TOWARD A MORE DISCIPLINED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY BUILDING

not quite ch^{a}os

by James B. Hyman, Ph.D.

NOTE TO THE READER

The presentation in this report was commissioned by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It is part of the Foundation's ongoing efforts to explore the complex processes and interactions that underlie our work to promote community-driven change efforts that will benefit poor families and children. The observations and conclusions reported here do not constitute a model that has been formally adopted by the Foundation. Instead, they offer us food for thought as we continue to pursue community building and community empowerment as intervention strategies.

We are publishing this report because we feel it presents a valuable perspective. It challenges us to think more rigorously and in more structured ways about these community processes and indigenous change efforts. We hope you too will find it interesting and useful, and we welcome your comments and reactions.

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Prepared by James B. Hyman, Ph.D.
for the Annie E. Casey Foundation

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I am also grateful to Frank Farrow for helping me introduce these concepts to selected senior program staff at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and for challenging me to demonstrate how an abstract formulation of very complex processes might actually be applied to real life community-driven change efforts. But I am especially thankful for the deep commitment, support and encouragement I received from Garland Yates who, in addition to volunteering to be the lead foundation sponsor of this work, arranged for its introduction into Denver and subsequent testing against the Denver *Making Connections* experience. In addition to his sponsorship and facilitation, Garland has contributed his wealth of experience and wisdom to this work. Joy Thomas Moore, Audrey Jordan, and Grace Crisostomo also lent valued support at critical junctures during the project.

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"Thanx" again to all!
Jim Hyman

contents

abstract

Increasingly, communities in the United States are beginning to take a more active and directive role in addressing issues that affect the well-being of their children, families, and neighborhoods. In so doing, neighborhood residents and their leaders hope to have more success in dealing with these persistent problems than has been the case under previous, and traditionally top-down, public or private interventions. The challenge underlying this new approach is helping communities to build their capacities for both involving residents in community issues and for sustaining that involvement in community-driven change efforts.

There are many in the philanthropic community, in government, and in the larger audience of social policy observers who espouse this new thinking and are willing to support communities in these processes. But to date, we have been unable to state with any real clarity what kinds of support are important to provide. Our approach to this community-building challenge has, for the most part, been situation specific—relying on our understanding of the unique social, political, economic, and structural realities of the communities of interest, identifying community strengths, and then building on those assets.

This report, *Not Quite Chaos,* is intended as an aid to thinking more concretely and uniformly about processes and structures that the author believes are common features of the community-building challenge—features that can be modeled and understood in ways that make the "art" of community building less like a Rorschach test and more like a disciplined field of study and practice.

The report is divided into two parts. Part One of the discussion addresses the question: What is community building and how do we model it as a sustainable community change process? In so doing it presents a Community-Building Process Framework that draws heavily from notions about social capital, civic engagement, and community organizing to outline five clusters of activity

that comprise community building's principal components: resident engagement, agenda building, community organizing, community action, and assessment and message development.

Part Two goes beyond this conceptualization to address an even more practical question: What might a community-building effort look like on the ground? In this section, the report provides insights into how one might manage processes as amorphous and organic as those outlined in Part One and presents illustrations for how local relationships might be structured to effectively address the community agenda. Part Two presents two Community-Building Structural Frameworks—an interim framework offered as a benchmark, work-in-progress formulation and an optimal framework that better represents an ideal version of how local relationships might be fashioned into a workable community-building effort.

The frameworks presented in this report require extensive empirical testing before they can be validated for wide use in the field. As their first test, this report examines their application in Denver, one of the 22 cities participating in the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative. Throughout this document, the author reports on the extent to which Denver's community-building experience in *Making Connections* can be described by, and better understood within, the parameters of the proposed frameworks. As the reader will see, the frameworks parallel the Denver experience so closely that the author has been able to use actual recorded testimony from Denver interviews to document these parallels.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation offers this report as one step in helping to stimulate additional disciplined inquiry into the dynamics of community-empowered change. Our hope is to probe the limits of community building as a field of work, study, and practice and, in so doing, help those who would invest in and pursue local improvement strategies to enjoy more consistent and effective outcomes for children, families, and neighborhoods.

The trouble is there's no road map. No one knows how to do this work.

—Mary Gittings Cronin, Director,
The Piton Foundation

preface

Like many whose careers have focused on issues of social justice here in the United States, I have spent a great deal of time observing and offering advice about resident-driven strategies for community change. Whether the goal has been to reduce neighborhood crime or to create more jobs and housing, the pivotal challenge in each effort was then, and is still, how to energize residents and their allies in communities so they can become a viable force for resident-inspired community change. And, like many of my colleagues in these pursuits, my experiences have grown over time into an expertise that has given me an intuitive "feel" for this work.

But community building should be guided by more than seasoned wisdom — mine or anyone else's. To be effective as a continuous approach to sustainable neighborhood change or to be viable as a field of work and study, resident-driven community change must be recognized as a *field*. It needs theory, tenets, axioms, and hypotheses—some set of agreed-upon starting points to give practitioners a shared language for, and some shared understanding about, what it is we are all trying to do. We need to establish a set of fundamentals—a strong theoretical base about which we agree and to which we can add our cumulative experience and research as a way to refine our understanding and expand the discipline.

For advocates, organizers, funders, and others who want to address issues of poverty and community disinvestment, the long-standing challenge has been to determine where to begin. We search for points of entry that can leverage significant resources and for strategies that will produce the broadest effect. Given the diversity we see across communities and among their constituents, structures, and resources, it has been difficult to conceive of global frameworks or models that could provide generic guidance.

Not Quite Chaos provides those frameworks. It recognizes that the capacity of a community to act on its own behalf is built on the attitudes and actions of individual residents—on their willingness and ability to unite in support of collective interests. In these frameworks, community change has a universal point of entry—building relationships and social capital among residents and, ultimately, between residents and resource-holding institutions.

The report's central theme is that the variety and complexity of communities need not demand that we approach them in awe or without tools. Community building for change can be an orderly process, deliberately managed to achieve good results.

For more than five decades, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked to improve the quality of life for children and families in difficult situations in tough neighborhoods. In 1999, after great reflection, the Foundation concluded that the well-being of children is most immediately and most importantly the responsibility of their families. It also was determined, however, that neighborhoods racked by crime, poverty, and disinvestment pose serious challenges to childrearing even for the strongest, most stable families. As a consequence, the Foundation has pledged a significant investment over the next decade in efforts to transform distressed neighborhoods into more family-supporting places.

For the past two years, the Casey Foundation has supported James B. Hyman's effort to arrive at a better understanding of how communities come together to get things done. Focusing first on the topic of social capital, his explorations sought to explain how and why people become engaged with others on community issues and how that engagement can be sustained for empowered community change.

The Process Framework he outlines makes a compelling case that this approach can serve not just as a good model, but that it can be deliberately supported and managed to encourage community change.

A second focus is on the *structure* of community building for change. The Structural Framework shows how an amorphous, multifaceted assortment of entities might be marshaled to facilitate the kinds of organic growth and development we would hope to result from a community-driven change initiative.

Twenty-two cities have been the initial focus of the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative. As might be expected, each city has approached the neighborhood transformation challenge in its own way. The discussion and frameworks that follow are drawn from our experience applying Dr. Hyman's frameworks at just one site—Denver, Colorado. As you will see, the approach in Denver was to determine whether the frameworks could be used to study and describe that city's approach to family-driven neighborhood change. The Denver principals were not asked to use the frameworks to guide their work. Instead, these explorations were conducted as "overlays" to see whether

the frameworks would parallel the actual operations and experiences of the Denver participants. Indeed, the parallels are so close that the report uses the voices of the Denver site's principals to describe the frameworks' application to their work.

We are confident that the findings from this report, although they focus on Denver, will help us promote the kinds of community connections that are so important to the Foundation in its efforts to strengthen families and revitalize neighborhoods all across the country. We thank the author for the creativity, depth, and strength of this work. We believe it adds a helpful measure of scientific rigor to our community-building strategies and, in so doing, has potential to strengthen the field.

We also want to thank all the local contributors who offered their expertise, time, and counsel to make this report practical and useful. They showed generosity of spirit and diligent work.

Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People; David Portillo, The Piton Foundation; Sandra Santa Cruz, resident; Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community coordinator, City of Denver; Peg Logan, director, The Chinook Fund; Cecelia Sanchez de Ortiz, AECF site liaison, *Making Connections–Denver;* Mary Gittings Cronin, director, The Piton Foundation; Kit Williams, consultant, Catalyst Resources; Carmen Carrillo, executive director, Mi Casa Resource Center; Myrna Hipp, deputy director, community planning and development, City of Denver; Michael Simmons, Community Relations Department, Denver Public Schools; Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation; Matt Hamilton, The Piton Foundation; and Beth Sanchez, former director, Denver Workforce Initiative.

Garland Yates, Senior Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation

introduction

THE CHAOS, THE FRAMEWORKS, AND THE REAL WORLD

Over the past three decades, a growing wisdom has emerged on the nation's social policy front. After a long history of relatively ineffective government interventions, this new wisdom argues that our top-down approaches should be reinvented in favor of more collaborative efforts—efforts that would unleash the energies of intended beneficiaries to help conceive and, in some instances, manage the interventions that serve their interests and needs. More and more, our approach to social interventions is leaning toward strategies that empower local communities and their residents to become effective agents for change.

A primary, and more vexing, question that attends this new wisdom, however, is whether the poor and distressed communities, to which these new change strategies might be directed, actually have the capacity to engage them effectively. Put simply, if the path to future community improvement is to rely heavily on the organized energies and involvement of the residents themselves, one must find ways to assist communities in building the capacity for that organization and involvement. Toward this end, "community building" is becoming an important first step in many of the more thoughtful recent efforts to improve the well-being of the nation's poor children, families, and neighborhoods.

The question that looms large here is *how?* How does one create and sustain a culture of community involvement and empowered community action in neighborhoods that are plagued by poverty and its attendant woes: crime, racism, drugs, and despair? Right now, we seem to lack concrete tools to guide us in the "how to's" of this work.

THE CHAOS AND BEYOND

The major challenge to community building lies in the nature of community itself. Communities are complex places and no two are alike. They vary in infrastructure, size, shape, complexion, capacity, and in myriad other descriptors, such that each, like a fingerprint, has its own peculiar texture of characteristics and dynamics. Not only are they different from each other at any given point in time, but the snapshot we take of any single community today is likely to differ from the one we would take tomorrow. Indeed, communities, like people, grow, mature, age, and, on occasion, even die (and are born again)—all in response to the vicissitudes of social, economic, and political trade winds. They are complex places indeed.

But our approach to urban policy is predicated on the belief that communities need not be viewed as mere corks on the tide—bound for destinies that are determined by the directions of today's currents. We believe in the power of intervention. For the past several decades, government has influenced community destinies through a variety of market, fiscal, and tax incentives. Most interventions were intended to stimulate employment and investment. But a relative lack of clear success is driving the search for new paradigms, including resident empowerment and community building.

This emerging new thinking emphasizes communities of people acting together to create a capacity for self-direction that gives them a voice and some control over their own neighborhoods. But it is important to remember that community building is not an end in itself. It is preparation, a first-order activity. The real aim is effective local change processes that will promote the well-being of the nation's poor families and children. Community building is an essential foundation for eliciting authentic, representative participation of the residents themselves in such efforts.

Until recently, very few initiatives in distressed communities truly engaged residents in any sustained way. And among those who would sponsor community-based and community-led strategies for change, the variations and idiosyncrasies within and among communities have often posed serious challenges for design. Most organizers and initiative sponsors, for instance, have a credo of meeting communities on their own terms. They start where the communities are—identifying, and then building on, the assets and structures that are already there. In so doing, they use the community's current strengths and energies to build new and increased capacity for self-determination and change. It is a well-reasoned approach that honors the organic and unpredictable nature of community processes, relationship building, and social organization.

Meeting each community on its own terms certainly reflects good judgment and appropriate sensibilities. Yet, we needn't, at the extreme, assume that community building must begin as a Rorschach test, in chaos and formlessness. If community building and community-empowered change are to flourish, we must do better than this "know it when we see it" approach. To be successful in the long term, community builders must establish a framework—a set of rules or principles to guide practice. My explorations suggest that there are ways to frame the community-building challenge in terms that provide a common starting point for our efforts and that overcome the amorphous nature of the task.

We must do better than this "know it when we see it" approach.

THE FRAMEWORKS: A PERSPECTIVE

This report proposes two community-building frameworks—a Process Framework and a Structural Framework. The Process Framework is a blueprint, a map, for how community building might proceed as a deliberate approach to the empowerment of community residents. Borrowing from the literature on social capital, this framework depicts a process of enhancing relationships among neighborhood residents, engaging those residents, and organizing communities. The Process Framework also shows how a newly empowered community can be mobilized for action and positive change.

The Structural Framework portrays an architecture for community building. This map illustrates one way to organize the relationships between a newly empowered neighborhood and the larger community of important agencies, actors, and resources to which the neighborhood must build a bridge to achieve desired ends.

The real aim is effective local change processes that will promote the well-being of the nation's poor families and children.

Both frameworks are offered as a way to think more concretely about empowered community action—and, potentially, as a model for guiding this important work. Their genesis is in the belief that the good works of those already toiling in the community-building vineyards would be greatly enhanced by these and other efforts to make community building more concrete and accessible as a field of work and study.

This does not mean that we are aspiring to a false precision for the sake of field building. Nor should it suggest we are attempting to overly rationalize community building as a discipline or trying to homogenize the communities themselves. On the contrary, the frameworks outlined here aspire only to convey an effective arrangement of the kinds of capacities, processes, relationships, and structures that we might intuit to be necessary to successful resident-led efforts to improve communities.

An analogy might help here. Envision a leisurely drive through the countryside on a fall Sunday afternoon—sightseeing with no real destination and no particular schedule for returning home—just a day of scenery-chasing whose direction is determined by the contours of the road and the occasional allure of a particular feature of the landscape. Undoubtedly, our comfort level for embarking on this kind of unguided excursion would be greatly enhanced by a simple tool—a road map. Such is the value of the frameworks presented here.

By analogy, our frameworks do not demand a particular way of proceeding. Nor do they direct their observers to some prescribed destination. Like a road map, they are merely tools—aids to help find the way. And, like a road map, they depict terrain whose various points exist simultaneously and are connected in various ways.

PUTTING THE FRAMEWORKS TO THE TEST

The frameworks in this report attempt to highlight the major dynamics, relationships, and components that are common elements of an effective community-building effort. If those elements are supported properly, residents of communities can strengthen their capacities to become agents of change. Moreover, we believe that these elements are so profound and so fundamental to long-term community empowerment that the ability to create and sustain them could well be the difference between communities that succeed in their efforts to produce long-term change and those that do not. (Of course, additional empirical research is needed.)

But the true test of the validity of the frameworks lies in whether they can be applied to the "real world" experience of community building. In this report, we examine the frameworks against the backdrop of the Denver site of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative. We explore the extent to which the experiences of the Denver participants can be described by and within each framework. Our investigations of this test case involved firsthand observation of the initiative, in-person interviews with 16 participants, and many telephone interviews over a 12-month period in 2000 and 2001. These methods do not constitute a clinical trial, but they have produced insights that proved valuable to the Foundation and to the *Making Connections—Denver* team. The participants are quoted throughout to let those "Denver voices" speak for themselves about the relationship between the frameworks' concepts and actual experience in community building.

MAKING CONNECTIONS **AND THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION.** Denver is one of 22 Annie E. Casey Foundation *Making Connections* sites. As the nation's largest philanthropic organization dedicated to the well-being of children and youth, the Casey Foundation has spent more than 50 years looking for effective ways to improve the prospects of the nation's vulnerable children and families. The philosophy is summed up in the statement, *children do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods.* This is the core of a major direction in the Foundation's grantmaking called Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development (NT/FD). The Foundation proposes the following hypothesis:

> *We are willing to wager that with the right mix of incentives, investments, and opportunities, neighborhood conditions can be changed in ways that support families and bolster children's chances of beating the odds.*[1]

The hypothesis is that place matters, and a major focus of NT/FD is to improve the place by improving services, conditions, and "opportunity structures" in ways that will help strengthen families and enhance the life prospects of children. The *Making Connections* initiative is the centerpiece for testing this hypothesis. Its primary aim is to help turn tough neighborhoods into family-supporting communities. The *Making Connections* approach to neighborhood transformation and family development is to stimulate and support local movements that engage residents,

civic groups, political leaders, grassroots groups, public- and private-sector leadership, and faith-based organizations in the effort.

To be successful in the long term, however, *Making Connections* must establish a theory—a set of rules or principles to guide the practice of community building—of how to create these local movements. The frameworks reported here offer such a theory. And because of the high demand for examples of promising approaches to community change, the Foundation hopes they will be of interest not just to *Making Connections* sites but to others in the field.

MAKING CONNECTIONS–DENVER. The *Making Connections* initiative is at work in 22 cities across the United States and is rich in the number and variety of its approaches to building local movements. This paper explores only one such approach. The Denver approach is grounded firmly in the primacy of residents in the change process. It is about building relationships—both among residents and neighborhood organizations and between the neighborhoods and outside institutions. Initial efforts have focused on increasing resident engagement through support for community organizing and on formulating community agendas.

Four low-income Denver neighborhoods are involved: Baker, La Alma–Lincoln Park, and Sun Valley on Denver's West Side, and Cole to the northeast. So far, the initiative has helped residents organize to work on important issues: safety, education, child care, health care, and employment. Each neighborhood has created its own organizing group and, together, the four groups have formed two associations: the Neighborhood Learning Partnership, which represents all four neighborhoods, and the Family Strengthening Small Grants Committee, which manages $100,000 a year to support various neighborhood projects.

Children do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods.

Making Connections–Denver has formed a Service Provider Partnership made up of nonprofit organizations. Also involved in the resident-driven efforts are representatives of city and state government and other key institutions.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

This report presents and discusses the two frameworks and applies them to *Making Connections–Denver.* Part One introduces the Process Framework and its assumptions. It demonstrates that community building is not a formless exercise but an intelligible process made up of many finite and interacting parts. After a brief overview, Part One considers five "clusters" of activity that comprise the Process Framework's principal components. To further the framework's practical value, this report recommends strategies for concrete steps that can be taken in relation to each cluster.

Part Two presents the Structural Framework. It focuses on managing the chaos and particularly on the roles and relationships among various players. It offers guidance on how to configure community-

building efforts and what they might look like in real life. It considers the issue of how the processes described in the Process Framework can be nested in and can interact with the larger community of resource holders and decision-makers. As part of that discussion, this report prescribes a set of bridged relationships that can be instrumental in achieving resident-driven, community-empowered neighborhood change.

ENDNOTES:

[1]Annie E. Casey Foundation, Neighborhood Tranformation/Family Development: Overview, Unpublished, p. 1.

part one:

A PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AS THE FOUNDATION FOR NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE

Harnessing the Power of People

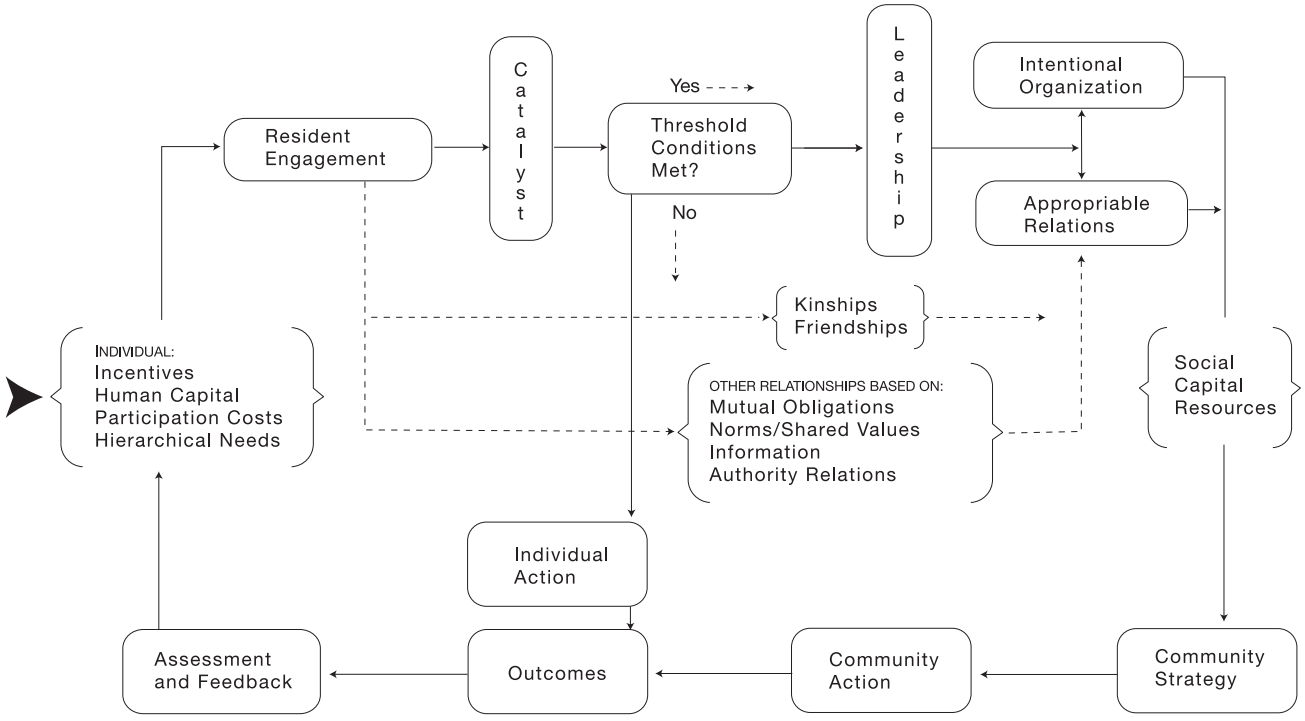
To me the most exciting thing [about Making Connections] *is this commitment to seeing ordinary people do the extraordinary, you know—lead. And that is bucking every way we've done business. I think that's what I'm most excited about, and I think it's the most challenging thing and the most important thing we can do.*

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

I think Making Connections–Denver *has really shown that if we invest with patient money in terms of real organizing, there's much more return. If we want to do quick money for quick mobilization, we can have a little bit of a flash, but we're not really changing any relationships.*

—David Portillo, The Piton Foundation

FIGURE I-1
A COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROCESS
FRAMEWORK



The Community-Building Process Framework illustrates how, and under what conditions, residents in communities become involved, either alone or in groups, in matters that affect their welfare and that of their neighbors. It begins with a focus on individual behavior and on the factors that influence residents to become actively engaged with others outside their homes. It goes on to consider the circumstances under which individual residents may decide to join forces to address issues of mutual concern. The framework highlights the critical roles that leadership and community organizing play in pressing community actions and in pursuing community outcomes. Finally, it stresses the importance of communication in maintaining the involvement of residents and in sustaining the community-building effort over time. (Figure I-1 is a diagram of the framework.)

For convenience and clarity, the Process Framework is presented here as a series of steps in a rather linear process. But the real-world process is usually far from linear. Consequently, this presentation represents just one of any number of ways the process might proceed. Every point in the discussion (and in Figure I-1) exists simultaneously with every other, and the sequence in which they occur can vary greatly with local circumstances.

The value of this "map," then, lies not so much in the sequence of the components, but in the fact that it identifies and displays those components at all. For example, one could easily imagine a catalytic event that rouses residents to get involved in community affairs (rather than the sequence being reversed, as Figure I-1). Think of Rosa Parks's famous refusal to move to the back of the bus. More than once, a process of local "internal combustion" has been known to fuel a movement. However, community improvement can't always wait for a magic moment. Our framework therefore offers a particular sequence. It takes on the perspective of a proactive outside entity, such as a national or local foundation that is interested in acting as a catalyst for generating a community-building capacity from scratch.

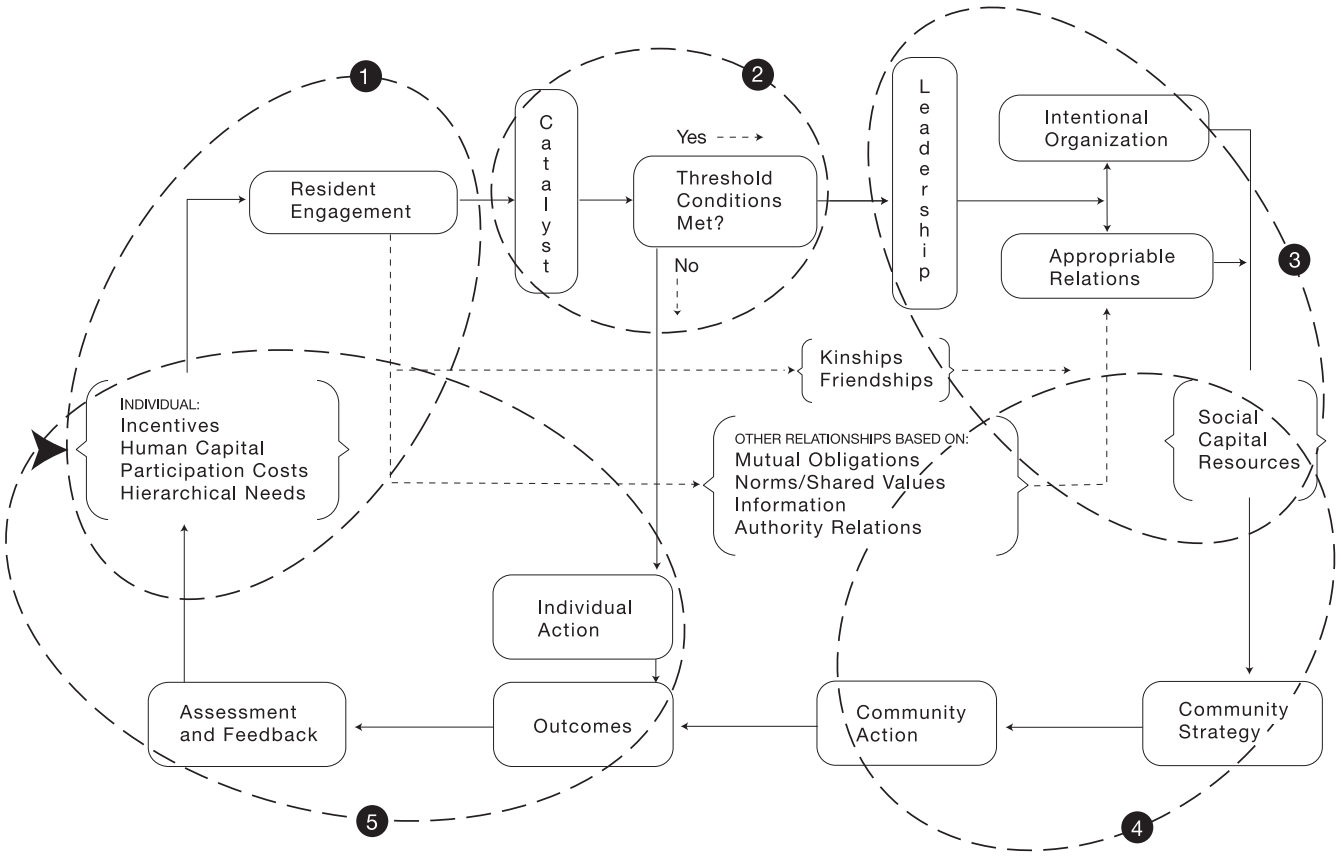
The framework is an iterative process, and the cycle can be repeated to focus on a different issue each time. A neighborhood might be concerned about police conduct, gang activities, or education reform. Each of these concerns might be a separate focus of that neighborhood's community-building efforts. In the real world, however, such neighborhood conditions and issues will probably exist simultaneously. Accordingly, smaller-scale versions of the framework can be pursued concurrently by different or overlapping groups of residents.

Finally, and perhaps most important, the Process Framework is likely to have cumulative effects—building on itself with each application. Each positive iteration of this process should make the next application easier. Participants' feelings, both about their participation in community affairs and about the outcomes of their actions, will condition their appetites for continued involvement. Participants' positive reactions can also provide incentives to other residents to become involved. For these reasons, we believe that communication about outcomes and successes is crucial.

This description of the framework is a simplification of what actually are complicated processes—perhaps too complicated to command the attention of the busy community leaders it might

benefit. To make those complex processes more accessible, they have been reduced to five major "clusters" of activity that characterize a collective community process: resident engagement, agenda building, community organizing, community action, and assessment and message development (Figure I-2). Each cluster is a set of processes and dynamics that are essential components of sustainable community action. They provide an organizing mechanism that enables the Process Framework to be easily understood by audiences who are more interested in practice than in theory.

FIGURE I-2
COMMUNITY-BUILDING PROCESS
FRAMEWORK ACTIVITY CLUSTERS



cluster 1: RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT
GETTING OFF THE LIVING ROOM COUCH

GOAL: Increase the social interaction and exchange among residents.

RATIONALE: Build neighborhood relationships as a foundation for identifying issues, building an agenda, and organizing residents.

The Centrality of Relationships among Residents

There is important groundwork to be done around relationship building and around enhancing a sense of unity and a sense of collective ownership. And it's not sexy and it's not always quantifiable. It's not the stuff that funders want and because of that I think we often skip over it.

I live with a theme that I learned in a leadership program that says, "You've got to go slow to go fast." The slow part has to do with getting people out of their houses, away from their televisions, talking with their neighbors, feeling safe to share things with their neighbors, and feeling a sense of responsibility for all the children in the neighborhood and not just their own. And that takes time. It takes time because it has taken time to get to the opposite place. It has taken time for those things to be broken down, so it's going to take time to build them back up.

—Beth Sanchez, Former Director, Denver Workforce Initiative

Some of the Casey language that we agree with a hundred percent is that the breakdown of community and community isolation are core, central issues that underlie a lot of social problems. To the extent that residents don't see themselves as connected to each other, a growing body of social science seems to indicate that that leads to a whole raft of community problems. On the other side, in communities where people have relationships with each other, people definitely have the power to effect change.

In some congregations where we're working now, people are saying, "We just don't even know each other very well." Or, "We have all these new people coming in and we don't even know them." And so we're already thinking ahead to, not just a social event, but things like using the gym for an indoor soccer club or something like that. Now those are still heading towards task-oriented activities, but

we have ended up, as an action step, in some places, creating efforts that are more about socialization, like what do we do about [getting to know] newcomers?

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

I think part of the power of the Story Circles is that we bring people together who may not normally have the occasion to talk with each other. We bring them together and we engage them in a conversation. People get to know each other so much better, and when people get to know each other better, of course, they communicate much better. And that communication, I think, is where we're really beginning to broaden the interrelationships between people in our community.

—Sandra Santa Cruz, La Alma–Lincoln Park Resident, Story Circle Facilitator

Increasing the amount of social interaction within neighborhoods is an important pursuit in its own right.

The strength of any community-building effort depends on the willingness and ability of individual residents to cooperate with each other on matters of common concern. Social isolation among community residents and alienation and disconnectedness from neighbors and neighborhoods are widely recognized as major contributors to a lack of social progress in many poor and distressed communities. The first cluster of the Process Framework therefore focuses on increasing neighborhood social interaction so residents can form and strengthen supportive relationships.

Creating, strengthening, and sustaining connections among residents is important because these relationships contain resources—social capital. This report defines social capital as *an asset representing actionable resources that are contained in, and accessible through, a system of relationships.*[1] With very few exceptions, people bring resources to relationships—time, skills, knowledge, contacts, and connections that have value to their relationship partners. These social capital relationships are created in one of two ways: through bonding or through "bridging."[2]

Bonding in this special sense, implies that there is a cohesive force for maintaining existing relationships—promoting solidarity, for instance, among family members, friends, or associates. Shared norms, values, and objectives; common interests; or characteristics such as ethnicity, race, and religion can each be exploited to some extent to promote bonding. *Bridging,* on the other hand, is about making connections for a purpose, particularly among people who might not know one another already. This latter kind of bringing together is usually an intentional act that occurs in response to some particular need or opportunity. Both relationship types are important to improving individual welfare.

Indeed, because relationships provide greater access to information and to other social, psychological, and tangible supports, we can assume that enlarging residents' social networks will result in an automatic improvement in their well-being, regardless of whether those relationships are ever organized to serve the larger community's needs. So increasing the amount of social interaction

within neighborhoods is an important pursuit in its own right as a strategy for improving the circumstances of families and children. By merely enlarging the pool of people to whom families can turn for help and advice, we can improve their circumstances and make them better off.

Relationships also are important as a foundation for community organization and action. But for most of us, they contain untapped or even hidden resources. One can think of social interaction as analogous to static electricity—random energy that exists all around us that is not directed into an electric current. Similarly, our social interactions with neighbors could be, for the most part, quite incidental—having no purpose other than our desire to be friendly and to acknowledge our common tie to a neighborhood.

The question is how to invest in building relationships?

Yet these incidental interactions can, in time, become more purposeful and grow into more substantial relationships. Even if they do not, they can still offer a basis for sharing information and expressing concerns about matters of mutual interest. And, depending on the intensity of those mutual interests, the relationships also might provide a basis for organization and action. As a starting point, therefore, a community-building effort must find ways first to increase the amount of incidental contact within neighborhoods and then to make those contacts more intentional so that they can become a foundation for organization and action.

Leveraging Relationships for Action

You can easily get in the rut of asking, "Why aren't those people getting engaged? Why the hell aren't they?" Well, if I look at myself, I know that I'll never volunteer off a bulletin announcement. Even if a pastor harangued me to get involved from the pulpit, I wouldn't do it. I only get involved if I'm asked. That's me, personally, and I do [community organizing] professionally.

I think I'd have to be visited; you'd have to visit me and ask me. Now, it's true that I am involved in some volunteer things at the moment, but the only reason I'm involved is because I have a relationship. I'm doing it because of a relationship and some self-interest ... and in some cases it's a weak self-interest even.

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The question is how to invest in building relationships—more specifically, how can one encourage more neighborly interaction among a greater number of community members? The most logical approach would be to find ways to increase residents' appetites and opportunities for interaction.

NCREASING APPETITES. Appetites for interaction are conditioned to a large extent by some combination of environment and personal makeup. The leaders of *Making Connections–Denver* agree that either or both of these factors can influence residents' willingness and ability to become active in the neighborhood. Environmental factors include a consideration of the benefits against the costs (money, time, inconvenience) or burden of participation. These considerations can be addressed by immediate incentives like food, entertainment, transportation, and child care. Personal issues can require longer-term attention because they can involve sensitive human issues, such as self-esteem and confidence, and a consideration of where residents stand in the hierarchy of needs that range from survival to self-actualization.

Meeting People's Needs First

This actually happened in His Love Fellowship. A woman said, "I'm really concerned, but no, I would never come to a meeting."

And I said, "Well, why?"

"Well, because we just can't get involved."

But in reality she was involved. It made no sense. So, I went back and talked to the pastor about it. It turned out what I had missed was she's illiterate, and what the church is doing is working on her literacy skills this summer. She is a total social capital builder, but didn't see ever coming to our meeting. So now that we know? Will [our meeting] be in Spanish? Yes, it will. We'll look at any way to get rid of barriers.

However, if somebody says, "No, someone else can do this for me …" In fact, if we feel pretty early on that this is someone who wants to complain but not do anything, we'll move on quickly. We'll leave a meeting in 15 minutes. But if there are barriers, we'll do anything we can.

"I need to be trained. I'm illiterate. I need babysitting."

You'd better believe that we'll do anything we can.
—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

I see [engagement] happening modestly on a very small scale within some of the neighborhoods in which we work. And the community organizers are helping me better understand that modest is

probably all you're going to get initially because people have to deal with their most immediate needs first and then they begin to broaden. It's kind of like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. You've got to deal with all the basic things before you can elevate to the next level.

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES. In fashioning an investment strategy, funders and others can find it helpful to study and map the characteristics and conditions that are likely to influence neighborhood interactions. Resources might be needed to help community leaders improve their understanding of the opportunities and impediments they face. Suggested activities include the following:

- ***Assess the character and composition of the neighborhood.*** It is important to discern whether there are neighborhood dynamics that work to keep people apart. Differences in income, culture, language, and race can create social fault lines that pose barriers and limits to neighborhood interaction. An understanding of any demographic divides within the community can be useful in creating strategies for increasing social interaction.

- ***Assess local targets of opportunity.*** Conversely, it also can be important to have a clearer understanding of what it is that brings a community together. For example, increasing social interaction will be made easier if efforts to do so are built on familiar bases. Consider various *places*—popular and safe venues that community members already frequent; *activities*—social, cultural, or recreational events that are known to be popular with residents; *occasions*—holidays, celebrations, or other special events; *organizations*—trusted, well-regarded entities that already produce turnout in the neighborhood (for example, churches and resident groups).

- ***Assess the gap periods.*** The ultimate goal is to increase the potential for *sustained* neighborhood social interaction, not just to increase participation in a single annual event. Planners should consider the timing as well as the number of interaction opportunities, encouraging regular engagement throughout the year and avoiding long gaps that might cause community energies to wane.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Investing resources in exploring neighborhood characteristics and conditions can help define areas for further investment. It might be important to invest in creating more resident supports (transportation, child care) or targets of opportunity (safe venues, popular activities, and occasions) or to bolster assets and efforts that already exist. A major—and sometimes overlooked—source of information and suggestions is the neighborhood itself.

In Denver, one avenue being used to gather such information, while promoting social interaction and engagement, is the *Story Circle*—an evening event involving 8–12 residents who share their stories. One theme that has emerged repeatedly from the Denver Story Circles is the value residents attach to social activity in their neighborhoods. In one session in the La Alma–Lincoln Park neighborhood, residents expressed their concerns and offered ideas about how to overcome isolation.

Wanted: Life in the Neighborhood

People were like, "Well, it would be really great if we had some entertainment or something going on in the parks during the summer. Or if, you know, the stores in our neighborhood, along Santa Fe Drive, were open in the evenings and people came out and there was just more of a sense of life in the community and people interacting with each other."

—Sandra Santa Cruz, La Alma–Lincoln Park Resident, Story Circle Facilitator

Residents interest in promoting more social interaction also has come to the attention of Denver's Small Grants Program, which is administered by the Piton Foundation to award grants that range from $100 to $5,000 for activities that are driven by residents or by service providers in the target neighborhoods. In June 2000, the program received 67 proposals and funded 29 with its $100,000 budget. Fifteen of the funded proposals were submitted by residents and six of those proposed activities that were either entirely social (such as block parties) or incorporated social exchange as a major component.

The Value of Celebration

The West Side probably had a lot more celebration kind of activity, but Sun Valley also had some. One was a "let's build this picnic area" kind of social activity project. But they also had a fair that we funded and this other activity where they were going to bring people together every month and do different kinds of celebrations.

—David Portillo, The Piton Foundation

Conversations and interviews with a sample of Denver principals produced some other examples of community efforts to encourage residents to meet and mix:

- ***Spanish and English classes in the Cole neighborhood.*** African-American and Hispanic residents organized to get these (simultaneous instruction) classes in recognition of a language barrier that prevented cross-cultural communications. The classes are viewed as a first step in helping to bring the neighborhood together.

- ***Multicultural dinners.*** An effort in Sun Valley promoted new social relations and greater understanding by sponsoring multicultural dinners in concert with the Vietnamese community.

- ***Good Neighboring Resource Guide.*** The Neighborhood Resource Center in Denver produced this booklet, which suggests ways community organizations can foster good relations among neighbors.

- ***Community social gatherings.*** Metropolitan Organizations for People is doing the organizing for the Sun Valley Coalition, mostly by focusing on visiting with individuals and experimenting with barbecues and other social gatherings as vehicles for exchanging information and organizing.

Building social energies is a goal to which initiative leaders and residents alike appear to be increasingly committed.

In a variety of efforts, *Making Connections–Denver* has focused on the social engagement of residents as a major component of community organizing. Building social energies is a goal to which initiative leaders and residents alike appear to be increasingly committed.

Investing in Social Interaction

Over time, we have come to recognize that this one-on-one and other [social interaction] work is actually organizing—that it is work that we could actually consider funding. So we've made some recommendations for the second grant cycle, putting it in as a priority on our application. So this year, we do say we will give priority to activities that bring residents together to actually create social change.

—David Portillo, The Piton Foundation

cluster 2: AGENDA BUILDING
CREATING A "MARKET" OF IDEAS AND ACTION

GOAL: Convert social interaction into social awareness and consensus building.

RATIONALE: Bolster the capacity to identify, coalesce around, and act on the priority concerns of the community.

Turning Interactions into Action

So, yes, right from the onset we were interested in not only getting people to relate to each other, but in helping them direct those relationships so they can act on the hopes and dreams they have for the community, as well as on what they see as the very serious problems that they're concerned about.

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

We had a Story Circle last night with residents from La Alma–Lincoln Park, and one of the comments was, "I would really like to see there be more activity in the community, more night-time life. I'd like to see people come out during the evenings and converse with neighbors, get to know neighbors." And that whole idea led us into a conversation about the reasons why that doesn't happen in our community.

Some of the reasons that we discussed were the disparities and the differences among different groups of people, among different classes, among different races. Just some turf issues. There was the whole idea about people who live in the housing projects and whether they really feel that they are part of the community because it's transitional housing. They're only there for a certain amount of time and then when that time is up they need to move on. Language as a barrier came up.

So we discussed a lot of reasons, potential causes for this particular sense of isolation. And so now that we have uncovered these issues, we need to think about what is the next step, how do we organize ourselves to address the issue?

—Sandra Santa Cruz, La Alma–Lincoln Park Resident, Story Circle Facilitator

We have emphasized that resident interaction and engagement are not ends in themselves. They are the foundation on which neighborhoods can organize for community-driven change. The next stage of community building is gathering information and gaining the consensus needed to construct an authentic agenda of community concerns. Cluster 2 of the framework—the agenda-building cluster—focuses on understanding how and why matters that affect individual residents rise to the level of community concern and become catalysts for community organization and action.

The Power of Powerlessness

The other day I visited a more middle-class woman who said, "I don't really have any concerns."

So, now, a good listener, a good organizer in teaching leaders would say, "Really? So, you don't care anything about anything?"

"Well, yeah, I kind of do."

"Well, have you ever thought of doing anything about it?"

"No."

"Well, how come?"

"Because I don't really think I can do anything about it. What can I do, what do I know? I'm just one person."

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

INDIVIDUAL CONCERNS VERSUS THE COMMUNITY AGENDA. Community-wide interest and action are not easy to arouse. Given a choice, most people would not elect to join a group—they would rather resolve issues by themselves. Working in groups can be stressful. It takes time and effort and it is fraught with uncertainties, inefficiencies, and demands for compromise. For most people, the preferred course of action, given any catalytic event or issue, is to go it alone and just take care of it. The alternative, which has become the target of community-building efforts, is to become so discouraged or intimidated that one feels powerless to do anything in defense of one's better interests.

Agenda-building activities should air residents' concerns in forums that permit others to relate to them and align with them. The focus of the second cluster is an examination of two sets of threshold conditions: Under what circumstances will individual resident concerns enter the "marketplace" of community civic discourse? What factors help determine whether a specific concern will "clear the market" and be included among the issues slated for community action?

We assume in this cluster that people will seek help from others on occasions when they believe they will be unable to effect a desired outcome if they act alone. Either or both of two conditions can cause feelings of powerlessness. A person might believe he or she has no access—that the jurisdiction or level of authority to which an appeal must be made lies beyond his or her reach. Or the person might think he or she has *no clout*—that the gravity or complexity of the issue makes it too large to be affected by someone acting alone.

Feelings of powerlessness also can occur when residents believe that the authorities are not likely to be responsive to them because of racial, cultural, or other biases. However they occur, conclusions about powerlessness can motivate residents to seek help in addressing concerns. Whether the affected resident actually takes the next step to exercise some leadership and bring other people together to consider the issue might be less important here than the individual's perception of having something at stake in a matter that individual people do not have the power to affect. Still, for an issue to become a community concern, it must first become a subject of community discussion.

For an issue to clear the market of residents' many concerns and rise as a priority for action, it must meet two additional conditions. It must have *general appeal* (i.e., and it must be considered significant by some critical mass of other community residents who also see it as beyond their ability to resolve on their own). And secondly, it must find a *willing leader,* someone to organize the community's energies and actions.

All of these conditions must be met to propel an individual resident's concern forward to become an issue for community action. In common-sense shorthand, an issue will rise to the level of a community concern only if and when a sufficient number of residents care enough about it to be willing to act on it. The crux of this cluster is building a market for ideas and action—creating the conditions and opportunities under which issues can be aired, shared, and subscribed to.

Theoretically, only those issues that pass the "market test" of community interest and energy should be actively pursued in the community-building process. Those that do not should not. Theoretically, an initiative like *Making Connections* should have no real stake in promoting any given issue that does not command community interest, even where the issue is important to funders.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

In the real world, and particularly in distressed communities that lack social organization, the mechanisms that elicit community opinion are often weak or nonexistent. In such communities, some investment might be needed to create a forum or some other mechanism to stimulate the

exchange of information and ideas. We could think of creating such a mechanism as a logical extension of the social interaction initiatives highlighted in the discussion of the first cluster. In this second cluster, the discussion moves beyond the aim of increasing socialization to focus on deliberate efforts to identify issues and build agendas. This agenda building can be accomplished in two major areas for intervention: creating a market for information and action, and clearing the market (building consensus).

Creating a market means facilitating information flow.

CREATING A MARKET FOR INFORMATION AND ACTION. At the very heart of community building is the gathering, exchanging, and processing of information among residents and between those residents and other stakeholders. Creating a market means facilitating information flow—information about community priorities and concerns, about activities and events, about resources and opportunities, about participation and engagement. Agenda building depends heavily on the involvement of community members in exchanging and processing information so that it yields an authentic set of priorities that is representative of neighborhood interests. Story Circles are one tool to facilitate information sharing in the neighborhoods.

Stories Raise Awareness

The storytelling project! I'm amazed, I'm constantly amazed at how powerful this particular tool is, not only in bringing residents together, but in getting them to open up and really talk about what's on their mind in terms of community, what's working in our community, what isn't working in our community … things that I would never even guess, and I live in the community. But you know, everybody has a different perspective and it's always just amazing the things that will come up out of a Story Circle.

—Sandra Santa Cruz, La Alma–Lincoln Park Resident, Story Circle Facilitator

Another way to facilitate information flow is to sponsor opportunities for informal exchange. Social events that have no particular content focus can provide opportunities for unscripted information exchange. Because they are primarily social, these forums can focus more on generating numbers of participants and less on ensuring that particular persons attend. This shotgun approach can accomplish a general community outreach and, perhaps more important, an awareness that some neighborhood residents are involved in something they think is important to the community. Denver's Small Grants Program has sponsored celebrations and social gatherings like barbecues to meet these ends.

CLEARING THE MARKET. This is really about consensus building. In addition to stimulating discussion and bringing resident issues and concerns to the surface, neighborhoods need mechanisms for holding informal "referenda" to sort and prioritize them. So community builders should sponsor

an orchestrated series of more formal exchanges—planned meetings organized around an agenda that has defined purposes and expectations for outcomes. Because formal exchanges have prescribed contents and purposes, they place some priority on ensuring the presence of particular participants. Many of Denver's gatherings combined informal and formal activities, seeking both to conduct necessary business and to hold a celebration for large numbers of residents.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Making Connections–Denver is creating a market of ideas in at least three ways. First, it is building on social interaction investments to promote informal exchanges. It also has invested in formal exchanges that are deliberate attempts at agenda building. The first major formal events were "neighborhood summits"—a series of neighborhood retreats designed to promote dialogue among residents and to report on their hopes, fears, and concerns about a neighborhood and its ability to support children and families. *Making Connections–Denver* also contributes to agenda building through its "one-on-ones" with neighborhood residents and through continuous outreach to ensure that the priorities for neighborhood change are authentic and vital.

Observing Denver's experiences has helped confirm the critical connection between strong neighborhood relationships and the convening strength of community meetings. Denver principals say the formal meetings that have been held in targeted communities are now both more possible and more successful because of previous efforts to build relationships and trust.

Relationship Lessons

It was good to have other residents from Sun Valley saying, "It wasn't just-like-that. If we give you a grant to have that meeting[3] nothing is going to change. You're going to be shouting at one another because there are no relationships that the community has built."

So it made some of the Small Grants Committee members—who are also, of course, residents involved in that neighborhood—think about, "Well, we didn't actually apply just to build relationships, but perhaps we should." So, for instance, this year we've seen many more proposals for agenda building that begin with or include this kind of relationship building. I think this year over half the proposals are for that kind of activity.

—David Portillo, The Piton Foundation

Denver has produced several additional insights about the relationship between agenda-building efforts and the resident engagement strategies highlighted in the discussion of the first cluster. The

Process Framework treats resident engagement and agenda building as separate activity clusters in the community-building process. The reason is that the framework is an idealized version of community processes, and it necessarily proceeds from scratch. It assumes there is a void and that social relations are weak or nonexistent. In such a scenario, our framework suggests that community building must start by increasing the amount of neighborhood social interaction as a separate, first-order imperative. But some Denver leaders have adopted strategies that combine their resident engagement and agenda-building efforts.

Issues Can Leverage Relationships

There has to be motivation, and social relationships provide that motivation. But sometimes I think you have to bring people together around something else that they care about because they're not willing in their busy lives—and this goes for wealthy as well as poor people—to take the time just for relationship building. If you tell them, "Come together so we can have relationships," that's not going to be important enough. If you say, "Come together because we've got to throw out the principal at the school," they'll come together, and relationships will develop if you add those social pieces in along the way.

—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

Conversations with Denver principals also suggested that the need for rudimentary community building might be mitigated somewhat if it can be anchored in specific institutions, like churches, that already have developed relationships and social capital.

Institutions as Relationship Builders

If you were to say,"Give me a percentage of when you would get people together for socialization alone." I would say, it would be a smaller percentage. One of the reasons we work within the church context—the congregation context—is there is a measure of social capital already there.

Let's say you worked on a campaign for affordable housing with a church or something like that. St. Dominic's right now is having a public meeting in North Denver on affordable housing. So let's say they have 300 people show up. Let's say they work on that. They get the work done and then they just get tired, right? As an organizer, I can let that sit for four months, five months, and do nothing. I can come back and I have the institution still. The pastor says, "Okay, let's convene another meeting," and we're back in business.

By contrast, my experience with neighborhood-based organizing suggests that I would have to go out and go door-to-door all over again. My experience was we would have a real sense of people coming together around a specific task or something, and then, inevitably, we lost just about everybody after that specific self-interest was gone.

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

This raises an interesting possibility. It could be that church-based or other institutionally based organizing efforts actually offer inherent advantages over neighborhood-based efforts because they may be more sustainable. As long as an organization remains viable, it is likely that the privileges, obligations, and events associated with membership will offer ready-made opportunities for social interaction, and consequently, for sustaining the relationships that constitute capacity for community action. If so, agenda-building and organizing activities might be less perishable and easier to promote when they are approached through relationships based on memberships rather than through relationships based solely on acquaintances.

It seems intuitive that community action is more easily sustained when it is based on relationships that are more heavily bonded. Whether such relationships exist through memberships, or just through kinships or friendships, they could be more enduring than those that are bridged together for more discrete and time-limited purposes.

These observations raise a useful empirical question in our thinking about resident engagement and agenda building: How does the strength of social ties within communities and neighborhoods affect their capacity to pursue and sustain a community-building effort? The question expands our concern for resident engagement beyond a preoccupation with the mere existence of social ties to include a concern for the quality of those social ties.

In any case, the evidence from Denver and elsewhere strongly supports the Process Framework's emphasis on social interactions as the fundamental basis for community building. In general, the Denver discussions reinforce the framework's fluidity and the interchangeable nature of its parts. The framework demands no particular order of activity. Indeed, the *Making Connections–Denver* experience suggests that much of the actual practice in the field will variously combine functions from several clusters into single activities and events. Denver's Story Circles, for example, combine social interaction, agenda building, and community organizing.

Building a Relationship Movement

That's exactly what we're trying to do: bring people out to interact with each other, to talk about our community, to talk about how we can improve our community, and to actually get people to work on making improvements in our community. If we give ourselves a goal of 100 Story Circles and we anticipate that there will be on the average ten people for each Story Circle, that's going to be like 1,000 responses. That's a lot of people and a tremendous amount of information to build an agenda for change.

—Sandra Santa Cruz, La Alma–Lincoln Park Resident, Story Circle Facilitator

cluster 3: COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
THE VEHICLE FOR EXERCISING AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY VOICE

GOAL: Build neighborhood leadership capacity and political organization.

RATIONALE: Bring sustainable energy, capacity, and cohesion to the table.

Organizing: What, Why, and Wherefore

Our starting point in Denver has been organizing—not just for organizing's sake, but as a way for families to find their voice around this effort. Only then can they feel that they can come to the table with the same power and the same energy that any system can come to this table.

Neighborhoods need to be clear about their self-interests. But that can only happen when families feel strong enough and powerful enough to be able to support their ideas around any table, be it with the governor, or social services, or the city, or with their neighbors. And that is a long-term deal. I think we are now in the process of trying to build that.

—Cecelia Sanchez de Ortiz, Site Liaison, *Making Connections–Denver*

The art and science of community organizing that I've been involved with strives to train and develop leaders and give people a vehicle to build power in their neighborhoods, and capacity and relationships in their communities. The whole purpose of that organizing is to teach people the necessary skills and build their capacity to lead efforts on their own behalf in the community.

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

I don't think there's ever enough. I think … organizing is going to be a constant. … People come and people go. One day you might have a parent leader in a school and then something happens to that family and that person's gone. So, it's a constant refueling, bringing in new people. It also helps prevent the gatekeepers from surfacing. So that is a constant investment we have to make.

—Mary Gittings Cronin, Director, The Piton Foundation

Until this point, our discussion has focused on overcoming the social inertia "from scratch" in a hypothetical neighborhood. The first two clusters addressed such questions as how to get individual residents moving and how to get them talking with one another. We also asked how we can focus some of that exchange on issues that are important to the community's welfare. Clusters 3, 4, and 5 turn to questions of how that new community energy might be directed and sustained.

Cluster 3 is about focus: How does a community concern actually become a focus for collective action and a vehicle for exercising community voice? An important issue that arises here is where people go with their concerns.

Community expression needs a center around which to revolve.

LEADERSHIP, GATEKEEPING, AND ORGANIZING. The question of where people turn for help is difficult to answer with any specificity because the avenues vary so much from one community to the next. In general, however, beyond turning to friends and relatives, we would expect people to approach the nearest individual or organization representing relevant, credible, and approachable leadership on the issue. In some instances, this means going directly to the appropriate authority. In others, it means approaching a community group, organization, individual, or leader who residents believe could be receptive to their concerns and effective in dealing with the appropriate authority.

Leadership is the first component of the community-organizing cluster precisely because community expression needs a center around which to revolve. Someone or something must "stand point" to receive community sentiments, focus community energies, and interpret and transmit community will. An immediate concern for the success of a community organizing effort, then, is whether there is an ample supply of competent and approachable leadership available to and among residents.

In Denver, the authenticity of prospective leaders has also arisen as an issue. During conversations in Denver, respondents often expressed a fear of establishing leaders as substitutes for rather than as transmitters of community voice. They believe that the risk of creating gatekeepers, people who speak for the community without truly representing it, is real and harmful—even when the gatekeepers themselves are relatively benign.

The Gatekeeper Syndrome

Often we deal with leaders in the community who do what I call leadership by intuition: "I live in the community, therefore I intuitively know the needs of the community, and I can tell you what it is we want and, in fact, if you want to do something, just come to me and I'll tell you. I don't need to talk with anyone. I don't need to tell them what I know is going on or what you've told me, and

I certainly don't need to ask them how they feel about it. Because when I tell you what the community feels, as long as I reflect what I feel, I'm reflecting what the community feels."

That's all wrong. We know that's all wrong. What we've done in the past is either ignore those folks or anoint them—one or the other. But either way, it does not bring the needs of community, other than that particular individual, to the table. Nor does it involve other residents in solving the problems of the community.

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

But the real and even deeper fear in Denver is that there are other, not-so-benign occasions when gatekeeping can be purposely harmful to the community's interests.

Who's Representing Whom?

With the history and the politics in those neighborhoods, we've got a couple of problems. One is, who's at the table? It's not always a representative group. There are some really strong power brokers there who are controlling everything and who have certain incentives not to want the neighborhood to be truly organized, because they would lose their platform.

—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

The fear of gatekeeping is based on the possibility that one person might define, control, or promote an agenda that reflects his or her own interests rather than those of the neighborhood. Conversations in Denver suggest that many are working hard to make sure that individuals are not put in positions where they can behave with that kind of autonomy. Denver's community-organizing process—with its continuing efforts to recruit new participants and train them in various leadership skills—offers some protection against this possibility. What respondents want is a model of leadership that is representative—one that brings community members together both around the issues and around the integrity of their leadership.

Keepin' it Real

[There needs to be some] accountability, so that any one person there, when they're speaking, is truly speaking for the group. If they speak in ways that do not represent the group, they get called on it and dethroned. That piece to me is very important, because that's the piece that protects us from gatekeepers and from tokenism.

And that's what "organized" means to me. It means that we're dealing with people who have an elevated level of skills and are working together so they have a lasting power among that group. So when we, as the bureaucracy, deal with them, there's really something to deal with and it's not just one person so when they go away it falls apart. It's a block and they operate as a block.

—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

Making Connections–Denver seems obsessed with the notion of dispersing its leadership. It offers broad leadership training to all who enter the initiative and is careful to prevent a situation in which anyone becomes too visibly identifiable as the voice of the initiative or the neighborhood. In this climate, "executive leadership"—autonomous leadership based on mutually agreeable relationships, goals, and principles—is not permitted or encouraged. Consensus rules, and individuals are loath to take too much initiative without evidence that they have been empowered by the group.

This system of checks and balances minimizes the likelihood that anyone will be viewed as a spokesperson, and it consequently reduces the possibility that one person can either control the agenda or espouse one of his or her own. What this means, of course, is that decisions are made and actions are taken much more slowly and often must be revisited. Inefficiency becomes an acceptable price of authentic community voice.

Leadership development is a two-edged sword.

But the gatekeeping issue is not so simple. It is conceivable, for example, that other communities might have a different view. Executive leadership is not synonymous with gatekeeping, and it need not be anathema to community empowerment. We might need to fashion a more nuanced view of gatekeeping and of the harm we think it inflicts. For example, despite all that might be feared from gatekeepers, they also can be viewed as community assets. After all, gatekeepers are, by definition, leaders. And it is an empirical question whether having a system of gatekeepers can be any worse than having no community leadership at all.

In truth, people's feelings about gatekeeping could be more circumstantial than absolute. For instance, it is difficult to imagine an executive leader being dubbed a gatekeeper if we agree with what that person does, even if it involves leadership that is less participatory and democratic. On the other hand, those whose positions on the issues differ from our own are likely to be labeled and distrusted, no matter what their approach to decision-making. Consequently, the gatekeeping issue could be a bit of a red herring. Even so, we should not lose sight of the point here: that leadership development is a two-edged sword. One side strives to establish people in positions of power and influence, and the other is about monitoring how, and in whose interests, that power and that influence are used.

Denver's approach has been to use its community organizing efforts as a vehicle for renewing its leadership through constant recruitment and leadership training. For *Making Connections– Denver,* the recruitment and the training of new leaders militate against the pursuit of individual agendas.

ORGANIZING THE COMMUNITY. James S. Coleman has suggested that communities can organize themselves and their resources in one of two ways: through intentional organizing or through "appropriable social organization"[4]—organizing efforts that rely on a neighborhood's ability to adapt or redirect existing relationships. The concept of appropriable social organization raises questions about whether relationships that are grounded in one set of issues or circumstances can be directed to other ends and purposes. So, for instance, a community leader who wants the city to support a summer youth employment program might attempt to enlist or "appropriate" the support of family and friends or the PTA.

Communities with a wealth of neighborhood, volunteer, and community-based organizations are presumed to have a strong latent capacity for this form of organizing. By contrast, the "from scratch" communities envisioned by our framework do not. In these less-well-endowed communities, the energy for community-driven change must be intentionally organized. And these intentional efforts force us to consider what it takes to strengthen organization in places where relationships are weak or do not exist. There must be a deliberate effort to bolster relationships and build capacity for effective action.[5]

The distinction between intentional and appropriable organizing, then, is related to the presence and the strength of organizations and relationships in the community. In practice, we might expect most community-driven change efforts to involve some combination of both organizing types.

Cluster 3 highlights the resources that are available to a community once it is organized. These resources reflect the social capital contained in residents' relationships and other community and organizational assets that can be marshaled and deployed on the community's behalf.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The observations in Denver suggest at least three strategies for organizing and strengthening neighborhoods. Leadership development is important because community action needs a center of gravity—a core around which to revolve. Making a long-term commitment to an organizing infrastructure also is important because it will ensure the continuing vitality and authenticity of the community's voice. Finally, devising strategies to link community residents and organizations to an array of resources within and beyond the neighborhood is a way of strengthening the assets that will be available to the neighborhood's change efforts.

True Leadership

The quality of leadership around this initiative is extremely high. And it is not only the ability to lead others. It's also leadership in vision and the ability to look at the possibilities. Almost every day, something new pops up and gets put back into the mill. It's a huge initiative that started and just sort of "morphed." It's something I have not seen to this extent before.

—Kit Williams, Consultant, Catalyst Resources

PROMOTE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT. Leadership development and training should rank high among community-building priorities because they are vehicles for increasing the capacities of individual residents and of the larger community. And a continual focus on identifying and training residents for leadership roles can offer a hedge against spokespeople who do not represent the residents. More specific suggestions:

- ***Find new ways to identify leadership.*** Funders and other catalyst organizations often need help in recognizing and enlisting the leadership talent that exists in poor communities. It is important to take time to understand the ways leadership manifests itself in such neighborhoods and to use that information in the process of identifying and recruiting leaders to involve in the work. Talking with the residents themselves is the best way to proceed.

Finding Leaders

One of the first things we did in Making Connections *was to survey two low-income communities. We sent one of our staff members into one neighborhood and contracted with a Latino [community-based organization] to do the other primarily Latino neighborhood. And, in each case, all we did was talk to residents.*

We asked questions like, "What are the issues you see in this neighborhood?" "What are the assets you have?" And, very importantly, "When you have a problem to whom do you turn?" And out of that we identified indigenous leadership that was not the leadership we were traditionally talking to.

—Mary Gittings Cronin, Director, The Piton Foundation

- ***Provide leadership training.*** Helping residents help themselves lies at the core of community building. It is important to provide opportunities for residents to learn and practice skills and behaviors that will ensure their effectiveness as members and leaders of group processes. Community building is also about people development.

Leadership Training

We need to help residents develop a broad set of leadership skills. I'm talking about things like being able to run a meeting; being able to identify issues; being able to research those issues; being able to prioritize them based on the research and determine which things are appropriate for action, from which groups, at what levels. Is it realistic, for instance, to go after [immigration] policy or do we need to focus on a different level of immigration problems, based on who we are?

And we need to train them to be effective in negotiations—to be able to go in, work with power brokers in the system, be articulate, have a plan, and be able to give and take.

—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

- ***View youth development as a leadership pipeline.*** To ensure the continuity of community leadership and participation, it is important to build a leadership pipeline. Paradoxically, this means investing in neighborhood youth development both as a means and as an end. Communities need to be attentive to the age cohorts of those involved in the work, making it a priority to recruit and train young people and give them opportunities to participate on the same terms as adults.

Helping residents help themselves lies at the core of community building.

SUPPORT ORGANIZING AND NEIGHBORHOOD BONDING AS PERMANENT COMPONENTS OF THE WORK. Coherence and cohesion within communities are vital to community-driven initiatives. As we have stated, maintaining an infrastructure for continuous organizing is essential. To this can be added a hypothesis: Increasing residents attachment to and identification with the neighborhood can strengthen the community's ability to function as a coherent and articulate agent for change. It is likely, for instance, that frequent social, athletic, and other events that bring residents together will help reinforce a neighborhood identity and cohesion, and hence the ongoing organizing effort.

INCREASE AND PROMOTE "BRIDGING" OPPORTUNITIES. Residents' organizations might need help in gaining access to social, political, and economic resources both within—and, particularly, outside of—the neighborhood. Creating bridging opportunities will strengthen the residents' ability to effect change. There are many ways to accomplish this, and it requires some clever strategic thinking:

- ***Link to infrastructure leadership.*** Research the missions, the board memberships, and the advisory structures of public and private service agencies to find opportunities for involvement and representation.

- ***Participate in governance.*** Carefully recruit residents for seats on the boards of local public and private organizations.

- ***Expand strategic outreach.*** Identify, recruit, and involve residents who have ties to major institutions and entities that affect neighborhood quality-of-life issues.
- ***Increase collaboration.*** Connect with other neighborhood groups that are active as advocates for neighborhood improvement.
- ***Ensure representation.*** Orchestrate resident attendance at appropriate public meetings.
- ***Market to allies.*** Invite city, civic, and other community leaders and resource people to community meetings and events.

Many believe that Denver's community organizing is already paying dividends.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Community organizing is a fundamental component of *Making Connections–Denver.* The initiative's first forays into community organizing were in the Sun Valley neighborhood. With funding from the initiative, Metropolitan Organizations for People (MOP) has enjoyed what most Denver team members acknowledge as great success in building from scratch Sun Valley's capacity to pursue issues that are important to residents.

Seeing the Difference

In Sun Valley, it's made a significant change. Some time ago, when we were going to apply for an empowerment zone, we went out into the neighborhoods, specifically into Sun Valley. They had about five people there, and they weren't speaking to each other. But through Making Connections' *organizing initiative, people who refused to talk to each other in the neighborhood have actually come together in a very cohesive group and are learning to work together. They are learning how to ask the questions they need to ask and make the requests they need to make to get us to respond to some of their needs.*

I've witnessed their meetings. They're models, you know. They're exactly what you'd want a neighborhood meeting to be . . . not only by the numbers of the people who attend, but also the ethnic diversity of those who attend.

—Myrna Hipp, Deputy Director, Community Planning and Development, City of Denver

The results of the organizing in Sun Valley have been received so positively that city officials have taken the unprecedented step of committing city funds to expand the organizing effort to other *Making Connections–Denver* neighborhoods.

Government as a Believer

We participated with the Denver, Casey, and Piton Foundations in funding community organizing in Sun Valley, and we have signed a contract with the Metropolitan Organizations for People for community organizing on the West Side—substantial amounts of money.

The city has never funded community organizing before, but we had such a positive outcome from the very beginning of the community organizing effort in Sun Valley that we committed the dollars to the West Side. I have probably something in the area of $800,000 left in the Enterprise Community pot. I am proposing to my bosses that we look at allocating a large portion of that money for community organizing.

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

Metropolitan Organizations for People has recently entered into relationships in the West Side neighborhoods to provide similar support for organizing, although the challenge of organizing is more difficult there because of fragmentation and lack of organization. The Cole neighborhood, on the other hand, is reputed to be replete with leadership and with organizations that can act as vehicles for exercising that leadership. In Cole, organizations like ACORN (Association of Community Organization for Reform Now) are playing lead roles in organizing. For differing reasons, the West Side neighborhoods may take more time to achieve a similar level of effective functioning.

Differing Paces for Different Places

Even though it has taken longer in Cole and La Alma–Lincoln Park, I think that the process is certainly beginning. And it's going to take longer because they're both larger neighborhoods with probably a more diverse population in each neighborhood. So you wouldn't expect them to be able to sort out their own issues within the community as quickly as they could at Sun Valley. Sun Valley is a relatively small neighborhood.

—Myrna Hipp, Deputy Director, Community Planning and Development, City of Denver

So while the efforts in various communities differ, *Making Connections–Denver* clearly supports the Process Framework's focus on community organizing as an essential component of community building. And many believe that Denver's community organizing is already paying dividends.

Community Voice and Systems Change

I can give you a very concrete example. When I came to the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, the way that that agency was running and the people that it was responding to weren't necessarily leading to an effective effort. We were getting a lot of input from the gatekeepers, the community-based organizations.

One of my first public activities as director was to attend the Sun Valley meeting last October. After the meeting, I talked to 22 people. And I took notes on each one of them. The quality and instructiveness of the answers I got became a prototype for how I proceeded in two ways: Number one, direct communication with folks in a place and manner that is convenient for them, not for us, and that is driven by them, not us. And two, the information led to fundamental reforms of our agency because it was my view that if we were going to ask people what they want, then we ought to actually act on those requests.

—Shepherd Nevel, Director, Mayor's Office of Workforce Development

cluster 4: COMMUNITY ACTION
STRATEGICALLY DEPLOYING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

GOAL: Strengthen the community's capacity to conceive, plan, and execute strategies for change.

RATIONALE: Ensure that community energy and resources are deployed effectively.

Increasing Effectiveness through Experiential Learning

Fairview is an elementary school in Sun Valley that's going through a lot of transitions. And a lot of community folks have been trying to figure out how come our kids are failing there. But rather than going up there and pointing their fingers in somebody's face, they're saying, "Well, what is your strategy to address that?"

Now that may not have happened prior to this because people would have just gone there and blown up. But now there's a collection of folks in the neighborhood who have learned, "Maybe if we can keep people from parking their cars around our place during a Broncos game . . . we can use the same tools to get our kids educated.[6] Or maybe we can use those tools for business development in our neighborhood." Realistically that's what we're talking about. Can you take that tool that you learned and be able to dig up other opportunities that you didn't have before? So to me, that's the first signal that it's making sense.

—Michael Simmons, Community Relations Department, Denver Public Schools

In this report, we have asserted that community building is about building the capacity for resident-driven community change and not about the community change itself. Similarly, this cluster is about enhancing the *capacity* for action rather than actually taking action to benefit a neighborhood.

The goal of organizing, no matter how it is approached, is to amass a set of resources that can be deployed in a community's interest. This cluster discusses some of those resources and some of the issues that can affect their deployment. The cluster begins with the people resources (relationships, expertise, sources of information) that might be needed to pursue community goals effectively. Next are the organizational resources and some tensions that have arisen between the traditional roles of community-based nonprofits and the new movement toward more active resident participation.

The cluster then considers how the community develops plans to use its resources to take effective action. And finally, it highlights the need to examine how well the action that was taken was actually executed.

PEOPLE RESOURCES. An important issue for any community action strategy is determining the lineup of the relevant and necessary players. Clearly, the most important *Making Connections* people resource is the residents themselves. And one of the immediate questions connected to this people resource is whether the numbers matter. How do you know if or when you have enough participation? How do you gauge community strength? And more generally, at what point can you say that a community is sufficiently organized?

Clearly, the most important *Making Connections* people resource is the residents themselves.

These are interesting questions that are probably unanswerable. What's the right number? Perhaps intuitively, we will know it when we see it. But Metropolitan Organizations for People's Mike Kromrey suggests, "… When you're … being taken seriously by politicians and businessmen, the real world is telling you that you've reached critical mass and you've got enough clout to impact change."

How Much Is Enough?

We don't have any illusions about trying to organize the entire neighborhood. I mean, I was just rereading this piece by Nicholas von Hoffman. He wrote a thing 15 years ago, "Finding and Making Leaders." He was saying if you get 2 percent you've got the most powerful thing in the neighborhood. We have done that in Sun Valley already, more than that.

The insane part of it, and kind of the fun and crazy part about my work, is you always want more. Somebody asked me the other day, "Are you satisfied with the number of congregation members and groups you have?" And I said, "Of course not." You want more. However, I would say that when you're at a place where you're being taken seriously by politicians and businessmen, the real world is telling you that you've reached critical mass and you've got enough clout to impact change.

—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

In addition to the critical mass issue, there is a second question about which *particular* people resources are needed. Which residents and which outside others are likely to be important to the success of the action? What mix of social capital resources—political clout, skills in legal or research disciplines, knowledge of specific content areas—is essential to the effort? And how can you bridge to important people resources that may be outside the immediate neighborhoods and social networks?

Clues to identifying specific people resources can be gleaned from three areas: the outcomes one would like to achieve, the array of strategies one would like to have at one's disposal, and the actions being considered. Looking to these parts of the framework will help planners determine the specific resources that will be important to the effort—which civic groups, associations and individuals, specialties and disciplines.

Residents as Networkers

The residents are doing their own recruiting and they're being very strategic. So for example, our newest member is Frieda Malone. Gabriella brought her in specifically because Frieda is on the Cole Organizing Alliance. Frieda is on the safety task force. Frieda is on the education task force. And Frieda is also on the Small Grants Committee. Gabby wanted Frieda because Frieda then becomes our liaison to those [groups].

So now the residents are saying, for example, that the people participating in the learning partnership meetings need to have significant overlap with the ones who are doing the organizing … so that, once you have them in place, they can actually start to play a different role. They can become the liaisons. They can become bridges.

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES. The primacy of residents to community building does not diminish the need for a capable infrastructure of community institutions. Often a community action will result in the provision of a needed service, activity, facility, or function. Community institutions will be the vehicles for delivering these fought-for benefits. Indeed, community-based organizations and other nonprofits will play pivotal roles in securing, delivering, and institutionalizing *Making Connections* outcomes. In fact, it is doubtful that the outcomes can be achieved and sustained without these organizations. Including them as partners in the community-building enterprise is therefore an important requirement for success.

In spite of the recognized value of community-based organizations to the initiative, reactions to these organizations have ranged from hopefulness to ambivalence to suspicion. There is an uneasy tension between the aspirations of these organizations to participate in the work and the initiative's determination to shift control of the community agenda to the residents. It is still not clear how these important community infrastructure institutions can and should contribute to *Making Connections–Denver.* In many respects, it appears that the nonprofit community has been left out of the early stages of the initiative, in which the focus has been on building capacity among residents.

Resident Development First?

What we did was to look for resident-driven efforts in the community. We didn't go to the nonprofits at this stage of the game, as important as they will be—in fact, as important as they are in this effort. We wanted to start with the folks that the communities identified as people who were working in the neighborhoods—perhaps through neighborhood associations, social action committees, churches, Weed and Seed programs, and the like, and through formalized organizing groups like MOP and ACORN.

This is not about services. Services are important, but services can only come after we've talked about relationships. Right now we've got over 150 leaders, at their own pace, figuring out what's needed in their neighborhoods. And that feels good. But that's only happening because they're talking to each other, not because they're talking to us [nonprofits].

—Cecelia Sanchez de Ortiz, Site Liaison, *Making Connections–Denver*

The shift has been unsettling for community nonprofits.

The tension we discovered can be understood in the context of a changing paradigm. After all, engaging residents as agents of social change stands in direct contrast to more traditional approaches that used neighborhood organizations and institutions as the primary change agents. In a report on community organizing in Denver, Lisa Duran refers to these traditional approaches as the "social planning" model of organizing: Social professionals are the engineers for change, and neighborhood residents are viewed as *consumers* of community improvement rather than as *catalysts*.[7] Since *Making Connections–Denver* stands in diametric opposition to this model, it is not surprising that the shift has been unsettling for community nonprofits—leaving them in unfamiliar territory with few clues as to how to navigate the new terrain.

New Reality for Providers

The Service Provider Partnership is a forum to bring together service providers in the four communities. The service providers have been meeting on a monthly basis to talk about some of the challenges they face as they try to become more resident focused, and that's something different for service providers. And so we spent a lot of time early on coming together and learning about what we can do.

Some providers thought that they were already working closely with the community. But after delving further into that issue, they realized that they were not doing everything they could to really meet the needs of residents. They're becoming challenged, and they are challenging each other to make some changes in how they do business. And that's something different for service providers.

—Jennifer Chavez, Mile High United Way

Providers' Uncertainties

In the beginning, I think we were all at the table because there was a perception that an RFP [request for proposal] would come out and that we would apply and that money was on the table. Providers were coming to the meetings thinking, "Well, we're going to get information on how to apply for funding to serve our community." That clearly changed. Over time, providers were beginning to understand that there wasn't any money on the table, and I think there's a lot of confusion. People were thinking, "If there's no money, then what's my role here? If this is a resident-driven initiative, what are we here for?"

My perception is that it has thrown the providers for a loop because we don't know how to react if we don't have something that says to us, "This is what we want to do and this is who we want to serve." It's been frustrating.

So then, once we understood that this was a different process, we said, "Well, let's get a facilitator, somebody who can help us and guide us. Let's see whether we can find our niche in this." And so, as I understand it now, the explanation is essentially that if we are serving the community and we pay attention to what the community needs and wants, eventually we will fit into what the residents are identifying.

—Carmen Carrillo, Executive Director, Mi Casa Resource Center

"If this is a resident-driven initiative, what are we here for?"

From the perspective of some participants in the *Making Connections* leadership, community-based organizations are potentially co-opting entities that can hijack the initiative if they are not carefully handled. These leaders worry about how they can ensure the primacy of the community's voice over the din of social professionals. They have even made a conscious effort to protect resident forums from "intrusion" by community-based organizations and nonprofit staff. Thus, many of the Denver leaders see their first priority as building the capacity of residents almost as a hedge against nonprofit control.

No Providers Allowed?

And that's what I've been saying for a year and a half about the nonprofits. Some people were interested in bringing the nonprofits together to talk. And I kept saying, "No, it's going to take so long to get the residents together, that we can't afford to have the nonprofits coming together at all, not even talking about this."

—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

These tensions may have the effect of leaving important community nonprofits largely outside the *Making Connections* loop—unable to prepare or adapt. Indeed, there is some danger of undermining the very organizations that, at the end of the day, may have to function as instruments for carrying out community will and delivering community benefits. Our Denver interviews indicated that some *Making Connections* leaders are aware of and concerned about this issue.

Left Behind?

So then, you also have issues of, even if the other two were in sync—the partners[8] and the residents—what do you do about these community intermediaries [nonprofits] that, no matter what, have to be there?

[They] provide valuable services. They provide valuable capacity-building opportunities for people in communities. They provide valuable employment opportunities in communities. They have to be there, [but] they're not anywhere close to where the partners and the residents are [in terms of understanding and readiness].

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

It may be too early to suggest what the growing *national* trend toward citizen-led initiatives may mean for nonprofits. But the Denver experience suggests that, at the extreme, it may have an unintended long-term effect of further weakening an already fragile sector. These organizations have historically been undercapitalized, understaffed, and under strain, in part because of inadequate general support and discretionary funding. To the extent that new program and funding strategies gravitate more and more toward communities of residents and away from organizations and projects, our new approaches may further erode the health and stability of these important community institutions. We may risk seriously undermining their ability to pursue the roles they may be asked to play in support of our resident-driven community improvement strategies. There is a need for balance.

Still a Needed Resource

One of the things that someone told me early on was that community-based organizations are kind of the intermediary between institutions and the residents in the community. I'm concerned about the direction of the Making Connections *program for what I see as the lack of emphasis on building the capacity of community-based organizations to act as that intermediary.*

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

Consequently, one pressing unresolved issue is how to engage the local nonprofit organizations in this new world of resident-driven community action. How do we create a new set of relationships and a system of incentives and rewards so that the community-based organizations function more as support vehicles and less as initiating entities? (For a more in-depth consideration of this issue, see Appendix III, "Nonprofit Organizations and the Community: A Matter of Trust.")

EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND EXECUTION. Without question, one of the remaining critical considerations is what a community can and will actually do. Community actions can range from a one-time showing of sentiments and solidarity to more sustained efforts at lobbying, authoring legislative proposals, or launching political campaigns, and more. The important point is that the action that is ultimately taken be driven by a strategy and guided by some kind of plan—preferably a plan characterized by clearly stated goals, a preferred set of outcomes, criteria for what constitutes success, and some mechanism for accountability.

The effective execution of a community strategy boils down to accountability and competence. Do people do what they are supposed to do, and do they do it well? If so, we can assume that we have maximized our potential for impact, given the resources and strategies that were deployed. The experience of the Sun Valley community demonstrates how powerfully and effectively resident engagement, agenda-building, and community-organizing activities can combine to create effective strategies that yield results. After a public meeting in which the residents made very specific proposals, the police and other local authorities cooperated in making them happen.

One pressing unresolved issue is how to engage the local nonprofit organizations.

Broncos Games, Safety, and Playgrounds

The public meeting that happened in October of last year was [about] safety. At the meeting, they had 100 people, 120, and they had the police captain and the school principal. The traffic engineer couldn't come, but they met with him ahead of time. They had very specific proposals that they wanted action on from the police, the traffic engineer, and the school principal.

The traffic [issue] concerned parking complaints against Health and Human Services and the [Denver] Broncos. It was stuff like, during Broncos games, not to have their neighborhood taken over so they couldn't park. The stadium is directly north, and it just gets parked full, so that patron parking spills into the neighborhood. The community also wanted a stop sign at a dangerous corner.

For the police chief, one specific proposal was to help residents get more toilets during Broncos games. People were urinating around their church and stuff like that, and there was powerful testimony around that. The captain agreed to that immediately. . . . And two weeks later, during the Broncos

game, it was like a radical change. People were thrilled. There were police all over and they were watching fans. They were ticketing cars that were parked illegally and towing them. And people just said it was a dramatic difference.

The other issue was people wanted the captain to significantly step up patrols in the neighborhood and get his people out of their cars, and he publicly agreed to do that. Now, during any free time they have in between the 911 emergency calls, officers have to log in that they are in Sun Valley and getting out of their cars.

Other things have concretely come out of that public meeting: The leaders also listed as a priority the playgrounds, how rundown they are. And they ended up doing a follow-up meeting with Myrna Hipp, who committed, at a meeting of the Sun Valley Coalition, $150,000 to complete the work on the playground.
—Mike Kromrey, Metropolitan Organizations for People

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The major theme of this cluster has been strategically managing resources to achieve the most effective community action and the most powerful results. People resources, institutional resources, and effective strategic planning and execution have been discussed. This section suggests some general strategies that can help all those who are interested in community building—whether they are residents, workers, funders, or legislators—to support residents and their community action agendas more effectively.

STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY. We have already discussed the tensions that can arise with the shift to a new paradigm—especially the potential danger of disenfranchising the very nonprofit organizations that serve the distressed neighborhoods. The following suggested strategies might help mitigate some of the difficulties that face community-based organizations and nonprofits, so they can strengthen their operations in a resident-driven environment:

- ***Assist with financial development.*** Invest in devising new fundraising messages that can market nonprofits in the context of community-wide collaborative strategies. Special emphasis might be placed on assistance with endowment fundraising and capital campaigns that can improve facilities and enhance discretionary budgets and working capital (and hence provide additional flexibility that can help organizations adapt to resident issues).

- ***Support organizational and systems development.*** Many of today's community-based institutions need assistance in financial management and accounting, human resources management and development, and the use of data and databases. Strengthening these systems will enable the organizations to be more effective in providing services or acting as conduits for "transient" or special-purpose community initiatives that may need incubation or temporary administrative support.

- ***Provide assistance in program development.*** Community-based organizations often need help in assessing community needs, accessing best practices, strategic planning, and program design and implementation.

- ***Create incentives for collaboration.*** Funding and other incentives that emphasize *organizational* accomplishments often inhibit organizations from collaborating in support of broader *community* agendas. One corrective strategy might entail negotiating higher administrative budgets for organizations that demonstrate exemplary efforts, such as supporting resident initiatives, pooling resources, or consolidating programs in support of *Making Connections* strategies.

- ***Support opportunities to build credibility in the neighborhoods.*** In view of the tensions that can result from our changing paradigm, funders and community leaders should encourage and support nonprofits in strengthening their credibility with, and connections and commitment to, their surrounding neighborhoods. Increasing the involvement of residents in organizational issues will be an important activity.

MAKING ACTIONS MORE EFFECTIVE. Good execution, by itself, will not ensure success. Misaligned or ineffectual resources deployed through an ill-conceived plan will not be likely to produce positive results, no matter how well the action is executed. Investors in community-building efforts may wish to provide resources to ensure that there is proper preparation up front and that the community leaders learn continuously from the experience. Effectiveness will be increased by the following activities:

- ***Supporting planning processes.*** Deliberate planning activities improve the prospects of achieving positive results. Resources should be invested in clarifying the purposes, means, and methods underlying change efforts and strategies. It is helpful to draft and frequently review a statement of goals and objectives for community actions, along with outcome benchmarks for various levels of success. The consideration of means could include assessing the social, political, economic, informational, and other assets needed for success. And contingency plans with a number of alternative strategies will be of great value in case of unexpected developments.

- ***Providing technical assistance.*** The matters that concern residents often involve complex issues that have proved themselves resistant to change, even when they have been tackled by professionals in social science and government. As laypeople in the policy arena, residents and their community-building partners may need various types of support. Technical assistance typically includes substantive expertise on matters of issue content; help in gathering, manipulating, and interpreting data; and consultation on fundraising, organizational needs, and more.

- ***Promoting community knowledge development.*** A community's capacity to effectively engage with its issues can be greatly enhanced by educating residents in the substantive matters that affect the neighborhood. Community leaders need opportunities to become better informed about important policy issues, promising strategies, and other relevant developments.

People and organizations are necessary resources for community action.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Making Connections is still in its formative stages in Denver. At this point, the initiative is investing a large proportion of its energies and resources in the engagement of residents, in building resident capacity, and in community organizing. These activities are extremely important in strengthening the people resources that are needed for resident-led community change. There is every indication that these investments are being made to good effect. The Neighborhood Learning Partnerships, story circles, and small-grants programs are all vehicles that offer participating residents valuable experience and useful skills for their community-change efforts.

At the same time, however, the initiative appears to have been less strategic and less certain in its approach to the community-based organizations and nonprofits that make up the infrastructure of the targeted neighborhoods. To date, Denver has placed more emphasis on the intentional organizing of residents and less on strategies for appropriating the energies of existing neighborhood organizations and institutions. As is pointed out in the discussion of cluster 3, people and organizations are necessary resources for community action. Consequently, it seems clear that Denver's resource base may be missing some important inputs, assets, and capacities.

The pace of *Making Connections* activity and accomplishment has been rapid and at times even frenetic in Denver, yet the actual number of community actions has been relatively small. The two major resident actions were the Neighborhood Summits in the spring of 2000 and the Sun Valley community meeting in October 2000. Interviews and observations suggest that, so far, the results of these activities have all been positive.

But the Denver testimony also suggests that its *Making Connections* site has not conducted its work using the kind of deliberate strategic approach that the framework recommends. Denver principals

concede that while it would be desirable to work within a concrete framework, there is currently no such strategic outline or framework, including the one reported here, explicitly guiding their work.

Needed, but Not Near

I think that the discussion of "principles" [that guide Making Connections–Denver] *is going to move us more toward using a framework down the road—maybe not in the same terms that you've provided us, but certainly in similar terms. My preference would be toward using that more to really check ourselves against. We need something like that. But you know that this thing moves so fast so that, day-to-day, I don't think that people are thinking about checking themselves against a framework.*

—Matt Hamilton, The Piton Foundation

Indeed, the team that is taking the lead coordinating and staffing role in *Making Connections–Denver* operates in a very malleable way in response to what they would describe as a primarily organic process.

Morphing Here, Morphing There

We'll start talking about benchmarking, so people from the team sort of gravitate to benchmarking, and pretty soon that's your benchmarking team. And then the next thing that comes up may be a conversation about institutional transformation. And the people who resonate with that move over to discuss institutional transformations. And they spend hours together. I mean, we have half-day meetings just trying to figure what we are going to do with this institutional transformation question. Then it's organizing . . . there's always been a struggle with organizing. So, this group starts to morph over there.

And it's not formal. Nobody says, "Who wants to be on that committee?" Nothing like that. Sometimes it happens at the team meetings, but frequently it doesn't. You'll be sitting somewhere or you'll be in another meeting that's totally unrelated and you'll say, "We need to talk about that," and you just move forward with it. It's incredibly fluid. I'd have to say that that process—of just sort of morphing over here and morphing over there, joining this group and then that one—that's probably a good third to half of the time I'm spending on Making Connections, *now that I think about it.*

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

cluster 5: ASSESSING OUTCOMES, DEVELOPING MESSAGES, AND SUSTAINING THE WORK

THE POWER OF INFORMATION

GOAL: To enhance the community's capacity to assess initiative outcomes and to provide timely information and feedback for residents and coalition partners.

RATIONALE: To use communications as strategic vehicles for raising awareness, recruiting participants, and ongoing community organizing.

Sharing Experience to Promote Learning

We sponsored some communication with the community by convening all the grantees from last year in a meeting where they could share information across the neighborhoods. Some of the participants had never come across from Cole or La Alma before. So just listening to what was happening was an eye opener for people.

We showed the Sun Valley video to our Small Grants Committee, and people from La Alma were shocked when they saw the roles that community residents had played with public officials. It helped them to see that community people can make a difference, even though it hasn't been the experience of people in their neighborhoods. People were amazed that "the little neighborhood across the highway has done this." And they wanted to know, "Well, how did they do it? How did they get those big changes?" It piqued their interest.

To some, the lesson was, "Well, we need to do that same kind of a meeting in our neighborhood." Whereas the Sun Valley people on our committee would say, "Well, you can't just do that meeting. Nobody's going to come. You don't have any relationships built and nobody has agreed on what the issues are. You need to do a whole year of learning to know your neighbor, talking about your issues." It was good to have that exchange in the Small Grants Committee. It was very educational, especially for communities where there's little organizing happening.

—David Portillo, The Piton Foundation

Communication is an integral part of any community-building effort. How an initiative describes itself, how it positions the issues, how it recruits participants, how it publicizes events, and how it disseminates results are all important in encouraging and maintaining the energy and involvement of residents. Skilful communication strategies can also help energize and engage funders, policymakers, and other important audiences whose cooperation may be needed in the effort to succeed.

Communication is important at every stage of community building. At a very basic level, sharing information about what's going on is a fundamental responsibility of the leadership. But communication about methods, operations, and progress can also contribute to long-term learning and to the accumulation of "best practices."

In cluster 5, the focus is specifically on communicating about outcomes. This narrower discussion is particularly important because of the pivotal connections between those outcomes, how they are received by residents, and the initiative's ability to maintain itself as a community-driven change effort. The focus here is on the potential for using communication strategies to sustain momentum.

Communication is an integral part of any community-building effort.

Sustainability is perhaps the most difficult challenge facing community-building initiatives—how to keep residents' interest going so that they continue to exercise their voice for neighborhood improvement. The intuitive answer, of course, is that residents will continue being engaged as long as they can see some benefit from their involvement. In maintaining the engagement of residents, it is critically important to be clear about two types of benefits—benefits for individual residents and benefits for the neighborhood—and to communicate progress on attaining them. Often, however, our tendency is to highlight one type of benefit and to neglect the other.

Most of what we regard as outcomes from community-led movements consists of an issue-oriented scoreboard of wins and losses. From this perspective, the bottom line in our change efforts is whether—and how well—an action worked.[9] Of course, substantive results are critically important and rightly so. After all, the principal driver of the new paradigm is the promise that it will have greater success in dealing with persistent social problems than did earlier approaches. For this reason, developing and communicating messages about the success of an event—such as Sun Valley's public meeting—can help maintain residents' commitment and keep the momentum going.

Equally important to the sustainability of this work, however, may be the extent to which it can document that real and valued rewards have accrued to the individual residents who participate. For example, training can be transformative for residents when it gives them skills and confidence in group processes and in interacting with authorities. Consider the story of Frieda Malone, a white, hearing-impaired single parent and resident of the mostly African American and Hispanic Cole neighborhood. After a year of being holed up in her apartment in fright, Frieda was encouraged to join *Making Connections* and is now on the Learning Partnership, the Cole Organizing Alliance and its Safety Task Force, and the Small Grants Committee. Clearly, in addition to achieving wins on community issues, an initiative like *Making Connections* can enrich the lives of individual residents and build human capital.

The strategies listed below focus most directly on community-level outcomes but, to the extent that individual stories can become a part of these investment strategies, they should contribute additional power to the messages and lessons.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

The strategies suggested in this cluster consist of five critical components: assessing outcomes; drawing out lessons; developing messages; disseminating the results, the lessons, and the messages; and considering next steps.

As important as fashioning messages are the logistics of reaching people with them.

ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES. Given the political realities of community change, it is likely that unambiguous neighborhood victories may be relatively rare. Instead, many of the outcomes of collective action are likely to be a mixed bag of "gets and give ups," reflecting various levels of compromise. How these outcomes are interpreted and disseminated will have a significant impact on: how residents perceive their success and the value of their participation; their willingness to stay involved; and consequently, the ease with which future actions can be organized. Individuals in the community may see these outcomes as evidence either of community efficacy or of futility.

Fortunately, many of the institutions that are forming partnerships in Denver are sensitive to the residents' need to experience success and achieve positive results. Accordingly, they have positioned themselves, in their encounters with residents, to help them earn some early moral victories.

Orchestrating Success

In the process of working together and of working out solutions with service providers—whether that be the city or community-based organizations or other institutions—it is important that they get wins, that things succeed, and they realize that they have some control over their environment and that they can, in fact, come together and have some successes and build on those successes.

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

DRAWING OUT LESSONS. The assessment of outcomes should proceed with explicit attention to accumulating useful knowledge—knowledge about such things as how relationships worked; how particular partners performed; the responses of targeted authorities; the particular points of leverage that proved effective; and the methods, processes, and procedures used in the strategy. Over time, these lessons should accumulate into a collection of "best practices" that can be codified, disseminated, and replicated.

DEVELOPING MESSAGES. Clearly, the interpretation and communication of outcomes will greatly influence the community's future appetite for collective actions. It is important, therefore, for the community change agents to carefully craft messages about the outcomes, particularly the gains, and package them for community consumption. Some suggestions:

- ***"Spin" the message.*** Leaders and partners have a good deal of control over how they interpret the results of community actions and events. Results should be reported accurately, while putting emphasis on positive developments and on encouraging signs of progress.

- ***Tell stories.*** Many poor neighborhoods operate mainly in the oral tradition. Where possible, messages should be powerful enough to have "word-of-mouth" currency. Stories of the real experiences of real people have the potential to garner additional community interest and support.

- ***"Test drive" the messages.*** It is worth the time, effort, and resources to craft messages in conjunction with residents who can give feedback on their power and oral "street life."

DISSEMINATION. As important as fashioning messages are the logistics of reaching people with them. Questions of which audiences to target and what vehicles to use should be the first considerations for dissemination. Because of our particular focus on providing feedback to the participating communities, it is worthwhile to explore, test, and employ a variety of strategies.

Ask the Residents

I think that we need to go back to the residents and ask them, "How do you all find out what's going on in your community? What are the vehicles that you all use?" Maybe that's not the right way to phrase it, but we need to have those discussions with them.

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

A concern for timeliness should also be important in any dissemination strategy. Long delays in providing feedback and irregular or erratic communications will make it more difficult to maintain resident involvement. On an even more mundane level, administrative communications about matters of process and logistics often become the undoing of volunteer organizations, especially if people get mixed messages about where they are to be, when, and doing what.

ARTICULATING NEXT STEPS. Community building is a long-term enterprise. As such, it should communicate itself as an ongoing and permanent resource. Its activities and initiatives should be viewed as part of a continuing effort at neighborhood improvement. So it will be important for

the leadership structure to be able to articulate a set of next steps and not let residents see individual initiatives as separate actions that have beginnings and endings.

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD

Interviews and observations in Denver suggest that the *Making Connections* initiative is not pursuing any particular communication strategy, even though the leaders cite communication as critical to the long-term prospects of the work. We can only speculate about why. One explanation may be the sheer pace of developments in the initiative. Members of the Denver team have been quite concerned about the frenetic pace at which issues surface and opportunities evolve.

On the Back Burner

I think people at this level are aware of the importance of communications, but I think time constraints and the speed with which things move prevent people from putting that into action. I don't think it's a giant leap for anybody to get information out. We haven't done enough to support that and make that a priority within the organizing groups. We just haven't done it.

To do it right, we need to pay a couple more people to really get out there and work with these neighborhoods—not as community-organizing supporters but as communication supporters—to be at the meetings, to work with the leaders, to say, "Well, how are you going to get that information out to people?" We've got some newspapers, local community newspapers, and we want to get some articles placed in all that sort of stuff.

But up here it takes us two months to really get things processed and done. We need to do it much quicker. It needs to be at a ground level. So the week after Sun Valley had that summit, they had articles in the paper. Channel 7 did come by and film.

But we need to do some training of people on how to do that constantly. We need to build enough relations with reporters so that they know what Making Connections *is, so that every six months you don't have to train a new reporter on what we're doing. Because, if this is a 15-year initiative, we should be building a 15-year relationship with [the press].*

—Matt Hamilton, The Piton Foundation

It may also be that, because there have been no headline-level achievements or major community threats in this formative stage, there has been no urgent need to put communication activities on a faster track—especially since other issues may press for more immediate attention. Generally speaking, in view of the size of the challenge, there may also be a tendency to procrastinate in less urgent areas. Clearly, though, as the initiative continues its unconstrained growth, communication strategies will move toward the front of the agenda.

SUMMING UP

The intent of Part One has been to outline the Community-Building Process Framework and explore the extent to which the experiences of the *Making Connections* initiative in Denver follow the logic of the framework. In our interviews and observations, respondents found no significant points of difference between the framework and the Denver experience. The degree of consonance between the conceptual model and Denver's actual experiences and operations on the ground is encouraging. It suggests that this congruence is not mere coincidence but rather that it is a reflection of the robust nature of the framework.

But however encouraging, these explorations do not prove the tenets of the framework. They do, however, argue strongly for deliberately testing it as an aid to community building in *Making Connections* and in other initiatives aimed at empowered community change.

ENDNOTES;

[1]We should be clear here that social capital is an asset that can also manifest itself in negative ways. Organized crime, street gangs, and the Ku Klux Klan are examples. But from a community perspective it would be interesting to speculate as to whether having negative social capital may be better than none at all. Perhaps the potential to redirect negative forms of social organization to positive purposes might be better than having a community be socially disorganized. It may be, for instance, that even depleted, crime-ridden neighborhoods may have capacity for positive action if means can be found to redirect whatever organizational energies might exist there.

[2]See Ross Gittell and Avis Vidal, *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy,* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998.

[3]The meeting reference here is to a public meeting orchestrated by Sun Valley residents last October and described in the discussion of cluster 4.

[4]James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology,* 1988, 94: S95–S121.

[5]From this broad perspective, it is reasonable to construe community organizing as encompassing all of the activities and dynamics of clusters 1, 2, and 3 of the framework or, alternatively, one could argue that it encompasses the framework in its entirety. Each of the framework's discrete elements is highly interactive with the other elements, and, similarly, there are numerous paths and connections between and among the clusters. The device of portraying these elements and clusters as discrete and sequential is a means of raising their visibility as important components of the community-building process.

[6]The reference here is to a public meeting that was organized by Sun Valley residents with Denver's police chief and other city officials about safety issues, particularly patron behavior at Broncos games and commercial traffic through the neighborhood.

[7]Lisa Duran, *Voices from the Neighborhoods: A Qualitative Analysis of Community Organizing in Denver*, Baltimore, Md.: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000, p. 8.

[8]*"Partners"* refers to a group of individuals representing public and private institutions and systems with resources to bring to bear on issues important to the neighborhoods. Denver's foundations, the city and state governments, and other such resource holders are part of the *Making Connections–Denver* partners group.

[9]Members of the *Making Connections–Denver* team argue strongly that the ultimate success of the initiative should be measured in terms of the human capital development of neighborhood residents—not by the scorecard of issue-oriented wins and losses. I agree. But that assertion lies beyond the purpose here because the goal, in constructing the framework, has been to clarify the role social capital plays in processing various issues into collective community action.

part two

A STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

ORGANIZING AND MANAGING FOR COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CHANGE

The clusters outlined in Part One represent very complex processes. Moreover, in Denver, where several communities are the focus of the community-building effort, numerous players are involved who represent a variety of organizations, associations, and entities. What's more, those players variously combine their efforts through no fewer than eight moving parts of the *Making Connections* initiative: the Denver team, the Denver Partners, the Service Provider Partnership, the Neighborhood Learning Partnership, the Small Grants Program, the Cole Neighborhood Alliance, the Westside Planning Group, and the Sun Valley Coalition. (See "The Players" on the next page for a description of these entities and their roles.)

In the face of this complexity, and that of the processes described in the Process Framework, explorations in Denver quickly gave rise to questions about how one might structure the initiative. There were two pressing needs. One need was to facilitate the operations of the various community-building processes across the initiative's several communities; the other was to coordinate the varying roles, functions, and activities of the initiative's numerous actors. We needed to find a way to manage the potential for chaos.

Conversations with core members of the *Making Connections–Denver* team helped produce a Structural Framework for community building. The Structural Framework actually consists of two related frameworks. The first represents an interim structure for *Making Connections* that is offered as a benchmark vision of community building as a work in progress. The second represents an optimum structure for *Making Connections* that is proposed as the ideal, more mature vision for

how a community-building effort might ultimately look. Both frameworks reflect the overarching goals of community-building investments like *Making Connections*—to make connections between the communities and their residents, on the one hand, and between the residents and the institutions and actors who can effect neighborhood change on the other.

THE PLAYERS

The Structural Framework identifies several critical roles and functions that are important to empowered community change. The roles and functions are described below, along with the entities that play these roles in Denver:

THE BROKER ENTITY. The Denver Team is the brokering entity. It is well respected and has relationships with both the communities themselves and the resource institutions of the regional infrastructure. The Denver Team is recognized by all entities as a credible intermediary. It maintains a global view of the community-building effort. As such, it can act as an archivist, a mediator, a broker, a conduit for funding sources, and a vehicle for securing and dispensing technical assistance and other forms of support. The Denver Team assumes the overarching staff role for the initiative.

Knowing One's Place

The Denver Team's work is trying to figure out the connections between things and also trying to get these partners going, these intermediaries going, these funders going. The team really ends up having a heightened staff role in those efforts.

But it's not appropriate for the team to be going out and getting involved in resident-driven things. It would not occur to me to go and say, "Let's work on Story Circles." We have some conversations about how we're going to integrate Story Circles into the organizing, but the creation, what the Story Circles are, how they operate, etc. … hands off. That doesn't belong to me, let alone anybody else on that team.

So I think there's two different ways to think about what's happening with the team. One is that it really has taken on a super role in terms of staffing: the thinking, the learning, the relationship with [the Casey Foundation], the partners, the benchmarks. Hyperstaffing. On the other hand, other than support the organizing, we're pretty hands off on the community side. But as I say that to you, I realize

one of the things is how, and at what point, and in what way, does the Denver Team get out of the middle?

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

THE INTRASTRUCTURE RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS. The Denver Partners are part of the larger city, county, and regional resources leadership. Members are drawn from resource organizations that represent the policy and resource apparatus that affects services, opportunities, and conditions for children, families, and communities. Examples of Denver Partners include the local schools and school boards, city and county governments, United Ways, local community foundations and other foundations, churches and interfaith councils, local print and broadcast media, Chambers of Commerce, business roundtables, etc. These entities may be focused on particular issues or services, but they generally are concerned about policies, programs, and resources that affect the welfare of the larger region.

We needed to find a way to manage the potential for chaos.

The Partners

If we went through the list of the local partners, you could really put them into three categories: government, philanthropy, and nonprofits. For example, the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development is at the table. The Mayor's Office of Economic Development, which is different, is also there, as well as the Denver Public Schools. The Piton, Chinook, Daniels, and Rose Foundations represent philanthropy, and then there's the United Way and others. … And, simply put, their role is to bring their resources and influence to the table.

—Mary Gittings Cronin, Director, The Piton Foundation

THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION. The Sun Valley Coalition, the Cole Alliance, and the Westside Planning Group are examples of central leadership organizations. These are entities that serve as local compilers of community opinion because of their cooperative relations with various community organizations and constituencies. The central leadership organization is an entity of residents. Within each of the three *Making Connections* communities, the central leadership organization plays an intermediary role similar to that of the brokering entity.

THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS. Community organizations, including the Decatur Place Residents' Council, Sun Valley Community Church, Sun Valley Homes, Sun Valley Community Association, and others are associations, organizations, and institutions based in or near the community that provide various supports. Examples include churches, local parent-and-teacher organizations, resident councils, block watch clubs, and others. These groups generally focus on the conditions, needs, and concerns of the local residents and neighborhoods and are often vehicles for community organizing and advocacy.

THE SERVICE PROVIDERS. The service providers, in Denver's Service Provider Partnership, are entities located both within and outside the neighborhoods that deliver services to the community under grants, contracts, and agreements with the infrastructure resource institutions. Predominantly not-for-profit agencies, they operate at the front line in addressing community needs and are typically undercapitalized and have few or no funds (e.g., endowments) set aside for the future.

In Search of a Role

As a provider, we've been mainly observers, if you will, instead of trying to contribute as it [the initiative] was identifying people from the community [who] might be interested in participating in Making Connections. *To me, mostly the role of providers has been just that: observing and trying to keep abreast of what was happening, but not necessarily doing very much.*

—Carmen Carrillo, Executive Director, Mi Casa Resource Center

Communities are complex places and no two are alike.

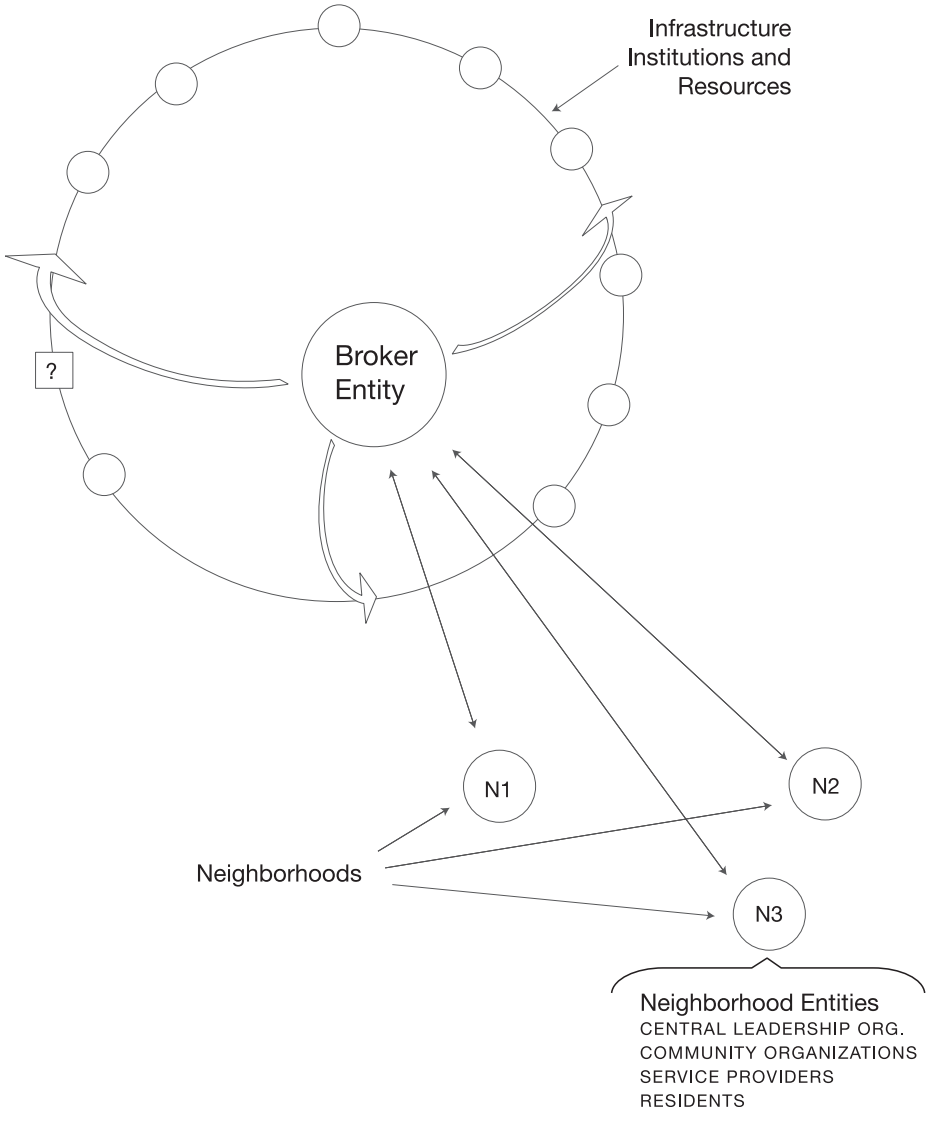
OTHER "MOVING PARTS." In addition to these structural components, Denver has several initiatives that are important to the *Making Connections* effort. The Small Grants Program and the Neighborhood Learning Partnership are initiatives designed to promote community experimentation and learning. They provide opportunities for residents to gain experience and knowledge that will increase their capacity to plan and take action for the benefit of their families. The Small Grants Program is a fund that is managed by residents and supports projects that are proposed by the three *Making Connections* communities. Many of those projects are geared to bolstering community socializing and organizing. The Neighborhood Learning Partnership has focused much of its energies on two fronts: identifying community issues through its Story Circle project; and exploring technology-based outreach strategies through its Digital Divide project.

These role specifications are the building blocks for the two frameworks that comprise our structural model.

ABOUT THE PROPOSED INTERIM STRUCTURE

Because communities are such complex places, and because no two are alike, it is not possible to construct a generic diagram that portrays the conditions that exist prior to a community-building effort. Indeed, one may encounter any number of structures and relationship configurations within and across the communities of interest. But despite their differences, most communities will be similar in several important ways. They will contain some smaller units that can be described as neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods will probably be served by some constellation of institutions and agencies. Such entities in or near the neighborhoods can or already do act as stakeholders

FIGURE II-1
GENERIC INTERIM STRUCTURE FOR
COMMUNITY BUILDING



in attempts to improve the residents' welfare. It is reasonable to expect that all but the most severely depleted U.S. communities will have at least this minimal structure.

The intuitive suggestion is that despite having differing starting points, community builders can aspire to similar interim and ending points. The Interim Framework represents a common standard to which community builders might aspire in the short term as they proceed with this work in progress. A possible scenario of the Interim Framework might be that someone, acting as a brokering entity, has managed to gather the community's institutions and other resources together, making an agreement to collaborate on issues affecting the welfare of certain neighborhoods. The brokering entity is central to this circle of resource holders, both as the impetus for the new compact and as its primary protagonist. In these roles, the brokering entity nurtures, facilitates, and performs all the necessary maintenance and cheerleading functions in forming and continuing this infrastructure. (Figure II-1 is a generic diagram of an Interim Framework.)

Despite having differing starting points, community builders can aspire to similar interim and ending points.

At the same time that it has arranged this coalition of institutions, the brokering entity has also reached out to establish relationships with the neighborhood residents. Again, each of these neighborhoods is assumed to have providers and other stakeholders, including a central leadership organization that has the potential to act as an instrument for exercising community voice. The framework assumes that the residents have no ongoing working communications or relationships with the member organizations that form the infrastructure. The relatively new link to the brokering entity is assumed to be the residents' only working connection to this circle of resource holders. The brokering entity's role in the neighborhoods is to assist residents in building the capacity for effective interaction, exchange, and relationship with the infrastructure members. Figure II-2 maps Denver's current structure onto our Interim Framework.

ABOUT THE PROPOSED OPTIMAL STRUCTURE

The current structure of *Making Connections–Denver* is not the long-term model for community building. In a more mature version of the Structural Framework (see Figure II-3), we would expect to see greater evidence of community empowerment and community initiative. In this "optimal" version, the Denver Team has moved itself *outside* the center of the initiative so that it is no longer positioned as an intermediary standing *between* the communities and the resource institutions.

In the "optimal" structure, the process of community capacity building has progressed far enough to enable the communities to move to the center of the circle of resources. The communities now manage their own relationships with the various institutions. Moreover, by now the communities have also fashioned direct communications among themselves and, in so doing, have created a potential for coalescing around issues of mutual interest. In this more mature scenario, the major catalyst for the initiative (in this instance, the Annie E. Casey Foundation) recedes from the spotlight to assume the role of partner, on par with the more local resource institutions.

FIGURE II-2
CURRENT STRUCTURE OF
MAKING CONNECTIONS–DENVER[1]

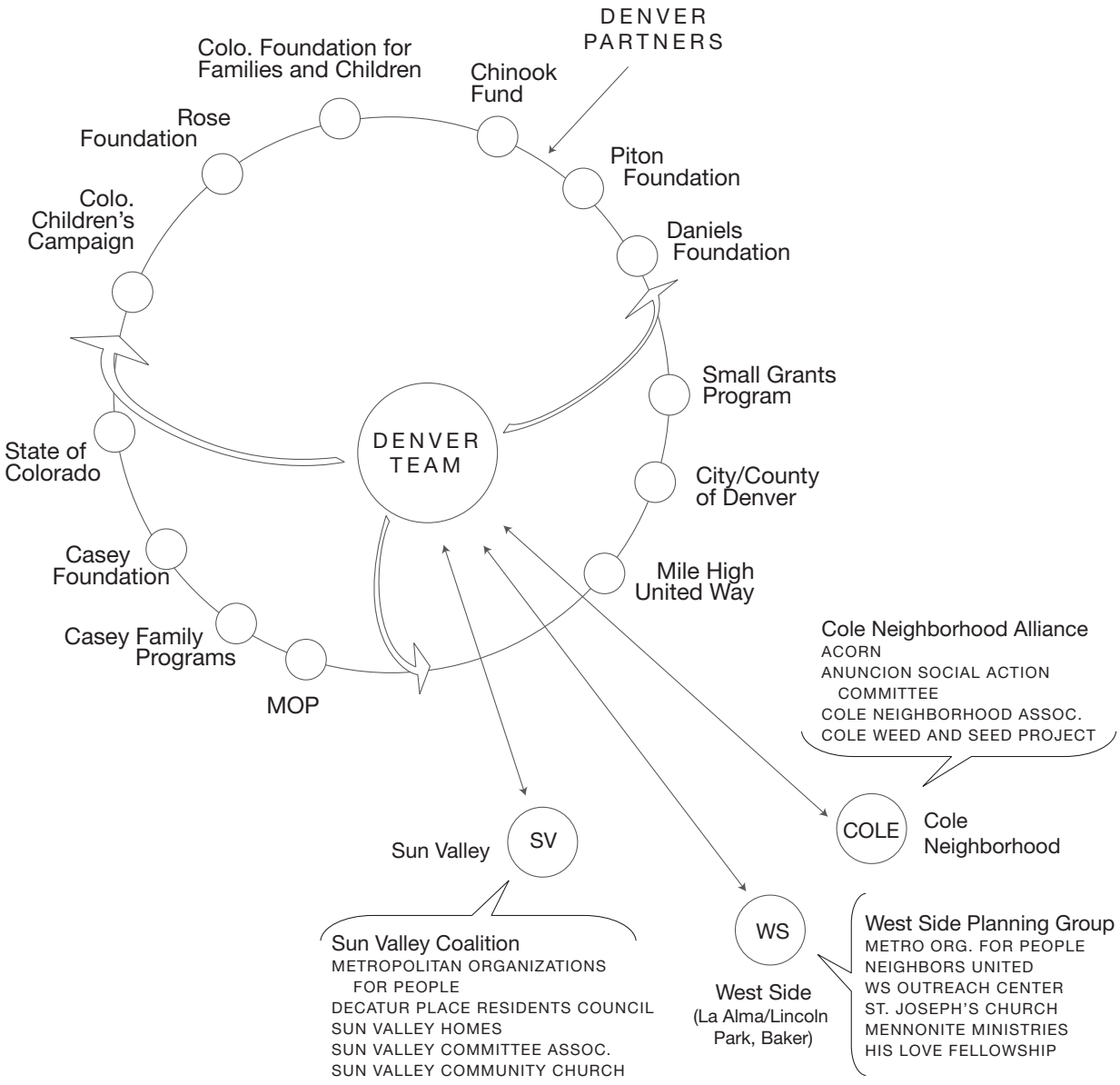
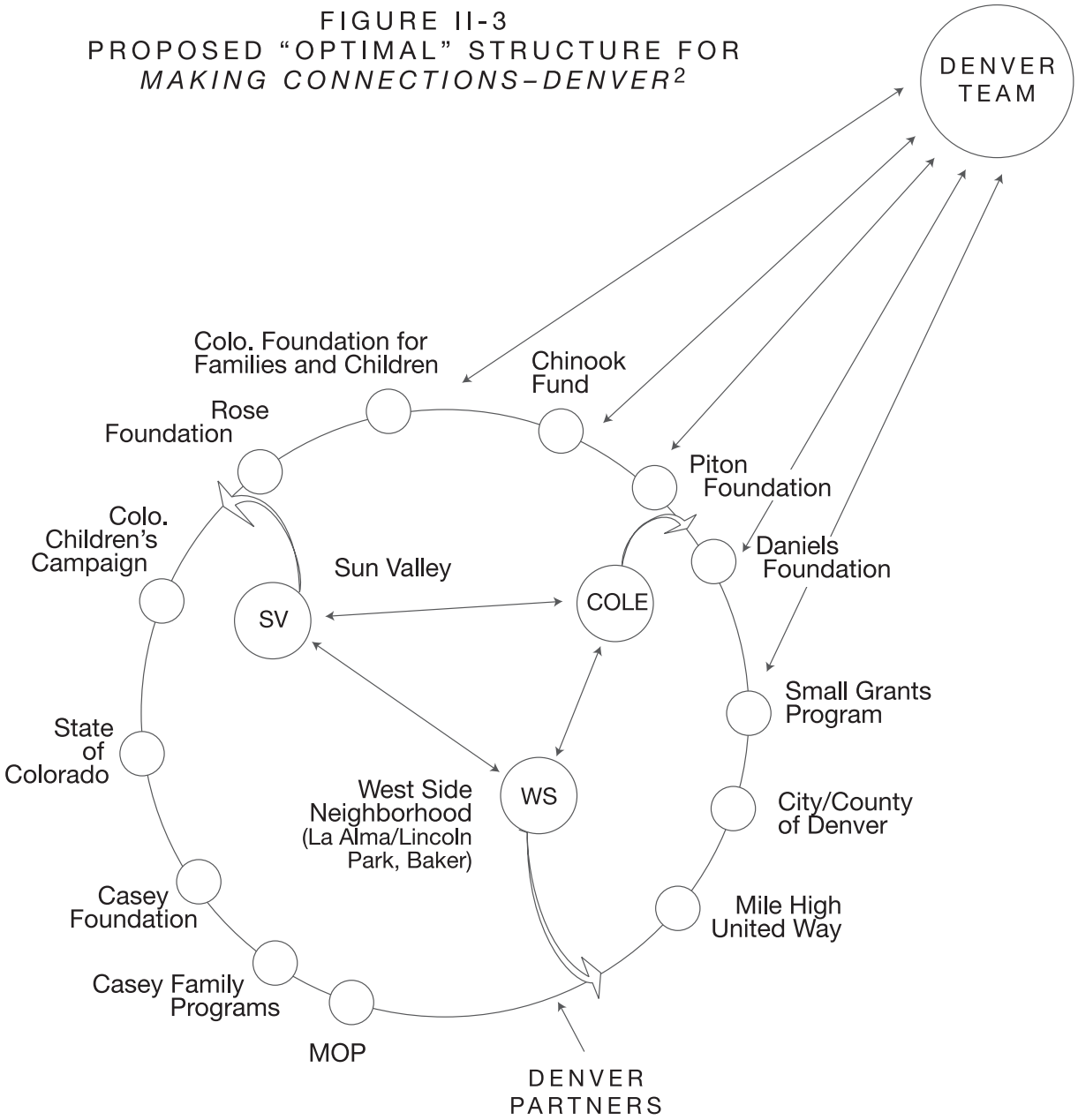


FIGURE II-3
PROPOSED "OPTIMAL" STRUCTURE FOR
MAKING CONNECTIONS–DENVER[2]



Moving community residents to the center of the initiative is imperative to any real efforts at community-driven change. Another important step is increasing the communication and collaboration among the neighborhoods. There are several reasons for collaboration among communities. Closer cooperation should help minimize the potential for the communities to find themselves advocating for divergent agendas or competing against each other for the resources of the partners. Forming a cross-community coalition helps the infrastructure resource partners as well by enabling them to respond to community needs in a more organized and equitable manner—as opposed to having to respond repeatedly to a series of "me too" requests. Finally, and as a consequence, greater cross-community communication will lend more continuity and coherence to the community change effort as a whole. At the time of this writing, however, this kind of cross-community collaboration was not yet in evidence in Denver.

Still Separate Fingers

At the moment, the communities aren't coordinated with each other. They're working on their own. Sun Valley is working on its own stuff. It doesn't have a relationship with West Side or with Cole and so, long term, I think they'll decide that. It's my best guess that they will [coordinate]. But at the moment, right now, they aren't even there.

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

The rather intricate arrangement proposed in the Structural Framework poses serious management challenges. How should all of these elements be managed to achieve positive outcomes for communities, families, and children?

MANAGING THE COMMUNITY-BUILDING ENTERPRISE: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Management protocols for an enterprise are usually tailored to fit the dynamics of the industry as well as the nature of the work actually performed by the firm. If one were producing a consumer product—let's say widgets, tires, or automobiles, for example—outputs would be finite, quantifiable, and subject to a defined production process and measurable quality standards. One might expect the functions of management to be focused primarily on matters of efficiency and cost minimization—for instance, controlling inventories, streamlining production processes, and monitoring labor costs.

Of course, the outputs of community-building enterprises are not finite. Interviews with and observations of Denver principals suggest that theirs is an extremely fluid and organic enterprise with the following characteristics:

- A wide array of potential objectives and hence conceivable outcomes (products) that may vary both over time and within and across communities;

- A large number of actors who can autonomously initiate strategies and activities to affect a set of outcomes;

- A potentially exponential expansion path in terms of both the breadth of issues and opportunities that may compete for attention, and the pace at which they may arise and develop;

- A high contagion that appears to strike its victims (initiative participants) at a very personal level. Consequently, on the downside, a very real danger of spinning out of control.

The Contagion

I understood the importance of relationships in community, but I don't think I adequately understood the importance of relationships in institutions. And that, just as people in community are craving relationships and meaningful dialogue, people in institutions are craving it, if anything, more.

As an example, one very interesting aspect of this work is its effects on the "partners." You see, in the partners' group, it is the individual members who have caught the contagion. The organizations have not caught it yet. And who knows what's going to happen to these individuals if they are not able to share that contagion within the institution. And we are so far away from knowing that answer. But those individuals speak pretty eloquently about feeling different about the ability of their work to make a difference and how important that seems to be.

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

And the interesting thing about Making Connections *is, when I see other bureaucrats like me get exposed to this community involvement, this resident involvement, they kind of brighten up. It's as if they've been waiting for this opportunity to change. They recognize that the way we've been doing things has not resulted in a lot of positive outcome.*

—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

It seems to have a force of its own. People talk about being attracted to the feeling that's being generated by this initiative. Not the money. I mean, at first people came around because Casey has a lot of money. I rarely hear anybody talking about the money now. People talk, as the one resident did, about "I'm not leaving a meeting, I'm leaving friends."

And so it's almost like moths to a flame, to a light, it just keeps attracting more and more, and people want to come in as opposed to staying out. It's becoming a very hard force to resist. It is very contagious. And it's very hard to come in negatively. Or, even if you do, it's very hard to survive within it being negative, because of the contagion of people feeling hopeful, and the expectation that this is about believing, it's not about disbelieving.
—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

The piece that does feel very new and very different is putting these power brokers around the table and having them very candidly talking to each other about their flaws in terms of being truly citizen responsive. I don't know that anything will change, but they're talking about things differently than they ever have before and they're entertaining the possibility of doing business differently and supporting each other in that.

I just think that's new, I really do. I mean all these organizations have thrown huge pots of money at social problems for years and years and years, and had different levels of effectiveness. But really saying, "Gosh, we're not very responsive." That's a new level of conversation and I find that thrilling.
—Peg Logan, Director, The Chinook Fund

Exponential Growth

I'm always amazed at the [size] of this work. This experience has become exponential. Every day someone brings up a new idea. And the problem with that is how do you facilitate it? You can't even say that you manage it because you don't manage this. We start a project or we look at an issue, and all of a sudden that brings up three more issues, and then those three issues bring up three more issues. And it's a process that you can't control either, because you've got to be open to all these ideas. I know facilitation is an overused word, but it's one that works.
—Cecelia Sanchez de Ortiz, Site Liaison, *Making Connections–Denver*

A Frenetic Pace

People don't go into nonprofits and into government for bad reasons. They go there because they really want to make a difference, just like everybody else. But in this initiative, they're moving almost too fast. They make commitments at the drop of a hat. They want to do business differently to the extent that they have control. Many of these people have a great deal of control, you know. They're committing money, or they're committing themselves, or they're committing their staffs. I don't think any of us expected how fast that was going to take off. I don't think any of us understood the synergy that would happen in that group and the extent to which the power of that message would resonate with them.

I'm concerned that it may be moving too fast because if it's going to be a meaningful relationship with community, it really has to be in partnership with community. It can't just be institutions saying, "I'm changed," you know? It really has to be through the course of the relationship that something changes. And it's hard to keep those things in balance.

And I also worry that so much of it is on the backs of individuals, as opposed to organizations. I don't think we have a sense of how to broaden it within institutions, let alone how to sustain it over time, when the passion of these individuals dwindles, gets diverted, or they just leave, as people do. And I don't know what the consequence will be if we don't figure that out. I don't know what the consequence will be on the communities who trust these people and for whom it is very difficult to separate the person from the institution they represent.

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

A Potential Downside

I think that growing the work and growing the initiative, it's become bigger than even an initiative. In fact, the scary part about all this is that families now believe it and, at the same time, we have a lot of issues to try to cover. So we find families wanting to be at these meetings, wanting to participate, excited about the fact that there's this national foundation as well as partners locally that are buying into this concept of how to build a family-strengthening agenda. And yet, my concern always for all of us is how do we not get overwhelmed with it?

—Cecelia Sanchez de Ortiz, Site Liaison, *Making Connections–Denver*

MANAGEMENT FOR ORDER, NOT CONTROL

Denver testimonies paint an exciting portrait of the *Making Connections–Denver* experience—one that feels more like a movement than an initiative. *Making Connections* appears to be finding a resonance in Denver with the initiative's staff, with its institutional partners, with its residents, and with government—in ways that appear to be transforming people, their relationships, their work, and the way they see their roles.

Looming over this picture, however, is the issue of how the initiative will manage to fulfill its promise and the expectations that so many people appear to have. How can the contagion, the relationships, the opportunities, and the issues be managed in a way that can fulfill this promise over the long term? How does *Making Connections* conduct itself so that it does not collapse under the weight of its own enthusiasm and potential? In short, how does *Making Connections* manage this kind of organic enterprise?

Managing a community-building enterprise is not about control.

Operational Glue

Well, the Denver Team is a coordination function. So we're just sort of keeping all the world moving. And realizing that we don't have a clue what we're doing, the Denver Team has become this crucial piece of… glue.

—Terri Bailey, The Piton Foundation

By now, it should be clear that managing a community-building enterprise is not about control—not any more, for example, than managing the Internet is about control. Indeed, in this kind of organic and largely unguidable enterprise, management may mean achieving and maintaining some semblance of order. Like the Internet, *Making Connections* may be about providing a platform—one that allows for many subscribers to join in exchanges around any number of issues and take those issues to fruition in a variety of ways—a platform that is guided by a set of rules that define what the game is, who can play, and how. The *Making Connections* "game" is pretty clear: strengthening communities and families by improving the services, conditions, and opportunity structures within neighborhoods. The rules in Denver are also readily apparent: that the voices of residents should take center stage. And so far, it appears that anyone and everyone can play.

In the context of this analogy, there are several "noncontrol" management functions that community builders should consider. This book makes no pretense of prescribing all such roles here, but a few important ones—monitoring, promoting, facilitating and supporting, brokering, and mediating—are highlighted.

MONITORING. There is a need for some entity to keep an overview perspective and perhaps even function as the archivist for the enterprise. Someone has to tend to the health and integrity of the

initiative to ensure that its purposes are being served in accordance with agreed-upon principles. As an example, throughout the Part One discussion, great emphasis was placed on the need for continuous recruitment and development of resident leaders in order to ensure the vitality and authenticity of the community's voice.

PROMOTING. An entity with the same overall perspective needs to take responsibility for assessing and communicating the initiative's work. *Making Connections–Denver* is focused currently on only three of the city's many neighborhoods, yet its purpose is to demonstrate a promising way to transform the landscape of family supports for every neighborhood. Consequently, while some burden of communication can be assumed by each of the players and constituents, *Making Connections* will also need to focus particular energies on building a capacity to tell the larger story.

FACILITATING AND SUPPORTING. It is likely that both the community-building process and its various players will need various forms of training and technical support on matters of substance or process. Establishing a capacity to identify and connect with such resources is an important component of managing this work.

From Hallelujah to How

When we as partners—funding agencies, government agencies, service providers—say we're going to do some work internally, make our own transformations, and look at our own processes to improve the outcomes in neighborhoods, I think we don't really know what that means. I think we accept it as a notion because it represents an ideal. It appeals to some political correctness that we carry with us.

But the depth to which, and the degree to which, we are really able to do that is yet to be determined. It will not happen easily and it will not happen smoothly. Which isn't to say people are already resistant. I just think we don't quite understand what it means to do things differently. I think that there are probably some organizations around the partners' table that don't know how to do this. And many don't because they haven't traditionally done it.

—Beth Sanchez, Former Director, Denver Workforce Initiative

BROKERING. Brokering is an important function because one cannot expect all of the important connections in *Making Connections* to happen organically or to happen smoothly. The contagion that many individuals have experienced may not be shared by their colleagues, superiors, and institutions. It is likely that, on occasion, some effort may be needed to negotiate the participation of some important players.

MEDIATING. It is almost certain that, at some point, Denver's enthusiasm for resident engagement and community organizing—as drivers for social change—will be sorely tested by some difference

or disagreement, most likely between the residents and some institutional authority. For such contingencies, some entity must be established and credentialed early on as the vehicle through which differences may be resolved.

At this point in the initiative, most of Denver's institutional partners are mindful of the need for residents to experience some "wins." Consequently, these institutions have made conscious efforts to respond affirmatively to resident requests. And so far, doing so has been relatively painless on rather small issues like stop signs and playgrounds. At some point, however, the stakes will rise.

The Eventual Conflict

You know, there's an interesting part to all of this and that is that eventually, if the theory is correct, the residents will say to me, "We don't agree. We think that we know better than you." And to a degree, I'm willing to yield. But you know, power is never given, it's taken. At some point we're going to clash. At some point they're going to want me to do something that I'm not necessarily going to want to do.

There are two things about that. One is we'll see what happens when we get to that point. And if we get there and I have a problem with it, maybe I need to move aside. But the other thing is that I'm focused on the process of getting there. We will have accomplished a great deal if we get all those things that need to get done—that I'm in support of—before we get to the point where we clash.

You know, when I went to the community-organizing training supported by Piton and MOP, at first, because I work for the city, people referred to me as the target. And you know, after a while, I became reasonably comfortable with that idea because they were reasonably friendly. You know? But at some point, I might actually become the target and have to deal with that. I'll be all right.
—Ernest Hughes, Enterprise Community Coordinator, City of Denver

It can be reasonably argued that each of the functions described above might be, and indeed on occasion should be, effectively performed locally by the parties involved in a particular negotiation or transaction. This report does not preclude that possibility. But because of Denver's interest in *Making Connections* as an effective approach to community change, its leadership has a vested interest in ensuring that there is positive synergy in this work. As managers of community-building processes, the Denver Team might want to minimize the number and the extent of unsuccessful relationships and outcomes in order to preserve a sense of positive progress overall. Hence, there appears to be a need for the initiative's leadership to pay special attention to how these various functions are managed.

SUMMARY

Explorations of the community-building process in Part One led to questions about how one might structure and manage something that seems so amorphous. I believe that attention to these questions is essential to maintaining the long-term viability of resident-driven neighborhood change efforts.

This section has suggested that managing the "enterprise" may be more a matter of ensuring order than it is about exercising control. As an aid to doing so, the section has presented a set of interim and optimal relationship structures that accommodate the sensitivities of the community-building process. Clearly, these relationship structures are crucial to the success of the *Making Connections–Denver* initiative and to the success of community building in general. Recognizing, monitoring, and nurturing the relationship structures described in this section must be major ongoing concerns.

Community building may be highly spontaneous and organic, but it is not quite chaos.

ENDNOTES

[1]Three neighborhoods are the focus of *Making Connections–Denver.* They vary in the degree to which they are organized. They have little contact with each other and limited familiarity with and access to the resources and institutions that make up Denver's infrastructure.

The primary thrusts of *Making Connections* is these neighborhoods have been providing resources and assistance to strengthen the level of community organization; and stimulating community dialogue in order to generate an agenda for change. Once an agenda is formulated, the neighborhoods will need assistance from the Denver Team in linking to resources and institutions in the infrastructure.

Making Connections–Denver is still at a formative stage in its development. The Denver Team is the central actor and primary catalyst for the initiative. Its current efforts are focused on brokering infrastructure institutions into the initiative; reaching out to the neighborhoods to strengthen their capacities for organizing and agenda building; and connecting residents to the institutions and resources they need to address community concerns.

A major challenge going forward is how to put the neighborhoods at the center of the *Making Connections* initiative.

[2]Three neighborhoods are at the center of *Making Connections–Denver.* The neighborhoods are surrounded by Denver's infrastructure of government and other resources.

They connect to these resources and to each other as needed to address neighborhood concerns. The Denver Team acts as a central resource to all the parties, the AECF grantee, and staff and archivist of the initiative in Denver.

conclusion

There is much more to the Denver story than could be covered in the foregoing pages. Telling that story in detail has not been the goal. Instead, the purpose has been to highlight points of convergence between the frameworks developed in this report, as aids to community building, and the actual field experiences and perceptions of *Making Connections* participants in Denver.

It is important to repeat that the observations reported here reflect the attempt to superimpose, after the fact, a framework that was independently conceived without knowledge of the Denver initiative. In this pursuit, I was so impressed with the extent of Denver's conformity with the frameworks that I used local, first-person quotations to speak to this conformity. The extraordinary amount of agreement between these voices and the frameworks supports the potential for using the frameworks as tools in community building.

It should also be clear, once again, that I do not construe this exercise as proof of the validity of these frameworks. The congruence documented here strongly suggests that community-building processes and structures can be modeled. Further conceptual work, in these or other directions, should result in raising this important field to a higher and more disciplined level of study and practice.

The two frameworks presented here—focusing as they do on the processes and the structures that support resident-driven change—allow readers to draw distinctions between two important aspects of community-empowered change. First, they permit readers to explore what it may take to sustain a community-building process. Second, they provide a vision of the organizational structure in which these processes might be embedded. Together, these two frameworks can be a first step in creating a theory of community building that, when applied, will make the difference between community empowerment that succeeds and efforts that do not. Indeed, though community building may, in many respects, be highly spontaneous and organic, the forgoing explorations suggest that it is not quite chaos.

appendices

APPENDIX I

THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION AND NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION

As the nation's largest philanthropic organization dedicated to the well-being of children and families, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has spent more than 50 years looking for effective ways to improve the future of the nation's poor children. The Foundation strongly believes that child welfare depends in large measure on the strength of families and on the various supports those families provide. The Foundation also recognizes that family strength is not defined in a vacuum. *Where* children grow up can make a difference in *how* they grow up—the environment of a community can either support or inhibit strong families and positive child development. The overview of an unpublished Foundation document about the Neighborhood Transformation/ Family Development (NT/FD) initiative puts it this way:

> *Our research and experience tell us that the majority of children who rank lowest on most gauges of social well-being are clustered in several hundred challenging neighborhoods. Families who live there have skills and strengths, leadership and genius, talent and resilience in abundance. But too often, the multiple risk factors present in these neighborhoods simply overwhelm the assets of families and undercut the aspirations they have for their children and themselves. High concentrations of poverty and unemployment, increasing social isolation, violence, and easy access to drugs are crippling these communities and compromising parents' best efforts to ensure bright futures for their children.*

NT/FD is the Foundation's commitment to invest up to half of its resources over a full decade in a concentrated campaign to improve the lives of children and families in the nation's tougher, more

distressed communities. To do so, the Foundation has embarked on an ambitious agenda of locally driven community improvement and change.

NT/FD: THE CASEY HYPOTHESIS

The philosophy of the Foundation's approach is straightforward: *Children do well when their families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive neighborhoods.*

> *Just as children need strong families to thrive, families need thriving communities to fulfill their potential. Even the most resilient families find it difficult to succeed, much less pass on a legacy of hope to their children, in communities eroded by a lack of investment and opportunity.*

Place matters. Consequently, a major focus of NT/FD is changing the conditions of place in ways that will support the strengthening of families and the development of children. The centerpiece for testing this hypothesis is the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative. In this project, the Foundation is putting neighborhood and family strengthening at the center of its efforts, working in 22 U.S. cities during its three-year demonstration phase. *Making Connections* stimulates and supports a "local movement" that engages residents; civic and grassroots groups; political, public, and private-sector leaders; and faith-based organizations in an effort to help turn tough neighborhoods into family-supportive environments. The hypothesis:

> *We are willing to wager that, with the right mix of incentives, investments, and opportunities, neighborhood conditions can be changed in ways that support families and bolster children's chances of beating the odds.*

NT/FD sees community building and empowered community change as first-order priorities for social intervention. More information about NT/FD and *Making Connections* is available on the Annie E. Casey Foundation's website: **www.aecf.org.**

APPENDIX II

IMPETUS FOR THIS WORK

The frameworks presented in this report were inspired by a series of five seminars, "Social Capital: Construct or Catch Phrase," I conducted between April 1999 and March 2000 for staff members of the Urban Institute's Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center. The series explored the increasingly popular concept of social capital (assets contained in and accessible through human relationships) to discern whether and how it might hold any real utility for efforts to improve domestic social welfare in the United States.

The series concluded that the social capital construct did indeed provide a useful lens through which to consider an otherwise undervalued resource in our various wars on poverty. The challenge, however, was whether this promising new view of the world could be translated into practicable guidance about how to muster social capital to improve social welfare. Can this new way of thinking about assets inform what we actually do to improve children's and families' circumstances, opportunities, and outcomes in the nation's poor communities?

Constructing a framework was an effort to transfer the "promise" of this asset into practical guidance. The beginnings of that framework were reported in a draft paper, "Exploring Social Capital Through a Proposed Collective Efficacy Framework," that was shared with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. In 1999 the Foundation began providing support to further explore and refine the framework as a means of assessing its value for the NT/FD (Neighborhood Transformation/Family Development) initiative. At the recommendation of Casey Foundation Vice President Ralph Smith, Frank Farrow (director of the Foundation's Technical Assistance Resource Center, TARC) commissioned me to explore its utility as an aid to designing effective *Making Connections* strategies. Findings from that work were reported to the Foundation in "Exploring Community Capacity Through a Collective Efficacy Framework: Toward a Set of New Practical Understandings," which proposed a process model for community building that demonstrates how resident civic engagement creates necessary social capital that can be organized into collective action to bring about community change.

The objective in creating the model was to make the complex and shifting dynamics involved in these processes more concrete and tangible. If we could construct an accurate rendering of how people engage the issues and concerns in their neighborhoods and communities, we might also create a tool for thinking more deliberately about how these processes might be supported (e.g., how the Foundation's resources could most effectively be marshaled to assist communities in strengthening their capacities for self-determination and self-help).

After reviewing that framework, the Foundation granted resources for further exploration of whether and how it might actually be applied in real communities. Garland Yates, senior program associate, became the primary sponsor of this work and instructed that it be focused on the three *Making Connections* sites for which he had lead responsibility. This examination began with Denver, and the plan was to extend the work eventually to Boston and Detroit.

The approach to the explorations in Denver favored a more passive than active validation of the framework's application. That is, rather than impose a model for community building and mandate its use in the Denver site, the Foundation chose to explore the extent to which the experience of the Denver principals reflected, and could be described, within the framework. The investigation involved observations of and interviews about the initiative as it actually operated. The intent was to gather information and glean insights into how *Making Connections* was functioning in Denver and the extent to which its operations and processes matched the parameters of the framework. Then, if the observations suggested promise, the Foundation would consider a more aggressive approach that might sponsor a deliberate test of the framework.

The initial explorations in Denver proved so fruitful that all the work became focused on elucidating how the rather abstract frameworks converge with and reflect the experiences of the site's principals. Indeed, the Denver observations offer sufficient validation for the collective efficacy framework to warrant its application as a planning and assessment tool and as a technical assistance aid to the *Making Connections* initiative and to community building more generally.

The Structural Framework evolved almost as an unintended consequence of those Denver explorations, as an outgrowth of the original focus on the *process* of community building. I became equally interested in understanding more about the structure of community building. The question became whether, in addition to understanding more about how to empower residents, there might also be a way to think about how community-building efforts should look, how they should be arranged, and how they ought to function in communities. So the structural diagram actually emerged from deliberations with the *Making Connections–Denver* team members about how relationships in the initiative might best be prescribed.

APPENDIX III

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY: A MATTER OF TRUST

Perhaps the greatest challenge to resident-driven communities in working with nonprofit organizations is the need to renew relationships of trust between those organizations and their would-be community constituents. In Denver, as in many communities, community-based and nonprofit organizations are appreciated for the services they provide; yet they are sometimes viewed with suspicion because they are not owned or directed by the communities themselves. Some of the distrust stems from community perceptions of the ways nonprofits are constituted and do business.

For instance, there is strong belief that whoever controls the money controls the organization and its agenda. The following presents some of what was heard in Denver:

- ***Nonprofits are beholden to funders.*** Residents know they have little or no ability to support nonprofit organizations on their own, so they believe that funders, not residents, are the major constituents of nonprofits.

- ***Funding carries with it issues of accountability and other constraints.*** Residents believe that community-based organizations will have little incentive to embark on a resident-driven agenda if the funders don't approve and won't pay. Residents also believe it is difficult for nonprofits to publicly take critical stands on political issues and that, as a result, divided loyalties can occur if resident activity is political.

- ***Different priorities.*** Residents understand that the programs, services, and activities of nonprofits often are determined more by the interests of funders than by the needs of communities. They expect a disconnection between the supports that community-based organizations and nonprofits provide and the priorities that arise from community forums.

- ***Communities often have no sense of connection to local nonprofits.*** Nonprofit staff members generally live outside the neighborhoods they serve and, depending on the array of services their organizations offer, might have only limited contact with but a small subset of residents. In general, too, local people often are insufficiently represented in nonprofit "power" positions—as fundraisers or board members—further reducing any feeling of local ownership.

- ***Who should be visible?*** The demands of nonprofit fundraising also create dilemmas for this work. To be successful fundraisers, community-based organizations must be highly visible and show evidence of organizational achievement and effectiveness. In contrast, initiatives like *Making Connections* require that residents, not organizations, take the lead as the real and visible drivers of community change. Yet fundraising realities can impede an organization from subordinating itself and from lowering its profile in support of neighborhoods and residents.

Peg Logan of the Chinook Fund sums up the major dilemma of nonprofits:

> *We're asking some organizations that have a particular way of doing things to stop and bring all these other people on board and by the way to give up some of their identity. So, when they're out there working, they're supposed to identify themselves as the alliance and no longer as the organization. Now, if I'm leading an organization on a particular issue, every time I get my name in the paper I'm strengthening my issue and my organization. But if, instead, I am always only putting the group name forth, I'm going to strengthen the group, but at the cost of my organization.*

Some resident suspicion stems from the nonprofits themselves. Many organizations have history to overcome. In chronicling the experiences of earlier change efforts in two of the *Making Connections* neighborhoods, Lisa Duran reported at least four comments that reflected residents' views of things that went wrong in their relationships with local nonprofits.[1] Residents reported that arguments in organizational meetings sometimes disintegrated to the extent that nonprofit staff would shout at residents, insult them, curse at them, and tell them they could not speak because they were not staff members.

Other problems in the Denver neighborhoods included a lack of accountability to residents, a lack of resident input, and domination of the decision-making process by a professional class. When the organization's agenda did not match community needs, program heads persisted in their programs' objectives, rather than changing their programs to meet resident needs. Funds thus were given without attention to building a capacity that would enable residents who were not professional agency staff to participate in meaningful ways.

All of this suggests that insufficient attention has been devoted to the critical task of reorienting community-based organizations and preparing them for new working relationships with residents. And this community-based organizational infrastructure is crucial. It is not likely that the transformation of neighborhoods into family- and child-supporting environments can be achieved without these organizations' active involvement.

ENDNOTES:

[1]Lisa Duran, *Voices from the Neighborhoods: A Qualitative Analysis of Community Organizing in Denver,* Baltimore, Md.: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2000, p. 32.

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