New Britain to Pittsburgh and Back

A CED Adventure

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Implemented in New Britain, CT and Pittsburgh, PA
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It is not in the nature of man - nor of any living entity - to start out by giving up, by spitting in one's own face and damning existence; that requires a process of corruption whose rapidity differs from man to man.

Some give up at the first touch of pressure; some sell out; some run down by imperceptible degrees and lose their fire, never knowing when or how they lost it.

Then all of these vanish in the vast swamp of their elders who tell them persistently that maturity consists of abandoning one's mind;
security, of abandoning one's values;
practicality, of losing self esteem.

Yet a few hold on and move on, knowing that that fire is not to be betrayed, learning how to give it shape, purpose and reality.

Ayn Rand, 1968.

To my grandparents Marjorie and Edward Sullivan and to my parents John and Kathleen Van Campen - thank you for letting my fire take shape.

Jennifer Van Campen, 1998.

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ABSTRACT

The following is a review of the author's Community Economic Development (CED) experiences while working at a non-profit community organizing project in New Britain, CT, a "fellow" at a public housing authority in Pittsburgh, PA and while "between positions." Each position offered substantial exposure to the various organizational constraints limiting the success of CED. The final sections present concerns and recommendations for how each described organization could better meet and honor the spirit of CED.

SUMMARY

Whether trying to address the unemployment of 300 people in the Arch Street neighborhood of New Britain, Connecticut or the re-housing of 1,500 public housing families in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; whether working in a large or small, private or public setting, I have learned that practitioners of Community Economic Development (CED) must adhere to several fundamental principles:

1) **Know your community** - inside and out, constantly reconnect, constantly listen

2) **Honor democracy** - it is hard work, but without it no project can have lasting success

3) **Address the place and the person** - CED strategies must both improve the physical environment which supports the improved person who nurtures the viable community

4) **Think big** - the impact you have can only at best match the vision you have

5) **Understand and respect self interest** - including your own; knowing why each person or player is involved and working that to everyone's advantage

6) **Have courage and listen to your heart** - take risks, think out loud, use bright colors, if it were easy - someone else would have already done it: listen, learn and act; lead by example; there are many willing to follow.

They seem simple. Yet hundreds (probably thousands) of talented thoughtful people in the world of human service delivery (public, private, non-profit) ignore these simple principles everyday. The following is the story of two places where thoughtful people have made these mistakes. We can all learn from them and prevent them.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

A. Problem Statements

The Arch Street neighborhood, in New Britain, CT, will continue to experience 25%+ unemployment and further disinvestment until a vehicle and a process for community economic development is created to promote employment and business development for the residents of the Arch St. neighborhood.

In Pittsburgh, PA, and in cities across the country, thousands of low-income individuals and families are threatened with losing their homes as public housing in this country is eroded by mismanagement, neglect and withdrawal of federal financial and political support. The residents of Allequippa Terrace must be given training and support if they are to become effective partners in the transformation of their community.

In the sixteen months of this program I have worked for a non-profit community organization, I have been a cog in the public housing authority wheel, and now, unemployed, I am a volunteer for a CDC back in my home of New Britain, CT. I have been an insider and an outsider. I have worked for growing and dying organizations. My problem statement is: unless I can learn how to maximize the organizational strengths and address the weaknesses in each of these models I will not be an effective CED practitioner. The crux of my academic research and field experience is: What is community? How is it built and destroyed? How can institutions of various types be most effective in supporting community? To answer these questions I will synthesize the results of the two very different projects in New Britain and Pittsburgh.

B. Project Goals

New Britain
The New Britain project, revolved around the newly formed Greater New Britain Community Development Corporation (GNB CDC). The GNB CDC formed in 1996 and has only very recently become incorporated. The organization is currently raising funds in order to hire a full time Executive Director. The Board is composed of five representatives from each Citizens for Action in New Britain (CANB) and the New Britain Area Conference of Churches (NewBRACC) which are the two "parent" organizations. There are also five at-large Board members nominated by the original ten. The current Board has 9 men and 6 women. The occupations range from a welfare recipient and factory manager to an architect and lawyer. The group is ethnically and racially representative of the City at-large. The group has a strong sense of camaraderie and purpose. They are excited about their future.

The mission of the GNB CDC is:

> To empower low and moderate income individuals and families to become stakeholders in their New Britain area neighborhoods, by:
> 1. Working with effective coalitions and community organizations that share our mission;

2. Creating homeownership opportunities;

3. Promoting economic development; and

4. Engaging in activities to build harmonious and tolerant communities thereby improving the quality of life in the New Britain area.

The GNB CDC has chosen to focus their initial development efforts on the Arch St. area. The Arch St. area is a small geographic area adjacent to downtown New Britain which is composed of two residential neighborhoods divided by a commercial corridor. The neighborhood has suffered tremendous disinvestment over the past 20 years. There are over 20 abandoned commercial structures on a 1/4 mile stretch of Arch St. The housing stock is 15% abandoned and the remaining units have an estimated 40% vacancy rates. The neighborhood is consistently one of the highest crime areas in the city and has the second highest unemployment rate. (More data available in the GNB CDC Strategic and Business Plan attached in Exhibit I).

Despite these obstacles the Arch St. neighborhood has tremendous potential which is why the GNB CDC has chosen it as a starting point. The neighborhood has a beautiful Victorian housing stock. It is adjacent to downtown and thus is of political interest. The neighborhood rests squarely between two major employers: New Britain General Hospital and the soon-to-be-completed New Britain District Court House. The neighborhood has several long-standing successful businesses and its residents have a strong sense of neighborhood identity.

The GNB CDC Board's first activity has been raising funds for initial staffing and project identification. In the meantime they are also interested in initiating an economic development planning and research process. My project goal was to create the development vehicle through which comprehensive neighborhood economic development planning could be undertaken and then to initiate that planning process.

Pittsburgh

In response to a "brain drain" which left the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with little rising talent, HUD Secretary Cisneros set about the creation of a "fellowship" program which would bring talented individuals from the private sector into the world of public housing. Perhaps the private sector had ideas about how to fix the nation's most troubled housing. This idea created the Community Renaissance Fellowship Program. Twenty individuals from across the country were selected to participate in this inaugural program and placed in housing authorities around the country. The fellowship was to be for two years.

As a participant in HUD's Community Renaissance Fellowship Program I had hoped to participate in numerous projects and initiatives which would have resulted in the improvement of the quality of and provision of public housing in Pittsburgh, PA. My original project was to create training opportunities for residents to learn how to participate effectively in the decision making processes within the Housing Authority that were dramatically shaping their lives.

C. Project Purpose and Background

1. Expected Outputs

New Britain

The purpose of this project was to create a community economic development plan that identified the goals, opportunities and strategies for economic development in the Arch Street neighborhood of New Britain. Anticipated project outputs include:

1. Work with the Committee to create a vision or guiding statement
2. Synthesize contemporary documents on a) New Britain's economy, b) State economy, c) regional economy and d) planning efforts to date
3. Review relevant national studies/efforts in community economic development
4. Summary of goals for New Britain's community economic development efforts
5. Prepare summary of options for short and long term community development activities
6. Propose process for selection of projects for further feasibility analysis

Pittsburgh

The purpose of this project was to create training opportunities for resident councils, which would allow them to be more effectively engaged in decision making processes affecting their communities. Anticipated project outputs included:

1. Establish and implement a city-wide resident council training program.
2. Provide HOPE VI specific training to resident councils so that they can effectively operate as co-general partners in the reconstruction of their communities.
3. Assist 3-5 resident councils with the implementation of their Tenant Opportunity Program (TOP) grants. Assist in the submission of a 1997 TOP grant application.
4. Create an independent staffing initiative so that resident councils may have staffing support, free from Housing Authority control.
5. Create a pilot Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program for families in Allequippa Terrace.

2. Background

Traditional community development literature suggests that there are four categories of community development which have been utilized throughout American history. It is important to understand that each has its advantages and disadvantages and that each is, more often than not, a *consciously* chosen path. The political context that makes up that choice is particularly important to understand if CED practitioners are to be able to create successful development strategies. The four categories are:

1. Amelioration - "gilding the ghetto," community empowerment strategies that serve to reduce the ugliness and despair of low income neighborhoods i.e.: reduce crime, blight etc. Amelioration does not address diversity, does not raise property values enough to encourage market development, rather it affects the place rather than the people
2. Gateway - provides a stable enough environment to encourage residents to obtain the educational gains and accumulate the assets they need to get out. The place is better, but the emphasis is on getting the people "out."
3. Gentrification – The neighborhood improves as higher income people move in, driving up property values and rents and driving out the current occupants. The place gets better but at the expense of the current residents

4. Common Gain - Perhaps the most difficult to achieve, Common Gain neighborhoods are improved without pushing the lowest income groups out of the area. These neighborhoods link residents to the mainstream institutions that they need to be healthy stable families such as banks, schools and public services. People are here because they want to be, because they feel safe, they feel it will be a promising place to raise their family. (Yale School of Management, CRFP Seminar, 1997).

The following are the paths chosen in the two communities in which I worked:

New Britain
As mentioned earlier the GNB CDC is a newly formed community organization with the mission of empowering low and moderate income individuals and families to become stakeholders in their New Britain area neighborhoods, through homeownership, economic development and other activities undertaken with partner organizations and coalitions. It has only just begun, 16 months later, it's first development project. The Board of Directors, however, maintains a high level of commitment and enthusiasm as evidenced by their attendance at meetings, volunteering research, and lively discussions about organizational development as well as project ideas.

The GNB CDC has had a challenging beginning. It was initiated by two parent organizations: Citizens for Action in New Britain (CANB) and the New Britain Area Conference of Churches (NewBRACC). At the time there was a strong alliance between the two groups' directors and key board members. It was believed that the more traditional mission and membership of the Conference of Churches would balance the more radical community organizing mission and membership of CANB. And for many New Britain institutions it did. However, the political administration did not see this balance and continues to believe that anything affiliated with CANB is a rabble-rousing, trouble-making, good for nothing. This is sadly a long-standing opinion of CANB from most political administrations, but is certainly not uncommon from the experiences of other communities where low income people are organizing and challenging the system.

As a result of this tension there has been a strong need for constant education of the NewBRACC and at-large membership of the GNB CDC Board as to why CANB does what it does, how it does it and why the administration holds its opinions. Although this education is extremely important, it has slowed down the development process. The GNB CDC has been meeting for almost two years and has only a 3-year strategic plan, written by a consultant almost a year ago, for its efforts. The group needs to produce something soon not only for its Board members mental health, but to maintain credibility in the community.

The GNB CDC is hoping to select development activities which promote a Common Gain Community. Their vision is to re-create a neighborhood where people chose to live, work, shop and raise their families. It will be a diverse neighborhood, a safe place that is economically and socially viable.

Pittsburgh
Allequippa Terrace is a 1,700 unit public housing project slated for demolition and reconstruction as one of the nation's HOPE VI sites. HOPE VI is a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) program created in 1993 to address the country's worst public housing stock. The premise of HOPE VI

is that public housing can be rebuilt on a smaller scale, be more neighborhood oriented and be composed of "mixed income" tenants (meaning poor and middle class people).

Public housing in this country has a long history of controversy, abuse and lack of political support. From day one in 1937 much of the nation's public housing stock has been relegated to distant corners of cities, poorly constructed and woefully inadequately maintained. In 1988 a study commissioned by HUD, it was estimated that $22 billion was needed to meet the modernization needs of the country's 1.3 million units of public housing. By 1992 that number had risen to $29 billion, but Congress only authorized $5 billion for comprehensive renovation programs (Epp, 1996).

In an effort to address the escalating problems in public housing Congress established the National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing in 1989. The Commission developed a system for identifying the most "severely distressed" public housing using four indicators: families living in distress, rates of serious crimes in the development or the surrounding neighborhood, barriers to managing the environment and physical deterioration of buildings. By their estimate over 86,000 units were severely distressed (Epp).

Although housing advocates argue that this number is grossly undercounting the number of distressed units, the Commission's report did result in the creation by Congress of the Urban Revitalization Demonstration Program. Later renamed HOPE VI, this program authorized $2 billion in the first three years of operation to be utilized by the most "troubled" housing authorities to revitalize their most "troubled" communities. The program required that 80% of funds be used for construction, demolition and other costs associated with building and that 20% be used for community service programs (Epp).

A philosophical underpinning of HOPE VI is that the dollars should be used to recreate "mixed income communities." Quoting the work of sociologists like William Julius Wilson and architects from the New Urbanism, then HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros championed the mixed income community as the way to improve the quality of life for poor families. This strategy would also increase the rent revenue for housing authorities thereby making them more financially stable and less dependent on Congress.

The presumed benefits of mixed income communities to public housing residents were:
1. Employed persons will provide role models for children and the unemployed.
2. Communities will likely be more stable because a family can remain in the unit even if the head loses a job, becomes employed, or gets a raise (rents could be adjusted).
3. Resident services and programs are more likely to be acknowledged as critical components of successful communities, and therefore their funding is often built into the development's operating budget.
4. Institutions, public agencies, and commercial businesses are more likely to invest in, rather than abandon, a mixed-income neighborhood (Epp, 1996).

In Pittsburgh, the HOPE VI concept was fully embraced by the Mayor and the Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP). With glee, they envisioned knocking down the worst public housing in Pittsburgh and replacing it with what has become very popular in Pittsburgh, row houses (with a maroon and teal color scheme). Proposals were submitted to HUD for the redevelopment of three sites. To date the HACP has been awarded nearly $50 million in HUD funds, and locally has generated an additional $75 million+, for the demolition of over 2,000 public

housing units. It is anticipated that approximately 1,200 will be rebuilt, but in keeping with HOPE VI's vision only about 60% of those will be available to low income people, the remaining being available for "market rate" people.

From the outset this Housing Authority, in large part dictated by HUD, chose a hybrid strategy of Gateway and Gentrification. The vision of HOPE VI is to create a community where low income people "get on their feet," save up some money, work hard and move on and where middle income people live their lives and through that be good role models for the other residents. Although the HUD rhetoric is chock full of notions of "community," if the premise of the development is to lure one group of people to stay (with cheap rents) and encourage another group to come but go as soon as possible (with two year contracts and rent penalties), it is very unlikely that a community, by anyone's definition, can be fully achieved. Moreover, HUD may be creating the initial steps towards a national housing crisis. Michael Pyatok, an architect and critic of the New Urbanism writes,

> Why, in the interest of making 'mixed income' neighborhoods, must we displace people without jobs with those who have jobs? Why not use all the money to 'up-do' or rebuild public housing to bring jobs and job training to those who live in public housing? Is it because HUD's policy makers know full well that there must be 8 million unemployed as the check against inflation and there will never be enough jobs to go around for all who need them? By offering the public housing tenants vouchers (which expire in just a few years) to live elsewhere, are we dispersing them to the four winds so we cannot see them and they will be too dispersed to organize for their rights? Are architects helping to set the fuse of a time bomb that will go off in just a few years? (1996)

Sadly, this is also not a new phenomenon. HUD has had a history of moving the "burden" of poverty to and from cities, to and from suburbs, into and out of centralization. The notion of a returning middle class to create a "mixed income" was a contentious topic in 1960 when Jane Jacobs wrote,

> City officials today prate about 'bringing back the middle class,' as if nobody were in the middle class until he had left the city and acquired a ranch house and a barbecue and thereby become precious. To be sure, cities are losing their middle class populations. However, cities need not 'bring back' a middle class, and carefully protect it like an artificial growth. Cities grow the middle class. But to keep it as it grows, to keep it as a stabilizing force in the form of self-diversified population, means considering the city's people valuable and worth retaining, right where they are, before they become middle class (1961).

D. Project Activities and Results

New Britain
The project in New Britain had six expected outputs:
1. Work with the Committee to create a vision or guiding statement
2. Synthesize contemporary documents on a) New Britain's economy, b) State economy, c) regional economy and d) planning efforts to date
3. Review relevant national studies/efforts in community economic development

4. Summary of goals for New Britain's community economic development efforts
5. Prepare summary of options for short and long term community development activities
6. Propose process for selection of projects for further feasibility analysis

Having only returned to New Britain in October, it is understandable that I would not be able to accomplish all of the six goals. However, additionally I underestimated some of my "baggage" that would get in the way of my trying to stimulate economic development activities in New Britain.

My first effort was to pull together a "steering committee." This group would serve as the vehicle; the core readers, reviewers, analyzers to help accomplish the six goals. The Committee was to be composed of representatives of Citizens for Action in New Britain (the "neighborhood folks"), representatives of the Greater New Britain Community Development Corporation (the "development folks") and representatives of the business community. The CANB Executive Director and myself identified five potential businesses who would bring expertise, credibility, a constituency and/or resources to the project. Three committed quickly to the project. Two were still considering the project at the time of this writing. The CANB Board enthusiastically endorsed the project. And, the CDC, the entity created to do this type of planning and implementation, the entity who's mission is to promote economic development in New Britain has suggested that they will *not* participate in the project because of my involvement in it. This is particularly ironic and frustrating because I was the lead facilitator that gave birth to the initiative two years ago. What this underscores is the profound tension between organizing and development.

> Organizing is a question of power; the point of organizing is to force the local/regional/state/national power structure to respond to community demands, and by so doing change the balance of power in favor of the community. Development is a business that involved carefully collecting the necessary financing, permits, permissions, grants, and other requirements for building units of housing, businesses, etc. Developers have lunch with bankers and try to show them why the bank should get involved in affordable housing. Organizers storm into bank offices with angry protesters demanding that bank officers take immediate action. It's hard to imagine doing both at the same time. But this is exactly what some groups are doing (Anner and Vogel, 1997).

The CDC's current concerns about me are that I'm an "organizer," which connotes all kinds of scary things to them. Their vision of me is as of being a protagonist, not being able to work with the City, always making waves, always resorting to confrontation etc. Their first and current project is to renovate the office of an Arch Street non-profit. This is a safe, understandable, non-threatening project. It also, in my opinion, has nothing to do with promoting economic development or homeownership....and only fosters harmonious relations with a tiny fraction of the community. Yet, through substantial media exposure, the CDC has won support (financial and political) for projects which are not very meaningful to the broader community and making scarce resources even more scarce. In short, the project does not accomplish any of the objectives of their mission. Furthermore, the assumption that any community development can be undertaken without conflict shows a gross lack of understanding of reality and shows the dire need for more training, discussion and reflection on the part of the CDC Board members.

Conflict means success, not failure...It means all interested parties are taking the first step in real problem solving. In order to produce a quality solution, different views must be heard, critically evaluated, and reflected upon before we reach agreement (Du Bois and Lappe, 1991).

In the meantime, I have begun to develop a framework for discussion for the Steering Committee. It is my belief that this type of process needs to happen whether or not the CDC is involved and/or whether or not I am the facilitator. If a compromise can be reached with the CDC the written framework will still prove useful for their purposes.

The framework, is essentially a summary of my CED readings and coursework. I have tried to briefly articulate the purpose of CED, the planning process, broad categories of development options and included examples of possible development opportunities in New Britain. I have also tried to formulate the questions the Steering Committee will need to answer in order to get to a specific goal and course of action. (The framework is included in Exhibit II).

Pittsburgh

My expected project outputs were to:

1. Establish and implement a city-wide resident council training program
2. Provide HOPE VI specific training to resident councils so that they can effectively operate as co-general partners in the reconstruction of their communities
3. Assist 3-5 resident councils with the implementation of their Tenant Opportunity Program (TOP) grants. Assist in the submission of a 1997 TOP grant application.
4. Create an independent staffing initiative so that resident councils may have staffing support, free from Housing Authority control.
5. Create a pilot Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program for families in Allequippa Terrace.

Working for a government agency was wearing a new hat for me. As an Industrial Areas Foundation organizer described it I was a "saint in Caesar's house," meaning maybe I was a good guy but I was still working for a bad guy. Being on the inside, representing a historically corrupt, incompetent and unresponsive organization was not easy. Everywhere I went people looked at me with skepticism at best and contempt on average. I was disliked by public housing residents because I was the Housing Authority. I was disliked by private developers and non-profit agencies because I was the Housing Authority. And strangely enough, because of my unique "fellowship" position within the Housing Authority, I was disliked by the Housing Authority because I was not the Housing Authority.

Being disliked and not trusted by 99% of the people you are supposed to work with makes for a difficult working environment. However, we were able to proceed on two of the project goals: the city-wide resident council training and to a lessor extent the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program.

I will only relate the gory details surrounding the creation of the training program. Suffice it to say that every new initiative undertaken by any creative person within the HACP meets a similar uphill battle.

Project Output #1: Establish and implement a city-wide resident council training program

Activities and Case Study

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During my first month in Pittsburgh I met with numerous HACP staff, agency directors and a few resident council Presidents. What became clear is that all believed that the resident councils were in desperate need of quality training and support. Internal HACP efforts to provide this support were haphazard and lacked a coherent vision or plan. Being a community organizer I thought this would be the most logical place to start.

My first formal step was to ask the Director of Resident Relations to set up a meeting with Resident Council Presidents in order to obtain their thoughts and ideas for a training program. My intention had been to gather their input, draft a request for proposals (RFP), circulate it amongst the Councils, issue the RFP, and work with a committee of Council Presidents to review the proposals and select the trainers. The Director of Resident Relations said, "We don't have time for all of that. Write the RFP." I being extremely naïve, went contrary to my gut and wrote the RFP. (RFP and other HACP outputs attached in Exhibit III, IV and V).

I had hoped that we could bring in resident council representatives for their input during the proposal review process. Alas, I was wrong again. After approximately three months of developing the RFP, obtaining proposals and nagging the Director of Resident Relations to set up a meeting with Council Presidents she said, "We've got to get this training out there. I want the consultant on Board by August." So, myself and two people in my office selected the consultant. In September, when the Council Presidents were finally invited by the Director to a meeting to discuss the training, they were irate and essentially refused to participate in the training. "Here we go again," said one Council President. "Housing's telling us what we've got to do and who we've got to do it with. Nope, not me." Nearly five months of work down the drain. The Director, by the way, did not even attend this meeting, and I was the sacrificial lamb taking the fall for the whole poorly conceived and executed project.

After licking my wounds for a few days I decided I would not give up quite so easily. I renegotiated with the consultant to undertake a planning process with voluntary resident councils to develop a training program of their own design. He was enthusiastic about the proposed process. It was simply the process that should have been used all along, but I was powerless to make it happen. It was at about this time that I attended a ribbon cutting for a drug rehabilitation center for women and a speaker quoted an old slave spiritual which said "let my life's work speak for me." I knew then that my work was not speaking for me and I resigned from the Housing Authority four weeks later.

Me

I had developed a problem statement about myself. Now, ten pages into this report I should identify what I was able to accomplish regarding myself. My original problem statement was:

> Unless I can learn how to maximize the organizational strengths and address the weaknesses in each of these models I will not be an effective CED practitioner. To be effective I need to be able to articulate: What is community? How is it built and destroyed? How can institutions of various types be most effective in supporting community?

Results, as you might guess are mixed. I know that I cannot be effective within any institution that is paralyzed by fear of change, or challenge, or conflict. I cannot be effective within any institution that is hypocritical and/or in denial about various self interests. It does not fall simply along public or private lines or even big or small lines. The truth is that CED organizations are often fraught with the same

fears and are as risk averse as big bureaucracies. The truth is that big bureaucracies affect millions of people and CED organizations barely scratch the surface of need. Somewhere there is a balance of scope and scale, of challenge and security, dreams and reality. I have not found it yet. But, the search continues. The following is a summary of responses to the critical issues raised for me over the past sixteen months.

E. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

My project changed drastically because of job changes (including two physical moves) over the course of this year. In twelve months I have been a non-profit executive director, unemployed, a government bureaucrat, unemployed, and a consultant. Each experience has offered amazing insights into the world of work, job creation, organizational dynamics, time and stress management, public/private partnerships, red tape and poverty. What has made my project very difficult to begin, let alone complete, has made me a more certain, determined and capable person. Clearly, my project would have benefited from my being in one place for more than six months, however, those were not the cards I was dealt. Despite these upheavals I have learned much.

New Britain
The jury is out on what will happen to the Greater New Britain CDC. It may become another nonprofit that promotes self preservation over reaching and growing to meet the demands of the community. The GNB CDC and CANB may fall victim to a disease that challenges many community development / community organizing models. The balance is hard to define and harder to achieve. But it is a relationship and a process that will have to be articulated and hammered out if community development will be successful in New Britain.

> Community development corporations are the progeny of neighborhood organizing. But like a child who grew to tower over his parents and left home, development has largely forgotten its organizing roots, usually without even calling to keep in touch...Without the connection that organizing provides developers can become technically proficient but detached from the community. Furthermore, without the threat of resident pressure to back them up, developers can find themselves severely limited in what they can accomplish (Vogel, 1997).

In New Britain the Greater New Britain CDC is suffering from several growing pains:

1) Unresolved tension between organizing and development
2) Grabbing good "PR" projects, rather than good projects
3) Overpowering fear of conflict
4) Growing disconnection with the community

In his extensive review of community organizing and community development organizations in the United States commissioned by the Ford Foundation, Gary Delgado concluded:

In all of my interviews with both CDC staff and with community organizers, there was one notion that everyone agreed with: CDC's work best when they act as implementors of the wishes of organized communities (1993).

The need for community economic development remains as critical as ever. The work will proceed (as long as I live and breath) but whether or not the GNB CDC is the vehicle is unknown at this point in time. (Editor's note: the part time acting director of the GNB CDC has resigned...maybe there is yet another job change in the picture for the author...)

Pittsburgh
In his book, "Bureaucracy, What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It," James Q. Wilson suggests that government bureaucracies are inherently incapable of operating effectively because of three key constraints. They,

> 1) cannot lawfully retain and devote to the private benefit of their members the earnings of the organization,
> 2) cannot allocate the factors of production in accordance with the preferences of the organization's administrators, and
> 3) must serve goals not of the organization's own choosing. Control over revenues, productive factors, and agency goals is all vested to an important degree in entities external to the organization - legislatures, courts, politicians and interest groups...As a result, government management tends to be driven by the *constraints* on the organization, not the *tasks* of the organization (1989).

My experience at HACP supports that these constraints are very real and have become insurmountable by most. In my mind, the provision of decent affordable housing is one of the most important services that an organization could provide. A safe home is a fundamental need for any person to live a functioning life. A child cannot learn or grow in an unsafe home. This fact should make the work of public housing authorities some of the most important work in the country. It should be a place full of compassionate, excited dynamic people because it's product is so vital to the well-being of this country. Yet the most commonly used expression by HACP employees is "we can't do that." HACP residents live in fear while HACP employees work in fear. With so many written rules, and so many unwritten rules, it is hard for people to operate let alone be creative.

Wilson adds,

> The existence of so many contextual goals and political constraints has several consequences for the management of public agencies. First managers have a strong incentive to worry more about constraints than task, which means to worry more about processes than outcomes. Outcomes often are uncertain, delayed and controversial; procedures are known, immediate, and defined by law or rule...Second, the multiplicity of constraints on an agency enhances the power of potential intervenors in the agency. Every constraint or contextual goal is the written affirmation of the claim of some external constituency...Third, equity is more important than efficiency in the management of many government agencies...Fourth, the existence of many contextual goals, like the existence of constraints on the use of resources, tends to make managers more risk averse...Fifth, standard operating procedures are developed in each agency to reduce the chance than an important contextual goal or constraint is not violated...rules can

multiply to the point where no action is possible if every action must conform to every rule... Sixth, public agencies will have more managers than private ones performing similar tasks. More constraints require more managers to observe and enforce them... Last, the more contextual goals and constraints that must be served, the more discretionary authority in an agency is pushed upward to the top (1989).

The HACP is run by an Executive Director who has a history of neighborhood organizing. He was a leader in historic preservation and community revitalization of African American neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, particularly a neighborhood called Manchester. He is visionary, but only with a very narrow vision – the revitalization of his neighborhood. He does not have a history with public housing, public administration, or even non-profit administration. As a result he relies on a very select group of men to make all of the decisions at the Authority. Other department heads are unable to operate their department effectively because of this stronghold the Director has on decision making. The following is a brief overview of my thoughts regarding the conditions of HACP as an organization and possible remedies:

1) Ineffective leadership and management

An Executive Director should establish organizational priorities. Support their staff in their pursuit of those priorities. Foster creativity, energy and teamwork. Reward progress. Don't make speeches, be patronizing or ridicule, a classic tact of many Housing Executive Directors. Don't be inconsistent or schizophrenic. Every action should seek to support prior actions not contradict them. Every department should initiate projects/programs that support other departments. Get rid of or neutralize problem people. Delegate responsibility and empower people to act. Use people's time thoughtfully and effectively. Demand and expect quality.

In Pittsburgh the Executive Director one day announced that all management staff would have to start wearing uniforms. Another morning, at a staff meeting, he announced that the day would be spent on a bus touring the various communities. Without discussing it with the Personnel Department, he hired an outside consultant to provide "customer relations" training. The head of the Modernization Department chose July and August to begin demolition of all of the HACP playgrounds! Yes, they needed to be replaced but, why during the summer school break? Meanwhile the Director is using $160,000 in modernization money to renovate his office and $5 million to build a fence around one of the most violent communities. What these are all examples of is the random nature of work at the HACP and the dictatorial behavior of the Executive Director. As a result everyone works (or more accurately doesn't work) in constant fear.

2) Empowerment is nonexistent because democracy is nonexistent

HACP rhetoric supports the empowerment of resident councils, but the HACP Director will only return the phone calls of the Presidents. He wants to empower the residents to take control of their communities but won't listen to anyone but the resident council. He wants to promote employment, but pleads conflict of interest when a resident council member wants to work for a sub-contractor. The Executive Director needs to set policies and procedures that are consistent with an overall philosophy of the organization. Each department head needs to honor them. This philosophy should be developed

through a democratic planning process involving HACP staff, residents and Board members and should be facilitated by a qualified organizational development consultant.

In a study of the privatization of two public housing communities in Boston, author Lawrence Vale concludes,

> It is not merely that a public agency devolved its responsibilities onto the private sector; it is that a highly intelligent group of thoughtful and motivated housing authority officials, working with a core group of committed and well-advised tenants, jointly developed a vision for a tenant-monitored system of private development and private management. It is not the act of privatization itself but the hundreds of hours that went into reaching consensus on the thousands of details that went into the [community's plan] that laid the groundwork for the [community's] sustained success (1996).

3) Denial of self interest

Everyone else is expected to operate from within their self interest. As an HACP employee I was carrying out the mission of the organization and doing what my boss told me to do because I wanted a paycheck, I wanted professional praise, and I wanted to be successful. The private developer wanted many of the same things and especially wanted to make money. We expect these self interests. We even nurture these behaviors and become suspect when they are not stated boldly up-front. Members of the Resident Council, however, are not allowed these same self interests. Rather, they are supposed to operate first and foremost because of a desire to improve their community. Furthermore, they are told they should not personally benefit as a result of their involvement in saving their community. (The HACP has a policy that no resident council member may hold a job at the Housing Authority or any of its contractors).

This notion is ridiculous and in total denial of why people get involved (particularly in HOPE VI projects). These are poor people. They want money. First and foremost they want to be better off as a result of their effort. They do want to see their community improve but that is *secondary* to wanting a better life for themselves and that means jobs, connections, power, access. All of the things we assume and expect from all of the other players (HACP, private developers, service agencies, politicians etc.) BUT NOT THE RESIDENTS THEMSELVES. It is absurd and self-defeating because as a result residents end up playing a game, creating a front for their true motivations. They play "caring dumb resident" when they are really gunning for a job. The smartest admit it, accept a job and get the hell out of the game. As a result the most talented people leave the resident council, leaving either the most incapable and/or most devious. If we encouraged residents to honor their self-interest, as we do all of the other players involved, we could create much more healthy, stable and honest resident councils.

4) Ridiculous expectations of the "poor"

In addition to expecting them to deny their self interest we also expect the poor to have more time and motivation to go to neighborhood meetings, plan programs, raise money, fight crime, brainstorm strategies, and give of themselves than we expect any other neighborhood resident to do. The truth is that nowhere - NO WHERE - do large numbers of people spontaneously participate in their neighborhood. Some communities have sporadic participation. And others have consistent but nurtured

and supported and/or paid for participation. Where it works consistently is where a community group with resources makes it happen plain and simple. That's by and large not happening in public housing communities.

Housing authorities could be more supportive of resident participation. Housing Authorities could provide operating support to councils, but it would have to be free and clear. Councils would need the autonomy to organize around the issues of their choice, not implement the pet projects of the Executive Director in exchange for operating support. (Currently all resident councils in Pittsburgh operate food pantries because the Director thought it would be a good idea).

5) *Lack of long term capacity of authorities to contend with complex issues*

The political nature of Housing Authorities promotes shining (and fleeting) stars. Housing Authorities often serve as a vehicle for a personal agenda – often a Mayor's or other prominent politicians. As a result there are constantly changing priorities. Every political administration brings a new set of Board of Directors and a new Executive Director. There is no incentive for the staff to develop long term plans because they may be undercut with a new Mayor. This unstable situation is a disincentive for anyone to stick their neck out, take risks or try new things because it may only be cut down.

Housing authorities, across the country, need to have more autonomy from local government. Local government should be able to demand accountability for the provision of quality affordable housing, but how the housing is built, managed and operated should be the domain of a qualified, motivated and committed staff.

These statements are made with full knowledge that the capacity of HUD to provide more meaningful oversight, vision and support is even less likely. HUD is an even more unhealthy dysfunctional institution. I am not sure how to fix this one. The bottom line in Pittsburgh, is that it doesn't matter anyway because the strategy is to demolish over half of the housing stock and dismantle the Housing Authority completely.

6) *The Council power struggle*

Resident council members face an ever shrinking sphere of power. Each president clings to their scraps of power, cling to their minuscule perks (such as attendance at political events, banquets, conferences etc.). Every attempt to broaden participation or increase overall group power diminishes their individual personal power so they cling harder and recede deeper into nowhere. Most of the other members of the council just sit and watch as the President abuses his/her authority because they are getting some crumbs too.

As a result when outsiders (housing authority employees, non-profits, consultants) raise tough issues, the council simply fires them. Like children sticking their fingers in their ears - they simply choose not to listen to the bad news.

Paulo Freire calls this the internalization of oppression. Ernesto Cortes calls it learned helplessness. The result is chronic disempowerment.

There is a tradition in south Texas I call "learned helplessness." People have been taught to be incompetent by all the institutions: family, the church, the school. There was a tradition among the quinieros, the workers of the King Ranch. They didn't have to worry about their retirement, they didn't have to worry about their kids' education, they didn't have to worry about anything because the boss would take care of them. Well, the King Ranch is not longer owned by a family; it's now owned by anonymous corporations. The quinieros who are now out of work have no skills, no education, nowhere to go because they've been raised in this almost feudal system where they were taken care of. They were taught to be dependent upon the patron (1989).

This, I believe, is the most difficult challenge facing public housing communities and the CED practitioners trying to work with public housing residents. Many public housing residents have lived in their communities for 15-45 years. They have been lied to since day one. They have been used, they have been studied, poked and prodded and have been the brunt of much public debate. They, plain and simple, are used to be talked about not talked to. The bizarre twist in modern public housing history is the HUD "empowerment" rhetoric. Residents are told that now, abracadabra, they have power. And thinking that they just "have it" they try to use it, but like a child given a car without the proper understanding and appreciation of how it operates they drive it into a tree and the parents then take it away. Somehow, public housing residents need to be trained to develop their own power, and to use it for their own predetermined purposes.

F. Retrospect: How does One Build Community? What are we going for?

So much talk about community from community groups, mayors, police chiefs, the Justice Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, HUD. Everyone seems to want in on this magic bullet called community. So, what is it?

Jane Jacobs in the "Death and Life of the Great American City" says,

> A Successful city neighborhood is a place that keeps sufficiently abreast of its problems so it is not destroyed by them. An unsuccessful neighborhood is a place that is overwhelmed by its defects and problems and is progressively more helpless before them (1961).

The Congress for the New Urbanism identifies ten design principles, complete with square footage requirements, appropriate plantings and use of building materials, "considered to be of primary importance in creating a complete neighborhood." These principles have been adopted hook, line and sinker by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in their HOPE VI initiative. Former HUD Secretary Cisneros wrote and spoke about gleaming new communities with modern architectural amenities, mixed incomes, jobs, picket fences etc. At first glance the ten principles make sense:

1. Walkability
2. Variety of uses
3. A minimum density of five residential units per acre

4. An internal balance of housing, jobs and services
5. An identifiable neighborhood center
6. Designed sites for civic buildings
7. A variety of public open spaces
8. A hierarchy of interconnected streets
9. Many separate and distinct buildings
10. Outbuildings as affordable housing units

But a critique of HUD's uncritical embrace of New Urbanism is offered by architect Michael Pyatok, FAIA, in an article entitled "Neighborhood Development in a Democratic City, Toward a 'Real' Urbanism."

> The new Urbanism's recent efforts to expand its ideology into lower income communities is not at grass roots levels where most of its members have limited experience, but at the highest of centralized bureaucracies – the public housing programs of HUD. It is not surprising that HUD's public housing division recently grasped the New Urbanism for help in face-lifting, and as some critics contend, in gentrifying many of its older public housing projects under the guise of 'mixing' incomes before selling them off and getting out of the business of helping those in most need. These latest prescriptions for physical design, while very useful and well-intentioned, repeat once again the design professions' historic addiction to environmental determinism, proclaiming that a better physical design can overcome social ills created by decades of disinvestment, discrimination and de-industrialization, this time with the ingredients of neo-traditionalism. And once again, both well intentioned as well as self-serving architects, find themselves providing cultural legitimacy to what is a profoundly immoral policy (1996).

So, physical characteristics are important to community. These are the things we see every day as we drive or walk through a neighborhood. These are the things that can assault or soothe our senses. These are the things that make us feel afraid or secure. But, community is more than that. As Jane Jacobs suggests communities are places that take care of people. As people take care of themselves and take care of each other they are taking care of their community.

In CED, therefore, we need to address both the people AND the place. We are seeking to build community by creating opportunities for people to:

a) take care of themselves - obtain income for food, shelter and basic necessities
b) take care of others - create volunteer activities, watch eachother's children, provide supportive programs and facilitate access to resources, and
c) take care of their community - protect the future of their community through the ownership of resources and institutions such as land trusts, cooperatives, worker owner companies, representation on boards, and political participation which affects public policies.

It has *all* got to happen to build and support an effective community.

> Visionary corporations do not oppress themselves with what we call the "Tyranny of the OR" - the rational view that cannot easily accept paradox, that cannot live with two seemingly contradictory forces or ideas at the same time...Highly visionary companies liberate themselves

with the "Genius of the AND" - the ability to embrace both extremes of a number of dimensions at the same time...A visionary company doesn't simply balance between idealism and profitability; it seeks to be highly idealistic AND profitable(Emerson, 1996).

In CED we can no longer afford to debate individual versus community needs. We cannot debate person or place. We cannot debate organizing versus development or conflict versus consensus. They all have a role to play and they all need to be played at once. CED is a chorus not a solo.

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