

**The Future of Low-Income Neighborhoods  
and the People Who Reside There**

**A Capacity-Oriented Strategy  
for Neighborhood Development**

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This report incorporates three separate papers.

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The third paper, "An Associational Map," may be reproduced.

## **The History of Neighborhoods in Industrial American Cities**

Modern American industrial cities were designed to bring workers and workplace together. The neighborhood adjoined the yards, the plant, and the mill. Work was often a walk away. Parishes bounded the spaces between workplaces. And wards and districts were political reflections of the units of work and residence that grew within the new industrial cities.

Workplace and residence intermingled and each shaped the vision of the other. We named this confluence of visions the "neighborhood," and it began to change as quickly as it was formed. Paradoxically, the products of the new industrialization were tools designed to break the boundaries of place -- streetcars, trains, autos. Physical mobility became the symbol of social and economic mobility. Workers aspired to drive to work, and the growing demand for industrial labor created new living places beyond the shadow of the smokestack, but within the reach of public transportation.

These new residential places were neighborhoods with visions beyond the plant, yard, and factory. They were living places where one worked to live, rather than spaces where one lived to work. They became places where growing wages were to be spent instead of earned. And in this new vision was the seed of the consumer society.

Neighborhoods became a place of consumers, as well as producers. The mandates of a good life through consumption of commodities reshaped the function and vision of neighborhoods. And it was such a powerful vision that even the old neighborhoods adopted the consumer vision as the definition of a good neighborhood. No longer was the only question one of accessible work. The new question was whether this was a good place to spend the benefits of work.

It was a profound shift in mentality. It was the first popular expression of residence as the space primarily for consumption rather than production. The idea grew up and out and was renamed suburb. But the form was born in our cities and is at the root of our most intransigent urban problems -- this idea of neighborhoods as consumer places.

### **Organizing Communities of Consumers**

While Saul Alinsky wouldn't have thought of himself as a consumer advocate, he was one of the first. He was the inventor of new techniques to increase the consumer capacities of aging neighborhoods. His organizing methods were designed to insure equitable residential consumption of goods and services: regular garbage pick-up, adequate police service, fresh produce in supermarkets, adequate credit from the banks.

Saul learned his methods from union organizers who used them to achieve justice in the production process. Saul took these methods and applied them to the newly developing consumer neighborhoods. It was a

radical translation for it proclaimed that the right to a fair wage was not enough. The right to fairly spend the wage was equally important. After all, it was small profit to labor in the mill for dollars that were then devalued by exploitative landlords and retailers, unresponsive city officials, and discriminatory bankers.

So Saul Alinsky was not just the creator of modern neighborhood organizing methods. He articulated and institutionalized the new neighborhood vision of residential space as a place to consume. And he taught people that they had rights to consumption that were the measure of a just society.

So it is that our conception of the urban neighborhood and justice are now intimately connected to the idea of place as the site of consumption, and equitable consumption as the right of a full citizen.

### **The Decline of Production**

As neighborhood defined as a consuming place became institutionalized, the industrial machine that provided its wages and products began to falter and fail. It is a repetitive, tragic, and familiar story that need not be retold. The consequence for the urban consumer neighborhood was devastating because both the cash and commodities diminished and the vision of a good life of consumption faded.

The dilemma was magnified by the failure of the public schools to teach people the new ways for new forms of work. And the new workplaces were beyond a walk or a bus or the subway.

Consumer neighborhoods became places without wages for effective consumption, and without education or transportation systems able to provide mobility to new places of residence or work.

It is a desperate story of people denied access to production, trapped in a place of consumption where they often become nothing but a public client -- the serfs of our times.

### **The Limits of Consumer Organizing**

Unfortunately, even the methods of Alinsky advocacy that once invigorated so much of neighborhood life diminished in their capacity to build a better way. A city hall impoverished by Reagan policies and the loss of its industrial tax base is not able to be very responsive to picketing, even if it wishes to help. A demonstration for jobs isn't effective when industry has moved on. A bank that is now owned by interests in Tokyo, Montreal, or Los Angeles may not be too concerned that its local outlet isn't lending in a poor neighborhood, even if local residents threaten a "green boycott." And a supermarket chain may decide to remove its local store if neighborhood people cause trouble because the store already feels the profit loss from a consumer neighborhood that is no longer fed by industrial wages.

The declining consumer neighborhoods blunted the tools of traditional consumer organizing. Confrontation methods revealed clear limits when government is poor, industry is gone, spending power is small, and institutional ownership may be continents away.

### **The Traditional Future of Low-Income Places**

Most Americans now recognize that there are many city neighborhoods that are the places of residence of people who are not a part of the productive process. The popular term for these people is "the underclass." They are more accurately understood as the residents of client neighborhoods.

Their traditional future is believed by some to depend upon two resources: public welfare and industrial redevelopment (of the high or heavy tech versions).

The public welfare resource is predicated on the necessary maintenance of "deficient" people.

The industrial redevelopment resource is predicated upon the possibility that a new auto plant might be located in the neighborhood or a new micro-chip factory created nearby.

A neighborhood future bounded by these two resources means that people in client neighborhoods are genuinely dependent on systems outside their control. They are not just dependent on welfare. They are also dependent on the decisions of Toyota or General Motors or a high-tech entrepreneur from another world.

It is this dual dependency that traditional plans and programs for future development are built upon. Concerned civic leaders lobby for public and private funds to sustain low-income neighborhood consumption while public officials vie for new plants and business breeders. The principal role of the residents of client neighborhoods is to hope for the success of their outside advocates in seeking help from the outside system.

What are the prospects of these outside advocates? What hope should people in client neighborhoods have for the success of their advocates' efforts?

It is my judgment that their prospects for success are unlikely and that client neighborhoods bounded by these resource futures have no hopeful future.

### **The Future of Welfare**

It is clear that the present national administration has no intention of increasing resources for client neighborhoods. It seems equally clear that the next administration, of either political persuasion, will be faced with a monumental national debt and a law severely limiting total expenditures. This

combination of restraints predicts at least a decade when there will be no significant increase in the federal investment in improved consumer status of low-income people.

The prospect of substantial increases in state and local commitments to residents of low-income neighborhoods seems equally dim considering their loss of both federal revenues and industrial tax bases.

Recent studies of public opinion also suggest that a majority of the American people are unwilling to increase support for able-bodied people in low-income status, unless their plight is perceived as being no fault of their own.

Therefore, it seems reasonably predictable that for the next decade, waiting for improved consumer status through public funds is a vain hope in client neighborhoods.

### **The Future of Reindustrialization**

What then about the prospect for new production opportunities through heavy or high-tech industrial development? Based upon the recent record, these prospects are dim indeed. There are, after all, a limited number of new auto plants to be built in the best of times. And those that have been newly created have been almost exclusively in suburban or rural locations.

The high-tech future is also losing its powerful attraction as city after city finds how difficult it is to replicate the silicon successes of East Palo Alto and the Boston Corridor.

And the probability that our older plants will be revived continues to fade as Second World countries become industrial powers with apparently unlimited capacity to produce quality heavy goods at lower prices than the United States.

### **A Possible Future Depends on Honesty About the Present**

It would be irresponsible advice to the people in client neighborhoods to suggest that their future, for the decade ahead, will be significantly improved by the reindustrialization of America.

Those who plan a neighborhood future based upon public support and private reindustrialization actually sentence most low-income clients to an ever-growing poverty. Indeed, it appears that the only responsible approach to the realities of low-income neighborhoods is to insure that belief in these two resource systems not be heightened.

It is my judgment that the possibility of a better future now depends upon civic, public, and especially neighborhood leaders recognizing that they cannot depend on the two basic systems that previously supported the economies of their neighborhoods. While this harsh reality is clear to some of those who have felt the devastation of urban abandonment, much of the programmatic and

policy focus of public and civic leadership remains focused on these two systems. As a result, the available public and private program dollars, attentions, and psychic energies are misdirected and people in low-income neighborhoods are often misled as to the power of their advocates and the probabilities of the future they predict.

Paradoxically, the foundation stone of a hopeful future for people in low-income neighborhoods is the understanding that they cannot depend upon their old advocates or the two systems that provided them reasonable consumer status. Instead, their possibilities necessarily depend upon a new vision of neighborhood that focuses every available resource upon production rather than consumption.

The remainder of this paper attempts to define the elements of an alternative future that breaks with dependence on systems of public maintenance and visions of industrial renaissance as the resources for neighborhood renewal. Instead, it attempts to outline the foundation stones for regenerating urban neighborhoods by once again linking work and residence -- consumption and production.

### **Alternative Visions of Urban Neighborhoods**

To reach beyond a traditional vision is difficult. We are bounded in our thinking by an industrial culture built on big systems of production and governance. It is very difficult for us to imagine renewing city places without primarily depending upon the resources, the management, and the technology of corporations, universities, federal agencies, etc.

Therefore, I have found it most helpful to intentionally look outside the definitions created by these systems. What are the possibilities of having productive<sup>1</sup> neighborhood economies that are not basically dependencies of large systems?

### **Three Visions of Development**

There are three alternative visions that I would commend. Each has helped me toward a new understanding. Each is greatly simplified here in order to emphasize their essential insights.

The first vision comes from Mexico. There, peasant village leaders have reeducated a group of urban technicians so that a unique collaboration has developed.<sup>2</sup> As one observes the fruitful village development efforts of this collaboration, two basic building blocks stand out.

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<sup>1</sup>"Productive" means not only the generation of goods and services, but the capacity for mutual support, care, and effective problem solving (citizenship).

<sup>2</sup>For further information regarding this innovative collaborative, contact Gustavo Esteva or Rodrigo Medellin E., Grupo Anadeges, Minerva 63, Col. Credito Constructor, C.P. 03940 Mexico, d.f.

First, there is an intensive effort to identify the skills, capacities, and resources of the village. "Who are we, what can we do, and what do we have that we can use and others will buy?"

Second, there is a game they play. It helps the villagers see when their new economic efforts will create dependency on outside resources. This helps minimize reliance on outside systems as the economy develops.

The collaboration also results in new economic relationships between villages as they see mutual possibilities for exchange and production.

But the key is the relentless recognition that productivity starts with a serious inventory of your present resources, skills, and capacities.

The second vision comes from Canada through the studies of the First World's best urban economist -- Jane Jacobs. In her newest book, *Cities and Wealth of Nations* (Random House, 1984), she finds that regional vitality grows around cities and that the generating power of the city is its ability to replace imports and create a surplus. But it is import replacement that is the starting point.

The key to generating an effective economy is the focus upon producing what you now import.

The third vision comes from a small place inside the United States, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. There, Robert Rodale publishes Successful Farmer and Organic Gardening. He has been experimenting with new approaches to restoring the vigor of our agricultural land. Much of our farmland has been badly damaged by chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. It costs more and more to grow crops chemically on fields whose natural growing powers have been decimated by the chemical inputs.

Bob Rodale has developed methods to restore the natural productive powers of the land by reducing costly outside inputs and enhancing the natural resources. As a result, farming can become economic again for families. Bob calls this process of renewal through reducing outside inputs and enhancing internal resources regeneration.

City neighborhoods are similarly places that became dependent on the high-cost inputs of outside systems. They became dependent and finally weak, because their internal capacities for production atrophied. Bob Rodale believes that, like a farm, city neighborhoods can be regenerated.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The theory of regeneration is defined in *Regenerating America*, Rodale Press. Its application is documented in the quarterly newsletter, Regeneration. Both are available from Robert Rodale, Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania 18049.



The key to effective regeneration is the conservation rather than consumption of our basic resources. We have abandoned physically sound neighborhoods because we have become consumers of not only goods and services, but our own neighborhoods as well.

In summary, an alternative vision recognizes the perils of client neighborhoods dependent on present public welfare and prospective industrial inputs. Instead, it builds on three foundation stones:

1. Productivity starts with a recognition of the basic value of present resources, skills, and capacities.
2. Effective productivity focuses on replacing imports.
3. Efficient productivity conserves and restores existing resources.

Together, these principles are the foundation of the process of internal development. It is not a new idea. In fact, it is the process by which all effective economies began. Effective new neighborhood economies depend on our recognizing these old truths and overcoming the illusion that two large outside systems will sustain or save us.

### **The Elements for Regenerating Productive Neighborhoods**

To begin, we need to recognize the nature of the human assets, skills, and abilities that exist in our neighborhoods. This recognition requires a major act of intellectual will because our older neighborhoods have become understood as the location of people with problems, pathologies, and needs. There is no possibility that a productive neighborhood can be built primarily upon this deficiency orientation. Policies, programs, and resources predicated upon deficiencies are the cornerstones of dependency, consumption, and clienthood.

The instrumentation for deficiency-oriented programs has been the "needs survey." It is a device to isolate, focus, and magnify the deficiencies that service systems see in client neighborhoods. The sum of these deficiencies becomes the raw material for creating service programs to meet "needs." The current aggregate effect of this approach to the needs of people in low-income neighborhoods is documented in a recent study by the Community Services Society of New York.<sup>4</sup> The study finds that the per capita value of all public and charitable dollars specifically designated for New York's population below 125% of the poverty line is \$7,000 or \$28,000 for a family of four. However, the study finds that only 33% of this allocation reaches the poor in-income. 67% is used for the provision of services.

<sup>4</sup>*New York City's Poverty Budget*, Community Services Society of New York, 105 East 22nd Street, New York, New York 10010.

Thus, the deficiency orientation and "needs survey" have been powerful tools to fund service systems designed to treat and minister to people in client neighborhoods. The cash economy has been largely replaced by a service economy that depends upon deficiencies. And those deficiencies are largely the outcome of living in neighborhoods with low cash incomes.

### **Inventories of Individual Capacities**

Therefore, a central dynamic for renewal is a capacity orientation -- the belief that every person has abilities, skills, and productive motives that are his/her most powerful attributes. It is the identification of these capacities that is the center of any regenerative development. Therefore, we have worked with two neighborhood organizations to create a simple tool to identify the capacities of neighborhood people. The device is called a Capacity Inventory and is attached to this paper as Appendix A.

As every neighborhood organizer knows, it is the identification of leadership capacities in every citizen that is the basis for effective community organization. It is also true that the identification of capacities is basic to regenerating economies and communities. That is why policies, programs, or community initiatives that support capacity-oriented activity are critical to moving from consumption to production in client neighborhoods.

### **Associational Development**

In addition to the identification of individual capacities, the redefinition of client neighborhoods requires recognition of the critical capacities of locally controlled associations.

Alexis de Tocqueville understood that the vitality of American democracy grew from its self-defining associations. Saul Alinsky recognized the same fact. He said that every neighborhood was organized through many associations. His methods were basically a design to create a center of power for those associations.

The basic power of associations is their problem-solving capacity. They are tools, unlike systems and agencies, that command local loyalty because they are self-governing. However, their potential has been sapped by the local invasion of professionals, technicians, managers, and systems claiming problem-solving authority over the lives of local people.

The regeneration of associational capacities and authority is essential if productive neighborhoods are to reemerge. This process requires identification of the range of local associations. To assist in this process, we have produced an Associational Map defining the typical forms of local association. A copy is attached as Appendix B. Experiments in enhancing their responsibilities and broadening their concerns are important steps toward creating a productive environment. The focus of some of the most creative experiments in associational regeneration have been stimulated by the National Center for

Neighborhood Enterprise (1367 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036), under the leadership of Robert Woodson.

Similarly, the experiments of the Georgia Advocacy Office (contact David Truran, 1447 Peachtree Street, NE, Suite 811, Atlanta, Georgia 30309), in calling forth unique responsibilities for labeled people from local associations and their leaders, commands special attention.

There is an entirely new range of problem-solving initiatives that can be called forth from local associations if they are given recognition and non-cooptive incentives to address "social problems" and create new methods for producing solutions, services, and goods.

It is clear that we have not yet found a travelled path toward enhancing associational regeneration. Nonetheless, it is the association that has the sense of people who are "our own" rather than the agency sense of "clients." That is why experiments in enhancing the authority and capacity of associational life are critical to a productive neighborhood future. The center of productive community is mutual obligation and the association is the structure through which that mutuality is expressed.

### Schools as Development Centers

In the process of reorienting toward capacity, it is also important to think anew about the public school -- our basic tool for capacity development. In many client neighborhoods, the schools are the only remaining institution representing substantial public investment. However, they have usually become dominated by the deficiency orientation of the service system. The despair and disbelief of many teachers feeds the client-making role of the school.

A regenerative possibility would recognize that the school is a center of capacities -- teacher capacities, staff capacities, and student capacities. Clearly, if these capacities were directed toward developing productive neighborhoods, they would be a powerful resource.

Local schools could also renew themselves by developing their capacities to renew community productivity. This possibility has been described by Jonathan Sher in a proposal for a "School-based Economic Development Corporation."<sup>5</sup> It is an audacious vision, but even the recent Carnegie Commission report on public education recognized that the central defect of our schools is the disconnection between the world of education and the world of work.

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<sup>5</sup>From *Education in Rural America*, Westview, 1977. For further information, contact Jonathan Sher, President, North Carolina REAL Enterprises, Route 1, Box 323K, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514.

Our schools can become working centers for regenerating neighborhood economies. And it is predictable that the unintended consequence of this functional redefinition will be rising student achievement scores.

In summary, the centers of human capital in neighborhoods are the capacities of individuals, associations, and schools. Their identification, nurture, and authority create opportunities for productivity to replace clienthood. There are, however, equally important resources to be found in other forms of neighborhood capital.

### **Capital Investment in Low-Income Neighborhoods**

Every client neighborhood is the site of large allocations of public dollars for the maintenance of the people and the place. These investments take the form of welfare benefits and capital improvements.

As described earlier, the welfare benefits are quite substantial, i.e., \$9.8 billion in New York City in 1983. Similarly, the capital improvement allocations are very substantial and often represent an amount that is equal to half of the city's entire operating budget.

The significant fact about both of these large public investments is that they are traditionally designed to maintain an unproductive place. In that sense, they are like grants to be spent rather than capital to be invested.

To allow neighborhoods to become productive, public dollars must be converted from maintenance funds to investment capital. And to achieve this end, the people in client neighborhoods will need the authority and organization to make new choices about how their public wealth is to be individually and collectively invested.

The majority of public and private welfare dollars are now invested in what might best be described as prepaid service vouchers. The cash beneficiary of the vouchers is a service system. The service beneficiary is the low-income client.

This system of allocating public wealth has several obvious limitations:

1. The client receives much less income than would be the case if she were the cash beneficiary.
2. The client has no role in defining the appropriate kind of service voucher. Perhaps she would rather have a voucher to go to college (unavailable) than an opportunity to receive budget planning assistance (available).
3. The client has very little to say about the provider of the predefined service. Perhaps she would find a better training opportunity than the one developed for her by the system.

4. The client has no opportunity to become the provider and, thus, move from consumer to producer.

If we are to have productive neighborhoods, local people need the opportunity to make choices in each of these areas. Their social service vouchers, sometimes called transfer payments, need to be recast as investment choices designed to place new authority and responsibility for productive activity in their hands.

The time for this kind of experimentation appears to have arrived. In many states, authorities are seeking waivers to create new options for investing welfare dollars. The August 10, 1986 *New York Times* has a front-page article indicating that the federal government plans experiments in 20 states providing recipients with new opportunities to make choices of how to invest welfare dollars in productive enterprise. New ways to invest transfer payments for production are described in Robert Friedman's book, *The Safety Net as Ladder* (1987, Corporation for Enterprise Development, 1725 K Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036).<sup>6</sup>

As these experiments are developed, they provide unique opportunities for new community development enterprises in child care, health insurance, transportation, etc. Both local community development groups and philanthropies can assist recipients in creating investments in new forms of neighborhood production.

### **Investing Capital Improvement Allocations**

In every American city, city planners vie for the opportunity to allocate central business district capital improvement dollars so that they will "trigger" investment in a new bank, stadium, hotel, or office building. Everyone clearly understands that, downtown, public capital investments trigger private capital investments.

Unfortunately, the lesson is usually forgotten in client neighborhoods. There, the technocratic, maintenance imperative prevails and public assets are used to replace and maintain the infrastructure and public furniture. The cash beneficiaries of the allocations are usually large construction companies from outside the neighborhood employing workers from outside the neighborhood. Thus, this potential neighborhood wealth is converted instead to maintenance dollars that provide direct enterprise and wage benefits to people living outside the neighborhood.

Obviously, productive neighborhoods need a say in how their capital dollars are to be spent so that maintenance and investment become equal values. In several cities, structures have been established that encourage client

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<sup>6</sup>Also available at the same address is a manual describing alternative investment models, *A Hand Up, Not a Hand-Out*.

neighborhoods to redefine public capital dollars so they become investments in neighborhood enterprise and jobs. Dr. Stanley Hallett of our Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research has prepared a report describing the neighborhood participation processes of those cities with the most highly developed systems. Titled *Citizen Participation in the Capital Budgeting Process: A Study of Six Cities*, the study is actually a design guide for local groups and coalitions seeking to create new neighborhood options for production by focusing local capital improvements upon investment and development as well as maintenance. (Copies are available for \$5.00 from Dr. Stanley Hallett, Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201).

Whether we are considering the huge investment of public wealth in service vouchers or maintenance of neighborhood capital stock, it is clear that this wealth usually purchases work from people outside the neighborhood to maintain people inside the neighborhood as low-level unemployed consumers. That is why working neighborhoods depend upon local initiatives to capture the public wealth that is currently invested in local people being dependencies of big systems.

### **Private Capital Investments**

Neighborhoods across America are alive with thousands of local groups seeking new ways to create, lure, and invest private capital in new forms of local production. These initiatives are the first growth of a new harvest of enterprise. They deserve every support possible, for America's neighborhood possibilities are being invented here.

To succeed, these inventions need the resources of the public wealth from welfare and capital systems and the capacities of citizens, schools, and associations. All these resources, creatively invested, are the essential building blocks of regenerated neighborhoods.

### **Information for Neighborhood Production**

The history of cities in the 1960s and 1970s documents the ascendance of centralized systems, whether federal, corporate, medical, or municipal. Power flowed out of neighborhoods as professional services and consumption replaced local problem solving and production.

In the 1980s, we have been struggling with the neighborhood vacuum in authority, responsibility, and productivity created by that great power shift.

Unfortunately, it is easier to take power and waste it than to give it back. But the life and death of our cities now depends on the revitalizing capacities of local citizens who were told in a thousand ways, for several decades, that "they would be better because someone else knew better and could do it better."

The truth is that the "someone else" has now abandoned the neighborhoods because of inadequate profit, undesirable clients, and deflating budgets. We are left with our own visions, having been used by the visions of others.

To perfect our vision, we will need the local information that the central systems collected, codified, computerized, and controlled in the service of their designs for us. It is the one thing they have left to give back.

### **Three Data Bases for Neighborhood Regeneration**

New initiatives to decode and disperse centralized information are developing in many cities. This information is essential to creating the "data base" for neighborhood investment and production.

Perhaps the most advanced of these information divestments is the City of Chicago's Affirmative Neighborhood Information Program. In cooperation with our Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, the City has assisted in developing regular, understandable, "neighborhoodized" information regarding local housing conditions. Examples of these neighborhood reports may be secured by contacting the author at Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201.

A second form of valuable information is an inventory of local associations, their leadership, and activities. While most neighborhood organizers are aware of those groups oriented to consumer advocacy, a much broader group of associations is involved in problem solving and production. Therefore, a comprehensive inventory of local associations is a second "data base" for regenerative neighborhood development and participation. (See Appendix B for an inventory guide).

Productive neighborhoods also need a voice. Network television and city newspapers are national and metropolitan voices. But they are unable to serve as a local voice to share visions, inform citizens about their associational plans, recognize achievements, and rally new initiatives. Unfortunately, client neighborhoods, denied adequate consumer income, have often lost their local newspapers. They are peculiarly disabled as they seek to regenerate community without communication by written word. Perhaps philanthropy can examine this issue and stimulate new modes of publication.

### **The Limits of Internal Development**

The future defined in this paper should be understood as a possibility -- not a desirability. I have tried to avoid the utopian vision of neighborhood salvation delivered by big systems and professional help. Instead, I have tried to describe a future based, as Saul Alinsky would say, "upon the world as it is rather than the world as I would like it to be." The recognition that we are our only real possibility is the essential motive for regenerating a productive place.

But can we do it on our own? Is it possible to build anew from a client neighborhood? The answer is clear. Without our self-determining action, there is no possibility.

Is there a good probability that our internal action will regenerate productive places? The answer is unclear. For effectiveness also depends upon our ability to build bridges out to people, places, associations, and organizations outside the neighborhood.

## Two Barriers to Bridge Building

There are two barriers to our building new bridges beyond the neighborhood.

The first is the existing systems that appear to be bridges to resources -- schools, city government, criminal justice systems, welfare systems. In fact, these big systems are often unproductive consumers of our public investment capital. They are usually directed by people who are disconnected from the neighborhood, and they are overwhelming. They create a world we cannot understand, much less control. In their monumentalism, they teach us each day about our impotence.

When groups from outside the neighborhood seek to relate to local interests, the systems divert them and subvert direct relationships. The meeting takes place downtown. The administrator gives permission. The agency speaks. The professional facilitates. The manager directs. And the authority, responsibility, and humanity of local folks and their forms and forums are lost.

It is very hard for outsiders to hear the voices of the neighborhood or to build bridges toward them because the territory is dominated by powerful systems that broadcast their responsibility for most of everyday life.

If new external relationships are to be created by neighborhood associations and enterprises, it will be necessary to develop creative strategies to void or end-run the mediating efforts of the big systems. Fortunately, there is a tremendous reservoir of good will and mutual creativity that generates whenever residents of client neighborhoods have direct opportunities to speak for themselves and to reach out to their opposite numbers or potential collaborators. One has only to observe some of the amazing meetings of diverse people arranged by the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise to see the American possibility come alive as popular interests make bridges over the barriers of systems.

Citizens must speak for themselves. Citizens must have authority over the associations and enterprises that are the vital center of productive neighborhoods. Without voice or authority, local citizens are reduced to being nothing but clients.



The second barrier to new bridges is the cultural power of the social service professions. In client neighborhoods there is a pervasive presence of social helpers trained in recognizing the deficiencies of local people. Their programs have the unintended consequence of rewarding deficiency. And their implicit economic message is that wealth is outside, it arrives through the aegis of service systems, and its purpose is to be spent.

These two messages -- deficiency is valuable and wealth is to be spent -- are the cultural bases for clienthood and the cornerstone of dependency. And yet, it is exactly these two messages that offend potential allies and collaborators in productive neighborhoods. Most Americans value capacity, ability, productivity, and investment. Service systems, however, have interpreted the people in client neighborhoods as being people without these attributes. It is this devaluing public interpretation that is a major barrier to bridges between individuals, associations, and enterprises across the poverty line.

Therefore, strategies that diminish the impact of the service ideology and affirm public images of capacity and productivity are important assets for regenerating neighborhoods. Developing access to media that can publicly portray the inventions, capacities, and possibilities of regenerating neighbors and neighborhoods represent new bridges over the devaluing interpretations of most helping professions.

I recognize that it is difficult for people of good will to believe that human service systems and helping professions could be damaging to those they seek to assist. Nonetheless, after thirty years of neighborhood work, it is my conclusion that the profound difference about a client neighborhood is that its people are walled in by the systems and professions that speak for them, have authority over them, and interpret them to the public.

The first step toward building bridges outward is to break through that wall. Inventive independent philanthropy could collaborate with regenerating neighbors and neighborhoods in legitimizing local voices and magnifying images of capacity.

## **The Second Step: Bridges to Citizen Territory**

On the other side of the wall are the families, associations, businesses, and universities that populate communities of productive citizens. The task of bridging is to connect these structures to their correlates in client neighborhoods. The possibilities are unlimited and exciting because they tap the hopefulness of the American dream. They seek out the face-to-face productive collaboration that deTocqueville found America's unique invention.

### **Families**

We are already seeing the invention of self-determined family-building activities among public housing residents. New linkages between middle-class

and client neighborhood families are burgeoning. New images of effective families are emerging. There are inventions, people reaching out, testing, meeting, and exploring. We are in a wonderful time of experimentation. These family-to-family bridges should be sought, supported, and celebrated.<sup>7</sup>

This is quite different than "parenting education." Parent education is actually the service system's taking one more responsibility for the lives of people in client neighborhoods. It will fail because it diminishes family authority, replaces community, and builds no bridges. It will fade away when its funding ends.

## **Associations**

Connections between associations of similar types represent a major bridge from client-to-citizen neighborhoods. Return to the Associational Map (Appendix B). Each of these associations is a citizen tool with potential to share common work across the boundaries of poverty. Paired associations from church groups to bowling leagues to veterans groups to fraternal organizations can undertake joint projects. They create new relationships, community improvements, a sense of mutual productiveness, and new institutional relationships.

Central to associational bridges is the call to mutually contribute rather than a call to charity. Incentives to create bridging projects for associations represent important beginnings for mutual respect and new opportunities.

## **Businesses**

Much of America's enterprise is expressed through the family business. Bridges between these businesses through teaming and conferences could provide shared experiences and new visions for start-ups. The record of systems such as the Small Business Administration is not very impressive as an entrepreneur-system link. Perhaps, we would find more effective means of fostering enterprise by bridging families and small groups to successful local enterprises.

At the corporate level, we should recognize that effective corporations are basically devices to develop human resources. As clients from low-income neighborhoods are given more opportunity to explore the use of their welfare capital for development purposes, direct links to cooperating corporations could be established. Thereby, those who understand development and investment could counsel those whose public wealth, or transfer payments, is being redefined as investment capital.

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<sup>7</sup>For further information regarding innovative family-to-family initiatives, contact the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, 1367 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Whether small business or corporate enterprise, direct relationships that reach outside of established service systems represent vital new resources for bridges to the mainstream.

## **Universities**

One of the typically disabling characteristics of service systems in client neighborhoods is their institutionalization of degraded visions for low-income people. High-rise public housing is a classic example of a "helping" vision that did unto others what no citizen would do unto themselves.

Throughout client neighborhoods, one can see programs that are implicitly based on the premise that clients are second-rate consumers without a future in the mainstream. This is one more reason why the cultural grip of the client systems and services must be broken.

An instructive example of how people in client neighborhoods have created their own activities with new and expanded aspirations is College Here We Come (4500 Quarles Street, NE, Washington, D.C. 20019). This group developed in a public housing project where the local school principal sought cooperation with an anti-drop out program designed by the system. A group of citizen residents, reflecting on the problem, decided that young people dropped out because it didn't make much difference if they completed the local high school. The certificate didn't convert to a job of real value.

The problem, the residents decided, was that their children didn't have the incentive that keeps most students in productive neighborhoods in school -- the expectation of going to college. Therefore, instead of assisting the system to keep (reimbursable) youth in school, the residents developed a plan to get their children into college. That citizen aspiration has resulted in more than 500 Washington, D.C. public housing residents going to college.

A vital new opportunity structure was built because the visions of a group of citizens in a client neighborhood created a bridge over the local service system to colleges and universities in citizen territory.

## **Conclusion**

Unfortunately, this paper can be read as a list of activities, programs, and initiatives. It is not. It is a map outlining the journey from client to citizen.

At the center of this regenerating journey is capacity. America is still the world's most hopeful nation because we believe in the capacity of every person. So we all vote. We all sit on juries to decide the ultimate fate of our fellows. And we are all needed to achieve the refashioning of America that new international challenges present today.

The greatest offense against America's democracy is our client neighborhoods, for they are built on deficiency rather than capacity. They are

dominated by systems that have institutionalized degraded visions for devalued people. They have become barriers to opportunity, walling people in from citizen territory.

In thirty years of neighborhood work, I have never met a single person, however devalued, who has lost the American dream. They may have lost their way, but not the dream. It is that dream that is the tremendous latent power in every client neighborhood.

This paper is a map of some of the ways to release that power through the regenerating capacities of citizens.

## Appendix A

## CAPACITY INVENTORY V\*

Hello. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ with the Uptown Center of Hull House or Howard Area Community Center. We're talking to local people about what skills they have. With this information, we hope to help people start businesses. I'd like to ask you some questions about your skills and where you have used them. Your participation is voluntary, and the information is confidential.

### PART I. SKILLS INFORMATION

Now I'm going to read to you a list of skills around which people build different kinds of small neighborhood businesses. It's an extensive list, so I hope you'll bear with me. I'll read the skills and you stop me whenever we get to one you have. We are interested in your skills and abilities. We are especially interested in skills and abilities you've learned through experience in the home or with the family. Also skills you've learned at church or elsewhere, as well as any skills you've learned on the job.

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\*© Prepared jointly by Brandon Neese, Howard Area Community Center; Dennis Marino, Uptown Center of Hull House; and John McKnight, Northwestern University. Use of this Inventory is encouraged and granted by the designers to not-for-profit neighborhood-based organizations with the condition that they contact John McKnight, at the following address, regarding how the Inventory is used. John McKnight, Northwestern University, Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, Illinois 60201 (Phone: 312-491-3395).

**I. Maintenance**

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Window Washing				
2. Floor Waxing or Mopping				
3. Washing and Cleaning Carpets/Rugs				
4. Routing Clogged Drains				
5. Using a Handtruck in a Business				
6. Caulking				
7. General Household Cleaning				
8. Fixing Leaky Faucets				
9. Mowing Lawns				
10. Planting & Caring for Gardens				
11. Pruning Trees & Shrubbery				
12. Cleaning/Maintaining Swimming Pools				
13. Floor Sanding or Stripping				
14. Wood Stripping/Refinishing				

**II. Health**

1. Caring for the Elderly				
2. Caring for the Mentally Ill				
3. Caring for the Sick				
4. Caring for the Physically Disabled or Retarded				

(IF YES ANSWERED TO ITEMS 1, 2, 3 OR 4, ASK THE FOLLOWING:)

Now, I would like to know about the kind of care you provided.

5. Bathing				
6. Feeding				
7. Preparing Special Diets				
8. Exercising and Escorting				
9. Grooming				
10. Dressing				
11. Making the Person Feel at Ease				

III. Construction of a Building

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Painting				
2. Porch Construction or Repair				
3. Tearing Down Buildings				
4. Knocking Out Walls				
5. Wall Papering				
6. Furniture Repairs				
7. Repairing Locks				
8. Building Garages				
9. Bathroom Modernization				
10. Building Room Additions				
11. Tile Work				
12. Installing Drywall & Taping				
13. Plumbing Repairs				
14. Electrical Repairs				
15. Bricklaying & Masonry				

STOP AFTER #15,  
IF NO AFFIRMATIVE RESPONSE TO #1-15.

16. Cabinetmaking				
17. Kitchen Modernization				
18. Furniture Making				
19. Installing Insulation				
20. Plastering				
21. Soldering & Welding				
22. Concrete Work (sidewalks)				
23. Installing Floor Coverings				
24. Repairing Chimneys				
25. Heating/Cooling System Installation				
26. Putting on Siding				
27. Tuckpointing				
28. Cleaning Chimneys (chimney sweep)				
29. Installing Windows				
30. Building Swimming Pools				
31. Carpentry Skills				
32. Roofing Repair or Installation				



**IV. Office**

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Typing (words per minute _____)				
2. Operating Adding Machine/Calculator				
3. Filing Alphabetically/Numerically				
4. Taking Phone Messages				
5. Writing Business Letters (not typing)				
6. Receiving Phone Orders				
7. Operating Switchboard				
8. Keeping Track of Supplies				
9. Shorthand or Speedwriting				
10. Bookkeeping				
11. Entering Information into Computer				
12. Word Processing				

**V. Operating Equipment & Repairing Machinery**

1. Repairing Radios, TVs, VCRs, Tape Recorders				
2. Repairing Other Small Appliances				
3. Repairing Automobiles				
4. Repairing Trucks/Buses				
5. Repairing Auto/Truck/Bus Bodies				
6. Using a Forklift				
7. Repairing Large Household Equipment (e.g., refrigerator)				
8. Repairing Heating & Air Conditioning System				
9. Operating a Dump Truck				
10. Fixing Washers/Dryers				
11. Repairing Elevators				
12. Operating a Crane				
13. Assembling Items				

**VI. Food**

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Catering				
2. Serving Food to Large Numbers of People (over 10)				
3. Preparing Meals for Large Numbers of People (over 10)				
4. Clearing/Setting Tables for Large Numbers of People (over 10)				
5. Washing Dishes for Large Numbers of People (over 10)				
6. Operating Commercial Food Preparation Equipment				
7. Bartending				
8. Meatcutting				
9. Baking				

**VII. Transportation**

1. Driving a Car				
2. Driving a Van				
3. Driving a Bus				
4. Driving a Taxi				
5. Driving a Tractor Trailer				
6. Driving a Commercial Truck				
7. Driving a Vehicle /Delivering Goods				
8. Hauling				
9. Operating Farm Equipment				
10. Driving an Ambulance				

**VIII. Child Care**

1. Caring for Babies (under 1 year)				
2. Caring for Children (1 to 6)				
3. Caring for Children (7 to 13)				
4. Taking Children on Field Trips				

**IX. Supervision**

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Writing Reports				
2. Filling out Forms				
3. Planning Work for Other People				
4. Directing the Work of Other People				
5. Making a Budget				
6. Keeping Records of All Your Activities				
7. Interviewing People				

**X. Sales**

1. Operating a Cash Register				
2. Selling Products Wholesale or for Manufacturer (If yes, which products?)				
3. Selling Products Retail (If yes, which products?)				
4. Selling Services (If yes, which services?)				
5. How have you sold these products or services? (Check mark, if yes)				
A. _____ Door to Door B. _____ Phone C. _____ Mail D. _____ Store E. _____ Home				

**XI. Music**

1. Singing				
2. Playing an Instrument (Which instrument?)				

**XII. Security**

	Yes	Job	Home	Other
1. Guarding Residential Property				
2. Guarding Commercial Property				
3. Guarding Industrial Property				
4. Armed Guard				
5. Crowd Control				
6. Ushering at Major Events				
7. Installing Alarms or Security Systems				
8. Repairing Alarms or Security Systems				
9. Firefighting				

**XIII. Other**

1. Upholstering				
2. Sewing				
3. Dressmaking				
4. Crocheting				
5. Knitting				
6. Tailoring				
7. Moving Furniture or Equipment to Different Locations				
8. Managing Property				
9. Assisting in the Classroom				
10. Hair Dressing				
11. Hair Cutting				
12. Phone Surveys				
13. Jewelry or Watch Repair				

**XIV. Skills**

A. Are there any other skills that you have which we haven't mentioned?

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B. When you think about your skills, what three things do you think you do best?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Which of all your skills are good enough that other people would hire you to do them?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

D. What three skills would you most like to learn?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

E. Are there any skills you would like to teach?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

F. Please describe other special interests or activities that you have been involved with (e.g., sports, artistic activities, crafts, crossword puzzles, fishing, gardening, swimming).

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G. Have you ever organized or helped organize any of the following community activities? (Place check mark (✓), if yes)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Church Fundraisers
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Bingo
4. \_\_\_\_\_ School-Parent Associations
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Sports Teams
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Camp Trips for Kids
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Field Trips
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Political Campaigns
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Block Clubs
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Community Groups
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Rummage Sales
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Yard Sales
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Church Suppers
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Community Gardens

H. Have you ever worked on a farm? If so, where and what did you do?

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## PART II. WORK EXPERIENCE

Now that we have discussed your skills, we would like to get a sense of your work experience.

A. Are you currently employed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Are you between jobs? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

1. If employed, what is your job title and what skills do you use on the job?

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A. Are you employed part-time or full-time? \_\_\_\_\_

B. If working part-time, would you like additional work?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. If not employed, are you interested in a job? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

A. Full-time

B. Part-time

C. Are there things that would prevent you from working right now?

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What were your previous jobs?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Have you ever been self-employed? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, describe:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Have you ever operated a business from your home? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, describe:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### PART III. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

A. How many years of school did you complete? (Please circle)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 (High School Diploma)

13 14 15 16 (College Degree) (Advanced Degree)

B. Do you have a GED? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

C. Have you participated in any training programs which were not part of your regular school studies? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

1. If yes, what kind of training did you participate in?

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2. What kind of work did that training prepare you for?

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#### **PART IV. ENTERPRISING ATTITUDES AND EXPERIENCE**

A. Have you ever considered starting a business? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

1. If yes, what kind of business did you have in mind?

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2. Did you plan to start it alone or with other people?

Alone \_\_\_\_\_ Others \_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you plan to operate it out of your home? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

B. Are you currently earning money on your own through the sale of services or products?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



1. If yes, what are the services or products you sell?

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2. Who do you sell to?

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3. How do you do this?

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C. What types of businesses are needed in the neighborhood?

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D. What businesses do we have in the neighborhood which are so unsatisfactory that we should consider starting new, competing businesses?

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E. What is the biggest obstacle which you face in starting a business?

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Are there others?

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**PART V. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ (If a precise age is not given, ask whether the person is in the teens, 20s, 30s, etc.)

Sex: F \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your time. We will send you a summary of your responses and the responses of others to this questionnaire.

Source: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

# AN ASSOCIATIONAL MAP

Prepared by John McKnight  
Northwestern University  
Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research  
2040 Sheridan Road  
Evanston, Illinois 60201

<b>Artistic Organizations:</b>	choral, theatrical, writing
<b>Business Organizations:</b>	Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood business associations, trade groups
<b>Charitable Groups &amp; Drives:</b>	Red Cross, Cancer Society, United Way
<b>Church Groups:</b>	service, prayer, maintenance, stewardship, acolytes, mens, womens, youth, seniors
<b>Civic Events:</b>	July 4th, art fair, Halloween
<b>Collectors Groups:</b>	stamp collectors, flower dryers, antiques
<b>Community Support Groups:</b>	"friends" of the library, nursing home, hospital
<b>Elderly Groups:</b>	Senior Citizens
<b>Ethnic Associations:</b>	Sons of Norway, Black Heritage Club, Hibernians
<b>Health &amp; Fitness Groups:</b>	bicycling, jogging, exercise
<b>Interest Clubs:</b>	poodle owners, antique car owners
<b>Local Government:</b>	town, township, electoral units, fire department, emergency units
<b>Local Media:</b>	radio, newspaper, local access cable TV
<b>Men's Groups:</b>	cultural, political, social, educational, vocational
<b>Mutual Support (Self-Help) Groups:</b>	Alcoholics Anonymous, Epilepsy Self-Help, La Leche League
<b>Neighborhood and Block Clubs:</b>	crime watch, beautification, Christmas decorations
<b>Outdoor Groups:</b>	garden clubs, Audubon Society, conservation clubs
<b>Political Organizations:</b>	Democrats, Republicans, caucuses
<b>School Groups:</b>	printing club, PTA, child care
<b>Service Clubs:</b>	Zonta, Kiwanis, Rotary, American Association of University Women
<b>Social Cause Groups:</b>	peace, rights, advocacy, service
<b>Sports Leagues:</b>	bowling, swimming, baseball, fishing, volleyball
<b>Study Groups:</b>	literary clubs, bible study groups
<b>Veteran Groups:</b>	American Legion, Amvets, Veterans of Foreign Wars, their Auxiliaries
<b>Women's Groups:</b>	cultural, political, social, educational, vocational
<b>Youth Groups:</b>	4H, Future Farmers, Scouts, YWCA