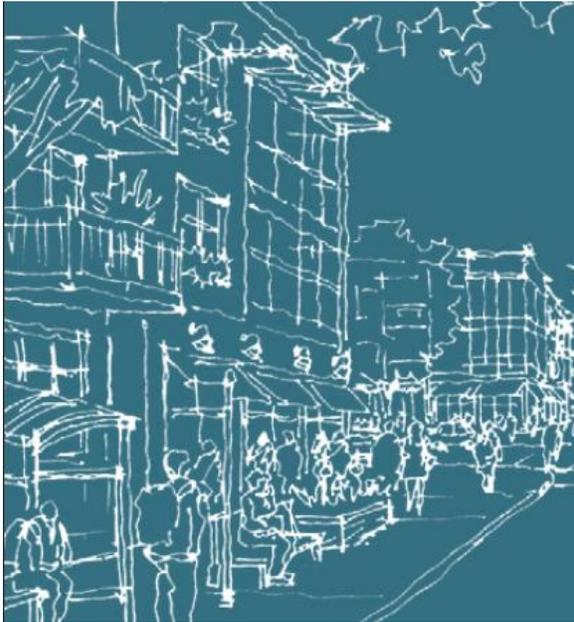


Let's Make a PACT:

Engaging Congregations in Neighborhood and Community Development via Participatory Democratic Structures



Sheldon Kenneth Johnson
Master of Public Policy Candidate, 2015
Sanford School of Public Policy
Duke University
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kenneth Dodge

April 17th, 2015

Special thanks to my advisor, Dr. Kenneth Dodge, for his guidance and wise counsel. I would also like to thank Dr. Anna Gassman-Pines for her patience and encouragement and Dr. Luke Bretherton for teaching me a Jeremiah 29:7 theology

Author email: skennethj@gmail.com

Disclaimer: This student paper was prepared in 2015 in partial completion of the requirements for the Master's Project, a major assignment for the Master of Public Policy Program at the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. The research, analysis, and policy alternatives and recommendations contained in this paper are the work of the student who authored the document, and do not represent the official or unofficial views of the Sanford School of Public Policy or of Duke University. Without the specific permission of its author, this paper may not be used or cited for any purpose other than to inform the client organization about the subject matter, The author relied in many instances on data provided by the client and related organizations and makes no independent representations as to the accuracy of the data.

Abstract

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*. This report explores how participatory democratic structures can be used in order to invigorate civic participation.

This report will focus on developing policy recommendations for Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), a 501(c)(3) engaging in neighborhood and community development in Columbus, OH.

These development initiatives are place-based initiatives targeted in an 800 acre area known as the Near East Side (NES). PACT is interested in building partnerships with the numerous congregations located in the NES.

This report leverages an in-depth literature review, case studies, and interviews with congregational leaders to advise PACT on how to use participatory democratic structures to achieve this goal.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary..... ii.

I. Introduction.....1

II. PACT & NES..... 2

III. Literature Review..... 9

IV. Case Studies of Participatory Democracy..... 15

V. Perspectives of NES Faith Leaders24

VI. Recommendations27

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.

I. Introduction

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.²

The PACT planning area is an 800 acre subsection of the larger NES. It is bounded by Interstate I-670 to the North, Woodland Avenue to the East, Broad Street to the South, and Interstate 71 to the West. PACT's vision is to create a healthy, financially and environmentally sustainable community where residents have access to safe and affordable housing, quality healthcare and education, and employment opportunities on the Near East Side of Columbus, OH.

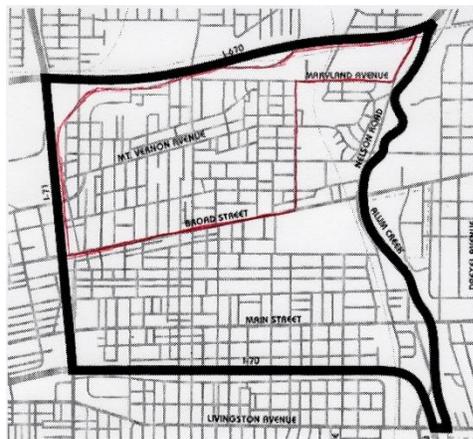


Figure 1 NES Map w/ PACT Geography Highlighted

PACT sought to achieve the aforementioned goals by developing a community master plan—defined as a comprehensive, long-term strategy that helps guide the development of a particular neighborhood or community.³ Community engagement was important to the PACT founding partners from the very beginning of the partnership. As such the organization committed to the following three values:

- Open and ongoing two-way communication through a variety of channels
- A transparent process throughout all phases of the partnership
- Meaningful community engagement

In accordance with these values, those who live, work, worship, visit, or serve the NES (collectively defined as Near East Side Stakeholders) are regarded as one of the four founding partners of PACT.

² The Near East Side is defined as the area bounded to the North by the Conrail Railroad, to the East by Alum Creek, to the South by Interstate 70 and Livingstone Avenue, and to the West by Interstate 71

³ Partners Achieving Community Transformation. "Frequently Asked Questions." Get the facts. Accessed April 17, 2015. <http://eastpact.org/get-the-facts/frequently-asked-questions/>

After a two year strategic planning process PACT created The Blueprint for Community Investment to guide the revitalization of the Near East Side. PACT was originally conceived as the body to design the Blueprint, and there was no concrete plan for who would implement it. At the conclusion of the planning process the founding partners decided that PACT should execute the plan itself. Therefore, in the Spring of 2013, PACT was restructured as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to be governed by a board of directors consisting of representatives from the founding partners.

After transitioning from a planning body to an implementation focused non-profit, PACT is now focused on developing implementation strategies and engaging in strategic partnerships that will ensure the sustainable revitalization of the Near East Side.



Figure 2 NES Churches and Other Places of Worship

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.

Therefore, at the request of PACT, this report will analyze the following 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?”

II. PACT and the Near East Side

The PACT planning area was chosen because it is host to both significant deficits and great assets.⁴ Residents of the PACT planning area face a variety of challenges including, but not limited to, high levels of poverty, a lack of employment opportunities, low quality education, and a deteriorating housing stock.

⁴ The portion of the Near East Side that is south of Broad Street is largely comprised of the Historic Olde Towne East neighborhood which has been the site of recent re-development efforts.

Watson, Jenna. “Old Towne East re-emerges as ‘cool place to be.’” *The Columbus Dispatch*, November 9, 2014, accessed on April 17, 2015, http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/home_and_garden/2014/11/09/1-olde-towne-no-longer-down.html

55% of the 7,700 residents in the PACT planning area are living in poverty. The average income of residents in the planning area (\$25,000) is less than half of the average income for the City of Columbus (\$54,000). The percentage of PACT residents that receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid is nearly three times the percentage for Franklin County.

The unemployment rate in the PACT planning area (28.4%) is much higher than the city of Columbus (8.9%). The schools within the planning area have lower academic performance and higher levels of discipline issues than the average Columbus City School. Five of the six schools located in the PACT geography are rated “Academic Watch” or “Academic Emergency.” There are over 650 vacant or dilapidated properties, which represents 16% of the total housing stock.

In addition to these areas of improvement the PACT planning area is home to several great community assets. The Lincoln Theater and King-Arts Complex are anchors of art and entertainment. University Hospital East and CarePoint East are offer employment opportunities and healthcare that were not previously available. Franklin Park & Conservatory, one of the most historically significant green spaces in the city of Columbus, is directly adjacent to the planning area.

There are a variety of civic, cultural, and human service organizations located within or on the borders of the PACT geography.



Figure 3 Civic, Cultural, and Human Service Organizations

Another one the vital assets that the NES community has is a sense of pride in the area’s history.

History of Near East Side

The Near East Side of Columbus, OH (NES) has a very rich history that includes the founding of St Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church and Second Baptist Church two of Columbus’ most historic Black churches. St. Paul AME was founded in 1823, and is the oldest congregation of African descent in Columbus.

In 1836, Second Baptist Church of Columbus, OH was founded under the leadership of Pastor Ezekiel Fields. Rev. James Poindexter became pastor in 1858 when his church, the Anti-Slavery Baptist Church of Columbus, re-merged with Second Baptist after splitting off years before. Rev. Poindexter was actively involved in politics while continuing to serve as the pastor of Second

Baptist Church. He would serve on the Columbus Board of Education, and in 1880 he was elected as the first African-American member of the Columbus City Council.⁵

The contemporary NES is an area comprised of several historic neighborhoods that were originally developed in the 1880's after streetcar lines were built along Broad Street, Long Street, and Mt. Vernon Avenue.⁶ During this time period the Near East Side was home to many notable residents of Columbus. In the late 19th century the Near East Side was a predominantly affluent Jewish community, but by the 1920s the Near East Side had developed into one of the more racially and socio-economically diverse neighborhoods in the city.

By the early 20th century certain sections of the Near East Side were largely populated by low income Black Americans and Jewish immigrants from Russia and Poland. Jews made up 25 to 30 percent of the households. Congregation Tifereth Israel purchased a site at 1354 East Broad Street in 1923 for \$20,000. The synagogue was dedicated in the fall of 1927 and was consecrated to “a spirit of reverence for Judaism and the highest ideals of Americanism.”⁷

The 1920's marked the establishment of a commercial, social, political, and cultural base in the NES. The area near Hamilton Park and Long Street developed into a wealthy Black neighborhood that was home to shops, offices, and restaurants. This time period also saw the Near East Side evolve into a cultural hotbed.

Numerous clubs and lounges, like the Pythian Theater, became home to the Jazz Age in Columbus. Visual artists shared their craft in venues like the Lincoln Theater. Scores of people traveled to the Near East Side to experience the artistic expression that thrived along Mt. Vernon Avenue and East Long Street.

Another area of the Near East Side, known as “The Blackberry Patch” due to the prevalence of blackberry bushes, was home to many low income Black Americans. Homes were built with pieces of scrap wood and many residents did not have the luxury of electricity and indoor plumbing.

In 1941 one of the nation's first public housing projects was built on the former Blackberry Patch Area. It was named Poindexter Village after Reverend James M. Poindexter. The project promised to offer higher quality housing than what was previously available.

Similar to many inner city neighborhoods, the Near East Side began to decline with the increasing availability of the automobile. The emergence of suburban communities lured businesses and residents away from the Near East Side. By 1950, much of the neighborhood's housing began to deteriorate. The construction of Interstate 71 reduced the available housing

⁵ Boone, Theodore. “National Baptist Convention,” in *Churches in Buckeye Country: A History of Ohio's Religious Groups*. (Columbus, OH: The Religious Participation Committee of the Ohio Sesquicentennial Commission, 1953), pg. 17

⁶ This section is based on the 2005 Near East Area Plan

⁷ Raphael, Marc, *Jews and Judaism in a Midwestern Community: Columbus, OH, 1840-1975* (Columbus, OH: Ohio Historical Society, 1979), pg. 266

options and caused many residents to relocate. The interstate also isolated the Near East Side from the city center and its services.

The late 1960's were a period of social strife for the Near East Side where the housing stock suffered from arson and vandalism. The implementation of the Federal Model Cities Program at this time further contributed to the destruction of the housing stock. The disinvestment of businesses and residents who fled the violence and turmoil of the Near East Side set the foundation for a period of revitalization efforts.

History of Revitalization Efforts

By the 1970's certain portions of the Near East Side were preserved by residents while other areas were dilapidated.⁸ A variety of rehabilitation programs and plans were instituted to revitalize the neediest areas.

1970s- Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were used to rehabilitate single family homes. The City of Columbus formed Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) areas on major streets throughout the Near East Side.⁹

1979- The Columbus City Council created the Near East Area Commission (NEAC) under Chapter 3111 Section 06 of Columbus municipal code.¹⁰

1989- I-670 Corridor Development Plan

1993- Columbus Comprehensive Plan

1994- South of Main Reinvestment Area Report and Action Plan

1995- Near East Area Plan

2000- Holtzman-Main Neighborhood Plan

2002- King-Lincoln District Plan and Columbus Recreation and parks Master Plan

2004- Alum Creek Action Plan

2005- Updated Near East Area Plan

2013- PACT Blueprint for Community Investment

⁸ Mount Vernon, King-Lincoln Bronzeville, Woodland Park, NOBO, and Saunders Park.

⁹ The Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization (NCR) program offers technical assistance, loans and matching grants, capital improvements and planning services.

The City of Columbus. "Neighborhood Commercial Revitalization." Economic Development. Accessed April 17, 2015, <http://columbus.gov/Templates/Detail.aspx?id=65296>

¹⁰ The mission of the NEAC is to advocate for and serve the residents and citizens who live and work within the boundaries of the NEAC.



Figure 4 The Blueprint Outlines a Plan for Residential and Commercial Development

A Community-Driven Process

The strategic planning process that led to the creation of the Blueprint for Community Investment is representative of PACT’s commitment to the values of open communication, transparency, and community engagement. It was developed over a twenty-month period in order to involve Near East Side residents and stakeholders in the planning process.

Among the founding partners of PACT, Ohio State University took a leading role in the strategic planning process. The University loaned two of its employees to serve as PACT staff members. Dawn Tyler Lee, who served as an Assistant Vice President of Government Relations, was appointed Executive Director and Autumn Glover, who served in a community outreach capacity for University Hospital East, was appointed Program Director.

Beginning in March of 2011, PACT engaged the community through public meetings, open houses, community conversations, and a variety of other events. In June of 2011 five subcommittees were formed that included a total of 100 participants. A subcommittee was formed for each of the five core plan elements:

- Jobs and Economic Impact
- Safe, Vibrant, and Accessible Neighborhoods
- Health and Wellness
- Education
- Housing

The subcommittees met monthly and produced reports that contributed to the planning team’s final recommendations. In total, the subcommittee format allowed PACT to hold over thirty meetings and to engage with a large number of diverse stakeholders on a monthly basis. PACT’s two person team was successful in their single minded focus to conduct a robust community engagement plan.

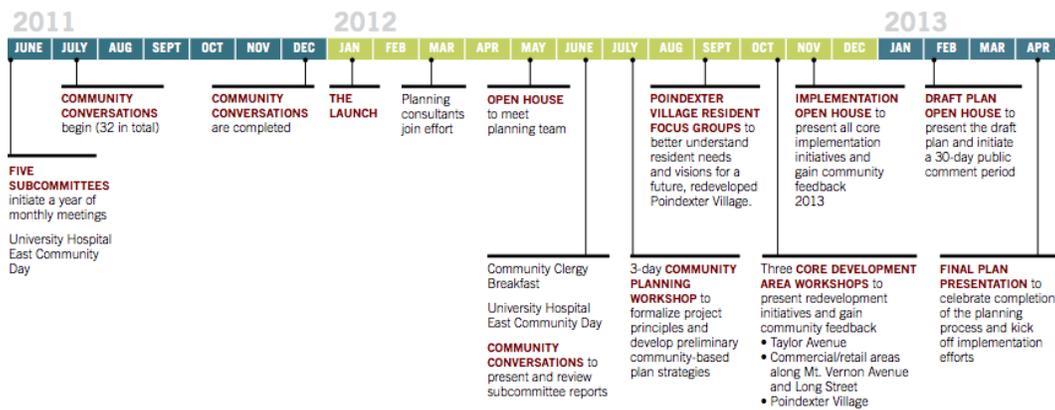


Figure 5 Timeline of the Strategic Planning Process

At the conclusion of the planning process both Ms. Tyler Lee and Ms. Glover were slated to return to their positions at Ohio State. Then the decision was made for PACT to become a 501(c)(3) focused on implementing the Blueprint. At that point Ms. Tyler Lee transitioned from PACT, but Ms. Glover’s loan was extended and she stayed on as Program Director. Trudy Bartley, who worked in government relations for Ohio State, was appointed Interim Executive Director for a year.

The completion of the planning process also signaled the end of the subcommittee structure. Due to the fact that PACT was originally designed as a temporary partnership the organization did not have plans for continued community engagement during an implementation process. PACT no longer had a single-minded focus on community engagement. In addition to active implementation projects, several months were spent completing an application for a Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The onset of the implementation process required a new level of balance between community engagement and a multitude of projects. According to Ms. Glover, PACT was not as strategic in communicating with stakeholders as it could have been during the first year of implementation. She defined having multiple groups of stakeholders constantly engaged as part of PACT’s DNA. In 2014 the organization began to create working groups around specific projects, as of this writing four working groups have been created:

1. Food-Access
2. Wealth Building
3. Legacy
4. Education
 - a. Family and Community Engagement committee
 - b. Curriculum committee
 - c. Policy and Governance committee

The creation of the Working Group structure allows PACT to once again engage stakeholders in a formal way, but also serves to provide the organization with additional capacity. The 501(c)(3) iteration of PACT has expanded to a larger team in order to administer the additional responsibilities of implementation.

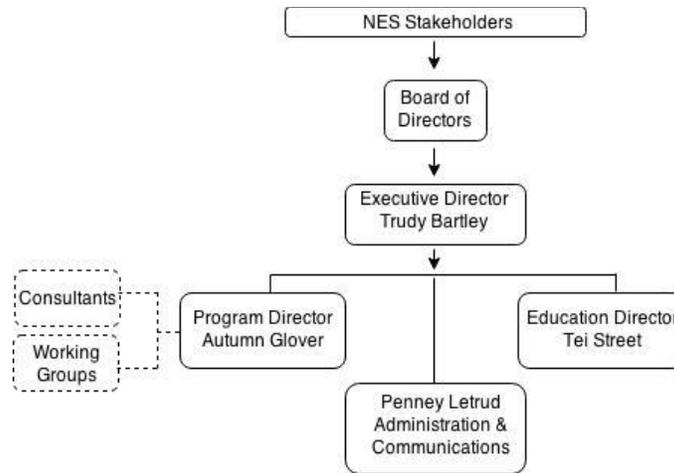


Figure 6 PACT Organization Chart

PACT now has four full-time staff members whose work is governed by an eight member Board of Directors. Due to being a small team the work of the PACT staff members is relatively fluid, thus making it difficult to articulate their full roles. The core function of each staff member is described below:

- **Board of Directors-** The core function of the PACT Board is to raise capital and supervise the Executive Director. The Board is in the midst of solidifying its governance structure and determining what committees should be created.
- **Executive Director-** The core function of the Executive Director is to manage PACT’s finances and to supervise the work of the Program and Education Directors. Ms. Bartley is still required to fulfill some responsibilities of her government relations position at Ohio State, thus her capacity is especially limited
- **Administration & Communications Assistant -** the core function of the Administration & Communications Assistant is to support the administration and management of our office, calendars, procurement; she also assists with communications and events
- **Education Director-** The core function of the Education Director is to guide the education strategy as an important platform for the holistic transformation of the PACT geography. Ms. Street is particularly focused on health sciences, and is leading the development and inception of the PACT Health Sciences Academies
- **Program Director-** The core function of the Program Director is focused on managing the planning, development, and community relations aspects of PACT’s work. Ms. Glover shares some authority with the Executive Director making her role resemble a de facto Assistant Director

In addition to the Board of Directors and full time staff members PACT plans to expand its capacity by hiring consultants and forming working groups around specific topics and projects as they arise. Due in part to budget constraints and also to the collaborative nature of its work, PACT prefers to expand its limited human capital capacity by forming new partnerships as opposed to hiring new full time staff. A shift in the way PACT engages with congregations in the Near East Side will allow the organization to develop strong partners among faith based institutions.

III. Literature Review

The existence of some high profile success stories in housing and economic development initiatives that have been sponsored by large churches contributes to a growing interest in increasing the involvement of congregations and other faith designated groups (FDG) in neighborhood and community development.¹¹ Despite this growing interest the role of churches, synagogues, mosques, and other FDGs in neighborhood and community development (NCED) is not a well-researched topic.

A large portion of the literature on the involvement of congregations and faith designated groups in neighborhood and community development is descriptive rather than analytical.¹² These descriptions lack analyses of program outcomes and assessments of what factors contribute to the scale or quality of these outcomes. This descriptive literature is persuasive in nature with a focus on moving the reader towards action. There are three broad categories that describe the state of the literature. The first category consists of descriptions of a particular urban ministry ranging from magazine and newspaper articles to autobiographical books by pastors involved in NCED.

The second category is articles and books that provide a theological argument for why congregations should be involved in activities that serve low income communities. The third is best described as how to manuals that instruct interested parties on how to perform some aspect of neighborhood and community development.¹³ These three categories of descriptive literature often describe NCED initiatives where individual congregations serve as the primary community anchor.

PACT serves as the primary community anchor in the Near East Side, and is interested in engaging other stakeholders. The congregations in the NES do not have the capacity to serve as

¹¹ The term faith-designated groups is presented by Dr. Luke Bretherton as an alternative to “faith communities” and “faith-based organizations”. According to Bretherton, any use of the latter two terms must be alert to the power relations intrinsic within their usage, as they are labels ascribed to certain groups by others rather than one intrinsic to the internal discourses of any group that is labeled as such
Bretherton, Luke. *Christianity and Contemporary Politics: The Conditions and Possibilities of Faithful Witness* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pg. 38

¹² The term “congregation” will be used to refer to a group of people who hold membership in a religious institution that regularly gathers for worship. It does not exclusively indicate Christian churches, but is instead inclusive of any faith tradition.

¹³ Vidal, Avis, “Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development,” *Prepared for U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development Office of Policy Development and Research*, August 2001: i-35

community anchors. Therefore, the following literature review will focus on how public, private, and nonprofit organizations that manage NCED partner with congregations and faith designated groups.

In the past two decades the role churches, synagogues, mosques, and other faith designated groups play in neighborhood and community development has been the topic of federal legislation. This began in 1996 when President Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) into law. This law detailed a set of provisions known as “charitable choice” which gave religious groups freedom to cooperate with the federal government without compromising their religiosity.¹⁴

President George W. Bush expanded the goals of Charitable Choice by establishing the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) with Executive Order 13199. The FBCI sought to increase the percentage of federal welfare dollars being allocated to congregations and faith designated groups and avoiding institutional isomorphism.¹⁵

After taking office, President Barack Obama amended President Bush’s FBCI with Executive Order 13498. Obama changed the name to the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP). Obama’s FBNP focuses on building partnerships between the federal government, neighborhood and community development organizations, and faith designated groups.

Faith designated groups on at local, regional, and national levels all have the potential to be meaningfully involved in neighborhood and community development. However, it is at the community level among local congregations where the greatest potential lies.¹⁶ Churches, mosques, and synagogues are among the key centers of community life for many neighborhoods.

Congregations are oftentimes some of the most durable and resilient features of American communities, particularly impoverished ones. Bob Lynn, former Lily Endowment Vice-President for religion, once observed that, “The last institutions to leave a troubled neighborhood are the church and the liquor store.”

Architecture is a notable asset that congregations bring to a community. There are many communities where the largest and grandest structures are churches and/or other houses of worship. Even when congregations do close and leave a community, the houses of worship remain and new congregations rise up to occupy them.

The rise of place and community based development movements has deep religious roots. The Black Church is an institution that has been at the forefront of pursuing political and socio-

¹⁴ Daly, Lew. *God’ Economy: Faith-Based Initiatives & the Caring State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009)

¹⁵ Institutional isomorphism refers to the pressure religious groups face to reshape themselves to fit government policy and taking on the same institutional shape and processes as a state agency, thereby losing their unique religious based characteristics.

Bretherton 2010, pg. 43

¹⁶ Pickman, James et al. “ Religious Institutions as Actors in Community Development.” *Making Waves* Vol. 12, no. 3(2001) 4-11

economic equity for oppressed peoples for centuries.¹⁷ A popular example is the fact that the modern Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's was primarily organized in church basements. Years later, the earliest community development corporations (CDC) were born in these same basements.

Islamic religious leaders have also advocated faith-based neighborhood and community development. Elijah Muhammad, prominent leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI), and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, were both renowned for their social and economic development activities. These two men laid the theoretical foundation for the community and neighborhood development work currently carried on by diverse groups of American Muslims.¹⁸

The resources that congregations have to offer neighborhood and community development organizations are often overlooked despite their shared history and the significant examples of congregational involvement in community and economic development.¹⁹ Many governmental and non-profit organizations are unaware of:

1. The mission orientation of local congregations
2. The significant resources congregations have to offer to NCED
3. How to effectively partner with religious institutions

Congregations and Mission Orientation

Congregations have the potential to occupy a unique leadership role in neighborhood and community development due to special capacities they hold that arise from their theologies. While the theological justification exists for congregations to engage in neighborhood and community development, whether or not they act on this justification is dependent upon their mission orientation, defined as the ways in which theologies are expressed.²⁰

Different religious traditions, denominations within the same religion, and congregations within the same denomination all have distinct mission orientations due to varying theological perspectives. There are five primary means of working for community transformation that congregations can undertake. They are:

6. Evangelism
7. Social services
8. Advocacy
9. Community organizing
10. Community development

¹⁷ Scheie, David. *Better Together: Religious Institutions as Partners in Community-Based Development* (Minneapolis, MN: Rainbow Research, Inc., 1994), pg. 3

¹⁸ Thomas, June Manning and Reynard N. Blake, Jr., "Faith-based Community Development and African-American Neighborhoods," in *Revitalizing Urban Neighborhoods*, edited by W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and Philip Star (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 135 and note

¹⁹ Ibid pg. 4

²⁰ Pickman et al 2001, pg. 5

Recent studies show that the majority of congregations in the United States focus primarily on programs and ministries that are evangelistic or social service in nature.²¹ These mission orientations hinge upon a theology that is “other-worldly” and focused on the inward spiritual aspects of human existence.

Congregations engage the least in advocacy, community development, and community organizing. These mission orientations hinge upon a theology that is “this-worldly” and focused on how one’s own well-being is inseparable from the well-being of one’s disadvantaged brothers and sisters.²²

Varying mission orientations can be explained not only by theological factors, but by contextual factors as well. These factors include, but are not limited to: the level of financial and human resources a congregation has, the circumstances in which a congregation exists, and the needs of a congregation’s surrounding neighborhood or community.

Current socio-economic forces are calling on more congregations to begin embracing mission orientations amenable to participating in neighborhood and community development. Increasing levels of poverty and unemployment continue to deteriorate low income communities. Many congregations in these low income communities are beginning to perceive the health of their congregation as intrinsically tied to the health of the community they are a part of.

Therefore, neighborhood and community development is viewed as being in the theological and contextual self-interest of the congregation. Additionally, the current social policy climate is conducive to private action and local initiative. The failure of federal government programs and initiatives has highlighted the importance of the local context.

Optimism regarding the potential of congregations and faith designated groups to engage in neighborhood and community development is based largely on the active role they play in providing social services. Faith designated groups and congregations spend between \$15-20 billion dollars a year in privately raised funds on social services in addition to millions of volunteer hours.

These social services, though, are not a sustainable means of community transformation as they do not offer any long-term systemic benefit. It can be argued that these programs are necessary due to immense concentrations of socio-economic need in many communities, but they are still a short term solution to deal with immediate needs. Those who are interested in engaging congregations in neighborhood and community development must understand the roles they are uniquely suited for.

What Can Congregations Offer to Neighborhood and 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. The

²¹ Linthicum, Robert. *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities* (Federal Way, WA: World Vision Press, 2005) 92-94

²² Pickman et al 2001, pg. 5

Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation (Seedco) provides the following nine examples as roles congregations are uniquely suited for:

- 1. Convener and Organizing Force-** Congregations gather people together around values that are not self-serving nor immediate. Individuals that are inspired by a broader vision of their own lives and of their community are able to relate to each other in an altruistic and generous basis. This type of social interaction can be a foundation for an organization seeking long-term social goals to build upon.
- 2. Articulators of a Community Vision-** An important first step toward the revitalization of a distressed neighborhood or community is the articulation of a vision of what could be. This vision will be important to setting the agenda for identifying potential development projects. Many residents of low-income communities have repeatedly heard unfulfilled promises of community improvements from politicians and others. Therefore, neighborhood and community development plans can be met with skepticism. It is important that vision, and those who articulate the vision, can credibly communicate an affirmation of faith in the potential of both a community and its people.
- 3. Legitimater-** Pastors, rabbis, imams, and priests are often, by virtue of their positions, neighborhood and community leaders. They are individuals that can lend moral authority and force behind redevelopment efforts. Lay members of congregations are also potential legitimators in that they are individuals committed to a positive vision who are acting on their beliefs. Congregational leaders, whether clergy or not, are often perceived as acting primarily in the best interest of the community.²³
- 4. Advocate-** No institution is better suited to articulate the moral imperative of a neighborhood or community's needs than a church, synagogue, or mosque. The organized energy of a congregation can easily be translated into political power. Each congregation represents a certain number of votes, which can be used as a weapon to advocate for an agenda with local government officials. Congregations can influence the existing power structure and its leadership with the powerful combination of moral authority and organized votes.
- 5. Link to Potential Partners-** Local congregations are natural mechanisms for building coalitions that draw on a variety of public, private, and community resources. Clergy and lay members of these congregations are often active in local community groups, neighborhood associations, and/or political organizations. Local congregations are also associated, even if informally, with other local, regional, and national bodies of their same faith. These larger bodies are potential partners through their connection with local their local affiliates.
- 6. Sustainer-** Congregations are able to offer sustenance to neighborhood and community development by providing spiritual encouragement and communal support to the leaders of these efforts.
- 7. Steward and Trustee-** Clergy and laypeople from local congregations are, by serving on the governing and/or advisory boards of community development organizations, able to ensure that neighborhood and community development efforts remain faithful to their mission over the long-term. This participation offers the stability that community development organizations often lack.²⁴
- 8. Developer and Manager-** Congregations with the necessary financial and human resources available are able to serve as the primary developer and manager of a neighborhood and

²³ Pickman et al 2001, pg. 6

²⁴ Pickman et al 2001, pg. 7

community development effort. These congregations will fulfill the role that a local government or private Community Development Corporation would in a non-faith based NCED project.

- 9. Resource Provider-** Local congregations, even those in distressed communities, have the capacity to contribute great resources to a neighborhood and community development initiative. Some congregations are able to collect enough money from individual parishioners to provide seed money for NCED. Other congregations have trust funds or bequests that can be invested. Many congregations are not able to contribute money, but can provide people, volunteer labor, the professional expertise of members, and facilities where those affiliated with a NCED effort can meet and work.²⁵

This list of roles that congregations are uniquely suited to play show that there are distinct advantages to engaging churches, mosques, and synagogues in neighborhood and community development. There are, however, some potential challenges to engaging congregations and faith-designated groups in NCED.

One challenge is that the potential exist that projects may come to be viewed as being owned by a particular group. Members of a congregation may have an inclination to feel as if they “own” a project, and want to give preferential treatment in the allocation of concrete benefits. On the other hand, if community members view a program as being owned by a particular group they may view concrete benefits as a measure of which group does or does not have the community’s best interest in mind.²⁶

Another potential challenge is navigating concerns regarding co-optation. Local congregations, particularly those in distressed communities, may be worried about being co-opted for two reasons. First, congregations may believe that outside institutions that manage NCED—such as businesses, foundations, and city governments— have no interest in truly involving community members in a decision making process, and are only concerned with completing preconceived goals.

Secondly, by their very nature churches, mosques, and synagogues have a religious orientation that secular organizations are often wary of. Leaders and members of these congregations may fear that they must sacrifice their religious identity and values in order to engage with NCED efforts. This fear explains why some congregations are unprepared (or unwilling) to handle the standards of accountability that come with the public sector funds that are crucial to neighborhood and community development work.

How to Effectively Partner with Religious Institutions

Organizations, like PACT, that seek to engage congregations and faith designated groups in neighborhood and community development must understand how to best build these partnerships. It is crucial for organizations that manage NCED to recognize that faith based institutions do not have the same perspective as Community Development Corporations,

²⁵ Ibid pg. 8

²⁶ Vidal, Avis, “Faith-Based Organizations in Community Development,” *Prepared for U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development Office of Policy Development and Research*, August 2001: pg. 18

businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. These differing perspectives do not negate the possibility of building partnerships between faith-based and non-faith-based institutions.

While secular organizations that manage NCED do not have expressed religious values it is important to accept that many of the resources that local congregations bring to bear in NCED efforts are based in the expression of their theologies. As mentioned earlier congregations often have an inherent distrust of secular agencies based in a fear of being co-opted. By proactively expressing an understanding of the aforementioned roles congregations are uniquely suited for in NCED; businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations can assuage fears of co-option.

Another best practice for secular organizations that manage NCED is to engage with congregations on an individual basis when possible. It may be counter intuitive to attempt to work with a collection of faith institutions if they do not view themselves as a cohesive community. Due to the differing mission orientations of varying faiths, denominations, and congregations it is important to perceive which roles individual congregations are best suited for.

Engagement occurs along a continuum that defines the varying approaches to partnership:

Information sharing → Cooperation → Collaboration

- **Information sharing-** This is the least intensive approach to partnership where a CDC, nonprofit, or governmental organization simply provides information to a congregation or faith designated group. An example would be a government agent placing information pamphlets at the worship site or a staff member of a nonprofit organization providing educational workshops for congregants.
- **Cooperation-** In this approach to partnership government agencies and a faith based institution partner in a manner that does not allow or require representatives of the congregation or faith designated group to adopt any major leadership responsibilities. An example would be a mosque providing space in the building for a Head Start program.
- **Collaboration-** This is the most intensive approach to partnership where all parties are deeply involved in defining problems, designing interventions, and implementing programs. All parties serve as full partners and leaders for change. An example would be a city government that engages congregations and faith designated groups via participatory democracy.

IV. Case Studies of Participatory Democracy

In his book, *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*, Benjamin Barber describes participatory, or strong, democracy as “a form of government in which *all of the people* govern themselves in at least *some public matters* at least *some of the time*.”²⁷ The term “democracy” should not be understood solely as referring to the sphere of government and electoral politics. Instead it should be understood as a principle of political and social equality.

²⁷ Barber, Benjamin. *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) pg. xiv emphasis added

Any field that is concerned with reinvigorating civic participation may adopt participatory democratic practices.²⁸ The Kettering Foundation defines democratic practices as ways citizens can work together—even when they disagree—to solve shared problems.²⁹ 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.³⁰

The discourse of participatory democracy places high value on inclusivity and the notion that partnership implies an equality of both standing and power between all actors.³¹ Participatory democratic structures allow neighborhoods and groups whose needs are not effectively expressed in a representative democracy to engage with the local policy making system.³² There are a variety of organizations and groups that adopt diverse participatory democratic structures in their local communities. In the midst of these differences there are three shared principles.

First, citizens seek out nontraditional forms of political participation that involve the public directly determining how some aspect of their community is governed. Second, disagreements and differences of opinion are handled in a non-adversarial manner with conflict being resolved through a pragmatic consensus to avoid win-lose outcomes. Third, all segments of society work together to solve social problems, as no single entity can revive civic engagement alone.³³

Most social and political institutions in the United States were designed to support representative democratic structures. John Dryzek argues that institutions interested in adopting participatory democratic structures must provide places for on-going communicative interaction.³⁴ Dryzek's approach to participatory democracy relies heavily on the concept of the "ideal speech situation." This hypothetical standard is focused on making collective judgments concerning the public good, and is free of strategic behavior, deception, self-interest, and the coercive exercise of power.

The challenge for institutions seeking to adopt participatory democratic structures is creating conditions similar to the ideal speech situation in the real world with real people engaged in activities that have real physical, material, and social outcomes. According to Benjamin Barber it is not necessary to develop new social and political institutions in order to create conditions similar to the ideal speech situation.

Resources for participatory democracy can be located in the local community and voluntary groups that citizens occupy in their everyday lives. These groups—including schools, neighborhoods, and congregations— provide fertile ground for participatory democracy, because

²⁸ Spano, Shawn. *Public Dialogue and Participatory Democracy: The Cupertino Community Project* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, Inc., 2001) pg. 22

²⁹ Kettering Foundation. "Democratic Practices." Kettering Foundation What We Study. Accessed April 17, 2015, <http://kettering.org/what-we-study/democratic-practices/>

³⁰ Skelcher, Chris et al. "The Public Governance of Collaborative Spaces: Discourse, Design and Democracy." *Public Administration* Vol. 83, no. 3 (2005): 573-596.

³¹ Ibid pg. 580

³² Ibid pg. 579

³³ Spano 2001 pg. 22

³⁴ Ibid pg. 24

they serve as mediating structures between government institutions and engaged citizens.³⁵ Public, private, and nonprofit organizations that manage NCED can create new opportunities for partnerships by tapping into the resources of existing community and voluntary groups.

Institutions that effectively integrate participatory democratic structures into neighborhood and community development use a holistic approach to assessing challenges. These institutions empower people to address their individual and collective challenges in order to build their neighborhoods and communities beyond “bricks and sticks.”³⁶ Local congregations, often serving as keepers of community social values, are particularly well suited for such work.

What follows are two case studies of organizations that used participatory democratic structures to encourage citizen engagement in neighborhood and community development initiatives. Neither of the cases worked specifically with local congregations, but the lessons learned are transferable to a faith based context.

Case Study #1 Seattle, WA: Department of Neighborhoods

Seattle, WA has a long tradition of neighborhood activism through its many independently organized community councils. This history of activism resulted in the city being transformed into, what Dr. Margaret Gordon refers to as, a “strong-mayor, strong-council, watchful citizens network.”³⁷ There was tension between the city government and community councils throughout the 1970s due to differing views on economic development. In the mid-1980s competing plans for the redevelopment of Pike Place Market led city Councilor Jim Street to seek a better way to handle neighborhood issues.

In 1988 Mayor Charles Roper hired former community organizer Jim Diers to head the newly created Office of Neighborhoods. The local government sought to develop a system that would develop solutions to neighborhood issues and the power to implement them by working in partnership with community councils.³⁸ The Office of Neighborhoods provided staffing for twelve newly established districts councils. A city neighborhood council, consisting of elected members of the district councils was created to provide independent citizen voice on neighborhood issues at the citywide level.³⁹

In 1989 the Office of Neighborhoods grew from four staff members to seven in order to increase the office’s capacity to support neighborhoods that lacked strong community councils. When Norm Rice became mayor the following year he consolidated the Office of Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Service Centers, and the Citizens Service Bureau to create the Department of Neighborhoods. As the Department of Neighborhoods grew it integrated new programs to support its mission of “preserving and enhancing Seattle’s diverse neighborhoods, empowering

³⁵ Spano 2001, pg. 25

³⁶ Thomas and Blake 1996, pg. 135

³⁷ Sirianni, Carmen, “Neighborhood Empowerment and Planning: Seattle, Washington,” in *Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2009), pg. 67.

³⁸ Diers, Jim. *Neighbor Power: Building Community The Seattle Way* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2004), pg. 24

³⁹ Sirianni 2009 pg. 66

people to make positive contributions in their communities, and bringing government closer to all people, ensuring that it is responsive.”⁴⁰

The Department of Neighborhoods sought to move the city of Seattle beyond promoting citizen participation to facilitating community empowerment. According to Jim Diers, citizen participation implies engaging citizens through government processes (such as public hearings and task forces) and programs (such as block watch and adopt-a-street). Community empowerment, on the other hand, involves providing citizens with the tools and resources needed to address their priorities through their own organizations.⁴¹

The Department of Neighborhoods designed four participatory democratic structures in order to empower Seattle’s neighborhoods.⁴²

The Neighborhood Leadership Program- Often times elected officials respond to the persistence of critical activist by becoming less democratic, and insulating themselves from the public. They may also attempt to wear down activists with meaningless public processes that are costly in terms of time, money, and community relations. There is also a significant opportunity cost of failing to take advantage of the assets engaged citizens offer.

In order to avoid these negative outcomes the Department of Neighborhoods offered classes and consultative services to help neighborhood activists develop effective organizations. Jim Diers argues that the presence of broad based community organizations is in a local government’s best interest because these organizations can do things that government cannot do.⁴³

Neighborhood Service Centers- The thirteen neighborhood service centers, also known as “little city halls”, provided valuable connections to Seattle’s communities. There two broad functions were individual services and civic convening and organizing. The service function entailed offering city services in a location more convenient to many residents than city hall. The civic convening and organization function was designed to add democratic capacity to the city of Seattle via Neighborhood Service Coordinators.⁴⁴

Neighborhood Service Coordinators worked to facilitate collaborative work among community councils and other civic groups. The coordinators were intimately familiar with government (city, county, and state level) programs and services as well as the schools, agencies, businesses, and places of worship in the communities they represented. Neighborhood Service Coordinators also served as consultants to the city government by preparing monthly reports about community concerns and a list of community contacts to be shared with department heads and elected officials.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Diers 2004 pg. 30

⁴¹ Ibid pg. 21

⁴² Sirianni 2009 pg. 69

⁴³ Diers 2004 pg. 32

⁴⁴ Sirianni 2009 pg. 78

⁴⁵ Diers 2004 pg. 47

Neighborhood Matching Fund- Created in 1989 with a budget of \$150,000 the success of the neighborhood matching fund saw its budget grow to a high of \$4.5 million in 2001. These funds came primarily from the city's general fund. Through this program the city of Seattle provided funding for projects initiated by neighborhoods that committed to matching these funds with cash, volunteer labor, goods, or services of equal value.⁴⁶ Over 2,500 projects were funded and completed between 1989 and 1994.⁴⁷

Project proposals could be presented to the Small and Simple Projects Fund, with a limit of \$15,000, or to the Large Projects Fund, with a limit of \$100,000. Large projects could take up to one year to complete. There was also a Small Sparks Fund that provided a maximum of \$250 to enable virtually any group to initiate a program. Through the Neighborhood Matching Fund citizens built 150 playgrounds, restored streams and wetlands, reforested hillsides and ravines, painted murals celebrating their neighborhood history, and completed cultural oral history projects.⁴⁸

The P-Patch Program- Founded in 1973, P-Patch was one of the first community organized gardening programs in the country. As of 2004, P-Patch was the largest municipally managed community gardening program in the country. There were sixty-two gardens, ranging in size from one hundred to four hundred square feet, on the programs seventeen acres of land. All of the gardens were built by the gardeners, often with support from the Neighborhood Matching Fund. Gardeners pay annual fees of \$24 to \$58 to help cover basic costs.⁴⁹

P-Patch Gardens served the Seattle community in four significant ways. First, they provide environmental benefits. Second, they build a strong sense of community as gardeners develop close ties with each other as they build and maintain their gardens. Third, they serve as community centers for surrounding neighborhoods as the gardens are open to the public and the common areas have features designed to attract community members such as play structures, picnic tables, and benches. Fourth, gardeners contribute eight to ten tons of organic produce to food banks through a program called Lettuce Link.⁵⁰

Case Study #2 Cupertino, CA: The Cupertino Community Project

In 1995, Kim Pearce organized a group of individuals together to explore how interpersonal skills could be used to improve the quality of public communication. This group of college professors, students, and communication practitioners founded a 501(c)(3) called the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC). After hosting two large public forums focused on conflict

⁴⁶ Sirianni 2009 pg. 69

⁴⁷ Ibid pg. 71

⁴⁸ Ibid pg. 70

⁴⁹ A Gardenship Fund managed by the Friends of P-Patch (a five-hundred member nonprofit organization established to advocate for and help manage the program) ensures everyone can access the program whether or not they can pay the annual fee. 25% of P-Patch gardeners had incomes below the federal poverty level, and 11% relied on food bank assistance.

Diers 2004 pg. 101-102

⁵⁰ Ibid pg. 102-103

resolution and attending several training sessions the group set out to find a sustained long-term community project to work on.⁵¹

A year later PDC approached Don Brown, the City Manager of Cupertino, CA and volunteered to initiate a collaborative project around public communication. The goal of the proposed project was to connect citizens and city officials in on-going conversations about the city. The project was designed to create opportunities for people to identify community issues and then talk about them in productive ways. PDC adopted a nonpartisan and neutral stance on community issues in order to build trust and establish relationships with the various stakeholder groups throughout the city.⁵²

PDC desired to fill an intermediary position between community members and the local government; therefore the organization wanted to avoid being perceived as seeking to advance a particular agenda. Although PDC was neutral on community issues members of the organization clearly communicated that they were biased towards a specific form of communication that would be used to define issues and make decisions. They believed that by engaging the Cupertino community in a dialogic form of communication the quality of decisions made by the city would improve and the public's commitment to these decisions would be enhanced.

PDC sought to achieve their goal through a process called public dialogue. They envisioned a simple model where residents and city officials would take turns speaking in an on-going conversation.⁵³ Eventually the project outgrew this model, and became much more complex. In total the Cupertino Community Project had four distinct phases that were conducted over a span of almost three years.

Phase I: Giving Voice to Community Concerns- The first phase consisted of a series of focus groups with a cross section of community residents. PDC adopted a fluid and open ended approach rather than having pre-established research questions.⁵⁴ Since they were to be vehicles of public dialogue and participatory democracy the focus groups were followed John Gastil's model of democratic small groups. Gastil states that:

A small group is democratic if it has equally distributed decision making power, an inclusive membership committed to democracy, healthy relationships among its members, and a democratic method of deliberation. Group deliberation is democratic if group members have equal and adequate opportunities to speak, neither withhold information nor verbally manipulate one another, and are able and willing to listen.

PDC recruited 72 volunteers to participate in 10 focus groups discussions. Tension in the Cupertino community that arose from the rising number of Asian immigrants was discussed in all ten focus groups and elicited more passion than any other topic.⁵⁵ PDC was struck by the contrast between resident's desire to address the issue and their perception that they did not know how.

⁵¹ Spano 2001 pg. 1 and note

⁵² Ibid pg. 4

⁵³ Ibid pg. 5

⁵⁴ Ibid pg. 60

⁵⁵ Ibid pg. 70

Phase II: Eliciting Visions and Action Plans- The second phase was also focused primarily on the perspective of Cupertino community members. The goal for Phase II was to follow up on the concerns expressed during Phase I. PDC termed the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in Cupertino as “cultural richness” in accordance with the asset based nature of the public dialogue process. In order to balance out the controversial topic of cultural richness, the facilitators included the divisive issue of community safety in Phase II.⁵⁶

Phase II was comprised of three interrelated activities:

1. A series of dialogue-group discussions
2. Intergenerational interviews conducted by high school students
3. A Town Hall meeting

The dialogue groups differed from focus groups in that they were focused on generating action oriented consensus. While the product of the focus-groups was to identify concerns and community problems the product of the dialogue-groups was developing visions for the future of the community, in terms of cultural richness and community safety, and creating action plans to realize these visions. PDC recruited 38 volunteers to participate in eight dialogue-group discussions.⁵⁷

For the second activity PDC trained over 100 high school students to conduct interviews on cultural richness and community safety with adult members of the Cupertino community. These interviews also focused on eliciting visions and actions. The students assisted the public dialogue process by promoting conversations about an issue that was widely considered to be undiscussable, and the project provided the students with a real-world situation in which to apply their qualitative research skills. This mutually beneficial collaboration between the community and the schools is an example of how service learning can contribute to participatory democracy.⁵⁸

The culmination of Phase II was a two and a half hour Town Hall Meeting held at a local community center. Approximately 150 residents attended the event that was billed as a “public dialogue on cultural richness and community safety.” As the first large scale event of the public Dialogue process the Town Hall served several purposes. First, it informed the larger community about the work completed in the focus groups, dialogue groups, and intergenerational interviews. Second, it demonstrated how community issues could be discussed without unproductive confrontation. Finally, it served as an invitation for other community members to engage with the conversation regarding the future direction of Cupertino.⁵⁹

Phase III: Working through City Leaders- The third phase was the first to have formal participation by the City Manager and City Council members. PDC did not want the city officials to feel attacked or feel like it was solely their responsibility to develop a solution to the

⁵⁶ Spano 2001, pg. 7

⁵⁷ Ibid pg. 88

⁵⁸ Ibid pg. 99

⁵⁹ Ibid pg. 102

community concerns. Instead the facilitators envisioned a context where the City Council was brought into collaborative decision-making relationship with residents. This process was an attempt to better align the city government with the principles and practices of participatory democracy. The goal of Phase III was to help the city council find ways to partner with community members.⁶⁰

Phase III was comprised of three interrelated activities:

1. City Council Interviews
2. Team Building and Issue Formation Meeting
3. Training and Team Building Program

The first activity was for a PDC facilitator to conduct in-depth one-on-one interviews with each of the five Cupertino city council members. Similar to the conversations in Phase II these interviews covered both cultural richness and community safety. The PDC facilitator created a summary document outlining all five interviews, and provided every Council member with a copy. The summary of the Council Interviews was used as a springboard to the second activity of Phase III.

After the interviews were conducted the City Council participated in a day-long Team Building and Issue Formation meeting. The purpose of the meeting was for the council to formulate a response to the concerns, visions, and action plans developed by residents in Phases I and II.⁶¹ During this meeting the council generated nine action plans. Six of the plans focused on cultural diversity and three of the plans focused on community safety.⁶²

The council members decided to plan a Training and Team Building Program as a formal response to Phases I and II. By identifying community leaders and connecting through a public communication skills training session, the council planned to create a pool of people able to manage community issues. Over 100 community residents attended the two day Training and Team Building Program. This event was significant, because it was the first attempt to train community members in the skills of public dialogue. It was also used to address the most potentially volatile aspects of increasing Asian immigration.

The participants deliberated among the various action plans and began to take steps to implement them.⁶³ By the end of Phase III, PDC had transitioned from being owners of the Cupertino Community Project, and assumed more of a partnership role with residents and city officials. The next step in the process was for the community to take complete ownership and begin to institutionalize the values of public dialogue and participatory democracy.

Phase IV: Sustaining the Public Dialogue Process- The goal of the final phase was to build the necessary infrastructure to sustain the public-dialogue process. PDC worked closely with city officials and community groups in several ways to institutionalize public-dialogue. Public

⁶⁰ Spano 2001 pg. 122

⁶¹ Ibid pg. 125

⁶² Ibid pg. 128

⁶³ Ibid pg. 10

Dialogue is self-reinforcing and cumulative, therefore it increases in direct proportion to its use. PDC sought to expand the domain of public communication by working with new segments of the Cupertino community such as the public school system and emergency preparedness program.⁶⁴

The PDC facilitators also worked to turn responsibility for the public dialogue process over to the community. This was the natural progression of institutionalization. PDC transitioned from controlling the process in Phases I and II to sharing responsibility in Phase III to relinquishing control in Phase IV. In order to help city officials and community residents develop the necessary capacity to assume complete control PDC expanded public dialogue training opportunities.

These trainings culminated in the creation of a citizen's action group called the Citizens of Cupertino Cross Cultural Consortium (5CS). The group coordinated the implementation of all the action plans developed in previous phases.⁶⁵ In addition to the action plans the 5CS conducted team building and public dialogue trainings. The city government allocated funding for the creation of a Community Relations Coordinator position to provide staff support for groups and organizations engaging in public dialogue projects.⁶⁶

By the end of Phase IV, approximately 2,500 people participated in one or more of the project phases. The creation of on-going groups and initiatives contributed to participatory democracy being institutionalized in Cupertino.

Key Takeaways for PACT

These two case studies are not directly applicable to PACT and congregations in the Near East Side, but both situations present takeaways that are transferable to Columbus.

The study of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods shows the importance of empowering citizens to be involved in neighborhood and community development. While this was done on a much larger scale than PACT works, the lesson is still transferable. Whether it be neighborhoods in the NES or congregations in the PACT geography, empowering residents is a potential strategy for implementing the Blueprint for Community Transformation.

The study of the Cupertino Community Project shows an effective model of continuing public dialogue during an implementation phase. Now that PACT has completed a successful planning process the organization is faced with balancing implementing the plan while developing an updated communication plan. Determining how to institutionalize the process of public dialogue, so PACT does not have to use its limited capacity to gear up for large scale outreach initiatives is a potential strategy.

⁶⁴ Spano 2001, pg. 152

⁶⁵ Ibid pg. 157

⁶⁶ Ibid pg. 194

Both the Department of Neighborhoods and the Cupertino Community Project case studies display the participatory democratic ideal of helping institutions grow. Benjamin Barber described this value:

Where a civic sector already exists, we must deploy strategies and laws to give it room to grow and flourish. Where it exists only as an ideal, we must suggest new strategies that help to seed civic institutions and then help them to grow.⁶⁷

In order to engage congregations in PACT's work of transforming the Near East Side via participatory democratic structures it is necessary to understand the perspective of these congregations.

V. Perspectives of Near East Side Faith Leaders

PACT is currently working to implement the Blueprint for Community Transformation, and is interested in building partnerships with congregations in the Near East Side. In order to best determine what form these potential partnerships could take, I gathered qualitative data from a cross section of congregations in the PACT planning area.

There are thirty-nine faith institutions located throughout the PACT geography. These institutions include thirty-seven Christian churches, a Jewish synagogue, and an Islamic Cultural Center.⁶⁸ In order to create a cross section of congregations I decided to use denomination as a differentiating factor. I believed this to be most appropriate for three reasons.

First, denomination is a factor that can be used to categorize all three faith traditions that are represented in the PACT geography.⁶⁹ Second, a congregation's mission orientation can be greatly influenced by its denomination. As mentioned earlier, mission orientated plays an integral role in determining the role a congregation may be interested in playing in neighborhood and community development. Finally, my client expressed interest in knowing how many congregations had programmatic thrusts that were directed by their denominations.

The thirty nine congregations in the PACT geography represent twenty one different denominations

⁶⁷ Spano 2001 pg. 122

⁶⁸ The Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio is not a mosque, but it does have an Imam that caters to the spiritual needs of members. Therefore, for this study, it will be referred to as a congregation.

⁶⁹ It is unclear which sect of Islam the Islamic Foundation of Central Ohio represents, therefore for research purposes I substituted "Muslim" as its denomination rather than Sunni, Shi'a, or Sufi.

Denomination	#	Denomination	#
African Methodist Episcopal	4	Christian Methodist Episcopal	1
American Baptist	2	Church of God & Saints of Christ	2
Baptist-Other	5	COGIC	2
Disciples of Christ	1	Evangelical Lutheran	1
Missionary Baptist	5	Episcopal	1
Mount Calvary Holy Church	1	Hebraic Roots	1
Pentecostal	2	United Holy Church of America	1
Presbyterian USA	2	United Methodist Church	1
Roman Catholic	1	Conservative Judaism	1
Apostolic	2	Muslim	1
Non-Denominational	3	Total	21

Figure 7 Denominations in PACT Geography

PACT provided me with eleven congregations, and requested that I prioritize obtaining data from them. This group of priority congregations represented nine denominations. I included congregations that represented the other twelve denominations not represented in the priority group to come up with a cross-section of twenty three congregations.⁷⁰

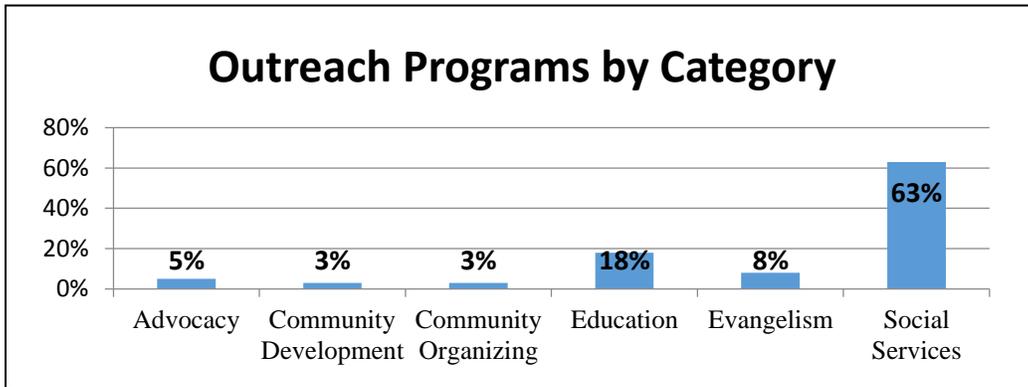
In order to gather data from these congregations I attempted to schedule 30-45 minute interviews, either in person or over the phone, with leaders from the respective congregations. I was able to schedule interviews with representatives of ten congregations, which is a response rate of 43%. My sample size only represents 26% of the congregations in the PACT geography which is too small to extrapolate the data outside of the ten congregations I spoke with.

The ten congregations ranged in size from 40-1,200 members, with an average size of 373. Nine of the ten congregations reported a small number of their congregants actually lived in the NES. These nine congregations reported an average of 7.5% of their members live in the NES.⁷¹ They expressed that the majority of their members drive in from the suburbs. Despite having so many members who live in other communities when asked to rank (on a scale from 1-5) how important serving the NES was to their mission the ten congregations average a ranking of 4.4.

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.

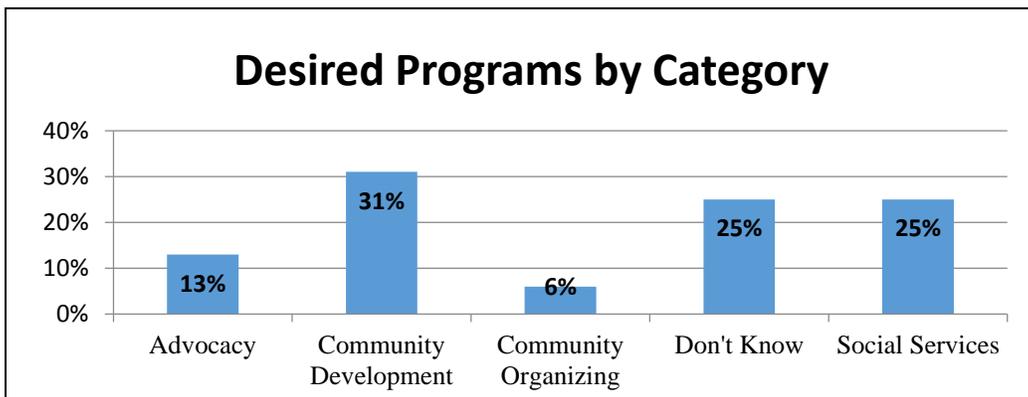
⁷⁰ For denominations that were represented by more than one congregation I included the congregation that I had the most information on (including, but not limited to: Leader Name, Phone Number, Email, Website, etc.)

⁷¹ The tenth church reported almost half of the members lived in the NES



The majority of these social service programs focus on serving food. Eight of them were ministries where the congregations served hot meals, and the other five were programs where the congregation handed out groceries.⁷² The second most popular category of programs is not one of the five aforementioned means for community transformation. Several congregations reported hosting educational workshops on a variety of topics and partnering with local schools for tutoring or mentoring programs.⁷³

There was a striking difference between the outreach programming the congregations reported doing, and the programming they reported yearning to do. The ten congregations 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. Five of the congregations specifically mentioned an interest in housing redevelopment or asset based community development.



Eight of the ten congregations expressed being familiar with the work PACT is doing, while two others said they were only vaguely familiar with the organization. The majority of the congregations expressed an interest in partnering with PACT, but did not have an idea how to do so.

⁷²This includes what is reportedly the third largest food pantry in Columbus at St. Philip's Episcopal Church

⁷³ Many of these programs would be better defined as "inreach" i.e. primarily servicing members of the congregation. I included them here, though, because they were self-reported as outreach ministries.

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.

Though these interviews only represent a small segment of the congregations represented in the PACT geography they provide some helpful information for how PACT may move forward in building partnerships with the faith community.

VI. 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. Though the focus of this report is on engaging congregations in the PACT geography these recommendations are focused more broadly than that. This strategy was chosen for two reasons.

First, many best practices for better engaging congregations are also best practices for engaging other organizations and stakeholder groups. Second, engaging with large groups of residents is, as Autumn Glover describes, a part of PACT's DNA. I believe that the organization's interest in better partnering with the faith community is birthed from that DNA. Therefore, the chosen strategy seeks to address both .

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

1. Expand PACT's Staff Capacity

PACT has been successful in achieving many organizational goals with a small team, but the organization's work has demanded new capacities since the transition from planning to implementation. The additional responsibilities that come with managing the implementation of the Blueprint make it difficult to conduct the intensive community relations work that PACT has done in the past.

I recommend that PACT expand its staff capacity by hiring a community engagement consultant or a Program Manager whose focus will be on community engagement. This person would report to the Program Director and manage a short term project (such as implementing one or more of these recommendations) or provide longer term support for the community relations aspects of PACT's work.

2. Create a Small Projects Matching Fund

One of the primary obstacles faith leaders reported as hindering their outreach work was a lack of funds. I recommend that PACT develop a small projects matching fund (similar to what was organized in Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods) in order to engage congregations around their community concerns.

3. Train Faith Leaders to Engage Community Members

Several congregations mentioned that they do not know how to support PACT's work or do not know how to engage community members. This contradicts the popular belief that the greatest resource congregations have to offer is their consistent presence. I recommend that PACT train members of the NES to engage their neighbors.

Increasing the connections congregations have with NES residents will aide PACT in future outreach as the organization continues to implement the transformation plan strategies. It will also empower those who live, work, play, and worship in the NES to work together around improving the neighborhood.

4. Update the PACT Homepage

I recommend that PACT update the information on the website, particularly the homepage. An essential component of a successful communication plan is having a website with up to date information. The PACT website has an updated community calendar, but the banner on the homepage is out of date.

PACT should use the website as passive marketing for updates and opportunities for volunteers to get involved.

5. Partner with Congregations for School Based Programming

Several congregations mentioned a concern for the educational quality in the East High School feeder pattern that educates the children of the Near East Side. Many of them have hosted tutoring or mentoring programs at one point, but overtime these programs have dwindled. Second Baptist Church and St. Philip's Evangelical Lutheran Church have relationships with Trevitt Elementary and East High School respectively.

I recommend that PACT partner with them for school based programming in the 2015-2016 academic year. PACT can leverage their relationships to achieve one of its education Transformation Plan Strategies.⁷⁴ It may also be possible to replicate their model for the health science academies that are opening in the fall.

6. Conduct One on Ones with Congregational Leaders

I recommend that PACT continue the work started by this report, and meet one on one with a representative from the remaining congregations in the PACT geography. Though time consuming, this would help the organization get a clear idea of the perspective of the rest of the faith community

⁷⁴ This recommendation is in line with education strategy #3 "Parent and community engagement" which is summarized as: Engage parents and PACT-area residents with neighborhood CCS schools and Target community program services to support academic enrichment and address barriers students face for academic success.