

Executive Summary

Policy Question

Given the large number of congregations in their planning area how can PACT best engage the faith community in the work to revitalize the Near East Side of Columbus, OH

Recommendations

This set of recommendations comprises a strategy that is primarily concerned with the goal of creating participatory democratic structures in the Near East Side.

The following recommendations are offered for consideration to Partners Achieving Community Transformation.

- 1. Expand PACT's Staff Capacity**
- 2. Create a Small Projects Matching Fund**
- 3. Train Faith Leaders to Engage Community Members**
- 4. Update the PACT Homepage**
- 5. Partner with Congregations for School Based Programming**
- 6. Conduct One on Ones with Congregational Leaders**

Client

Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT) is a partnership between the City of Columbus, Ohio State University (OSU), the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), and Near East Side (NES) stakeholders. This partnership was formed in 2010 with the overarching goals of enhancing the quality of life and fostering healthy community revitalization in the NES. The PACT planning area is an 800 acre subsection of the larger NES.

Context

PACT is particularly interested in building partnerships with the NES faith community. The PACT planning area contains thirty-seven Christian churches, the largest Jewish synagogue in the city, and an Islamic Cultural Center. PACT staff members believe that great potential for partnership exists within the NES faith community.

Congregations in Neighborhood and Community Development

There are five primary means of working for community transformation that congregations can undertake. They are:

1. Evangelism
2. Social services
3. Advocacy
4. Community organizing
5. Community development

Congregations should not be viewed as simply another cog in the wheel of partnership building as they are uniquely suited for several roles in neighborhood and community development. There are nine roles congregations are uniquely suited for:

- Convener and Organizing Force
- Articulators of a Community Vision
- Legitimater
- Advocate
- Link to Potential Partners
- Sustainer
- Steward and Trustee
- Developer and Manager
- Resource Provider

Participatory Democracy

Participatory democracy is a form of governance in which *all of the people* govern themselves in at least *some public matters* at least *some of the time*. The term “democracy” should not be understood solely as referring to the sphere of government and electoral politics. Any field that is concerned with reinvigorating civic participation may adopt participatory democratic practices.

The Kettering Foundation defines democratic practices as ways citizens can work together—even when they disagree—to solve shared problems. Democratic practices are integral to the governance of partnerships in collaborative spaces where public, private, nonprofit, and faith institutions join together to shape, make, and implement public policy.

Case Studies

Seattle, WA: Department of Neighborhoods

Cupertino, CA: The Cupertino Community Project

Perspective of NES Congregations

For the purposes of this report a cross section of twenty-three congregations was created that represented three religious traditions and each of the nineteen Christian denominations represented in the PACT geography. 30-45 minute interviews were scheduled with 10 of these congregations representing a 43% response rate. This sample size is too small to extrapolate findings beyond the ten congregations interviewed.

All of the congregations reported having active outreach programs and ministries. They reported a total of thirty eight different programs. These programs are primarily social service in nature, accounting for 63% of all of the programs. They also reported a total of sixteen outreach programs they would like to initiate. Half of these programs were advocacy, community organizing, or community development in nature whereas only 8% of the programming currently conducted fall in those three categories.

Overall, the ten congregations I spoke to have a primarily positive view of PACT. There were, however, some critical comments primarily regarding lapses in communication. Several of the leaders were dismayed at the lack of communication since the implementation phase started. Others are wondering if their contributions to the Strategic Planning Process made a difference to the work PACT is doing.