

Chapter 4: Vollintine-Evergreen, Memphis

Michael Kirby
Rhodes College

This chapter examines diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen, a historic neighborhood located in the North-Midtown area of Memphis. This neighborhood is a success story and has remained racially diverse for more than 25 years. The chapter describes the racial diversity within the Vollintine-Evergreen community and discusses the reasons why it remains diverse. Explanations include the neighborhood organization's inclusive style, the quality of the housing, the role of neighborhood institutions (such as religious congregations and a college), and the impact of external groups (such as government agencies and foundations). Of these factors, the neighborhood organization has been especially central to the maintenance of diversity. One of the themes that emerges from a review of the organization and neighborhood institutions is that diversity is both a process and an outcome. To maintain its diversity, the community has relied on the participation of its diverse residents.

The Memphis research approach made two very important distinctions relating to the neighborhood and the nature of the neighborhood's efforts. First, it is important to differentiate between the area and the organization, because their histories are so closely intertwined. The Vollintine-Evergreen area was not recognized as an identifiable feature of Memphis social and political life until the founding of its neighborhood association in 1970. Although the research focused on diversity in a geographical area known as Vollintine-Evergreen, the role of the neighborhood organization—called the Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association (VECA)—is crucial to understanding the continuing existence of that diversity. The process of maintaining diversity by the neighborhood organization helped sustain diversity in the area.

Second, the study identified the approaches to diversity used by the neighborhood organization. Academic and policy research has identified the approaches used by neighborhoods to foster diversity. For example, John Yinger (1995) identifies four strategies including:

- Improving neighborhood quality.
- Providing information about the housing market.
- Preventing behaviors such as racial steering.
- Subsidizing housing for diverse families.

VECA uses the first three strategies, although its primary focus has been on maintaining and improving neighborhood quality.

The study of the Memphis site was jointly conducted by Rhodes College and VECA. Research sources included interviews with VECA activists; focus groups conducted with neighborhood residents; interviews with residents and others knowledgeable about the neighborhood; observations of neighborhood groups, committees, and institutions; newspaper clippings; and census data.

The first section provides insight about diversity in the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Next the analysis links the Vollintine-Evergreen area with the greater Memphis area. The analysis then describes the effects of White and African-American migrations on the demographic characteristics of Vollintine-Evergreen. The next section provides an indepth examination of VECA, followed by discussions on housing, human resources, and neighborhood institutions in the area. Some external forces are then reviewed, and conclusions complete the article.

The Extent of Diversity

Memphis is not especially supportive of diversity.¹ As with many Southern cities, post-Civil War Memphis had its share of ethnic diversity. The Irish migrated to Memphis during railroad construction. Upon arriving, they competed with African-Americans for low-skill and low-paying jobs in the city. The Germans were the group that supported culture in the community (Berkley, 1980; Robinson, 1967; Pohlmann and Kirby, 1996). Migrations in later years brought Jews and Italians to Memphis.

Southern Whites and African-Americans did not demographically dominate the population of Memphis until after poor sanitation led to a yellow fever epidemic in the 1870s. Many White ethnics then left Memphis for cities such as St. Louis and Cincinnati. The Whites who remained died in proportions estimated as high as 80 percent (Ellis, 1974). After the epidemic, other Whites migrated to Memphis from the surrounding countryside searching for economic opportunities. They brought to the city their views of a separated biracial society.² Memphis was essentially a rural Southern city where African-Americans and Whites lived in adjacent, segregated neighborhoods.

The long-term impact of the demographic change was the creation of a biracial political culture that produced a highly polarized political climate. Pohlmann and Kirby's study of Memphis mayoral races from 1967 to 1991 found that polarization rates were consistently above 90 percent and sometimes reached 99 percent.³ These rates meant that White Memphians voted for White candidates and African-American Memphians voted for African-American candidates. Whites controlled Memphis city government since they enjoyed a demographic majority. In 1991 Memphis elected its first African-American mayor, primarily because of demographic changes in the city as a whole.

A recent study of Memphis has found that in "1960 there were 21 census tracts with Black populations exceeding 80 percent. By 1990 the number of census tracts with more than 80 percent Black population had more than doubled to 44" (Kolbe and Lanier, 1995, p.11). Similarly, the *Memphis Poll* recently described expected moving patterns by African-Americans and Whites living in the city. Although both groups intended to move at the same rates, African-Americans were more apt to move within the city, whereas Whites were more likely to move outside the city (Kirby, 1996).

Local sources provided information that suggests a lack of diversity in the city of Memphis. Several indices prepared for a study of impediments to fair housing in Memphis

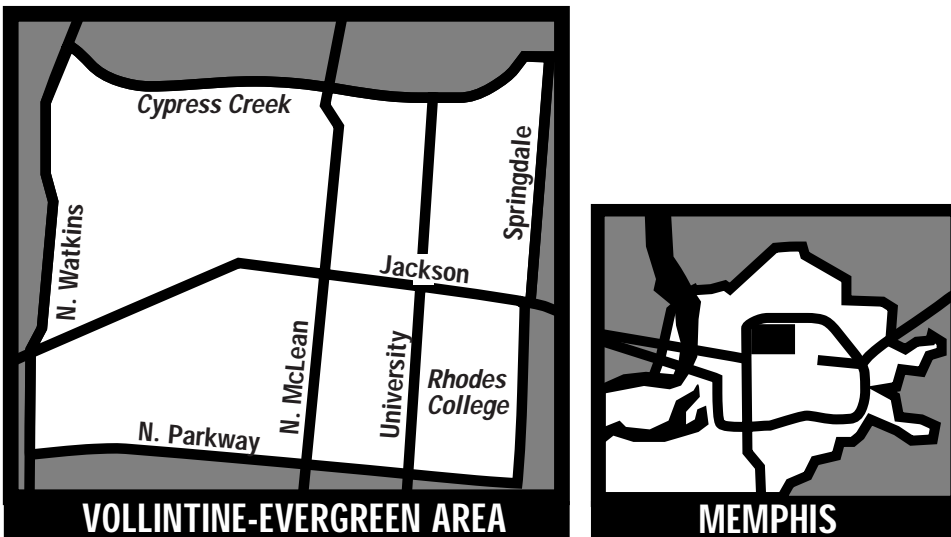
showed a high level of segregation, though it was below that of other U.S. cities. The isolation index, which describes the lack of interracial contact, was above the U.S. average (Kolbe and Lanier, 1995, p. 13). An article in the local newspaper assessed support for diversity in Memphis and appeared to confirm these quantitative findings through a series of interviews with influential Memphians (Lollar, 1996). In the face of these impediments, the sustenance of diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen has been impressive. These data also suggest the maintenance of diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen was not a historical accident but was accomplished despite powerful social trends.

Vollintine-Evergreen and Memphis

Exhibit 1 places Vollintine-Evergreen in the geographical context of Memphis and Shelby County. Vollintine-Evergreen is directly east of the downtown area, and it is the oldest existing diverse neighborhood in Memphis. Vollintine-Evergreen is variously considered to be in midtown, a predominantly White residential area with period housing, and North Memphis, which is predominantly an African-American and low-income community.

Exhibit 1

Map of the Vollintine-Evergreen Area



The Vollintine-Evergreen area has more than 11,000 residents and 4,200 households. The demographics show 59 percent homeownership, 54 percent African-American residents, 45 percent White residents, a 1990 median income of \$23,019, 92 percent employment, and 13 percent age 65 or older. These numbers suggest that Vollintine-Evergreen is a statistical average for the city as a whole, although the city's demographics are not distributed in a diverse manner (Foster, 1994).

Census blocks were used to determine more specific patterns of diversity within the larger neighborhood, using a 20- to 80-percent definition of a diverse area.⁴ Areas with

20 percent or less White population were primarily African-American. Areas with 80 percent or higher White population were considered primarily White. The other areas with 21 to 79 percent White population were considered diverse.

Exhibit 2

Population Percentage in VECA Census Blocks, 1980 and 1990

	1980	1990
African-American	20	35
Diverse	38	29
White	43	36
N=*	112	123

*The differences in numbers were due to changing boundaries, missing data, and visual problems with the 1980 maps.

Exhibit 2 shows the percentages of census blocks for the three categories of diversity in 1980 and 1990. More than one-third of the census blocks were diverse in 1980, whereas slightly less than one-third were diverse in 1990. The data also show that the proportion of primarily African-American census blocks increased from one-fifth to one-third between 1980 and 1990, and the percentage of primarily White census blocks decreased from 43 percent to 36 percent over the period. The data also show a decrease in the percentage of diverse census blocks in the last two census decades, an increase of African-American census blocks, and a decrease of White census blocks.

Both the data and observations show that there is great diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen. Many White and Black residents live next to each other at the block level along the spine of the neighborhood from west to east. Many other residents live in blocks that are homogeneous by race adjacent to largely diverse areas. In comparison with the city of Memphis, Vollintine-Evergreen is diverse in terms of race.⁵

Demographic Characteristics and Migration

This demographic composition of the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood was affected by two historical migrations. The White migration to Vollintine-Evergreen occurred during the development of subdivisions in the area between 1922 and 1944. Seventy-six percent of the housing was built by 1940, 59 percent was built by 1930, and 5 percent was built by 1920.⁶ The earliest housing was located in the neighborhood's southern subdivisions between North Parkway and Vollintine Street. In essence, Vollintine-Evergreen was one of the first suburbs of Memphis to develop along the streetcar line. This initial migration began the contemporary eastern growth pattern of Memphis along the northern corridor from the Greenlaw neighborhood north of the downtown area to the Vollintine-Evergreen area.

Peggy Boyce Jemison's study of Vollintine-Evergreen shows the migration was partially driven by ethnicity and religion. Although Memphis had relatively few foreign-born ethnics, Jemison (1990) claims that in 1970, 15 percent of the residents in Vollintine-Evergreen were foreign born. The populations migrated to specific religious institutions; for example, Italians moved close to Little Flower Catholic Church, English settled close to Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal, and Eastern Europeans resided near Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

The second migration initially brought African-Americans to the Vollintine-Evergreen community in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many of these residents were middle class and were attracted to the affordable housing and fine schools in the area. Later migrations brought an economic mix of African-Americans.

Several areas of Vollintine-Evergreen were primarily African-American from the beginning of the second migration. Edward Street was a new subdivision next to Cypress Creek on the northern border of the neighborhood. White homebuyers would not purchase houses on Edward Street because a historically low-income African-American area was located across the creek.

African-American migration also took place in formerly all-White areas. Because the neighborhood had many older residents who were moving to residential facilities or dying, there was a supply of available housing. In addition, many from the large Orthodox Jewish synagogue were moving to East Memphis, making more housing available throughout the 1970s.

The second migration culminated in the founding of the VECA in 1970. The objective of this community organization is to maintain the diverse character of the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood through local improvement activities. As with many neighborhood organizations, VECA came into existence during a time of crisis, although it soon developed into a problem-solving organization. VECA has experienced three distinctive periods.

The inception period of VECA (1969–1971) was the period of White flight from Vollintine-Evergreen and the founding of VECA as a formal organization. White flight was prompted by a fear of living next to African-American neighbors, potential lower real estate prices, aggressive blockbusting by real estate agents, and racial rumors that were sweeping the neighborhood. Hundreds of houses had for sale signs in their front yards, but few buyers appeared in this period of panic selling.

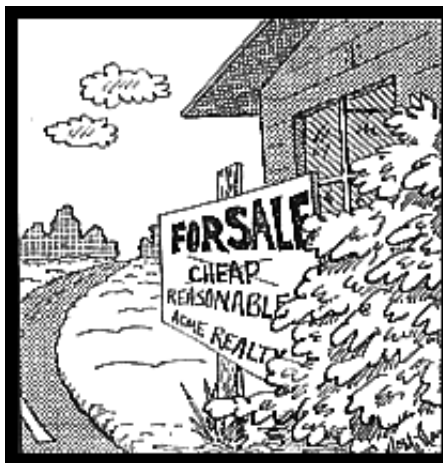
As a response, a group of church members and ministers formed VECA in 1970, stressing the diverse nature of the neighborhood. This early period involved communicating through a neighborhood newspaper and public meetings. The neighborhood also threatened legal action against blockbusting by real estate agents. By 1973 a real estate appraiser said that “observable evidence shows that the real estate market and resulting property values are substantially better; in fact, I would say that the market is extremely tight” (Hough, 1973). Real estate values stabilized, and many for sale signs disappeared. Exhibit 3 shows a cartoon from the neighborhood newspaper reflecting the quick turnaround in the real estate market.

The stabilization period from 1972 to 1990 involved efforts to make the neighborhood more livable. It was characterized by more White than African-American involvement. However, several African-American middle-class areas, such as Vollintine Hills and Edward Street, were active and remain organized communities today. VECA was very inclusive during this period. Many residents were not dues-paying members, but the organization provided services and access to all residents. Although primarily White during this period, VECA worked extensively in all areas and with all groups. It intervened when the school board twice tried to remove an African-American area from the school district. VECA also devoted considerable resources to blocking a recording studio’s attempt to change the zoning from residential to commercial in a predominantly African-American residential area. VECA worked successfully behind the scenes with the city government on these issues, as well as on efforts to improve city building code enforcement in the

Vollintine-Evergreen community. VECA's success during the stabilization period was reflected in both national and local media. In 1976, Vollintine-Evergreen was featured on NBC news as an example of a successfully integrated neighborhood ("VECA Exposure," 1976).

Exhibit 3

Cartoon Showing Neighborhood Turnaround



Source: McMillan, 1973

The most recent historical period, maintenance-development, began in 1991 and continues to the present. This period involves a genuine partnership between African-American and White residents. Both groups participated in a recent designation study. African-American involvement has especially increased through block clubs, efforts at improving housing conditions, and development of a community center.

In 1995 VECA received a major grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts under its Neighborhood Preservation Initiative (NPI) (Risher, 1995a, 1995b). The VECA grant proposal included plans to develop a housing corporation, improve neighborhood green spaces, address the needs of neighborhood youth, purchase a space for its headquarters, and develop block clubs (Foster, 1994). VECA was chosen for the grant because of its long history of voluntary activity and diversity. According to one observer, Pew was "really touched [by] the enthusiasm and commitment of the people in VECA" ("People Power Works," 1994).

Many factors have contributed to the maintenance of diversity in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. The factors include the neighborhood organization, the housing situation, human resources, neighborhood institutions, and external institutions. These factors are examined in the following section under the premise that VECA maintained diversity through neighborhood improvement activities.

The Neighborhood Organization

VECA has been crucial to maintaining diversity in the Vollintine-Evergreen community. It has brought together the disparate elements of the community to maintain and improve the neighborhood. According to a focus group member, “VECA is the glue that holds together the diversity in the neighborhood.” This section describes the nature of VECA’s efforts and some of the processes it employs to play such an important role in the life of the community.

Diversity as a Cultural Value

Support for diversity has come from the people participating in VECA. They have brought both a work ethic to improve the neighborhood and a set of values in support of diversity. This section highlights some of the prominent neighborhood activists.

An African-American focus group participant said, “The people who formed VECA had a vision of what it could be and I think they were inclusive to begin with and that was really important because if only Whites had organized, it would not have survived.” VECA was a biracial organization, and its early symbol of African-American hands holding White hands was a reflection of commitment.⁷

Exhibit 4

Poster Celebrating Diversity Within the Vollintine-Evergreen Area



Source: *The Evergreen News*, 1980

A group of committed leaders has served the neighborhood organization and provided support for this set of values. The values of the early founders affected some residents in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. For example, a politically prominent resident stressed the tolerance of the neighborhood: “The neighborhood does not aggressively fight racism or strive for diversity as much as this is the way we live. People in Vollintine-Evergreen do not fight for diversity as much as they live for it.” A focus group member reflected on the same theme: “There are absolutely better race relations found within

VECA. People come here with certain values, but also the community helps to hold [together] the values of the people living here.” Another focus group participant said that Vollintine-Evergreen comes together because “it has people with open minds. It makes me appreciate people more and makes me more tolerant.” A focus group member summed it up best: “My primary commitment was to live in an integrated area and that’s why we moved here.”

Residents of the Vollintine-Evergreen area supported diversity long before it became fashionable. Exhibit 4, a poster drawn by former Vollintine-Evergreen resident Brad McMillan during the late 1970s, illustrates this support for diversity (“*E-News Sells McMillan Poster*,” 1980). Perhaps attitudinal diversity was best expressed by one of the recorders of the focus groups: “Everyone in the focus groups thought the neighborhood was diverse but in different ways.”

VECA Volunteers

The key to the neighborhood’s self-improvement efforts is its volunteers. Some volunteers serve in high-profile positions of leadership such as on the VECA governing board and the development corporation board (Risher, 1995c). Others serve on committees that execute the specific activities. Many volunteers offer their time depending on the needs of the organization. Efforts vary by the type of activity and may include picking up litter, mowing the greenbelts, surveying houses for historic nomination, delivering the neighborhood newspaper, appearing at the meetings of public bodies, writing reports, and preparing maps (Obermark, 1993a, 1993b). Volunteers are the heart of the organization, and their activism is part of the success of Vollintine-Evergreen.

The development of the neighborhood’s railroad greenbelt shows how spontaneous networks of volunteers emerge to do the work of the organization. VECA had long hoped to purchase a rail passage running through the community. In 1980 it failed to convince the city to purchase for \$350,000 the land from Vollintine-Evergreen to downtown.

In 1995 the Greenways Committee once again developed an interest in purchasing and using the railroad greenbelt as a recreational area. In preparation for the neighborhood’s purchase, the Greenways Committee showed that it was possible to turn the greenbelt into a positive feature of the neighborhood. Adjacent neighbors and Rhodes College students planted trees and flowers and mowed the passage during the summer. They encouraged activities such as gardening, walking, bike riding, and Easter-egg hunts. The activities have increased the number of neighbors using the greenbelt and its beauty. These improvements have led to greater pride in the neighborhood and reduced crime, vagrancy, littering, and dumping along the greenbelt.⁸

The experience of the Greenways Committee provides several important lessons on volunteerism. The work of volunteers can be reflected in an analogy of concentric rings. A core of about 15 volunteers is at the center of the effort. An initial public meeting as a result of the Pew Trusts grant brought out interested residents who wanted to develop the railroad greenbelt. They worked for 1 year at developing a concept to purchase the abandoned route. They convinced the VECA Executive Committee to approve the purchase, publicized their efforts through meetings, provided written material, maintained personal contact with residents, and encouraged widespread neighborhood use of the greenbelt. These volunteers lived within one block of the railroad—most lived directly adjacent to the route.

The second ring included the occasional volunteers who took part in the greenbelt tours, helped during the massive cleanup of the greenbelt, donated plants, and helped maintain the greenbelt through activities such as mowing. There may have been as many as 100 volunteers involved in these activities.

The third ring was made up of the vast, though silent, neighborhood supporters of the greenbelt. They included those who used the greenbelt to walk their dogs or for recreational activities. Some neighbors enjoyed driving to work along the greenbelt to view its beautiful, rustic flower beds. Others were pleased that there had been a cleanup and that sections were no longer overgrown with tall weeds. Neighbors were pleased that the cleanup reduced negative uses of the greenbelt.⁹ The railroad greenbelt effort is helping maintain the diversity of the area by attracting both longtime adjacent neighbors and younger residents who recently moved into the area. In fact, this involvement has resulted in the neighborhood's attitudinal ownership and pride in the greenbelt.

Counting VECA Members and Activists

VECA serves as a forum for diverse groups to come together in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. This section documents the involvement of African-American and White residents in VECA. VECA selected White and African-American residents as the organization's officers. The VECA board includes 13 White and 6 African-American residents. The community development corporation board includes 14 White and 5 African-American residents. The president and secretary of the development corporation are African-American, while the vice president and treasurer are White (Risher, 1995c).

The full-time VECA staff is diverse, with two White and two African-American members. Two staff members live in the neighborhood, and another lives in the next neighborhood. The racial composition of other committees is as follows: the Cypress School Committee has 9 White and 21 African-American members; the Greenways Committee has 16 White members and 1 African-American member. There are now 79 block clubs, 60 percent of which are African-American. Neighborhood meetings generally have about two-thirds White and one-third African-American participants. However, the number of residents and the demographic composition of the meetings vary by topic. The most recent annual meeting included about two-thirds African-American residents.

Recent figures on activists and members suggest that about 60 percent of the involvement in VECA has been from White residents, and about 40 percent has been from African-American residents. These data reflect diverse activism. Observations show that African-Americans contribute both in their comments and through their influence on the board. The chair of the community development corporation, an African-American, is especially influential, as he questions policies and moves the group toward making decisions. There are demographic explanations for the slightly lower level of African-American involvement. VECA has many working-class African-American residents who typically do not participate in organizations. Their work schedules include several jobs, and they have a childcare need to meet. The result is very little discretionary time available for community activities.¹⁰ This analysis suggests that creating and sustaining diversity takes effort on the part of the organization. VECA did not extensively "connect" with such a range of residents until the 1990s.¹¹ For example, VECA's communications were not as effective in working-class African-American areas, and VECA was not able to find carriers to deliver the neighborhood newspaper in all those areas.

The focus groups also suggested that White residents were more concerned about maintaining diversity and, therefore, more apt to be mobilized by the neighborhood organization than were African-American residents. Most African-Americans in the focus groups

supported diversity but viewed neighborhood involvement as localized block improvement. Jemison's history of Vollintine-Evergreen contains an interesting quotation from an African-American: "People on our street ... weren't particularly interested in being involved with VECA because they felt that our neighborhood, for the most part, was an African-American neighborhood.... The whole idea of integrating the neighborhood didn't affect us one way or the other." (Jemison, 1990.) Yet an African-American focus group participant supported the effort: "There may be White families who need housing; VECA should be seeking White families for the houses it is developing." Another long-term African-American activist said, "VECA must go about sustaining diversity in a planned way."

Organizational Activity

The organization lives by the slogan *success begets success*. VECA is known in the city as a neighborhood group that successfully completes its tasks. The motivation to complete these tasks comes from complaints or requests from neighborhood residents. The ability of the neighborhood to address a task is primarily a function of finding enough volunteers to work on a project, whether they are committee members or part of the VECA board.

Although the organization is sensitive to the needs of both African-American and White residents, there is not a specific neighborhood campaign to attract or retain a particular population group. Rather, there is a consensus that VECA needs to continue developing policies to improve the neighborhood as a whole. For example, one African-American focus group suggested the following improvements: a new neighbor welcoming committee, improvements in products available at commercial centers, recruiting new neighbors, feature articles in the neighborhood newspaper about plantings and flowers, and information on property values.

The leadership of the organization focuses on "deracialized" strategies that appeal to both White and African-American residents—or at least it identifies strategies that draw the interest of both groups. In fact, the literature about deracialized political campaigns in U.S. cities provides a theoretical basis for the analysis of the organization. It selects issues that are of interest to both African-American and White residents, VECA members are willing and able to communicate across racial lines, and VECA has been successful in providing very symbolic victories to both White and African-American residents (Perry, 1991).

The Newspaper and Neighborhood Identification

In some ways the *Vollintine-Evergreen News* is the single most important institution in Vollintine-Evergreen (Formerly called the *Evergreen News* and the *ENews*, it is now called the *VE News*). The *VE News* is widely read by residents of the neighborhood. It describes the activities and successes of the organization; announces meeting dates; publishes articles about neighborhood residents, businesses, and institutions; and carries advertising from neighborhood-oriented businesses. It also features news that celebrates the success of the organization and the diversity of the area.

The delivery system is ingenious because it creates identification with the neighborhood organization. Extensive numbers of volunteers deliver the newspaper. A focus group member said, "We couldn't make the VECA meetings, but we still have always had the *VE News* delivered ever since we've been here. It has been a very important part of our lives, and we read the newspaper every time and we really believe in VECA and if it weren't here, I don't know what would have kept us here." Another focus group participant said, "The Evergreen press is a stabilizing factor, and I look forward to getting my

copy. It's nice to see a list of involved people." Still another focus group participant said, "The way the *VE News* is delivered is very personal." A volunteer deliverer said, "I always get a warm reception when delivering the *Evergreen News*."

An article by an observer reflects on the quality of the paper in its early years ("Memphis Neighborhood Stabilizing," 1971):

To an outsider it is the *Evergreen News* which is the most visible of VECA activities. It provides not only a model for other community newspapers but also enjoyable reading. The March issue, for instance, focused on Memphis schools and quoted findings from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the *Coleman Report* on the educational benefits of integrated education.

The *VE News* creates a neighborhood identification with VECA. The first editor of the newspaper said that the approach of the newspaper was to "give to the community today a sense of the neighborhood. The purpose of the newspaper was to let the people of the community know that our neighborhood was a good place to live. I think we did that (Kedigh, 1983).

The impact of the *VE News* on neighborhood identification can be seen through a 1989 neighborhood survey. The survey interviewed residents in the southwest section of the neighborhood. This area was racially and economically diverse and had minimal contact with VECA as an organization. However, the newspaper was regularly delivered to the area. The survey findings showed that 70 percent of the residents were familiar with VECA. In addition, the interviewers received a warm reception from both White and African-American residents, as well as from both working class and middle-income residents (Kirby, 1989).

Housing

This section examines Vollintine-Evergreen as a traditional neighborhood, specific housing policies undertaken by the neighborhood organization, and commercial areas that support residential areas.

The Traditional Neighborhood

Renditions of traditional neighborhoods such as Vollintine-Evergreen are increasingly appearing in both the popular and the academic press. David Goldfield and Blaine Brownell (1990) describe the historic planned garden city, which includes "the essential features of urban life, such as business, industry, and education, as well as some of the attributes of the countryside, such as public parks and private gardens." The popular press is now referring to neotraditional housing based on neighborhoods such as Vollintine-Evergreen. *Consumer Reports* (1996) said, "In many cities, 1920's-style homes in traditional neighborhoods have become increasingly desirable." The reporter referred to houses on small lots, street grids, shopping with stores along the sidewalk, tree-lined streets, front porches, and housing types that vary in size and price. The *Wall Street Journal* ("What Is the New Urbanism," 1995) described the "new urbanism" based on the Ahwhanee Principles, which focus on creating more liveable cities. It stressed communities that integrate housing, shops, parks, and schools; housing within walking distance of public transit; residents of diverse ages and economic backgrounds; and open spaces with pedestrian access.

Vollintine-Evergreen is not neotraditional. It is a neighborhood that was built in the 1920s and features linear streets, mixed housing, open spaces, sidewalks that promote walking,

and housing that emphasizes neighboring and adjacent commercial areas. VECA uses these features to attract and maintain diversity in the neighborhood. The Vollintine-Evergreen area is distinctive as a residential environment. The neighborhood has primarily single-family homes, but some duplexes are scattered throughout, and there are a few apartment complexes on major thoroughfares. The single-family and duplex housing ranges from bungalows to Tudors. The neighborhood's application to the National Register of Historic places states that Vollintine-Evergreen "contains the largest cohesive collection of eclectic-style houses in Memphis." The area has "bungalows, colonial and Dutch colonial revival styles, Tudor English cottages and houses, foursquares, Cape Cod houses and minimal traditional types"(Johnson, 1996). However, the bungalows¹² dominate in the neighborhood:

Bungalows were particularly popular with the working class folks in Memphis ... from 1890 to around 1940. Some were clapboarded while others were stuccoed or shingled. They were usually built on fairly narrow lots, but the rather modest structures made up in depth what they lacked in height. They were planned for both outdoor and indoor living, with high ceilings and tall windows for good air circulation in the hot summers before air conditioning. On the exterior, open verandas were supported at each end by two tapering columns or piers, with a low balustrade enclosing the side and front. Verandas were often screened (Baker, 1991).

Repeated focus group comments suggested that this impressive architecture attracted new residents to the neighborhood. One participant said, "There are styles that are very different. They accommodate people with different tastes." Besides their architectural significance, the houses are very affordable given the quality of the Vollintine-Evergreen area. For example, a VECA activist said, "There are other neighborhoods with very attractive housing, but they weren't and aren't as affordable as [Vollintine-Evergreen]." In addition, residents who may have wanted to move because of neighborhood problems, crime, or the need for a larger house have decided to stay because of their current home. A focus group participant said, "We had our house up for sale. We just couldn't find a house where the house was solid, the door was solid, the walls were solid. Eventually we decided to stay here."

VECA recently obtained recognition on the National Register for Historic Places for its housing. VECA felt that this effort would give the area an additional marketing tool for its real estate. It also wanted residents of Vollintine-Evergreen to realize the value of the historic housing (Risher, 1996a). Rather than hiring a consultant, volunteers in each VECA area were trained to use a survey form that described the architecture of each house. More than 100 enthusiastic African-American and White residents were recruited to survey their blocks. Vollintine-Evergreen neighbors became more knowledgeable of the architectural heritage of their homes. The neighborhood designed historic markers, developed an annual home tour, and encouraged rehabilitation of the houses in an architecturally sensitive manner (Risher, 1996b).

Housing Policies

Maintaining the quality of the housing is important to neighborhood residents. A survey conducted by VECA volunteers in 1989 found housing problems to be the second highest neighborhood concerns from residents who lived in an area in the southwest section of the neighborhood (Kirby, 1989). Unsystematic observations from VECA activists suggest that some former residents moved because adjacent neighbors did not maintain their houses.

There were many reasons for maintenance problems. Some absentee owners did not appreciate the substantial nature of the houses and allowed them to deteriorate. Some houses in estates had not been maintained by elderly residents toward the end of their lives; these houses sometimes remained vacant and increasingly deteriorated. Federal Housing Administration (FHA) foreclosures have been a problem, although the FHA's discount in purchase price means the neighborhood can acquire these houses before they deteriorate further.¹³

The approach of the neighborhood was to preserve its housing by working with the city on code enforcement. This process involved a housing committee that met regularly, identified problem houses, and made formal complaints to the mayor's Citizen Service Center. The center then sent the complaint to the housing code enforcement officials or other agencies with legal responsibility for the problem.

It became apparent in early 1977 that code enforcement would be of only limited value. Eventually, VECA created a community development corporation in 1994 that purchased derelict houses in the neighborhood. According to the executive director of the corporation, "Our number one objective is to promote owner-occupied housing in the VECA community. Close behind that ... would be to restore buildings nobody else is able or willing to do (Risher, 1995e).¹⁴

Housing problems in the Vollintine-Evergreen area are often isolated. For example, a single house in a residential area may be a problem. Typically, the problems tend to be privately owned duplexes that are allowed to deteriorate. The Watkins Street duplexes at the northwestern section of the neighborhood provide an illustration of a creative process to deal with derelict houses. These duplexes were severely deteriorating and mostly abandoned. VECA's development corporation was able to purchase these 10 buildings and use a variety of funding mechanisms to convert them to single-family housing in a subdivision setting called Watkins Village (Risher, 1995f). The owner provided a partial loan for the purchase of the buildings, but a construction loan was provided by Boatmen's Bank. The city of Memphis provided downpayment assistance, and the State of Tennessee provided funds for below-market interest rates on the loans for the new owners.

Commercial Areas That Support Residential Areas

Vollintine-Evergreen's commercial areas, reflecting its traditional nature, are within walking distance of its residential areas. VECA has used zoning to maintain these commercial areas that complement the residential areas. The Vollintine-Evergreen area has five commercial areas, all of which are clustered at the intersections of major streets. They contain a variety of services, including gas stations, hair salons, and restaurants. The focus groups suggested that residents are attracted to the image of a commercial area that is within walking distance of their homes, but does not intrude into the residential neighborhood.

Even the owners of the businesses themselves reflect diversity. Italians owned a prominent grocery store for many years, Asians now own several grocery stores, and the area has Memphis's only kosher bakery. There are several popular neighborhood working-class restaurants. Dino's Grill, a third-generation Italian restaurant, serves a primarily White clientele, and Melonie's Restaurant serves a primarily African-American clientele. Alex's is a popular Greek bar in the neighborhood. Several new businesses that have moved into the neighborhood are increasingly responding to its diversity. They include hair salons and a Palestinian-owned mini-mart that attracts residents from the surrounding residential area.

Although the businesses are conveniently dispersed throughout the neighborhood, they are also a source of disappointment for it. Commercial buildings are not as well maintained as the housing, and some have absentee building and business owners who do not understand the market potential of the area (Faber and Miller, 1994). Largely, VECA has ignored the problems with its commercial areas and has addressed these problems only indirectly. It has little contact with the building owners and has not been able to create a business association, nor has it worked on facade restoration. And it has left marketing and maintenance problems to the private sector. However, VECA is now completing a study that will indicate the direction it should take in its commercial revitalization activities.

VECA has worked to maintain the zoning controls in the commercial areas.¹⁵ This has meant vigorous involvement when special-use permits or rezonings might expand the commercial areas beyond their current boundaries.

Human Resources

The Vollintine-Evergreen area has many human resources that provide assistance to the neighborhood, which also has several sources for human resources and volunteers.

Vollintine-Evergreen is a somewhat homogeneous community in terms of income. Both White and African-American residents live in areas where the neighborhood median income is slightly higher than the 1990 city median income. The estimated 1990 Vollintine-Evergreen median income was \$23,119, while the city median was \$22,674. Exhibit 5 displays the range of incomes in the Vollintine-Evergreen area. The two lowest income areas contain apartment complexes. Area 7.3 includes Saints Courts, a low-income apartment complex for African-American residents that is effectively maintained by a church, whereas 7.6 is the University Cabana Apartments, which are well maintained for college, graduate, and medical students.

Exhibit 5

Vollintine-Evergreen Median Income, by Census Block Groupings



The income figures show that there is a substantial Black and White middle class that is responsive to the need for neighborhood activity. For example, Jemison's history of the neighborhood said that, in the early years of VECA, "African-Americans moving in were mostly well-educated and professionally employed. They were interested in the same type of neighborhood as the White families." Jemison quoted a prominent African-American resident: "I liked the greenery, the trees and the neighborliness of the area...." His wife said, "The things that sold us were the schools ... and the churches" (Jemison, 1990).

VECA is fortunate to have very talented people who have volunteered to work for the organization. For example, the following professionals serve on the community development board: an architect, a developer of low-income housing, a shopping mall developer, the personnel director for the county, a funder of programs for development corporations, a medical school professor, a professor of urban studies, and the owner of a construction company.

Homeownership, which reflects people particularly vested in the community, also provides a group of volunteers for the organization and means that pervasive social problems are not found in the neighborhood (Alford and Scoble, 1968; Cox, 1982; Goetz and Sidney, 1994; Thomas, 1986). Homeownership is high for both White and African-American residents and has a neighborhood distribution similar to income. VECA's homeownership rate is 59 percent, compared with 55 percent for the city as a whole.

Networking

Vollintine-Evergreen supports a network of social relations.¹⁶ Those social networks appear to function at the block level rather than at any neighborhoodwide level.¹⁷ Networking involves regular interactions among neighbors. This networking takes place in both the African-American and White communities. It is widespread, but does not involve every street. The focus groups suggest that networking decreases with residential instability.

Block clubs are important throughout the neighborhood. Sometimes they come together as neighborhood watch organizations in response to crime. Frequently they are ways in which residents get together on a purely social basis. Block parties reflect the diversity of the neighborhood:

It's a warm Sunday afternoon in May and a throng of people are gathered in the shadows of mighty oaks. The conversation is animated, the conversationalists noteworthy.... It's the second annual Kensington block party and the gang's all there. Where else would one find a kayaker, environmentalist, mathematician, social workers, office supply company owner, newspaper people, radio talk show host, dedicated English gardener, librarian, ministers, cotton baron, the neighborhood's most important grandmothers... (Borys, 1988).

Vollintine-Evergreen residents described this networking in the focus group sessions. One resident said that it is a "nice feature of the neighborhood of how people are out and about all the time." Another said, "People will call and say a light is on in your car and I didn't see you today, are you all right?" Still another focus group member said "I know just walking from my house to Dino's [Grill] four or five people will honk. People just know each other." Another focus group participant said: "You notice that people do talk, just being outside. My house is being painted and everyone has stopped to talk. When I was raking leaves, a neighbor stopped to chat. This is one of the main ways I've met people on my street." An African-American activist said that she did not "find the closeness anywhere else that she lived."

Eliza Elder's (1988) study of social attitudes on a diverse Vollintine-Evergreen block experiencing problems related to change found that 65 percent enjoyed socializing with each other, whereas only 25 percent did not. Elder notes, "It is a strength of the neighborhood that most neighbors interact with each other."

Networking and Real Estate

It has already been suggested that VECA arose in response to blockbusting by the real estate industry. Initially, VECA's response was to organize internally to allay the fears of White residents. It confronted individual real estate agents whose solicitations were inappropriate. This approach took the form of letters outlining the legal obligations of the agents, along with copies of appropriate laws. Occasionally, meetings also took place with agents. However, all of this took place behind the scenes. Publicizing the action might have created panic.

The discriminatory nature of the real estate market was not corrected by these actions. For example, a city of Memphis report reviewed the research on the local real estate industry. It studied real estate advertising, which showed that "integrated areas had fewer company ads, fewer open houses mentioned, fewer school notations, fewer favorable descriptions and fewer directions provided. In short, these major real estate companies had drastically reduced their advertising efforts and thus their servicing efforts, in substantially integrated areas" (Housing Opportunities Corporation, 1993).

Perceptions of these activities were related in the focus groups. For example, a participant said, "A young couple bought a house on my street and their agent ... very actively tried to get them not to buy a house on my street. I mean, they had to battle this woman to buy the house they wanted." Another participant said, "Getting agents to show us a house in midtown was difficult." Another participant said, "I drove around and found my house myself."

Vollintine-Evergreen managed to withstand the effects of this real estate marketing since it was a very stable neighborhood, had relatively few sales, and used the efforts of its residents in marketing. Informal networking was important in the sale of neighborhood housing. For instance, the focus groups said that Vollintine-Evergreen residents recruited buyers through friends and work associates. Additionally, residents "dressed up" their street when there was a for sale sign, talked to the agent, and tried to get it sold as quickly as possible. Occasionally, houses were sold informally without an agency listing. More recently, the NPI initiative has increased property values, and as a result, the private market has been more active. Many real estate companies now actively sell property in the neighborhood.

Neighborhood Institutions

Neighborhood institutions can serve to maintain and add to diversity in a community. They include religious congregations, schools, social services agencies, government, and industry. These institutions can provide leaders and resources, but they can also create problems for the community. The institutions in Vollintine-Evergreen have been supportive of diversity and have worked to maintain the quality of the area.

The Religious Community

The religious community played an important role in the creation of VECA. Clergy members and parishioners from Little Flower Catholic Church were among the early activists in VECA. As VECA developed, the religious congregations played a smaller

role, because they experienced problems of their own with White flight. Some worked hard to survive and had little time for VECA, whereas others changed their focus to one of service and support for diversity.¹⁸ For example, Little Flower Church and Lindsay Memorial Presbyterian Church both provided office space for VECA before it had its own offices (Hirschmann, 1990). Baron Hirsch Synagogue, Evergreen Presbyterian, Gethsemane Garden Church of God in Christ, Peace Lutheran, and St. John's Orthodox have all provided meeting space for VECA.

The religious congregations supporting diversity are also diverse. Evergreen Presbyterian, Little Flower Church, Peace Lutheran, and St. John's Orthodox are excellent examples. For example, a visit to Sunday Mass at Little Flower Catholic Church showed that the congregation comprised 67 White, 26 African-American, and 4 Asian worshippers. There were five White and five African-American choir members. There were two White altar servers and one African-American altar server. There was mixed seating throughout the church. Although Little Flower has closed its school, one focus group participant said, "When my child went to Little Flower, sometimes the White kids would play with African-Americans and some days they wouldn't [reflecting a normal pattern]. The enrollment was fifty-fifty, even though it was parochial."

Evergreen Presbyterian has a predominantly White congregation. It has, however, a recreation and afterschool program that draws from the diversity of the neighborhood. About one-third of the children are African-American, and the remaining children are White. An African-American public official who resided in the neighborhood said that the "churches, schools, and sports programs are all great opportunities [to] bring the races together. Children have a lot of opportunities at Evergreen Presbyterian."

Public Schools

The public schools play an important role in the life of the neighborhood. The schools include Snowden (Kindergarten–grade 9), Vollintine (Kindergarten–grade 3), and Cypress (grades 7–9). VECA has been involved in the school system since the desegregation of the public schools. It entered a Federal court suit in 1972 as a "friend of the court," and as a result Snowden and Vollintine schools were paired as neighborhood schools. Both schools escaped the widespread court-ordered busing in Memphis because they were already integrated.¹⁹

Snowden has played a major role in the neighborhood's diversity, since the school remains about one-third White. Many White and African-American parents have remained in Vollintine-Evergreen because of the excellent academic program at Snowden, which is an optional (magnet) school with a college preparatory program. Snowden is especially sensitive to supporting its diversity. For example, two VECA activists founded the Snowden Takes a Right Stand (STARS) program. The program was created because of concerns about differential treatment across racial lines. STARS used "encounter groups" to encourage teachers, parents, administrators, and students to discuss racial interaction. Eventually, the STARS program became a committee of the Snowden Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The success of this was recently illustrated by a poem that appeared in the PTA newsletter (Brown, 1996):

We are all one race.
We share this earth together.
We all have one face.

Snowden's afterschool program also reflects these values. Our observer saw children of different races playing together and sitting at tables together in friendly communication. The director of the program felt that these relationships were produced by the neighborhood surrounding Snowden. She said that the children had been brought up together and had attended school together since kindergarten. Because the neighborhood is diverse, the ethnic diversity within the school is not alien to the children. Instead, they see it as natural.

Rhodes College

Rhodes College is an important institution in the neighborhood and is the architectural gem of Memphis. In her book *Colleges That Change Lives*, Loren Pope (1996) refers to "its elegant, Oxford-like campus of lovely grounds and collegiate gothic buildings with leaded glass." She says that the campus has "an architectural unity that is probably unique, but every stone of its many buildings comes from the same quarry." Many college buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places. The college's admissions policies are considered selective, and it primarily recruits students from the South. Although Rhodes is a mostly White institution, its students, faculty, and staff bring a demographic and intellectual diversity to the neighborhood.²⁰

The college has historically played an important role in Vollintine-Evergreen (Kirby and Thomas, 1976). Four college employees have served as presidents of VECA; three professors have served as editors of the neighborhood newspaper; the college has provided space for meetings and has printed the neighborhood newspaper, and it served as a fiscal agent for several grants. The college has donated furniture and a computer to VECA. More than 40 college employees and approximately 120 alumni live in the neighborhood.

Students have also volunteered their time in the neighborhood. Students working with Habitat for Humanity helped paint elderly residents' houses. Students involved in a community service project called Spring Fling cleaned trash from Lick Creek. Students from the college's special residence program²¹ and members of the VECA Club worked for 3 years to clean up the railroad greenbelt (Risher, 1995h). The latter activity not only improved the neighborhood, but the college received a wealth of good publicity from the newspaper and from local television news. These students are called upon by the college to speak to trustees and other college friends about the neighborhood. Rhodes students are also involved in Snowden School to provide "tutoring, violence prevention information, and peer mediation and multi-cultural enrichment" ("Snowden Benefits From Grants," 1994).

Overall, the Vollintine-Evergreen area has some excellent institutions that have played an important role in the neighborhood. However, even in this neighborhood, involvement varies by institution and time. The Rhodes example suggests that the neighborhood must cultivate relations with these institutions and make clear how the institutions can help support diversity.

External Forces

External forces have an effect on neighborhoods, although our analysis shows that it is not always positive. There is little in the historical record to show that most external entities, except charitable foundations, played anything but a minor role in encouraging diversity in Vollintine-Evergreen. However, more recently, city and State governments, the media, and charitable foundations have been more supportive of VECA.

The City Government

The city's record is mixed in its support of diversity and development of policies to maintain and improve the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. This study contrasts policies during two historical periods: the governance of conservative White mayors from 1976 to 1991 and governance during an African-American administration from 1992 to the present.

Wyeth Chandler was mayor from 1972 to 1982 and was succeeded by Richard Hackett, who governed from 1982 until 1991. Both mayors were White conservatives who saw a minimal role for government, except in the delivery of essential public services such as police, fire, and garbage collection. These mayors were not interested in neighborhoods and saw neighborhood organization as a threat to their political power. Supporting diversity was not going to take place in these two administrations, whose political support derived primarily from the conservative White community. Because of this, during the years of VECA's existence, the visible influence of local government was not apparent in the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Major W.W. Herenton came to office in 1992 with an urban agenda to include more support for neighborhoods and housing. Local government is now far more responsive to the needs of Vollintine-Evergreen than were earlier administrations.

There are many examples of this responsiveness. The City Beautiful Commission is brokering some private-sector initiatives to beautify the Jackson Avenue median strip. The Public Works Division of the city recently performed extensive repavement of neighborhood streets. The Office of Planning and Developing worked to rezone the neighborhood to a single-family category. The Department of Housing and Community Development provided subsidies for the development corporation's housing initiative and provided funds for an initiative on community reinvestment. The police department has done saturation patrols in response to neighborhood requests.

VECA has taken a more proactive role in working with city agencies. VECA's most visible and positive effort was a tour using trolley-style buses, to which government officials were invited. The three trolleys used for the tour "crisscrossed the neighborhood, rolling past boarded-up rental housing and neatly kept cottages, past overgrown ditches and green spaces spruced up by volunteers (Risher, 1995i.)" The tour stopped at neighborhood houses and landmarks so that Vollintine-Evergreen residents could articulate their aspirations.

There have also been changes on the City Council in the districts that touch the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Barbara Swearagen Holt (an African-American council member) has been very active at neighborhood functions and has been a participant in the neighborhood's efforts to improve housing. John Vergos (a White council member) was elected with support from the neighborhood and is working on zoning issues. Ricky Peete (an African-American council member) has been exceedingly helpful on commercial revitalization, and Joe Brown (an African-American council member) has assisted with the successful block club initiative.

The State Government

The Overton Park Expressway controversy is an example of State policy that could have destroyed diversity in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. In the late 1960s, the State of Tennessee demolished many houses along the southern border of the Vollintine-Evergreen community in an area that was to be the path of a center-city expressway.²² Though the highway was never built for legal and environmental reasons, the resulting

vacant land became a justification for noninvestment in the surrounding neighborhood. VECA was very active in the 1970s in trying to preserve the area. Vollintine-Evergreen residents were divided on the expressway. About three-fourths of the residents supported it, whereas most VECA activists were opposed and organized community meetings to fight it. The efforts connected some White residents to the larger midtown community and convinced many to stay in the Vollintine-Evergreen community.

The Evergreen Historic District neighborhood organization, which represents residents to the south of the Vollintine-Evergreen area, became very active in reclaiming the expressway land for new housing in keeping with the architectural character of the area. As a result, residents of this area preferred working with that organization, and VECA redrew its boundaries to reflect the wishes of these residents. Although it is now outside the Vollintine-Evergreen area, the rebuilding of the area with housing was a testament to the resiliency of the entire area, including Vollintine-Evergreen.

In the 1970s the proposed expressway was a wall that threatened to accelerate White flight from the Vollintine-Evergreen area and encouraged community disinvestment by both government and financial institutions. Viewed from the perspective of 1996, however, the expressway controversy is a success story, as houses are being constructed in the corridor, bringing affluent White residents into the city and increasing the level of diversity in the Midtown area. The State representative has also taken an interest in Vollintine-Evergreen, and recently successfully sponsored a bill that will provide \$20,000 for a tractor for the Greenway Committee.

The Media

The media communicate an image of the neighborhood to public officials, residents, and the city as a whole. The local media do carry some negative stories about the center of the city. However, over time, the media and especially the local newspaper, the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, have become increasingly positive toward the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Stories about life in the neighborhood point to its stable, integrated nature. Dozens of articles profile VECA's work favorably.

Coverage has become increasingly balanced. For example, an article dealt with some neighborhood robberies, always an incendiary topic. The author of the articles pointed out the nature of the crime, discussed police reaction, and reflected on citizen concern. The article also described similar robberies in more affluent areas of the city to suggest that this crime was not solely a Vollintine-Evergreen problem (Risher, 1995j).

Charitable Foundations

Charitable foundations are becoming increasingly important in the lives of residents of the neighborhood. They have replaced some lost Federal funds in U.S. cities. They also provide flexible funds to solve community problems. Their administrative style may mean that more of the funds reach the targeted problems.²³

Only recently have foundations started to play an important role in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood. However, their impact has been dramatic, given the short period of involvement. The Community Foundation of Greater Memphis played an important role in capacity building of VECA. Its neighborhood small grant program provided seed funds to execute the survey of Vollintine-Evergreen homes that became the basis of the historic district application. Most important, the grants created a working relationship between an officer at the foundation and a VECA activist, who worked on

the historic designation study. The result was a collaboration that subsequently resulted in a \$1 million grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts under its NPI.

As a result of the NPI grant, VECA has one of the most active development corporations in the city. VECA has leveraged its funds with a bank, a foundation, the city, and the State. It has purchased railroad property. Historic district status was awarded by the U.S. Department of the Interior. A major effort is being made to obtain funding for a community center. Relationships have been built with the neighborhood's most important institution, Rhodes College. The excitement and activities associated with the NPI grant have brought more diverse volunteers to the activities of the organization. Vollintine-Evergreen has also made a transition to a partially staffed organization, with a director for the grant, two employees in the development corporation, an administrative assistant, and a part-time block club coordinator. In addition, VECA has purchased a headquarters that provides it with offices, meeting space, display areas, and increased visibility (Risher, 1996c).

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the factors supporting diversity in the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Several findings emerged from our study. We discovered that diversity was an asset that helped maintain the quality of the neighborhood in a variety of ways. The neighborhood organization, the institutions within the neighborhood, and the diverse people all played a role in preserving the Vollintine-Evergreen area. The neighborhood organization works to maintain diversity by improving the conditions of the neighborhood and remaining true to the principle of inclusivity.

The organization's work took the form of maintaining and improving the area, rather than specifically attracting particular population groups. The organization was involved in housing improvement, zoning issues, education, and a variety of other matters. These activities supported diversity in the neighborhood by enhancing life for everyone.

As a voluntary organization, VECA worked to stabilize the area through communication and neighborhood improvement and investment. Now, as it becomes a professional organization, it has the capacity to use its resources in a more consistent way without losing its creativity. This change has expanded the number of volunteers. It has also led to a formal effort to encourage the development of even more block clubs in the Vollintine-Evergreen area.

The study also showed that support for diversity is more than a set of activities. A series of cultural norms developed in Vollintine-Evergreen that supported diversity through informal factors, such as networking-supported diversity at the grassroots level. The support for these norms was found throughout the institutions, such as the religious congregations and schools.

Neighborhood institutions were highly supportive of diversity and frequently were themselves diverse. The churches and synagogues, schools, and Rhodes College all had impressive records working with the neighborhood organization. Yet external institutions were typically less supportive and would have destroyed diversity had it not been for the efforts of the neighborhood organization. For example, the expressway proposed by the State of Tennessee would have created a physical barrier that would have obliterated diversity within the Vollintine-Evergreen area. Foundations have been different from the other external agencies. Although they have only recently become involved in the community, they have proved to be among the most enthusiastic supporters of the neighborhood.

In summary, the many efforts of VECA and other community institutions, dedicated to the value of diversity, have provided an essential sense of community in Vollintine-Evergreen. Historically, VECA and other organizations have vigorously responded to threats to the community's viability and have initiated programs that have added to the quality of life, leading to a stable, diverse neighborhood. Viable schools, well-maintained and attractive housing, and good internal and external communication have been significant factors.

Author

Michael Kirby of Rhodes College was the field work director and he is the author of the study report. Dr. Kirby has conducted many studies in Memphis, including the Memphis Poll, an annual survey of the opinions of Memphis citizens on city services and neighborhood concerns. He is coauthor of Racial Politics at the Crossroads, a study of racial polarization in voting patterns. He has performed other studies on criminal justice, lending patterns by financial institutions, and profiles of neighborhoods. He is chair of the Urban Studies Program and involves his students in the Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood through volunteerism, internships, research projects, and class field work.

Julie Borys and Modeane Thompson, longtime VECA activists and a biracial team, were the primary neighborhood resource coordinators who conducted the focus groups. Michael Faber, a Rhodes College student, and Cherry Whitehead, a resident of the Vollintine-Evergreen community and a LeMoyne-Owen College student, served as a biracial team of interviewers and correspondents. Adam Renshaw and Joe Montiminy of Rhodes College served as researchers on the project. Mary Wilder, VECA staff member and former VECA president, was an advisor for the research study.

Notes

1. For an overview of Memphis' social, political, and economic life, see Vaughn (1989).
2. For a discussion of rural immigrants in southern cities, see Goldfield (1989).
3. Marcus Pohlmann and Michael Kirby (1996, ch. 6). Also see Richard Murray and Arnold Vedlitz (1978, September) and Richard Murray and Arnold Vedlitz, (1977).
4. These figures were selected contextually upon examining the maps. We are not aware of any social-scientific standards that could be used for this purpose.
5. This statement has not been verified by examining block data throughout the city. Philip Kolbe and Mary-Knox Lanier (1995) suggest that the extent of diversity in the city is limited. In addition, Pohlmann and Kirby (1996) found a high number of election precincts that approached 100 percent, showing lack of support for diversity in the city.
6. These data were provided by Chandler and Chandler, a local real estate firm, which uses public records to create a unique database. Chandler and Chandler also checks individual real estate records for errors. The Chandler and Chandler data differ from the building age information provided by the 1990 census and are more accurate because the census information is based on the resident's estimate of the structure's age.
7. The courage of the early leaders was described by Ron Russell (1981): "It was in 1971 that John Bruhwiler (first editor of the *Vollintine-Evergreen News*) received his

baptism of fire as a neighborhood activist opposed to blockbusting. That also was when his garage and car went up in flames. Although never proven, the consensus in this Vollintine-Evergreen neighborhood was that it was arson.”

8. Extensive support for the conversion of the railroad to a greenbelt was shown in a survey of adjacent residents reported by Fitzner, (1983).
9. For a discussion of the relationship of crime and physical disorder, see James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (1982). The relationship between greenspaces and crime reduction is documented in *Healing America's Cities*, 1994.
10. M. Margaret Conway (1991, pp. 23–28) suggests that working class African-Americans participate at levels that are the same as, or higher than, that for working class Whites.
11. Julie Borys, a VECA activist, actually prepared the neighborhood for this transition through several publicized efforts to prevent the school board from removing parts of the neighborhood from the school district. She also networked among African-American residents.
12. One of the neighborhood's bungalows won the mayor's This Old House award. See Risher, 1995d.
13. These foreclosures are called *HUD houses* and they result from residents who defaulted on their mortgages. HUD houses take a long period of time to place back into the market. They remain vacant and deteriorate during that period.
14. The development corporation began acquiring houses in early 1995.
15. Zoning has also been used to deal with housing problems. One of the neighborhood's major problems is a one-block-long area of Maury Street that inexplicably contains fourplex apartments in the middle of single-family housing and has a zoning that supports rooming houses. Several rooming houses have brought some social and drug problems to the street. As a solution, VECA worked to rezone the area so the boarding houses become nonconforming and the development corporation is attempting to purchase some apartment buildings.
16. Mark Granovetter (1973) suggests that social cohesion at the primary group level does not necessarily prevent community fragmentation. He argues that formal organizations are needed to mobilize these primary groups. VECA, the organization, brings together these primary groups into an areawide effort of community preservation.
17. Homeowners stay in their houses longer than renters and thus increase neighborhood stability. Social relationships can be developed and then used for neighborhood maintenance purposes.
18. For some interesting examples of church involvement in urban neighborhoods, see Henry Cisneros (1996).
19. For a discussion of this case, see “Judge's Dilemma” (1972).
20. Predominantly White or African-American institutions can offer diversity to the area, although they are not internally diverse.

21. For a discussion of the special residence hall program, see Risher (1995g).
22. For a discussion of this controversy, see Rice (1979).
23. Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar (1994) provide a fascinating example of accomplishments using foundation assistance in a Boston inner-city neighborhood.

References

- Alford, Robert, and Harry Scoble. 1968. "Sources of Local Political Involvement," *American Political Science Review* 62(December):1192–1206.
- Baker, Julie. 1991. "We've Got Style," *The Evergreen News* 16(March).
- Berkeley, Kathleen. 1980. *Like a Plague of Locusts: Immigration and Social Change in Memphis, Tennessee*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Press.
- Borys, Julie. 1988. "Kensington Block Party," *The Evergreen News* 14(July).
- Brown, P.J. 1996. "Faces," *Snowden School PTA Newsletter*, May 1996.
- Cisneros, Henry. 1996. *Higher Ground: Faith Communities and Community Building*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Conway, M. Margaret. 1991. *Political Participation in the United States*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- "Court Pairs Schools." 1972. *The Evergreen News* 2(May).
- Cox, Kevin. 1982. "Housing Tenure and Neighborhood Activism," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 18(September):107–121.
- Elder, Eliza. 1988. "An In-Depth Property and Social Analysis: A Troubled VECA Block." Memphis, TN: Rhodes College, Seminar Paper.
- Ellis, John. 1974. "Disease and the Destiny of a City: The 1878 Yellow Fever Epidemic in Memphis," *The West Tennessee Historical Papers* 28:76, 82, 87.
- "ENews Sells McMillan Poster." 1980. *The Evergreen News* 10(July).
- Faber, Michael, and Kristin Miller. 1994. "VECA's McLean Business Area." Memphis, TN: Rhodes College, Seminar Paper.
- Fitzner, Julie. 1983. "A Study of the VECA Railroad Right-of-Way Controversy." Memphis, TN: Rhodes College, Seminar Paper.
- Foster, Janis. 1994. *Pew Charitable Trusts, Neighborhood Preservation Initiative Application*. Memphis, TN: Community Foundation.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. 1995. "Communities Say Neatness Fights Crime," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 2.
- Goetz, Edward, and Mara Sidney. 1994. "Revenge of the Property Owners: Community Development and the Politics of Property," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 16(4):319–334.

- Goldfield, David. 1989. *Cotton Fields and Skyscrapers*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Goldfield, David, and Blaine Brownell. 1990. *Urban America: A History*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78(May):1360–1379.
- Hirschman, David. 1990. "Vollintine-Evergreen Group Moves Office From Lindsay," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, January 11.
- Hough, Joe. 1973. *The Evergreen News* 3(March).
- Housing Opportunities Corporation. 1993. *Impediments to Fair Housing*. Memphis, TN: City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development.
- Jemison, Peggy Boyce. 1990. *Vollintine-Evergreen: A Diverse Community, A History*. Memphis, TN: Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association.
- Johnson, Judith. 1996. National Register Nomination for the Vollintine-Evergreen Historic District. Nomination Submitted to the Department of Interior, National Park Service.
- "Judge's Dilemma." 1972. *The Evergreen News* 2(April).
- Kedigh, Kini. 1983. "Editor Recalls First 'E' News," *The Evergreen News* 14 (December/January).
- Kirby, Michael. 1996. *The Memphis Poll*. Memphis, TN: City of Memphis, Finance Division.
- . 1989. *Census of the VECA Restoration Areas*. Memphis, TN: Vollintine-Evergreen Community Association.
- Kirby, Michael P., and Richard K. Thomas. 1976. "The Urban Liberal Arts College and Neighborhood Preservation." Presented at the National Conference on Urban Education, November 22–23, Milwaukee, WI.
- Kolbe, Philip, and Mary-Knox Lanier. 1995. "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing in Memphis, Tennessee." Memphis, TN: City of Memphis, Division of Housing and Community Development.
- Lollar, Michael. 1996. "Do Community Diversity Programs Make Any Difference?" *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 17.
- McMillan, Brad. 1973. "For Sale," *The Evergreen News*, 3(March).
- Medoff, Peter, and Holly Sklar. 1994. *Streets of Hope*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- "Memphis Neighborhood Stabilizing: Students Are Key in School Report." 1971. *South Today: A Digest of Southern Affairs*. Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council, May.

- Murray, Richard, and Arnold Vedlitz. 1978. "Racial Voting Patterns in the South," *Annals of the American Academy of Political Social Sciences* 439 (September):29–40.
- . 1977. "Race, SES, and Voting Participation in Large Southern Cities," *Journal of Politics*, November:1064–1072.
- "Neighborhoods Reborn." 1996. *Consumer Reports* 61(May):24–27.
- Newman, Carla. 1996. Director of the Afterschool Program, Interview with the author, February 12.
- Obermark, Jerome. 1993a. "Neighborhood Strives to be Historic, but Innovative, Too," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 14.
- . 1993b. "Programs Geared to Community," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 14.
- Olsen, Marvin. 1970. "Social and Political Participation of Blacks," *American Sociological Review* 35:682–696.
- "People Power Works." 1994. *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, October 5.
- Perry, Huey L. 1991. "Deracialization as an Analytical Construct in American Politics," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 27(December):181–191.
- Pohlmann, Marcus, and Michael Kirby. 1996. *Racial Politics in Transition*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.
- Pope, Loren. 1996. *Colleges That Change Lives*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Rice, Harry. 1979. "Overton Park-Interstate 40 Conflict," in *Cases in Public Administration*, Joseph A. Uveges, Jr., ed. Boston, MA: Holbrook Press.
- Risher, Wayne. 1996a. "Neighborhood Wins Designation as Historic Area," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, May 16.
- . 1996b. "Vollintine-Evergreen Joins List," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, May 16.
- . 1996c. "VECA Moving Into Jackson Store Site," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 21.
- . 1995a. "\$975,000 Grant, 1 of 9 in U.S. Goes to Midtown Community," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, October 3.
- . 1995b. "Vollintine-Evergreen Happy with \$1 Million," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, October 20.
- . 1995c. "Diverse Group Helping Keep Neighborhood From Sinking," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, January 26.
- . 1995d. "Bungalow Wins Mayor's Award," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, April.

- . 1995e. “2 VECA Workers’ Outlooks Similar,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, February 16.
- . 1995f. “Vollintine-Evergreen Work Starts: Duplexes To Become Single-Family Homes,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, December 16.
- . 1995g. “Rhodes Students Reach Out, Get a Nicer Room for Efforts,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 30.
- . 1995h. Neighbors To Remove Debris From Old Railroad: Rhodes Students, Scouts Help Get Project on Tract,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 3.
- . 1995i. “Residents Showcase Plan for Upgrade,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 30.
- . 1995j. “Victim Fighting Driveway Robberies,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, December 6.
- Robinson, Clayton. 1967. “Impact of the City on Rural Immigration to Memphis: 1840–1940.” Ph.D. Dissertation. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.
- Russell, Ron. 1981. “Back-Yard Revolution Sprouted in Midtown in the 1960s,” *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, November 29.
- Scharitz, Dotty. 1990. “VECA History,” *The Evergreen News* 16(July).
- “Snowden Benefits From Grants.” 1994. *Snowden News*, October.
- Thomas, John Clayton. 1986. *Between Citizen and City*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.
- Vaughn, Sandra. 1989. “Memphis: Heart of the Mid-South,” in *In Search of the New South*, Robert Bullard, ed. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- “VECA Exposure.” 1976. *The Evergreen News* 6(March).
- “What Is the New Urbanism?” 1998. *Wall Street Journal*, December 8.
- Wilson, James Q., and George L. Kelling. 1982. “Broken Windows: The Police and Public Safety,” *Atlantic Monthly*, March.
- Yinger, John. 1995. *Opening Doors: How To Cut Discrimination by Supporting Neighborhood Integration*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.