

Community Building in Kansas City: Lessons Learned



NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE
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The opinions expressed in this report are solely those of the National Civic League and not necessarily those of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

Preface

The **National Civic League** (NCL), the United States' oldest organization advocating for the issues of community democracy, envisions a country where citizens are actively engaged in the process of self-governance and work in partnership with the public, private and non-profit sectors of society, and where citizens are creating active civic culture reflective of the diversity of community voices. In short, our mission is to strengthen citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions.

As part of our efforts to achieve this mission, NCL works to bring together communities facing similar problems so they can learn from each other and support each other's actions. Under the leadership of our chairman-emeritus, John W. Gardner, NCL created the **Alliance for National Renewal** to bring citizens from across the country together to help each other improve their communities. This coalition of more than 200 national and local organizations spotlights the efforts of people and organizations working to improve their communities, shares stories of innovative community building efforts, and makes important connections between vital organizations.

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation works toward the vision of self-sufficient people in healthy communities. Its mission is to research and identify unfulfilled needs of society, and to develop, implement and/or fund breakthrough solutions that have a lasting impact and offer people a choice and hope for the future.

Through the confluence of these two missions the Kansas City Lessons Learned Project was born. The National Civic League and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation hope that by presenting a document that furthers our understanding of how community renewal works, we can assist others committed to revitalizing their own communities.

Introduction

The Alliance for National Renewal: Nurturing Community Renewal

John W. Gardner, chairman-emeritus of the National Civic League (NCL), while looking at the challenges the United States faces, noted, “The problems themselves are not as perplexing as the questions they raise concerning our capacity to gather our forces and act. Do we have what it takes to build a future worthy of our past?” He asks, “How can the American people be awakened to a new sense of purpose, a new vision and a new resolve? How can we remind ourselves of the standards of excellence and discipline we once honored, stir ourselves to the striving, vigorous performance we once took for granted?”

Gardner’s answer is that our nation’s challenges can only be met by engaging citizens in problem solving in their own communities. As a nation we now have to focus on building problem solving capacity at the local level and engaging citizens in the process of community democracy. For more than four decades we have relied on the federal government as our major agent for societal change. But now that Washington, D.C. has become a relatively less dominant part of our federalist system, our nation must focus on engaging citizens and empowering communities.

Yet within this observation are the roots of hope. As Gardner proclaims, “Communities are incubators of innovation and are where our “can do” spirit resides. In communities lies hope and new opportunities for citizens to volunteer, celebrate, learn about their responsibilities, and take action together.”

In short, by nurturing and encouraging community renewal efforts, and then sharing best practices with other local, state, and national organizations, we can reverse our country’s cynical mood and restore the “can do” spirit of past times. By restoring a sense of community and individual responsibility we will improve quality of life for Americans.

To that end, under Gardner’s leadership, the National Civic League formed the Alliance for National Renewal (ANR) and charged it with the mission of serving as a catalyst for inspiring diverse people to work collaboratively in revitalizing their communities and society.

Although each community is unique, most face similar issues; unfortunately, more often than not, each community struggles in apparent isolation, working to solve problems that, most likely, some other community has already addressed with some measure of success. Quite simply, even though citizens are engaged in community building and civic innovation in communities across America, often community activists do not know who in specific is working on similar problems, and do not know how to gain access to information that can help them with their battles.

NCL's Alliance for National Renewal (ANR) brings citizens from across the country together to help each other improve their communities. This coalition of more than 200 national and local organizations spotlights the efforts of people and organizations working to improve their communities, shares stories of innovative community building efforts, and makes important connections between vital organizations. ANR brings together communities facing similar problems so they can learn from each other and support each other's actions.

ANR offers:

- assistance to communities that want to start community renewal alliances;
- access to a network of people who believe in taking back our nation, neighborhood by neighborhood;
- a collection of stories on successful community renewal efforts;
- inspiration, ideas, tools and collaborative processes shared through conferences, publications, technical assistance, and the world wide web.

Quite simply, ANR is a coming together of organizations, institutions, communities and individuals from the public, private and nonprofit sectors who realize it is time to set aside turf battles and work together toward a shared vision of improving communities.

The Good Community Initiative: San Francisco Findings

One of the first projects undertaken by the Alliance for National Renewal was the Good Community Initiative. Through this effort, ANR worked with and observed several communities, hoping to develop a sophisticated understanding of how community renewal works, and to subsequently create and disseminate community renewal materials and case studies of participating communities for others to use. At the same time, ANR provided hands-on technical assistance, helping facilitate a change in the civic culture of the participating communities.

The Good Community Initiative began by analyzing and describing the existing civic society in the Bay Area of Northern California.¹ The

San Francisco Bay Area, an economically, racially and culturally diverse region, was selected as a microcosm of civic society development. The purpose of this project was to identify and understand what ANR's primary researcher, San Diego journalist Richard Louv, calls "the culture of renewal" in Northern California, that is, those organizations, networks, leaders, and communication conduits, that are working to create community.

Despite the differences in organizational methods and obvious differences in scale, some common themes emerged from the study of the civic culture of the Bay Area:

- ***Nonprofits must take the lead.*** Businesses are inherently competitive, and government agencies are inherently insular. Both of those traits are at odds with effective collaboration. Thus, it falls to nonprofits to be the catalyst.
- ***The best collaborations require a unifying vision, measurable outcomes and a wide range of participants.***
- ***High-tech tools show great promise, but low-tech still get the job done.*** New media—such as email and the Internet—can be helpful in exchanging information or recruiting volunteers. However, the heart of collaboration is still the face-to-face building of relationships—going door-to-door, confronting politicians, building constituency and collaborations.
- ***Programs wax and wane; collaborative relationships last.*** A program bears fruit as long as users are interested and funding is assured, but a good working relationship can live on, to spawn more and better programs.
- ***There are predictable stages of collaboration, including: convening strategy, vision building, agreeing on the reality, action planning, strategic doing, and monitoring progress.***
- ***There is a need for training in collaborative skills.***
- ***The more diverse the population, the more difficult the collaboration; but, at the same time, all sectors can learn from each other through collaboration.***
- ***Maintaining a group identity is the biggest struggle would-be collaborators face.*** Collaboration can widen the opportunities for financial support, but the process can also make it harder for an individual program to maintain its individuality.
- ***Would-be collaborators are skeptical of the effectiveness of funding-driven collaboration.*** Community building that taps existing capacity and then builds on it with added outside funding is more effective and sustainable than collaborations that take place as a result of new, available funding.

The Kansas City Lessons Learned Project

To confirm and build upon these findings, in 1997 ANR's Good Community Initiative began a study of exemplar civic organizations in the metropolitan Kansas City, Missouri area. Kansas City is situated near the border of Kansas and Missouri. Most of the area's population lies on the Missouri side. Kansas City has a strong economic base, made up of manufacturing, commercial, and livestock businesses. Kansas City is easily accessible for business because of its geographical location (approximately the center of the 48 states), and its proximity to railroads and the Missouri and Kansas rivers. There are numerous educational and cultural institutions in Kansas City, including the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Kansas City Art Institute, and several junior colleges. In the last 20 years, the area's population has decreased by nearly 15 percent. The suburban areas have grown exponentially as a result of people fleeing the downtown area in search of newer homes and a stronger sense of community. Kansas City was once described as "the most livable city" by its citizens, and now community organizations are trying to rebuild that feeling and image.

Kansas City has a highly developed civic network, making it an ideal community for a study designed to help develop an understanding of how community renewal works. This network is made up of four primary non-profit organizations with a close working relationship. Two organizations represent the business community, one the philanthropic community and one the local government. Kansas City's civic infrastructure is based on the relationships between these organizations. The civic network includes the Civic Council (comprised of 100 top corporation leaders), the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, and the Mid-America Regional Council (a council of governments). These groups have overlapping board members and the directors have personal and professional relationships. This civic network decides on what Kansas City should focus, where the money should be spent, and what needs should be addressed. However, it is the work of hundreds of non-profit and service-providing organizations that receive the money and do the work.

In addition, Kansas City has more neighborhood organizations and associations than most American communities. There is a strong sense of community identity among people in the area. There are 13 community development corporations (CDCs), a support and technical assistance agency (the Neighborhood Alliance), and agencies like PICO, the Kansas City Church Organizations (an IAF project supported by churches within the region) and the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative. The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has also been active in Kansas City. Churches have also played an important organizational role in the African American neighborhoods.

Finally, the Kansas City Community Foundation, the Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation, and the Hall Family Foundation have played a large role in the non-profit and community infrastructure of Kansas City. These foundations bring financial resources as well as connections and direction to community issues.

Methodology

The Kansas City Lessons Learned study involved five case studies of various community building organizations, collaborative efforts, and projects underway in the Kansas City metro area. For the purposes of this study, the National Civic League focused on efforts that create relationships across sectors, involve and impact diverse groups of people, and have documented results.

It is important to stress that what NCL was trying to achieve through this research was documentation of “lessons learned” from Kansas City’s experiences in mobilizing its civic infrastructure to address social problems. We were NOT attempting to develop a “best practices” directory.

Moreover, although at first we did have hopes of developing the “Kansas City model” of collaborative community renewal, it soon became apparent that the goal of developing a model was misdirected. Our research did not reveal a standard approach to community renewal that could be turned into a template for other organizations to modify and adopt.

Consequently, NCL decided to focus instead on capturing learnings that can be shared with other community builders in Kansas City and around the country. Upon reflection, those involved with this study realized that this latter approach, would in fact be much more useful; community builders would find more value in a document that provides advice based on experience than one which posited a universal model, that in many cases would not fit each community’s unique characteristics and challenges.

Nor was NCL identifying perfect projects. Indeed, many of the projects we studied experienced internal difficulties at some time or another during the duration of our research.

The first step in the research process was to identify 10 to 15 individuals who then acted as key informants regarding the Kansas City civic scene. These 15 individuals represent community building organizations, local foundations, community development corporations, local media, universities, local government officials, and the private sector. They were also diverse in terms of gender and ethnicity. All had lived and worked in the Kansas City metro area for at least five years. All were aware of what was going on in the Kansas City community and had been observing the civic scene for a number of years.

The key informants each participated in a 20 to 30 minute phone interview and were asked their impressions of Kansas City's civic life. Each informant was asked to identify four to six significant community problem solving projects. Informants were given considerable leeway in determining which projects they thought were "significant." For example, informants could categorize a project as significant because it had great promise and failed; contrarily a project that started quite modestly yet turned out to have powerful impacts could also be considered significant. Yet again, informants could choose to identify the programs, initiatives and collaboratives they felt were the most innovative in building community in the area.

All the information gathered from these phone interviews was compiled to identify those programs/initiatives that received multiple mentions. A common set of projects emerged from across the suggestions of the different informants. These included:

- **Partnership for Children**, a 10-year initiative of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and the Heart of America United Way. The partnership was formed to improve coalitions for children by mobilizing powerful new voices on their behalf. The project issues an annual report card on the status of children and supports metropolitan immunization campaigns, promotes the federal earned income credit and advocates for early childhood care and education.
- **YouthNet**, a broad based collaborative involving not-for-profit and public agencies serving youth. YouthNet delivers a comprehensive set of services to at-risk youth during non-school hours, with targeted efforts in areas of constructive activities, community service, counseling and employment training. At the time this research was conducted, YouthNet was actively expanding a youth mentoring program.
- **The Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance**, a multi-faceted bi-state agency that provides cohesion and support for Kansas City neighborhoods, offering a series of training programs in such areas as home ownership and neighborhood leadership and development.
- **Project NeighborHOOD**, one of 12 sites in the country selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to participate in its Fighting Back Initiative. A key project element was the network of 16 grassroots mobilizers who connect residents with a range of prevention and treatment services. In addition, Project NeighborHOOD was actively involved in public policy issues such as high concentrations of inner city liquor licenses.

- **Community Builders of Kansas City**, a nonprofit community development corporation established to translate commitment into action for neighborhood revitalization. Community Builders' mission is to improve the general well-being of communities by developing health and family services, increasing educational and employment opportunities, and building quality, affordable housing.

After the five programs were selected, NCL research staff then began a literature search and review of these projects and conducted on-site interviews of key organizational staff and board from each of the five programs. A profile of each program was developed from this information. These preliminary case studies were circulated to program staff and then revised by NCL based on the feedback we received.

While this stage of research was being conducted, YouthNet began to undergo an internal transition. Due to organizational issues that accompanied this transition, NCL decided that a detailed organizational profile of YouthNet could not be developed at this time. Instead, researchers decided to incorporate the lessons learned from our preliminary investigation of YouthNet into the body of the text, rather than present YouthNet as a stand-alone case study.

A year passed from the time the original drafts were circulated to the time of the next stage of the research process. The preliminary profiles were again circulated to each organization's key staff for the purposes of receiving updated information and corrections. The hiatus between the two rounds of feedback from the organizations profiled allowed NCL to develop not just a snapshot of the organizations, but a longitudinal look at each program. That is, this prolonged look at each organization provides fuller depth of study for the lessons learned from this research.

Prior to this second round of research, Project NeighborHOOD also underwent an organizational transformation, merging with a similarly focused agency. This development again led NCL researchers to decide against presenting this organization as a stand-alone case study. As with YouthNet, lessons learned from our investigation of Project NeighborHOOD have been incorporated into the body text.

Finally, the penultimate version of the monograph was delivered to David Renz, Director of the Midwest Center for NonProfit Leadership, an independent Kansas City consultant, familiar with the culture of civic renewal in the area, but without a vested interest in any of the particular organizations profiled. He was able to provide NCL with impartial comments and suggestions for the final version of this monograph.

Research Framework

As a basis for both the interview questions and then extrapolating lessons from our research, NCL developed an analytic framework prior to beginning our case studies. This framework was drawn from NCL's concepts regarding effective community problem solving, primarily the notion of civic infrastructure developed in NCL's *Civic Index: Measuring Your Community's Civic Health*² and NCL's organizational tenet that successful community problem solving must be grounded in cross-sectoral collaboration.

NCL's belief in the necessity of collaboration stems from the simple reality that governments can no longer be held solely responsible for the health and quality of life of their communities. The issues facing America's communities today are highly complex; devolution at the federal and state level is forcing local governments to assume more and more responsibility for resolving societal challenges; and fewer federal and state resources are available to local governments to address their local concerns. Successful communities, consequently, will be those in which business, government, community groups and citizens work *together* to help a community reach its collective goals and meet its common challenges. Organizations, agencies and individuals need to work together in a sustained effort to collaboratively define problems, create options, develop strategies, and implement chosen solutions.

NCL's conception of civic infrastructure was developed in the first edition of the Civic Index over a decade ago as a means of helping communities evaluate and improve their problem solving capacities. Every community has a civic infrastructure—the complex interaction of people and groups through which decisions are made and problems are resolved; how people work together and relate to each other; how people help each other and how the community as a whole sets priorities and deals with problems.

The quality of these relationships and interactions, that is, the quality of a community's civic infrastructure, will greatly affect that community's ability to address its challenges. This holds true regardless of the particular issue at stake. Whether the specific issue is a quality school system, an air pollution problem, or lack of adequate low-income housing, the need for effective problem solving is the same. Communities must have the capacity to solve the problems they face.

The Civic Index provides a framework within which communities can undertake a self-evaluation of their own capacity to deal with critical issues. The 10 components of the Civic Index serve as a description of the types of skills and processes that must be present for a community to deal effectively with its unique concerns. These components are:

1. Citizen Participation
2. Community Leadership

3. Government Performance
4. Volunteerism and Philanthropy
5. Inter-group and Intra-group Relations
6. Civic Education
7. Community Information Sharing
8. Capacity for Cooperation and Consensus Building
9. Community Vision and Pride
10. Regional Cooperation

A community with a strong civic infrastructure will excel at most, if not all of these components.

Section Two of this monograph analyzes the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance, Community Builders of Kansas City, and Partnership for Children on the basis of how they approach collaborative problem solving and in terms of what they are doing to improve their community's civic infrastructure. The profiles of each organization do not address point-by-point the organizations' standing in regard to each civic index component; instead, we have chosen to highlight one element of each organization's civic infrastructure capacity building efforts in hopes that these discussions can provide valuable lessons to organizations working to improve their own community's problem solving capacities.

The concluding section of this document then presents a series of lessons derived from NCL's study of all five of the organizations researched for this project. First, several of the lessons learned from the Good Community Initiative's San Francisco findings are revisited. Then, some additional lessons derived from our current research are posited.

Organization Profiles

The Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance

“Nothing is more important to a neighborhood’s viability than home ownership,” says Colleen Hernandez, executive director of the **Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance** (KCNA).³

Hernandez’s sentiments are reflected by the mission of KCNA which is “to build the capacity of Kansas City’s neighborhoods to become safe, strong, stable and attractive places where people are proud to live.”⁴ Established in 1979 in response to a dramatic drop in the percentage of single-family owner-occupied homes, coupled with the declining ability of low- and moderate-income families to get credit, KCNA initiated training to help prospective home owners in the inner city qualify for mortgages. It made available high-quality, affordable, rental and ownership housing by buying and rehabilitating abandoned or deteriorated housing. And, KCNA worked with lenders to ensure that loans were available for these families.

KCNA has demonstrated great success in fulfilling its mission by aiding more than 10,000 families in qualifying for mortgages and constructing 170 homes for low-income residents, with another 74 units to begin construction in the spring of 2000. Moreover, KCNA’s success is evident not only in terms of what it has helped residents accomplish, but in terms of the progress of Kansas City as a whole. KCNA’s work has contributed to an increase in investment of private corporations, a greater volume of home improvement loans, higher property maintenance standards, and reduced crime statistics.

However, KCNA believes that to fulfill its mission, not only must it work to improve the physical infrastructure of Kansas City neighborhoods through increased homeownership, but it must work to enhance the civic infrastructure as well. This dual approach is evident in KCNA’s stated goals, which are to:

- build safe, affordable rental housing for low income families;
- offer training to help prospective home owners in the inner city qualify for mortgages and address financial planning and savings;
- purchase and rehabilitate homes in targeted neighborhoods;

- increase the percentage of homes that are owner-occupied in the core city metropolitan area;
- revitalize underdeveloped areas of the community; and
- create a “critical mass” of trained, effective, volunteer, grass-roots, neighborhood leaders (emphasis added).

That is, while improving access to housing is a primary, if not the primary, focus of its activities, KCNA’s approach understands that the ability to improve the physical infrastructure of their community is intimately linked to their community’s civic capacities. A strong civic infrastructure must be in place before a community can deal successfully with the challenges of its physical infrastructure. KCNA has, accordingly, adopted the role of catalyst for civic infrastructure improvement, working to build the capacity of neighborhood leaders and residents to improve their own communities.

As KCNA’s promotional material explains, “There are those who are born and raised, who live and die in communities where good luck has more to do with surviving than with getting ahead. Helping them achieve the good life is the focus of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance. Our goal is to provide them with safe and affordable rental housing and to enable them eventually to own their own homes. The Alliance also encourages people to act on their own behalf, to take active leadership roles in their communities. We then strive to ensure that their efforts at neighborhood leadership produce tangible results and, above all, hope.”

Again, KCNA has had a great deal of success in fulfilling this side of its goals, having enabled more than 500 residents to become effective problem solvers through their leadership training programs.

KCNA’s specific programmatic activities illustrate this dual approach to community building. Some of its programs clearly target improving Kansas City’s physical infrastructure: The HomeWorks program, begun in 1990, offers classroom training and one-to-one mortgage planning to train people to purchase and own a home; it provides tailored homeowner training to organizations upon request; and it supports and encourages conventional lenders to serve the low- to moderate-income home buying market. Another KCNA program, the Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, purchases vacant homes in the Blue Hills Neighborhood southeast of the Country Club Plaza and rehabilitates them for resale.

On the other hand, many of KCNA’s programs are specifically designed to advance the civic infrastructure of Kansas City’s low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. For example, the Civic Index posits that communities must have mechanisms for gathering and sharing information, and educating the public about the issues. As Derek Okubo, Director of the National Civic League’s Community Services program argues, “Without comprehensive and accessible information sharing, a

community's ability to work toward solutions to the challenges they face, make balanced judgements and head off contentious disputes is impaired... The link between information access and citizen participation is irrefutable. Citizens must understand the vital issues of their communities so that they can make informed decisions."⁵

Two KCNA programs recognize, and act upon, the importance of community information sharing. The KCNA Newsletter Center provides neighborhood organizations with free access to a personal computer, laser printer, desktop publishing software, paper, duplication services, and volunteer assistance, and was established "in recognition of the value of the newsletter as a tool to *inform, involve and educate* residents on issues of importance to their neighborhoods" (emphasis added).

KCNA's Neighborhood Network is a computer network designed to connect Kansas City area neighborhood organizations, leaders and members to information resources that can help them in neighborhood improvement. Participants are able to communicate with other neighborhood leaders, access some governmental information and access information of importance to neighborhoods from local, national, and international sources. Neighborhoods are also beginning to create their own web sites with KCNA's assistance. KCNA's computer network was established fully recognizing that "information about specific neighborhoods in the Kansas City area, resources and links to information... *can help you be a more effective participant in your neighborhood and our fine city*" (emphasis added).

Perhaps the cornerstone of KCNA's civic infrastructure building activities is their Leadership Division, which offers, among other activities, a nine-month intensive training curriculum to neighborhood leaders that teaches participants how to create action plans, gain resources, network and build volunteer support. The Leadership Division's objectives are:

- to improve and increase the leadership and management skills of neighborhood leaders;
- to improve the planning capabilities of neighborhood leaders in dealing with neighborhood issues;
- to assist the participating associations in a one-year implementation process;
- to increase the trust level among neighborhood leaders encouraging cooperative activities and decreasing territorialism; and
- to encourage and coordinate mentoring of neighborhood leaders and organizations by Leadership Program graduates.

In short, the Leadership Division's ultimate objective—"to build the capacity of neighborhood leaders to improve their communities"—is grounded in the recognition that the status of a community's physical infrastructure and civic infrastructure are interdependent.

The confluence of KCNA's two foci is exemplified by two of their programs: The Housing Inventory Project and the Neighborhood Self-Help

Fund. The Housing Inventory Program is designed to provide a visual snapshot of the housing conditions and physical infrastructure for an area encompassing 110,000 urban core residential structures. Results of the survey will be mapped and problem areas identified to enable neighborhood residents to advocate for the resources most needed in their communities. Whether the concern is sidewalks, catch basins, roofs or siding, residents can prioritize their needs and locate appropriate resources. Active citizen participation is necessary for the program to work.

Finally, KCNA's Self-Help Fund provides small financial awards to help fund a myriad of neighborhood improvement projects including: vacant lot clean-up, lawn care for the elderly, crime watches and summer youth activities. Yet, in addition to providing small grants for "neighborhood improvement projects," the Self-Help Fund also funds projects that "build leadership capacity" and "encourage long-range thinking and planning."

Moreover, the Fund itself exemplifies another element of a strong civic infrastructure: the ability to leverage public and private monies to help meet local challenges. In recent years, increased social needs combined with limits in government resources call for a greater contribution of time, money, and services from individuals and community institutions. If communities are to meet the dual challenges of increasing needs and dwindling resources, they will need comprehensive strategies to enhance and maximize their philanthropic and volunteer capacities. The private sector, the nonprofit sector, and individual citizens must help, both in amassing resources and in deciding how they can be leveraged with public dollars to address critical issues. KCNA's financial backers include foundations, local businesses, lending institutions, corporations, as well as private citizens.

Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance: Focus on Collaboration

From its outset, the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance has been premised on the need for cross-sector collaboration. As KCNA's organizational history describes: "In 1979 the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, an organization of the chief executive officers of the 100 largest Kansas City corporations, created the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance to provide technical expertise to neighborhood groups in the city's urban core."

The document continues, "The creation of the Neighborhood Alliance was a formal recognition of both the importance of neighborhood organizations to the growth of strong, vital communities and of the need for an independent, technically versed and accountable intermediary operating between the corporate, foundation, public and neighborhood sectors."

Colleen Hernandez has been working to help realize this commitment to collaboration for over 15 years as executive director of KCNA. During

this time, she has learned that for any collaborative effort to be successful, each sector, and all those involved, must play a role. Hernandez explains, in the case of KCNA, the nonprofit sector—in this instance funders—have played a critical role in the organization’s success: from providing the resources needed to deliver services, to facilitating difficult situations and serving in leadership positions on the governing board. But one of their most important functions has been simply their ability to get service providers to talk and work together. That is, funders, in regard to KCNA, have often played a role in making the collaborative process happen. Hernandez says that the way KCNA’s funders, such as Hallmark and the United Way, have been able to accomplish this has been to insist that projects assume an outcomes orientation, and she cautions, “You can’t produce outcomes unless you have partners that assemble the pieces of the puzzle for any given community and say I will do this if you do that. We will only get to the real outcome if we all do our part.”

In KCNA’s case, Hernandez continues, the private sector has also been willing to play an instrumental role—first through helping create the organization and then through continued involvement. Moreover, the business community, through the Civic Council, has been not only actively involved in community building, but has been prepared and inclined to take on tough issues. As Hernandez states, “These guys tackle—no, fund—[anti] racism, literacy, urban blight..., formulate a strategy for the community, and then support it with candidates, with charitable dollars, and with legislative power.” That is, the private sector is willing to commit time, money, and resources to help build community in Kansas City.

The commitment of the private and public sector to community problem solving, Hernandez argues, has been especially important to the success of any Kansas City community building effort, such as KCNA, due to the fact that at times, the Kansas City public sector has not been as strong as she would like; rapid turnover in the city manager’s post and consistent turnover in elected officials due to term limitations has, at times, curtailed the ability of the public sector to provide a consistent, optimal level of vision, leadership and resources needed for consistent effective and efficient community building.

Yet even so, KCNA leadership realizes that government has to be a key part of community problem solving efforts and that the nonprofit sector and neighborhood organizations must approach government with a collaborative mindset. That is, in the past, across the country, citizen participation in community decision making often has taken an adversarial tone. Citizens have been able to wield some power, but this power has been largely negative. Citizens often found they had the power to say “no” and obstruct community actions initiated without citizen participation in the decision making processes.

By contrast, Allan Hallquist, past KCNA board chair, describes KCNA's approach: "Colleen [Hernandez] and I said, 'The city manager can't develop the neighborhood improvement programs without working with the neighborhoods.... But to work with the city in partnership is to solve the problems, not to bring all the garbage and dump it on city hall steps, pounding the table.'"⁶ Correlatively, Hallquist argues KCNA has realized that to take this "business approach" to working in partnership with government, neighborhood people need to become more active, and strong neighborhood people, committed to working in partnership with government, need to continue to participate on their board.

This kind of collaborative process, where each sector and citizens all play their role is not always easy. Decision making among like-minded individuals representing similar interests is less time consuming and far less contentious than decision making among individuals of different backgrounds and with different interests. But, as Hernandez argues, for collaboration to work, people need to be committed to the collaborative process, despite the difficult nature of the process. She argues, "It does not happen without people committing to the process and bearing with each other, like a marriage—'we are having kind of a rough patch there, but we did say for life.'" Some collaborations, she continues, are "just magic." You know instantaneously that you are all on the same wavelength, have the same values, know the same people. Other times, the situation is less ideal. But you have to realize the value added of everyone's participation.

Finally, a valuable lesson that KCNA has learned, pointed to by both Hernandez and Hallquist, is the fact that a key to successful collaboration is success. That is, collaborative efforts must be designed with an end in sight, and actually accomplish tasks for the collaborative process to become an accepted and routinely chosen community building tactic. Bringing people together for the sake of bringing people together will not often lead to long-term collaboration.

As Hernandez explains, "We try to plan it so that we can get results. We don't say that we are going to bring the sun up in the West next year. No, let's aim for something we can get done that is still significant, *and a lot of the time it works.*"

Building Civic Infrastructure: KCNA and Leadership Development

The Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance's literature proclaims that their goal is "to create a "critical mass" of trained, effective, volunteer, grassroots, neighborhood leaders. Their purpose: to manage the business of their neighborhood groups, attract much-needed resources and interact with public and private institutions that affect their lives."

And, indeed, the National Civic League argues that a strong community civic infrastructure is one where citizens are actively engaged in the process of self-governance and work in partnership with the public,

private and non-profit sectors of society. As Christopher T. Gates, president of the National Civic League, writes, “[A]s community populations become increasingly diverse, individuals from previously excluded populations need to be made part of community program implementation and planning processes. At one time, a small number of major community players—people like the mayor, the city manager, the large local employer, the wealthy family that had been in town for generations—could sit down in the back room and make a decision or cut a deal. Now politically, racially, geographically, ethnically, and economically diverse stakeholder groups need to have their voices heard and their concerns valued.”⁷

Yet, when the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance was first created in 1979 leadership training was not part of the original charter. The original charter was to support the activities of the community development corporations. Beginning in 1983, when Hernandez assumed the directorship, KCNA began to offer some neighborhood volunteer leadership training. However, since the mid-1990s, this leadership development component of KCNA “has just exploded with activity and support and demand from the constituents.”

In fact, Hernandez argues that KCNA’s work “has now changed the culture of the way that neighborhood groups think... satisfied customers just keep coming back and telling their neighbors, you have to go do this. So much so that our management training for neighborhood leaders now is kind of an expected part of when the leadership changes hands and a new president is elected. ‘Surely you are going to do that nine-month curriculum, go away for the weekend with five other groups and learn about delegation and communication and strategic planning and fund raising. Why would you not do that?’”

The other side of the coin also holds true: Not only do neighborhood people see the value in KCNA’s leadership training, but the Kansas City public sector sees the need for and value of including neighborhood leaders in public processes. Hernandez continues, “It is pretty much accepted now that if you are going to do any kind of city-wide task force or subcommittee... that you will have neighborhood perspective representatives.... So very regularly I get calls from the governor or the state housing finance or housing authority or the transportation authority, ‘We are putting together this task force can you find the profile of somebody who looks like this.’”

The National Civic League’s Civic Index posits that, given the changing context of American community politics—in this instance, the need to bring new players into decision making processes—that governmental leaders need to adapt and modify the way they lead. They must come to the realization that, while governmental leadership is part of what makes democracy work, it is not the whole of it; businesses, nonprofit organizations and citizens all need to participate in public deliberations about social issues. The role of governmental leadership is to convene

this discussion, not control it. Hernandez's above observations about Kansas City's changing leadership culture seem to indicate a positive improvement in Kansas City's civic infrastructure.

The KCNA approach to leadership development is interesting in that its target is organizational, not individual capacity building. James Prim of KCNA's Leadership Training program, explains, "Most of our programs, as far as development and leadership skills are organizationally focused.... Instead of training individuals, [KCNA] brings a whole group of emerging leaders from a neighborhood to train them."⁸

This organizational focus, perhaps, leads Prim to view leadership development as capacity building, rather than creating leaders or encouraging people to become leaders. That is, he views "developing emerging leaders" as opposed to finding leaders as the primary task of KCNA's leadership program. "Our whole leadership division," he explains, "is about building capacity." Moreover, he argues that building individual capacity and building organizational capacity are merely two sides of the same activity.

He describes the most surprising aspect of his work as seeing how eager people are to learn the skills needed to become effective neighborhood leaders. Where he had expected resistance, he's found that first thing that the people he works with ask him is, "What will you do for me?" Not, "Don't teach me, do it for me."

Prim expounds, "When I think of emerging leaders, I think of people who may have been in the community a long period of time and then some event happens, that causes them to become active. ... 'Miss Porter' who has chosen to become active, has been a follower primarily all of her life. And yet now, she is choosing to emerge and become more established as a leader, and she just needed someone to show her how you do it... just basic skills setting... she's starting with a very high desire and very low capacity. But, I can deal with that. I can help to bring the capacity up. And I think that's our job."

Aasim Baheyadeen, past KCNA board chairman, describes a correlative outcome of the capacity building approach to leadership development: This method builds upon itself. "Once you get them involved, and they take a step or two and they can taste the sweet feel of success, then out comes the leader: a person who is able to do things and pull other people in because of their success and their hard work and dedication.... It's just like teaching a kid how to read. You do that and they're on their way."⁹

Despite the success of KCNA's leadership programs, those involved all see areas that can be improved. One lesson KCNA learned from its experiences was the need to be more strategic in deciding what programs it offers. Hernandez describes how they started by offering a "whole laundry list of programs." All these programs, she argues, were worthwhile, and have had good outcomes and high 'customer satisfaction.' But the programs weren't strategically implemented nor has KCNA been able to

systematically measure these programs' impact. The "laundry list" nature of their leadership programs also made it difficult to integrate these activities into their already established programming.

A second struggle, Allan Hallquist describes, is the organizational dilemma of deciding what is the line between helping others act and acting oneself. Hallquist explains, "If you look at our mission statement and our goals, we talk about assisting, building the capacity of leadership to do its own work." But running contrary to this mission is the desire to directly help the neighborhood improve itself. He continues, "We're dealing more and more with 'are we the catalyst [and] to what extent do we get involved as a catalyst, working with leaders to identify issues and then address them?'"

This issue is one over which KCNA finds itself continually struggling. KCNA also encountered this dilemma in relation to its collaborative activities, yet in this instance, the emphasis was reversed. At the beginning of its existence KCNA, for the most part, provided services; however, as the organization grew and recognized a community need, it began to act more as a facilitator of other collaborative efforts. Hernandez describes the tension created as the organization made this shift. She often heard feedback such as, 'You got tired of doing, so now you're facilitating.'

As an organization determined to both help improve neighborhoods and encourage residents to take control of neighborhood improvement, and as an organization committed to both providing services and acting as a facilitator of service provision efforts, it is likely that the issue of internal organizational tension will stay with KCNA for some time to come.

Community Builders of Kansas City

Community Builders of Kansas City is a nonprofit community development corporation with the mission of improving the general well-being of communities by developing health and family services, increasing educational and employment opportunities, and building quality, affordable housing.

Community Builders is best understood in context of the Mount Cleveland Initiative. In 1992, the Swope Parkway Health Center approached the residents of the Mount Cleveland neighborhood with a proposal to build a residential drug treatment facility there. Mount Cleveland residents agreed to support the medical center's application to the Zoning Committee, but only if Swope Parkway dedicated itself to revitalization of the neighborhood. Out of this agreement, a unique partnership was born.

Swope Parkway was willing to commit to the project because the goals involved were in line with their organizational mission. "Swope

Parkway...embraces the whole person—physically, mentally, spiritually and economically. It was a natural extension of the health center to embrace the health of the entire neighborhood in the same manner," says Frank Ellis, president and CEO of the health center.¹⁰

To fulfill their side of the bargain, Swope Parkway created two affiliate organizations, the Applied Urban Research Institute (AURI), an urban planning group that led residents through a neighborhood plan; and Community Builders of Kansas City (CBKC), which was to oversee the development of the health center and other health center related, and commercial and residential developments.

Soon after the organization of AURI and CBKC, they, along with residents, developed the Mount Cleveland Initiative, a comprehensive and ambitious plan encompassing health, economic development, affordable housing and employment. The plan included such action steps as: completion of the Swope Parkway Health Center and KCMC Child Development Center; demolition and replacement of dilapidated homes; development of new family dwellings and new retail ventures; removal of illegal dumping; and elimination of drug houses. CBKC also helped the community locate resources to make the changes they desired.

The success of these initial efforts have helped Community Builders of Kansas City grow from its initial focus on the Mount Cleveland area. As CBKC's Senior Development Specialist Chuck Gatson explains, they have detailed goals for the near future: "We are going to build, over the next five years, probably 150-200 single family houses.... We are going to produce a 70 unit multi-family unit structure every other year for the next five or six years. We are going to build a quarter of a million-square-foot shopping center in the next 36 months. We are already buying the land for it. We are going to continue to be involved in the direction of public policy and public dollars in the neighborhoods where we live [and] we are going to create a neighborhood plan in at least one of those every year for the next four of five years."¹¹

Community Builders of Kansas City: Focus on Collaboration

Although collaborative problem solving efforts can be initiated from representatives of any sector, neighborhood, or population within a community, the success of such efforts are usually dependent upon whether they ultimately involve, and as important, are supported by, a cross-section of the community. An uncommitted or, worse, antagonistic sector, community sub-population or area can doom efforts to create solutions to local challenges.

We see this pattern of success in the instance of Community Builders of Kansas City. The impetus for collaboration came from the residents of the Mount Cleveland area. They proposed a mutually beneficial exchange with Swope Parkway when health center appealed to the neighborhood for support of its drug rehabilitation center, setting the stage for a joint community building effort.

At the same time, Swope Parkway’s institutional predisposition towards both collaboration and its deep-seeded sense of responsibility to facilitate community development efforts enabled them to enter into this kind of partnership with neighborhood residents and institutions. Swope Parkway organizational materials argue that the foundation for collaborative efforts “begins with the premise of a community institution as a catalyst for redevelopment. Their research reveal[s] that this institution has sometimes been a church, as with the New Community Corporation in Newark; sometimes a bank, as in Chicago’s South Shore Bank; and in SPHC’s case, a community health center.”¹²

But what began as a collaboration between citizens and the health center eventually grew to, if not include, at least have the support of the public sector as well. As a National Community Building Network profile of the Mount Cleveland Initiative states, “[T]he community’s vision is materializing in large part due to the partnership with Swope Parkway, but also because the City of Kansas City, Missouri, adopted the neighborhood-configured Mount Cleveland plan as the official city plan for the development of that community.” The profile continues, that while city officials have “offered guidance and information” regarding bureaucratic and legal questions, and have also provided funding both for the planning process and for its implementation, the City accepted the neighborhood’s recommendation, rather than impose its own vision upon the plan.¹³

Part of what made the CBKC collaborative relationship work was the willingness of all the parties involved to seek common ground and work hard to develop shared, mutually beneficial solutions. As Christopher T. Gates, National Civic League president explains,¹⁴ oftentimes problem solving arenas—be they federal, state, or local—devolve to the point where solving community issues ends up as a zero-sum battle with different interests choosing sides and drawing hard lines. Energy is spent on winning the fight rather than developing a solution that all interests are willing to support and help implement. Unfortunately, this approach often leads to stalemate rather than progress.

The alternative is collaborative, consensus-based decision making, often described as a “win-win” model of decision making. Under this approach, the way to move forward is not by beating your opponent, but by finding common ground. When numerous interests are involved, the mindset of the competing interest holders cannot be to win at the expense of other interests. Rather, shared interests and values should be identified and acted upon.

We can see this “win-win” approach being adopted by Swope Parkway and the Mount Cleveland residents, leading to the creation of Community Builders of Kansas City. While many other Kansas City neighborhoods had already rejected the health center’s proposed drug treatment center, the Mount Cleveland residents saw the possibility of a win-win solution: if Swope Parkway would help the residents of Mount Cleveland clean up

their neighborhood, they would support the drug treatment center. Where other communities had followed a “NIMBY” (Not in My Back Yard) mode of operation—a mode of operation often premised on the zero-sum assumption that something that *you* want couldn’t possibly benefit *me*—Mount Cleveland residents realized that community problem solving could have multiple winners. This community operated from a different assumption than other neighborhoods.

Certainly, the fact that there was a confluence of values between the neighborhood association and the health center helped “grease the wheels” and enable each to work together. Swope Parkway’s vision “that the health of a community has physical, spiritual, and economic dimensions” and the residents’ goal “that anyone would want to live in their community” mesh well. And again, Swope’s willingness to work with the community also facilitated collaboration: As Easter Richardson of the Mount Cleveland Neighborhood Association states, “The fact that the Health Center sought our approval and goodwill made all the difference....”¹⁵ But, other neighborhoods also shared the value of promoting healthy neighborhoods with Swope Parkway. But the shared values stayed beneath the surface in these instances, while competing interests moved to the fore.

The commitment to finding win-win solutions—which has become an institutional tenet of CBKC—was manifest in various ways during the formative stages of the collaborative project. For example, as CBKC and the residents of Mount Cleveland began to develop a strategy for neighborhood revitalization, they realized that they had to incorporate regional needs into their plans. Issues had emerged that were more regional than local in nature. Twenty-five years of neglect of the Mount Cleveland area had had a negative effect on the adjacent, but demographically distinct, neighborhood, Sheraton Estates. Both communities realized that the problems in Mount Cleveland clearly crossed jurisdictional boundaries and so, they also realized, the solutions must also cross these boundaries—and they began to look for avenues of cooperation. Sheraton Estates residents became full participants in developing the Mount Cleveland plan.

Certainly, the residents of Mount Cleveland and Sheraton Estates found that creating effective regional problem solving structures and routines were challenging. Each community needed to alter its preconceived notions about the other and its own standard way of doing business. Participants describe how tempers sometimes flared as people of different races, classes, genders, and socioeconomic status attempted to “overcome barriers and [join] forces around a shared vision.”

But as Jennifer Hill of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation—a partner in and funder of the Mount Cleveland Initiative—writes (discussing the collaborative process in toto, and not just in regard to regional cooperation), “[T]he shared vision of a “place where anybody would want to live” kept people working together. It was vital for

different people, at different times, to remind the main circle of partners of our original purpose.”¹⁶

This is not to deny that some conflict will always be present among the communities that make up a region. In fact, Hill continues, “we had compatible, not identical visions...” Nor is this to say that, at some point in any regional problem solving effort, conflicting issues and viewpoints may need to be addressed. However, at any given time, a vast number of issues exist within a region that need attention and which will not lead to a dysfunctional regional problem solving environment. When possible, regions should pull potentially disruptive issues off the table.

Fortunately, the local leaders and citizens in Mount Cleveland and Sheraton Estates each concluded that the vitality of their own community was directly related to their ability to cooperate regionally. By recognizing that their local challenges transcended neighborhood limits and recognizing the need to work with each other, in the long run, Mount Cleveland and Sheraton Estates each ended up advancing their own community’s best interests.

Spotlight on Vision and Strategic Planning

The National Civic League’s Civic Index argues communities that most successfully deal with the challenges they face have developed a clear sense of their desired future—that is, a community vision. Having a vision can motivate community residents; it gives them a goal. At the same time, a long-term community vision helps guide the community’s short-term strategic decisions; each immediate policy should fit in the plan to reach the overall goal.

We can see this in the instance of the Mount Cleveland neighborhood/Swope Parkway Health Center collaborative effort that gave birth to Community Builders of Kansas City. Both had simple long-term visions: Swope’s vision was “that the health of a community has physical, spiritual, and economic dimensions;” the residents’ vision was “that anyone would want to live in their community.”

With these long term goals in mind, short term tactics were clearly definable: Swope looked for ways to help make the neighborhood “self-sustaining” and to enable it to become the “building block for a healthier society.”¹⁷ Mount Cleveland’s short-term objectives included cleaning up the neighborhood, which had become a dumping site for the entire city. They wanted to get rid of drug houses and dilapidated housing. Community Builders of Kansas City became the mechanism through which these short-term objectives were, first clarified, and then acted upon.

The Civic Index continues that one way a community has of achieving its long-term goals is to conduct a community visioning project and strategic planning process. Such a process brings together all sectors of a community to identify problems, evaluate changing conditions, and

build collective approaches to improve the quality of life in the community.

CBKC's sister organization, AURI was established to lead the Mount Cleveland residents through such a planning process—which eventually produced the Mount Cleveland Initiative. Community Builders then became the focal point of implementing this plan.

The success of any planning process is often determined by how fully citizens themselves participate in the process. The days of citizens deferring to outside experts to make decisions that affect their lives are long gone. Given the explosion of information technology in recent years, citizens now feel they have more than enough information to be directly involved in the resolution of issues and expect to be so. In addition, as the trust level in traditional institutions has decreased, citizens have begun to demand more involvement in the decisions and projects that affect their lives. Moreover, they often have the power to obstruct community actions initiated without their participation in the decision making process. The ability of several neighborhoods to block the Swope Parkway proposed drug treatment center is ample evidence of this capacity.

By contrast, while involving citizens in planning processes may add to the time spent during the early stages of decision making, citizen participation in planning decision often 'smoothes' the implementation side of the equation. Citizens want their ideas and opinions to be heard and to be seriously considered. The "ownership" of decisions by the community—and the willingness to assist in their implementation—corresponds directly to the level of participation in the development of these decisions. In participatory processes, project outcomes and policies are, in effect, "pre-sold" to the various interest groups and the general citizenry. Community residents are not inclined to block implementation of a decision that reflects their own interests and efforts.

Recognizing this phenomenon, Community Builders has premised their planning process on citizen participation. Moreover, citizens are engaged at the initial stages of policy-making processes. Community Builders goes to neighborhoods and to community-based organizations, finds out what people think, finds out their needs and concerns and then develops a plan, in conjunction with the residents, based on that proactive input.

This approach is outlined in Community Builders' 'universal principles.' (As Community Builders examined the problems of other communities, they thought it was important to try to define some universal principles to guide their planning and development activities.) One of their three fundamental principles is: "Advocating with the Community." They write, "This basic tenet includes both working with grassroots neighborhood groups to determine issues and priorities, and undertaking urban policy analysis of broader issues."¹⁸

This approach has allowed Community Builders to avoid many of the problems experienced by other community development organizations. As the National Community Building Network notes, “The seemingly innocuous terms of “redevelopment, renewal, and revitalization” often take on a different meaning when put in the context of urban improvement, where they often conjure images of displacement, vacant lots and gentrification. The community building approach of the Mount Cleveland Initiative in Kansas City, Missouri avoids these pitfalls by placing residents at the center of efforts to conceive, develop and implement plans for strengthening their neighborhood.”¹⁹

Community Builders has taken the participatory planning process first developed through work in the Mount Cleveland neighborhood, refined it, and continue to make it the basis of their expanded efforts throughout Kansas City. CBKC’s Chuck Gatson talks about the importance of involving the community in the development stage of community planning, and what happens when the community isn’t involved in the process. He argues that the easiest way to do development is for the developer to go in and say, ‘I am here. I am doing this without you.’ Although this is often is the way that decisions are made in communities, more times than not those projects end up unsuccessful because the community has no ownership of the project or development, or because these decisions reflect organizational, rather than neighborhood concerns.

As such, Gatson explains, Community Builders does not go anywhere they are not invited (by the residents, local officials, a local nonprofit or church, etc.). Once they get to a neighborhood, they make a pact that they will only do what the community wants done and nothing else—as determined through a community planning process. From the community plan, priorities for physical changes and development are created and costs and funding sources are identified.

Adopting this participatory approach to planning processes has helped Community Builders come closer to realizing their vision in an additional way: Swope’s motivation for creating Community Builders was in part the desire to help build the capacity of neighborhoods (and the residents of neighborhoods) to become the building blocks for a healthier society. Sharing in problem solving and planning for the future as a community is an empowering experience; it both raises the community’s collective self-esteem and pride in their community. In addition, when citizens are brought into the community vision-creation process, they become invested; the community vision that emerges is theirs and they become stakeholders in their community’s future.

As F. Frank Ellis, Swope Parkway’s CEO, concludes, “What is needed is to bring these people and resources together—working in concert towards self-empowerment and, ultimately, self-sufficiency. Then we’ll begin to see neighbors realize their potential physically, emotionally, spiritually and economically. They will then be in a position to give back

to their communities and that's how self-sustaining environments are created; and that is the shared goal of Swope Parkway... and Community Builders."²⁰

Partnership for Children

Partnership for Children was formed in 1991 by the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and the Heart of America United Way. The leaders of the two organizations were interested in motivating the Kansas City community to proactively address the problems facing children and prevent them from happening in the first place. Partnership for Children was envisioned as a 10-year initiative charged with improving conditions for children and youth in the Kansas City area by mobilizing new voices to work on their behalf.

Its mission is "to secure from every citizen of our community the highest regard for the care and treatment of our children and their families; to define, elicit, and measure desirable behaviors consistent with that attitude—and displayed by precise actions which are validated by measurable behavior showing that Kansas City's commitment to its community starts with a commitment to its children."²¹

In its 10-year-plus existence, Partnership for Children has established a number of projects intended to put the care of children and youth in the forefront of metropolitan Kansas City's collective mind. Every year, the organization issues an annual *Report Card on the Status of Children in Metro Kansas City*. Partnership for Children has led a drive to increase childhood immunization rates in the Kansas City area, and has urged state lawmakers in Missouri and Kansas to improve health care coverage and child care standards in both states.

But for the past four years, Partnership for Children's primary mission has been to promote the #1 Question campaign. Launched in April of 1997, the campaign challenges every citizen and institution in greater Kansas City to premise all decision making on the #1 Question—Is it good for the children? The goal of the campaign is that, by getting everyone in the Kansas City community to ask the #1 Question, there will be an increased awareness of children's issues, and the overall quality of life for young people will improve.

Partnership for Children: Focus on Collaboration

Dr. James Caccamo, executive director of Partnership for Children, is faced with a constant dilemma: He states, "You cannot be successful without collaboration. You absolutely cannot."²² Yet at the same time, he has serious misgivings about the collaborative process. He finds that often collaboration becomes an end in and of itself, and not a means to an end and, just as often organizational representatives are unwilling to put aside vested interest long enough to find shared solutions to local

challenges. The more attempts at collaboration he sees, Caccamo says, the more he is convinced of what a laborious undertaking it is.

The inherent difficulties with collaboration have led Caccamo to adapt the serenity prayer: “God grant me the serenity to collaborate when I must, the courage to provide leadership when collaboration is not enough, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Despite his misgivings about the collaborative process, Caccamo stresses that it is imperative that agencies, and the community at large, come together to realize any lasting achievement. He says Partnership for Children has formed alliances with a number of Kansas City area business and civic organizations, including Hallmark Cards, H&R Block, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, and the city and county governments in the metro area. And Caccamo reiterates that, without the effort of groups like the Boys and Girls Club, the YWCA, and YouthFriends, the accomplishments of Partnership for Children would be few.

Yet Caccamo stresses that, while Partnership for Children works collaboratively with other organizations to achieve its ends, it is not structured as a collaborative organization. Caccamo contrasts Partnership for Children with YouthNet. He observes, “I don’t know if we are a collaboration like YouthNet is a collaboration. YouthNet really is an organization of youth serving agencies. They are a collaborative in that sense. We are not an organization of agency providers—they are. They have all of the providers on their board and they do everything by consensus around what all of the agencies want to do. We collaborate in order to get our job done.”

Caccamo believes that the biggest obstacle to collaboration is organizational vested interest. All the groups coming into any collaborative process have vested interests, and it can be difficult to get beyond turf issues. He also notes that “to move those vested interests verbally is one thing. Behaviorally is quite a different thing.”

Caccamo does not make this comment to be critical, but rather as an observation of the environment in which collaborative efforts will find themselves. It is only the extremely rare organizational representative who will not see agency self-preservation as a primary goal. Moreover, each group has its own organizational imperatives, which in turn determine issue stances and action priorities. Partnership for Children certainly is no exception: their organizational imperative—their vested interest—is the well being of children.

Yet, as discussed previously, for collaboration to succeed, organizations must alter the way they view agency interaction and organizational vested interest. When operating within a world of limited resources, many times, even good-minded organizations with theoretically similar goals, approach organization interaction with the mindset that they are playing a zero-sum game. Either my organization wins, or yours does. Organizations need to accept that more often than not, no single agency

has the resources or mandate to effectively address a particular community issue alone.

Caccamo describes his approach to circumventing the problem of organizational vested interest. He doesn't try to get an organization to give up their vested interest, but to realize that they have vested interests in common. He describes a situation where Partnership for Children's primary focus—highlighting what is good for children—for years seemed to come in conflict with the vested interest of a second, community-based organization, whose primary focus was the well-being of their narrowly defined geographic community. Eventually, the organizations found shared ground: both organizations had a vested interest in the quality of schools and from that understanding, the two organizations were able to develop a working relationship.

The second primary concern Caccamo has with collaboration is that he has found that collaboration often becomes the desired end of groups working together. It is not the end, he argues. Community change is the end. Collaboration is just a means to that end. Caccamo jokes, "I think there ought to be collaboration police. If collaboration becomes the end, you get arrested. Collaboration is only a process to some other end. You have got to keep your eye on the prize."

He is adamant on this point. When asked if he could do one thing to improve the status of children in the Kansas City community, Caccamo replies, "*I would burn everybody's Franklin Planner.*"

He asks, "Did you ever go to a meeting where everybody opens their planner, everybody makes notes in their planners, everybody closes their planner and leaves. [Only] a small number of people open it up again and look at the little dots they made and go ahead and do these things.... What I'm trying to point out is that sometimes the process of collaboration [becomes] filling your note page in your planner. That is not it. It is going back home, and looking at those things and acting on what you think you need to act on."

"My wife and I have a little trick. When we get home every night, I ask her how many kids she saved today. She asks me the same question. We don't ask each other, 'How many meetings did you go to? Did you collaborate today?' Because what we want to do is save children. How many kids did you save today? I went to six meetings. I know, but did you save any kids today. No, but I went to six meetings. Some day we might save kids. I know, but how many did you save today? If you can't save a kid every day—at least one—what the hell did you do?"

Community Information Sharing

The National Civic League's investigations into the elements of a strong civic infrastructure have revealed that without comprehensive and accessible information sharing, a community's ability to work toward solutions to the challenges they face, make balanced judgements and avoid contentious disputes is impaired. Citizens must understand the

vital issues of their communities so that they can make informed decisions.

Many of Partnership for Children's activities seem to be premised on this type of belief: Each year since, 1992 the Partnership has issued a *Report Card* and an accompanying briefing book. These reports "document the status of children in Greater Kansas City and encourage actions to improve children and youth's lives; the Partnership's #1 Question campaign is a metropolitan-wide marketing and grassroots effort to encourage volunteerism on behalf of Greater Kansas City's youngest citizens. The goal of the Campaign is that every person in the community will ask themselves a simple question in all aspects of their lives: "Is it good for the children?" The message of the #1 Question has been spread by Partnership for Children through grassroots engagement, paid advertising and basic marketing techniques.

Through these information sharing activities and the struggles they have encountered during their activities, Partnership for Children has learned valuable lessons regarding how to build community infrastructure. Perhaps one of the harshest lessons has been how difficult it is to translate community education into individual action. You can raise awareness of an issue, but it is much more difficult to get someone to change their behaviors; yet both sides of this equation are essential elements for community change. As Caccamo succinctly puts it, "Okay, now you believe it; now what are you going to do?"

For example, a recent survey showed that 71 percent of Kansas City area residents are aware of the #1 Question. But Caccamo describes, the awareness phase of the campaign is the easier part. It will be more challenging to see if people will now act on the #1 Question. "It's hard to get people to understand that they have to change their behavior," Caccamo says. "We're in a very different phase of the campaign now, the calling to action, getting people to actually do something."

Correlatively, the struggles organizations have fostering action often leads them to question whether they themselves should be doing the work for the community. For instance, the Partnership's Report Card explicitly states, "The Partnership for Children exists to improve the conditions for children and youth *by mobilizing powerful new voices in the community to work on their behalf*" (emphasis added).²³

Caccamo explains that the program's founders did not look upon the organization as a service provider for children, but as an advocacy group. "The work may be initiated by the Partnership for Children," he says, "but is carried out by other organizations in the community. We may be the driving force behind an idea, but it's the faith communities, the schools, the neighborhood groups, the Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA and others which are doing the hard work of implementing those ideas."

Yet, after eight years of working primarily to promote attitudinal (and behavioral) change through information sharing, Partnership for

Children has begun to question whether organizationally it needs to take a more direct role in promoting change.

For example, on April 6, 1998, voters in Missouri had to decide whether to approve Proposition B, which would have allowed most citizens to carry concealed weapons. Partnership for Children's board struggled over whether the organization should take a stand against the controversial issue, and actively fight to defeat it. At an animated meeting in February, the board voted to authorize Partnership for Children to speak out against the passage of the concealed weapons bill because it would not be good for children. The organization hired a political consultant and forged ties with the group spearheading the statewide campaign against the measure. Partnership for Children organized news conferences, wrote editorials, set up phone banks and made sure that the various groups opposed to the ballot issue stayed on the message that the bill was poorly written and would be bad for the children. Despite being outspent four-to-one by the National Rifle Association, Proposition B went down to defeat.

The success Partnership for Children had in the conceal/carry campaign has led to a re-evaluation of where the organization wants to head in the future. While Partnership for Children is not interested in becoming a political or lobbying group, the idea of affecting real public policy change around children's issues was appealing to many of those involved in the organization. To that end, the organization has applied for 501(c)3 status.

A second lesson gleaned from their experiences over the past decade is that, just as it is their responsibility—and the responsibility of local media, government, schools, and nonprofit organizations—to make information readily available to citizens, Partnership for Children also has the responsibility to search out a true cross-section of opinions and viewpoints. The responsibility for community information sharing is double edged. Not only must information be shared, it must be sought.

For example, Caccamo feels when trying to make progress on children's issues, it is crucial to get feedback from those who will be affected by any possible plan of action. He says that is something those in the world of civic engagement often fail to do. "We don't know what our neighbors want or think. We do the thinking for them."²⁴ He suggests that even though hundreds of groups have been toiling for years to figure out how to better the lives of children, you just have to listen to kids to find out what they really need. "We have conducted focus groups in which children told us the things they need most. They are unconditional love, respect, admiration, support, things to do and positive role models."

The need to solicit information also implies the need to broaden the scope of whom you are willing to listen to. As Caccamo describes, "I like to find people with [leadership] characteristics in the community. You find them in barbershops, grocery stores—I'll bet they are all over the

place if you look. Oftentimes they are not the presidents of the Homes Association. They are not the chair of the parish council. They are not the elder of the church. [But] these people know everybody and everybody listens to them.”

Derek Okubo of the National Civic League argues in his series of community building advice columns that citizen participation should be “defined by the involvement of all people who have a stake in the future of the community, not simply those who traditionally have had power in the community. Certainly the “usual suspects,” that is community leaders and organizations who are always involved in community efforts, have valuable contributions to make to a community. But successful communities have a good balance of the “old” and the “new” and are thus able to take advantage of what traditionally underrepresented populations have to offer a community.”²⁵

Partnership for Children’s model of community information sharing—that is, both gathering and sharing information, and educating the public about the issues and, at the same time, seeking information from the public—seems to exemplify the two-way communication needed to build community.

Lessons Learned

The Kansas City Lessons Learned Project began as a study of exemplar civic organizations in the metropolitan Kansas City, Missouri area, and focused on capturing learnings that can be shared with other community builders in Kansas City and around the country. The study took as its starting point to confirm and build upon the findings presented in NCL's 1996 study, the *San Francisco Bay Area Community Builders Scan*.

As stated in section one of this monograph, some common themes emerged from the study of the civic culture of the Bay Area, including the findings that nonprofit organizations often must take the lead in initiating collaborative efforts and that the best collaborations require a unifying vision, measurable outcomes and a wide range of participants. Several of the same themes were again manifest during the course of the Kansas City study and, at times, the findings of the Kansas City study mirrored those of the previous study. Still, the findings of this later study were not completely consistent with the Bay Area Scan, and as such, can add to our understanding of collaborative community building.²⁶

1. Successful collaborative efforts can be initiated by any sector of the community, but to be successful these efforts must eventually involve all sectors.

The San Francisco Scan concluded that nonprofits must take the lead in organizing collaborative efforts. The study argued that “businesses are inherently competitive, and government agencies are inherently insular” and that both of these traits are at odds with effective collaboration. This pattern did not repeat itself in Kansas City. Yes, Partnership for Children was formed at the impetus of two Kansas City nonprofits—the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation and the Heart of America United Way—and YouthNet was primarily driven by youth-serving agencies. But on the other hand, the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City—a network of corporate leadership—played a major role in the formation of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance. However, as in the San Francisco findings, the success of all of the collaborative efforts studied was greatly dependent on the eventual involvement and support from all three sectors.

2. The best collaborations are those that grow out of outcomes orientations, but also are those that pay attention to the processes through which those outcomes are to be achieved.

The Bay Area study found that the best collaborations are those that are guided by defined objectives—objectives that include measurable outcomes. The findings from the Kansas City study are essentially in agreement with this position, with most of those interviewed for the Kansas City study becoming almost messianic in their support of this point.

Collaboration, respondents repeatedly warned, while necessary for successful community building efforts, often becomes an end in and of itself, and not a means to an end. For example, Janice Kreamer, president of the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, voices this common sentiment. “I think collaboration is a vital tactic and strategy in community building. Unfortunately it has become the end, not the tactic or the means.”²⁷

Yet, bringing people together for the sake of bringing people together will not often lead to long-term collaboration. As Keith Brown, executive director of Project NeighborHOOD reiterates, “I think another reason why people don’t collaborate is because we’ve got to get beyond talking... we’ve just got to ask ourselves, by collaborating, is it good for the maintenance and health and wellness of the community?”²⁸ Or, as Chuck Gatson advises, collaborations need to look at outcomes. Prospective collaborations need to ask, “What are you trying to accomplish? Where are you going with this stuff? What are you looking to make happen? What are the outcomes? That is the question that I ask everyone.”

Attention to outcomes not only will bring people to the table, but it will help keep people there. Focusing on outcomes, and then achieving those outcomes will sustain and strengthen collaborative efforts. As both Colleen Hernandez and Allan Hallquist of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance point out: a key to successful collaboration is success. That is, collaborative efforts must be designed with an end in sight, and actually accomplish tasks for the collaborative process to become an accepted and routinely chosen community building tactic. Keith Brown concurs. “I think believing...believing in the possibility that we can make a difference [breaks down the barriers to successful collaboration]. Then we have got to build in some successes. That’s the fuel, these small successes, that’s the fuel that keeps them going and builds hope. These small victories.”

Yet within this cacophony calling for outcomes, one voice cautioned for patience, and the need to balance an outcomes orientation with attention to process. James Prim, of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance states, “I tend to be more patient with the process and learning.” He argues that if people take the time and allow efforts to develop,

to evolve, they'll achieve outcomes. "Allow [a collaboration] to get the right people and the right seats... allow the struggle to take place [and] it will result in so much more in the long term. I think that's the secret."

Prim continues, "And it's hard to do that when funders, when government, even constituents say 'hold on, this is taking too long.' We need a decision now. I don't think our troubled communities, the communities that we work in primarily, got that way overnight... If you just take the time you end up better off in the long run."

So perhaps the lesson to learn from both the call for outcomes and Prim's cautions is that the collaborations most likely to successfully address community issues, and then sustain those efforts—that is, collaborations that are most likely to produce lasting change—are those that focus upon the *processes* by which issues are addressed as well as the *outcomes* the community wishes to achieve.

3. A shared vision helps overcome sector differences, organizational turf issues, bridges demographic diversity and unites distinct jurisdictions.

Kansas City informants repeatedly cited the themes of zero-sum politics as a barrier to successful collaboration, and the search for shared visions and values and win-win solutions as keys to successful collaboration—echoing a finding of the San Francisco Scan. Complementary missions enabled the Swope Parkway Health Center and Mount Cleveland residents to work together and form Community Builders of Kansas City. Subsequently, a recognition of shared interests enabled the Mount Cleveland residents to cross jurisdictional lines and form a cooperative relationship with their neighbors in Sheraton Estates.

James Caccamo of Partnership for Children and Keith Brown of Project NeighborHOOD each emphasized turf issues as standing in the way of organizational cooperation. Brown points to shrinking resources, in terms of both finances and in that so many organizations have sprung up that he now sees competition for constituencies. Each of these factors creates the potential for turf battles, and act as barriers to collaboration. But, as Caccamo's story of finding common vested interests between a community group and a children's organization illustrates—turf is not an insurmountable barrier.

Nor are demographic differences insurmountable barriers to collaboration. Common ground and shared interest can be found. Brown's approach is to help all parties realize they're stakeholders in the same community: "You've got the youngsters in the neighborhood causing a ruckus, and the elderly, more established folks are upset by that. So go out and talk to both, not blame, let's hear both. Then, let's bring both together.... So now it becomes not a top-down, nor a bottom-up, but a horizontal relationship. We're around the table as equals. *Equals in what's good for the community*" (emphasis added).

These examples once again help illustrate a feature of collaborative community building: successful collaboration tends to build upon itself. Just as the San Francisco Scan found that “the more diverse the population, the more difficult the collaboration, but, at the same time, all sectors can learn from each other through collaboration” so did the Kansas City study. And as diverse populations, sectors, and jurisdictions experience the value added of working collaboratively, and as they come to realize the values they all share, a community will begin to experience what Colleen Hernandez calls “a kind of a cultural shift.” Recognition of the need for collaboration will become more and more prevalent—and indeed, Hernandez sees that kind of shift taking place in Kansas City.

4. There is a need for organizations to facilitate collaborative efforts.

The San Francisco finding that there is a need for training in collaborative skills certainly still holds true. The Scan found that “[m]ost practitioners of collaboration approach it in a hit-or-miss fashion. They recognize they are acting intuitively and would welcome more information about proven methods.”²⁹

Several of the organizations profiled for this Kansas City study, not only agreed with this finding, but they have jumped into the fray; they saw that many problem solving efforts approached collaboration in a haphazard way and began to offer their services as facilitators. For example, Colleen Hernandez of KCNA noticed that the collaborations that her organization had been party to often succeeded or failed based on the skill level of the facilitators of the effort—or if there even was any facilitation of the effort. As such, KCNA began to offer their services as facilitators.

Keith Brown commented that Project NeighborHOOD’s “niche is that we’re able to mobilize, and we’re able to convene.” The organization served as a “coach” to neighborhoods that want to tackle the problems caused by substance abuse. Project NeighborHOOD offered technical support and access to various agencies to solve problems and assisted in developing partnerships to help the community heal itself. In short, they worked as facilitators of the process.

5. The ability of a community to address its challenges is in large part dependent upon the quality of its civic infrastructure.

The National Civic League posits that a community’s ability to address its challenges is, in large part, dependent upon the quality of its civic infrastructure—with civic infrastructure being defined simply as the sum of skills, processes, and relationships that allow communities to come together and solve problems. NCL continues, just as with a community’s physical infrastructure, if the civic infrastructure has

deteriorated, it must be rebuilt. In new communities it has to be built before the community will be able to deal successfully with its challenges.

Indeed, the research framework for this study, the National Civic League's Civic Index, is premised on the above belief. Yet were this not so, and had NCL grounded this study of Kansas City community building organizations in an alternative research framework, the findings of our research would have led us to return to the belief that the quality of a community's physical infrastructure is dependent on its underlying problem solving capacities.

For example, the Kansas City Neighborhood Association, as described in section two, believes that to fulfill its mission, it must not only work to improve the *physical* infrastructure of Kansas City neighborhoods through increased homeownership, but it must work to enhance the *civic* infrastructure through programs that focus on leadership development, gathering and sharing information, and educating the public about the issues. Just like KCNA, Community Builders of Kansas City sees a link between civic and physical infrastructure. As the Swope Parkway Health Center's annual report declaims, "This social *and* physical rebuilding of a neighborhood is at the core of SPHC's approach, and represents an amalgamation of numerous community-building efforts" (emphasis added).³⁰ Alice Wadsworth, a Kansas City-based consultant, describes CBKC's underlying belief in greater detail: "I think that the Community Builders are a different kind of community development corporation because they have a holistic approach to community building. They have a comprehensive approach—while they are doing physical development, at the same time they are working on the social infrastructure. They are reconnecting people with the services they need. They are working on building a shopping center and grocery store. They are closing drug houses; picking up trash; really taking the neighborhood back."³¹

Moreover, it is interesting to note that many of these organizations did not begin their operations with a desire to help build Kansas City's civic infrastructure. They saw problems, such as the low- and moderate-income homeownership, and set up programmatic responses to these issues. But, after years of operations, these organizations grew to understand that, in order for their issue related efforts to succeed, they needed to take a step back and introduce capacity building programs.

The development of Project NeighborHOOD—which also grew to hold the belief in the need for programmatic capacity building activities—illustrates this pattern. Project NeighborHOOD's original focus was drug use reduction. But as the project progressed its members realized that it was difficult to actually make an impact on this issue without building the civic infrastructure within the community. Keith Brown recalls that the team asked themselves, "What lessons have we learned so far?" Lesson one was, "people have to take ownership for,

I don't want to say their problem, but for their well-being. So we wanted to move from just having a substance abuse focus, to what we call a neighborhood-centered initiative. And that is where decisions on what's going to happen are driven by the indigenous population that's within these neighborhoods."

And again, leadership training, which has now grown to be a major component of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance's programmatic activities, was not part of its original charter. But, as James Prim argues, KCNA has grown to realize the value of building civic infrastructure. He notes that with capacity building comes greater capacity building. People, and neighborhoods, notice that some communities are succeeding, and others appear to be mired in their problems. Those in the less successful neighborhoods asked, "Why isn't that happening in our neighborhood?" and seek to change their ways. Correlatively, Prim has seen a "mentoring attitude" begin to develop in Kansas City, as neighborhoods that have built their capacities are willing to share the lessons they've learned.

6. Collaboration can take many forms and serve multiple purposes, but regardless of the form or purpose can add value to community building efforts.

The Alliance for National Renewal's scan of community building in the San Francisco area came to the conclusion that there are predictable stages of collaboration, including: convening, strategy, vision building, agreeing on the reality, action planning, strategic doing, and monitoring progress. While this finding may still hold true, the individuals interviewed for ANR's Kansas City study did not want to be pigeonholed so rigidly. Many of those we talked to argued that the form and methods of collaboration that their organization assumed was significantly different than that of some of the other organizations profiled for this study.

James Caccamo for example declared that, while Partnership for Children works collaboratively with other organizations to achieve its ends, it is not structured as a collaborative organization. That is, his organization identifies tasks and goals, and then seeks to find partners to help reach those goals. He contrasts this method of collaboration with that of YouthNet. This organization, Caccamo states, brings together a myriad of youth serving agencies that, as a group, decide by consensus what the organization will do. In yet another model, Community Builders of Kansas City's internal vision of collaboration is, in part, as a resource allocator. As E. Frank Ellis, president and CEO of the Swope Parkway Health Center describes, partnering with social service agencies, foundations, and other entities in the public and private sectors is "about tapping into the resources that already exist and orchestrating all these efforts in the rebuilding of self-directed communities."³²

Nor is any one organization's vision of collaboration static. While Michael McAfee, past president of YouthNet, might agree with Caccamo's description of YouthNet as a convening of youth-serving organizations, under his tenure McAfee hoped that YouthNet would move away from the traditional conception of collaboration, where everyone must come to the table. "We see collaboration at a different level," McAfee said. "Collaboration around function. What is the function that you are trying to serve? Not just have folks come to the table because they all serve the same clientele."³³

But regardless of the form that collaborative efforts take, even James Caccamo, one of the most outspoken interviewees on the trials and tribulations of the collaborative process, was forced to admit, "You cannot be successful without collaboration. You absolutely cannot." The organizations profiled in this study chose to work collaboratively because that is the method that seemed to offer these groups the most benefits. As Jim Nunley, a board member of both YouthNet and Project NeighborHOOD states, "I think there was a sense of practicality, and the sense was that we couldn't go up against a substance abuse problem without a total community effort. And part of the value added to collaborating would be that, not only would it teach the community, but that eventually the community would help you achieve the goal. So, we built collaboration, team building and staged vision into our process very early."³⁴

All practicality aside, perhaps Aasim Baheyadeen best identifies the value added of collaboration—of bringing together diverse people, from diverse places, representing diverse sectors to work together to improve a community—when he says: "I think whenever you can bring a cross section of people together in an organization that exists to enhance people who may not be doing as well as yourself... I think that humanity speaks a lot for the quality of city in which you live in."

He concludes, "And having a city where people are thoughtful of others, I think that will breed success. And success begets more success. I think the path we're taking is proper, and all we need to do is stay on it and keep good things happening."

Endnotes

- ¹ *San Francisco Bay Area Community Builders Scan*, 1996, National Civic League Press, Denver, Colorado.
- ² *The Civic Index: Measuring Your Community's Civic Health*, 1999. National Civic League Press, Denver, Colorado. Research for the Kansas City: Lessons Learned project was conducted using the first edition of the Civic Index as a research framework. The first edition describes 10 components of civic infrastructure. The Second Edition describes two additional civic infrastructure components.
- ³ Interview with Colleen Hernandez, KCNA executive director, February 19, 1998. All subsequent Hernandez quotes taken from same interview session.
- ⁴ All non-attributed quotes taken from internally published Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance promotional and informational materials, including World Wide Web pages.
- ⁵ Okubo, Derek. *Responsible and Open Community Information Sharing Creates Positive Atmosphere for Community Problem Solving*, 1999, <http://www.ncl.org/NCL/cat9.htm>.
- ⁶ Allan Hallquist, past KCNS board chair, interview April 8, 1998. All subsequent Hallquist quotes taken from same interview session.
- ⁷ Gates, Christopher T. *The Shift from Government to Governance: Adapting to a changing local problem solving context*. *Futures* 31 (1999) 519-525.
- ⁸ James Prim, KCNA's Leadership Training Program, interview April 8, 1998. All subsequent Prim quotes taken from same interview session. Prim adds that KCNA is currently working on a program more geared toward emerging, grassroots neighborhood leaders. This program would offer basic skills, such as how to run a meeting and set up by laws. Still, the content of this training falls under the skills needed for organizational leadership.
- ⁹ Aasim Baheyadeen, past KCNA board chairman, interview April 6, 1998. All subsequent Bahayadeen quotes taken from same interview session.
- ¹⁰ *Mount Cleveland Initiative Builds Both Homes and Hopes*, NCBN, Winter 1997, p. 3.
- ¹¹ R. Charles Gatson, CBKC's senior development specialist, interview, February 19, 1998. All subsequent Gatson quotes taken from same interview session.
- ¹² Integrating Health and Social Services with Housing and Retail Stores: Swope Parkway Health Center's Model for Rebuilding a Community. Internal document. p. 6.
- ¹³ NCBN.
- ¹⁴ Gates.
- ¹⁵ Integrating Health and Social Services with Housing and Retail Stores: Swope Parkway Health Center's Model for Rebuilding a Community, p. 1.
- ¹⁶ Hill, Jennifer. *Mount Cleveland: Rebirth of a Community; Lessons Learned in Community Building*, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.
- ¹⁷ Swope Parkway Health Center. Annual Report 1995-1996. p. 1.
- ¹⁸ Integrating Health and Social Services with Housing and Retail Stores, p. 5.
- ¹⁹ NCBN.
- ²⁰ Swope Parkway Health Center. Annual Report 1995-1996.
- ²¹ About the Partnership for Children. www.pfc.org.
- ²² James Caccamo, Partnership for Children, executive director, interview February 19, 1998. All subsequent Caccamo quotes taken from same interview session.
- ²³ Internally published brochure.
- ²⁴ This perspective was shared by many of the organizational representatives interviewed for this paper. Colleen Hernandez, executive director of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance, for example, relates that the way to engage the community is to find out "the point of view [of] the person on the street"—to ask them what they think of the state of the district. KCNA's literature proclaims, "[W]e listen to our constituents, we connect them to one another and to other resources. In short, we respond to their needs." Hernandez argues that if we can develop a knowledge base that includes the neighborhood perspective, better community strategies and goals, and ultimately, a better community will result. Keith Brown of Project NeighborHOOD describes the same type of process, using a method he calls "laboratory

work.” Project NeighborHOOD wanted to explore how they could be the most helpful and make the biggest impact in the community; they made these decisions by asking the community what they needed and what programs they thought would be most advantageous.

²⁵ Okubo, Derek. *Apathetic Citizens? Not when they can make a difference*, 1999, www.ncl.org/NCL/cat3.htm.

²⁶ Several learnings mentioned in the earlier study—that (1) Maintaining a group identity is the biggest struggle would-be collaborators face, (2) High-tech tools show great promise, but low-tech still get the job done, (3) Programs wax and wane; collaborative relationships last, and (4) Would-be collaborators are skeptical of the effectiveness of funding-driven collaboration—were not discussed in enough detail during the Kansas City research to come to any conclusions on these matters.

²⁷ Janice Kreamer, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation president, interview April 8, 1998.

²⁸ Keith Brown, Project NeighborHOOD, executive director, interview February 8, 1998. All subsequent Brown quotes taken from same interview session.

²⁹ *San Francisco Bay Area Community Builders Scan*, p. 3.

³⁰ Swope Parkway Health Center. Annual Report 1995-1996. p. 1.

³¹ Alice Wadsworth, Kansas City-based consultant, phone interview, May 28, 1997.

³² Swope Parkway Health Center. Annual Report 1995-1996.

³³ Michael McAfee, past YouthNet president, interview February 18, 1998.

³⁴ Jim Nunley, board member YouthNet and Project NeighborHOOD, interview April 6, 1998.

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816-922-7667

Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance

3822 Summit
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-753-8600
www.kcneighbor.net.org

Partnership for Children

1055 Broadway, Suite 170
Kansas City, MO 64105
816-842-7643
www.pfc.org/

Project NeighborHOOD

1900 Vine
Kansas City, MO 64108
816-842-8515

YouthNet of Greater Kansas City

301 East Armour, Suite 460
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-931-9900
www.kcyouthnet.org

National Civic League

Strengthening Citizen Democracy by Transforming Democratic Institutions

America's Challenge

As our country enters a new and more complex century, we Americans are convinced that citizens need to act in partnership with each other and our government in order to have more control over our common future. Yet, many citizens are deeply frustrated because they often find their democratic institutions unresponsive to this need. They see political systems undermined by entrenched power, money and special interests.

NCL's Vision

The **National Civic League**, the United States' oldest organization advocating for the issues of community democracy, envisions a country where citizens are actively engaged in the process of self-governance and work in partnership with the public, private and non-profit sectors of society, and where citizens are creating active civic culture reflective of the diversity of community voices.

NCL's Strategies

- NCL assists communities engaged in civic renewal by strengthening their capacity for collaborative problem solving. Through the **Community Services** program, NCL is providing technical assistance, training and diagnostic tools for citizens to assess the civic health of their community. Technical assistance includes strategic planning, visioning, and facilitation. Tools include the *The Civic Index: Measuring a Community's Civic Health*, the *Community Collaborative Wellness Tool*, and *Building Civic Capital*.
 - NCL aligns communities involved in civic renewal in order for them to learn from and
- support each other. The 107th **National Conference on Governance** to be held in November 2001 will explore how new technology can be used to build community. NCL's **Alliance for National Renewal** supports more than 200 national and local partners as they promote cross-sector collaboration. NCL's website, publications and products provide resources and research spotlighting cutting-edge innovation and trends. NCL works with federal and state agencies, as well as foundations, to convene multi-site community building initiatives.
 - NCL fosters innovation in community building and political reform by identifying best practices and conducting applied research. NCL's **New Politics Program** is documenting reform happening at the local level and assisting grassroots leaders with information and convenings. NCL is exploring the means to overcome voter anger, impediments to voter participation and disincentives to voting. NCL advocates re-examining the entire political system and considering all serious reform.
 - NCL assists state and local government to increase their effectiveness by developing responsive partnerships with citizens. Through training, technical assistance, historically important publications, such as the *Model City Charter*, the *Model County Charter*, the *National Civic Review*, and newer publications—*The Civic Index* and the *Civic Capital Assessment Tool*—NCL is helping government work better with citizens and other sectors.
 - NCL recognizes and celebrates communities that cooperatively tackle challenges, bring

together diverse voices, and achieve results. The **All-America City Award**, now in its 53rd year, annually recognizes 10 communities for their cross-sector collaboration and achievements. To apply, see the application on NCL's website or call to request an application. Stories of finalists and All-America Cities are also available via the website.

Contact the National Civic League

www.ncl.org

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Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

Self-Sufficient People in Healthy Communities

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation is a private foundation that works toward the vision of self-sufficient people in healthy communities. Its mission is to research and identify unfulfilled needs of society and to develop, implement and/or fund breakthrough solutions that have a lasting impact and offer people a choice and hope for the future. The Kauffman Foundation's work is focused on two areas: Youth Development and Entrepreneurial Leadership.

The Youth Development division works with others to create a continuous and nurturing network of support for children, their families and their communities toward the goal of helping youth become responsible and productive members of society. Youth Development focuses its funding and engaged grantmaking efforts into three areas: 1) getting children started right through early childhood development and parent and family support initiatives; 2) building a nurturing web of support for children and adolescents through strategies designed to create effective schools and increase the capacity and services of youth-serving agencies; and finally, 3) giving youth choice and hope for the futures through targeted social and economic strategies to create healthy communities where they live.

The Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership promotes the growth of entrepreneurship in America. The Center's Entrepreneur Training Institute sponsors education, training and research initiatives targeted to the needs of adult entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship support systems. Through the Institute for Entrepreneurship Education, a variety of experience-based education efforts work to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit in students from kindergarten through community college. The

Public Sector and Community Entrepreneurship segment focuses on entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector, public policy issues related to entrepreneurship and the community infrastructure that supports entrepreneurs.

Our Values and Beliefs

Striving to become an uncommon philanthropy engaging in the development of America's youth and its entrepreneurial spirit.

Mission

To research and identify the unfulfilled needs of society and to develop, implement and /or fund breakthrough solutions that have a lasting impact and offer a choice and hope for the future.

Vision

Self-sufficient people in healthy communities.

The fundamental value and principle guiding the behavior of Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation associates is: Treat others as we want to be treated, with humility, dignity, respect and honesty.

We Believe...

- Our effectiveness is based on relationships characterized by mutual trust and integrity.
- Responsible risk-taking and life-long learning are essential for personal and organizational development.
- In giving back to the community.

We have both the right and the responsibility to...

- Be committed to and have pride in the Foundation's Mission and Vision.
- Contribute to the Foundation's positive image.
- Work together as a team in an inclusive environment that values and respects individual differences, promotes creativity and supports balanced decision making.
- Be heard and get our problems resolved.
- Know what is expected of us and be rewarded fairly for work performed.
- Pursue opportunities for professional and personal development.
- Use the Foundation's resources wisely.
- Seek balance between career, family and personal life.

Success for the Kauffman Foundation...

Requires the ability and spirit to accept our responsibilities and earn our rights through a commitment to excellence in all we do.

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

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