

PART 2

CASE STUDY I: THE OPERATION REACHOUT-SOUTHWEST

Introduction

The Operation ReachOut-SouthWest (OROSW) case study provides overview and analysis of the process structure, key players and crucial elements of community planning process which took place in southwest Baltimore City between September 1997 and December 1998.

The case study is based on information from interviews with process participants, and written materials about the OROSW and the OROSW plan. For this case study I have interviewed four OROSW process participants (see Appendix).

The case study describes the OROSW process through introducing the context of the community, chronological portrait of the process, analysis of elements of the process and concluding with lessons learned from the process.

Selected Characteristics of the Operation ReachOut-SouthWest

Total population (1999)	26,524
Race population characteristics (1995)	64% African Americans 35% white 1% other
Median household income (for southwest Baltimore in 1989)	\$ 15,644
Unemployment rate (for southwest Baltimore in 1995)	13,6%

To illustrate two biggest problems, drugs and crime, of the Operation ReachOut community, I use few quotations from Simon and Burns (1997) book *The Corner: A year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*, written about Southwest Baltimore neighborhood in 1993.¹

By the turn of the decade, the survivors graduated to speedballs, mainlining the coke and dope together for the ultimate rush. The heroin was the base; it leveled you out and got you well. The coke went on top, for that extra boost that morphine always lacked. Baltimore stumbled and staggered through the decade-long cocaine epidemic, emerging in the mid-1990s as the city with the highest rate of intravenous drug use in the country, according to government estimates. And of the tens of thousands of hardcore users, the vast mostly were using coke and dope simultaneously.

Heroin had been claiming its share of West Baltimore men for thirty years, but the cheap cocaine of the 1980s had turned the women out, bringing them to the corner in numbers previously unthinkable. Where once, on Fayette Street, there had been a network of single mothers who managed to get the essentials done, there was now raw anarchy in many homes. And where a discussion of single-parent households once seemed relevant to places like Fayette Street, now there loomed the new specter of children who were, in reality, parentless.

Violence is no longer the prerogative of professional but a function of impulse and emotion. The contract killers and the well-planned assassinations of earlier eras are mere myth on these corners. Now the moment of truth generally comes down to some manchild

with hurt feelings waving a .380 around and spraying bullets up and down the block. The accidental shooting of bystanders is now commonplace.

Men and women, parents and children, the fools and the clever ones, even the derelicts and outcasts who had no viable role when drug distribution was a structured enterprise--all are assimilated into the corner world of 1990s. At Fayette and Monroe and so many other corners in so many other cities, it's nothing more or less than the amateur hour.²

Over the course of the five years prior the planning process a strong movement of residents and stakeholders has grown to organize and remake their community in old Southwest Baltimore. There have been many community successes during mentioned period:

- At least 20% drop in crime in six 'OROSW communities',
- establishing of community associations' offices to serve the neighborhoods,
- establishing of youth councils in five 'OROSW communities',
- the majority of the 'OROSW area' is designated Hot Spot and Comprehensive Community Neighborhood with significant amount of resources for crime prevention,
- two community associations received presidential awards for their work,
- successful implementation of two OROSW project; the rehabilitation of 30 houses on Baltimore Street and the development of the Community Support Center,
- and successful completion of two projects by local non-profits; redevelopment of Franklin Mews and the Eubie Blake development.

Basic Information about the Operation ReachOut-SouthWest

Goals of the process:

- To imagine and build the future of the neighborhoods of Southwest Baltimore through the OROSW.³
- To develop a vision for a five, ten and twenty years into the future,
- to identify the best strategies to achieve the vision of the OROSW,
- to develop the comprehensive plan to coordinate all community based efforts,
- to systematically address issues that cut across neighborhood boundaries,
- to create the tool for community residents and stakeholders to state in a unified and clear way how they want to revitalize and remake their community,
- to create the tool for community to increase the possibility to attract grants and loans by demonstrating the comprehensiveness of community efforts.⁴

Length of the planning process: 15 months (September 1997 - December 1998)

Number and type of participants: more than 250 residents and stakeholders from 13 communities, 11 community-based organization, and dozens of churches, businesses, non-profits, government agencies and private institutions

Facilitator:	Kevin Jordan, Bon Secour Baltimore Health System
Convening organization:	Bon Secour Baltimore Health System, now through The Operation ReachOut-SouthWest Entities

Initiation

At the beginning there was a desire of Bon Secour Baltimore Health System to improve a life of the neighborhood community in which the hospital is located. In 1994 a committee of community, church, and non-profit leaders was organized and staffed by the local hospital. The Committee was providing community input on what community wants to be changed in their neighborhoods. This was the beginning of the Operation ReachOut.

Bon Secour's Community Development Department in conjunction with the Operation ReachOut committee developed two projects, which were successfully implemented in the community. Two projects were:

- the rehabilitation of 30 houses on Baltimore Street, as a part of the strategy for building high quality, low income rental housing;
- and the development of the Community Support Center, to support young mothers and children.

These successes lead the committee to look for ways to entice public and private investments back into the neighborhoods. The Operation ReachOut held two neighborhoods' tours for City, State and private banks officials to familiarize them with Southwest Baltimore and educate them on the current revitalization activities. At these tours the financial officials stated crucial question to the OROSW representatives. What is the plan or strategy for the whole community, to show systematic, long term approach to community problems? This was the main impulse for the Operation ReachOut to start discussion about community strategic planning.

Planning Process

In this part I outline evolution of the OROSW planning process, from its beginning in 1997 to today implementation.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| September, 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Operation ReachOut Committee meets to discuss idea about the community plan. |
| October, 1997 | <p>⇒ Kick off meeting[*]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement to conduct a planning process, • Planning Committee formed (see The steering committee). |
| November, 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and mission statement[*] developed (coalition has modified existing vision and mission of The Operation ReachOut committee), and <p>⇒ Coalition brainstorms issues to be addressed through plan (outcome - more then hundred issue's ideas).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The steering committee groups the issues, whole coalition revise grouped issues, and prioritizes six issue areas around |

^{*} Regular monthly meetings of OROSW

⇒ key steps in process identified by participants

- which forms issue **committees**, (see committees).
- Initiative formally becomes a **Coalition** with new name OROSW –**The Operation ReachOut-SouthWest**.
- December, 1997 ⇒ ‘Operation CORNER’: Coalition together with city organizes first community joint event - neighborhoods clean up (sanitation and drugs clean up).
- January, 1998
- Coalition meeting* - presenting data about the community; about housing occupancy, educational levels, median income, age distribution, etc. Land Use Survey Approved (NDC). (About 150 participants,)
- February, 1998 ⇒ **Residents survey community area** - involving various groups of residents - kids go door to door collecting information, they identified vacancies, trees, etc. „ ...it was big party with outcome.“
- Organization (OROSW functions as a program of C.O.I.L. - community development corporation) decides to apply for funding for a project director.
- March, 1998:
- Issue committees are **developing goals and strategies**.
- March - June, 1998
- Respective issues and strategies are individually presented to specific community groups for a **feedback** - businessmen, church leaders, and residents.
- September, 1998
- **Draft of comprehensive reinvestment strategy** is developed by planning committee together with representatives of each issue committee and approved - commented by coalition.
- September -
October, 1998
- **Draft of comprehensive plan presented** to individual community groups, churches, and businesses.
- October, 1998
- **Reactions of community groups to the plan** are presented to the OROSW coalition.
 - Planning committee together with representatives of each issue committee develop final version of plan.
 - Coalition organizes second community joint event - area-wide communities clean up.
- November, 1998
- Coalition meeting* - presenting **final plan for ratification to the full OROSW body**.
 - Project **director hired**.
- December, 1998:
- **Final version of plan ratified*** and printed.
 - Community celebrates the plan.
- January, 1999:
- Starting **implementation** of revitalization strategy.

Implementation arrangements and agreements

Based on plan the OROSW received a three years grant from the Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative to oversee and catalyze the implementation of the

strategies of all six committees, and grant from Abell Foundation (for 18 months) for drug recovery of the community.

- January, 1999
 - Starting **implementation** of revitalization strategy.
- January - March 1999:
 - Each issue committee identifies five priorities for the period from one to three years.
 - Each issue committee develops for each priority list of partners, action steps, and costs/ potential sources.
 - The steering committee develops action plan and timeline for implementation including plans from all six issue committees.
 - Coalition approves comprehensive action plan.
 - The steering committee is developing organizational structure of the OROSW.
- April, 1999
 - The OROSW organizes beautification day in whole community.

The OROSW plan is being implemented through two paths, through issue's committees and through community organizations, which have for each community individual time plan. Two important principles of implementation are strengthening existing community organizations, and attracting outside organization to do programs in the community,

The Governing Structure, Roles and Decision Making

The Coalition

The coalition represents a full body of the OROSW -- residents and representatives of various organizations participating in the process. All content decision (with some exemptions if there needs to be immediate decision) are made by voting, by full coalition present at the meeting; approximately 50-60 people. The coalition meets regularly, once a month at the Bon Secour Family Support Center.

The Steering Committee

During the planning process steering committee was a group from ten to fifteen people (open membership) responsible for designing process; creating specific process proposals presented, discussed, and approved by whole coalition. Members of the steering committee included two persons from the City of Baltimore, two persons from the Bon Secour hospital, one person from the Neighborhood Design Center, and some presidents of community associations.

Now the steering committee functions as a decision-making body of the OROSW. The committee makes all process decision, and decision about project if it's not enough time to take them to whole coalition. Decisions in the steering committee are made by voting, after deliberation about the issue at the table. The steering committee is representative of community leadership, at the same time is open and „fluid“. Participation in the steering committee meetings is open to all citizens, representatives of non-profits, church, businesses, and government agencies. The steering committee is planning to have a chair/ co-chairs; their role needs to be developed.

In the steering committee each community association (twelve communities of the OROSW) has one vote. To assure consistency, each community association should assign one member to be on the steering committee and one alternate. Each non-profit organization or business located within the OROSW boundaries can also have one vote.

The steering committee functions as a board of directors of the OROSW, develops budget, and reviews finances of the OROSW. Steering committee's role is to make sure all project using the OROSW mark are consistent with a plan and accountable through the OROSW; an accountability structure needs to be developed. If there are more proposals going after the same source, the steering committee sets priorities, and monitors and evaluates implementation of a plan; this accountability structure also needs to be developed. The steering committee develops working plan and timeline for projects, and creates new committees as necessary.

The Committees

At the moment there are six committees working on implementation plans. These six committees are dealing with following issues:

- Economic development
- Education
- Health
- Physical planning

- Public safety
- Special needs groups

The committees are comprised of community residents, church leaders, local businesses people, other community stakeholders, and professionals in a committee issue. Committees have from eight to twenty-five members; they are open for other interested people to participate. The committees are self-managed task forces.

Function of the committee is to develop and implement projects that have been identified through the planning process, and participate in decision making; review new ideas for projects, and make recommendation for the steering committee.

The OROSW -- Program

The OROSW -- program, provides technical support for community organizations, (with proposal writing, identifying possible donors), links local organization to national sources, training organizations (CPHA), experts, and funding organizations. The OROSW Director individually assists community organizations through listening, learning about their situation, and linking them to information they need.

Decision-making

After deliberation of different opinions about the issue, all decisions are made through voting.

Analysis of the Operation ReachOut-SouthWest

This part of case study provides analysis of essential elements and key players of the OROSW process discern from process participants' opinions expressed during in depths interviews.

Key elements as identified by interviewed participants of the process

Beginnings

All interviewed process participants characterized the relationship between community organizations and the Bon Secour Hospital by trust existing prior the process. This trust was built in previous years when six neighborhoods were brought together by the hospital to cooperate on a crime fighting program. Cooperation among neighborhoods started with information and practices exchange, and replication of programs for young people (from the Franklin Square Community Association). Neighborhoods had experienced that cooperation leads to successes. To summarize, activity in southwest Baltimore started from very specific and visible projects targeted on immediate problems, *„people (in inner city) don't believe till they see the results“*, and with the success it have proceeded to broader long term planning process. The idea for planning came from outside, but the planning have started only because community representatives agreed that the process is what they want to do, and after they understood what they are going to plan about. Another important point made by interviewed participant is that process have worked because the reason to come together and cooperate wasn't money, but shared interest in addressing common problem. Money came after cooperation was established and plan prepared.

The Role of the Bon Secour Hospital

All interviewed participants expressed that the role of the Bon Secour Hospital was crucial for the process. At the beginning Bon Secour provided stable foundation for connecting residents. As I mentioned before the Bon Secour Health System has the trust, relationships, and credibility within all involved neighborhoods. Participants pointed out that hospital didn't imposed ideas to community, but provided lacking resources.

Local Leadership Capacities

According to the interviewed participant „*there was not need for outside facilitators because community had experienced leaders and organizations*“ already participating in the process. Process was able to benefit from ongoing leadership trainings provided as part of crime fighting and CPHA programs. Besides various useful skills, local leaders have learned to see their neighborhood as part of a bigger picture of interdependent relationships with other neighborhoods.

Professionals participating in the process have known that development of local leaders is long-term process, and requires permanent attempt to involve local people to the leadership positions. Trained leaders now provide role models for other community members. The following are specific leadership skills, identified as crucial for community leaders:

Process skills:

- Running subcommittee
- Ability to achieve consensus on goals
- Keep focus of the group on developing actions steps
- Include all stakeholders
- Prioritizing
- Keep attention of the group on priorities

Content skills:

- Knowledge and understanding of specific topic of subcommittee for example physical planning

Coordination

In the interviews respondents acknowledged crucial role of Kevin Jordan as single point of coordination, excellent community organizer, and process facilitator. They have appreciated his role in the process and characterized his behavior as: trustful -- trusted, not taking leadership for community people, content neutral, enabling people come together, action oriented (very important in the community where people are impatient and need fast progress), involving knowledge and skills in the area of planning.

Participants have stressed importance of coordination during the implementation. To advocate for funding as a coalition is more efficient than individually. They also see geographically based coordination on issues as more important than cooperation of individual organizations.

Citizen's Involvement/ Public Outreach

In the interviews participants pointed out importance of simple, visible, and highly participative community organizing actions during the process e. g. door to door citizens organizing and clean-ups. It has provided outcomes visible for residents and promoted the OROSW in the community, and at the same time it helped to sustain motivation of participants.

The OROSW process started with citizens; first it built community ownership and then it has involved experts. The role of experts is to propose possibilities and accept community choices.

Respondents also stressed influence of vibrant communication channels between the process and residents involving lots of listening and permanent community informing. They identified as necessary to report back to coalition every decision and possible direction of actions. From their experience regular pace of meetings, and serving food prior meeting helped sustain residents' participation. Last point related to participation is to start with implementation as soon as possible. Too long planning process is likely to lose community attention and support. This is especially true in communities with urgent problems strongly influencing everyday life of residents.

Involving Stakeholders

Last key element I identified from the interviews is stakeholders' involvement. In the OROSW process every community was represented in the steering committee, and stakeholders who didn't participate directly in the meeting were informed and their feedback was received through individual meetings -- *„if they don't come we'll go to them.“* Representatives of city government participated from very beginning, but they didn't control the process. City government representatives have important role in implementation, possess expertise in planning, and assist the process with linking it to broader city context.

Conclusions

The Operation ReachOut-SouthWest is neighborhood driven process based on mutual trust and openness. Process started with citizens driven projects aimed to improve living conditions in the neighborhoods. Its success provided a model for addressing specific problem, but more important it has built trust, hope and openness to participate in the collaborative effort among residents. The trust, responsive nature of the process and local leadership has enabled process to move forward fast.

The OROSW is empowering process. At the beginning *„people wanted to see changes in their neighborhood, but they felt powerless, and unheard. Through the process they become part of the solutions.“* Process taught residents that everyone individually is important.. The decision making through voting served as a tool to communicate to the citizens the importance of every participating resident. In this case meaning of voting is giving the voice to everyone person in the room rather than majority rule of decision making. It also means that in the OROSW whole Coalition provides the leadership of the process, there is not one person or small group controlling the process. Because residents' participation is crucial and irreplaceable element in the OROSW process, community organizing became main and constantly present approach for empowering neighborhoods. Residents

contribute their time and skills to the overall planning and the concrete work in their neighborhoods.

The OROSW process has enabled many new relationships among diverse participants from neighborhoods, local government, and businesses. Process provides structure and guidance for achieving shared goals through cooperation while respecting independence and importance of individual community organizations. In practice it means that community organizations cooperate with local government on shared goals, but at the same time they fight city projects which are not in the interest of residents. Through the OROSW, neighborhoods developed cooperation mechanism for mobilizing citizens to balance the power of the formal authorities -- one of the neighborhoods won the trial with a local government about a housing project.

Based on the OROSW case it seems that in distressed neighborhoods with urgent problems participative process is very effective for empowering residents and setting general goals. Possible strategies to achieve goals and address problems needs to come from experts. *„Role of experts in such a processes is to provide new ideas for discussion, function as reservoir of best practices, at the same time experts need to keep their ego small, especially if the community doesn't pick the „best“ solution.“*

The Operation ReachOut-SouthWest process is in the progress. In consonance with the process goal: „to imagine and build the future of the neighborhoods of Southwest Baltimore through the OROSW“, participants see the OROSW as never ending effort. *„Condition for success is keep working, sustain participation and make plans happen.“* And as the process progresses the governance structure of the OROSW is evolving along way, reflecting nature of the tasks.

As one of the interviewed participants stressed each community process has its own individuality that depends on community context and on choice of approach. Certainly there is more then one way how to convene visioning process. What have different successful processes in common is living value of democracy.

CASE STUDY II: GREATER HOMEWOOD RENAISSANCE

Introduction

The Greater Homewood Renaissance (GHR) case study provides an overall description and analysis of the process structure, key players and crucial elements of community planning process which took place in north Baltimore City between 1994 and 1997.

The case study is based on information from interviews with participants involved in the process, and on various written materials on GHR and Greater Homewood Community Corporation; plans, reports, case study, leaflets. For this case study I have interviewed ten participants (see Appendix) of GHR process who played different roles and participated in different phases of GHR planning and implementing.

The case study describes the GHR process by first introducing the context and key stakeholders of GHR, then proceeding to chronological portrait of the process, later to analytical part dealing with essential phases and elements of the process and, finally, concluding in lessons learned from the process.

Selected Characteristics of Greater Homewood

Greater Homewood with total population of approximately 77,000 residents is a highly diverse region. Inside Greater Homewood boroughs it is possible to find complete scale of socially and racially diverse residents. Brought into proximity by a common physical space, prosperous and marginal groups are divided by residential segregation, racial demarcations, and income differences -- barriers seldom crossed. M. Patricia Fernandez Kelly divided Greater Homewood region in the study for Greater Homewood to four clusters; according to shared common historical, spatial and social features. ⁵

Greater Homewood encompasses neighborhoods like Roland Park and Homeland which were developed in the nineteenth century upon few large estates owned by wealthy families of European descent. For almost two centuries, these affluent families represent the most prosperous part of Baltimore society. In contrast Waverly, in the east, originated as a village and gradually transformed into a series of residential neighborhoods for less affluent white families. In the 1970s, the demographic composition of the area began to change as a result of the influx of African Americans seeking improved living conditions. It is now predominantly black neighborhood whose fortunes hang by a string.⁶

In Greater Homewood it's possible to find also neighborhoods like Harwood (south part of North Charles Village), whose residents are living under the poverty level. Most people living in Harwood do not receive government assistance; instead they are part of a bulging mass of working poor, that is people who hold temporary or full-time jobs but whose wages are not sufficient to lift them above poverty.⁷

Cluster	Population	Racial composition	Unemployment	Median Household Income	Crime incidents
1 GUILFORD AND ROLAND PARK	22,867	91% white, 6.5 % African Americans, high level of racial segregation	3.5%	\$48,080	2,731
2 GREATER WAVERLY	17,240	29% white, 68% African Americans, lower level of racial segregation	8.5%	\$29,985	915
3 HAMPTEN AND REMINGTON	19,014	68% white, 29% African Americans, high level of racial segregation	7.8%	\$24,106	3,794
4 CHARLES VILLAGE	17,529	50% white, 42.5% African Americans, 7% Asian, high level of racial integration	6.8% (south Charles Village 18%)	\$18,163	3,748

Selected Characteristics of Main GHR Process Stakeholders

Greater Homewood is home of Johns Hopkins University (Hopkins) - today the largest employer in the City of Baltimore. Homewood residents view Hopkins with mixed feelings. Most people are proud to live in the area where a major institution of higher education is located. At the same time, many feel that Hopkins has not been particularly sensitive to the needs of the community. There is a widespread frustration about the limited number of activities held by the university for the benefit of local groups. Homewood residents, especially those most active and committed to the region, feel that the university often does not take their interests into consideration.⁸

Community Organizations

Greater Homewood (GH) region has a large number of community associations. From the list of members of The Presidents Council I have identified 64 different neighborhood associations. Most of the neighborhood organizations are advocacy oriented, not incorporated, or without 501 (c) (3) status, and without capacity to carry out projects. It also seems that GH has a limited capacity of community leadership with skills e.g. in running non-profit, designing, and carrying out programs. Few examples of exemptions are: Charles Village Community Benefits District -- a self-taxing initiative aimed at improvement of living conditions by increasing the services and surveillance; North Charles Village Business Association, The Waverly Community Housing Program -- a joint endeavor bringing together local groups, banks and Hopkins to ensure the acquisition of residential units by low-income individuals and families, and Waverly Family Center -- focuses on prevention and parental education.

Relations Among Community Organizations and Hopkins and Memorial Hospital

For Hopkins and Union Memorial Hospital, an eagerness to reaffirm a constructive partnership with the Greater Homewood community is a matter of enlightened self-interest and survival. The University's ability to attract and retain the very best students, faculty, and staff, largely depends on the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Individuals and communities understand that large institutions are significant source of employment, knowledge, and sociability; that they are vital assets. However, they also tend to see them with mistrust and to hold them responsible for problems at the grassroots level. Hopkins and Union Memorial are not exemptions to that rule. A major obstacle in cooperative efforts between large institutions and small community organizations is the tendency on the part of the former to engage in heavy-handed and top-down demonstrations without taking into consideration realities and perceptions as they are experienced and expressed by people at the grassroots level. No matter how well intentioned, top-down measures tend to fail for lack of understanding and compound feelings of resentment and skepticism about the potential change.⁹

Short History of Greater Homewood Community Corporation

In 1966 Ross Jones, working for Johns Hopkins University (Hopkins), initiated Greater Homewood Planning Project. Through this project the energy and excitement of residents was captured and focused into residents' involvement in Greater Homewood community building. Hopkins received federal funding for the project and supported community discussions for 2 years, which led to establishing of the Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC). GHCC was founded as an umbrella organization to energize neighborhood associations. During following years Hopkins' involvement in GHCC continued through assistance with fundraising and participating in Board of Directors.

According to the interviewed residents, during first decade GHCC was a vibrant, independent organization, with high community involvement. Responsive character of GHCC was able to attract substantial sources, form City and Federal funds, which led to fast growth (from 3 to 30-40 employees in few years) and transformation from community advocating into service providing organization. Since beginning of 80s, Baltimore started to face big problems with economic recession and with interrelated social problems. At the same time city funding and soon after federal funding started to dry out. By that time GHCC have lost the character of community responsive organization and became „a part of establishment,. It seemed that GHCC was not able to address effectively this organization crisis, and in mid 90's it was still struggling with lack of resources, leadership and mission.

Basic Information about Greater Homewood Renaissance

Goal of the process:

Through careful and open process of listening, choosing priorities, and strategic planning, distill vision for a great community into practical plans for action.¹⁰

- Develop a clear vision statement for diverse communities of north Baltimore City.
- Develop strategies to address the issues and concerns most crucial to realizing our vision.
- Identify 10 -12 projects, which over five-year period are best suited to implement these strategies.
- Develop a clear plan for accomplishing our projects. This plan will include the commitment of area recourses and institutions.¹¹

Definition of target community:

Planning was done for community selected as area of interest of Greater Homewood Community Corporation; 35 neighborhoods in North Baltimore City (see appendix for map).

Length of the process:

Roughly from beginning of 1994 until end of 1997

Number and type of participants:

approx. 250 - from experts, representatives of institutions, and neighborhood associations to ordinary citizens

Facilitator:

Joe McNeely, The Development Training Institute, Inc. Baltimore (DTI)

Convening organization: Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC)

Greater Homewood Renaissance Planning Process¹²

In this part I chronologically outline evolution of GHR planning process, from beginning in 1994 to today implementation.

- Beginning of 1994: 25th Anniversary of GHCC - need for renewal of GHCC formulated by Ross Jones, Vice-President of Hopkins.
- Spring 1994 - spring 1995: GHCC, Hopkins and UMH appointed Dr. Fernandez-Kelly (Institute for Policy Studies, Hopkins) to develop **Comprehensive profile of Greater Homewood**. Part of the study was also a survey of GH residents' perceptions realized through 125 questionnaires and interviews.

Dr. Fernandez-Kelly suggested 5 action areas: (she focused on areas with the largest potential to bring about positive change through the implementation of cooperative strategies linking institutions, city government and neighborhood associations.)

- * *Services to Women and Children,*
- * *Educational Alternatives,*
- * *Attracting and Retaining Residents,*
- * *Revitalizing Small Businesses,*
- * *Integrating Healthcare Services*

The study was envisioned as a basis for the deliberations of a task force mandated to make recommendations and guide the implementation of joint initiatives addressing problems in the Greater Homewood area. Five areas were developed to serve for community education and discussion, and to focus attention and actions on specific areas where the GHCC can make a change.¹³

- Spring 1995: Eastman (Hopkins) appointed to work with and Sparks (GHCC) to assure action in 5 action areas.
- May 31, 1995: **Roundtable Dinner for community leaders** - presenting the findings of the study to app. 100 selected community leaders. Creating of:
 - * 5 Working Groups (WG) - 24 people in total,
 - * Steering Committee (chairs of WG + representatives of institutions).
- December 1995: **Developed recommendation** for 5 action areas; approximately 100-150 recommendations in total.
- Winter 1995: 'Implementation team' (Eastman (Hopkins) and Sparks (GHCC)) demand professional help with implementation of recommendations and projects design by WG - RFP for consultants.
 - * Recognizing the need for more community involvement from the churches - Jones hosts a dinner for ministers. These were seeds of the Interfaith Alliance.
- Spring 1996:
 - * Renaming the activity - Grater Homewood Renaissance (GHR)
 - * Sanfilippo (Hopkins) joins 'implementation team' (new Provost of Hopkins Mr. S. Knapp appointed J. Sanfilippo to work on GHR).
- Spring - Summer 1996:
 - * Struggling with implementation,

- * Janet Sanfilippo expresses need for community involvement.
- * April 96: GHCC receives a grant for implementation (\$50,000) from Goldseker Foundation.
- Summer 1996:
 - * Eastman (Hopkins) dropped participation in implementation team,
 - * Joe McNeely hired as a consultant for implementation - he proposes revisiting the planning, more public involvement and redefining the role of the Steering Committee (SC).
- Winter 1996:
 - * Involving other institutions as well as individuals; new activities: roundtable, breakfast, open houses (Guilford, Homeland),
 - * eliciting new co-sponsors; institutional meetings,
 - * increasing reliance on SC, new members,
 - * new individuals showing interest in participation in the process.
- January 1997:
 - * Working Groups are working on „too small projects,, - SC realizes that for attracting national funding a broader scope and more participatory process are needed.
 - * Regular monthly meetings of SC,
 - * regular weekly or be-weekly meeting of staff - Sanfilippo (Hopkins), Sparks (GHCC) and McNeely (DTI),
 - * public outreach activities: alumni meeting, housing seminar.
- Spring 1997: End of the funding - what to do next?**
SC decides to:
 - * **start again** with visioning meetings and strategic planning - grant of \$75,000 for planning from Goldseker Foundation,
 - * Working Groups continue to work on implementation plans in 5 action areas,
 - * part of the SC is to plan visioning meetings and recruitment of new co-sponsors.

We soon realized that revisiting the planning process was critical to our long-term success. The initial planning done by the Working Groups was an excellent start, but additional, professional expertise and neighborhood involvement were necessary to develop recommendation that would eventually stabilize the neighborhood of Greater Homewood. An extensive outreach effort has been made to reach all those who live, work and study in north Baltimore City in order to involve them in the process, and we are prepared to embark upon this area's first community-wide planning process.¹⁴

- May 1997: **12 visioning meetings** were held throughout Greater Homewood
Approximate 250 residents participated, meetings were focused on four questions:
 - * Three things that make the Great Homewood community a good area to live, work, study, play, raise children, invest, and do business.
 - * The two biggest problems or threats that keep the Greater Homewood area from being as attractive as it could be.

- * What advantages does your neighborhood get from being near other Greater Homewood neighborhoods?
- * In what ways could neighborhoods in the Greater Homewood area collaborate better to improve the whole area?

A community vision is an image of our area. It tells people inside and outside of our community what kind of community we are. We compete in a big region for families, businesses and investments, and we need to be able to tell others what our area has to offer. We know Greater Homewood is a great place to live, work, raise a family, invest, have fun, study, and do businesses. But why? What is it we like about this place? Why should others come here? Visioning meetings are designed to articulate these things.¹⁵

Gathered participants brainstormed ideas which later served for developing of the vision and for grouping to issue areas. The ideas about common assets and challenges were significantly overlapping in all 12 meeting groups.

- * Visioning committee was appointed to prepare the draft of the vision for community approval.

●June 21, 1997: **Public meeting to review the input from visioning meetings**, (100 people). *Outcomes of the meeting:*

- * 8 Task Forces formed around newly created issues:

- connecting communities
- crime
- education
- economic development
- housing
- health
- recreation and culture
- youth.

- * Draft of vision statement was presented and commented on by residents.

●July - October, 1997: **Task Forces working briefly on strategies, concentrating on developing projects** in their issue area (44 meeting and over 150 people involved in total)

●September 13, 1997: **Public meeting of Task Forces** - reviewing the on-going work of Task Forces, discussing suggested projects, overlaps and gaps, and working in four geographically representative groups on particular focuses in that area. (about 125 people)

●October 18, 1997: **Public meeting to select top priorities** from proposed 37 projects.

About 150 people participated in the competitive priority setting process that day. Joe McNeely, president of DTI, facilitated the two-part voting process. Upon registering that morning, participants received a booklet with the 37 proposals, developed by the nine Greater Homewood Renaissance Task Forces, and set of strip for voting. Two-foot wide enlargements of all 37 proposals lined the walls of the church hall at New Waverly United Methodist Church.

During first vote, participants simply selected their favorite proposals. As an intermediate step, Joe McNeely invited participants to think in terms of combining and linking projects. People stepped to the microphone to persuade the audience of new combinations. The result was 18 proposals for a second round of voting...¹⁶

By the end 12 projects were selected:

1. *Action Center for Excellent Schools*
2. *Comprehensive Community Building*
3. *Renaissance Community Development Corporation*
4. *Jones Falls Watershed Revitalization*
5. *Citizen Action Center*
6. *Marketing Campaign*
7. *Baltimore Bread*
8. *Redevelop Vacant Houses*
9. *View Finders: A Visual Environmental Literacy Curriculum*
10. *Combined Force of Business District for Government Services*
11. *Safe and Sound Service Site*
12. *Financial Incentives for Marketing*

●Fall 1997: **Deciding about implementation organization**

The Committee on Implementing Structure was examining two directions for implementing structure: 1) using GHCC, designing changes for renewed GHCC; and 2) creating new organization. After consulting community organizations Committee proposed the first option with significant changes in the structure of the Board of Directors. Complicated process of discussions between GHR and GHCC was concluded on November's Board meeting. Board agreed to include new members; 12 from the ***Council of Presidents of Community Associations*** (newly created association), and 1 from Interfaith Alliance. Total number of Board members is 25.

●November 22, 1997: **Public meeting - approving the implementation plans** and celebration (total 75 people), proposal of 6 institution as implementation units and meeting also included *Declaration of Community (see appendix)*.

6 institutions:

- **Action Center for Excellent Schools*
- **Comprehensive Community Building*
- **Renaissance Community Development Corporation*
- **Jones Falls Watershed Association*
- **The Great Homewood Citizen Action Center*
- **GHCC*

Implementation

●1998: **Renaissance Implementation Committee** was created to oversee implementation of the Greater Homewood Renaissance Plan, a \$32 million, five-year plan to leverage \$300 million in new private sector investments to further improve Greater Homewood.

●April 29, 1998: 28th Greater Homewood Annual Meeting - election of new board of directors for the GHCC, the first in many years to include representatives sent directly from community associations by selection from each Quad of the Greater Homewood Presidents Council.¹⁷

What was achieved

Action Center for Excellent Schools

*Coalition of Principals - forum of school officials for improving the educational system

*Educational Bill of Rights - adopted as GHCC policy

*VISTAs working in southern elementary schools, initiating programs that can attract grass roots volunteers - students as well as parents. Currently, schools do not have the resources to effectively handle an influx of volunteers. ACES works on addressing this problem by developing a volunteer manual for public schools and assisting in the placement of a dedicated volunteer manager.

Comprehensive Community Building

*Effort to improve housing, public safety, sanitation, youth opportunities, education, and workforce development is targeted on five Southern Greater Homewood neighborhoods. This program was initiated from outside of Southern Greater Homewood.

*In the first year of the program the Barclay neighborhood is the focus of the resident effort. VISTA community organizer involves residents in the development and implementation of small block level projects. The Barclay Leadership Council was created to empower women in Barclay.

*The program works through mobilization of community residents - five block clubs in Barclay.

Community Development Corporation

*GHCC didn't succeed to secure funding in first year

Jones Falls Watershed Association

*Created the Jones Falls Celebration in Sept. 1998 in this year the JFX was closed to traffic and 5,000 people explored the beauty of the Jones Falls watershed.

*Successfully progressing in Jones Falls revitalization.

*Independently managed program.

Neighborhood Action Center:

*Neighborhood advocacy - Council of Presidents of Community Associations (for 40 neighborhood associations) is advocating issues which are shared by neighborhoods, and also represents GH community in Board of Directors of GHCC.

*Great Homewood Interfaith Alliance, representing 30 area churches, established by Greater Homewood Community Corp., collected \$5,000 for local schools and \$11,000 for school supplies and uniforms for area children.

*Future Leaders of Greater Homewood, a teen leadership program.

- *Organizes annual GH Helping Hands Day - „Clean up/ Fix up,, days and „Paint the Town,, days.
- *Charles Village’s Court Watch project is in implementation.
- *Functions as an information resource center for GH neighborhoods (library).

Greater Homewood Community Corporation

- *Business To Business Breakfasts,
- *State-of-the-art computer lab at the Greenmount Recreation Center,
- *25 VISTA volunteers based at the GHCC,
- *Computerized Asset Inventory of the community recourses,
- *Partnership between the Union Memorial Hospital and the Baltimore City Health Department - nurses in 3 GH elementary schools.

Analysis of Greater Homewood Renaissance Process

This part of the case study provides an analysis of the essential phases, which were discern from process participants’ opinions expressed by key players and crucial elements of GHR process during in-depths interviews.

Major Process Successes Identified by Respondents

All interviewed process participants identified *Jones Falls Revitalization* and overall work of *Jones Falls Watershed Association* as a clear success of the process. Jones Falls Revitalization can function as a model for affluent activity, which achieved its full development through organizational support and cooperation with GHCC. Activities targeted on revitalization of Jones Falls have existed prior to the process, are still managed independently, and now benefit from organizational support from GHCC; Jones Falls Watershed Association is not incorporated and does not have 501 (c) (3) status necessary for managing financial aid from donors. Jones Falls Revitalization is also highly successful in providing opportunities for residents’ involvement.

Another process success on which all respondents agreed is significantly increased number of *VISTAS volunteers* working in Greater Homewood community.

Respondents also pointed out *higher involvement* and *increased cooperation among neighborhood organizations and churches* in Greater Homewood. Cooperation among faith communities was institutionalized during the planning process to the *Great Homewood Interfaith Alliance*, and *Council of Presidents of Community Associations* provides today the forum for coordination and cooperation among neighborhood associations.

Another success appreciated by respondents was *high community investment into the planning process, and cross participation in the process*. For most of the respondents new experience of discussions between residents from central and lower Greater Homewood was significant gain of planing process.

Last, but by no means least, success participants identified is the *rebirth of Greater Homewood Community Corporation*. Restructured GHCC much better reflects GH community, recreated board of directors provides substantial space for direct community representation and GHR plan attracted new substantial funding for projects proposed and developed by residents.

In next part I will describe main phases of Greater Homewood Renaissance Process and how participants view them.

Beginnings

Most of the interviewed process's participants agree, that at the beginning of the process the Greater Homewood Community Corporation (GHCC) was an organization with serious problems. At the same time almost all respondents recognized very successful Literacy Program and English for Speakers of Other Languages GHCC project. Critique was mostly targeted on the GHCC functions of integrating and representing Greater Homewood community, which are expected from neighborhood associations' umbrella organization. Respective respondents have indicated various possible causes for difficult situation of GHCC - *„financial starving of the organization,, „poor leadership,,* (of board of directors as well as executive directors) during almost two last decades, poor communication channels with the community, lack of mechanisms to respond to the community organizations and citizens.

Motivation of Johns Hopkins University (Hopkins) initiative at the very beginning of the process was to facilitate reconstruction or recreation of community spirit of GHCC, which was so appealing at the time of it's creation in 70's. For Hopkins GHCC is perceived as a way to target community needs as well as a vehicle for improving Hopkins relations with the Greater Homewood community. Behind financial crises of GHCC Ross Jones recognized the need for substantial change in orientation and structure of organization, and proposed study as the first step and Hopkins contribution.

The demand to *„...remade, reinvent GHCC,, or „... increased capacity of GHCC...,,* didn't come form inside of the organization, and it seemed that *„...Board of Directors was not ready for the process...,,*

Most of the interviewed participants recognized two distinctive processes over the period of time (from the beginning in 1994 until the end of 1997) within Greater Homewood Renaissance (GHR). In a sense these two processes can be understood as two, not complete, circles of analyzing -- planning -- implementing -- and evaluating.

'First' Process (Beginning 1994 - Spring 1997)

Premises, on which the first process was based, could be characterized through following characteristics: rational, linear, problem solving, and experts driven.

Then the process structure of the first process, coming from rational paradigm of planning, looks like this:

Process started with an expert appointed to study and analyze the Greater Homewood, identify problems, and propose issues for working groups. Working groups, created from limited number of local experts and leaders, develop recommendations for solutions and actions, and pass recommendation to the 'implementing team'. The implementing team is then responsible for utilizing recommendations. This rational structure can work only if the implementing institution has sources and authority to carry out implementation - for example in the case of local government using external advisory committees. In case of GHR, implementing institution 1) was not clearly stated; informal 'implementation team' was working on implementation without clearly defined relations and commitments of formal institutions; 2) missed both attributes - access to substantial sources, and authority.

Community involvement

Through difficulties with implementing recommendations, participants most involved in the process recognized the necessity of community involvement. Lack of legitimacy of the process had manifested itself through missing support and „buy into„ proposed recommendations and actions. Random initiatives to involve specific parts of community (faith community, business community) followed as a consequence of missing agreement on the process and strategy for involvement. Negative images of the GHR and bad feelings of those who were not invited are not surprising. However, at least two of community involvement initiatives (Business-to-Business Breakfast and Interfaith Alliance) started during this period and have sustained as important forums in Greater Homewood.

Structure

Following characteristics of individual elements of structure are selected from participants' assessment of first process. These characteristics provide valuable participants' reflection and lesson that they have learned and later used in the second process.

Steering Committee (SC)

- not clear role, random meetings,
- failed to provide leadership in the process,
- missing cross working groups' prioritizing and planning,
- did not tight up community involvement initiatives with the planning,
- not representative of the community.

Working Groups (WG)

- advisory character, limited participation of experts and community leaders,
- self managed, self contained, self sufficient,
- without clearly defined outcome and process,
- without unifying structure - each group decided what they do with the issue; different levels of details and approaches to developing recommendations or projects,

- without stated commitment to implementation.

'Implementation Team'

- according to recommendations, WG provided too many possible directions of action - missing capacity to carry out all the actions,
- missing authority and community stakeholders' support for implementing recommendations.

Participants' reflections on the first process:

„Energy of volunteers is limited. Implementation doesn't work without focused effort and full time staff.,,

„With recommendations from working groups it seemed easy to implement, but it wasn't. There was not enough of reliable data, expertise, and community buy in.,,

„Process missed clear steps leading somewhere.,,

„First process had problems with legitimacy, transparency of decision-making, missing governing structure, and very limited outreach.,,

„There was clear need for new process.,,

'Second' Process (spring 97 - spring 98)

Second process started in the moment when enlarged and reconstructed Steering Committee (SC) decided to give up the old process. SC needed substantial time, six months, to decide which process they apply further. Through discussions and process reviewing with new process co-sponsors and constituencies, SC was able to overcome tension from already invested time, money and effort, and have chosen new, citizens driven planning process demanded by the community.

Goal of the Process

At this point goal of the process was newly stated. *„There were two kinds of goals:*

- outcome goal: agenda on which community will agree***
- process goals: bring together disparate parties in the community, and reunite or replace the structure of GHCC.,,***

It seemed that because the request for organizational change of GHCC did not come from inside of the organization, neither there was an agreement about such a need, process became, to some degree threatening, for GHCC staff and Board of Directors. Therefore understanding the agenda for some of them was also somehow different. *„There were two kinds of agenda - public and hidden... Public agenda was to create climate for bringing new resources to Greater Homewood and involve people into building Greater Homewood... Hidden agenda was, that only a handful of people decided to reorganized GHCC.,,*

Planning Process

Design of the second process was shaped by experience (from the first process, and Charles Village Community Benefit District's experience with community planning in the 1996), and by expertise (Joe McNeely and The Development Training Institute). Originally proposed „fast track,, of process designed for six months (visioning, consensus building, few recommendations, fundraising, and structure) was changed to a broad community involvement design. Twelve parallel visioning meetings in neighborhoods followed by four community-wide meetings were planned as an open forum for Greater Homewood residents. Enlarged and reconstructed Steering Committee was providing leadership and coordination of the process.

From interviews it seems that there are very different experiences and opinions about the second process among participants depending on the level of involvement. Individuals participating in community meeting and task forces have - in general - very positive opinion about the planning process. (More in Community Involvement part.) On the other hand I have found very diverse, even polarized, opinions among SC members and GHR staff.

Second process inherited from the first-one some barriers which were not easy to overcome:

- suspicious and negative perceptions about the GHR, of those not involved, or involved later,
- tension between people participating from beginning and 'new' participants,
- history of personal conflicts (not just from the first process),
- consequent mistrust.

These barriers were manifested much stronger among participants with high stake in the process. To illustrate diversity of opinions, here are some participants' responses to the questions: „Was the GHRP a successful process?,, and „How are you satisfied with the process?,,

„...it was better than I expected... I am thrilled...,,

„...there was very good response [to the process] from the community...,,

„...I am satisfied... but progress is slow...,,

„...[process resulted in] very positive publicity of Greater Homewood...,,

„...[process was] long, powerful, exiting and fun... ,,

„... very important benefit of the process was new configuration of ideas...,,

„...ideas had lives of their own...,,

„...I was skeptical, and I am not surprised...,,

„...process missed the depth in discovering the nature of issues, the issues were just brought to the table and immediately taken for developing actions... there was not enough deliberation...,,

„...process failed...,,

„...process resulted in people divided to winners and losers...,,

„...it was too complicated, too difficult process...,,

„...strategic planning became the end instead of the means...„

Community Involvement

From interviews and from written materials it seems that participants of the first process have learned a very important lesson; that *„broad public involvement is crucial„* for successful process. What they were about to learn in the second process were techniques and methods for community involvement. Neighborhoods visioning meetings, Greater Homewood community meetings, task forces, and random surveys were used as main methods for community involvement. Those who participated in community meetings agree, that meetings were exiting, dynamic, well facilitated, and fun. At the same time, participants also agree, that the participation in meeting was not representative because of diversity (racial and socio-economic) of Greater Homewood community.

Participants Reflections on Community Involvement

„...not representative involvement... just white people. It is very hard to involve new people, especially from neighborhoods where you don't have association ... no contacts on residents who might be involved...„

„...there was effort to include participants from turbulent, poor neighborhoods. We wanted to do things with them, not for them.... we have used community survey to reach out to those neighborhoods...„

„...middle class and north residents mistrust and fear people from south...„

„...one of the most important successes was cross participation in process, discussion between residents from central and lower Greater Homewood... we want to make them [residents from south neighborhoods] part of the solution...„

„...community meetings were high point of the process...„

„...techniques used [in community meetings] were great... there was constant voting, and lots of fun - balloons, sometimes it was silly and childish, but it was very democratic...„

Process Structure, Roles, and Decision-Making

Steering Committee (SC)

The Steering Committee was serving as a primary governance body of GHR. During the second process, reconstructed SC consisted of 31 people; citizens, representatives of institutions and businesses. SC members also represented an even mix between community residents and professionals. From the beginning of 1997 through the end of 1997, SC had meetings regularly, once a month. SC as a primary governance body was responsible for all process decisions. Decisions were made by voting, ground rules were used to overcome mistrust and prevent conflicts in decision making (e.g. decisions must have been backed up by facts - utilizing community surveys done by DTI and Hopkins students). All respondents participating in the first process noticed that clarity in role of SC and transparency of

decisions had improved in the second process. At the same time almost all interviewed SC members pointed out conflicts arising from difficult personalities of participants:

„...process bogged down in personalities...,,

„...it was necessary to displace some people from process -- people not able to accommodate with democratic values...,,

„...roles of people were clouded...,,

„...people in SC didn't trust people in community ...biases about people from community...,,

„...discussion about conflicts was avoided - because of personalities it was not possible to open it...,,

All of SC members which I interviewed identified **'leadership tandem'** -- Ross Jones and Joe McNeely -- as a center of power in the process. Ross Jones, Chair of SC, was mostly viewed as a broker, with personal charisma, more respected and trusted by other SC members than anyone else. Ross Jones's very high personal reputation in *Greater Homewood* community contrasts general view on Hopkins („*Hopkins is suspect in the community*,,). Some participants viewed his role in the GHR as different from his role in Hopkins, others were very conscious of his formal authority, power, and connections -- „*Ross Jones is rain maker*,,.

Consultant -- Joe McNeely

Joe McNeely worked in the second process as a process consultant, leader, facilitator, expert, he was „*bounding process and content*,, and as one of the participants characterized it, he was important „*up front as well as behind the scene*,, Joe McNeely lives and works in the Greater Homewood, at the same time „*he is known more for his advocacy work at national level -- he isn't so involved in Greater Homewood community*,,.

Interviewed participants of the process viewed Joe McNeely's role with an ambiguity:

„... it was hate/ love relationship [with Joe]...,, „...he is a savvy person ...

chameleon...,, „...good politician ... too powerful...,,

„... he has a very strong personality, ... he was able to keep people inside and reach agreement...,,

„... he has neutral position in the community ... especially comparing with perception of Hopkins - Hopkins is suspect in the community...,,

„... he had control over the process, he was directing process very sensibly... he allowed space for chaos...,,

„...he enabled more open discussion ... as well as confrontations...,,

he facilitated process and at the same time he was educating participants - „*sharing strong opinions about issues, and decisions*,,.

„... he was only person who got paid, ... all the money form the grant went for the consultant ... GHCC expectation were not met....,,

Self-reflection:

„Facilitating process like this is a high wire act, and there are things I would not have done without Ross Jones as my safety net.,,

„It was value, not agenda, driven involvement... with values of inclusion and democracy ...we [with Ross Jones] didn't have personal stake in the outcomes.,,

Staff

Many of interviewed participants pointed out the crucial role of process staff. During the process there were many of practical things to be done that needed focused effort of full time staff. Participants especially recognized the role of Janet Sanfilippo, who did *„a superb job of facilitating the process without forcing agenda.,,* Community representatives appreciated her ability to listen and learn from their opinions, and bridge community and SC needs. All of the participants viewed her as a credible and respected ally.

Task Forces

Most of the planning work for Greater Homewood was done through eight task forces ranging from 8 to 45 participants. Task forces were working during the period of five months. Individual task forces met between 3 and 11 times.

Based on the lesson-learned from working groups, task forces had clearly defined role from the very beginning, linkages to other task forces, and participation open to interested residents.

Task forces role in the process was to identify and plan programs and projects that will address selected community issue assigned to individual task force. One possible area of improvement of task forces role is utilization of resources represented in task forces through stated commitment to implementation of individual participants as well as whole task forces.

Task forces had clearly defined outcome (projects) and process through which projects for implementation are to be chosen. Unifying structure, and inter-connections with other task forces helped to coordinate projects of all task forces also according to the targeted geographic area of projects. At the same time task forces were self-managed and independent.

Participation of task forces was open, and represented mix of professionals and community residents. As mentioned before about overall process, also in task forces African American residents of GH were under-represented.

Decision-making

From interviews I have identified three main levels of decision-making:

1. *Structural decision -- about who will decide what, framing options for decisions, framing issues.* These decisions were made mostly between Joe McNeely (consultant), Ross Jones (SC chair) and Janet Sanfilippo (GHR staff).
2. *Decisions about what process will be applied in community, what steps, framing vision, framing strategies.* SC made these decisions (together with staff) directly, or approved recommended choice of appointed special committee.

3. *Decisions about projects.* Task forces made choices about what projects they propose, and community through prioritizing and voting decided which projects should be implemented. Residents through community meetings also first commented and then ratified vision statement.

All participants recognized the decision about *implementation structure* as a crucial point in the process. The decision about implementation was framed as a choice between 1) endorsing GHCC with substantial changes in its structure, and 2) establishing new single organization, which will implement GHRP. In fact it was decision about future of GHCC which was made from outside the organization. Although the Board of Directors was 'in charge' of GHCC, it did not have much choices in case of accepting structural changes recommended by Implementation Structure Committee. It was crystal clear, that if GHCC is not appointed to implement GHRP, it will lose its constituencies as well as funding possibilities. So even Board of Directors refused to make structural changes at first, later second attempt succeeded, and Board agreed to significantly change its composition. Resignation of Executive Director of GHCC followed.

Implementation

Interviewed process participants share some degree of disappointment with implementation. One aspect of the disappointment is lack of information about what is happening with THEIR projects, what was already implemented, and how. Another aspect, even more important is, that residents contributing during the planning are not connected, do not participate in implementation. One of the participants described it this way:

„In short term there was high point in the process -- 4 very participatory public meetings -- and then fast drop off and disappointment. For example following Annual conference of GHCC after planning process was few times rescheduled according the Governor schedule, so not many people participated, ...and it was listening to speeches, ...there was not enough space for discussion ...„

These are areas of problems with implementation most often identified by participants:

Missing Continuity Between Planning and Implementation:

GHCC

New executive director, new staff, more or less new board of directors, and unfulfilled need for DTI continuing involvement in implementation. No one from key persons (leaders) in process -- Ross Jones, Joe McNeely and Janet Sanfilippo --is involved anymore.

Stronger directions from GHCC Board of Directors would be needed. Half of the Board is from Council of Presidents, which mean they represent Grater Homewood community. *Most of the board members have little experience with working as a member of NGO's board of directors.*

GHCC is not visible enough in community - Odette is doing good job, but it's not enough -- just one person.

The Greater Homewood Renaissance Plan - brochure - doesn't reflect the process, its more marketing tool then a community plan...

Dilemma of professional (VISTA) volunteers and grassroots volunteers

Some citizens participated in the process with expectation to donate their time and energy in long term, even to give up some other activities which they were involve in, and they energy was not harvested. Work is done by VISTAS, residents are involved in very limited way.

Task groups, if they sustained, have changed their character from creating and contributing, to listening to VISTA volunteers reports

Aspirations - capacity

- ‘*Projects were to ambitious, not realistic, without real assessment about finances, organizational and human resources*’,
- contrast between aspiration and raced expectation and delivery,*
- conflict between abstract expertise and reality.*

Almost all projects in implementation are modified through action planning by GHCC staff and VISTAs. Adjusting plans is an inevitable part of implementation, however, the mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and tracking of implementation was not part of the Grater Homewood Plan. Consequently, current practice of GHCC staff in deciding about changes is lacking transparency, legitimacy and connection to previous planning process.

Funding

- Hopkins delayed financial support which was promised*
- GHR didn't develop sufficient funding strategy during the planning process -- new forms of creating income like membership, community foundation etc.*

Critical Aspects of the GHR Process Identified by Participants

All interviewed participants identified *broad public involvement* as crucial element of the process. They also pointed out that broad public involvement is not only critical but also possible. To be able to achieve substantial level of participation, knowledge and skills in proven public involvement techniques play substantial role.

According to participants *Steering Committee* played critical role in *reaching to the Greater Homewood community*.

Skilled and experienced facilitator was identified as another critical element of the process. Specific skills discerned for effective process facilitation were *process - content capabilities*, which enable facilitator responsibly navigate the process. Some respondents also identified as a necessary element of GHR process the *broker role* of Ross Jones.

Many of interviewed participants also pointed out the crucial role of focused effort of full time staff.

Some of the participants especially stressed the importance of the premises form which the process is driven. They recommended process driven by values rather than agenda. Greater Homewood Renaissance process was based on values of democracy and citizens involvement.

Conclusions

We can examine Greater Homewood Renaissance through comparing process achievements with process goals. From this point of view, Greater Homewood Renaissance accomplished what process initiators and champions intended. Greater Homewood has an *agenda on which community agree*, and community created this agenda through *open process of listening, choosing priorities, and strategic planning, they distilled vision for a great community* and they also have *practical plans for action*. Also *the structure of GHCC was replaced*.

Another point of view through which we can examine GHR is based on explicit and implicit values and principles that characterize community-building processes. This point of view might help us understand better why most of the process participants (whom I interviewed) are at least partly disappointed with today's reality of Greater Homewood Renaissance, as well as why the implementation in the first year achieved less than a half of originally planned tasks.

In this part of the case study I will try to provide some hints to these questions.

Initial Community Characteristics and Process Timing

Two of key factors characteristic for successful community building efforts identified by many scholars were *motivation from within the community* and *community awareness of an issue* (Mattessich, Monsey, Roy, 1997). Both factors essentially mean that successful efforts is more likely to occur in communities where residents themselves recognize the need for some kind of initiative, and issue to be addressed is important for, or effects enough of residents.

If we look at motivations and issues, which triggered GHR (the first process), we can find many with the same characteristic - all of them were anything but community initiated or chosen. Motivations came from individuals and organizations, and experts chose issues. To summarize, the demand for the first process did not come from the community. (Which does not mean there were not opportunities and different approaches for effective community building or problem addressing programs.) Participatory visioning and strategic planning of second process was much closer to what community was asking for, but still some of the interviewed participants expressed doubts whether the time for community wide process was right.

Related elements are *existing, identifiable community leadership* and *continual emergence of leaders* during the process (Mattessich, Monsey, Roy, 1997). To succeed, it is important to be able first to identify, and then involve community leadership in the process. Most of the scholars advise that community leadership should be represented in *stakeholder group*, which then shapes the process. I was not able to allocate community leadership visibly participating in the process. Also programs to support emergence of community leaders were missing prior or along way to the process. Lack of community leadership was not so obvious during the planning as it is now, when plans need to be implemented.

Last critical element, which I want to mention in this section, is *trust* among community members, organizations, and also between community and process conveyor. Trust relies in previous positive experiences with networking, coordination and collaboration. Greater Homewood community has experience with successful collaboration, this experience is more than 20 years old, though. For many of today's community residents and process participants collaboration tradition was forgotten, and covered by resent conflicts. Trust needed to be recreated. Reconstructing trust

is slow and delicate process. In following section I will describe few principles applying of which helps to build trust.

Process Characteristics

Progression from *simple to complex activities*, and *focus on product* (accomplishments, and actions) *and process* (building relationships, and planning) concurrently (Mattessich, Monsey, Roy, 1997)¹⁸ are two principles which usually help to build and sustain community willingness and support for a long term process. Good example of applying these two principles is Operation ReachOut-SouthWest initiative described in the first case study.

In many ways, the implementation of GHR is now starting from simpler actions than were planned, proceeding in small steps. But because the expectations were raised very high during the planning, disappointment follows. Implementing actions along side with planning helps to test capacities and plans' feasibility constantly.

Necessity of *widespread participation in the process* was clearly identified by process participants. Participants were continuous of the need for representative participation, and even if they did not succeed completely, effort was present. Some participants also recognized the need for continuous participation, bridging planning and implementation. Through Greater Homewood Renaissance Declaration of Community (see appendix) created during the process, participants expressed desire to „actively participate in efforts to solve problems and confront the challenges facing our community,.. But this important element was not effectively transformed to the implementation mechanism of GHR.

Another element of successful efforts identified by various scholars is *assets-based, or assets-oriented initiative* (Kretzmann, McKnight, 1996, Knigsley, McNeely, Gibson, 1996, Wallis, 1996). Core of this element is focusing on assets, resources and opportunities existing in the community and the ways how to identify, grow, mobilize and utilize them for community benefit instead of just problem solving orientation which is focused on elimination of problems. According to my information GHR process did not involve community assets identification, and consequently was not able to benefit from various community resources.

Very closely related aspect is the *right mix of resources* (Mattessich, Monsey, Roy, 1997). I will look just at one aspect of resources -- *sources of resources*. Successful efforts more likely occur in situations where community residents themselves put forth some of the funds necessary to finance the effort. Greater Homewood residents were not asked to do so.

Monitoring, evaluating, and tracking

Last element, which I want to point out, is mechanism for monitoring, evaluating, and tracking of implementation. Especially for implementation with long-term outcomes, effective mechanism for monitoring and evaluation is crucial. Measuring interim outcomes and progress of individual programs allows implementation to reflect successes as well as areas for improvements. It also helps implementator to recognize changes in environment, stakeholders and goals. Effective mechanism should allow modification and tracking of implementation. In participatory processes transparency of monitoring and tracking mechanism play important role. I was not able to identify any monitoring and tracking mechanism in place in GHR implementation.

Some Ideas for Follow-up

GHR achieved many positive changes in Greater Homewood community. It is the task for GHCC, DTI as well as for other institutions and individuals involved in GHR to learn from the experience, replicate 'models' which proved to be successful, and continuously improve plans as well as implementation.

Through the interview, DTI representatives expressed interest in further involvement in GHR, at the same time participants from GHCC expressed the demand for continuing involvement of DTI. I suppose that DTI might help GHCC to identify the essence of Jones Falls Revitalization success and also propose the ways through which this essence could be replicated in for other programs.

Another achievements, which can be built on and multiplied, are neighborhood mobilizing in Barclay and community organizing through annual Helping Hands Day. These activities are highly visible and provide common opportunities for involvement of the residents.

Final idea, which I would like to put in the attention of GHCC and DTI, is recreating or reactivating of the task forces. Sooner or later GHCC will need to renew GHR plan in legitimate manner. In my opinion, task forces could provide the vehicle for continuing process tracking. What needs to be done is to recreate task forces from former, still interested, as well as new participants, and re-define task force role according to implementation stage of the process.

CASE STUDY III: HOWARD COUNTY – A UNITED VISION

Introduction

The Howard County – A United Vision case study is being written while the planning process is still in its first phase. Because of the early planning stage of the process, the stakeholders are just about to formulate the community vision, I adjusted focus and research method for this case. To research Howard County process I have observed six meetings of Coordination and Outreach Committees, four stakeholders' meetings and one county-wide meeting, all in five months time, between January and May 1998. At the same time I have discussed process with one of the process facilitators, Jarle Crocker. The stage of the process and research method makes this study different from two previous.

The case study approaches the Howard County process by first introducing the context of planning process, then proceeds to description of planning process and to analytical part dealing with essential elements of the first stage of process and finally concludes with a summary of main features of the Howard County process.

Selected characteristics of Howard County

Total population of Howard County in 1995	218,030
Race population characteristics of Howard County, 1995	81.5% white 18.5% nonwhite
Median household income, 1999	\$ 68,800
Unemployment rate, 1999	2.5%

Howard County is located in the Washington D. C.--Baltimore corridor, administratively belongs to Baltimore region, but is dominated by influence of Washington D.C. Howard County is the richest county of all Baltimore Counties, with very sophisticated residency and community life. Development of Columbia provides the most important source of this sophistication.

Columbia Tradition

Columbia is Howard County's biggest city and, with today population of approximately 90,000, it represents almost half of Howard County inhabitants. Columbia is unique, consciously build rational city. In the 1960s James Rouse started to build Columbia to fulfill his vision of a city planned and developed by professionals from every field of knowledge concerned with urban development. The Columbia's planning-development team included at the outset, on a continuing basis, urban planners and designers, economists, mortgage bankers, real estate developers, architects, landscape architects, marketing and scheduling professionals, as well as experts on nursery schools and day care centers, housing, recreation, health, and church, and a psychologist. Their task was to create a city that will 1) provide social and physical environment which would work for people and nurse human growth; 2) preserve and enhance the qualities of the land as built; and

3) as a venture of private capital, make profit in the development and sale of land. The evolution of Columbia, whose developers seek to balance social goals and private profit, is interesting and valuable social experiment to observe.¹⁹

Another unique aspect of the Columbia is its governance structure. The Columbia Association is a community-controlled, private, nonprofit corporation every landowner belongs to and is assessed by the covenants on his property. The Columbia Association functions as the alter ego to the County government. The Columbia Association is governed by its Board of Directors, which is composed of 10 Columbia Council representatives; one elected from each of Columbia's villages and a Town Center. The Columbia Association maintains and operates open space, lakes, parks, sport facilities, community and neighborhood centers, and the Columbia Art Center. The Columbia Association has more than a dozen community-based committees involving over 118 individuals.²⁰

My reason for describing the history and governance of Columbia is that rich community heritage significantly shapes the process and provides base for community building and strategic planning efforts.

In following part I will describe selected realities and trends influencing Howard County. Selected trends and realities were identified by A United Vision stakeholders at stakeholders and countywide meetings.

Community Identity

Real and perceived differences between Columbia and the rest of Howard County have had a long tradition. Columbia residents used to have, and still have, strong identity of belonging to the exceptional Columbia community. Residents of „the rest,, of Howard County don't have such source of pride, which would match Jim Rouse's vision of Columbia. The differences are decreasing over the years but still create a barrier to better community relationships and efforts to solve countywide problems.

Growth and Development

Population of Howard County has surged to about 230,000 from 36,000 in the early 1960s, and has doubled since 1980. Fast trend of growth illustrated by these figures makes residents consider what consequences the over-development of the county will have on the environment and overall quality of life. Residents are concerned whether all of them will equally share the benefits of growth, what influence will growth have on open space and farmland, and whether continued growth will actually create economic benefits for the community. Residents also want to prepare strategies for further economic development of Columbia after it reaches anticipated „built-out,, shape. (100,000 residents are target population of Columbia.)

Aging Population

In the next several decades, the number of residents of Howard County over the age of 65 is expected to increase significantly. Seniors can be a valuable resource in the community; they can offer skills, time, and energy. At the same time residents feel that now is the time to discuss issue of „graying,, population, to ensure a high quality of life for elderly residents in the future (social services, health care, housing, transportation).

Diversity

Racial, cultural and socio-economic diversity is seen as an important heritage of James Rouse’s vision of Columbia, but maybe disappearing by influx of new residents. At the same time trends in immigration are demographically changing Howard County. Significant challenge for the near future is to renew the identity of the county through providing equal opportunities and involving all diverse groups of Howard County community. A variety of concerns exist about how the growing diversity of the county can be used as a source of strength instead of becoming a source of conflict.

High level of education, tradition of a strong commitment to the community, and diversity of residents, are seen as valuable assets that need to be nurtured for benefit of the whole community. Howard County also needs to create more specific opportunities for young people to motivate them to stay and contribute to the community.

United Vision stakeholders expressed concern that influence of the business community in the civic and political life of the county is not balanced by other sectors; nonprofits, civic organizations, community groups. They would like to see the community having a „fair say,, in community affairs.

Following part of the case study provides basic information, describes initiation, planning and governing structures, and decision-making procedures of Howard County process.

Basic information about Howard County – A United Vision

Goal of the process:

Howard County – A United Vision is a countywide, grassroots visioning and long-range planning project, designed to bring together all diverse members, interests and perspectives in the County to craft a vision for its future, and to develop the goals and actions necessary to make that vision a reality.

At the end of the process, Howard County – A United Vision will have a working public document that represents a consensus-based vision of County. The vision will reflect the public’s agenda and will consist of specific action plans with measurable objectives, each owned by a sector of the community: business, government, nonprofit groups, or individuals. All the citizens will become ‘co-owners’ of public agenda. ²¹

Target community: whole Howard County

Length of the process: Initiating Committee started to meet in October 1998, implementation plans should be developed by the October 1999

Number and type of participants: Coordinating and Outreach Committee -- app. 20 residents, stakeholders group -- vary according to meeting between 130 and 180 stakeholders (total list of stakeholders includes app. 250 names), first countywide meeting participants - 125 residents

Facilitator/s, facilitator. Organization:	Program for Community Problem Solving - a division of the National Civic League (NCL), facilitators: Christine Benero, Jarle P. Crocker, William H. Schechter
Convening organization:	Howard County – A United Vision Project of Association of Community Services
Co-chairs:	Sandra Gray, vice president of Leadership for Independent Sector, and a board member of The Columbia Foundation Chuck Ecker, former Howard County executive

Initiation

The initial sponsor of Howard County – A United Vision was the Columbia Foundation's Community Needs Committee. The committee began by meeting with Howard County community leaders and newcomers to solicit their views on the county future - important trends, preferred directions, and pressing issues. While each group mentioned specifics, they also expressed shared concern about county lacking unifying sense of community. At that point the Foundation began to work with the NCL to coordinate and launch visioning process.

Planning Process

The Initiating Committee of 18 people, facilitated by NCL, began to work in October, 1998. This committee, representing diverse groups in community, met four times to concentrate on identifying sources of support, staffing, and community outreach.

By January 1999, the project had evolved into a Coordinating Committee and an Outreach Committee, staff was hired, and it had arranged for the Association of Community Services to be its fiscal agent. The project also raised funds. The Columbia Foundation provided seed funding and two and a half dozens of other institutions have contributed so far.

By the end of January, the group had recruited chairs and developed a list of citizen 'stakeholders' representing different perspectives, views, and interests from all sectors of the county.

Coordinating Committee adopted The National Civic League design of the process, which will have the stakeholders meeting on regular basis, twelve times altogether, every three weeks, from March to October 1999. All meetings are open to all citizens and public.

Adopted process has three stages:

Stage One: Finding out where we are as a community

- **Coming together as a community** -- Stakeholders Kickoff Meeting (March 2)
 - * Introducing the visioning and planning process; process rationale, and structure - stages and steps, roles of stakeholders, committees and NCL,
 - * energizing Howard County community to contribute to the process,
 - * starting to build a shared picture of the community; Howard County strengths and challenges.

- **Identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and treats facing Howard County** -- SWOT Analysis (March 23)
 - * Assessing the County - presentations of experts about strengths, weaknesses and trends,
 - * building on discussion started at the first meeting - opportunities and treats facing the County.
- **Howard County - A United Vision Community Meeting** -- First Countywide Community Meeting (April 7)
 - * Providing Howard County's residents with basic information about the process,
 - * listen to the residents' ideas about issues, which need to be addressed in Howard County.
- **Mapping the „civic infrastructure,, of Howard County** -- Using the Civic Index Survey, tool developed by NCL (April 13)
 - * Assessing Howard Country's „civic infrastructure,, - community's capacities and competencies for collaboration in addressing community issues (citizen participation, community leadership, government performance, volunteering and philanthropy, inter-group relation, civic education, information sharing, capacity for cooperation and consensus building, community vision and pride, and inter-community cooperation).
- **Building a Vision** -- Defining a vision statement to guide action (May 4)
 - * Building shared understanding of how the vision relates to the strategies and actions to be developed later,
 - * developing ideas for vision statement,
 - * choosing representatives to draft vision statement to be presented at the following meeting.

Plan of meetings until the end of October 1999 as follows:

Stage Two: Defining where we want to go as a community

- **Finalizing Vision Statement and identifying 5-10 important areas/ issues for action** -- Key Performance Areas (May 25).
- **Organizing the stakeholder group into work teams around each Key Performance Area - KPA** (June 15).

Stage Three: Planning for implementation

During the last six meetings, the work teams will develop action plans by reaching out to partner with other key institutions and individuals in Howard County. These plans will detail specific steps that need to be taken to achieve the vision. Meetings, both regularly scheduled stakeholders meetings and KPA work group meetings, will include:

Information Gathering and Reporting

Networking

Defining Desired Outcomes

Designing Action Plans

Planning Implementation

Planned Stakeholders meetings:

- **Plan for Community Collaboration** -- Engaging other community stakeholders to partner with work teams (July 6 and July 27).
- **Create consensus on Action Plans** -- Defining specific actions, in collaboration with other stakeholders, for key performance areas (August 17 and September 7).
- **Design Implementation Plans** -- Work teams and other community stakeholders design implementation plans (September 28).
- **Finalize Implementation Plans** -- Conclude implementation stage and plan community celebration (October 19).

Governing Structure, Roles, and Decision Making

Stakeholders Group

- Is main decision making body about the process content.
- Collaboratively develops a vision of Howard County,
- will choose from five to ten key performance areas,
- will break into task forces to identify main issues for every key performance area of the community to focus its efforts.

Task Forces - will be created later in the process

- In stage three, working closely with all County residents will establish specific, measurable objectives, and will work in partnership with the appropriate agencies, organizations, and individuals to achieve these mandates.

Coordinating Committee

- Designs, in cooperation with facilitators, individual stakeholders meetings.
- Functions as check point for process. 'Test' tasks and exercises, which then are adapted for stakeholders meeting. Provides the link between stakeholders' feedback and design of meetings, making sure the process meets stakeholders' needs.
- Proposes and creates additional committees and temporary working groups.
- Members of Coordination Committee facilitate small groups -- individual tables during stakeholders meetings.

Outreach Committee

- Engages diversity of the county residents and makes sure that stakeholder group is representative of Howard County.

- Is charged with keeping the community informed about the process, and soliciting opinions on issues.
- Designs strategies for two-way communication between diverse groups in Howard County and the process.
- Members of Outreach Committee facilitate small groups -- individual tables during stakeholders meetings.

Co-chairs

- In turn, they chair the Coordination and Outreach Committees.
- Together they chair stakeholders meetings.
- Represent process in the public and press; act as spokespersons for the effort.
- Act as a bridge builders and managers of conflicts within the process, and model behavior for the entire effort.

Facilitators

- Work with the Committees, two co-chairs, and project director to design and manage meetings.
- Propose design of whole process and individual meetings.
- Facilitate meetings of Coordination and Outreach Committees, and stakeholders meetings.
- Advise on procesual aspects of planing, provide contacts and examples of similar processes from other parts of the United States.
- Summarize and write notes from all meetings.

Staff

- Project director and project assistant organize all the meetings (committees, stakeholders, and county) -- all logistics.
- Coordinate all activities -- meetings of committees and working groups, relationships with institutions and media, fundraising.
- Function as a contact point -- provide information about effort to all interested people.
- Report to the co-chairs and to two committees.

Decision Making

Opposed to a „majority rule,, method, a visioning process works to gather multiple views and shape them into a consensus that meets the needs of interests of the community as a whole. Instead of starting with a debate over „positions,, - specific actions - stakeholders begin by learning each other’s underlying interests and values. It should be stressed that it takes time, especially since it requires a public dialogue that goes beyond „sound bites,, and superficial discussion. However, once this process is complete, the decisions that are made are more durable because

they have the support of a broad cross section of the community.²²

Analysis of Howard County - A United Vision

Visioning process in Howard County is the largest of three cases, which I studied in Baltimore. Stakeholders are planning for the largest area and population, through the largest regular meetings. Another feature, which significantly shapes the process, is sophistication of participants. Residents participating in the Howard County process, especially in comparison with two previous cases, have high level of education, rather high income, and substantial experience with participating processes. To deal with large size of the process and residents with high expectations of rational or even scientific approach to the community issues, professional facilitators use precise, proven process structure and tools developed by National Civic League. Related to the size of the stakeholders' group, the whole process, as well as individual meetings, is more structured than in two previous cases.

First stage of the planning process, reflected in this case study, is generally characteristic by its divergent nature. It means that the goal of this phase is not decision itself but rather creation of trust, shared base of information and understanding of the community current situation and trends, and large pool of community issues developed by participants. Later in the process stakeholders will choose key areas from these issues and address them through task forces.

Key Elements of the First Stage of Howard County - A United Vision Process

Citizens Involvement/ Public Outreach

From very beginning the members of Initiating Committee (and later Coordination and Outreach Committees) have approached citizens' involvement in the process with acknowledging its strategic importance. To achieve process' credibility, the Outreach Committee designs strategies to reach out to the Howard County community for representative participation of stakeholders, and for creating broad awareness about the visioning process and participation possibilities. Here are main public outreach approaches and methods used in Howard County:

- *Build relationships with main media in Howard County to achieve broad coverage of the process. Since Stakeholders Kickoff Meeting, media representatives are an integral part of the process. They are specially invited to observe and report on each stakeholders' and countywide meeting.
- *Build relationships with diverse institutions in Howard County to inform them about the process and to gain their support during the planning and implementation phases. Representatives of diverse institutions are invited to participate, but rather as private citizens than „official,, agents. Equally important is to coordinate with other ongoing processes. Good example is a process of creating the General Plan for Howard County, which has just started, and one of the Coordination Committee members has been appointed to chair the process.
- *Assure that citizens have easy accessibility to all information about the process. A United Vision project has established a phone line to provide answers to all questions related to the process. This phone line operates since Stakeholders Kickoff Meeting and is broadly used by stakeholders and other residents. Another important source of information for residents is regularly updated A United Vision

web site, also operating from the very beginning of the process. Project staff is now preparing first issue of A United Vision Newsletter.

*The countywide meeting is another citizen's involvement method used in Howard County process. First Countywide meeting served for introducing the visioning process to the residents as well as for receiving their input on issues important for the Howard County's future.

*Reach out to specific communities, which are underrepresented in the process. The Speakers Bureau was created to organize individual meetings within specific communities and groups to provide input opportunity for residents who otherwise would not be involved.

Stakeholders Group

Representativeness of Stakeholders Group, Credibility, and Authority of the Process

In a visioning process, authority comes from the ability of stakeholders successfully build consensus among individual residents, organizations, and institutions in the community. To enable community acceptance of the process and community-wide consensus, creating representative and credible stakeholders group is crucially important.

A United Vision stakeholders group was created to include people whose interests cut across a variety of areas, and who, as best as possible, could represent the diversity of Howard County. The effort to assure representative participation is continuous task for both, Coordination and Outreach Committees. Committees succeeded in making everyone, Committees' members as well as stakeholders, responsible for searching for and involvement of 'missing' parts of the community.

All stakeholders are invited to participate in the visioning process as private citizens, not „official,, representatives of an organization, group, or institution.

Inclusiveness

Another important principle related to process participation is inclusiveness. Through deliberation before Kickoff Meeting Committees', members decided to open planning process to everyone interested, even though they were afraid the stakeholders group will be hard to manage. This decision has proved to be very wise. Committees' members have learned that they don't have to be afraid of over participation at stakeholders meetings. Together about 200 stakeholders and guests participated at Kickoff Meeting. After fourth meeting it seemed that participation has stabilized at about 130 stakeholders. Only distinction between stakeholders and guests is that stakeholders have committed themselves to participate in all stakeholders meetings until the end of October unlike guests who participate equally in the meeting activities. Stakeholders' commitment is useful to assure continuity of the process.

Facilitation of the Meetings

Successful management of the stakeholders group of approximately 150 various people is not an easy task to achieve. Especially if the goal is to produce community

plan on which everybody will not just agree, but will commit to implement. Let us examine what kinds of tools the Howard County process uses to fulfill this task.

Careful preparation of the meeting agenda is one of the clues. Committees' members together with professional facilitators design agenda for each stakeholders' meeting, which provides strong structure to assure effectiveness of the meeting. To balance restrains of strong meeting structure it is critical to create enough space for face-to-face discussion. In Howard County process it is realized through 'table' discussions (no more than ten people). Committees' members facilitate table discussions. The members of Committees are very advanced, which means that they have advanced communication skills, they trust the structure designed by professional facilitators, and seem to be comfortable in facilitator's role.

Another tool which helps to facilitate a discussion in small as well as in a large group are ground rules established at second stakeholders' meeting (see appendix).

Substantial role of community members in facilitating the meetings develops community ownership of the process. A United Vision Co-chairs are highly visible during stakeholders' meetings. Besides facilitating small groups, they open the meeting, introduce agenda, explain tasks to be accomplished during the meeting, and at the end close the meeting.

From process point of view I find interesting the procedure for developing issues. Issues are what most of the residents are interested in. In Howard County, process developing of issues started from the first stakeholders' meeting and in some form continues at all meetings. Even though development of issues was not so far a separated task of the stakeholders' meeting, participants already have various opportunities for discussing and prioritizing of the issues. This gradual process allows participants to deliberate, digest, and then choose what is really important for their community using not just meeting time but also time between the meetings. Also residents not participating at the meetings can express their opinions about issues at A United Vision web side. They can find on the web side already proposed issues, and they can also vote for those they prefer.

Conclusions

Howard County - A United Vision is large and smart process. Its proactive nature allows participants to plan for the future free from struggling with immediate problems. Main features of the first stage of the process are: collaborative, inclusive, credible, and responsive.

It is hard to imagine process as large as Howard County - A United Vision without experienced and skilled facilitators in both, designing and facilitating of the visioning processes. In Howard County process responsibilities for process and content are clearly separated. County residents have all the necessary capacity to address the process content. Facilitators' responsibility is to find the right balance between structure and directiveness to assure process' effectiveness, and flexibility to respect demands and expectations of participants. Equally important are facilitator abilities to work with small as well as large groups' dynamics.

Howard County process uses precise structure of the process and tools developed by professionals. It safes lot of time and energy especially of Committees' members, but it is only possible because participants trust the process, National Civic League and facilitators' expertise. In communities with not such expert' trusting

culture, situation might be very different. In Howard County process participants' understanding of the whole process and reasons for individual tasks is built gradually; only facilitators have a clear picture from the very beginning. In more reactive communities with higher expectations for fast change or visible product, participants need to know more about the process from the beginning. Otherwise minor problem, misunderstanding or dissatisfaction with the process might easily destroy the whole strategic planning effort.

In the Howard County process, Coordination and Outreach Committees provide facilitative leadership (Schwartz, 1994)²³ of the process. They share information, control and power over the process with stakeholders which empowers stakeholders to make free and informed choices. Sharing of control leads to internal commitment of participants, increases responsibility and ownership, and creates conditions for mutual learning. Facilitative leadership of Committees' members reflects and clearly communicates core values of the process: collaboration, commitment, and partnership to the community.

Howard County - A United Vision has already built its own identity. Identity of progress, rationality, participation, proactiveness, and at the same time protectiveness of community's traditions and heritage. Outward image of the process created through Co-chairs and Committees' members' presentations, web site, and flyers, and inward culture and rituals of the meetings mediated the establishment of this identity. Strong identity helps to keep residents already participating involved, and at the same time it might discourage potential participants who don't fit. It's important to establish permanent communication channels also for those who, for whatever reason, won't participate directly. In Howard County process Speakers Bureau was established to accomplish this task.

Howard County is in its first stage, and most of the work must yet be done. But process itself has already built foundations that promise authority and credibility to future process decisions and actions.

¹References

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⁵ adapted from Kelly, M. Patricia Fernandez (1996). „Comprehensive profile of Greater Homewood,“ IPS

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The Greater Homewood Renaissance Plan, published by GHCC in the end of the process in 1998

¹¹ description of GHR process aim used in ‘second’ process - in 1997

¹² data from Paige Hull: Hope, Citizen Renewal, and Organizational Structure: The GHR a Case Study in Community participation and Building Citizenship

¹³ Kelly (1996).

¹⁴ How did The Grater Homewood Renaissance start?, The Greater Homewood Renaissance, May 1997, Issue No. I

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¹⁶ Renaissance Process Supports Comprehensive Community Building, Key Notes, Greater Homewood Community Corporation, INC., November/ December 1997, Volume 28, No. 2

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¹⁹ adapted from: Hoppenfeld, Morton: The Columbia Process, The Potential for New Towns; The Garden City Press Limited

²⁰ adapted form The CA Guide, Columbia Association’s Handbook for Residents

²¹ adopted form „Stakeholder Briefing Book’ materials, each stakeholders received ‘stakeholder folder’ at the first meeting, and continuously receives additional materials

²² adopted form „Stakeholder Briefing Book’ materials

²³ Schwars, Roger M. (1994) „The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups,„ Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco