Community Empowerment Strategies: The Limits and Potential of Community Organizing in Urban Neighborhoods

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Abstract

This article focuses on the factors that lead to successful community organizing. Community organizing, community-based development, and community-based service provision are distinct community empowerment strategies. Community organizing centers on mobilization of residents to address common problems. While many macroeconomic and social structural factors can promote or inhibit grassroots mobilization, this discussion emphasizes the importance of leadership development, strategic planning, and network building (across neighborhoods, cities, and regions) in mobilizing people to solve their common problems. The major obstacle to successful community organizing is the lack of training in leadership development and organizational capacity building. The primary strategy recommended for overcoming this obstacle is to help community organizations take advantage of intermediary organizations such as organizing networks and training centers that have emerged during the past several decades.[1]

Since the late 1970s, the Nation has witnessed a remarkable resurgence of citizen activism. Residents of America's urban neighborhoods have ignited what Harry Boyte called a "backyard revolution" of community activism (Boyte, 1980, 1989; Berry et al., 1993). Most American cities, and many inner-ring suburbs, have at least some level of grassroots neighborhood participation. Today, tens of thousands of neighborhood organizations are involved in a wide range of community improvement efforts.

It is important to distinguish among three strategies for promoting what is often called community empowerment. Community organizing involves mobilizing people to combat common problems and to increase their voice in institutions and decisions that affect their lives and communities. Community-based development involves neighborhood-based efforts to improve an area's physical and economic condition, such as the construction or rehabilitation of housing and the creation of jobs and business enterprises. Community-based service provision involves neighborhood-level efforts to deliver social services

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(such as job training, child care, parenting skills, housing counseling, immunization, and literacy) that will improve people's lives and opportunities (often called "human capital") within a neighborhood.

The heart of the new community empowerment movement is grassroots organizing to solve social problems and improve economic conditions in distressed urban neighborhoods. Community organizations that engage in successful mobilization efforts sometimes branch out into community development and/or the provision of social services. Although efforts to balance these components are not without tension, this is a logical step toward a comprehensive community empowerment agenda. Community groups that focus primarily on service delivery or community development often lose the energy and momentum required to do effective community organizing. Service delivery and community development are more effective when they are part of a community organizing strategy, especially when the tasks are clearly delineated within the organization (Traynor, 1993; Miller, 1992; Lenz, 1988).

For example, in a number of cities, ACORN (a national network of community organizations) has drawn on its success in challenging bank redlining to become involved in housing counseling for potential homeowners. In Lowell, Massachusetts, the Coalition for a Better Acre began as an affiliate of Massachusetts Fair Share, a citizen action group; after several years of successful organizing around neighborhood issues, the group formed its own community development corporation (CDC) to repair and build affordable housing. East Brooklyn Churches, a coalition of New York City religious congregations that is part of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) network, spent a decade working on neighborhood issues before establishing its own housing development program (Nehemiah Homes), which has become one of the largest nonprofit development projects in the country.[2]

Community organizations vary widely in size, scope, and competence, but the range of issues and concerns that have been addressed is remarkable. They include public safety, crime, and drugs; tenants' rights, abandoned housing, and housing discrimination; environmental and public health issues, such as toxic waste dumping, smoking, lead paint, and pollution; community reinvestment, redlining, and related matters; economic development, job training, and plant closings; youth, education, and recreation; and municipal services delivery. Some community organizations focus on a single issue, while others tackle a variety of issues under a single organizational umbrella. Some groups focus solely on problems on their block or in their neighborhood, while others tackle issues across neighborhoods, either by expanding their own "turf" or by forging alliances and coalitions with counterparts in other neighborhoods.[3]

The experiences and activities of the Nation's community-based empowerment organizations provide ample evidence that the American self-help tradition is alive and well. Although many Americans engage in some aspect of community organizing, the public is not well informed about this phenomenon. The mainstream media typically report on the activities of these groups only when they disrupt business as usual. Few newspapers or television stations routinely cover the efforts of community-based organizations (Dreier, May 1991, September/October 1993). Although funding organizations and some scholars have examined specific groups, there has been relatively little analysis of the experiences of these groups or of the factors that account for their success. Still, there is a sufficient body of knowledge about this growing sector of American urban life to provide a brief overview of recent trends and an evaluation of the factors that contribute to their success or failure.[4]

The Federal Role in Community Empowerment

In recent years, many government officials, civic leaders, and academics have embraced the notion of community empowerment as a component of a strategy for revitalizing and strengthening America's urban communities. To do so makes sense from both a moral and an administrative perspective. In a democracy, self-government rests on two foundations: citizen participation and reciprocal responsibility. Community empowerment reflects the longstanding American values of promoting strong families in healthy neighborhoods, self-help and volunteerism, and the balancing of rights and responsibilities.

Moreover, if government community development programs are to succeed, social institutions in America's neighborhoods must be strengthened. Community empowerment is consistent with the concept, endorsed by both conservatives and liberals, of using voluntary intermediary community institutions to help rebuild the social fabric—or social capital—of troubled neighborhoods.[5] Neither the public nor the private sector alone can address the problems of America's urban areas; community organizations must play a key role. In recent years, some American business leaders have recognized the benefits of restructuring enterprises to increase the voice of workers, midlevel managers, and even consumers in decisionmaking. As the Clinton administration moves to reinvent government, it can apply the same lessons. Rather than viewing neighborhood residents as passive consumers or clients of government services, it is more appropriate, as well as more efficient and effective, to view them as citizens and partners who can help shape, promote, and even deliver services. In order for America's urban neighborhoods to be healthy, their residents must gain a stronger voice in shaping the physical, economic, and social conditions in their communities.

Government support for community organizing involves a healthy and creative tension. Government's institutional culture encourages lawmakers and bureaucrats to view policymaking and program implementation as their prerogatives, but policies and programs are a two-way street. Citizen participation can sometimes be messy and even conflicting, but it often results in better public policy, more cost-effective programs, and a healthier democracy.

This article makes specific policy and program recommendations to help the Federal Government promote community empowerment and rekindle the spirit of public service. Grassroots empowerment, which emphasizes citizenship, not clientship, best embodies this spirit. Government can play an important role in encouraging grassroots self-help efforts in several ways, including funding direct operations, training, and ancillary activities of community groups; making public information accessible to community organizations; and giving community organizations a legitimate role in the public policy process through regulations (such as requiring public hearings) and laws (such as the Community Reinvestment Act [CRA]).

Beyond specific policy ideas, top government officials can help create a positive climate for grassroots self-help efforts simply by using their "bully pulpit" to recognize grassroots organizing and draw it to the attention of the public and the media. They can help inspire a new generation of community activists and encourage neighborhood residents to gain self esteem and self confidence by organizing their neighbors to improve their communities.[6]

Government leaders can reinforce calls to action through regular visits to community-based organizations. There are many community organizing groups in our cities that can provide firsthand evidence of the importance of grassroots mobilization in changing both

the objective and psychological conditions of neighborhoods. Many groups would welcome the opportunity to show our Nation's leaders the housing developments and businesses sponsored by neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations. To demonstrate its support for these efforts, the White House might start a "neighborhood heroes" award program to honor the leaders and organizations working on the front lines to empower low-income people in their communities.

The current Administration can build on an existing track record of Federal funding for community organizing, from the Great Society antipoverty programs to current initiatives. Too many journalistic accounts have painted these efforts with the same brush. This is unfortunate, because there is much we can learn from both the successes and the failures of these efforts. Over the years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has sponsored a wide range of community self-help and mobilization efforts. These include the Model Cities program, the Tenant Management demonstration program, the Neighborhood Development Demonstration program (now called the Heinz Neighborhood Development Program); community-based fair housing monitoring and homeownership counseling; and support for public and HUD-assisted housing tenants who mobilize to fight crime, improve management, attain a stronger role in management, and help tenant associations purchase their homes or negotiate with private owners and nonprofit organizations to assume ownership.

In the l970s the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), sponsored the Community Anti-Crime Program that helped community organizations expand arson prevention, crime watch, and related public safety efforts. In those years Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) funded hundreds of successful community organization efforts covering a wide range of issues and concerns. Many of these VISTA- and LEAA-funded groups weathered Federal cutbacks of the 1980s and remain rooted in their neighborhoods, working on issues of community improvement.

Although the Reagan administration eliminated LEAA and, with it, the Community Anti-Crime Program, DOJ now has a similar but much smaller program, funded through the National Training and Information Center (NTIC), that provides technical assistance to dozens of community organizations working on neighborhood drug, crime, and gang problems. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program provides grassroots environmental groups with funds to identify local health and safety hazards, investigate the impact of toxic waste sites, and monitor pollution control efforts, in part by hiring experts to work for them.

Limits and Potential of Neighborhood Organizing

Observers of urban neighborhood problems recognize that sources of urban decay reside primarily outside of neighborhood boundaries. Symptoms of urban decay—poverty, unemployment, homelessness, violent crime, racial segregation, and high infant mortality rates—have their roots in large-scale economic forces and Federal Government policy. The forces and policies include economic restructuring toward a low-wage service economy; corporate disinvestment (encouraged by Federal tax laws); bidding wars among cities and States to attract businesses that undermine local fiscal health; redlining by banks and insurance companies; Federal housing, transportation, tax, and defense spending policies that have subsidized the migration of people and businesses to the

suburbs (exacerbating urban fiscal traumas); and Federal cutbacks of various financial assistance, housing, social service, economic development, and other programs. These large-scale forces can undermine the economic and social fabric of urban neighborhoods (Dreier, 1993; Massey and Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987; Goldsmith and Blakely, 1992; Johnson et al., 1992; Fishman, 1990).

In the face of such realities, neighborhood empowerment organizations face enormous obstacles to repairing the social and economic fabric of their communities. What influence can neighborhood self-help organizations have on policies made in State capitals or in Washington, D.C., and on decisions made in corporate boardrooms? Some would argue that neighborhood crime watches, tenant organizations, community reinvestment coalitions, and similar groups can have only a marginal impact, in light of these major trends and forces. Although there is some truth to this notion, it is ultimately misguided. Community-based organizations cannot, on their own, solve the major problems in their neighborhoods, but they provide the essential building blocks for doing so.

This is a very important point. Most neighborhood and community organizations that operate on their own have only limited success. They can win some victories, but they often have difficulty sustaining their accomplishments. This limitation is due in part to organizations' inability to develop strategies for strengthening their base and moving on to new issues. But, it is also due to the fact that the resources or authority needed to address a neighborhood's problems are not available at the neighborhood level, and often not even at the city level.

Community organizations have won many neighborhood-level victories. Some organizing networks have built statewide coalitions to address State-level issues and change laws, regulations, and priorities. But the hard truth is that despite the tens of thousands of grassroots community organizations that have emerged in America's urban neighborhoods, the whole of the community organizing movement is smaller than the sum of its parts. For every group that succeeds, there are many that do not. With some important exceptions, described below, community groups that *do* win important local victories are not always capable of building on their success and moving on to other issues and larger problems. For the most part, despite local success and growth, community-based organizing has been unable to affect the national agenda—or, in most cases, even the State agenda. As a result, they often improve only marginally the conditions of life in many urban neighborhoods.

Successful Community Organizing Requires Leadership Training and Capacity Building

There is a considerable body of social science knowledge related to the various types, quality, and social structures of urban neighborhoods. Thanks to the decennial census and other data, we know a great deal about the changing demographic, economic, racial, and family composition of America's urban neighborhoods. We have much evidence about the causes and incidence of residential segregation and concentrated poverty. Many studies have explored indicators of social problems, including rates of poverty, unemployment, crime, juvenile delinquency, and substandard housing. Some studies also examine levels of social cohesion, including such indicators as voluntary association membership, residential turnover, homeownership, and psychological affiliation with the community.

Despite all the research, we know little about so-called *neighborhood effects:* the impact of neighborhood-level factors on individual, household, or group behavior.[7] In terms of our understanding of neighborhood empowerment, social science has paid inadequate attention to the factors that contribute to community mobilization and to the impact of those efforts on neighborhood quality. We know, for example, that community members' involvement in neighborhoods and residents' trust in police—their willingness to report crime, press for arrest, and cooperate with police and prosecutors—help in apprehension and prosecution (Skogan, 1990; Skogan and Maxfield, 1981; Currie, 1993; Skogan and Autunes, 1979; McGahey, 1986). However, we know little about the reasons why some neighborhoods mobilize while others do not. Neighborhoods are not simply statistical aggregates; they are *social* places. Macro-level factors alone cannot account for how, or how well, neighborhood residents organize themselves. Human will and volition are also involved. We know, for example, that (controlling for income) homeowners are more likely than renters to participate in community organizations and to vote,[8] but experience also shows that when renters are mobilized, their neighborhood involvement and voting participation increase.

There is no easy formula to explain when and why residents of a neighborhood, particularly a low-income neighborhood, will join together to address a common problem, or whether or not their efforts will be successful. The situation cannot be explained simply by looking at macroeconomic forces, because community organizing has occurred in good times and bad, when conditions were improving and when they were getting worse. Nor can it be fully explained by looking only at neighborhood-level conditions. Two neighborhoods with similar social and economic conditions—the same levels of poverty, racial composition, church membership, crime, and housing conditions—may manifest two very different levels of community mobilization.

It is here that decisions by organizers and leaders can play a key role. Although a community may be ripe for grassroots mobilization, there is no guarantee that it will occur. Community residents, local institutions (such as religious congregations), or external organizations must make a conscious decision to invest time and resources in mobilizing people around common concerns. Any careful, honest examination of community mobilization must also recognize that there are many false starts on the road to community empowerment. In fact, because we rarely hear about the efforts that went nowhere, we fail to note that many grassroots initiatives never get far beyond the first living-room complaint session, the first church basement meeting, the first phone call that fell on deaf ears, or the first leaflet that appeared in neighborhood mailboxes and went unacknowledged.

But success is not simply about winning victories on specific issues. It is also about changing attitudes. It is about overcoming hopelessness and the sense of futility that infect America's inner cities—that which some have called the *quiet riots* of drug and alcohol abuse, violence, and suicide. It is about giving young people a vision of a different, and better, future. It is about giving everyone more self confidence and self esteem. It is, in other words, as much about winning "hearts and minds" as it is about winning better police protection, a new stoplight on the corner, or a new bank branch in the neighborhood. It is these changes in attitude that give people and neighborhoods the inner strength to organize around issues and to develop a vision that things can be different. Religious institutions often play a key role in community organizing, in part because they provide the moral solidarity that adds an important dimension to self help efforts that transcend narrow concepts of self interest.[9]

The process of developing strong leaders and community organizations is not simply a matter of expanding the self confidence and skills of certain individuals. It is about building solid organizations to change economic conditions, strengthen families and communities, and improve the social fabric of urban neighborhoods. Moreover, transforming social conditions in urban areas has important ripple effects for the entire society because, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros has observed, their destinies are interwoven (Cisneros, 1993a).

Many community organizations are extremely fragile entities. Although staff members and leaders may have enormous commitment and energy, these attributes alone cannot create a strong organization. Funding is clearly a major problem. Many grassroots organizations lack sufficient resources to maintain adequate staff, office space, equipment, and other basics, and most have little financial stability or continuity. In the past decade, many foundations concerned with low-income neighborhoods have shifted priorities, putting more resources into community-based development than into community organizing (Council for Community-Based Development, 1993; Rabinowitz, 1990; Jenkins, 1989). Few community organizations are adept at grassroots fundraising, which includes such activities as collecting membership dues, canvassing for donations, and mounting the proverbial bake sale.

Many groups with very small budgets often limp along from year to year (sometimes even from month to month) without a plan for sustained fundraising. Foundations and other funding organizations often give such groups 1- to 3-year seed grants with the expectation that they will then become self-sufficient. Surely these groups can do a better job of raising money, both from members and from external sources. But it is unrealistic to expect organizations composed primarily of the poor to be self-sufficient; that is, to fund their operations primarily from membership dues.

But not even additional funding will, on its own, guarantee effectiveness; leaders and staff must be skilled in building organizations. Too many community groups rely on a small number of leaders and, in most cases, a few staff members. When these people leave or "burn out," the organization often collapses, because there has been no plan for developing or recruiting new leadership and staff. In some situations, charismatic or dominant leaders resist recruitment of new leaders and members. They may feel threatened by perceived competition, or they may not realize that delegating tasks and giving more people a stake in the organization strengthens a group's effectiveness. Success also depends on the ability of poor people's movements and community groups to mobilize resources and generate external support for their activities from various members of the public (the "conscience constituency"), government officials, the media, and funding groups, including religious institutions, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and government.[10]

Successful community empowerment requires a number of factors, such as strong, skilled, indigenous leadership; a stable organization in terms of membership and funding; a clear sense of mission that includes a long-term stake in the community; and an overall strategy that allows an organization to build on its defeats and its victories. These attributes do not emerge overnight. They evolve through a process of leadership development, organizational capacity building, education, and consciousness raising. Successful community empowerment efforts depend a great deal on indigenous leadership development and organizational capacity building—the important "how-to" matters that encompass such skills as chairing meetings, dealing with the media, negotiating with government and

business institutions, fundraising, and handling budgets. These skills rarely come naturally. Individuals must develop the skills, stamina, and willpower to succeed as community activists, organization builders, and problem solvers. The popular notion that most leaders and movements emerge spontaneously is misleading—the stuff of folklore.

Many Americans believe, for example, that the 1955 Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott and the subsequent civil rights movement were triggered spontaneously by Rosa Parks' sudden refusal to move to the back of the bus. In fact, Mrs. Parks and her husband were longtime civil rights activists involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other organizations. She had attended the Highlander Folk School, a training center for citizenship education, and was part of a network of African-American community leaders that included E.D. Nixon of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. This network had the capacity to mobilize resources quickly and efficiently. It arranged meeting sites (particularly in churches), had access to mimeograph machines and telephone lists, raised funds, organized a complex alternative transportation system, and identified candidates for a variety of leadership roles, including Dr. Martin Luther King and a number of less-heralded individuals (Morris, 1984; Jarratt, 1975; and Branch, 1988).

The example of Rosa Parks illustrates the important point that people interested in successful community mobilization need not reinvent the wheel. Groups can draw on recent experiences in leadership development and organization building that have been informally codified through a variety of training centers, organizational networks, and other vehicles. Strong grassroots community leaders, as well as strong grassroots community organizations, are born *and* made.

Lessons From the Community Development Sector

This scenario may sound familiar to those who have closely observed community-based development during the past two decades (Vidal, 1989; Mayer, 1990; Dreier and Hulchanski, 1993; Walker, 1993; Sullivan, 1993; Bratt et al., 1994; Committee for Economic Development, 1995; and Goetz, 1993). Many CDCs of the late l960s and l970s—with roots in well-intentioned community organizations, churches, and social service agencies—tripped over their own inexperience. With funding from foundations and the Federal Government, this generation of CDCs struggled to undertake physical redevelopment projects. But many of them lacked the financial, developmental, and management experience needed to construct and manage low-income rental housing competently. Although a few of these early groups managed to survive, grow, and prosper, many fell on hard times and ultimately went out of business. Some of their housing projects were mismanaged; some fell into foreclosure.

In the early 1980s, as the Government began cutting assistance for low-income housing sharply, few observers would have predicted that the decade would witness something of a renaissance for the nonprofit community development sector. As the decade began, only a handful of organizations had the capacity to undertake complex projects that required multiple sources of funding. Even fewer had the capacity to manage rental housing occupied by populations with many social and economic problems. Although the Nation's community-based development sector is still relatively small and its track record varies from region to region, observers acknowledge that in the past decade it has made significant headway

against overwhelming odds, which include an unsympathetic Federal administration (from 1981 to 1992), patchwork financing, high-risk development projects, and undercapitalization. This sector is moving increasingly from the margins to the mainstream of the Nation's community revitalization efforts.

The Clinton administration has recognized the potential of the community development sector and has pledged to encourage its growth through strengthening the CRA, creating a community development bank program, and improving the Home Investment Partnerships Act (HOME) program, including the Community Housing Partnership initiative within HOME. Although this is not the place to recount the story of America's CDC sector, it is important to note that some of the lessons learned from that experience can be helpful in understanding how the Federal Government and private funders might encourage and support successful community self-help organizing efforts.

The key ingredient in the numerical growth and improved capacity of the community development sector has been the creation and expansion of national, regional, and local nonprofit intermediary institutions over the past decade. These include organizations such as the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Enterprise Foundation, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, Telesis Corporation, Development Training Institute, Community Builders, Community Economics, Institute for Community Economics, and McAuley Institute. These organizations provide technical assistance to help existing organizations improve their skills and to help new organizations learn the basics of community development. They help channel private, philanthropic, and government funding—including Federal HOME/Community Housing Partnership funds and Low Income Housing Tax Credits—to community-based development groups to help them undertake projects successfully.

Thanks in part to the work of these intermediary institutions, community-based development organizations have become increasingly sophisticated in terms of finance, construction, management, and other key functions. This has been accomplished not simply by targeting technical assistance and funds to individual groups but by enabling groups to learn from one another, build on one another's successes, and form partnerships and coalitions. The Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, the Chicago Rehab Network, the Coalition of Neighborhood Developers in Los Angeles, and other citywide umbrella organizations—many of them public-private-community partnerships—have expanded exponentially the capacity of CDCs in their cities. These collaborative efforts have, in turn, provided community development groups with the resources to become key players in their neighborhoods, not only in housing and economic development but also as sponsors or facilitators of improved human services, public safety, and other components of vibrant, healthy neighborhoods.

Although in some parts of the country the community-based development sector is still barely noticed, it has become a highly visible and important part of community rebuilding efforts in many areas. As it becomes more sophisticated, its success triggers other successes in a cumulative process. Communities gain hope when they see buildings being repaired and new businesses opening. Other neighborhoods recognize that they can do the same thing. Neighborhoods that once objected to subsidized housing projects are more likely to welcome developments sponsored by community-based groups that can demonstrate success in design, construction, management, and local hiring.

The intermediary organizations have expanded their activities during the past decade. Initially they were funded primarily by corporate and private philanthropy, but the Federal HOME/Community Housing Partnership program provides a specific set-aside that enables intermediaries to provide technical assistance and training to community-based development organizations.

Organizing Training Centers and Networks

What does the success of the community development movement have to do with community organizing? Many of the ingredients contributing to the past decade's growth of community-based development can be seen in the community organizing sector as well. During the past decade, the field of community organizing has become more institutionalized and, to some extent, professionalized. In its early days, skills and experience were passed on informally, by means of a kind of oral tradition. Through his books and his training center, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), Saul Alinsky sought to codify the lessons learned from his and others' experiences. The Highlander Research and Education Center played a similar role for activists and organizations in the Southern labor and civil rights movements.[11]

Today, more than 20 training centers have successful track records of teaching community organizations the skills needed to develop indigenous leaders, build strong community organizations, and win victories that improve social and economic conditions in their neighborhoods.[12] Many local groups and thousands of leaders and staff members have participated in these training programs during the past decade alone. In addition to IAF and the Highlander Center, training centers include the Midwest Academy, Center for Third World Organizing, National Training and Information Center, Institute for Social Justice, National Housing Institute, Gamaliel Foundation, the Organizing and Leadership Training Center in Boston, Organize Training Center in San Francisco, Grassroots Leadership, Pacific Institute for Community Organizations in Oakland, the Community Training and Assistance Center in Boston, the Regional Council of Neighborhood Organizations in Philadelphia, United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods, and the Center for Community Change (CCC). Many provide technical assistance to groups across the country, while some focus on particular regions. These training centers have developed well-honed techniques, books,[13] manuals, videos, and other materials to train grassroots leaders and create vibrant community organizations.

Some training centers are affiliated with national community organizing networks that have emerged in the past several decades. These multi-issue networks include ACORN, IAF, National People's Action (NPA), and Citizen Action. Somewhat looser networks include the National Toxics Campaign, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, and the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste. For example, the Midwest Academy in Chicago provides training and technical assistance to statewide and neighborhood organizations linked to the Citizen Action network, but it also provides these services to hundreds of other community organizations.

These networks have had considerable success, not only in forging strong neighborhood organizations but also in linking neighborhood organizations to address social and economic issues that transcend neighborhood boundaries.[14] Like their counterparts among intermediaries and training programs in the community development sector, these organizing networks and training centers have the capacity to expand significantly the scope and effectiveness of the Nation's grassroots community organizations. They have the

staff, experience, track record, staying power, and vision to help community groups put in place the components they need for broader success: leadership development, organizational capacity building, alliances, and external support.

Compared with their community development counterparts, however, community organizing networks and training centers operate on shoestring budgets and comprise an incredible untapped resource. They, and groups that could take advantage of their expertise, lack the funds to move much beyond their current level of activity. These networks and training centers could play an important role in promoting successful community empowerment at the neighborhood level as well as helping neighborhood groups form alliances with their counterparts in other neighborhoods, cities, and regions.[15]

Three Contrasting Case Studies

To illustrate these points, we can briefly compare trends in community organizing in three areas: community reinvestment, public housing, and HUD-assisted housing.[16]

Community Reinvestment

Perhaps the most successful community-based organizing in the past decade has been around the issue of redlining and community reinvestment. It is worth looking closely at this movement in order to understand its success.[17] In the mid-1970s, small groups of community activists in cities across the country recognized that the invisible hand of market forces wrote with a red pen. In Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, New York, and other cities, neighborhood residents and small business owners began to recognize a pattern in bank lending decisions. Banks were refusing to make loans to homes and businesses in certain neighborhoods, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of neglect and deterioration.

Local activists concluded that their neighborhoods were experiencing systematic disinvestment, not isolated lending decisions by misguided loan officers, and they began efforts to convince banks to revise their perceptions and lending practices. Some were simply educational campaigns to change the way bankers—often suburban residents with stereotyped images of city neighborhoods—viewed the areas. Other efforts involved consumer boycotts—"greenlining" campaigns—of neighborhood banks that refused to reinvest local depositors' money in their own backyards. Most of the efforts ended in frustration, with little impact on the banks' practices. But some neighborhood groups achieved small victories, including agreements between banks and community organizations to provide loans or maintain branches in their neighborhoods. Eventually, activists across the country who were working on similar issues discovered one another and recognized their common agendas. From such localized efforts grew a national "community reinvestment" movement to address the problem of bank redlining.

In response to grassroots pressure from the emerging neighborhood movement, Congress sponsored a number of initiatives to promote community self-help efforts against redlining. These included two key pieces of legislation, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) of l975 and the CRA of l977.

In combination, HMDA and CRA provided an effective tool that enabled local groups to pressure banks to invest in low-income and minority neighborhoods. HMDA provided the data needed to analyze banks' lending patterns systematically (for housing loans but not

commercial loans). HMDA gave many community groups and university-based schol-
ars—and some newspapers, local governments, and other agencies—the data with which
to investigate geographic and racial bias in lending. By requiring banks to meet commu-
nity needs as a prerequisite for obtaining various approvals from Federal bank regulators,
and by giving consumer and community groups the right to challenge these approvals,
CRA provided the groups with leverage to bring banks to the negotiating table.

From l977 through the late l980s, Federal regulators failed to monitor and enforce CRA.
As a result, community reinvestment activities primarily involved bottom-up enforce-
ment: local campaigns by community organizations or coalitions against local banks. In
the late l980s, these local activities coalesced into a significant national presence. Thanks
to the work of three national community organizing networks—ACORN, CCC, and
NPA—these local efforts became building blocks for a truly national effort that has pro-
duced dramatic results in the past few years. Locally crafted CRA agreements alone have
catalyzed more than $60 billion in bank lending and services. But even more important
is the fact that many banks are now much more proactive in working with community
organizations to form successful neighborhood rebuilding partnerships.

Training centers and organizing networks have helped local organizations significantly
expand their capacity to identify redlining, work with local media, negotiate with lenders,
persuade State and local governments to support their efforts through linked deposit poli-
cies[18] and public-private lending partnerships, and work with CDCs to take advantage of
new lending products. With funding support from several foundations and technical ad-
vice from these national networks and training centers, community groups have been able
to hire experts to help interpret HMDA data, publish reports, and expose systematic bank
discrimination. Whereas in the past most HMDA studies focused only on one bank or one
city, groups such as ACORN that have a base in neighborhoods in many cities were able
to demonstrate that the problem is not confined to just a few places. In 1989 the Federal
Reserve began to respond with several studies of its own.

Community groups and organizing networks have gained the respect of the Nation's
mainstream media, which began to report the redlining issue with some regularity. In fact,
the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* won a Pulitzer Prize for its l988 series "The Color of
Money" on this subject. Through these networks, acting on their own or in concert,
grassroots groups pressured Congress to strengthen both CRA and HMDA several times
in the late 1980s. These were dramatic legislative victories against overwhelming political
odds. In the early 1990s, the national networks, along with community development inter-
mediaries such as LISC, the National Congress for Community Economic Development,
and The Enterprise Foundation, formed the National Community Reinvestment Coalition
to strengthen the community reinvestment agenda.

Indeed, the entire community reinvestment climate has changed dramatically in the past
few years. Banks are now much more proactive in working with community organizations
to identify credit needs and create partnerships to meet them. Government regulators are
much more active in evaluating lenders' CRA performance and using regulatory incen-
tives to ensure compliance. Fulfilling its campaign pledge, the Clinton administration has
made the issue of redlining and community reinvestment by banks and insurance compa-
nies, as well as support for community-based development, a centerpiece of its urban
policy agenda. What were the *key ingredients for success* in community reinvestment?

■ First, it was an issue that affected many people and was clearly linked to economic
and social conditions in urban neighborhoods.

■ Second, the HMDA law provided community groups with usable tools to identify the problem, illustrating the importance of community organizations having access to key information.

■ Third, a series of organizing entities gave residents a clear set of remedies at the national, State, and local levels. These included local linked deposit laws, State linked deposit and anti-redlining laws, and, of course, the Federal CRA. Consequently, groups could organize, and achieve victories, on several fronts.

■ Fourth, local groups working on the same issue were able to learn from one another through several national organizing networks and training centers, such as ACORN, NPA, and CCC, which helped expand the capacity of local community groups to use CRA and HMDA to rebuild and revitalize neighborhoods. The networks provided groups with training and linked them together to make the Federal Government— legislators and regulators alike—more responsive to neighborhood credit needs.

■ Fifth, local groups had access to training and leadership development that empowered them to stabilize the membership and fundraising of their organizations; to form coalitions with a variety of groups (including church-based organizations, civil rights groups, nonprofit developers, and social service agencies) that often crossed boundaries of race, income, and neighborhood; to learn how to develop strategies for working on several issues simultaneously and building on small victories; to develop a strategy for negotiating with lenders and government; and to deal with the media.

■ Sixth, local groups had access to expertise and technology that enabled them to take advantage of HMDA and CRA. To make such Federal laws work, community groups must learn how to use them, and that usually involves having money to hire experts or to train staff in the computer skills needed to analyze complex HMDA data and translate them into reports understandable to the general public and the media. Community groups also need access to financial expertise to craft local CRA agreements with lenders. In today's technological society, access to technology and financial expertise is critical to a community group's ability to deal with government and the private sector on complex issues.

Tenant Organizing in Public Housing Developments

The strength and success of the grassroots community reinvestment movement stands in contrast to organizing efforts in both public and HUD-assisted housing developments. Without doubt, there has been a great deal of grassroots organizing among the Nation's public housing and HUD-assisted housing tenants. Although we can point to important success stories in developments across the country, the cumulative impact of tenant-led efforts has been marginal at best, in terms of building strong, stable community organizations and making a significant impact on economic and social conditions in the developments and their neighborhoods (Keyes, 1992; Atlas and Dreier, 1992).

Public housing tenants have organized to improve the local housing authority's management, especially in making repairs and improving the physical condition of developments; to deal with questions of security and public safety, including the epidemic of drugs and gangs in the developments; to start or expand job-training, child-care, counseling, and other human service programs in their developments; and to address such environmental and public health hazards in and near the developments as lead-based paint, toxic dumps, and asbestos. Some public housing tenants have used direct action and litigation tactics to

save their homes from the wrecking ball. Some of the struggles have led tenant organizations to demand a stronger tenant voice in the day-to-day management of their housing, including the creation of resident management corporations and even tenant ownership.[19]

Although a growing number of tenant associations, resident councils, and tenant management corporations exist in public housing today, they represent only a handful of the Nation's public housing developments. Many tenant groups are relatively weak in terms of leadership and organizational capacity. Few enjoy widespread participation by residents, several tiers of leadership and subcommittees, or regular elections. A number could be categorized as "company unions," lacking the level of independence from the housing authority management that makes tenant groups effective. A framework for accountability between residents and tenant leaders is often problematic. In only a few cities—including Milwaukee, Boston, Los Angeles, Baton Rouge, and Kansas City, Missouri—have residents formed citywide tenant councils that bring together leaders from various developments to negotiate their common concerns with the housing authority. Most citywide groups are quite fragile.

Thus resident organizing and participation in the Nation's public housing is still extremely thin. In part this has to do with the overwhelming problems confronting the low-income residents of public housing. But there are enough examples of successful organizing by public housing tenants to demonstrate that effective organizing is possible, as it was even during the 1980s when public housing had few friends in high places—not in the Federal Government, the media, or foundations.

What has been missing is the ability to disseminate the lessons of success (and failure) from one development to another in a given city and to share the lessons among cities in order to build a national infrastructure of public housing residents who can become effective advocates in Washington for public housing, especially in dealing with Congress. Organizing in the Nation's public housing developments is ad hoc and unfocused. Few of the tenant groups are linked to broader organizations or networks, and few have the resources to undertake leadership training or capacity building. There is no effort to create a new empowerment movement among public housing tenants.[20] Even when local housing authorities recognize the importance of tenants organizing, public housing authority (PHA) staffs rarely have the mandate or training to build an effective grassroots organization among residents, and most tenant organizations lack the resources to hire staff.[21]

Tenant Organizing in HUD-Assisted Developments

The situation is similar among tenants in HUD-assisted (Sections 8, 221, and 236) developments.[22] In many areas these developments are even more troubled than their public housing counterparts. Tenants in some developments have organized to improve maintenance, fight crime, and gain a stronger voice in management, but because their landlords are private owners, not a public agency accountable to voters and open to greater scrutiny, there are even more obstacles to organizing. Nevertheless, some of the most effective tenant organizing during the past decade has taken place in HUD-assisted housing complexes over two issues: the termination of subsidies and the management and disposition of developments taken over by HUD as a result of default and foreclosure.

Most HUD-assisted housing built in the 1960s and 1970s had an escape clause (called *expiring use*) for landlords that allowed them to pay off HUD-subsidized mortgages after only 20 years. This issue crept up on tenant groups and lawmakers who had ignored the ticking bomb until the mid-1980s, when the low-income stipulations began to expire. Renters in HUD-assisted developments realized that they could lose their homes unless

they could stop landlords from taking advantage of this loophole in the law. With their backs to the wall, tenants in buildings across the country mobilized on two fronts, local and national.

Locally, organizers began to educate residents about the looming threat and to alert potential allies, such as the local media, public officials, and housing activist groups. In some areas, local tenant groups organized regional alliances of tenants in at-risk HUD-assisted buildings. In Boston, the Massachusetts Tenants Organization and the Boston Affordable Housing Coalition took the lead. In Chicago, the Organization for the North East and the Lakeview Tenants Organization led the charge. The Coalition for Economic Survival (CES) in Los Angeles, the Texas Tenants Union, the Community Service Society in New York City, and ACORN in St. Louis played similar roles. By the mid-l980s, when the first group of buildings began to reach the 20-year milestone, a few owners had already exercised their right to raise rents to market levels. By l987, in California alone landlords had removed 37 projects with 1,246 units from Federal subsidy programs.

In a few areas with a high concentration of at-risk buildings, including Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, tenant organizations, along with nonprofit community-based developers and other housing activists, formed task forces to develop strategies for preserving HUD housing. Many housing experts and some government agencies, such as the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation in Massachusetts, provided technical help to tenant groups negotiating with landlords and government officials. This tenant activism led some cities and States to pass laws to slow down the process.[23] But it soon became clear that tenants had little bargaining power with landlords as long as Federal law allowed owners to prepay mortgages and raise rents. So tenant groups and their allies took the fight to the Federal Government.

Aided by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, tenant groups from various cities formed a network to pressure Congress to reform the Federal law and make it more difficult for landlords to terminate their subsidy agreements. Across the country, tenants organized demonstrations at owners' offices, persuaded journalists to write stories, and lobbied their Senators and members of Congress. They found some allies in Congress, particularly from those cities where there was a large inventory of at-risk buildings and where tenants and their allies were relatively well organized. Tenant and housing activists argued that allowing owners to withdraw from the housing subsidies would push more low-income people onto the streets and into shelters. At least a dozen organizations— owners associations, government agencies, housing advocacy groups, and others—issued reports estimating the magnitude of the problem and proposing solutions.[24]

Tenant groups won a temporary victory when Congress passed the Emergency Low Income Housing Preservation Act of 1987. The law imposed a 3-year moratorium on prepayments, through October 1990, which gave residents protection from immediate eviction and provided breathing room while Congress tried to resolve the conflict between landlords and housing activists and to fashion a permanent solution. Owners of subsidized projects created the Assisted Housing Legal Rights Fund, which quickly filed suit to overturn the l988 law limiting members' options and profits. Tenants kept pressure on Congress to preserve the HUD-assisted housing inventory permanently.

The Bush administration frequently talked about resident empowerment, but it did not always back its ideas with action. Some top HUD staff refused to cooperate with tenant groups and their allies. For example, HUD refused to give tenants the names of owners who had filed their intent to pay off their mortgages, even though the l987 Federal law

required HUD to do so. In some cities, however, grassroots protest and media attention forced reluctant HUD officials to make concessions. For 3 years housing activists and developers lobbied to protect their interests.

In 1990, over the opposition of the Bush administration, Congress enacted the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act (LIHPRHA). The new law gave owners the option of remaining in the HUD program in exchange for additional financial incentives or selling their properties, with the first option to purchase them going to tenant associations and nonprofit organizations. It also provided planning funds so that residents in these developments could come together to weigh the options and develop a plan for their housing complex. The Act gave tenants additional safeguards, but at an enormous price. Essentially, Congress accepted the landlords' idea of offering additional subsidies and tax breaks to induce them to continue renting to low-income residents.[25]

The l988 and l990 Federal laws, and various local and State laws, gave tenants expanded opportunities to work together to address their common problems and additional leverage to negotiate with owners, but the odds against resident success are still overwhelming. The law gives residents a narrow timeframe to organize and develop a plan of action; few tenant organizations have the resources and staff to do this effectively. In Los Angeles, for example, 158 HUD developments with more than 10,000 units are facing the expiring-use deadline.

The Los Angeles-based CES has successfully provided technical assistance to help residents in several developments organize and, in some cases, purchase their housing complexes. CES has provided technical assistance to help form a countywide HUD tenants' organization, the Los Angeles County Alliance of HUD Tenants (CAHT).[26] This group has received funding from the Los Angeles city government to hire three organizers. CES itself has only three full-time staff members, and they estimate that it would require 18 to 20 staff members to organize the residents of all HUD-assisted buildings in Los Angeles facing the LIHPRHA deadline.

LIHPRHA, like CRA, is an important tool, but it will be of little use to most tenants in Los Angeles, or in any other city, if they do not have the resources needed to mobilize, form organizations, develop negotiating and organization-building skills, hire experts to help plan and weigh options, and work with HUD to carry out an agenda of stronger resident participation and the preservation of federally assisted housing.[27]

Given their limited resources, the community-empowerment efforts of these resident organizations are remarkable, but the base is still small in relation to the magnitude of the problem. In only a few cities—including Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, and New York— are the efforts well organized beyond individual developments. Moreover, the national networks that have worked with residents in HUD-assisted housing are not as experienced as, and are more fragmented than, the community reinvestment networks and training centers. As the Los Angeles example illustrates, there is a need to expand the number of resident organizations in these developments, to provide technical assistance and training, and to forge connections among resident organizations within the same city or region.[28]

Residents of expiring-use developments faced the threat of losing their homes because the owners could make bigger profits with the buildings in the private marketplace. But some tenants faced the opposite problem: They lived in HUD-subsidized projects whose owners had simply walked away. In many cases, the landlords simply neglected to maintain their

buildings while still collecting HUD subsidies. Others ceased to make mortgage payments, putting the properties in jeopardy of foreclosure. While many HUD-assisted housing developments were in default, the Department was reluctant to foreclose on even the most troubled projects, as it would then be forced to assume the ownership and management of severely distressed properties. Nevertheless, during the l970s and l980s, HUD took over hundreds of developments, mostly in low-income areas. Soon after taking office in 1993, Secretary Cisneros identified this problem as a time bomb for the coming years.

In a few cities, most notably Boston, tenants in these buildings have mobilized, initially regarding day-to-day management and public safety concerns but also over the ultimate disposition and ownership of their developments. In the early l980s, tenants in several large Boston projects—Warren Gardens, Marksdale Gardens, and Methunion Manor—persuaded HUD to sell the developments to resident cooperatives. Under tenant ownership residents made substantial repairs, and the projects were among the best-run in the city. Their success convinced tenant groups in other developments to follow the same path. Nevertheless, when President Reagan took office in l981, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Samuel Pierce's approach was simply to auction these developments to the highest bidder, which guaranteed that speculators and slumlords, with little regard for the residents, would take ownership of the complexes and receive the HUD subsidies.

Here too, intermediaries have played an important role in helping residents organize to improve neighborhood conditions. Community Builders, a regional nonprofit development intermediary; the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP), a public-private community partnership that supports CDC-based development; and the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation, a State-funded technical assistance group, have worked with several neighborhood organizing groups to develop a comprehensive plan for Boston's sizable inventory of HUD-held buildings.[29]

In the late l980s, a coalition of resident organizations, State and city officials, and Boston business leaders waged a successful campaign to persuade HUD to stop the auction process and negotiate a transfer of 2,000 units in more than 60 scattered buildings to neighborhood-based CDCs. Tenant organizers and their allies kept up the pressure. The Massachusetts congressional delegation convened public hearings to expose the problems. Strong support from Governor Michael Dukakis, Mayor Raymond Flynn, downtown business leaders, and Boston's congressional delegation and considerable coverage in the Boston media convinced HUD to stop the auctions. The parties insisted that HUD sell the properties to tenant groups or nonprofit CDCs. Year after year, the tenants had protested HUD's inaction, while politicians and business leaders had written letters and lobbied in Washington on their behalf.

In l986 HUD agreed to sell 60 buildings with more than 2,000 units, known as the Granite Properties, to 8 CDCs through BHP. HUD also agreed to pay for long-neglected repairs and to continue rent subsidies for low-income residents. BHP raised funds from local businesses and foundations to hire social workers and organizers and to provide social services for the residents.[30]

Tenants in both public housing and federally assisted projects faced common problems and developed comparable strategies for addressing them. In both cases, residents sought a greater voice in running their homes. The early success stories in tenant empowerment came from the bottom up, but the ability to sustain these early successes has been problematic. While there are many paths to tenant empowerment, the most successful efforts are those in which tenants take the initiative and have access to the resources needed to build strong organizations and leadership. But these efforts have typically taken place

on an ad hoc basis. Success requires the same type of strategic networking and training that the community-based development sector, and to a lesser extent the community reinvestment movement, has built.

Although the Bush administration frequently voiced support for the idea of tenant empowerment, there was little to show for its efforts. The biggest weakness was the failure to recognize that resident ownership and management, if indeed it is something the residents want, should be the final stage of an organizing process that involves mobilizing tenants around day-to-day issues such as maintenance and crime, developing stable leaders, and winning a series of small victories, so that when tenants manage or own their projects they will have won something worth owning. However, the Bush administration, looking for quick results, was unwilling to fund that kind of genuine grassroots empowerment.

Whether organizing a crime watch, a voter registration drive, or a social service effort, or working to assume management tasks or even ownership of a subsidized development, the efforts will likely fail unless tenants are trained to assume complex organization-building and management tasks, including selection and monitoring of a private management firm. Corporations spend millions of dollars to improve their employees' management skills; residents of subsidized housing need a similar level of training and capacity building.

Policy Recommendations: Program Criteria

What can we learn from these experiences in order to forge a partnership with community organizing groups to strengthen inner-city neighborhoods, cities, and metropolitan areas and our Nation's well-being and productivity? Strategies to expand community-based organizing efforts must be viewed as part of the larger agenda for improving economic and social conditions in urban areas. Three areas in which the Federal Government can be most helpful in promoting community empowerment are organizing and training, access to information, and leverage points.

Organizing and Training

Community organizations need multiyear funding for organizing and training. It is critical for these groups to get effective technical assistance in leadership development and organizational capacity building. Options include providing funds to community organizing training centers and networks (intermediaries) and/or providing categorical grants to community groups for ongoing training.

Focus on organizing groups. Community organizing groups are a special type of community institution, and it is important to ensure that only bona fide organizations are eligible. Although a group may engage in development and/or service delivery, funding should be restricted to groups whose primary activity is the mobilization and empowerment of neighborhood residents. It should be a nonprofit organization that is not part of a local government or a government-controlled entity. Its governing board and leadership should be democratically elected by its membership, and the board should hold regular meetings and use accountability mechanisms. Although community organizations may work in economically diverse neighborhoods, low-income people should be well represented on an organization's governing board.[31]

Make categorical grants to community groups and intermediaries. Federal initiatives to help community organizing should be administered as competitively awarded categorical programs under Federal agency supervision, instead of being directed through local

governmental jurisdictions.[32] Funds should be allocated in two ways: (1) through national, regional, and local intermediaries (training centers and organizing networks) with good track records in community organizing; and (2) to groups that work with these intermediaries.[33] Federal funds should focus on two types of activities: (1) support for community organizations' day-to-day operations and (2) technical assistance to help train community organization leadership and expand their capacity in such areas as fundraising, budgeting, and membership recruitment.

Build alliances across income and race. Recent discussions of urban conditions have focused attention on the social, economic, and political isolation of the Nation's inner-city poor.[34] Low-income people need to develop strong organizations and leadership to help overcome this isolation, but they also need to build alliances with moderate-income people who share common concerns about the condition of their neighborhoods, families, schools, and the economy. It is often difficult to find issues and develop strategies that cut across the boundaries of income and race, but some of the most successful community organizations have done so. Federal support for community-based organizing should recognize the importance of both empowering the poor and building alliances with those only a step or two above the poverty level.

Target distressed urban and suburban neighborhoods. Secretary Cisneros has spoken of the "interwoven destinies" of America's cities and suburbs. A growing body of research has shown that suburbs cannot remain healthy if their central cities are decaying (Ledebur and Barnes, 1993; Peirce, 1993; Persky et al., 1991; Savitch et al., 1993; Sclar and Hook, 1993; O'Cleirecan, 1993; and Salins, 1993). Equally important, many so-called suburbs have social, economic, and demographic conditions similar to those in inner-city neighborhoods. The artificial boundaries between cities and suburbs, particularly the inner-ring suburbs, must be broken down. One way to do that is to encourage residents of distressed suburban communities to organize and find common ground with their counterparts in the inner cities. This does not mean providing funds for affluent suburban neighborhood associations to promote NIMBY (not in my back yard) attitudes; it means identifying troubled low-income neighborhoods in such places as Compton, California; Harvey, Illinois; Somerville, Massachusetts; and in other communities.[35] Funding formulas and targeting should not focus exclusively on low-income neighborhoods in central cities but should be flexible enough to identify areas outside inner cities.

Access to Information

The Federal Government should provide easy access to information, such as HMDA data, modernization estimates for public and HUD-assisted housing developments, Superfund inventories, crime statistics, and community right-to-know laws about chemicals, and should help community organizations gain access to the expertise and technology necessary to interpret and work with these data. Additional measures that would be helpful include putting HMDA data online so that community groups have easy access to it and adding commercial lending data to the HMDA law.

Promote community access to technology and expertise. If community organizations are to be effective problem solvers, they must have access to expertise and technology. The access should not be an afterthought, but instead should be a key component of the community organization's operating budget. The organizations need funds with which

to hire experts who can help them evaluate environmental impact statements, HMDA data, housing rehabilitation and financing estimates, architectural design and zoning guidelines, utility company documents involving rate structures, and similar matters. They also need access to computers for desktop publishing of newsletters and other forms of communication; for research using such data as the census, HMDA, and crime incidence reports; and for compiling membership lists. They should be able to access online computer programs such as HandsNet and to use videos and cable television stations to enhance their community education and training efforts.

To promote community access to such expertise, the Federal Government might encourage community groups and local colleges and universities to form partnerships based on existing models, such as the Center for Community and Environmental Development at Pratt Institute in New York, the Policy Research and Action Group in Chicago, the Public Research Institute at San Francisco State University, and the Center for Neighborhood Development at Cleveland State University. At these centers, academic researchers work closely with community groups, not only to provide technical and scientific expertise but also to train community organizations to use these tools.[36]

Support community outreach. Community organizing groups are an effective means of educating community residents about the availability of services. Many government-funded and privately funded services never reach the low-income families to which they are targeted because of inadequate outreach or bureaucratic incompetence. Community organizing groups can be the most cost-effective vehicles for serving community residents by sponsoring a variety of outreach and counseling programs on such concerns as the Earned Income Tax Credit, mortgage and credit counseling, HUD's lead-based paint testing and outreach initiative, fair lending and fair housing testing, job counseling, immunization, and voter registration.[37]

Improve media coverage of community initiatives. The media play an important role in either enhancing or thwarting community-based problem solving.[38] For the most part, the Nation's mainstream media treat urban neighborhoods as magnets for social problems. In so doing, they distort reality; exaggerate urban ills; undermine the public's will to address these problems; and inadvertently sabotage efforts by government, community organizations, and the private sector to forge solutions. With some important exceptions, the media generally ignore or trivialize the community-building efforts of neighborhood groups and the policymaking efforts of government. Community groups can help improve the media's coverage of the urban condition and the community-based efforts to solve urban problems. As part of its community empowerment initiative, the Clinton administration should help community organizations educate the media about the realities of their neighborhoods and community-based problemsolving activities. Training programs for community organizations should include the topic of dealing with the local media.[39]

Equally important, the Federal Government should help community groups forge partnerships with local journalism schools. Together, they could sponsor workshops for journalists on urban issues and community-based problem solving and analyze the content of print and broadcast news coverage to help identify institutional blind spots. They could sponsor walking tours of neighborhoods for reporters and editors and point out problem-solving activities that could become topics for news stories. They could encourage the media to give community organizations a regular voice through editorial page columns and special pages, as the *Los Angeles Times* does now. They could sponsor awards for the best and worst reporting on neighborhood issues.[40]

Leverage Points

Community organizations need to have a regular and legitimate role in shaping public policy and enforcing laws and regulations. Organizers call such activities *handles;* that is, points of leverage or access to the policy process.

Promote laws and regulations that give communities a voice. Certain laws and regulations offer community organizations opportunities to voice their concerns and become part of the public process. CRA, the Superfund law, and community right-to-know laws have been helpful in giving communities a voice in the public policy process and catalyzing effective grassroots organizing. HUD's efforts to give tenants in public and assisted housing a voice in management have been helpful but have put too much emphasis on the goal of resident management or ownership rather than resident mobilization. A revised crime bill that would give community organizations a role in all community policing initiatives could do the same thing.

Support program monitoring. Community organizing groups are in the best position to monitor and evaluate the ways in which various programs are implemented and services provided, and their watchfulness can help Government agencies do a better job. Citizen monitoring of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME, Superfund, CRA, community policing, court sentencing, and other activities should be encouraged.[41]

Policy Recommendations: Specific Programs

Federal policy can encourage effective community empowerment. Below are suggestions in three areas of community empowerment: general community improvement, public and HUD-assisted housing, and community crime prevention.

General Community Improvement

There are many exciting community-based organizing activities in low-income areas that do not directly focus on the specific concerns of residents in public or HUD-assisted developments. Nevertheless, these organizations address a variety of concerns that are important to the residents of America's low-income communities. They are working on key issues, such as public health, environmental justice, affordable housing, community investment, jobs and economic improvement, education, and fair housing and discrimination.

Community organizations need direct operating support that will enable them to undertake basic community improvement efforts and allied programs. Two existing programs provide something of a model. Congress authorized the Neighborhood Development Demonstration Program (NDDP) in 1983 and appropriated funds in l985. Since then, NDDP has provided about $2 million a year in direct support to individual community-based organizations (a maximum of $50,000 a year). In turn, these funds helped community organizations raise additional private funds for neighborhood development activities. Through NDDP, more than 200 organizations have received grants for housing, economic development, and neighborhood improvement projects. The success of the demonstration program led Congress in 1993 to enact the John Heinz Neighborhood Development Program, a permanent version of NDDP (Community Information Center, 1993). In 1994 there were about 280 applications and about 40 awards. The Clinton administration supported higher funding levels for the Heinz program—$5 million for both FY1994 and FY1995—but it has not yet been funded for FY1996.

Since l985 EPA has sponsored the Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program as part of the Superfund environmental cleanup effort. Through TAG, community groups receive up to a maximum of $50,000 to assist them in evaluating Superfund sites. This highly complex scientific process means that community groups must have access to scientific expertise in order to understand the extent of environmental harm, the magnitude of the lead-based paint abatement process, and the local impact of Superfund cleanup activities. Using TAG funds, these groups hire experts to evaluate government and private studies that address these issues.

Elements of HUD's Heinz program and EPA's TAG program could be incorporated into a new community empowerment partnership program through which the Federal Government would provide support for community-based organizing efforts. Such a program would have two key components: (1) funding intermediary training centers and organizing technical assistance networks and (2) promoting development of training platforms.

HUD would fund intermediary training centers and organizing networks to provide technical assistance to community-based organizations. This approach would encourage shared skill building and coordination among community groups in various neighborhoods of a city and among community groups in various cities and regions. It would also promote the creation and dissemination of training materials, conferences, and other key components of successful training, leadership development, and organization building. Through a notice of funds availability (NOFA) process, HUD could identify training centers and networks with the capacity to undertake this process.

The Federal Government would provide direct funding to community-based organizations engaged in a wide variety of community improvement efforts, but only to those that contract with one of the national training centers/networks that HUD has identified as competent to provide technical assistance.[42] HUD and other Federal agencies should work closely with the training centers/networks to identify groups with the potential for successful organization building and leadership development. There are several ways to accomplish this goal. For example:

■ Expand the Heinz program by increasing its overall funding level and making community organizing an eligible activity.

■ Target funds for community organizing in all neighborhoods designated as Empowerment Zones.

■ Make community organizing an eligible (in fact, a priority) activity under the new Federal national service program.

■ Target funds for community organizing to neighborhoods designated as priority Superfund environmental cleanup sites.[43]

■ Target funds for community organizing to promote effective grassroots parent councils as part of the Chapter 1 education program.[44]

■ Target funds to community organizations to help implement the new and stronger fair lending and fair housing laws.[45]

■ Target funds for community organizing to groups working in cities that receive Federal funds for community policing as part of the Federal anticrime legislation (discussed below).

The range of issues and activities for which the Government would provide direct funding could be broad, including:

■ **Neighborhood housing, activities, and conditions,** such as code enforcement, abandonment, tenant rights, evictions, zoning, court monitoring (involving code enforcement/evictions), and arson.

■ **Fair housing and fair lending,** including undertaking "testing" for housing or lending discrimination; using HMDA data to monitor lenders' performance in meeting community credit needs; negotiating community reinvestment agreements with lenders; providing education and counseling to neighborhood residents on housing and mortgage programs, such as organizing bank fairs to inform consumers about bank products and sponsoring community education programs; and working with local lenders and government agencies to provide free check-cashing services for recipients of Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, and Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

■ **Public health education** on matters such as drug, tobacco, and alcohol prevention. Initiatives might include reducing the number of neighborhood billboards that promote cigarettes or alcohol; working with local schools to develop education programs on smoking, drug use, and alcohol; reducing the number of liquor stores in a neighborhood; and organizing to pass legislation and regulations to create smoke-free zones in public buildings, restaurants, and other areas.

■ **Public and private programs and public outreach efforts** that will increase the participation of people eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit; Chapter 1 education program; food stamps; Women, Infants, and Children program; job training; emergency food; and other programs.

■ **Environmental, transportation, and energy concerns,** such as reducing toxic emissions, fighting incinerator sitings, and eliminating toxic waste sites; working with local transportation agencies and private firms to sponsor ride-sharing programs, neighborhood recycling programs, and lead-based paint abatement; adopting special rate schedules for low-income and elderly consumers; conducting neighborhood beautification, anti-graffiti, and mural programs targeted at young people; and implementing community garden programs, and farmers' market programs in low-income neighborhoods.

■ **Education and youth programs,** such as recreation and arts programs, peer counseling, school-based management, "streetworker" programs, and parental involvement in school governance.

■ **Improved city services,** such as garbage pickup, snow removal, traffic safety, park maintenance, and street repairs, including joint ventures with (and outsourcing of city services to) community-based nonprofit organizations.

■ **Economic development,** such as linked development policies (by which developers are required to set aside space or funds for affordable housing), job retention, and public financing of privately sponsored projects such as sports complexes and neighborhood job agreements.

Public and HUD-Assisted Housing

The Clinton administration has made significant headway in improving regulations to encourage tenant organizing and resident councils in public housing. It has also improved regulations to encourage resident empowerment in HUD-assisted developments in the

at-risk expiring-use inventory. But there are a number of additional ways to ensure that resident groups are democratic and effective. HUD should fund technical assistance (TA), such as training in leadership and organization building, to resident organizations in both public housing and HUD-assisted developments. The assistance can be allocated through intermediaries: national, regional, and local training centers and networks that have a proven track record in working with grassroots groups to achieve community empowerment. Some have been identified earlier. Through a competition process, HUD can select a number of training centers and networks to undertake the TA effort. If possible, initial funding should be for at least 3 years—sufficient time to expand capacity, train leaders, and show results. These intermediary groups, in turn, would identify tenant groups to work with. Program requirements and goals should be clear in terms of achievable results: for example, a significant growth in the number of grassroots organizations with the capacity to address the social, economic, and physical conditions of their developments. Tenant management and/or ownership would be one of many possible outcomes but need not be the sine qua non of tenant empowerment.

By providing resources to the intermediaries as the locus of empowerment efforts in subsidized and public housing, HUD would be able to take advantage not only of their experience but also of the economies of scale that would allow them to develop new training materials specifically geared to public and subsidized housing: videos, training manuals, workshops, and the like. One of the goals of the program should be the sharing of ideas and skills among developments in the same city and among tenant organizations in various cities and parts of the country. Training workshops and conferences that bring tenant leaders together would be encouraged.

Tenants who wish to organize should have the clear right to do so without interference from local housing authorities or owners of HUD-assisted developments. A mechanism for recognizing the rights and responsibilities of tenant organizations as the legitimate voice of the residents should be implemented. One way to achieve this goal would be to provide residents in public housing and HUD-assisted developments (known as Section 8, 202, 221d, or 236 housing) with a vehicle similar to the National Labor Relations Act—in effect, a national tenant-landlord relations act.

To become a recognized tenant organization, the tenant group would have to win a majority vote of the residents in the development. An election would be held by secret ballot, and HUD or a third party, such as the American Arbitration Association or the League of Women Voters, would supervise the elections, playing a role similar to that of the National Labor Relations Board in labor-management disputes.

Once a tenant organization wins a supervised election, it becomes a recognized group in the eyes of the local housing authority or the owner of the development. Both the tenant organization and the authority/owner would have certain rights and responsibilities in the problemsolving process, in terms of management, budget, and tenant selection and eviction, including the steps leading to resident management and ownership. Some elements of this process are already in the new HUD regulations pertaining to resident councils and tenant management corporations. This process will lead to greater reciprocity and stronger partnerships. For example, experience shows that when tenant groups are responsible for developing standards for tenant selection and eviction, they are often more strict than the housing authority.

Tenant associations that win elections and become the official voice of residents in their development should receive funding from HUD on a per capita or per unit basis—in essence a dues checkoff. This funding would be used to hire staff and consultants, buy

equipment, rent office space, and operate the tenant association. In addition to providing a funding floor, HUD can provide matching funds that will encourage tenant associations to raise additional funds through grassroots fundraising.

Federal law should require that public housing residents be represented on all local public housing authority boards. Representatives should be selected by the tenants in some way. They could be chosen through a direct election of all public housing residents in a city or be selected by the mayor, city manager, or city council from a list of nominees submitted by officially recognized tenant associations.

Tenants in HUD-assisted housing should have a way to voice their concerns directly to HUD, which provides the subsidies to private owners, monitors the selection of management firms, and oversees a large inventory of scattered developments owned by a wide variety of landlords. Recognized tenant organizations in HUD-assisted developments should elect or appoint representatives to regional advisory boards that would meet regularly with the ranking official in the HUD local office. In this way HUD staff could stay informed about such matters as management, public safety, maintenance, and related concerns.

Community Crime Prevention

Many grassroots organizations have developed innovative ways to mobilize residents to address problems of neighborhood public safety, which include drugs, gangs, and related issues. The Federal Government can help strengthen and expand these efforts by encouraging and funding community anticrime efforts. Moreover, we have successful models on which to build.

The new community policing effort, a major element of the recent anticrime bill, is an important initiative to make neighborhoods safer and better places to live, work, and invest. Simply putting more police on the streets, however, is a limited approach. Evidence suggests that community policing as a crime-prevention strategy works best when the community itself is well organized and can become an effective partner with the local police department. Unfortunately, the anticrime bill has no provision for helping communities organize themselves to work with police. The Federal Government—DOJ, HUD, or both agencies jointly—should create a national community crime prevention program as an adjunct to its community policing effort. In every city where Federal funds are targeted to hire and train personnel to undertake community policing, funds should also be directed to community groups to organize neighborhood anticrime efforts in partnership with local police departments.

Similar to the LEAA Community Anti-Crime Program of the 1970s, these funds would be targeted directly to community organizations. Compared with that era, however, there are now more community groups with the capacity or potential to mobilize residents and increase their involvement in public safety issues. In addition, we know more about the ingredients of successful community anticrime efforts. HUD's drug elimination effort in public housing has some elements of these ingredients, although its focus is entirely on subsidized housing and its definition of eligible crime-prevention activities is relatively narrow.

Community organizations should be able to develop neighborhood-based programs and working relationships with all segments of the community: schools, businesses, churches, and local government, including the police. Some of these organizations will

be multi-issue groups devoted to a wide range of community improvement efforts. Others will focus primarily or exclusively on broadly defined public safety issues. Eligible activities should be comprehensive and might include:

■ Establishing neighborhood block clubs, crime watch, and security patrol initiatives.

■ Monitoring courts to guarantee that drug dealers and other criminals, especially repeat offenders, receive appropriate sentences and to evaluate judges in terms of the way they approach the sentencing of repeat drug offenders and other criminals.

■ Encouraging witnesses and victims to help law enforcement agencies identify and prosecute criminals.

■ Sponsoring intervention programs targeted at young people, including streetworker programs, "midnight basketball," teen councils, and peer counseling.

■ Working with law enforcement officials to create a restitution program for first-time offenders.

■ Organizing neighborhood take-back-the-streets campaigns and drug-free zones around schools.

■ Organizing anti-graffiti and neighborhood cleanup and beautification campaigns.

■ Working with city officials to improve street and park lighting, construct speed bumps, establish resident-only parking zones, and make other improvements that may reduce crime.

■ Setting up programs to identify arson-prone buildings.

■ Sponsoring take-back-the-night rallies and rape counseling centers.

■ Identifying drug houses and working with police and the city government to secure and rehabilitate these properties.

■ Working with private and public agencies to create or expand drug-prevention and counseling programs through schools, churches, and community centers.

■ Working with landlords to identify, evict, and prosecute tenants who deal in drugs.

■ Working with private and public agencies to create or expand drug treatment programs.

■ Working with law enforcement agencies to identify high-crime "hot spots," such as apartment buildings, street corners, parks, and bars, and targeting local government agency resources to these areas.

■ Working with local government agencies to improve code enforcement for substandard or abandoned buildings.

■ Working with nearby institutions (hospitals, universities, businesses) to improve lighting and security.

■ Working with local government and the police to identify and punish clients of prostitutes in order to rid the neighborhood of this activity.

■ Working with local, county, and State governments to direct more public resources toward these programs and to strengthen laws to increase public safety.

The Federal Government, through DOJ, HUD, or both agencies jointly, should fund a community crime prevention technical assistance program, channelled through national and regional organizing networks and training centers that have been successful in community crime prevention. DOJ recently funded a small program of this type, Communities in Action to Prevent Drug Abuse, through NTIC. Similar to the proposal for public and HUD-assisted housing developments, this program would provide training in organizational capacity building, leadership development, and community crime-prevention techniques. It would help local neighborhood groups from various cities and regions share experiences and skills, learn from one another and, in the process, provide the building blocks for a more coordinated national effort that would focus public attention and public and private resources on this important problem.

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Notes

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2. IAF has pioneered the involvement of parishes and congregations in community organizing. The success of Nehemiah Homes in New York City inspired other IAF-affiliated community organizations in Baltimore and greater Los Angeles to create their own housing programs modeled on the New York City program.

3. A sample of the activities and victories of community empowerment organizations includes: Influence city officials to shut down a crack house; persuade a housing authority to improve security or set up a day-care center; influence a bank to increase mortgage loans or add a neighborhood branch; push the city housing inspection department to strengthen code enforcement in slum buildings; pressure cigarette or alcohol companies to remove billboards that market their products to young people; persuade city government to increase neighborhood police patrols; pressure the school board to use school facilities for day care or for after-school youth programs (such as midnight basketball); prevent the siting of a facility emitting toxic substances in the community; work with government agencies to clean up a toxic site or abate lead-based paint from old apartment buildings; educate and inform neighborhood residents about the Earned Income Tax Credit and child immunization

programs; organize take-back-the-streets campaigns to make neighborhoods safer; work with police to identify drug dealers and monitor courts to make sure repeat offenders receive adequate sentences; work with local lenders to sponsor bank fairs and provide homeownership counseling; set up a program to identify and monitor arson-prone buildings and owners; help community-based development organizations encourage lenders and government agencies to target more housing and economic development funds to the neighborhoods; publish a neighborhood newsletter and produce a weekly neighborhood show on local cable television; organize residents of "expiring-use" Section 8 developments to form a tenant cooperative; stop unscrupulous realtors from blockbusting, unscrupulous private mortgage companies from "scamming" unknowing homeowners with usurious interest rates, and unscrupulous contractors from performing substandard home repairs; and organize residents to escort senior citizens to medical appointments and shopping.

4. There are no systematic studies of the wide range of activities of community organizing groups, including the various training centers and organizing networks. A few publications—including *Social Policy, City Limits, Neighborhood Works, Shelterforce,* and *Third Force*—regularly report their activities. Books that focus on various aspects of community organizing include: Betten and Austin, 1990; Fisher, 1984; Slayton, 1986; Rogers, 1990; Glen, 1988; Boyte et al., 1986; Horwitt, 1989; Reitzes and Reitzes, 1987; Delgado, 1986; Wigginton, 1991; Fisher, 1993; Greider, 1992; Davis, 1991; and Bullard, 1993. A description and analysis of tenant organizing is found in Dreier, 1984. Some recent evaluations for community organizing include: Delgado, 1994; O'Donnell et al., 1995; McCarthy and Castelli, 1994; and Delgado et al., 1995.

5. For discussion of these issues, see: Putnam, 1993 and spring 1995; and Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993.

6. After the Wagner Act passed during the Great Depression, local union leaders were able to inspire working men and women with the message, "President Roosevelt wants you to join the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]." Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and other New Deal leaders spent much time visiting mines, factories, farms, and other places where Americans were organizing to improve their living and working conditions. Even though most newspapers and newsreels were critical of unions, their very presence at these symbolic visits helped communicate the message that organizing was good for the country.

7. See, for example, Jencks and Mayer, 1990.

8. See, for example, Cox, 1982.

9. Gregory F. Pierce, *Activism that Makes Sense: Congregations and Community Organization,* Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1984; Robert McAfee Brown and Sydney Thomson Brown, eds., *A Cry for Justice: The Churches and Synagogues Speak,* New York: Paulist Press, 1989; and Samuel Freedman's *Upon this Rock* (1993), describe the activities of Rev. Johnny Youngblood in mobilizing his Brooklyn, New York, congregation and other congregations to form East Brooklyn Churches and engage in neighborhood improvement. See also Boyte, Rogers, and Greider.

10. An early statement of that which is now called the *resource mobilization* perspective is made by Lipsky, 1970. A more recent version is that of Gamson, 1990. Academic debate on the relative importance of indigenous and external resources in successful grassroots activism is found in Morris and Mueller, 1992; and in Milofsky, 1988.

11. For information about the origins and early history of IAF, see: Horwitt, 1989. For information about the Highlander Center, see Wigginton, 1991; Morris, 1984; and Horton, 1989.

12. For brief descriptions of these training centers, see Wolter, 1991 and 1993. For a description of the work of the Center for Community Change, see Williams, 1987.

13. See, for example: Bobo et al., 1991; Cohen and O'Connor, 1993; Kahn, 1991; Staples, 1984; and Pick, 1993.

14. See notes 4 and 10 for sources of information about these networks and training centers.

15. It is important to develop criteria for selecting organizations to use when providing their services to community-based organizations, but there has been little social scientific evaluation of the work of either the community development intermediary organizations or the community organizing training centers. The criteria for funding national and regional intermediaries through the HOME/Community Housing Partnership program was created with considerable recognition of their important role, but without extensive social scientific data.

16. These and other examples of organizing around housing and community development issues are discussed in greater detail in Dreier, 1997 (forthcoming); some of the same material is reported in Dreier and Atlas, l989.

17. For case studies of community organizing around redlining issues, see: Squires, 1992; and Dreier, November/December 1991.

18. Linked deposit policies require local and State governments to evaluate banks' performance and target government deposits only to lending institutions with good track records of meeting the credit needs of low-income and minority neighborhoods and consumers.

19. Public housing is an arena in which women make effective leaders. Female-headed families make up a large portion of public housing households. Women have taken on the key roles as caregivers and tenant organizers.

20. ACORN, the Center for Community Change, the Midwest Academy, and other networks and training centers have worked to build local tenant organizations in public housing, but they have lacked the resources to help more than a handful of groups.

21. Some of the new leaders in tenant management—such as Kimi Gray of Washington, D.C., and Bertha Gilkey of St. Louis—have forged links with tenant groups in public housing developments in other cities, but this is no substitute for the patient, day-to-day organization building and leadership training necessary for real success.

22. That is, residents of HUD-assisted developments, not tenants with Section 8 vouchers or certificates living elsewhere.

23. For example in 1987 in Boston, where as many as 9,200 units were potentially at risk, the city government expanded its rent control law to include these buildings, but only if landlords opted out of the Federal subsidy and chose to operate their buildings as market housing. The rent control law served as a major disincentive to owners since they would not be able to reap the windfall profits from huge rent

increases or condominium conversions. In Burlington, Vermont, when the owners of Northgate/Greenfield Apartments announced in early 1987 their intention to terminate the HUD subsidy on the 336-unit townhouse complex, the city government passed an ordinance to restrict the conversion of apartments to condominiums. The California legislature passed a law requiring owners to give tenants and local governments a 1-year warning if they intended to terminate their subsidy agreement. California also offered owners tax breaks if they continued to rent to low-income tenants and gave residents of federally subsidized developments the first right to purchase their complexes if the owner prepaid the mortgage. Pressured by the Maryland Low-Income Housing Coalition, Baltimore tenant groups, and other housing advocates, the Maryland legislature passed a law requiring owners to give tenants an early notice of their intentions, at least a 1-year lease following the notice, the first right to purchase, and relocation payments if they chose not to purchase. At least 10 other States enacted similar laws.

24. The studies sponsored by owners' groups minimized the problem and called for Congress to increase incentives—subsidies and tax breaks—to owners to encourage them to continue renting to the low-income tenants. Another study, conducted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Philip Clay for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation in 1987, claimed that millions of low-income renters might become homeless if the Federal Government did not find a way to preserve its affordable housing stock. Whatever their findings, each time a report was released it drew media attention to the problem and elevated the pressure on Congress.

25. The struggle over the expiring-use question was a clear test of the tenant movement's strength and effectiveness. The tenants' overall weakness, compared with the political clout of the owners' lobby, is evident in several aspects of the compromise legislation. Congress guaranteed that owners would receive a fair return on their investment, even going so far as to establish a fair return formula. As long as the owner receives this fair return, the property is restricted to low-income use, even if it is sold. The legislation also allowed owners to raise rents, with HUD's approval, to levels that could undermine the ability of some residents to remain in their homes. But it included an important escape hatch: If owners can prove that they are not receiving a fair return—and if HUD does not provide adequate subsidies to ensure the minimal level of profit—the owner can pay off the mortgage and convert the property to market-rate housing.

26. The Los Angeles CAHT is, in turn, a member of statewide and national organizations of HUD tenants.

27. Following the November 1994 elections, the Republican majority in Congress sought to cut HUD's budget significantly. One of the most vulnerable HUD programs has been the preservation of subsidized housing developments.

28. In 1992 the loose network of tenants in HUD-assisted developments, initially brought together through the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, formed the National Alliance of HUD Tenants. Thus far its membership is based primarily in a few cities, including Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York, but there are also member groups representing HUD buildings in other parts of the country.

29. BHP was formed in l983 by the city's business, government, and community leaders. The Boston office of LISC, along with Community Builders (a nonprofit technical assistance organization) helped catalyze the organization. Initially the BHP umbrella

incorporated eight CDCs, but the number has grown. In 1992 BHP expanded its mission and became the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP).

30. BHP/MBHP has played an important role in helping to expand Boston CDCs' capacity to undertake difficult rehabilitation and management tasks, including the repair and management of HUD properties. Beyond helping the CDCs with physical and financial tasks, however, MBHP has raised funds to improve the human relations aspects of subsidized housing. For example, it set up a Resident Resource Initiative program that channels funding for resident organizing and human services through neighborhood-based empowerment groups and human service agencies. In the past few years, tenants in Boston's HUD-owned or managed projects, and the same coalition of allies, have worked with HUD to fire incompetent management companies, repair substandard buildings, exterminate rodents, fix vacant units, and sell the buildings to tenant groups or CDCs. MBHP, with support from city government, local businesses, and local foundations, provided funds to help tenant groups hire organizations and consultants to help them address more immediate issues, such as drugs, crime, and code enforcement, as well as to develop a long-term plan that would include the possibility of resident management or resident ownership.

31. Because poverty is rooted in low wages and high unemployment, some community organizations (including ACORN) have also worked to organize unions among low-wage workers in the service sector, while others (such as the California IAF network's groups) have worked in coalition with unions to increase State minimum wage levels. Likewise, some unions in low-wage industries have adopted strategies of community organizing. Examples include the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union in Boston, which has focused on neighborhood housing and redlining issues. The Service Employees International Union's "Justice for Janitors" campaigns in Los Angeles and other cities and "Living Wage" coalitions in several cities are other examples.

32. While there are many sides to this question, experience suggests that community organizations are most effective when they are independent from local government so that the partnership is based on mutual respect and reciprocity, not dependency. This dynamic tension has been part of many Federal programs, from Model Cities to the Community Housing Partnership component of the HOME program. Of course, economic and political conditions in America's cities are much different now from those of the War on Poverty era. Although a growing number of local governments have learned to work closely with community organizations, funding for community self-help should not be channeled through their jurisdictions. Illustrations of local government support for community empowerment, some of the tensions it may create, and some recent changes in this relationship are discussed in Berry et al., 1993; Goetz, 1993; Mier, 1993; Dreier, fall 1993; Dreier and Ehrlich, 1991; Dreier and Keating, 1990; Lemann, 1991; Moynihan, 1969; Marris and Rein, 1973; Vanecko, 1969; and Peterson and Greenstone, 1977.

33. The reference here is specifically to intermediaries that provide technical assistance for community organizing. Some grassroots groups may also get involved in community development, in which case a different kind of technical assistance program (and different technical assistance providers) may be called for.

34. See, for example: Wilson, 1987; Lynn and McGeary, 1991; Jencks and Peterson, 1991.

35. The IAF network in southern California, for example, has affiliated groups in both the inner-city and inner-ring suburban areas of Los Angeles.

36. The U.S. Department of Education's Urban Community Service Program incorporates some elements of this approach.

37. The recent passage of the so-called "motor-voter" bill provides another illustration of the importance of linkages between local organizations and national networks. The idea for a motor-voter bill that would remove obstacles to voter registration had been around for more than a decade. Groups such as Human Service, the NAACP, and the League of Women Voters kept the issue alive through grassroots advocacy and national lobbying, but the legislation had little momentum in Congress until presidential candidate Bill Clinton embraced the idea during the 1992 campaign. His election helped catalyze the political forces and mobilize support for the bill's enactment in June 1993. The legislation has enormous potential as a tool for community organizing and community empowerment. It will likely increase overall voter registration and, in light of the relatively low registration levels among low-income people, it may be particularly important to expanding the political strength of the poor.

38. In his speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Association in New York City on May 6, 1992—a week after the Los Angeles riots—Secretary Cisneros discussed the media's responsibility to address urban problems.

39. A number of training centers and university-based institutions have successful track records in this area. Boston College sponsors the Media Research and Action Project, which trains community organization leaders to deal effectively with the media. See Ryan (1991).

40. The National Housing Institute (NHI), for example, works with local community housing groups to identify examples of first-rate housing reporting and issues Housing Journalism Awards to exemplary reporters and publications. These are described in *Shelterforce,* NHI's bimonthly publication.

41. Citizen monitoring can be an important tool in a community organizing strategy, but it is not, by itself, a substitute for community mobilization. For example a community group that monitors HMDA data should also be engaged in mobilizing residents around banking services; a group that monitors CDBG or HOME funds should also be engaged in organizing residents around community improvement so that these funds are used effectively. For a discussion of the successful Citizens Monitoring Project that focused on the CDBG program in the l970s, see Kotz (1981).

42. In a given year, HUD may not be able to fund all of the training centers and organizing networks competent to provide technical assistance to community organizations. But HUD's direct grants could be targeted to groups working with any HUD-approved network or center, regardless of whether it is receiving HUD funds at that time.

43. EPA is drafting recommendations for amending and strengthening the Superfund law. One key idea is to have more and earlier community participation in the Superfund process, including working with communities to propose uses for Superfund sites after clean-up. While there are more than 35,000 Superfund sites, including about 1,200 sites on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL), only 133 TAGs have been awarded by EPA since the program's inception. Expanding the TAG program,

perhaps by making it an entitlement for communities around NPL sites and by changing NPL criteria to put more inner-city areas on the list, would help carry out the Administration's environmental and community empowerment agendas.

44. The reauthorization of the Chapter 1 education program to help disadvantaged students calls for significant parent involvement in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of local school programs, including the creation of parent advisory councils. Many organizations of school parents, however, have links with the public school bureaucracy that inhibit widespread and active involvement of concerned parents. Federal support for grassroots organizing among school parents would help carry out the Administration's goals for the new Chapter 1 program.

45. As noted earlier, grassroots organizing has been the best vehicle for making CRA work for neighborhoods. The community reinvestment movement's bottom-up enforcement strategy has been successful in using CRA to attract private investment in distressed neighborhoods. Community groups have not only exposed the problem and negotiated community reinvestment agreements with banks but have undertaken homeownership counseling and community outreach efforts to ensure that the agreements benefit community residents. It is a fruitful area for government support of community empowerment.

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