EASTOWN!

A report on how Aquinas College helped its local
community reverse neighborhood transition and deterioration

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PREFACE

Private foundations constantly seek out those rare pilot project ideas that can trigger broad new initiatives for addressing critical social issues. *Eastown!* reports on just such an enterprise. Thus, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation is proud of its association and support of the project.
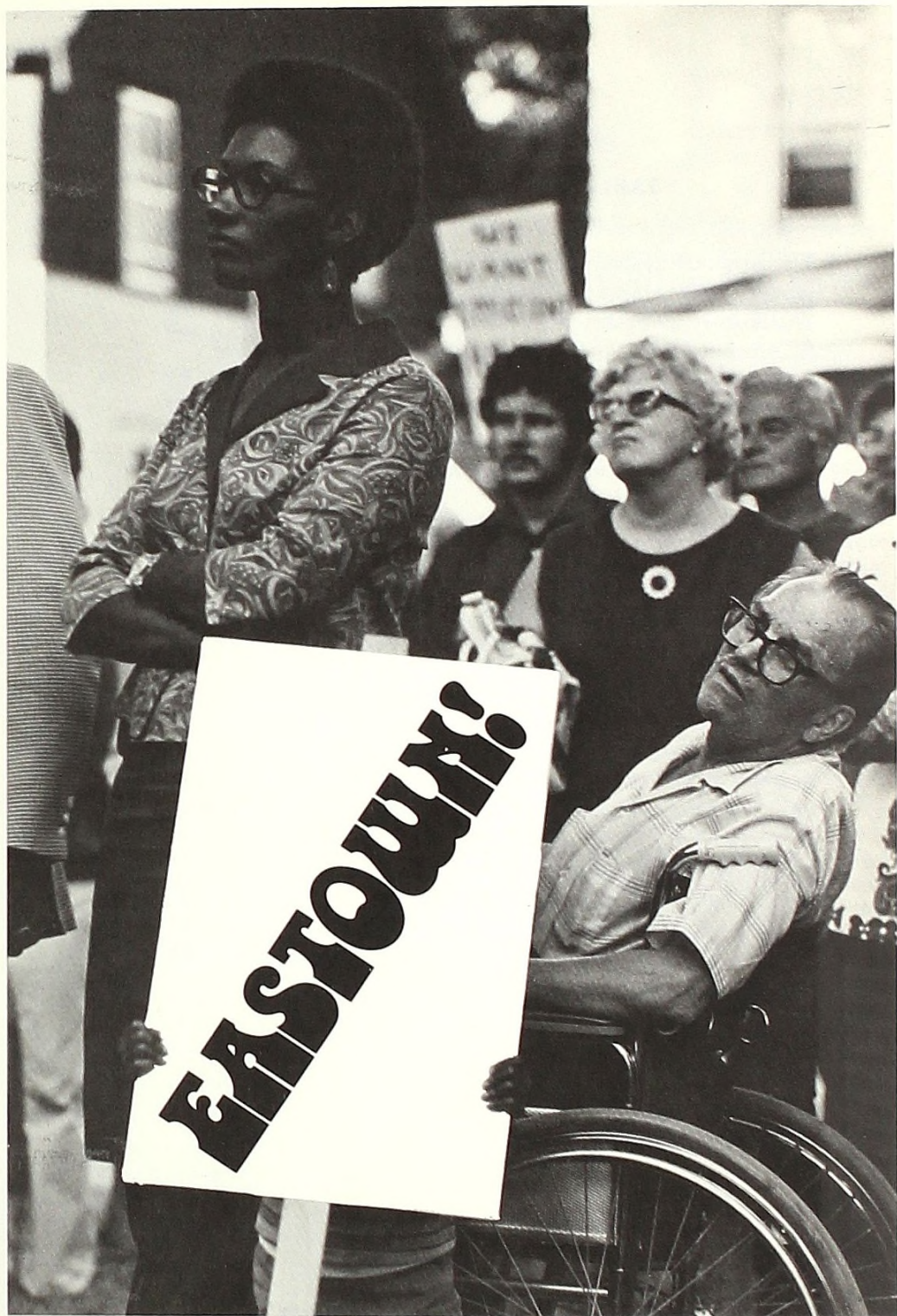
The success story presented in the following narrative is offered not only as an inspiration and a gratifying tale of problems accurately identified and effectively dealt with, but more importantly this publication provides a basis for the use of *lessons learned* that can profitably serve other communities and agencies faced with the same or similar vexing concerns.

The problem of nearby static or deteriorating neighborhoods has plagued colleges, hospitals, and churches for many years. Now we have at least one tested approach to the perennial question, "What can our institution do to help save its neighborhood?" The strategies employed by Aquinas College in working with its contiguous community are not offered in the form of a blueprint. Rather, they are meant to serve as an aid in the formulation of the special approach called for in other similar but always unique situations. Nevertheless, it is possible to benefit from learning the details of the gratifying developments now proudly referred to as the Aquinas-Eastown experience. Even more promising is the offer that accompanies this publication (see insert). Aquinas College and Eastown Community Association have magnanimously agreed to share freely their hard won expertise. With this book they offer to help individuals and groups to adapt to other settings the strategies applied in Eastown. On request they are willing to provide counsel and to supplement, as appropriate, this brief report of their pioneering response to neighborhood renewal.

Robert E. Kinsinger
Vice President
W. K. Kellogg Foundation

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Community Concern: housing appeals board.

INTRODUCTION: WHY THIS BOOK?

This book tells the story of how one institution — a small Catholic liberal arts college — became involved with its surrounding urban neighborhood in order to help that community reverse the processes of neighborhood transition and deterioration. The book is presented with the hope that in its narrating other institutions and neighborhoods may recognize their own potential for controlling the destiny of their common living areas through determination and collaboration.

The Eastown neighborhood in Grand Rapids, Michigan encompasses approximately 8,500 residents within 70 square blocks. It can be described as a microcosm of the larger city, at least in terms of such variables as age and race, according to the 1970 census. In general it is characterized by a high degree of diversity, with an unusual concentration of white-collar workers and a large student population. The neighborhood was experiencing a transition from a stable, largely white, middle-class population to a more diversified ethnic and income distribution. Businesses were moving toward suburban areas, minority and low-income populations were expanding, the number of rental properties was rising, and crimes such as armed robbery, auto theft, burglary, and vandalism were becoming much more frequent.

Aquinas College, a small Catholic college with a liberal arts tradition, is one of the major institutions in the Eastown neighborhood. In the fall of 1971, its new president, Norbert J. Hruby, having noted the unmistakable signs of neighborhood transition and the consequent flight of residents and businesses from the area, suggested that Aquinas College institute its own "good neighbor" policy. He organized a neighborhood study committee of college representatives to learn all it could about the area that is now called Eastown. These "learning sessions" went on for a year, with members of the study group meeting with local experts and statisticians from the City and County Health Departments, city planners, and planners from the Board of Education.

In August, 1972, the group presented its findings to the faculty, staff and trustees, and the college community was challenged to come up with ideas about the College's relationship with Eastown,
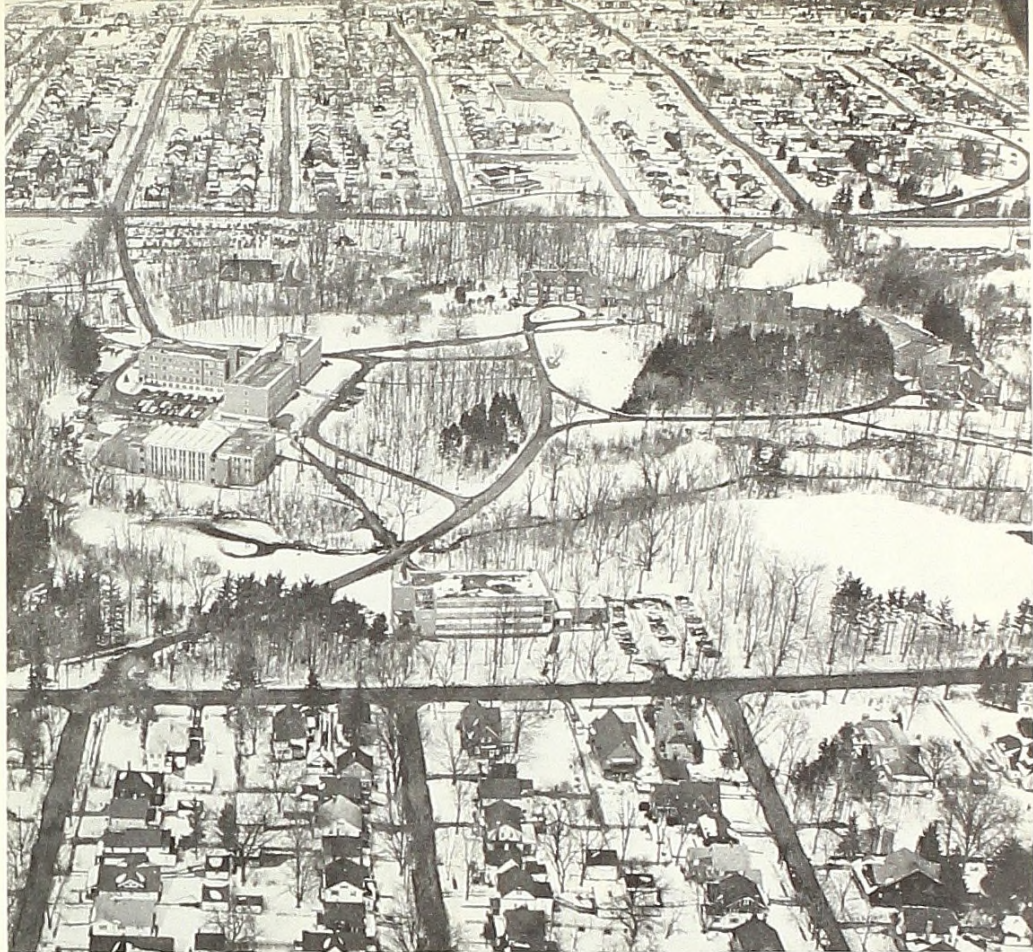
Aerial view of Aquinas College campus.

what services it could offer, and what the College itself could learn. The Geography Department, led by its department head, responded with ideas. The Urban Geography class did an in-depth survey to determine the area for Aquinas involvement.

Armed with this survey, President Hruby invited neighborhood residents to an open meeting on January 8, 1973. At that session, attended by about 100 persons from the area, the information gathered was shared. The report was repeated on January 24 to area merchants. After the meeting, fourteen persons volunteered to serve as a task force to organize a community group. Following a series of meetings the task force called a third general session to report on their progress. They called for volunteers to serve as block coordinators, elected temporary officers, and planned an April community street fair. This was the beginning of the Eastown Community Association.

Aquinas College, having applied for a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan, received $129,836 from that Foundation in January of 1974. These funds were to decrease by roughly one-third in the second year and one-third in the third year, and were to be used in the Eastown community and on the Aquinas campus to create close community-college working ties

that would enhance the development of the recently-formed neighborhood association, as well as provide programs for faculty development. Three broad goals were to be facilitated by the grant:

- **College-Community Liaison** — *Closer working ties were to be established between Aquinas College and its surrounding neighborhood of Eastown.*

- **Community Development Through Organization** — *The development of the neighborhood itself was to be emphasized through the establishment of an office in Eastown with a two-person staff to coordinate neighborhood organization. This aspect accounted for one-third of the grant funds.*

- **Institutional Development at Aquinas** — *The remainder of the grant money was allocated for various facilitating activities which originated from Aquinas. The major purpose of this part of the grant was to provide financial incentives for faculty, not only to work in the Eastown community, but also to utilize their experiences in ways which would help them develop as teachers. In other words, the grant was intended to have an impact on the instructional program of the College as well as on the community.*

This book will describe the interrelationships that developed between Aquinas College and the Eastown neighborhood before, during, and after the W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant period. It will examine and evaluate the changes which occurred in the institution and in the community as a result of that interaction.

Individuals associated with institutions which are, or would like to be, closely involved in the activities of their surrounding communities, can use this book as a case study of the attempts of one institution to interact constructively with its neighborhood. Included among such institutions might be hospitals, schools, churches, businesses, social agencies, industries, and presumably others. However, Aquinas' community involvement should not be perceived as a model to be copied. In many respects, the Aquinas-Eastown relationship is unique: the distinctive features of each of the two components, as well as the specific nature of their interaction, created too many variables for imitation. The reader will have to select from this case study those elements which may be relevant to his or her particular situation. It should be kept in mind that as much can be learned from mistakes or omissions within the interaction, as can be learned from actual accomplishments.

Persons whose major interest lies in community organizing may find in this book useful examples of how a neighborhood utilized its institutional resources (including in this case a local college) to help meet its needs and achieve its goals. In recent years much emphasis has been placed on the exploitative relationships which can exist between institutions and their nearby communities. For example, in *The Rape of Our Neighborhoods*, William Worthy describes ways in which institutions are destroying viable neighborhoods with their plans for expanded facilities, and the strategies communities are using to resist these "take-overs." In contrast, the present book illustrates ways in which a community can work to develop cooperative relationships with an institution in an effort to solve its unique problems as well as the ones it shares with local institutions, businesses, and agencies.

At the end of each year of the grant, a report was submitted to the Kellogg Foundation. In 1977, upon the termination of the grant, a general evaluation of relevant on-campus and community activities was conducted for the College and Foundation by a team of Aquinas College faculty and students. The College and Foundation then agreed to co-sponsor the writing of the present book in the hope that the "Aquinas-Eastown story" could be used as a guide by other institutions and neighborhoods in the development of constructive working relationships.

This book is a cooperative effort. Although each of the authors assumes primary responsibility for writing one of the major chapters, every section of the book, including those chapters, has been thoroughly discussed and critiqued by all three authors and the editor. The resulting interchange has been beneficial to all participants.

Below is a brief sketch of the authors, indicating the nature of each one's association with Aquinas College and with the Eastown Community:

LINDA ELAINE EASLEY is an Instructor of Anthropology at Aquinas College, at Grand Valley State Colleges, and at Grand Rapids Junior College. Using Eastown as a field site for her doctoral dissertation in cultural anthropology, she examined the development of the Eastown Community Association and the ways in which Eastown residents have participated in its activities. She has served on the Eastown Community Council for three years and has been active on several of the Eastown Community Association's Committees. In this book, she is primarily responsible for Chapter IV: What To Expect.

THOMAS WHITFIELD EDISON is an Assistant Professor of Geography at Aquinas College. He assisted in the initial preparation of the proposal to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for funding of the Aquinas-Eastown project, and has been actively involved throughout the development of the Eastown Community Association. He currently sits on the Eastown Community Council. In this book he looks at the changes which have taken place in the Eastown Community during recent years. He is responsible for Chapter II: The Community In The Aquinas-Eastown Relationship.

MICHAEL RONAN WILLIAMS, an Assistant Professor "in-the-College," served on the Aquinas-Eastown Faculty Development Team and with the Aquinas Faculty Development Committee. Although currently the Director of Faculty Development, he worked in the first two years of the Kellogg grant on helping the Eastown Community Association develop its structural organization, chairing the Finance Committee and acting as a consultant to the first Executive Director of ECA. His emphasis in the current volume is on institutional analysis in Chapter III: The Institution In The Aquinas-Eastown Relationship.

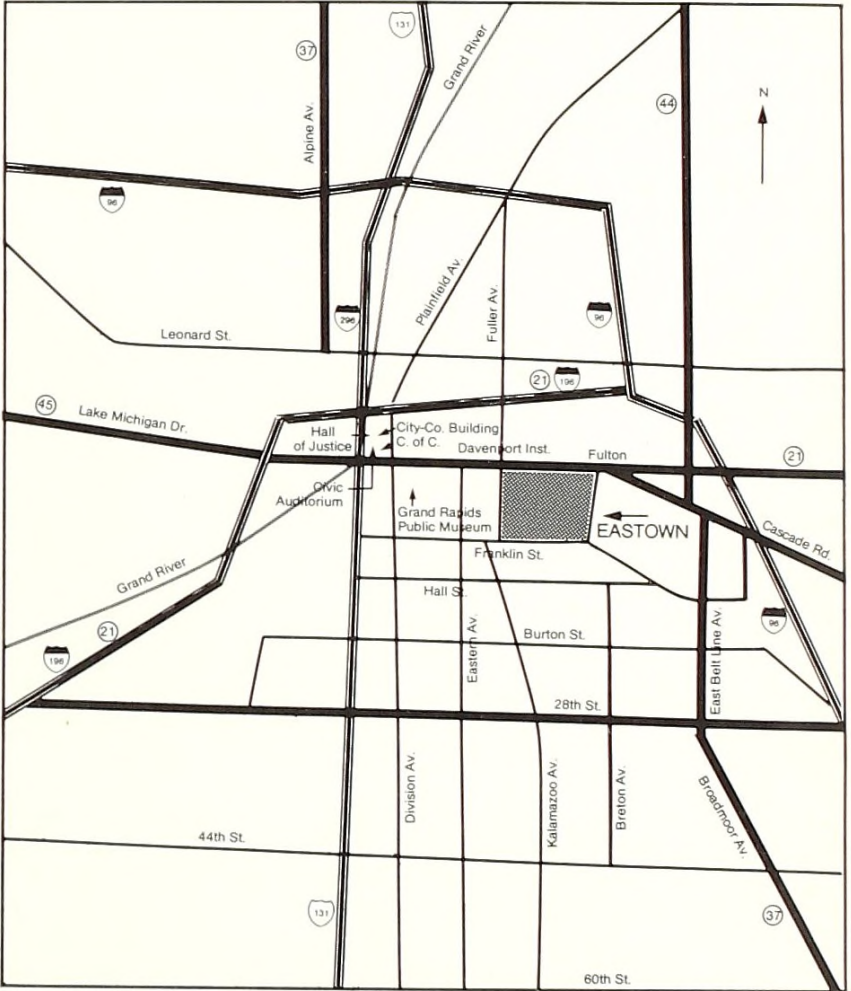Sister Mary James Rau, *Editor*

PART I:
THE AQUINAS-EASTOWN EXPERIENCE

Figure 1. Greater Grand Rapids.

CHAPTER I:
WHAT HAPPENED IN EASTOWN?

The History Of Eastown To 1973

The Eastown community, which occupies a 70-square block area of the eastern portion of Grand Rapids, is bounded on three sides by other identifiable Grand Rapids neighborhoods, and extends into the city of East Grand Rapids (see Figure 1). However, a neighborhood territory has not only boundaries, but a center as well. Eastown's center is the commercial development at the intersection of Lake Drive and Wealthy Street. The area in and around these crossroads has been the focus for the total development of the Eastown community.

Prior To 1950: Early white settlement of the area much later known as Eastown began in 1832, and by 1876 a considerable population of farm families was supported by small but prosperous farms. Although population statistics are not available for the period, the street pattern from the *Official Map of Grand Rapids, 1896,* was quite similar to the existing pattern. It has been estimated that about one-third of contemporary Eastown housing was constructed during the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1912, the Eastown area had developed into a predominantly Dutch, middle-to-upper income, residential area.

Eastown experienced its most significant physical development during the rapid economic expansion of the early 1920s. During this period about one-half of the current housing stock was constructed. The St. Thomas and St. Stephen neighborhoods are the most characteristic of this period. By the end of World War II, the Eastown area was a well-established, relatively affluent, white, middle-class community, with a prosperous commercial and medical establishment located at its business center.

1950 To 1973: As in most American urban areas during the 1950s, sections of Grand Rapids were experiencing neighborhood transition and "ghettoization." The Eastown area maintained its sound and vital structure throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. But by the mid-1960s signs of neighborhood change were apparent, especially in the more southerly regions of the community. By the early 1970s, transition had become widespread throughout the area, as is evident in this statement by Norbert Hruby, President of Aquinas College:

When I arrived in Grand Rapids in 1969, I found the neighborhood adjacent to the campus charming and delightful. Three years later there suddenly appeared a rash of For Sale signs on residential streets, and an alarming number of vacant stores in the Wealthy-Lake Drive commercial area.

The For Sale signs were only a surface indication of the deep political-

economic process of neighborhood deterioration spurred by fear, greed, and racism. The symptoms of transition are familiar, and the prognosis is usually death for the afflicted neighborhood through economic starvation and political neglect.

The processes of transition and ghettoization do not occur as random geographic events, but, in fact, diffuse outward from a core area. In Grand Rapids, this diffusion has historically moved from southwest to northeast. The migration across the Eastown area from the southwest brought the transitional process into contact with a formidable barrier: the combined influence of the institutional no-man's land along Fulton Street on the north, and the political-economic defenses of affluent East Grand Rapids on the east (see Figure 2) seriously slowed the diffusion of blight to the northeast. It is probable that the characteristics of the Eastown site delayed, at least temporarily, the northeastward march of this neighborhood decay, and with the time made available, important steps could be taken to assist vital components of the community system to adapt to change. Some of these components call for more detailed description.

Housing: Housing is the fundamental component of any residential community. The community where adequate housing for its residents is not available is critically deficient. The transition from higher to lower-income residents signals the onset of housing deterioration. Lower-income families that attempt to take advantage of the availability of low-cost housing by purchasing homes in a transition area must struggle against financial discrimination, government callousness, tax inequities, and environmental degradation. Speculators and slumlords exploit the recently devalued but still structurally sound housing by overcrowding and undermaintaining it. High population densities, grossly inadequate maintenance, and negative tax incentives soon unite to wear out neighborhood housing and promote its abandonment.

By the 1960s it was evident that the process of deterioration was active in large parts of the Eastown community. Located in the southwest corner of Eastown, the WEFF neighborhood, bounded by Wealthy, Ethel, Franklin, and Fuller Streets, had been struggling with the problems of depreciation and blight for several years. But by 1970 population density in the WEFF neighborhood ranged from 25,000 to 31,000 people per square mile, about three times greater than the density for the total Eastown area. Pressure from these high densities was reflected in increased frequency of housing abandonment and fire, as well as in obvious structural deterioration.

In the spring of 1973, geography students from Aquinas College conducted a housing quality survey throughout the Eastown area, using Kent County Department of Health methods and criteria. A map derived from that data indicated large sections of deteriorated housing, not only in the WEFF neighborhood, but also extending north and east as well (see Figure 3). Well maintained housing was restricted to East Grand Rapids and to some isolated blocks north of Lake Drive. Blocks of intermediate maintenance generally separated
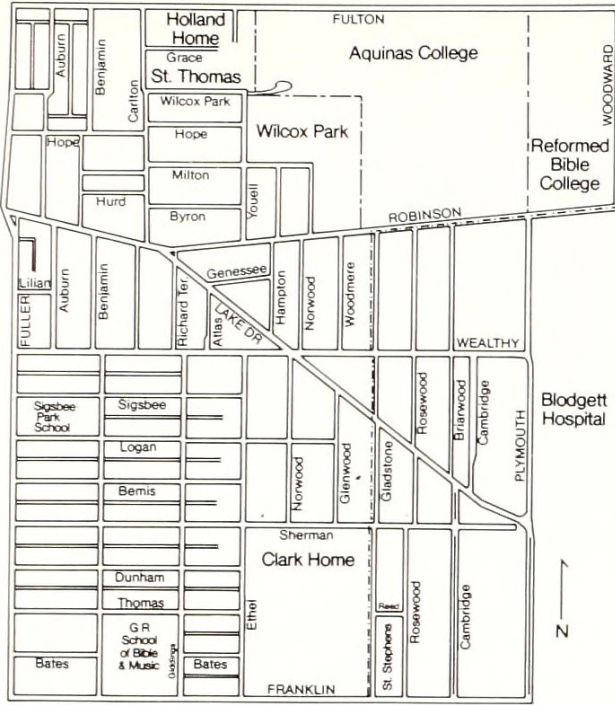
Figure 2. Eastown.

☐ WELL MAINTAINED
☐ INTERMEDIATE
▨ DETERIORATED
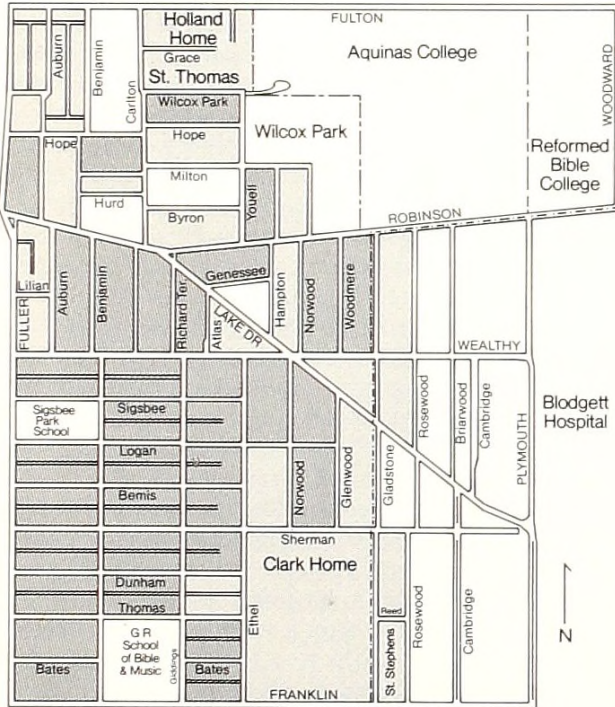
Figure 3. Housing quality in Eastown, 1973.

A view down Wealthy Street toward the Eastown Commercial Center.

well maintained sections from deteriorated blocks. Although there is good reason to suspect that in 1973 the intermediate blocks were experiencing the influences of transition, there is no data to support this suspicion.

Commercial Center: A second major component of the Eastown community is its commercial center. By Urban Land Institute classifications, the Wealthy-Lake Drive shopping area can be defined as a "community commercial center." This center has provided not only convenience goods and services (groceries, gas stations, hardware, bakeries, banks) for the immediate neighborhood, but also specialized goods and services (clothing, shoes, entertainment, auto dealership) to a broader market. Historically, this area has served an important commercial function for the east end of Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, the Wealthy-Lake Drive shopping area served the convenience and specialty needs of a prosperous, white, middle-class community. Exclusive clothing and shoe shops, several grocery supermarkets, variety and drug stores, and an automobile dealership were characteristic of the commercial district at that time. The area also housed a concentration of medical and dental offices and related activities. During this period the proprietors were organized into a successful alliance called the Wealthy-Lake Drive Businessmen's Association that often sponsored joint marketing and maintenance projects. In general, the Wealthy-Lake Drive shopping area was a viable and prosperous community commercial center.

During the 1960s two powerful and interrelated forces influenced the commercial area. First, the social and economic characteristics of the area traditionally served by the Wealthy-Lake Drive

center were undergoing fundamental transition which was felt by the business district in declining customer purchasing power and a resultant change in market preference. Second, new and attractive market sites were being established away from the inner Grand Rapids area in response to the extensive migration of the white middle class to the suburban areas. By the late 1960s the commercial and residential migration had lured a significant proportion of the Eastown commercial community and their clientele to the "malls." To a large extent the medical establishment from the Wealthy-Lake Drive area joined this migration. By 1972, most of the original specialty shop functions of the commercial center had left the area, leaving behind a doubtful convenience sector and a conspicuous 30% vacancy rate.

The Eastown commercial area reached its low point in 1972. During this period about 50% of the commercial and office space was unoccupied. Remaining in the area were those specialized functions with capital investments too large to move (printing establishments and a theatre) and those businesses with little or no direct relationship to the immediate area (insurance agencies, regional offices, small manufacturing). Also remaining in the area were the convenience functions that could adapt their operation to the changing characteristics of the local market (supermarket, hardware). A survey conducted by Aquinas students in February of 1977 indicated that only 33% of the businesses and institutions located in the Eastown area had been there for at least ten years.

Streets And Parks: A third vital community component has a dual aspect: as machine-space increases, people-space decreases. A review of the maps of Grand Rapids through the years reveals gradual erosion of the urban landscape by constant expansion of streets and

highways. As an area becomes more urbanized, increasingly more space is devoted to the flow, storage, or maintenance of the automobile.

Eastown is bounded by major thoroughfares on all sides, while two major arteries bisect the community. The visual effect of the red brick surface on Wealthy Street creates a notable image for the Eastown commercial center, while Lake Drive serves as a principal north-south divider within Eastown and is the most heavily traveled street through the area. In 1973 about 35% of Eastown land area was devoted to automobile usage.

At the same time Eastown's only recreational park facility was Wilcox Park, located to the west of Aquinas College. It was plagued by vandalism and was thought to be a haven for most of the neighborhood delinquents. Maintenance of the park was poor, and recreation programs offered were inadequate. Residents living near the park were frightened and frustrated.

WEFF had no parks within it. Parents of children attending Sigsbee School, the public elementary school which served the WEFF neighborhood, had been petitioning the School Board not only for a new school, but for a park adjacent to it. Yet by 1973 neither the school nor the park had been built.

Education: The fourth vital community component, education, is a central concern of resident families which are in turn the main stabilizing force in a neighborhood. In 1876 children from several miles around attended Lake Public School which was located not far from the present Lake Drive-Wealthy intersection. At the turn of the century Sigsbee Public School opened in an impressive building on Benjamin Avenue, just south of Wealthy Street. During the 1920s two parochial schools were built in the Eastown area to service the needs of the rapidly growing Catholic population in the St. Stephen and St. Thomas parishes. Children from the East Grand Rapids sector of Eastown historically have attended schools in that city.
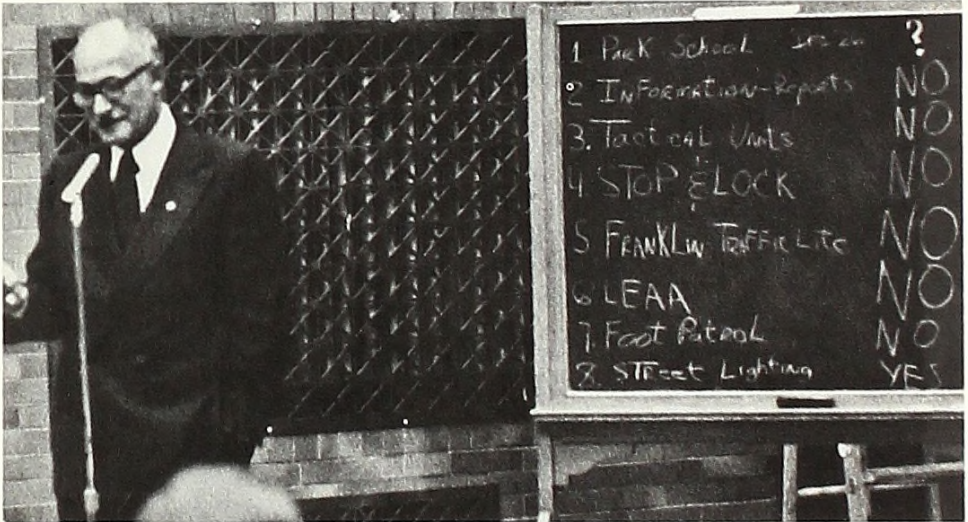
Citizens meet with mayor of Grand Rapids over school and park issues.

By 1973, however, area schools were facing serious problems. The changing racial and economic characteristics of the WEFF neighborhood were reflected in the composition of students attending the now aging Sigsbee, with black enrollment reaching 90%. Although much of this racial imbalance can be explained as a function of the changing neighborhood, an unfortunate determination of the Sigsbee School district boundaries and the practice of potential white students "jumping" to other districts or attending Catholic or Christian schools exaggerated the situation. But the two local Catholic schools were also under stress. Their enrollments were declining at a time of increasing costs. In addition, many young white families were leaving the area and the parishes, while most of the new residents either were not inclined or could not afford to send their children to parochial schools.

Several institutions of higher education have operated in Eastown during the past fifty years. Until 1960, Calvin College occupied what is now the campus of the Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music. It was an important factor in the growth of the WEFF area during the 1940s and 1950s. The Lowe Estate on Robinson Road became the location of the University of Grand Rapids during the 1940s. Although this venture was short-lived, the estate was shortly to become the home of Aquinas College. And during the 1960s The Reformed Bible Institute moved into another estate adjoining the Aquinas campus on Robinson Road.

Thus, in 1973, the four major system components of the Eastown community – housing, the commercial center, streets and parks, and education – were edging toward breakdown. The Eastown Community Association was formed with help from Aquinas College to reverse this decline. The history of the ECA's growth is a story in itself.

ECA Is Born: The History Of The Eastown Community Association 1973-1978

The Eastown Community Association did not sprout full-blown overnight; neither was it built at a steady rate. Rather, periods of harmonious activity and times of draining internal conflict intertwined with each other to produce a kind of evolution, which over the past half-decade has resulted in one of the strongest neighborhood organizations in the state. What follows are the major events of those years, buttressed by interviews with key activists in ECA's history. We begin in 1973.

1973-74: The Rise And Fall Of The Steering Committee: Supported by the initiatives of Aquinas College and its President, a task force was formed in early 1973 to address the problems and needs of the newly defined Eastown area. This group quickly became the Steering Committee of the just-incorporated Eastown Community Association. Steering Committee members at that time were motivated by a sincere desire to make the area an attractive place to live. They sought "the preservation of neighborhood values," as they said, and the "improvement of communication" in the racially changing neighborhood.

Burned out houses in WEFF:
a source of resident concern.

Citizens seek ordinance on abandoned
housing in action at city hall.

The membership of the embryonic governing body was composed of predominantly white middle-class residents, who were for all their concern, naive about community organization. Whoever "felt an affinity with the purposes of the Association," whether from within the area or outside it, could become a member of the Association, and if they desired, of the Steering Committee itself. This loose democracy limited participation to those who could afford considerable input of time as well as the patience to develop the organization. Lack of structure and time constraints thus kept the number of initial participants small, with the result that the Steering Committee became the forum for discussion of all Association business. The Steering Committee *was* the early ECA.

By November of 1973, the ECA had made arrangements to occupy a spacious building on Wealthy Street. This move, together with sponsorship of the successful Street Fair of the preceding Spring, gave evidence of the legitimate existence of the Eastown Community Association.

It is difficult to determine whether the ECA would have continued to grow if the W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant had not arrived when it did in early 1974. The need for financial support for the Association had become increasingly apparent to Steering Committee members throughout 1973. Although several funding schemes had been hatched, only the Patron Plan ("Donate $10 each month to *your* Association!") had reasonable success. The Association had no well-defined objectives, and the Steering Committee was not stimulating broader participation from the Eastown community. To say the least, the W. K.

Kellogg Foundation grant was gratefully and enthusiastically received. *With this support, the ECA was given an important three-year period to mature and to build the necessary internal structure and community-wide legitimacy to become self-supporting.*

1974 is best remembered for exciting expansion of activity in many segments of Eastown. This diversification of effort was largely the result of issue-organizing: actions involving large numbers of residents in their concerns about traffic, street widenings, and housing problems. Two early examples stand out. The first was the proposed widening of Lake Drive through the area's commercial center. If anything was seen as destructive to the community, this proposal was. And for what? So suburbanites could drive through a little faster on their way downtown? This issue brought hundreds of Eastown residents to City Hall. The proposal was quickly scuttled. The second issue to unite neighbors in Eastown dealt with housing. Five houses in the predominantly black, lower-income area of WEFF had been destroyed by fire within a period of two months. Residents were incensed that these eyesores were not removed by the city, and further, that abandoned housing was not immediately boarded up. Abandoned houses tempted arsonists, invited rats, and provided dangerous play areas for neighborhood children. Coordinated citizen efforts resulted in the removal of these charred hulks and enactment of a boarding ordinance. This activity marks the Association's first real involvement in the problems of Eastown's black and low-income residents, an emphasis that would grow in significance in succeeding years.

One young man, a recent Aquinas graduate trained in community organizing at the Mid-America Institute in Chicago and hired with grant funds, was almost entirely responsible for promoting these actions. The Steering Committee, while continuing its "town meetings," was more led than leader during this time.

The Steering Committee was in crisis during 1974. The increased militancy of many of the Association activities caused some members to reconsider whether they should participate. Others thought the increasingly "political" nature of the organization made the Steering Committee irrelevant. In fact, most of the important decisions were being discussed and made apart from the Steering Committee in the independent context of various issue-oriented *ad hoc* committees burgeoning in the community. The most effective among these groups were addressing Wilcox Park issues, such as adequate police surveillance, park repair and maintenance, and the responsible use of Department of Parks and Recreation funds for the park.

Important for later developments, however, was the use of the Eastown Community Association banner leading these thrusts at City Hall. To outsiders, it was the *Association*, not a committee, that was pushing for change. Under the umbrella of the larger Association's name, an Aquinas political scientist successfully proposed in 1974 the establishment of a citizen review board (Community Development Citizens' Committee) to oversee the disbursement of Federal Community Development Act (CDA) funds for the City of Grand Rapids. His intervention underscores as well the growing influence

at the time of the Aquinas-Eastown Faculty Development Team in the affairs of the Association.

In sum, as the neighborhood organizer became more efficient in organizing the Eastown community, and as the Association became identified as a significant voice in Grand Rapids politics, the Steering Committee became increasingly less representative of its community and more unable to define and fulfill its function.

During a three-day visit to Eastown and Aquinas College in November, 1974, Milton Kotler, the Director of the Alliance for Neighborhood Government based in Washington, D. C., saw and articulated the growing inadequacies of the Steering Committee structure. It could not meet the needs of the Association nor could it represent the views of the people of Eastown. He suggested a structure that would maximize accessibility for *all* residents and would define and direct the future growth of the Association.

1974-75: A Push Toward The Institutionalization Of ECA: Response to Kotler's suggestions was positive. The chairman of the ECA, in his 1974 year-end report, said:

Within the past few months, I have seen the organization become more inward looking, and I feel that now we are moving toward a better organization, involving more people in the community.

At a meeting on December 16, 1974, the Steering Committee was dissolved and a new Community Council was formed. The minutes of that meeting state that the function of the Community Council "was to set the policies, procedures, and priorities for the Eastown Community Association." Through the Community Council, the ECA was taking a further step toward community-wide decision-making.

During the first few months of 1975, participation in the Community Council grew in numbers. New people, attracted both by the organizing efforts of the staff and by the new purpose of the Community Council, signed on. These people were significantly more militant than those originally involved in the Steering Committee, and by mid-1975 many of the early participants were no longer active. A new sense of participation and activism permeated the ECA during this period.

But this Community Council approach, too, had its problems. The new council was to be comprised of representatives from various Association activities (the Food Co-op, the Radio Station, the Eastown *Access* community newsletter), the officers of the Association (two chairpersons, secretary, and treasurer), and anyone from the Eastown community interested in participating. Vestiges of the time-demands and structurelessness of the former Steering Committee notwithstanding, the new council was a step closer to being more representative of the whole Eastown community. By March, 1975, there were 17 regularly attending Community Council members.

In an effort to resolve some of the inadequacies of the previous system, each committee of the ECA was asked to prepare a statement of purpose for approval by the Community Council. This obvious attempt to centralize decision-making led to a confrontation with

the director of the Food Co-op, who subsequently resigned his director-ship. Two other committees emerged at this time, which reflected current concerns: the Planning Committee, which exists to this day as a forum for Community Council members for "letting it all hang out" and the Finance Committee, which sought to establish fiscal policy for the organization, but which died an early death as coming before its time.

The Community Council sought to assert its authority over minute decisions in every area of the Association's business, now holding even longer, more tedious meetings than did its predecessor, the Steering Committee. But few of its members, remembering the weaknesses and irrelevance of the former governing body, seriously questioned this considerable investment of time and energy. Planning at this juncture was overly ambitious, unsophisticated, and suffered from lack of follow-through. Staff members were torn between a frustrating dependence on the erratic decision-making of the Community Council and their need to generate activities in the community independently.

Stung by a critical report of its operations made by an outside evaluator in February, 1975, the Community Council held a day-long retreat on March 8 outside the city to discuss the goals and programs of the Association. Tangible outcomes of this event were scarce, but some members trace the beginnings of more sophisticated concern for planning and council-staff relations to this day.

Several months later, during June of 1975, an Aquinas faculty member proposed that he be allowed to develop the position of Executive Director of ECA, including creation of sound personnel policy, consistent staff supervision, and a credible fund raising capacity. Although his proposal was not received favorably at the time, it did portend what was to come.

On June 21 of that year another retreat was conducted to discuss the implications of the Executive Director proposal. A timetable was drawn up at this conference which stipulated that:

1. the planning committee would make a working plan for the structure of the organization
2. the staff, recently expanded by several CETA appointments, would generate community support for the plan's acceptance at a proposed "general assembly" in the Fall.

By August, the Community Council had reached final agreement on the statement of purpose for the Association. It read:

The Eastown Community Association believes community development is a deliberate act of all neighborhood people working collectively to take the responsibility for their lives in a fully human way by participating directly in the decisions which affect their lives through neighborhood power and control.

The following month, a list of seven organizational objectives was accepted by the Community Council:

1. to develop a self-sustaining community organization
2. to develop and maintain indigenous leadership
3. to be an advocate for community needs

4. to provide an information and communication service
5. to provide a public forum that can facilitate community decisions, identify priorities, and seek to resolve conflict within the community
6. to develop community self-determination and self-reliance
7. to develop working relations with other groups.

Activities during the remainder of 1975 were of three varieties. First, much energy was spent on rewriting the bylaws of the Association. There had existed a constitution, but Kotler had pointed out several areas for fundamental change. Second, Council committees, such as Personnel, Communications, and Housing, were struggling to become more effective. Third, staff centered their efforts on improvements in Wilcox Park, organizing block meetings, and dealing with FHA on mortgage and housing rehabilitation issues.

But these activities took second place to internal tensions. On the one hand, the Community Council was favoring becoming more "institutional": more concerned with policy, procedure, funding, and stabilization. On the other hand, the staff held that their ad hoc issue-organizing was more basic to the growth of the Association. In short the organizers were being told to take more administrative responsibility, and they felt unable to do so, especially the neighborhood coordinator, whose role was being shifted rapidly from chief community organizer to executive director. Between October and December of 1975, the Community Council created the staff position of Executive Director, and the Neighborhood Coordinator resigned (partly for financial reasons — the ECA was not successfully matching the Kellogg funds in this second year of the grant) with attendant community reaction to his perceived "firing." The co-chairperson of the Community Council also resigned, saying "I have been in it too long, and other new people should become involved." Another member of the Community Council was appointed the first Executive Director. The new bylaws were hotly discussed at several meetings, and were accepted by the Community Council in January 1976. ECA was becoming an institution.

1976 — ECA Comes Of Age: The new bylaws stipulated that the Community Council was to be composed of members elected proportionately from the several neighborhoods of Eastown. But since the bylaws themselves had been passed by only 31 voters, such representation and the even grander ideal of an "assembly" of hundreds of Eastowners deciding the direction of the Community Council, were well down the road in the future. Nonetheless, new members attracted to the Community Council during the period of tension worked vigorously to expand the organization and to broaden participation in it.

The staff had been enlarged by CETA appointments. Although one CETA worker created hostilities within the staff, several accomplishments of 1976 stand out. The Grand Rapids Campaign for Human Development (CHD) granted funds to ECA to purchase printing equipment, thereby giving birth to the Economic Development Committee of ECA. That Committee's chairman, together with the

Aquinas-Eastown Coordinator, was instrumental in beginning more sophisticated fund raising for ECA among local foundations.

ECA staff, viewing Eastown as part of the larger Grand Rapids area, lobbied for creation of a Citizen Participation Task Force to advise city officials on ways to involve citizens in city decisions. One of ECA's appointees to that group later became Executive Director of ECA. Staff research to identify "redlining" in Eastown catapulted the Association into a prominent role in defining that issue throughout the city and in the state legislature, which subsequently passed two laws against the practice. "Redlining" literally means drawing a red line around certain geographic areas within which banks and other lending institutions are unwilling to invest. The resultant lack of conventional mortgage and rehabilitation money in these older, predominantly low-income neighborhoods only hastens their further deterioration.

ECA staff helped orchestrate an attempt to block the closing of two fire stations serving the southeast side of the city–an attempt which received extraordinary citizen support and succeeded. The Association also pushed for "target area" status in order to become eligible for Federal Community Development Act funds. After a long struggle, the WEFF area of Eastown was finally granted this status, allowing homeowners to apply for low-interest loans and outright grants for home rehabilitation, and mandating uniform code enforcement area-wide. The Association would train one of its own people to be the local housing inspector, to be paid by city funds.

In all these activities the Association was helping to form coalitions with other neighborhood groups throughout the city. Many neighborhood problems needed solutions far beyond the individual neighborhood's boundaries. Early on, ECA people realized that self-help meant helping others at the same time – and receiving their help in return.

By Autumn of 1976, the interest of residents in the "target area" issue was broad enough that several meetings with city planners brought out large numbers of people. The ECA used this opportunity to conduct the first area-wide election of delegates to the Community Council. These elections were a landmark in the growth of the Association simply because they were the first. The newly elected Community Council numbered 18 members, nine from WEFF and nine from the area north of WEFF. The new officers showed a spirit of efficiency and optimism. Council meetings were made shorter and relied as a rule on committee reports. Staff roles, communications channels, and responsibilities were made relatively clear. The ECA was now quite consistent and efficient in its operations as the last year of the Kellogg grant came to a close in early 1977.

This solid basis enabled the Association to raise over $75,000 in the following two years in foundation and private grants, and in 1977 to purchase and renovate a duplex at 415 Ethel Street, S. E., for its offices, meeting space, and printing operation. Most materials were paid for by a grant from a local foundation, but over 3,200 person-hours of volunteer labor went into the job. The new Eastown Hall stands as a symbol of residents' resolve that "we're here to stay."

How Eastown Has Changed Since 1973

In the five years since ECA's beginnings, much decline has been arrested or turned around. Some of this reversal has been the direct result of ECA effort; some because the Association helped to create a sense of community identity and pride; and some because the Association simply reinforced what previously isolated groups had already been trying to bring about. A look at the four vital community system components shows this progress below, and is followed by a survey of Eastowners' perceptions of their neighborhood's improvement and ECA's part in it.

Housing: During this period housing in Eastown has shown encouraging signs of stabilization and improvement. Abandonment has slowed and the incidence of house fires has significantly decreased through enactment and enforcement of a strong city ordinance for the boarding and securing of abandoned buildings. At least a dozen of the most dilapidated structures have been removed, while an urban homesteading program has been initiated to help preserve and restore some of the more marginal dwellings. Paint and fix programs have been sponsored by government, civic, and church organizations.

Although rented student residences are numerous in the Eastown area, the proportion of rented units in the area is not excessive, standing at about 30% of the approximately 1800 housing units. In 1970, there were fewer than 25% rented housing units on most of the blocks in the WEFF neighborhood. It is reasonable to assume that owner pride and a growing sense of community may have encouraged many of the younger families in that neighborhood to invest in home improvements, to take advantage of one or another of the increasingly available home improvement programs. At any rate, a follow-up survey conducted in March of 1977 indicates significant improvement in the condition of Eastown housing (see Figure 4). It should be noted that on those blocks experiencing either declining quality or constant intermediate status, there also exist high proportions of rented housing units.

Although the overall quality of housing in the Eastown area improved during this time, the situation is still far from optimum, with rather extensive pockets of deteriorated housing apparent in several areas, while large tracts of housing of intermediate condition remain vulnerable to rapid change (see Figure 5).

Commercial Center: Gradually, through 1973 and 1974, small specialty shops began to rent the vacant store-fronts in the Eastown commercial area. Several of these shops, whose owners were attracted by the relatively deflated rents, included on-site production facilities and specialized in hand-made products. The presence of these establishments, combined with the high concentration of students and other youth in the immediate locale, gave an atmosphere reminiscent of the "college towns" in many urban places. Due to general business inexperience, limited resources, and considerable competition for a financially limited market, many of these small craft-oriented enterprises did not survive. But the initial presence
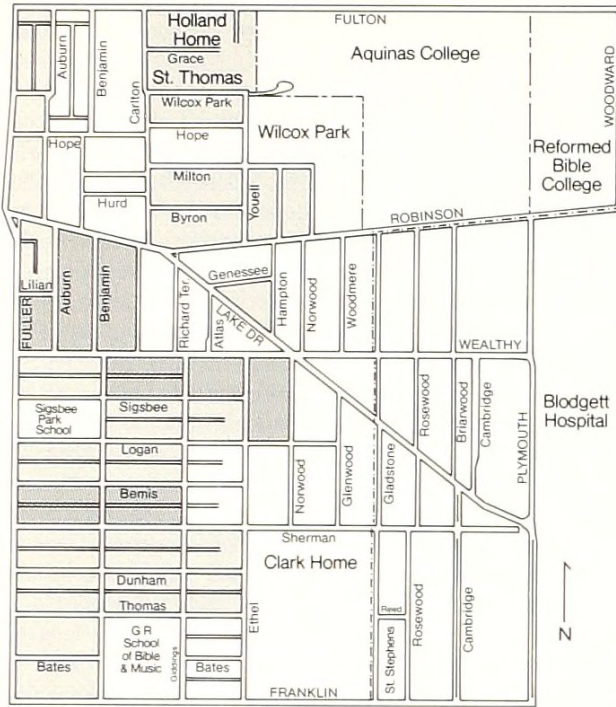
Note: Dotted line (–·–) represents boundary between Grand Rapids and East Grand Rapids.

☐ WELL MAINTAINED
☐ INTERMEDIATE
▨ DETERIORATED

Figure 4. Housing quality in Eastown, 1977.

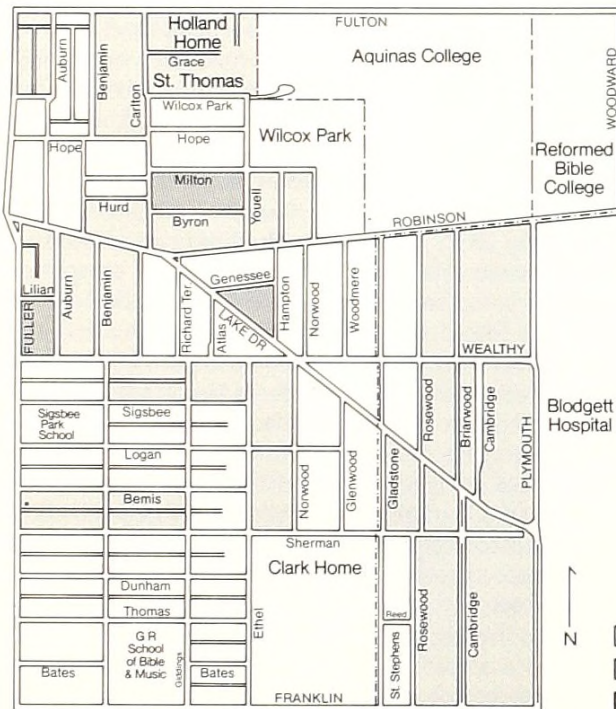

☐ GENERALLY IMPROVING
☐ CONSTANT
▨ GENERALLY DECREASING

Figure 5. Housing quality changes in Eastown, 1973-1977.

of these small businesses helped to create an image for the Eastown commercial area. The annual Eastown Street Fair reinforced this growing image, and although turnover was high, so too was demand to locate in the area.

Taking advantage of the student market in the general area, two very successful taverns featuring rock music opened in the Eastown commercial district. These establishments generated considerable traffic in the area especially during the evening hours, thereby creating a sense of around-the-clock activity in the district.

Also in 1974, a large one-story building was converted into a "mini-mall." This development attracted several more small arts and crafts enterprises, two food establishments, a furniture store, and a small theatre. An enterprising developer had conceived the idea of the mini-mall to attract affluent suburban clientele back into the Wealthy-Lake Drive commercial area. Apart from the small theatre and the furniture store, however, the mini-mall has not been successful, but this development did enhance the image of the entire commercial area. The mini-mall also had the effect of forcing up commercial rents in the area, thus hastening the removal of several "shoestring" operations. During 1974, two of three vacant short-order food establishments were occupied, in one case by a highly successful soup and sandwich restaurant which eventually blossomed into a state-wide chain of restaurants.

Turnover remained high during 1975 and into 1976, but the enterprises attracted to the Eastown commercial area during this period made substantially larger investments than the earlier initiatives. By February of 1977, 50% of the businesses and institutions located in the Eastown Community had been in the area for less than five years, with 30% of the total located there for less than one year. During the 1975-1976 period the Eastown commercial area experienced some significant losses, specifically, the only drug store, the large theatre (which has since reopened under new ownership), and many shops in the mini-mall. These losses should not be considered the product of the transitional process, however, but were more likely the result of natural attrition.

Currently, the nearly 100 businesses in the Eastown commercial area seem relatively secure. Since 1972, the number of people employed in the Eastown area has increased 25% to 1563, of whom about 20% reside in the Eastown Community. Half the businesses and institutions in Eastown receive at least 20% of their business from the Eastown Community, while 25% of the establishments receive 50% or more of their business from the area. This data would indicate that, to some degree, these businesses and institutions service the needs of local people, and that the commercial area is beginning to regain its function as a community commercial center.

Streets And Parks: Most significant during this time is the fact that the street area has not expanded; the automobile's inexhaustible appetite for land has been stayed. In 1973 the proposed widening of Lake Drive was stopped through unified citizen pressure, saving the taxpayers $270,000 in construction costs. In 1975, the expansion of the Fulton Street-Fuller Avenue intersection at the northwest corner

of Eastown was turned back by organized local protest. On the other hand, however, attempts to reduce the land used by cars have not been successful. When citizens along Carlton Avenue suggested closing their street to heavy through traffic, the larger community of Eastowners resisted this change.

Important improvements in street lighting came to the Wilcox Park area in 1976. Already existing neon fixtures, taken from the city's freeways because they were being replaced by sodium-vapor lamps, were installed throughout the area at a cost of only $20,000 to the City of Grand Rapids. Through this five-year period, regularly scheduled street improvements and maintenance have taken place. New curbing has been installed in the WEFF area, and various new traffic signs have been set up around Eastown.

By 1976, considerable improvements in and around Wilcox Park had been achieved. The frequency of rowdyism and vandalism decreased dramatically. The playing field was graded, smoothed, and reseeded; a new basketball court was constructed; and two tennis courts were added to the two already present. But increased police surveillance and a more responsive Department of Parks and Recreation would not have occurred without the organized concern of local residents, especially those affiliated with St. Thomas School.

Citizens of WEFF had requested that the Board of Education designate the new Sigsbee School a "park school," which meant that a park-playground would be built adjacent to the new building. After considerable discussion, in which the ECA played a key role, the recommendation was approved, and a $154,000 park was created. This facility at the Sigsbee Park School is currently one of the most heavily used installations of its kind in the City of Grand Rapids.

In sum, while street expansion in Eastown has been curtailed during the five years under consideration, a corresponding growth in Eastown parks has occurred.

Education: The picture has brightened for both the public and private elementary school sectors. Parents of Sigsbee School children had mobilized and worked untiringly to improve the educational situation of their school. For more than ten years these concerned parents had negotiated with the Grand Rapids Board of Education for a new Sigsbee School building. In the fall of 1975 their efforts were rewarded as classes began in the new Sigsbee Park School, and the new facility became the source of considerable neighborhood pride. Without enormous citizen effort this development probably would never have occurred, especially during a time of general retrenchment within the overall Grand Rapids school system.

Parish schools, too, benefited from the general resurgence in Eastown. Enrollment of new families in the area gradually increased, especially in St. Stephen School, while the rate of out-migration from the St. Thomas parish declined significantly. Although both schools continue to operate within strict financial constraints, their health has bloomed in the past few years.

Postscript: A Community Survey: In March of 1977, a random

survey was made of 10% of the Eastown households to determine perceptions both of neighborhood changes and of the ECA, and indeed whether ECA was thought to have played a part in improving things. While 78% of the 150 respondents felt that their neighborhood had changed in four years, only 32% of these felt that the situation had improved. But there was no geographic concentration of these responses, and attempts through follow-up questioning to pinpoint what they saw as good and bad in the community produced confusing or contradictory results. One might, in fact, assume that the community was perceived neither positively nor negatively by many of its residents.

The next phase of the survey was concerned with the extent to which residents were aware of the ECA. Of those sampled, only 20% admitted no awareness of the Association. Thirty-nine percent of the respondents indicated they had participated in some meeting, project, block meeting, or other function of the ECA. While 16% of those surveyed were members of the Eastown Food Co-op, 64% had attended the annual Street Fair and 78% had read the Eastown *Access*. When asked if they would go to the ECA for help if they had a problem in the neighborhood, two-thirds of the entire group said they would. These results show that an awareness of ECA has diffused throughout the community.

Although in the first series of questions from the survey only 21% of the total sample had perceived positive change in their neighborhood in the past four years, almost 75% of the respondents answered "yes" when asked, "Do you think the ECA has made your neighborhood a better place in which to live?" These data suggest a strong correlation between the works of the Association and improvements in Eastown. In answer to the question, "In your opinion, what is the most important thing ECA has done to your neighborhood?," residents said the following:

Nothing	21%
ECA developed a sense of community	20%
ECA got things done, made city hall aware	10%
ECA improved the business climate	7%
ECA is effective on selected issues or activities, e.g., street lights, fire stations, boarded buildings, Street Fair, traffic, etc.	42%

Further, when asked, "Would you feel a loss if the ECA were to discontinue?," 68% of the sample said "yes."

Conclusions? Most residents of Eastown are aware of ECA as a viable and active neighborhood institution. Many of them also feel that a sense of community has developed in Eastown. This identity, though, has not completely overcome much of the fear and prejudice found in a changing neighborhood. Much has improved; much has yet to improve.

Young Eastown residents benefit from improved schools and parks.

PART 2
HOW THE INSTITUTION BECAME A NEIGHBOR: HOW TO DO IT

A winter scene on the Aquinas campus.

CHAPTER II:
THE COMMUNITY IN THE AQUINAS-EASTOWN RELATIONSHIP

by Thomas Whitfield Edison

A complex web of connections marks the relationships between an institution and the area surrounding it. Institutional leaders and local residents are likely to view this set of relationships from quite different perspectives, and in this regard Aquinas College and Eastown personnel have been no exception. For that reason it is necessary to examine both viewpoints on the interrelationship.

The Community Can Influence An Institution

The local area constitutes the setting in which the institution operates. Whether the area is urban or rural, low-income or upper-class, the character of the local place will influence, in significant though often ignored ways, the programs and policies of the institution as well as its delivery of basic services.

For many years, Eastown had afforded a number of Aquinas employees and students a secure and convenient place to live. Although a definitely urban setting, the Eastown location was typically a white middle-to-upper class residential community, with its supportive commercial center. This kind of setting was fitting and comfortable for the students and faculty who settled around the campus. The prosperous image of the locality also attracted those who commuted from other parts of the Grand Rapids vicinity.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s the area immediately to the southwest of the campus began to show disturbing signs of neighborhood transition. The secure setting of the campus, which had always been taken for granted, was now threatened. Suddenly what happened to the neighborhood became of real significance to the future development of the College. At a time of generally decreasing enrollments throughout higher education, the specter of a small liberal arts college nestled in the heart of a Grand Rapids ghetto did not project a very optimistic picture for student recruitment. The college administrators quickly became cognizant of the relationship between community deterioration and the well-being of the institution; in no time they realized that "neighborhood problems are our problems; we're part of the community."

QUESTION: How is your institution influenced by developments in its geographic setting?

The Institution Affects The Local Area

The influence of Aquinas College on the surrounding area has been at the same time obvious and subtle. Like most institutions, the College offers its services to the general public, including the specific area around the campus. But in order to deliver its services successfully to the broader Grand Rapids area, a set of special relationships began and grew between the College and the local neighborhoods. How does the operation of the College affect the local area?

The primary institutional function of Aquinas College is to provide educational services. Yet the direct educational impact of the College on its surrounding area is chiefly felt by those students who live close to the campus to be near their classes. Certain of the academic programs designed to attract and accommodate specialized populations, such as continuing educational programs for adult undergraduates and senior citizens, have probably provoked larger numbers from the local area to respond. In general, though, most local residents are not directly concerned with the college educational programs, nor is the basic educational program designed to appeal to specific interests of local residents.

In addition to the educational programs at Aquinas College, special events on campus are often open to the public, although these programs do not generate much response from the surrounding neighborhood. The low profile of the Aquinas sports program does not evoke local support, while the appeal of campus films and lectures is to a broad segment of the Grand Rapids community. On-campus concerts occasionally attract people from the local area, but most entertainment programs have not catered to the specific interests of the neighborhood. Interestingly, entertainment is a rapidly growing part of the local commercial center in Eastown, with newly developed movie theaters, show-bars, an art gallery, a pinball arcade and a bowling alley – all of which attract the college-age market in the area.

Perhaps the most significant direct influence of the College on the adjoining neighborhood is its physical setting. Its seventy acres of landscape display a natural beauty of flowering shrubs, well-kept lawns, and an impressive variety of trees, crossed by two creeks and marked by a pond. The campus is always open to the public and is best appreciated on bicycle or on foot; local children and adults in numbers enjoy its beauty and serenity, and find its surprising calm a pleasant contrast to the surrounding urban rush.

Although most Eastown residents do not benefit directly from college programs, the College does indirectly influence the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, many college employees reside in the local area. Beyond the impact they may have on the local economy through their patronage of local businesses, their ownership on a particular block improves the stability and image of the immediate vicinity. College personnel, especially professors, are generally respected members of society, and their established presence enhances the image of their general residential location.

Unfortunately, the faculty is small, so their total influence is small. Furthermore, faculty usually locate in more desirable neighborhoods, where their stabilizing influence is not as critically needed as in more marginal neighborhoods.

Students of conventional college age, the primary clientele of an educational institution, are often perceived as undesirable by the more permanent residents of the neighborhood. It is believed that student rentals will lower property values in a particular area, and considerable effort is usually spent to restrict where students may live. In many college communities, zoning restrictions have been effective in excluding students from the more well-to-do blocks and neighborhoods. Such restrictions in the East Grand Rapids portion of Eastown have limited the location of student rentals close to the campus.

In those neighborhoods that are open, about one-third of the regular Aquinas students rent within walking distance of the campus. These "student ghettos" are usually within or adjacent to low-income neighborhoods. Students from other colleges also rent in those neighborhoods, but predictably the student residential density decreases with distance from the Aquinas campus. Students' purchases of staples are typical of the low and middle-income families of the area. Several successful entertainment establishments have capitalized on this concentrated student market, giving the Eastown area a distinctive image in the city, especially during evening hours.

Another example of the indirect influence of the institution on the local area is the role of the College as a generator of traffic. The day-to-day operation of the College creates problems of expanded traffic volume, speeding, and parking, while special events on campus intensify such problems. Although the latter are often a nuisance for nearby residents, they are seldom thoroughly considered in planning institutional activities. It is interesting to note that since the College closed its main north-south traffic artery to enhance the safety and serenity of the campus, residents of a nearby north-south street have attempted to limit traffic in front of their homes, some of which is a product of the campus close-off. At least four attempts to do so have met with no success.

Apart from heightened traffic problems, the operation of the Aquinas facility apparently has no other annoying or noxious side-effects on the local environment, although signals from the radio tower atop the Administration Building have been known to interfere with reception locally. In fact, as stated earlier, people of the area widely consider the campus to be a genuine addition to the local landscape.

The above examples have been taken from the actual Aquinas-Eastown relationship, but it is not hard to imagine other potentially troublesome situations. Conceivably, large institutional parking lots, all-night security lighting, or even church bells on Sunday morning could be at least an irritant, if not a major headache, for local residents. Such problem situations offer opportunity for fruitful communication and cooperation between the community affected by

the situation and the institution generating it, perhaps inadvertently.

QUESTION: What are the side-effects of your institutional operation on the local neighborhood?

How The Institution "Creates" The Community

With some understanding of how the institution and the surrounding area influence one another, the next consideration is to determine where the institution can exercise the greatest influence, and the place of greatest potential for collaboration. Six steps are involved in this process:

1. Look for "bridges."
2. Gather data.
3. Inventory institutional resources.
4. Devise meaningful boundaries.
5. Determine existing groupings within these boundaries.
6. Christen the community.

Look For "Bridges": Area size and location are critical consider-ations, but first of all it is essential to identify and appraise the already existing "bridges" that join the institution with the potential community. In other words, are there groups or individuals that could serve to link institutional resources with community needs?

The most apparent bridge between Aquinas and the surround-ing area was built upon those faculty and students who lived in the neighborhoods to the southwest of the campus. Identification of a bridging group is meaningless, however, unless that group can be motivated to become active in the community. To stimulate such motivation is a function of the institution, which must provide the initiative and the resources needed to build and reinforce the bridging group. In the case of Aquinas, students living in the area supplied much of the initial energy and excitement for the early identification stage of the Eastown community development. Faculty, on the other hand, were generally less easily motivated, and far less involved in this early stage of community development.

Definition of the best way for the College to become involved in the community was accomplished partly by determining how many students lived in the local area, and where they resided. This information was obtained by plotting a map of off-campus student residences (Figure 6). This map became a vital tool for describing the College's area of influence in the surrounding neighborhoods. Church members or hospital staff might also serve as bridging groups, and their residences could be mapped in the same manner, as an urgent first step in defining the place to begin institutional involvement.

QUESTION: Can you identify potential bridging groups between your institution and the surrounding neighborhood?
QUESTION: Do you know where the staff or clientele of the in-stitution live?

Gather Data: The next step after the bridges to the community
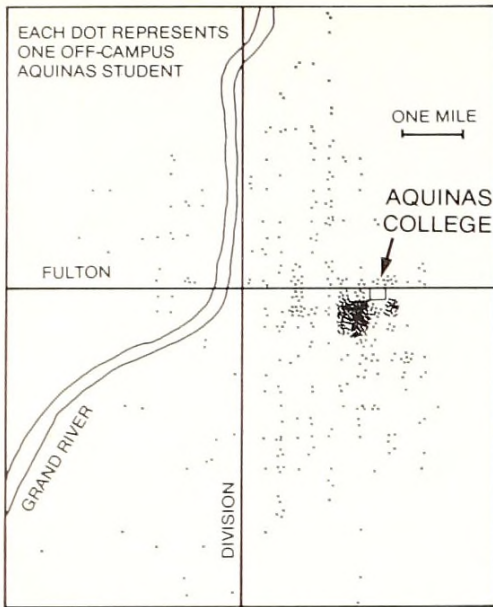
Figure 6. Each dot represents one off-campus Aquinas student.

have been identified and mapped, is to compile an accurate description of the characteristics of the area. The profile should reflect the following basic information about the locality:

- WHAT IS THE PLACE LIKE?
  - Land-use – how much and where?
    - – industrial
    - – commercial
    - – residential
    - – public
    - – institutional
    - – other (woods, water)
  - Housing – what kind and where?
    - – condition of housing
    - – rented or owner-occupied
    - – single family, multiple family, etc.
    - – age, density
    - – other significant characteristics
- WHAT ARE THE PEOPLE LIKE?
  - How many, and where are they?
  - Population characteristics
    - – economic status
    - – age distribution
    - – racial or ethnic groupings
    - – level of education
    - – employment
    - – family characteristics
    - – other significant information

The objective here is to develop a reasonable understanding of the physical and social characteristics of the local area in order to gain some idea of the potential scope and scale for institutional involvement. The description is a vital tool not only for describing a manageable target area for such involvement, but also to identify the problems of the local neighborhoods. Of major significance is the use of this profile to marshal resources within the neighborhoods to work toward solving problems. The information collected for the profile should be as site-specific as time, energy, and other resources permit; these data are usually available from existing sources such as the U. S. Census, Block Data, School Board and Health Department information, and so on. Whenever possible, the material should be presented in maps or other graphic forms so that existing locational relationships can be accurately and conspicuously displayed to elicit interest in the community.

Inventory Institutional Resources: Having identified the bridges between institution and community and having drawn the community profile, the institution must next make an honest appraisal of its own resources in order to determine what it can realistically expect to accomplish in the community. It should be emphasized at this time that the institutional role should *not* be designed to direct the development of the local area, but only to *reinforce self-development within the community.* This point cannot be stressed too much; it is a central theme of the book.

Realistically, Aquinas College had neither the political nor the economic power to create a zone of "pacification" between its campus and the changing local neighborhoods as in Columbia University-Morningside Heights or University of Chicago-Kenwood relationships. Nor could Aquinas afford to leave the area for a new campus site as Calvin College had done only a few years earlier when it outgrew its old campus. Aquinas had to remain and face the situation with whatever resources it could command.

Define Meaningful Boundaries: Once the institution has identified potential bridging groups, the general characteristics of the local area, and potential institutional resources, it is ready to define the general area of its involvement in the community. The size of the area could range from one or two city blocks to several square miles, or from as few as 1,000 people to as many as 20,000. A useful rule of thumb for the general scale of institutional involvement might be that each member of the bridging group correspond to between 20 to 50 persons in the community. For example, 100 parishioners living in the vicinity of their church could be motivated to initiate some early phases of community development for 2,000 to 5,000 people. However, if for no other reason than communications efficiency, when confronted with decisions about population or area size, *don't overload the bridge!*

A key criterion for defining the area of Aquinas' involvement was the location of the highest density of off-campus student residency. Of equal weight, however, was the prominence of the commercial center one block south of the campus. For many years the

Wealthy-Lake Drive intersection, the commercial center of Eastown.

Wealthy-Lake Drive business area served as the focus for several distinct and diverse neighborhoods surrounding it. Including the shopping center in the area under consideration for college involvement led naturally to including also the neighborhoods that patronized the center. In general, the location of student residency coincided with that of the commercial service area.

QUESTION: In the area being considered for involvement by your institution, is there a place that serves as a central focus?

After the institution has determined a manageable size and a meaningful location for its involvement, it should define the boundaries of the target area. The best boundaries will be formed by existing obstacles to human interaction, and the contemporary urban landscape is usually marked by plenty of such barriers as major transportation arteries, industrial corridors, public and institutional land, and natural features such as lakes and rivers.

The boundaries of the target area Aquinas defined for its involvement definitely divided places of distinct physical and social characteristics (see Figure 2). On the north, Fulton Street is the major north-south divider for the City of Grand Rapids, and is dominated on both sides by commercial and institutional land-use. A zone along Woodward Lane and Plymouth Road provides a significant social and economic barrier on the east. Franklin Street, a mile to the south of Fulton, is another major east-west artery, and marks off a zone of sharp social-economic transition to the south. Finally, Fuller Avenue to the west is important as one of the few north-south thoroughfares in the eastern region of Grand Rapids, and its barrier effect is primarily the result of heavy traffic and of its being perceived as a social barrier. The entire target area comprises about one square mile and

is home for about 8,500 people, having at least four distinct neighborhoods. It should be noted that existing political boundaries were not considered in defining Eastown; the area includes part of the City of Grand Rapids and part of the City of East Grand Rapids. The Grand Rapids portion falls within two of the three electoral wards of the city.

QUESTION: Can you find barriers to interaction and communication in the area being considered by your institution?

Determine Existing Groupings Within Boundaries: Since a community will be built upon a collection of self-defined social neighborhoods, it is imperative that the boundaries of these neighborhoods not be broken down. During the 1960s, the southwest quarter of the area being considered by Aquinas had experienced considerable organizing activity. By 1973, the remnants of that activity were dimly reflected by the WEFF neighborhood organization. While not wanting to interfere with any productive neighborhood interaction, Aquinas encompassed the WEFF area within its scope of involvement. This area would later grow into the powerful WEFF neighborhood of the Eastown Community Association. However, institutional involvement must never be perceived as an invasion of the turf of a viable community organization.

QUESTION: Are there any viable community or neighborhood organizations in the area being considered by your institution?

Some institutional personnel may at this point be saying, "If the institution is to define the community, it could well be accused of being: impetuous, arbitrary, domineering, arrogant, paternalistic, selfish, or "all of the above." Perhaps so, but if there is to be a community development there must be a starting point — a place with which to identify and from which to evolve. If no such identity exists to begin with, and that will usually be the case, then why not *create* one! And why not define this place in such a way as to insure the maximum efficiency and utilization of institutional resources? Once the community has been created, the next step toward its development is to gain acceptance and legitimacy for this newly defined place from the people who live there; in other words, to promote community identity.

The massive scale of urban expansion and the increased mobility of the urban resident prevent most people from ever developing close personal identification with a particular place. Urban neighborhoods, like suburbs, have increasingly become primarily places to sleep at night and to leave the next morning for work or school. Neighborhood life still goes on somewhere in most cities, but for most urban residents close identification with a special place is dying. This is especially the case where rapid and extensive resident turnover has occurred. *Yet people will only expend their energies to improve local conditions if they feel themselves to be part of a place they share with others, with all its common problems and common resources.*

Christen The Community: Basic to developing the community identity is the determination of an appropriate name for the place

under consideration. Within any city, many local places will have substantial roots in the past and may already possess a commonly recognized "place" name, for example, Woodlawn, Fitzgerald, the Bottoms. If this is not the case, select a name. Place name selection should not only reflect unique locational characteristics of the area, but also the spirit and emphasis of the citizens involved in creating the community identity; for example, Heritage Hill, Heartside, Eastown.

QUESTION: Does your place already have a name or nickname?

Getting The Residents To Know They Are In This Community: Drawing On Leadership Pools

One problem facing the institution during the early stages of involvement in the community is how to find those individuals most likely to promote institution-community interaction. Whether the individual is affiliated with the institution or from the local area, the key attribute for potential personal involvement is the extent to which that person is concerned about the problems affecting the local community. The Aquinas-Eastown experience points to the existence of several pools from which participants may enter the interaction. Ranked below in descending order of participative effectiveness, these groupings are:

- people with strong connections in both institution and community
- community people with no connection to the institution
- institutional people with no connection to the community
- total outsiders.

Although a large number of people may have some potential for beginning the work of community identity, those who actually become involved may be depressingly few, at least initially. The relationship between individual participation and perceived self-interest cannot be overstated; it is useful to remember that concern about community problems will increase as the individual becomes more sensitive to the problem situation. After all, Aquinas College would probably not have become involved in the community had it not seen its future interwoven with the well-being of the surrounding area! When individuals become involved in the community, it will be because of growing realization of the linkage between problems in the community and their institutional and/or community role. Those closest to the problem should be the most easily motivated.

Aquinas students and faculty comprised the initial bridging groups that connected the College to the local area. However, student response to community problems was quite different from that of faculty, and the differences form the basis for an interesting comparison in participation.

The Student: Students, although usually not highly appreciated by the local residents, were and are a significant and visible minority in Eastown. Student involvement in the evolution of the Eastown Community Association has been critical, especially during the early phases of identity development. Individual student efforts, as well as such coordinated student activities as CAVA (Community

A scene from the annual Eastown Street Fair.

Action Volunteers of Aquinas) and Off-Campus College were primarily responsible for the inauguration of the Eastown Food Co-op, Eastown Street Fair, Eastown *Access* (newsletter), Eastown Rental Service, and Eastown Radio Station. Students also had significant voice in the early development of the Eastown Community Association. Why were these students so motivated to respond to the problems of the local community?

The Aquinas students were predominantly from white middle-class suburban backgrounds, but their off-campus living experience exposed them directly to an environment of urban poverty. Their immediate survival needs were not appreciably different from those of other low-income, inner-city residents. Certainly they could anticipate a future escape from this environment, but their growing survival consciousness provoked in them sincere indignation and the desire to improve the local conditions — a desire that led to useful and effective action in the community.

The students were able to spread the message of community to their numbers through the existing College communication network — student newspaper, classes, activities, and peer communication. This network served to generate excitement that could be organized and reinforced for application to off-campus activities. For a brief period in 1973 and 1974, Off-Campus College (OCC) was one of the most influential student groups in defining student issues and organizing activity. As its purpose, OCC aimed to organize and unify those students who lived independently in the community, and to instill in them a sense of connection or "wholeness" with the place where they lived. "You are where you're at!" was the rallying cry. For many reasons, an on-going organization of off-campus

students did not materialize, but for the considerable number who did become involved in this effort, realization of themselves as an integral part of the community and its problems was certainly an important part of their college experience.

The extent and commitment of student involvement can be interpreted as the final vestige of the student activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Certainly the ad hoc and spontaneous nature of the early phases of the Eastown Community Association engendered excitement and attracted many of the more socially-conscious students. At any rate, as many as 250 Aquinas students took some direct part in the developments of 1973 and 1974. Since that initial surge, *organized* student participation has gradually declined; nevertheless, individual student contribution continues, usually as part of the growing community organization.

The Role Of The Faculty: Measuring the faculty contribution against student involvement is quite revealing. This comparison shows that faculty response was proportionally less significant to the early stages of community growth in Eastown than was student participation. Why this difference? First and of fundamental importance, the faculty, a more affluent and respected group than the students, were more removed from the immediate physical impact of urban poverty than were the students. In addition, there was little organized motivation (such as OCC) for the faculty to connect their living and working situation directly with conditions in the community.

Beyond this, there is a strong tendency for academics to avoid the distractions of practical reality while in pursuit of their intellectual goals: this has been called the "ivory-tower syndrome." In fact, most of the faculty participation was encouraged by financial reward, potential for professional development or some other subtle institutional prompting, but seldom in response to the deteriorating potential for human survival in the neighborhood. Although a detailed account of faculty involvement will follow in the next section, it should be emphasized here that the faculty's social and economic apathy toward the local community should not be seen as unique to the Aquinas-Eastown relationship, but as symptomatic of class segregation throughout American Society.

QUESTION: To what extent do the bridging groups in your institution identify with community problems?

QUESTION: Do the bridging groups in your institution have an existing communications network?

QUESTION: Can you foresee barriers to motivating any bridging group to become active in the community?

How does the institution establish and reinforce participation by community leaders? This group is not directly affiliated with the institution, but they are in close touch with the community and its problems. The institution must go all out to insure the widest possible social and economic representation in the initial composition of this group. Yet the institution will probably not have equal or adequate communication with all segments of the community, and

conspicuous gaps in the make-up of the group will become evident. In some instances the institution may even encounter apprehension or overt resistance to the idea of institutional involvement in the community. The character of early participants in the community-institution relationship will vary from situation to situation, but it is imperative at the beginning that the institution encourage the broadest possible support from the active and influential members of the community.

Early Community Participants And Their Identification Of Problems: During the early phases of the Aquinas-Eastown experience, community participants had to consider not only the situation in the community, but also the most appropriate method for institutional involvement. In January 1973, community people were invited by the College President to attend the first presentation of the Eastown community profile — a sort of unveiling of Eastown by the College. The hundred people in attendance at the presentation strongly reflected the impact of the Aquinas communication network, and were comprised primarily of two groups:

- local establishment leaders in business, religion, and education, who attended the meeting in response to the credibility and prestige implied by the formal invitation from the College; and
- Eastown residents, predominantly younger, white, middle-class home owners, selected from a network of active supporters of a recent successful political campaign.

The first group, by their presence, contributed tacit acceptance and respectability for future development within the newly-formed Eastown Community. The second group would provide the necessary leadership and expertise to establish the early phase of evolving community identity. At that time neither group was in close touch with the major problems facing the Eastown Community nor with their potential solutions. Early emphasis seemed to focus on finding those individuals who were concerned about the general improvement of the community, with relatively little consideration of the specific issues affecting the area. However, as time passed, emphasis shifted to increasing concern with the problems of the community, and in turn participation from the community began to reflect Eastown's diversity more closely.

QUESTION: Can you identify the leaders in business, religion, education, and politics in your community?
QUESTION: Is there an existing network of people in the community who might consider community participation?

Coordination Of Community Participation: Perhaps the single greatest obstruction of local resources is the lack of a unifying community name and identity. After an initial presentation of the Eastown idea, a task force was formed that worked to define and organize the Eastown Community Association through legal incorporation procedures. The task force quickly evolved into the Steering Committee of the ECA, and collaborated closely with the various

endeavors of the Aquinas student activists. By the spring of 1973, significant development of the student-initiated programs had occurred through combined efforts of student groups and the Steering Committee. The importance of establishing a definite community identity and name as a foundation for leadership and organizational development cannot be overstressed.

QUESTION: Can you identify lawyers, accountants, or other professionals who would bring special expertise to assist in the early development of a community organization?

For those involved during the early days of the Eastown experience, exuberance and dedication were seldom in short supply. Yet apart from a strong desire to form an association of neighbors from the Eastown area, there was only vague understanding of how community improvements might be accomplished. The objectives of the Association were not yet clearly defined, but members of the Steering Committee frequently appealed for people to "clean up and beautify the area" and spoke of a "need for racial harmony" and a "need for public safety." All of these are noble causes, but hardly working strategies for community action. The well-meaning but naive members of the Steering Committee reflected the predominantly white, middle-class bias of the original Aquinas selection process. However, this problem of bias had to be solved by involving more black and low-income residents, who in fact were more directly affected by the neighborhood's deterioration. By spring of 1974, the Eastown identity had been developed, and the orientation and image of the Association were being established by means of issue-organizing throughout the Eastown area.

Through time, College involvement evolved from the spontaneous contributions of the students into the more structured activities of the Aquinas-Eastown Project. But the most significant impact of the College on the Eastown community was the successful application of institutional resources to writing and securing a $129,836 grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in early 1974. About one-third of that sum was used directly to support the operation of the Eastown Community Association during the ensuing three years, while the remainder was used to stimulate further College involvement in the community. This money provided the Association with the time and flexibility to grow and to learn from its successes and mistakes. This model of institutional support for community development is certainly transferable to other community-institution relationships.

An important stimulant to the growth of the Eastown Community Association was the timely employment of outside consultants. At critical stages in the Association's development, experts were brought in to advise on organizing strategies, structural development, personnel policy, and so on. The most significant decisions of the early Steering Committee were to send an ECA staff person for training as a Community Organizer, and employing the services of a consultant to develop organizing strategies. It should be noted,

however, that outside experts will have varying degrees of success and effectiveness, and will not identify or solve community problems by themselves. The consultant must be perceived as an excellent resource to assist community initiatives.

This section has attempted to examine some of the interrelationships between Aquinas College and its surrounding community, and how these relationships were utilized to create the Eastown community identity. To a great degree we have assumed the role of the institution as initiator of community-institution interaction, but the impetus to involve institutional resources in community assistance would be no less valid and probably more practical if it were to come from the neighborhoods. The institutional role can be only to assist. *The direction and design for development must come from the people of the community.* Finally, dependence on specific institutional support must be minimized as soon as possible. Throughout this chapter the purpose has been to discuss the creation and dissemination of the idea of place — the legitimate, concrete, and permanent site for fully human interaction — a community.

CHAPTER III:
THE INSTITUTION IN THE
AQUINAS-EASTOWN
RELATIONSHIP

by Michael Ronan Williams

Overcoming The Agency Mindset

One of the chief blind spots of people in institutions is that they usually try to solve problems by creating structures first instead of letting the structures create themselves. Creating structures such as committees, task forces, project offices, and store-front programs is a top-down activity, while letting the structures create themselves is bottom-up, organic. This bureaucratic mindset is often self-defeating, because the program or committee is formed before there is any widespread awareness of the problem or commitment to its solution.

We have stated the "agency mindset" problem in extremes for emphasis. To some extent, we at Aquinas fell victim to this blind spot, perhaps more in dealing with our own faculty than with neighborhood people. Of course, some organization must accompany the raising of consciousness within the institution, but in our case it exceeded the minimum. The greater part of this chapter will explore our in-house problem-solving efforts; caveats about imposing structure on the community will close the chapter.

By supporting the issue-organizing of the Neighborhood Coordinator, Aquinas did avoid the pitfall of creating an agency in the community before it was needed. He needed a base from which to operate, and the grant was used to equip and a staff a store-front office, but no one from the College told him what to do or how to function. That came from community people and his mentor in Chicago whose job was to train community organizers. If the College people had demanded that he set up such-and-such a program, for example an after school recreation program for street kids, the whole operation might never have lasted the first year, nor have been as effective as it was.

At Aquinas organizational development occurred much more quickly, however, before understanding of the Aquinas-Eastown Project became widespread. A mechanism was needed to funnel professional helpers into Eastown as well as to promote liaison. An Aquinas-Eastown Project office was established on the campus with a full-time director and secretarial assistance. Since the grant was to provide released time for several faculty, the project director convened a group of nine faculty members who had either volunteered for involvement or were thought to be sympathetic to the project's goals. This group became known as the Aquinas-Eastown

Faculty Development Team (A-EFDT) and met weekly for several months. As a group, though, this team was not action-oriented, although released time from teaching responsibilities for individuals enabled them to participate in community activities. It was a committee that met on campus, much like any other committee.

Faculty development was not new to the campus in 1974. It was already an important movement at Aquinas and on campuses throughout the country. Colleges were struggling to maintain themselves as the enrollment booms of the 1960s topped out. Fewer 18-to-22-year-olds were coming to college. Faculty positions were not opening up, with the result that job mobility was greatly curtailed for most professors. Non-traditional student markets were being explored: the housewife and the businessman who never finished their degrees, the "under-prepared" and the minority student, the elderly. Two forces were now converging with ever greater demands that faculty "develop": impending retrenchment and the idea that "we're stuck with the faculty we've got" was one; non-traditional students placing additional strains on professors' teaching skills was the other.

Aquinas had an office of Faculty Development with a part-time director whose job it was to help faculty improve their teaching. Since the grant formally encouraged faculty development through community involvement, some institutional people thought that the newly formed faculty development committee (FDC), some of whose thirteen members were also on the A-EFDT, might be another vehicle for meeting the grant's goals. Thus two large committees and two offices quickly became the official machinery to move Aquinas to help Eastown. Four years later, it is probably safe to say that released time alone accounted for most faculty involvement after the grant was made. The Geography Department, an existing structure, had accounted for almost all Aquinas activities in the community prior to the grant.

The Office of Director of the Aquinas-Eastown Project was established not only to be a liaison between the College and the ECA but also to "make things happen" in the institution. The director during the first two years of the grant had a high prestige level in the College (she was Vice Chairperson of the Board of Trustees) and a deep interest in the project (she had just completed a master's degree in Urban Affairs at the University of Michigan).

She oversaw the expenditure of grant funds with a creative and humane touch, ever conscious of meeting the financial needs of the seedling ECA. Red tape never stood in her way for long. As the Association moved into the critical second year of the grant, in which it had to begin matching Kellogg funds, its first faltering steps were shored up by her timely intervention to get other funds donated to the ECA.

Her liaison work involved meeting most of Eastown's merchants, attending countless community meetings, and serving on several key Association committees. On campus, she chaired A-EFDT meetings, kept information flowing to its members, and offered sympathetic guidance and counsel to those involved faculty

who sought it. But because she was a trustee and not a faculty member, she chose a basically non-directive stance toward college personnel involved in the project. On the one hand, this was wise since we were feeling our way on what to do. But on the other hand, it was easy for some to float. A more directive attitude was probably needed, and in later sections we make some suggestions as to how such a key official, a prime mover in the institution, might have gotten more professionals effectively involved in the community. This type of office will be a key to the success of any similar institution-community effort.

We also want to underscore that we are *not* saying that teaming is useless; on the contrary, it is an essential if institutional resources are to be effectively employed on behalf of the community. We are saying that effective teams cannot be so simply created.

QUESTION: Are there existing structures in your institution which might get your people working on neighborhood problems?
QUESTION: What is the counterpart of our faculty development committees in your institution? A men's or women's club? A social action group? A professional development committee, or in-service planning team?

Going On The Neighborhood's Turf

An institution can help its neighborhood to help itself through two types of aid: direct and indirect. Direct aid means that the individual institutional helper gives aid to the community without attempting to change the institution. Indirect aid involves raising consciousness or awareness within the institution to move it to aid the community. This latter form of aid will always require some changes in the institution. Several examples of each type help make the differences clear.

Direct aid was fairly easy for many faculty to understand, even if they did not all heed the call. As mentioned earlier, an Aquinas political scientist wrote a proposal to the Grand Rapids City Commission that a citizen review board be established to oversee spending of Community Development Act funds. He hoped that Eastown, as well as other neighborhoods, would benefit from these funds as a result of improved citizen participation in the decision-making process. The proposal won approval, and he became a member of the new Community Development Citizens' Committee. Eastown is now benefiting from CDA funds for housing rehabilitation and repair.

A geographer and several neighborhood student activists, using the Off-Campus College framework, helped set up a food cooperative, the annual Street Fair, and the neighborhood newspaper, the ACCESS. They were also a principal force behind the establishment of the Eastown Community Association itself.

An Aquinas physical education instructor supervised several students in organizing games for children at the Street Fair. An accounting instructor, paid directly by the grant, set up the bookkeeping system for the food co-op. Non-faculty direct help came from the Aquinas-Eastown Project secretary, who did typing for the

Eastown office; and the director of Aquinas maintenance, who loaned tools, vehicles, and occasionally expertise to Eastown projects.

The College also functioned as a direct aid channel for other resources, both human and material. Several consultants on community-organizing issues and strategy were paid by Aquinas to lend their advice on-site in Eastown. The College provided rooms for community meetings, paper, use of copying equipment, and bookkeeping services for the grant. Finally, Aquinas lent its name to the enterprise in a variety of public relations releases. There is no way to gauge how effective this publicity was, but it was certainly necessary to alert the members of the institution itself to the fact of the Aquinas-Eastown effort. This supportive official stance enabled faculty to place a high priority on their Eastown involvement.

In sum, direct aid got the helper *directly* involved "out there," although it did not require any changes to be made within the institution. *It is our strongly held position that indirect aid, though it may be more complex and circuitous, also requires such personal involvement in the neighborhood.*

QUESTION: Can you list ways in which professional or staff members in your institution could provide direct help to your neighborhood? (Are you sure this help is wanted?)

Indirect aid involved raising consciousness within the institution to move it (by restructuring some part of itself) to aid the community. Before delving into the more common ways (e.g., courses) in which the College shifted toward the community, it might be good to analyze a less common example which did not materialize. This example is important and is placed first in the discussion because it shows most clearly how the lack of intimate contact with community residents can lead to lack of follow-through. It is also a good example of what is meant by a "significant structural change" in the institution.

In late 1975, one of the authors, experienced in building early childhood education programs, called together parties from both the campus and the community who were interested in starting such a program on the campus. It was to have been a research and teaching facility for faculty and a day-care program for students and Eastown residents. He wrote a proposal to the President, who suggested that a feasibility study be done before he committed Aquinas funds. Four months later, when the study was released concluding that the idea was too ambitious, the original group had dissolved, and the whole idea was forgotten.

Why? It had seemed so surely an idea whose time had come. The root of failure was that this on-campus leader had not taken the time to involve the Eastown residents in drafting the proposal. They had not developed a group identity around the issue by seeing themselves working together. They relied entirely on the "insider" at the institution to do their work for them.

In short, for the "insider," providing indirect aid involves more than generating the idea for a new way to restructure the institution

to meet neighborhood needs. It involves underscoring the neighbors' needs to *themselves* and giving them impetus *as a group* to take advantage of this restructuring. Thus indirect aid should include *community* contact, consciousness-raising and organizing, as well as similar efforts within the institutional walls. It follows that as the community itself becomes more organized, more internally conscious of its own various group needs, giving indirect aid becomes less difficult.

Organized pressures brought to bear on an institution greatly facilitate the restructuring process, provided the institution is open to it. If the institution truly wishes to help, it must learn the art of teaching community groups to know what to ask for and to keep asking. It must generate pressure on itself.

QUESTION: Are there issues in the community that could be attacked with institutional resources?

QUESTION: Are there vehicles involving several staff members within the institution that could be created or utilized to provide indirect aid, such as in the day-care example?

Not all cases of indirect aid are so clearly analyzed here. Teaching courses and creating other forums for the discussion of neighborhood issues are, on the face of it, less immediately addressed to a specific group of residents. Several activities led to aid while others did not.

In 1975, a year after the W. K. Kellogg grant began, two faculty members organized a course entitled *Urban Studies 358: Community Development.* The first six weeks were to feature lectures on Eastown's historical development, and the remaining ten weeks were to be on-site activities in Eastown for students. The original two recruited several faculty members who would in turn provide supervision for student experiences. Although several Eastown residents participated in the lectures, few of the professor-supervisors ever moved out of their offices to the sites. The impact on faculty consciousness was not as great as intended.

During this year, the two large faculty development committees were meeting frequently. Although there was considerable discussion on a wide range of issues as one might expect from professors, little action resulted. Those who were helping the community had been doing so from the beginning. The two groups ultimately collapsed into a more organic team of five faculty members, including the three authors of this book. The team ran two more urban studies courses. In 1976, for the first of these courses, twenty students were invited to work with us to develop an eight-ward map for the Grand Rapids City Commission. (Grand Rapids is divided into three wards, but the mayor had favored an eight-ward arrangement.) While this task did not immediately affect Eastown, it did seem to us then that it might be a motivator for students. If a suitable proposal were drawn, it might impress the voters and pass. The students could directly affect the shape of city government! Also it would affect Eastown, which lay in two separate wards.
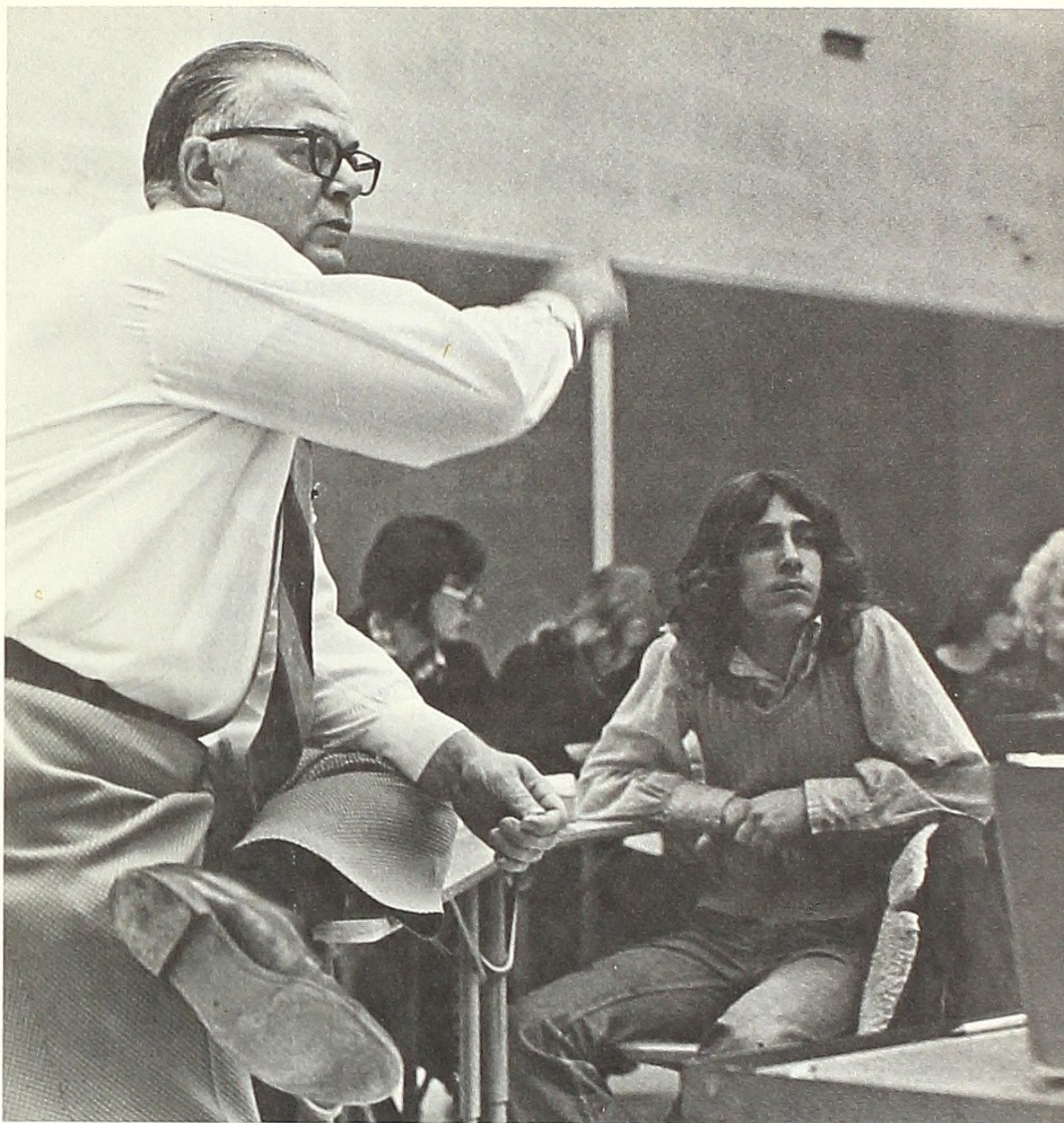
Aquinas professor lectures on Eastown history in Urban Studies course.

However, the mayor suddenly withdrew his support – an action which led to the proposal's defeat later in the Fall. Once the course had ended and the proposal had been drawn, there had been no follow-through, no lobbying, no real connections made with the community. It had been merely an "academic exercise."

Undaunted, the Urban Studies Team launched another course, *Grand Rapids: 2000*. It was less task-oriented, more concerned with broader issues – a more typical class. It did not result in any aid to the community either, because it had not been designed to. There was nothing to follow through on. Although the students liked the course, it was the last activity of the Urban Studies Team.

QUESTIONS: If your institution is a college, are the problem-oriented courses actually connected somehow with the community? Could they be, from the instructor's viewpoint? If not, how could your institution offer education programs that touch the community?

Faculty teaming on courses or committees was not the only mode of activity used to aid the community by heightening awareness behind the walls. Activity more integrated with the community took place in certain other courses, especially in Cultural Geography and Urban History. This activity was integrated because the teachers' personal up-to-date involvement with the growth of the Eastown Community Association lent meaning to their classroom discussions and led many students to work on a variety of projects for the community's benefit.

Other ways than courses and committees were utilized to enlighten individuals in the institution. Various publications enhanced consciousness of the Eastown neighborhood's problems. An open faculty meeting to explain the W. K. Kellogg grant when it was first awarded had preceded the formation of the two faculty development groups. Likewise, informal talking among faculty should not be discounted. These less structured means, however, were also probably less efficient in moving individuals toward the neighborhood.

Courses, committees, meetings, publications are all ephemeral: they come into and go out of existence easily. They are not structural changes in any major sense. The example of failure given earlier might have provided a longer-term and much more significant institutional commitment to the project. *Institutional teams make these kinds of changes happen more readily than do isolated individuals.*

Working With Fellow Professionals

One of the important objectives of the grant was to answer the question "Can faculty be developed through community involvement?" But it should have been turned around to read "Can their concern for professional development be used to get professionals involved in solving community problems?" Our answer to this question, which can be applied to almost any professional group within any institution, whether it be a church consortium, a hospital, or a local bank, is a resounding "maybe." There are particular difficulties in attracting the professional to the streets.

From the point of view of the concerned neighborhood resident all this discussion may be useless eyewash; but *if there is to be real involvement of institutional people, it has to relate somehow to their professional self-image.* And even if good will is not in short supply, the institutional leaders need a good deal of imagination to help make these connections.

For many academics it seems to be natural to be isolated from whatever is immediately outside the ivy-covered walls. Perhaps this isolation has evolved as a protective mechanism for all of urbanized humankind, but with professors it seems particularly pronounced. At best, with many of them the nearby neighborhood is a "field" for

research; at worst, it is merely a blighted area to drive through on the way to work. Even if the professor is concerned and wishes to help reverse the neighborhood's decline, there may still be a "vacuum cleaner" mentality which leads him or her to ask, "How can I clean up the neighborhood without getting my hands dirty?" Of course, it can't be done, but saying that without qualification may scare the individual off. And, too, the narrow specialties of most academics seem to them inadequate tools with which to address the messy "interdisciplinary" problems of real communities.

Given good will and the desire to help, the professional must also see that personal involvement will benefit him professionally — that it certainly will not be time away from professional pursuits, but rather part of this activity. All of the examples of direct or indirect aid listed earlier had this quality.

QUESTION: Can some of your institution's members look beyond the institution to see its interconnectedness with the surrounding community?
QUESTION: Can their concern for professional development be used to get them involved in solving community problems?

Motivating Professionals: Earlier, the pools of potential leadership were ranked. At the top were those who "connect" with both the institution and the neighborhood. These may be professionals who reside in the area, or staff, or clients. But in all probability, they live in and are concerned about the neighborhood. If they don't live in the area, they are probably quite aware that the survival of their institution is closely linked with that of the neighborhood. Without at least one of these motivating concerns, little action can be expected to follow. The prime movers who will do the motivating and plugging in will come from this pool. Their prestige level should be middle to high, although high prestige leaders can serve to protect and nurture lower level movers. These catalysts can create institutional survival awareness either by public barnstorming, private cajoling, or both. Direct concern for the neighborhood is harder to inject, but it can be done the same way.

In our case, the college president not only made public statements in speeches and in writing that Aquinas was in danger of meeting the same fate as had befallen even larger universities, but also frequently reminded anyone within earshot that a significant problem existed and that *we were part of it*. If Aquinas became surrounded by a rotting ghetto, enrollments would drop drastically. The College would die of starvation.

However, sounding the alarm was not enough. Before many people would rouse themselves, they needed also to be shown that it was to their *direct* benefit, there and then, to become activists. The idea of direct benefit, however, varied greatly from one person to another. For some the possibility of released time from teaching was just what the doctor ordered. For others, small grants to improve their courses were important. For yet others, the opportunity to involve their classes in the community in some structured way was

rewarding. Although most professors who became involved did not cite fear of losing their jobs should the College sink into the rising slums, that should not be minimized as another "direct-benefit" motivator. There will always be those, of course, who are motivated primarily by personal financial gain or by a somewhat naive altruism. Only as they come to have some ownership of the venture will they remain on, and ownership rests on their seeing the necessity for the project and for their part in it.

QUESTION: What efforts have been made in your institution to publicize the problem of neighborhood deterioration and to connect that problem with the institution's own survival?
QUESTION: Can you think of ways in which professionals in your organization could personally benefit from helping to cure the neighborhood's ills?

The Switchboard Operator: The prime movers within the institution must be "switchboard operators," plugging interested professionals into whatever niche may momentarily appear in the neighborhood's evolution. A hypothetical example in a college might be a biology instructor interested in pest control – often a problem in decaying urban areas. If this person is willing, the mover could introduce him to community workers, bring him to meetings, or have him write a piece about pest control for a community newsletter. This initial slotting phase is critical, for it will determine whether the faculty person becomes more involved or loses interest and drops out.

Once plugged in, however, more complex avenues of activity will open to the individual. Perhaps city legislation to establish a rat control bureau should be lobbied for, or a grant proposal written for state, federal, or private funds. This more complex activity will require broadened working ties with community leaders, and commitment will have a better chance of surviving on its own.

Note that the plugging-in process does not assume a "job-slot" in the neighborhood organization. There will not be clear-cut bureaucratic job descriptions into which one could painlessly fit. To assume so is to fall victim to the agency mindset described. By "niches" is meant opportunities to mesh need and expertise.

Building A Professional Team: As previously noted, a team of professionals can influence the institution more effectively than individuals working separately. Anyone who wishes to raise awareness in a big organization needs a support group to help in proselytizing, to provide feedback, and to participate in other ways in the change effort. More importantly, the team can encourage its members to go out into the community and can support them once they're out there.

Our experiences were with teams teaching courses and with academic committees, but any professional groupings which encourage the members to see the problems firsthand, such as a hospital's outreach clinic or a parish's secondhand store personnel could achieve the same ends. Most of the groupings failed to proselytize, support
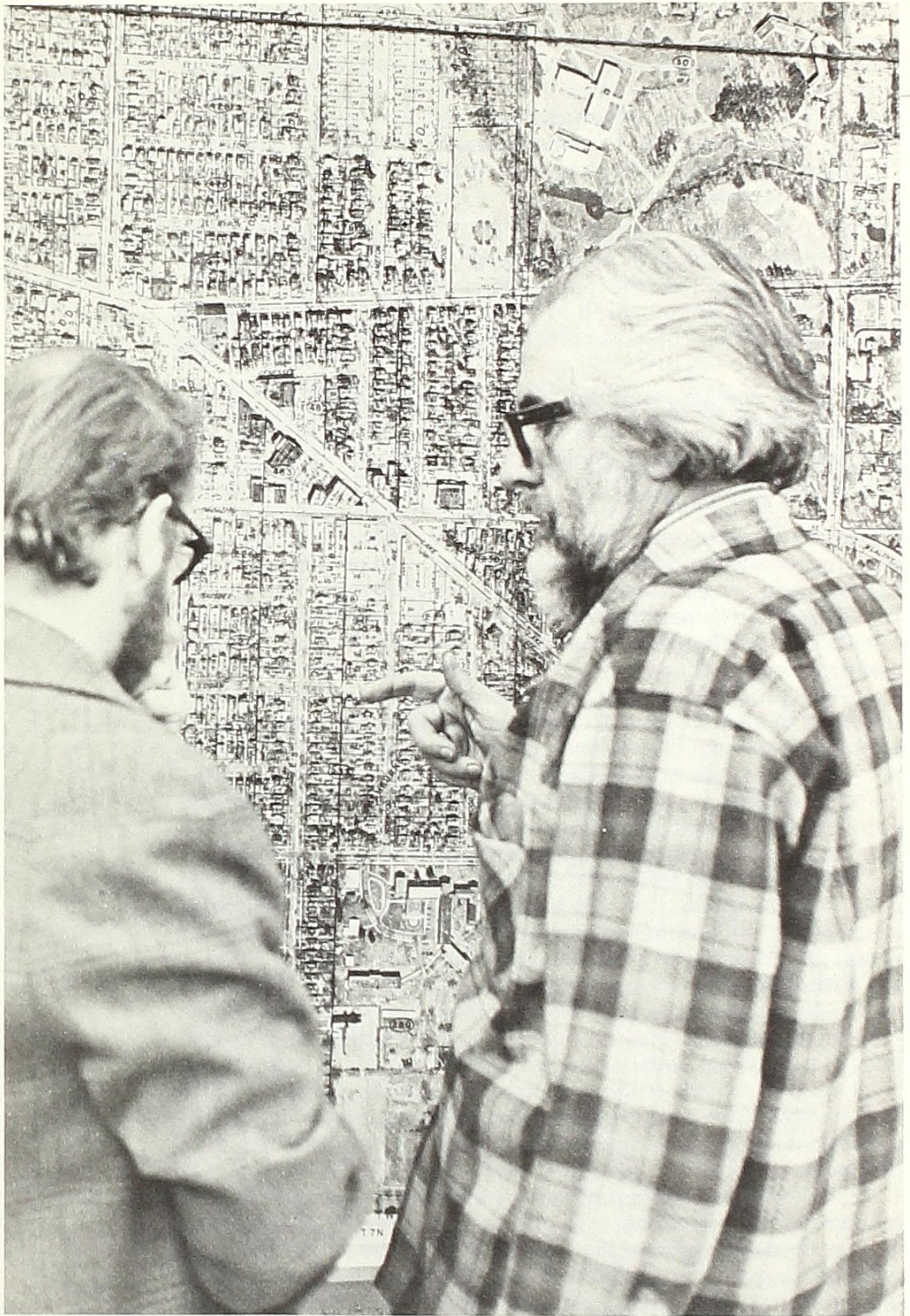
Aquinas faculty discuss Eastown.

each other, and encourage involvement in the community. Why?

First, the purposes and more specific tasks of the groups lacked clarity. The objectives of the committees appeared muddy to leaders and led alike. For example, the Aquinas-Eastown Faculty Development team, in retrospect, was probably intended to provide an institutional way for faculty to "touch" the community, to come into intimate contact with those stirrings and happenings in the nascent ECA, like a slide into a pool of water. But the committee did not function as a slide for most of the team members; it was at best a forum in which the active faculty could personally invite the uninitiated faculty to community meetings, where they could shout, "Come on in, the water's fine!"

Second, the teams needed to act. De facto, the teams appeared to their members like committees, and this committee mentality has a subtle counterproductive effect. Some faculty could attend the A-EFDT meetings on campus, be filled with news about the latest events in Eastown, venture an opinion or two, and leave with the (erroneous) feeling that they had made contact with the reality of the neighborhood organization. These persons were not deliberately deluding themselves; but it is a fact of academic life that prolonged contact with the world of orderly ideas can become confused with contact with disorderly concrete realities.

Third, before the groups were even called together, the prospective members should have had preparation. The Aquinas-Eastown Project Director might first have invited faculty individually to participate in community projects, later using the meeting format to share impressions, feelings, and opinions, much as student teachers do in supervisory seminars. The meetings might have been thought of as reflections on field activities. These meetings would be the second step, which would precede discussions of how to move the institution, perhaps beginning with course ideas (which include team-teaching and student involvement in the neighborhood) and moving in later times to curriculum reform and ways to involve ever more institutional personnel.

An effective team takes time to develop, because it is a group whose members know, trust, and support one another to a high degree. Such individuals probably first join to address some task, which in an academic setting might well be the creation of a new course touching community redevelopment in some way. As this group begins to function, it should consider what difficulties it might expect to see in its internal dynamics. What might go wrong; how might these difficulties be avoided?

The team-taught course is an example. A leader-professor calls some other faculty together, explains his or her vision, and somehow assures these other individuals that they can meet their own professional needs by climbing aboard the project. A sort of naive euphoria grips everyone, so that the inevitable conflicts are unforeseen and unprepared for. This temporary blindness even masks the reality that what they are going to do is not completely new; a lot of the "old" is being brought along. *It is the wise group leader indeed who prepares the group at the outset for internal conflict.*

This conflict can be of several kinds: the discovery of disagreeable personality traits is obvious; a much less obvious source of trouble is the requirement that the leader adapt mode of leadership to the group members' growing self-direction. They begin to formulate their own view of how to meet their needs in this project. Unless the leader becomes more democratic and facilitative, the project can flounder under the weight of dissension.

The issue of whether the group is appointed or spontaneously formed is a false one. A good working relationship among team members is the crucial issue. Do they share common viewpoints? Do they socialize with each other? Can they foresee any difficulties with the project? Can they agree to disagree? The most important steps are choosing the group members.

Two other pitfalls are worthy of mention. First, lack of resources and imagination may severely crimp the team's life-line. Do members of the group require large sums of money before attempting anything? When necessary resources might be lacking, can members devise alternatives? For example, if a scheduled speaker from a community agency cannot keep the appointment, could the class go to the agency? Second, expectations for the project's success ought to be reasonable. But much can be accomplished by a few persistent individuals working as a team. The Aquinas-Eastown Project is a good example of such accomplishment.

QUESTIONS: Are there two or three individuals in your institution with the characteristics cited, who might form the nucleus of a team to aid the community? How might they be brought together and supported by the institution? How might they see their task? Could participation on this team be extended to other professionals in the institution?

Cautions On Controlling The Community Organization

The agency mindset is top-down, authoritarian, and efficiency-oriented, and for these reasons is inappropriate in helping the community. Response to community problems should not automatically be the setting up of an administrative office in a store-front or the creation of programs based on institutional views of what "they" need. One ought to work among the people, spend time where they live, work, and play, and ask sympathetically about their lives and troubles as citizens. Only this exhaustive spadework can furnish adequate foundation for administrative or program organizing.

This point is mentioned because some Aquinas faculty functioned with an agency mindset — well-intentioned, but anxious "to be on with it." Executive machinery may develop to accompany growing group identities, but it should not precede them, for it will be premature and may even act to stifle broader participation. The institution, of course, is in much the better position to control the community organization.

A second problem with the agency mindset is frustration on the part of the professionals. If the operation in the community does

not proceed *smoothly,* and grassroots organization-building never does, some professionals may drop out of the project when they realize this fact of life. Telling them about it in advance may not deter drop-outs, but then again it might.

Third, the agency mindset obstructs the role-reversal professionals must necessarily undergo in aiding the community. For before they can teach the community, they must learn from the community. They should be silent and listen, quite a difficult chore for many professional experts. If they do not, community people will not speak; they will be intimidated and probably resentful, and their desire to participate will be squelched.

QUESTION: How can a dialogue best be begun between members of your institution and residents of the neighborhood about solving their community problems?

A fourth consideration is that as the neighborhood comes into its own, it is probably better for institutional help to withdraw to a more passive role. If the institution sees itself as *the* agent controlling change in the neighborhood, it will rearrange its internal structures to manage that change, in the ways that service agencies have always done: *our* bureaucracy will perform the services, *our* accountants will handle the money, meetings will be in *our* facility, and so forth. This is a potential problem with any indirect aid.

This is a caricature. No institution would want such a role. Yet the agency mindset described does exist and assert itself in subtle ways, chiefly having to do with control of funds until "they get on their feet." This kind of paternalism may be justified on occasion, but it can become a sore point in the community nonetheless. Churches and hospitals, because they are more oriented toward direct service (as discussed earlier) ought to be especially careful of paternalistic practices.

QUESTION: How much control do you think your institution would want over organization efforts in your neighborhood?
QUESTION: Do potential leaders in your organization see the inherent conflict between needing to control and sparking participation?

In light of this discussion, what is reasonable to expect from the institution? First, some professionals will participate, to varying degrees and for varying lengths of time. Second, the prestige of the institution should attract *some* money to the project and give it legitimacy. If this appears to be a risk for the institution (e.g., supporting issue-organizing), fears will probably be out of proportion to the danger (e.g., of reprisals). Third, the institution should have established, even if only informally, an office of "change agent," perhaps titled Community Liaison Officer. Upon this office would fall much of the burden for promoting direct and indirect aid to the neighborhood, as we have seen.

Fourth, on a more long-term basis the institution will probably adapt as necessary to meet changing conditions in the community.

This minimal change is a far cry from a more radical restructuring of the institution itself. Perhaps this is as it should be, although the question is left open, for such revolutionary re-orientation may lead in the long run to new conflicts over who controls change in the community.

CHAPTER IV:
WHAT TO EXPECT*

by Linda Elaine Easley

Having taken some of the beginning steps decribed in Chapters II and III, what can you expect to happen in the community? What can you *make* happen? In this section we explore some directions a community organization might take and look at some problems which may arise as well as consider various solutions for them. Examples are taken directly from analysis of the Eastown experience.

Stages In Organizational Growth

The development of a community organization is not the work of a few great men who create changes overnight. It results from continuous efforts by many individuals and groups working together to solve common neighborhood problems. Periods of internal conflict and confusion can be as important to an organization's growth as those times when there is apparent wide-spread agreement about goals and methods for reaching them.

The realization that a community organization may experience various stages in its development can help you understand where your community organization is now and where it may be headed. It can also help make sense out of the intense debates and factionalism which may arise from time to time within the organization.

In Chapter II we discussed six steps which laid the groundwork for the four stages of ECA's development: 1) looking for "bridges"; 2) gathering data; 3) making an inventory of institutional resources; 4) devising meaningful boundaries; 5) determining groupings within the boundaries; and 6) naming the community. The figures on the following pages briefly review the major purposes, characteristics, activities, and weaknesses of the Eastown Community Association during its four major phases.

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* Portions of this chapter that reflect actual Eastown experiences are based on personal interviews in the Spring of 1978 with Eastown Community Association staff and volunteers. They generously gave their time to provide this information.

Figure 7. Stage I: Identity development of the Eastown Community Association (1974-75).

Figure 8. Stage II: Image development (1975-76).

PURPOSES:
• to develop a community identity
• to identify leaders and resources in the area
• to set up a Steering Committee
• to begin neighborhood improvement projects

CHARACTERISTICS:
• broad use of institutional resources
• many ideas are discussed about what could be done in the community
• "band-aid work" on community problems

ACTIVITIES:
• Paint n' Fix and Alley Clean-Up Programs
• creation of a community food co-op
• publication of a regular community newsletter
• sponsoring a spring Street Fair
• setting up a Community Hall

PROBLEMS:
• symptoms of problems are attacked rather than their causes
• a tendency to bite off more work than the organization can chew
• a homogenous clique runs things
• there is a failure to view Eastown within the context of urban problems in Grand Rapids and the United States

next stage develops in response to the problems raised

PURPOSES:
• to create an image and develop visibility for the Eastown Community Association
• to investigate the relationships between community problems and city operations
• to work with residents to find solutions to problems which directly affect them
• to develop leadership within the community

CHARACTERISTICS:
• community organizing around specific issues
• focus on defining and fighting "the enemy"
• large public turn-outs for demonstrations and hearings
• generally an ad hoc structure

ACTIVITIES:
• enforcing housing inspections
• stopping street widenings
• effective demands for more street lights and stop signs
• successful pressure for city ordinance concerning abandoned homes
• block meetings throughout the community
• annual Street Fair becomes a city-wide event

PROBLEMS:
• lack of on-going participation by community residents
• ineffective and weak organizational structure
• low potential for democratic decision making
• lack of short and long range planning by the Community Council

next stage develops in response to the problems raised

Figure 9. Stage III: Structural development (1976-77).

Figure 10. Stage IV: Community development (1977-?).

PURPOSES:
• to develop maximum participation in decision-making processes
• to work out policies for staff-volunteer relations
• to set up on-going committees, programs, and services
• to develop short and long-range planning for the Association

CHARACTERISTICS:
• increasingly efficient and effective organizational structure; emphasis on democratic decision-making
• formal definition of roles, responsibility, and accountability
• expansion of staff

ACTIVITIES:
• creation of a set of bylaws and the development of formalized election procedures for Community Council positions
• received tax-deductible status
• well-attended Community Council meetings
• active committee work
• lobbied for anti-redlining legislation at local, state, and federal levels
• requested Community Development Target Area status
• purchased and renovated a new Community Hall
• sponsored annual spring Street Fair

PROBLEMS:
• emphasis on the Association's internal development may detract from effectiveness in the community
• expansion of staff can discourage volunteer participation
• disagreements about the various methods to be used to complete the Association's tasks

PURPOSES:
• to use the Association to build a community
• to encourage maximum citizen participation in all Association activities
• to develop economic self-sufficiency

CHARACTERISTICS:
• processes used to complete tasks are made more consistent with the goals and objectives of the Association
• emphasis on accountability and collective work
• major decisions are considered in terms of precedents and precedent-making
• expansion of staff

ACTIVITIES:
• expansion of printing press operations
• hiring of the Association's own housing inspector through the Community Development program in Grand Rapids
• annual Street Fair becomes more of a community event
• extensive consulting service for other neighborhood organizations
• establishment of a successful Home Repair and Maintenance Program
• exploring the possibilities of setting up a community credit union

PROBLEMS:
• yet to be seen

next stage will develop in response to the problems raised

next stage develops in response to the problems raised

Some Characteristics Of Stages

Some general principles and themes emerge from the various stages which the Eastown Community Association has gone through and the processes by which it has moved from one phase to another.

A specific kind of organizational structure may be well-suited to meeting the needs of an organization at a particular time. For example, in Eastown's image development stage, clear advantages resulted from using an ad hoc structure focused on issue-organizing. This enabled the residents to participate in actions on issues that directly affected them, and to see specific results of their work. Such a structure encouraged diverse types of people throughout the entire community to become active in Association activities. The lack of bureaucratic controls allowed the staff to take the initiative and to be innovative in exploring and developing issues. Failure with one issue did not affect the progress of a different one in another region of the community. However, the successes served to reinforce the Association and to show what could be done by working together to solve common problems (Gerlach, pp. 168-169).

If this organizational structure worked so well, why did it change? How does a community organization move from one stage to another? Problems within the community organization develop for a variety of reasons. All of the examples below are from Eastown's Stage II; they demonstrate the need for on-going structural change:

• *sometimes the existing structure cannot effectively meet the major goals of the organization (Eastown: an ad hoc structure could not provide a means for on-going community participation)*

• *the existing structure may not be able to deal with new tasks which arise or newly-defined problems (Eastown: attacking the redlining problem at the state level necessitated a different approach from the ways in which enforcement of the housing code in Eastown was handled)*

• *expansion of the organization's activities and staff may call for a change in its basic structure (Eastown: the need for a staff director and for more effective Council meetings became obvious as staff and participants grew in numbers).*

As such problems become more apparent, some members of the organization will begin to question the way things are being done. They develop new ideas and suggest different ways of doing things. As these innovations are discussed among the members, conflicts may arise between those who benefited from the old methods and those favoring the new ones. Eventually broad agreement may be reached concerning the inadequacies of the structure, and innovations are adopted which require major changes in the organization. Thus a new phase begins (Horvath, p. 176).

Different stages may require basically different structures, resources, activities, and modes of participation. The Eastown Community Association experienced many such changes. For example, with a more formalized organizational structure and an enlarged staff (Stage III), fund-raising efforts expanded to include systematic and successful contacts with area foundations. A larger staff also meant that the Association could provide more services to the area (home repair, housing inspection). Such activities helped move the

community organization from concentrating on outward-directed efforts to fight city hall to the inner-directed dynamics of building a community. At the same time more energy was put into community-wide elections to create a representative Community Council. Leadership skills developed earlier through participation in actions centering around issues were now utilized in committee work. Participation during the earlier stages had required that a resident spend long, tedious hours at frequent meetings throughout each week. In Stage III, participation could easily occur at varying levels (e.g., voting at elections, signing a petition, baking brownies).

Aspects of earlier phases often carry over to play important roles in the later stages of the organization. For example, although many of the present (1977-78) Community Council members are active in committee work (Stage III), the Association continues to sponsor the spring Street Fair (Stage I) and to be involved in local pest control (Stage II). Present staff positions also indicate the continued interest in past activities: among those currently employed are a home-repair and maintenance person (Stage I), two community organizers (Stage II), an executive director (Stage III), and a printer (Stage IV).

Some problems may be "perennials": they persist throughout the development of the organization. Continuous efforts must be made to encourage broader community participation, to develop follow-through on projects, and to maintain continual contact and communication with interested residents.

Conflict As An Ingredient In Growth: Periods of intense conflict can play a valuable role in the growth of an organization. Disagreements about goals, tactics, and leadership help to clarify its purposes and direction. They increase the participants' determination to further their own ideas, methods, or loyalty to one leader or another. This may lead to increased efforts to communicate with others and to recruit new members to the group, thus expanding the organization (Gerlach, pp. 171-172).

Even when only two or more people interact over a period of time, there are bound to be disagreements about ideas and methods. A community organization has to develop effective ways of dealing with dissension among its members. Benefits often derive from openly discussing differences in terms of the larger issues being raised, e.g., what role staff members should take in their work with volunteer committees on a project. Such an approach is more useful than dealing with conflicts by gossiping about personalities. It is also important to consider the views of *all* parties involved in an internal disagreement.

People should be encouraged to evaluate the activities of the organization continually and to express both their positive and negative ideas about it. The planning committee of the organization can provide an arena where long and thorough discussion of internal problems can take place. "Talk-down sessions" after issue-organizing activities and regular day-long retreats for council and staff members can also be used as forums where disagreements are aired.

A typical neighborhood Block Party in Eastown.

The conflict and confusion of moving to the later stages may be less intense and bitter than in earlier transitions. Perhaps this is due to increased use and effectiveness of conflict-resolving mechanisms, or it may result from an expansion of the kinds of activities which involve the energies of many members. When a group has no specific purposes or tasks, its participants often turn their energies to controlling other members. Talented people with time on their hands and a need to justify meetings may begin to put their efforts into criticizing others or into gaining personal control. However, when an organization is involved in a variety of meaningful activities, people are more likely to accept others and to overlook personal dislikes in order to get the jobs done (Freeman, p. 159).

The step-by-step building of a community organization is a series of experiments. Specific problems are examined; various solutions are considered, and one or more is tried. Successful results can set precedents for future actions on similar matters. At the same time, the flexibility to change and the freedom to fail are important attitudes to retain throughout the development of the organization. Much can be learned from failures. Members should be strongly encouraged to analyze and openly discuss the reasons why some of their attempts are clear-cut victories (Eastown: requests for a city-wide ordinance on abandoned homes), others succeed only partially (Eastown: changing traffic patterns in the Wilcox Park area), and still others totally "bomb out" (Eastown: creation of a Pocket Park on an empty lot). Soon after the annual Eastown Street Fair a "post-mortem evaluation" session is held. Participants discuss the event and then develop ideas and a plan for an improved Street Fair for the coming year.

Problems And Solutions In Organizing The Community

If institutional members and community residents want to create an effective community organization, they must get their hands dirty. Knowing what to do, how to do it, and with whom to do it will not always be obvious. Following are some of the basic problems an organization might face and possible solutions for them. The term "community organizer" is used to describe the role of the institutional or community person who is actively working with the community organization. One must keep in mind also that the problems and their possible solutions will differ, depending upon the various stages that each organization is experiencing.

Notes On Issue-Organizing: The community is already organized. Its residents are members of local clubs, churches, and unions. Their daily interaction with each other forms regular predictable patterns. Life proceeds in an organized manner. However, these patterns or structures have not been effective in solving neighborhood problems, thus modifications and changes in the social structures of the community are called for.

A first step in initiating change involves finding out what the community residents see as the problems in their neighborhood. One approach involves knocking on the doors in a specific block and talking with people about life in the area, the problems they see, and their suggested solutions. Their perceptions of what is wrong (curb repair, dogs barking) might differ greatly from that of the community organizer (redlining, unemployment). The latter should beware of organizing one group of people in the community against another — whites against blacks or older residents against students, for example. It is imperative that the organizer begin to work with the issues that the people have identified as critical for themselves. Sometimes this means helping individuals see how their private problems (e.g., rats next door) are really public ones (e.g., need for a city-wide ordinance on pest control).

It will be impossible to tackle all the problems which are brought up; a few will have to be selected after the organizer has done some homework. For example, if heavy traffic on area streets is seen as a problem, then the organizer should investigate who handles such cases in the local governmental structure and learn what the procedures are for bringing problems before them. If other neighborhood organizations exist, they should be contacted to see if they have taken any action on similar problems. He or she should find out whether the solution lies in enforcing current policies or in changing them completely. Should there be a need for changing them, what might be the nature of the opposition?

The first issues to be attacked by a group of residents should be ones that can be clearly defined and that are relatively easy to win. Issues concerning housing are often a good place to begin (zoning codes, redlining, housing inspection, abandoned homes, FHA houses). Ethical concerns must be integral to the development of all issues. For example, residents might feel that racial integration of a community or its school is problematic, and want help from the organi-

zation. At this point the organization must base its decisions upon explicit moral values.

In talking with people on the block, the organizer should be looking for persons interested in doing something about an issue. She or he can ask one of them to host a block meeting at which they can plan and publicize the meeting's agenda in the area. They might also invite a government, agency, or business official (e.g., urban planner, housing inspector, public relations person) who is responsible for addressing the problem to come during the latter part of the block meeting. The organizer should encourage the residents to take as much responsibility as possible in developing the issue. The organizer should play the role of a resource person to help people help themselves.

After a block meeting, public hearing or demonstration, it is often helpful to hold a formal or informal talk-down session, where participants discuss their impressions of what has occurred and plan strategies for the future. The broad consequences of various actions have to be weighed. *There is a difference between continually fighting city hall and learning how to do something yourself.* (After a two-year struggle to obtain Community Development Target Area status for Eastown, which would include more housing inspection by the city, the Association recently won permission to hire its own housing inspector.)

The formation of alliances with other blocks, regions, and communities should be thoroughly explored. (Eastown: When many blocks surrounding a local park got together and invited Recreation Department officials to a public meeting, they were successful in getting significant improvements for the local park.) If the problem occurs throughout the area, a community-wide committee can become a beginning structure for the community organization, for example, a housing or education committee. Such committees are best built from the ground up. They are made up of persons who are interested in and willing to work on the problem, rather than of persons appointed for that purpose without any personal interest in the problem.

Fund-Raising: Money isn't everything, but it helps! There are many resources inside and outside the community which can be used to sustain the organization. Some institutions, businesses, and agencies may not be willing to contribute hard cash, but they will donate such things as paper, furniture, places to meet, publicity, and raffle prizes. All possibilities for such aid should be explored.

Whether one joining the organization should pay a membership fee is a continuing debate within the Eastown Community Association. On the one hand, it enables people to donate for services provided to them by the Association and gives the organization a clear idea of how many people it represents. However, such a fee may exclude people who might otherwise join. Those who have paid may feel that they are not obligated to contribute any more time or energy to the work of the organization. Door-to-door drives for membership or fee collecting will be more successful if the organiza-

tion has first attained a high degree of visibility (Stage II-Image Development).

The Eastown Community Association uses a "Patron Plan" whereby local residents, businesses, and institutions can contribute on a monthly or yearly basis. Accurate records of donations are kept. Frequent communication with the donors through annual reports, Christmas cards, thank-you notes, and invitations to activities keeps the Association in contact with financial donors as well as those who contribute other resources.

A variety of small-scale activities can be successful in raising funds (raffles, bake sales, movie benefits, bazaars). But their principal value lies in involving many community residents on an informal basis. Such activities will be more effective if organized well in advance and preceded by wide publicity.

Once a committee or activity is set up as an on-going part of the organization it should define its goals and submit a budget to the organization to cover its financial needs (paper, equipment, ads). If this is done each year, it will enable the organization to assess its overall needs and will legitimize its requests for aid from various sources.

Legal incorporation as a non-profit organization is a relatively simple task. Information about it is accessible from the State Department of Commerce. Obtaining from the Internal Revenue Service a tax-exempt status (501-c-3) which enables donors to deduct contributions from their taxes is more complicated. Help must be obtained from a corporate lawyer. Once this tax-exempt status is received the organization must conscientiously file annual reports; *failure to do so brings stiff penalties.*

Local businesses and area foundations must be approached carefully and systematically. Businesses within the community are more directly affected by the improvement of life in the area and should therefore be contacted first. Later, foundations will want you to demonstrate your financial support locally in order to assess your credibility. Accurate records from local fund-raising activities can be used to establish such legitimacy.

Foundations have to give away a certain amount of money each year and the job of an organization is to persuade them to direct some of it to the community organization. Research in the local library will determine what kinds of activities the foundation funds, how much money is given away, when its Board meets, and so on. During the initial phone call, the community organizer should introduce himself and give a brief history of the organization, its past funding, and its proposed budget for the coming year. Next, he can ask for an appointment to discuss the matter further with a representative from the foundation. If the answer is "no," the organizer might ask such questions as: "When would be a good time to contact you in the future? When does your fiscal year begin? When do you receive proposals each year? Does the foundation require a written proposal?" If this does not get the community organizer any further, the conversation can be ended with an offer to send the foundation a

packet of informational materials about the organization. If an appointment is obtained, several people should attend it, including at least one person who has been with the organization for some time, so that miscellaneous questions can be fielded by one who is experienced with the organization. A short slide show which demonstrates what the organization is all about might provide an attractive opening for your meeting.

It is wise to consider ways in which the community organization can become economically more self-sustaining and self-reliant. For example, the Eastown Community Association is exploring the possibilities of setting up sister organizations (a small-scale printing industry, a community credit union) which could donate a portion of their profits to the Association.

Staffing The Organization: Finances to pay staff salaries can stem from a variety of sources including student internships, VISTA volunteers, CETA employees, and Urban Corp participants. The Association or a personnel committee should work out the general job descriptions for the positions needed, publicize the openings throughout the neighborhood, and interview applicants. If possible, preference should be given to people who live within the community, because they are more likely to be committed to improving the area. People who have done volunteer work with the organization should also be given special priority. Strong emphasis should be placed on the ability of the staff member to work with many different kinds of people, inside and outside the community. He or she will be serving as both leader and follower in helping people learn how to do things for themselves.

Training of staff members during the early part of the organization's growth might be best handled by formal training sessions. (See Appendix for training institutes.) Consultants can be brought in to conduct workshops for staff and interested volunteers. During the later phases, older staff members can train newer ones. Weekly staff meetings can also serve as educational experiences for the staff.

Sometimes overcommitted and overworked staff and volunteers in a community organization become "burned-out" — exhausted, cynical, cranky. This can be prevented by limiting the number of working hours or committee responsibilities for a single person, scheduling frequent vacations, rotating tasks, and emphasizing the important role that volunteers can play in the work of the organization. Both volunteers and staff should be encouraged to develop strong interests in people, things, and activities totally outside the organization. Their work with the community organization cannot be expected to meet all of their individual needs.

Americans are bombarded every day with news of city, state, national, and global events. However, they sometimes know little about what is happening in their own neighborhood. A community newsletter can help create a sense of identification with the area, let people know what the organization is doing, and encourage them to participate in it. It should contain news of particular interest to the specific community. Perhaps it could include regular features by

local agencies and institutions, as well as regular columns about events in specific regions of the community. It can also contain grass-roots news about people moving into the area, new babies, deaths, rummage and garage sales, and so on. A communication committee can be established to help with the work of the newsletter and other public relations efforts. The paper can be financed through ads from the business area (as is done in Eastown) or through charging a small fee for the paper. Arrangements for printing can be made through a local printing firm. Even a well-done ditto printed on colored paper can help get out the word about the organization's activities.

Both news-gathering and distribution can be handled by asking volunteers on every block to be contributors to the paper and dis-tributors of it. Someone from the organization should contact the volunteers frequently to check on distribution problems and to discuss and write up their local news. The paper can also be distributed by paying newsboys/newsgirls to deliver it, but this does not allow much community participation. The paper should be mailed to city officials, other neighborhood organizations, and contributors who live outside the community.

A colorful brochure should be designed setting forth the pur-pose, history, activities, funding sources, and location of the organi-zation and the community. It can then be distributed throughout the neighborhood, used in asking for financial contributions, passed out at community activities, and sent to appropriate city and state officials. Brochures can be used to explain programs and services (e.g., Home Repair, Paint n' Fix).

Someone with the community organization also should be assigned the responsibility for establishing good contacts with the city's newspapers, radio, and television stations. Media coverage of the organization's activities can help create and maintain community identity and visibility.

Creating Consensus About Long-Range Goals: The general goals of maximum citizen participation in democratic decision-making and political effectiveness are probably common to most community organizations. After the organization is under way, an ad hoc committee might be formed to work out specific goals and objectives. Bylaws can then be written to provide guidelines for its operation. They should be viewed as a flexible model which can be readily modified to meet the changing needs of the organization. Goals, objectives, and bylaws can be used as standards against which the strengths and weaknesses of the organization can be measured as it develops. Such general assessments can take place at staff meetings, council retreats, or town meetings.

A question to be kept in mind in thinking about long-range goals is "Whom does all this benefit?" In other words, "For whom are you saving the neighborhood?" The recent interest in the revitalization of urban neighborhoods is attracting more middle-income families to inner city areas, thus raising property values and forcing lower-income families to move out of their communities into relatives' homes or into housing of poorer quality. The ownership of

Eastown residents meet the media on educational issues.

low-income homes by the community organization could help to reverse this trend somewhat in a specific area.

During the 1950s and 1960s many businesses and industries left the cities to locate in suburban areas. They gave little thought to the effect this had on the population they left behind. At present there are tax incentives which encourage them to relocate in the cities. *Communities receiving such businesses and industries should negotiate with the latter concerning their present and future responsibilities to the people in their area.*

Significant differences may be apparent between what some members would like the organization to be and the realities of the community it exists in. For example, some might hope that the organization would try to transform a society of meat-eaters into a community of vegetarians through its food co-op and nutrition programs. That may indeed be possible, but many intermediary steps would be needed to make that dream come true. An organization has to begin with the people's priorities even if these are not what its leaders would like them to be.

Explanations that are offered for community problems must be carefully analyzed. Each explanation usually implies a specific solution. (Eastown: in the early seventies the deterioration of the area was seen as a result of new residents' lack of interest in keeping up their homes. This led to an emphasis on "Paint n' Fix" Programs, "Alley-Clean Ups," and planting marigolds in the area. Later explanations pointed to the damaging effects of redlining policies used by local banks and insurance companies. This called for action to be taken at various levels of city, state, and federal government in order to develop and implement anti-redlining legislation. If the Eastown Community Association had stuck with its emphasis on beautification programs, it might have won a few cosmetic battles, but it would certainly have lost the war over the economic-political survival of the Eastown area.)

Structuring The Organization: The community organization usually begins with the work of an informal group of friends. They often share the same backgrounds, life-styles, value orientations, and amounts of spare time, and usually recruit their friends to the organization. Members of this group often talk with each other socially, and consult with each other concerning decisions about organization activities. At meetings, they listen to each other more attentively than to "outsiders," interrupt less frequently, and repeat each other's points. In summary, they often unconsciously form a homogeneous closed group. Such informal friendship networks exist within any organization, but they need not be the ones to run things. As the need for more political effectiveness and community participation grows, the organization will have to develop ways of opening up. One way to do this is to "formalize" the structure of the organization. When the rules for decision-making are open and available to everyone, more people are encouraged to participate, even though they may not have the time to cultivate friendships with the informal groups in the organization. More importantly,

those who work with the organization are then held directly responsible to the larger group, and the ultimate power for decision-making is retained within the organization rather than in the hands of a small informal friendship network (Freeman, p. 154).

Figure 11 illustrates schematically the present organizational structure of the Eastown Community Association.
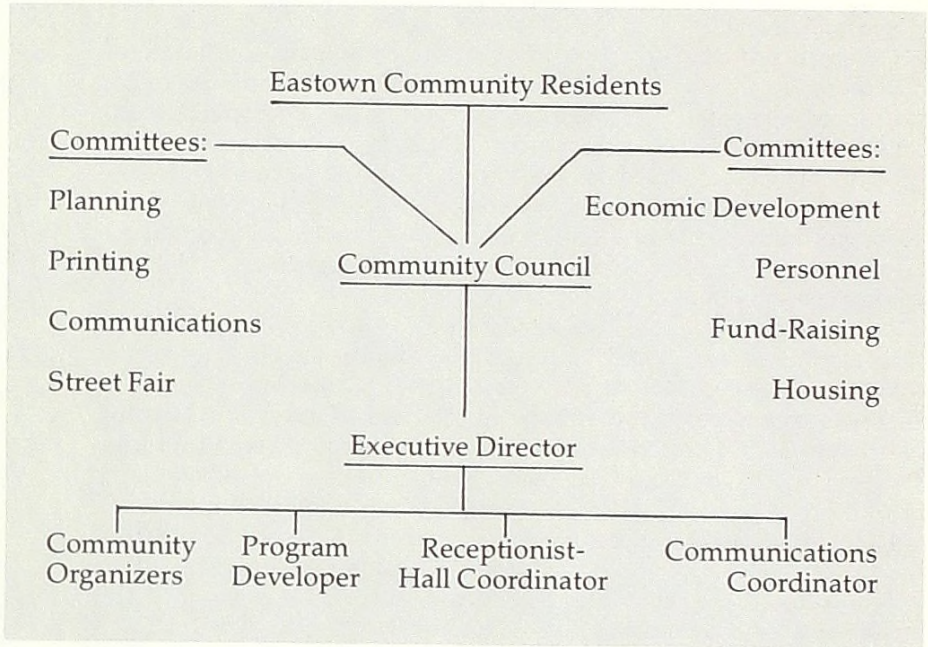

Figure 11. Schematic organizational structure of the Eastown Community Association.

A board or council should be set up to function as the major governing body of the organization. This council should be as representative of the community's population as possible in terms of such variables as sex, age, ethnic identification, and economic position.

The twenty-one-member Eastown Council is elected each Fall by its neighborhood regions. Four seats at-large are later appointed by the Council in order to balance representation. New Council members become familiar with the workings of the organization by reading information packets, by attending orientation sessions, and through discussions with "buddies" assigned to them from among older Council members or volunteers. Each member is asked to attend a monthly Council meeting as well as to take responsibility for some activity of the organization (e.g., committee, issue). The Council is directed by two co-chairpersons. Ideally, one would already have served as co-chair for a year and the other would be new to the position; thus a kind of apprenticeship for the co-chair can be created.

An early Eastown issue: need for alley clean-up.

A few days before each Council meeting the chairpersons and staff plan an agenda which is delivered, along with relevant papers, committee and staff reports, to the council members' homes, so that they can review the material beforehand. Each meeting begins with several moments of silence for reflection, followed by approval of both the minutes and the proposed agenda. Next comes a series of committee and staff reports, old and new business. Each major resolution to be considered is in writing and all Council members are asked to sign it, indicating their personal vote on the matter. Efforts are made to keep these Council meetings to two hours through emphasis on active committee work and the practice of including written reports with the agenda.

Committees are both permanent (Housing, Printing) and ad hoc (Fire Station, Truck Route). A Planning Committee open to all Council members meets a week prior to the Council meetings, and considers the general policies of the organization and miscellaneous committee work; it provides a forum for discussion of new ideas, internal conflicts, and complaints. There is no time limit on these meetings, so they provide an open arena for consideration of many ideas which the Council would not have time to debate and discuss in detail. The Planning Committee often forms resolutions and recommendations based on these discussions, which are later brought to the Community Council. This committee can be seen as the workhorse of the organization.

At present the Community Council is working towards setting up a community-wide assembly or town meeting to be held annually, at which election of Council members will be held, and long-range goals for the organization will be established through direct democratic decision-making.

Given the large staff, the complex structure, and the newly purchased community hall, one may wonder what prevents the Eastown Community Association from becoming just another social service agency or "mini-city hall." Jo Freeman, in her article "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," has developed some principles which an organization should follow if it is to be democratically structured and politically effective. The Eastown Community Association, by trial and error, has slowly developed similar policies. What follows are paraphrased excerpts from Freeman's article, together with examples from the Eastown experience that illustrate those principles:

Tasks should be delegated to persons who are interested in and willing to perform them. Eastown: At one time the Association assigned Council members committee responsibilities and many became disenchanted by this. Now, members are encouraged to become involved in the issues or activities which personally interest them and they tend to be more responsible in their participation as a result.

Individuals may exercise power, but the organization has the ultimate responsibility for how the power is exercised. Eastown: Several staff members and volunteers have had their hands gently slapped by the Community Council for proceeding to purchase expensive equipment for the Association without Council approval.

Responsibility should be distributed among as many people as is reasonably possible. Eastown: Staff members are encouraged to include volunteers in most of their work.

Tasks should be rotated among various members. Eastown: Efforts are being made to develop a training program for new council members who want to become involved in efforts to contact foundations for funds. Each year the spring Street Fair is coordinated by different individuals with the previous directors serving as their assistants.

People should be given an opportunity to learn skills they do not have, but this is best done through some type of "apprenticeship" rather than the sink-or-swim method. Eastown: The Association is making an effort to train its Council members by encouraging them to coordinate activities and lead various committee meetings.

Information is power! The more the entire group knows about how things work and what is happening, the more effective all of its members can be. Eastown: Orientation sessions, assigning new council members to work with old council members, information packets, and retreats all serve these functions in the Eastown Community Association. Staff members also make an effort to contact frequently Council members on a one-to-one basis to inform them of daily operations.

Equal access should be provided to the resources used by the organization (printing press, newsletter). Eastown: Residents and the Association's committees are all encouraged to write articles for the monthly newsletter. The files of the Association can be used by all Eastowners.

The Eastown Community Association has developed three other policies which have been useful in its efforts to be democratic and politically effective:

- A formalized structure to resolve internal conflict has been created with the development of a Planning Committee. It serves as a forum for any ideas, conflicts, and dissension which may occur. These can be brought up, listened to, discussed, and then formulated into recommendations to be considered at Council meetings.

- The majority of people on the staff are those who have spent many hours in volunteer work for the Association prior to their hiring, and often after their employment. They are also people who live in the Eastown community and have a long-term commitment to improving the quality of life in the area.

- The Association is making an effort to develop reciprocal relationships in exchange for various services it provides area residents. For example, if someone wants a garage torn down or home repair work done, he is requested to pay for this work according to a sliding scale or to volunteer hours of service to the Association.

These principles and policies have gradually evolved as a result of the daily operations of the Eastown Community Association. Such

guidelines have been important in keeping the Association a grass-roots, democratic, and politically effective organization.

Generating Community Participation: Organizers should find out what kinds of activities residents participate in and how such activities can be involved with the new organization to help improve life in the community. For example, area institutions and agencies could be asked to run a candidate for the Community Council. In this way a cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere can be created from the beginning.

Some stages of the organization's growth allow for more or different kinds of participation than others. Many, perhaps hundreds, may become actively involved in a single emotional issue (e.g., street widening, the possibility of area porno shops), whereas few may continue to attend meetings on a regular basis. (Eastown: Recently the distinction between the completion of a task and the processes which can be used to get the job done has become important in discussions of Association activities. For example, the question has arisen as to whether or not the Association should pay for delivery of the newsletter or continue to encourage volunteers to distribute it. The task will be completed in each case, but the latter method encourages participation by more area residents.)

Eastown Hall before and after renovation: a symbol of neighborhood self-help.

Many residents become aware of the existence of the community organization during its initial stages of development. They may become actively involved in its activities when they have face-to-face contact with a participant whom they already know or who has been significant to them in some way. Active members often recruit others from their networks of families, friends, and associates. News stories, television, and public demonstrations may create interest in the operations of the organization, but *the best way to make an active participant of someone who has followed the activities of the organization from afar is through close personal ties with an actively involved person or small group* (Gerlach, pp. 173-174).

Individuals may have many reasons for participating: to gain personal recognition, to protect property values, lack of good television programs on a specific evening, wanting to socialize. Many of these will be different from the formally-stated goals and objectives of the organization. However, such interests must be respected and considered by the organization's leaders in planning activities. For example, staff and committee reports at each Council meeting enable public recognition to be given for work done by individuals. Members often look forward to going out for a beer afterwards when they come to organization meetings. Some feel more comfortable in the discussions of organization business at the bar later than they do during the more formally-organized sessions.

Individuals participate at different levels and in different ways in organization activities, e.g., holding block meetings, sewing for a bazaar, lobbying with the state legislature. Appreciation should be shown for whatever they can give to the organization. It is important to make people feel they are not just cogs in another bureaucratic wheel or called on when the organization needs something. (Eastown: The Christmas message the Association sent out last year thanking people for their help was a meaningful gesture. There is also a life-cycle aspect to participation. At some time during the year or during their lives, people are better able to participate than at other times. For example, a housewife whose children are grown or a middle-age businessman may have more time for community service than they did when younger.)

It is often said that people will participate only when it is in their own self-interest to do so. One effect the community organization has is to expand people's ideas of what their actual self-interest is. For example, they begin to see how a committee meeting or a neighborhood regional meeting on city truck routes can help them in their individual efforts to protest the amount of truck traffic which moves in front of their homes.

As individuals begin to act together, they see the changes they can make by cooperating with each other. They begin to understand their interdependence and to shed their frustrations in trying to change things alone. No longer do they see themselves as passive victims of City Hall or great corporations.

Many decisions affect an individual's life, and in American society today most of these are beyond personal control. One effect

of community residents working collectively to solve common problems is that individuals are directly able to participate in more decision-making processes which affect them. What were once considered private problems (a crumbling curb, a leaky roof) are now defined as public issues (e.g., lack of city services in an area, poor housing code enforcement) which can be examined and solved. As the community organization grows, the set of decisions within the control of its individual members expands and their options are broadened.

Making Links Outside The Community: The community and its institutions do not live in isolation. Their operations are directly influenced by other neighborhoods, by city, county, state, federal and international events, and by agencies, corporations, and governments.

The community organizer should quickly find out "who is who" and "who does what" in various levels of government, agencies, and industry. He or she must be aware of the distinction between those who have the authority to make decisions (e.g., city commissioners, county officials) and those who have power to influence those decisions (multinational corporations, real estate industry).

It is also important to know when to define a governmental organization or agency as a member of the opposition and when to build alliances with it. Who is viewed as an enemy and who is deemed a friend may change depending upon the circumstances. (Eastown: The Association began its relationship with the Federal Housing Administration in a hostile manner in its attempt to pressure them to improve the quality of housing in the community. Recently, because of FHA compliance, it has more cooperative ties with the local office.)

There may be a difference between the formal ties that an organization has and the informal contacts which are created and cultivated on a one-to-one basis between its members and those of others. (Eastown: Because of its role in helping other neighborhoods to begin their own organizations, the Eastown Community Association now has strong informal contacts with many other leaders in the neighborhood movement throughout the city. A few years ago an attempt to formalize such relationships in a city-wide Neighborhood Alliance failed. Perhaps, like community organizations themselves, alliances among neighborhoods in a city pass through various stages of development. The neighborhoods involved may not have been strong enough at that time to sustain an active commitment to internal grass-roots organizing and at the same time to democratic involvement in a formally-structured neighborhood alliance.)

Several national organizations of neighborhoods carry out a variety of activities at national and regional levels. Any community organization should seriously consider maintaining active contact with them to receive information and ideas and to obtain training. Coalitions created through such organizations have been crucial in the passing of anti-redlining legislation and in the recognition of neighborhood groups in recent Federal urban policies. The

most prominent of such organizations are listed in the Appendix.

As a result of its links to the outside world, a community organization often serves as a referral agency to local residents. It provides specific names and phone numbers of people they can contact throughout the city and state about specific problems. This is particularly important for low-income residents who are so much at the mercy of governmental and social service agencies. The organization can help them cut through the red tape and can provide them with the means for more personalized contacts with members inside large complex bureaucracies.

The preceding pages have explored ways in which the community organization might move through various phases in its growth. Each individual relationship between an institution and a community is different, but these pages provide a general basis for discussion and some ideas for action.

CHAPTER V:
SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

The condition of the neighborhood has a powerful effect on the operation of the institution. It affects principally the institution's clientele, so that deteriorating surroundings may lead to dwindling numbers of clients, be they students, parishioners, or patients. More subtly perhaps, blight also affects the staff of the institution. Not wanting to live in such an area, their relationship to the institution becomes more distant, physically and even psychologically. Their morale suffers.

Some ways in which the institution affects its neighborhood are obvious, other ways are more subtle. In the case of an urban college, a large number of students will tend to occupy housing near the campus, perhaps irritating permanent residents with their noise, automobiles, or general transiency. Conversely, church parishioners may be a stabilizing factor in a changing neighborhood. Both kinds of residents support the local economy, however, although the kinds of establishments they frequent may differ starkly.

The institution may provide educational, health, religious, or recreational services to the community. But on the negative side it can represent property unavailable for taxes, placing a proportionately larger burden on the property owners around it. It both generates and redirects traffic, another negative impact from the residential point of view. Finally, the institution may also pollute the immediate environment with night lighting, smoke, or radio and TV interference, noise (e.g., church bells).

It's OK To "Create" A Neighborhood: If a clearly identifiable community does not exist, why not take the initiative to create one? First, look for "bridges," groups of people who connect the institution with the community, such as students, resident faculty, parishioners, clients, or staff living in the area. These groups will be a main source of leadership in future organization. Second, gather as much statistical data on the neighborhood and its residents as is feasible. How is land used? What sorts of housing exist? What are the population characteristics?

Third, inventory your institutional resources. What can your institution provide and what can't it? Fourth, devise meaningful boundaries for the neighborhood. They may be major streets or expressways, commercial corridors, railroads, or natural dividers such as rivers. Fifth, determine what groupings exist within these boundaries: people who know each other somewhat, may act together, or may share the same life-style or value outlook. Are there block clubs or previously existing neighborhood action organizations? Your "bridge" may be one of these groups. Sixth and finally, select a name as a rallying point for community esprit de corps.

Community Self-Help Means Watching Out For The Agency Mindset: The institution's main purpose must be to help the community *to help itself.* Your institution may have "created" the neighborhood, but once the residents begin to show some ownership for the enterprise you are all jointly engaged in, the institutional stance must become less controlling.

In fact, the development of any agencies or organizations, whether in the neighborhood or in the institution, ought to be more "bottom up" than "top down." Widespread awareness of problems and some commitment to their solutions should precede any program, store-front, or committee development. However, most people working within a bureaucracy develop an efficiency mindset which demands that "they be on with it." Resist this temptation just as you resist the frustration of dealing with the inefficiencies of grassroots organizing.

Learn from your neighborhood residents what *their* perceptions of their needs are. Professionals from institutions often find this role-reversal, seeking advice rather than giving it, perhaps the most trying aspect of helping. But without it, a truly cooperative venture is impossible.

Phasing out the institutional influence as the community organization grows stronger is necessary, but it is not the same as a return to the normal do-nothing tendencies. Remaining supportive and concerned means not forgetting about the community after a brief flurry of activity.

Direct Or Indirect Aid Requires Getting Your Hands Dirty: The difference between these kinds of aid to the community is that in the case of indirect aid, the helper politicks within the institution in an attempt to raise consciousness and promote internal structural change. The object of this change is to enable the institution to help the neighborhood better in the future.

The main thing learned from Eastown about giving aid is that it requires on-site involvement: meeting people, listening to them, perhaps performing some services. This is readily understood in the straightforward (direct) situations mentioned in Chapter III, but any internal activities to raise consciousness such as committees, courses, or the like must include touching base frequently with the neighborhood and its problems.

Two further points helpers should keep in mind: first, you may have to organize the residents to pressure the institution for help. Without this backing your own efforts within the walls may be fruitless. Second, working with your fellow professionals, despite tendencies to stumble, provides a support group for your efforts. Much more can be done by a dedicated few acting together than could be accomplished by each individually.

A caution: community helpers from the institution should hold reasonable expectations. A few will become significantly involved, and institutional prestige should attract some money. Official approval of the project may prove empty, but it also helps to free up resources. Don't let the absence of following crowds dis-

courage you. They'll probably never be there.

Neighborhood Organization Proceeds Through Stages: In a sense, a community is already organized into predictable patterns. But these patterns of interaction (clubs, churches, unions) are not capable of addressing larger neighborhood problems such as housing deterioration, crime, traffic, or the loss of a commercial center.

The first stage, identity development, seeks to create a sense of "who we are" and "where we are." Some organization, such as a steering committee to address problems, will form amid much concern for symptoms: clean-up, fix-up, paint-up, or talk of vigilantism against youth gangs.

The second stage, image development, grows out of the first. Some leaders see that the neighborhood's problems are often the result of outside forces, the most easily identifiable of which is City Hall. There is internal conflict within the organization over goals. The organizational structure itself may be inefficient, leading to a lack of continuous participation by residents. But the good news is that organizing around specific issues, such as against proposed street-widenings and demolitions and in favor of street repairs, street lighting, and park improvements delayed by bureaucracy, develops visibility for the neighborhood and touches many more residents personally.

Stage III, structural development, refers to the firming of the community association. Paradoxically, although roles become defined more formally and responsibilities allocated more authoritatively, the opportunity for more broad-based democratic decision-making is enhanced. The lonely cliques which guided the organization through its earlier phases are subsumed into a larger, more integrated political network. But again, not without some painful moments. Issue-organizing remains an important instrument, but it, too, is subsumed into a larger repertoire of methods.

Stage IV, community development, is a yet more sophisticated phase in which the organization achieves a good measure of self-sufficiency and functions well in encouraging maximum citizen participation in all its activities. Conflict is still present, but it is less personal, and is diffused throughout the structure of the association.

APPENDIX
Neighborhood Organizations and Training Institutes

(Where to write for help)

National Organizations of Neighborhood Groups

National Association of
   Neighborhoods
1612 20th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

National Peoples Action
121 West Superior Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610

National Neighbors
17 Maplewood Mall
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Information and Training Institutes

National Training and Information
   Center
1123 West Washington Boulevard
Chicago, Illinois 60607

New England Training Center
19 Davis Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02908

Neighborhood Organization
   Research Group
Workshop in Political Theory and
   Policy Analysis
Indiana University
814 East Third Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47401

Institute for Local Self-Reliance
1717 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009

Center for Governmental Studies
Neighborhood Decentralization
   Newsletters
1701 K Street, N.W., Suite 906
Washington, D.C. 20006

ACORN
523 West 15th Street
Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

Aquinas-Eastown Project
Aquinas College
1607 Robinson Road, S.E.
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506

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Alinsky, Saul. *From Citizen Apathy to Participation*. Chicago, Illinois: Industrial Areas Foundation, 8 South Michigan Avenue.

– discusses ways to generate citizen participation to solve community problems

Alinsky, Saul. *Rules for Radicals*. New York: Vintage Book, 1972.

– This book is basic reading for those interested in community organizing. Alinsky, probably the most notable American organizer of the past 30 years, discusses the tactics and mechanisms necessary to create mass movements behind well-defined issues, with the power of organized people. His emphasis on the need to deal with the practical reality of the situation and discount the rigidity of rhetorical or dogmatic response is of special significance to potential institutional response.

Boggs, James and Grace Lee. *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

– places cultural change in the United States within an historical and cross-cultural context.

Boyer, Brian D. *Cities Destroyed for Cash*. Chicago: Follett Press, 1973.

– analyzes the redlining issue and other housing problems in the United States.

Bradford, Leland R. *Making Meetings Work*. La Jolla, California: University Associates, 1976.

– a guide for leaders and group members on how to run and participate in meetings.

Bunge, W. *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution*. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Inc., 1971.

– an in-depth study of one square mile of the inner city of Detroit just after the rebellion of 1967 and a classic analysis of the evolution of a contemporary American urban landscape. Every aspect of this book is noteworthy, but the author's personal contribution to neighborhood activities is of special significance for those considering involvement in their community.

Castro, B. "Hostos: Report from a Ghetto College." *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 44, No 2 (May, 1974): pp. 270-294.

– In this analysis, the creation of a new college was one attempt to reverse the decay of the South Bronx. Particularly good is Castro's understanding of the built-in flaws, both structural and attitudinal, which led to the decline of the institution.

Flanagan, Joan. *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book: How to Raise Money in Your Community*. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1977.

– examines many ways to raise money using your own group's members and resources.

Freeman, Jo. "The Tyranny of Structurelessness." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology,* XVII, (1972-73), 151-164.
   —reviews principles by which an organization can be operated in a democratic manner and be politically effective.

Gerlach, Luther P. and Virginia H. Hine. *Lifeway Leap.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1973.
   —an overview of cultural changes in America and the parts that various groups play in this process.

Harvey, D. *Social Justice and the City.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
   —Although the urban landscape seldom reflects an equitable distribution of those social and economic resources necessary for adequate human growth and development, it is assumed throughout this complex book that social justice must be the principal goal for urban planning and development. One especially significant theoretical insight to be gained from this book is the relationship between spatial patterns and contemporary urban America and the social-economic processes of the American system.

Hess, Karl. "Flight from Freedom." *Quest,* Vol. 1, No. 4 (September-October, 1977).
   —describes the rise and fall of a self-help project in a neighborhood in Washington, D.C.

Horvath, Ronald J. "Machine Space." *Geographical Review,* (April, 1974), 167-188.
   —discusses the idea of stages of growth with the example of automobile usage in the United States.

Jones, W. Ron. *Finding Community.* Palo Alto, California: James E. Freel and Associates, 1971.
   —a guide to community research and action.

Kahn, S. *How People Get Power.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1970.
   —a book about community organizing, written for organizers

Kasperson, R. and M. Breitbart. *Participation, Decentralization and Advocacy Planning.* Washington, D.C.: Commission on College Geography, Resource Paper No. 25. Association of American Geographers, 1974.
   —In this resource paper the authors have chosen not to inventory specific examples of urban decentralization and citizen participation, but rather to emphasize the general conceptual issues related to these developments. The discussion of advocacy planning is especially relevant for those interested in stimulating professional involvement in community development.

Kotler, Milton. *Neighborhood Government: the Local Foundations of Political Life.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1969.

– In this book Kotler develops a model for maximum political participation. Neighborhood government through direct participation in those decisions that affect the neighborhood is the foundation for this book. The historic and political precedents for this model of local decentralized control are carefully defined and analyzed, as are the methods of transferring decision-making power back to the neighborhood.

Morris, D. and K. Hess. *Neighborhood Power: the New Localism.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1975.

– This easily read book is devoted to the idea of returning political and economic power back to a workable human scale of the urban neighborhood. The authors look at many models of political and economic decentralization, and draw from their experiences in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, D.C.

Nash, G., R.E. Price and D. Waldorf. *The University and the City: Eight Cases of Involvement.* A report prepared for the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973.

– Although none of these cases is a detailed "how-to-do-it" study, the report is useful in showing how institutions of different sizes reacted creatively to diverse situations of urban deterioration in which they found themselves.

Rossi, P.H. and R.A. Dentler. *The Politics of Urban Renewal: the Chicago Findings.* New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

– A large and prestigious university struggles with rapid deterioration in neighborhoods and commercial centers surrounding it. This case study is particularly helpful in showing how the effort at community rejuvenation had to be carried on at many levels beyond the neighborhood itself: the city, the state, even the federal government.

Sarason, S.B. *The Creation of Settings and the Future Societies.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972.

– Sarason's extensive experience as an academic working in community settings is distilled into a cogent "theory" of human interaction which explains why some group ventures fail and others succeed. Parts of Chapter III of the present book draw on his insights.

Wholey, Jane. "The Story of the USA's First Urban Solar System and Windmill." *Win.* (February 3, 1977).

Worthy, William. *The Rape of Our Neighborhoods.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976.

– discusses how communities are resisting take-overs by colleges, hospitals, church businesses, and public agencies.