

# **Strengthening Neighborhood Organizing in Hartford: A Report to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving**

## **Introduction**

Hartford is at an important juncture. For several years the City has been undergoing a physical transformation as evidenced by the Six Pillars, including Adriaen's Landing, The Learning Corridor, HOPE VI developments throughout the city, and new investment in physical improvements in the North End by public and private institutions have brought about visible change. However, poverty remains acute in the capital city of the wealthiest state in the country. The neighborhoods are struggling with many issues, including lack of jobs, public safety issues, deteriorating housing, under-resourced schools, and the return of formerly incarcerated individuals into their community. Many Hartford leaders are determined that their city will not become another Baltimore, with dramatic improvements in the downtown business district juxtaposed against declining neighborhoods, with a widening gap between the suburbs and the city, between rich and poor.

Hartford has a solid legacy of community-based organizations and committees that engage in various kinds of resident engagement, community services, planning, and community building. With help from the Neighborhood Support Collaborative, community-development corporations have honed their skills and effectiveness in producing affordable housing and other kinds of community projects. The Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs) have developed and begun implementing strategic plans to foster physical improvements and economic development in the neighborhoods. Several longstanding social service agencies and civic associations provide critical services to their communities and strengthen their social fabric. These are all important community institutions whose activities should continue to be supported.

This report focuses on another critical community activity—neighborhood organizing. Hartford has a proud history of neighborhood organizing, with community-based organizations involving large numbers of people in making substantial contributions to their neighborhoods and the city generally. This history of productive organizing has been supported by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, other foundations, and such unusual sources as the City government and the United Way – funders which in many other cities have been slow to support grassroots organizing.

Organizing has accomplished many tangible benefits for residents – renovated buildings, restored parks and other improvements that are important to immediate neighbors—and other changes as ambitious as creation of the Hartford Construction Jobs Initiative and the Community Court. The jobs funnel has trained and employed hundreds of residents in well-paying construction jobs, and the model will soon be replicated to funnel residents into permanent jobs in new commercial and retail developments. The Community Court has been a breakthrough in helping residents address nuisance and quality of life issues which are so important to neighborhood morale and vitality. In addition, through organizing, residents have been able to persuade powerful institutions

to commit the resources and the policy changes which have been critical to the expansion of community development corporations and community-based services in the city.

Community organizing has also made other highly significant contributions, giving voice to people who seldom influence their own communities or citywide policy, and developing leaders who serve the city in many ways – as neighborhood representatives, as members of the City Council and Mayor, as influential people in other government posts and elsewhere in the private and nonprofit sectors.

It is an important time to conduct this assessment of neighborhood organizing. The state of organizing today is fragile throughout the city, and yet there are important opportunities for helping residents move to the next stage in developing their power and capacity to contribute to revitalizing Hartford. By more effectively channeling resources into the building of strong, effective community-based organizations, Hartford institutions can ensure that, moving forward, the revitalization of the city is not just physical and focused on downtown, but also encompasses strengthening the power and capacities of neighborhoods to play an active role in shaping Hartford’s future.

### **Assessment of Community Organizing and Resident Engagement Initiatives**

In order to assess the various efforts to involve Hartford residents in addressing issues which are central to them and their neighborhoods, and to think through how best to develop strong neighborhoods for the future, it is imperative to clear-up confusion by clarifying how the terms “resident engagement” and “community organizing” are used.

#### Working definition of “resident engagement” or “citizen participation”:

“Resident engagement” is the process “of creating officially designated channels for involving residents in providing input into government decision-making and problem-solving and accessing government services. Participants monitor the neighborhood’s streets and public spaces on an ongoing basis, submitting information and complaints about specific problems to the appropriate liaisons within particular city agencies and departments...” They act “as the city’s eyes and ears”.<sup>1</sup>

The CCP program is premised on this model (although some of the PSCs also use a community organizing approach). It established useful officially recognized opportunities for citizens to meet with the police to express their concerns about crime and to make their priorities known. These forums had a significant impact on how police handled crime situations, changed the attitudes of both police and residents towards each other, and contributed to a reduction in crime. Such independent civic groups as Blue Hills Civic Association and elements of the Rising Star initiative also draw on this model of resident engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> Smock, Kristina. Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change.

### Working definition of “community organizing”:

Community organizing is the process of building an increasingly broadly based, democratic organization rooted in a lower income community. Over time the goal is to build a large, well-disciplined organization with the membership, leadership, knowledge, vision, power, and capacity to strengthen their neighborhood’s social and economic fabric and make increasingly significant gains on vital issues. This requires a continuing process of actively reaching out, involving larger numbers of people, surfacing leaders and giving them training, increasing responsibility and authority, and helping them move into effective action on the issues that most concern them. The ultimate goal of community organizing is to transform the conditions that currently restrict opportunities for people who are too often left behind.

In Hartford today there are fewer examples of community organizing than there were in earlier days when the Asylum Hill Organizing Project and CHANE were in their beginning stages. Nonetheless, several of the CCP-funded groups were frequently cited by a range of persons we interviewed for good organizing – HART and early stages of organizing in West End, Parkville, and Asylum Hill. In particular, in the broader region, the Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice (ICEJ), a faith-based organizing initiative affiliated with the Gamaliel Foundation, has dozens of member congregations, including twenty in Hartford itself. And the national organizing network ACORN has recently come to Hartford.

As we have learned in conducting the assessment, a lack of common understanding on definitions creates confusion about which models and standards are being used. This makes it difficult to determine how the effectiveness of various groups should be judged and to discern whether and how the differing programs should relate to one another in creating increasingly vibrant and influential processes for involving residents in tackling the main issues they and their city face.

However, it is clear from our interviews,<sup>2</sup> that many leaders in the neighborhoods and in key positions in the city feel that it is vital that Hartford develop a stronger set of stable, sustainable organizations which are actively building the leadership, constituency, experience, and vision to be major players in revitalizing their neighborhoods and strengthening the city. For this reason, this assessment of current programs and future potential focuses in large part on the extent to which particular organizing approaches are creating the preconditions for Hartford’s neighborhoods to move to the next level in helping shape the city’s future.

### **Comprehensive Community Partnership Program (CCP)**

A detailed assessment of the Comprehensive Community Partnership Program is attached as Appendix II. A brief summary is included here.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I for a complete listing of the persons we interviewed.

## Organizational Structure –

The CCP program has several strong design elements, including: the emphasis on residents setting the agenda; the commitment to reinforcing the existing infrastructure of community organizations in establishing the problem-solving committees (PSCs); the creation of a citywide monthly forum for residents to come together; and the regular productive meetings between local residents and police representatives

However, these elements could be made more effective in key ways:

- While CCP built where possible on such existing organizations as HART, in other places the PSCs have existed for ten years without evolving into permanent, powerful structures. With the dearth of strong, sustainable resident-led organizations in the city today, a focus on building such strong organizations where none exist should be a goal for funders and the City.
- CCP’s definition of neighborhood “organizing” has been sufficiently vague and confused with “resident engagement”, that, in the absence of strong and fully appropriate accountability mechanisms, some neighborhoods have used their resources and organizers for purposes other than organizing. A common complaint from people we interviewed was that “Distributing flyers or being the neighborhood secretary is not organizing.” This lack of clarity also created confusion when other resident engagement mechanisms were developed, such as the NRZs and the homeownership initiative.
- The CCP monthly meetings were apparently quite lively and effective at bridging turf, class and race issues early on. However, most stakeholders today say that the meetings currently are not as effective as they could be, and that their focus should be on strategizing on common issues and collective action, not just information sharing.
- The structure as it evolved has inherent conflicting roles that undermine its integrity and effectiveness. One limitation is that one partner in the city/ community partnership – the City government – holds the purse strings and thus has the lion’s share of the power. Another is that UCAN is the employer of record but not the supervisor for some “organizers”, a situation which is further complicated by the fact that UCAN is also the TA provider to these organizers. This confusing arrangement weakens accountability and supervision and makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the different parties.

## Strategies –

CCP’s positive strategies include the three-legged triangle of residents/the police department/other city agencies and the availability of staff to work with residents. While using public safety and quality of life as the focus for resident involvement in crime prevention makes great sense, residents want to address many other pressing issues, such as youth, schools, and housing, and several people, including people in the police

department itself, observed that organizing is far more effective when it focuses first on the issues of greatest concern to neighborhood residents. While in practice the CCP program has often been administered flexibly enough to allow organizers to work on other issues, there still has been more emphasis on issues of crime and such responses as block watches and hot spots than would have been optimal for maximizing community involvement.

The strategies employed could have been made more effective in other ways:

- As one stakeholder observed, the triangle model only works when all three legs are firmly in place, and that has not always been the case. Most notable is the lack of real organizing in most of the North End where there are no staffed PSCs, as well as the lack of bilingual organizing – thereby leaving many African Americans and Latinos unorganized. Currently the neighborhoods with the lowest incomes and greatest need are not assisted adequately through CCP.
- The strategy of having a PSC in every neighborhood and then providing staff for each has proved untenable in an underfunded program. A strategy of building fewer resident-led organizations across several neighborhoods would be more likely to be sustainable, achieve scale, and promote collaboration citywide.
- The block watch model of organizing is not always the most effective for building leadership and collective action, and sometimes encourages a myopic view by residents. Organizers find that organizing around issues that affect larger areas than blocks can have far greater impact.
- Groups that organize on a multi-issue basis have strong inherent advantages. They can broaden their constituency and get more people involved as they respond to several issues at once, and they can shift from issue to issue as opportunities for progress wax and wane with changes in the economy, local politics or the issues which are “hot” at a particular time.

#### Staffing and Supervision –

The addition of paid organizers for fourteen PSCs in 1998 was an important step forward for the CCP, providing the committees with more staff help than previously. However, the amount of money allocated to cover each organizer’s salary was quite low and has not changed in five years, making it difficult to attract and retain talented staff. The lack of supervision by the City, and the arrangement with UCAN to ‘employ’ some organizers without having supervisory authority, have resulted in very uneven organizing as well as high staff turnover in some neighborhoods. However, in neighborhoods that were able to provide additional funds, more senior organizers have been retained who can mentor the less experienced ones.

#### Training and Technical Assistance –

United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods (UCAN) has been the sole training and technical assistance (TA) provider for the program. It is difficult to gauge its success given cuts in funding for UCAN’s services, the overall lack of accountability and

performance standards in the CCP, and the conflicting roles UCAN has been asked to play.

Clearly some PSCs have found UCAN's training to be very useful and UCAN should continue to play a training role in the future within a better conceptualized and more accountable structure. Other types and styles of training and TA than that provided by UCAN are also needed, for example, to stimulate new organizing in the North End and to take advantage of the tremendous inherent training capacity of others, including many alumni of Hartford organizing who now have positions in the nonprofit, public and private sectors in the city. Expanding assistance for organizing in the city and supporting a variety of training and TA options would allow neighborhood groups to gain greater access to the help they need for capacity-building and action strategies.

#### Monitoring and Performance –

The monitoring function played by the City focused simply on contract compliance rather than performance. Until work plans were developed recently, neither PSCs nor their 'organizers' were required to set short- and long-term goals or track their progress. Training and TA have not been subject to performance review or evaluation. While organizing may seem less tangible than other activities like community development, in fact strong community organizing groups are highly disciplined about setting priorities (often at public conventions), examining progress in building their organizations and achieving their goals, reflecting on lessons from their experiences (including successes and disappointments), and assessing their outcomes.<sup>3</sup> In short, evaluation and reflection are highly valued in strong community organizing groups and vital to their effectiveness.

#### Program Financing –

Federal and state law enforcement funds are dwindling. Even when the CCP was 'fully funded', resources were inadequate for paying organizers a decent salary. Neighborhood organizations need a reasonable level of funding that can be counted on over a several year period, funding that is sufficient for efficiently staffing, monitoring and evaluating their work. They also need sufficient training and technical assistance so they can learn quickly and progress rapidly. Since the uncertainty and low-level of program funding in the last few years has had a harmful effect on morale for the neighborhood stakeholders in CCP, it is especially vital now that means be found to provide assured long-term support for key organizations – those that hold real promise for effectively organizing their communities and making significant progress on the most pressing neighborhood and citywide issues.

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<sup>3</sup> See reports by Andrew Mott on [Evaluation: Good News for Funders](#) and [Strengthening Social Change Through Assessment and Organizational Learning](#).

## Program Results –

Despite the problems raised above, and the lack of consistent data collection on the outcomes of the program, CCP has achieved some impressive results in its ten-year history. These include:

- *Public safety:* reduction in crime rates; creation of ‘hot spots’ system; improved attitudes of police toward the neighborhoods and of community residents toward the police department; and the development of a shared belief in the centrality of community-oriented policing in fighting and preventing crime.
- *Resident engagement and collaboration:* establishment of PSCs in every neighborhood and development of new leaders; forum for citywide interaction where residents put aside turf, race and class divisions; improved relations between residents and some city agencies and an increasing consensus on the necessity of these close working relationships; and collaboration across neighborhoods (such as West End/Parkville/Asylum Hill, and recent HART work with North End leaders).
- *Neighborhood victories:* examples are \$300,000 for boys and girls club in Asylum Hill; new community center and removal of slumlord in West End.
- *Citywide victories:* examples are the establishment of Community Court; an increase in the number of recruits being trained in community policing by the police academy.

While the CCP program has suffered from many structural challenges related to funding, organization, and accountability, it has accomplished some impressive outcomes despite these problems. It provides a key building block as stakeholders plan how best to expand community involvement and community investment in Hartford in order to strengthen the city, improve the quality of life and expand opportunities in the region.

### **Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs)**

Most people we interviewed believe that NRZs and PSCs play complementary roles. Some described the difference between the two by suggesting that PSCs focus on short-term problems while NRZs explore long-term community issues. Another way to compare them is to look at their approaches to community involvement. We mentioned earlier that CCP uses a “resident engagement” model, as well as some community organizing. On the other hand, NRZs focus on “community building,” whereby neighborhoods seek to foster physical and economic development through collaborative partnerships among all stakeholders, including city government, to engage in comprehensive planning.<sup>4</sup> NRZs are not a community organizing model, but as a community building model they hold promise.

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<sup>4</sup> Kristina Smock, Democracy in Action

### Organizational structure –

NRZs operate according to state legislation that mandates membership by all neighborhood stakeholders, including tenants, property owners, community organizations, businesses, and a representative of the City. A majority of members are required to be residents. The law also mandates that NRZs use a consensus-building process for their decision-making. Hartford 2000, the umbrella group for NRZs, follows this model, and also includes the City as a member.

These features differ substantially from the CCP program, which includes only residents and does not require a consensus model. At the NRZ program's inception, the City allowed neighborhoods to self-define their zones, resulting in NRZs that do not match up with the 17 neighborhoods defined for CCP and other city purposes.

The NRZs' reliance on consensus has great advantages in addressing many issues. Positive things can be accomplished when all of the stakeholders agree on goals and strategies. However, this consensus-building approach deters consideration of more controversial issues, making it unlikely that any issue or strategy will be pursued unless everyone in the neighborhood – and the City government – agree to it. In practice, this model precludes the neighborhood from addressing issues that could put stakeholders in the neighborhood in conflict. For example, it would be difficult for an NRZ to be a vehicle for tenants to challenge a landlord to make repairs, or residents to challenge city agencies to enforce building codes or change property disposition policies to favor residents over investors. While this constraint may not prevent NRZs from achieving many of their goals, Hartford neighborhoods also need powerful, independent resident-led organizations to take on some of the tougher, systemic issues that cannot always be resolved through a consensus model.

As with CCP, there would be economies of scale for NRZs if larger geographic areas were grouped together. Focusing on larger areas would also facilitate moving toward the bigger economic and neighborhood revitalization issues that face the city and the region.

Several people pointed out the great importance of rationalizing the boundaries for PSCs and NRZs so that they use the same boundaries rather than define their turf somewhat differently. The current situation creates needless complication and confusion.

### Strategies –

The NRZs' goal is to revitalize neighborhoods where there is considerable property abandonment, deterioration and blight. The strategies they use are the development and implementation of strategic plans that cover a very broad range of issues, including homeownership and economic development. They may also address issues that overlap with the PSCs, like public safety and self-empowerment.



The law creating NRZs did not provide funding for the strategic planning process. It therefore took NRZs anywhere from three to six years just to get their plans finalized and adopted into the City ordinance, a situation that inevitably caused many people to stop participating in the process. Not surprisingly, plan implementation has been slow. Furthermore, the City has not updated its comprehensive plan in many years and that plan therefore does not yet incorporate the NRZ plans as part of a larger vision for the city.

Some of the tools available to implement the plans have not been utilized by the City, including the power of eminent domain, waiver of codes and regulations, and receivership of rents. NRZs have not ‘tested’ the City to see if these tools could be used.

The potential for overlap with the PSCs in NRZs’ roles has led to considerable friction in some places; in other locales the PSCs and NRZs work together well or have merged. The lack of clarity about the difference between NRZs and PSCs causes frustration among City agencies, nonprofit leaders and others who think their roles are currently confusing and duplicative.

While there are some communities in which it is not realistic to expect NRZs and PSCs to merge, because of history or personalities or differing priorities, it would be useful to encourage mergers in order to reduce the burden on community leaders who now often have to go to several different sets of meetings. This is a recipe for burnout and reduced participation.

#### Staffing and Supervision –

The NRZs themselves do not have paid staff. Hartford 2000 has a paid part-time consultant who helps the NRZs come together on issues of common concern, but does not do work for individual NRZs. She is supervised by the Hartford 2000 board.

The lack of staffing accountable to NRZs has made it challenging for them to develop and implement their plans. NRZs with members who have expertise in planning tend to get things done more quickly than others. Some staff support customized to their individual needs would allow these other NRZs to have a greater impact.

#### Training and TA –

Hartford 2000 has developed programs to help NRZ members gain expertise. These include a leadership development program run by Leadership Greater Hartford, and workshops on such topics as the City budget process and the roles of different City agencies. The leadership development training sessions reportedly draw a diverse group of participants, thereby helping increase the diversity of NRZ leadership.

#### Monitoring and Performance –

There appears to be little monitoring of the program. There is no timeline in the law or elsewhere regarding attainment of specific goals. The State does not monitor

NRZs, and the City primarily plays a stakeholder role while also reminding NRZs of their reporting requirements.

No entity follows the NRZ process to make sure it adheres to the participation requirements. Some assert that “The NRZs are not representative of the community. Whoever shows up gets to make the decisions. It tends to be the more middle class, professional types that come to the meetings.” The program would benefit from better monitoring to ensure democratic participation and progress toward stated goals.

#### Program Financing –

While the state enabling legislation did not authorize funding for the program, NRZs did initially receive \$500,000 each (\$7 million total) in Urban Act funds, and an additional \$4 million at a later date. The program would benefit from discussion about the long-term prospects of generating capital funds to implement the plans.

While small pots of money are currently available through the Community Economic Development Fund, the resources are clearly insufficient to implement the plans fully. Also, NRZs do not have funds to secure staff assistance to engage in outreach or information dissemination in their neighborhoods.

#### Program Results –

The program achieved some of its goals for neighborhood revitalization with the limited funds made available in the early years for pedestrian lighting, sidewalk improvements, low-income housing, park improvements, soccer fields, housing rehab loans, and other public improvements. While the NRZs are very effective at coming together citywide through Hartford 2000 – which serves as a conduit for information to the neighborhoods from city agencies and others, and engages in leadership development and training – it is not clear whether the NRZs collectively will be able to garner the resources they need to implement their plans, their key function under the law.

In conclusion, NRZs are an important mechanism for neighborhood planning that could be more effective at implementing their goals with greater resources. Hartford 2000 plays a valuable role by bringing the NRZs together to be a united voice and developing their capacities through trainings and workshops. NRZs could be more effective at resident engagement with greater outreach efforts, assisted in part by the leadership development programs that are attracting more diverse participants. NRZs and community organizing efforts have different objectives and strategies, but both seek to improve neighborhoods and would benefit from mutual engagement and support.

### **Rising Star Homeownership Initiative**

The Rising Star Homeownership Initiative is in an early stage of implementation, making an assessment of its effectiveness premature. However, it is helpful to understand the program's goals and how they relate to the CCP and the NRZ initiative.

Rising Star was developed in response to low homeownership rates in the city, and seeks to enhance the marketability of target clusters and blocks through the promotion of "neighborliness" and incentives to upgrade the housing stock and increase curb appeal. Both its goals and strategies can potentially overlap with those of the PSCs and NRZs:

- NRZ strategic plans are required to address many issues, including homeownership, marketing and outreach – objectives similar to those of the Rising Star program. Yet the NRZs have few resources to implement their plans, while Rising Star has raised several million dollars to achieve its goals. Some NRZs feel that they should have been involved more in the new program's design and implementation, or that the program should have been integrated into the existing NRZ infrastructure.
- Proponents of Rising Star describe it as an organizing model, but distinguish it from CCP by emphasizing that the organizing is focused on positive goals ("healthy neighborhoods"), rather than negative problem solving. They see the two programs as complementary – that the poorer neighborhoods with low homeownership rates, which are not part of the Rising Star strategy, especially need the problem-solving approach. However, despite this distinction, many stakeholders who live and work in the neighborhoods are confused about the differences. The Rising Star staff members that have been hired to work in the program's clusters have been described as 'community organizers', and one new hire had previously been employed at a community organizing group, adding to the confusion.

The Rising Star program has a discrete set of objectives for resident engagement and neighborhood stabilization. A strategy for articulating the ways it is different from the goals of CCP and the NRZ initiative would help to eliminate confusion in the neighborhoods. Opportunities to involve or at least inform the PSCs and the NRZs where it makes sense to do so would foster greater understanding of the program and its potential or intended complementary roles.

### **Conclusion on Assessments of Current Initiatives**

A scan of Hartford's resident engagement and neighborhood organizing initiatives reveals many positive signs. It is now accepted as a given that residents should be actively involved in making decisions about how to improve their neighborhoods. A number of strong community leaders have emerged since the CCP and NRZ programs were established. Important mechanisms for civic engagement are in place through the PSCs and NRZs. Neighborhoods are increasingly willing to come together citywide to

address common concerns. Community-oriented government is now considered the standard for how the City should operate. There is a desire by all parties to see a resurgence of powerful community-based organizations.

Yet many obstacles to stronger neighborhood organizing remain. Confusion about the purposes and roles of the different initiatives has bred feelings of resentment, competition, and conflict. The constrained funding environment further exacerbates these feelings. The programs combined are not maximizing their potential for developing a series of powerful, effective, and influential community organizations in key sections of the city, particularly in the North End. The potential for citywide action on important neighborhood issues has not been fully realized. The need for more qualified and diverse community organizers is acute. The neighborhoods with the greatest need are perhaps the least organized.

The funding crisis that precipitated the decision to re-examine the CCP program creates an opportunity to put forth an exciting new vision for organizing in Hartford. Our recommendations build on the strengths of the existing infrastructure while proposing new ways to develop strong, resident-led, multi-issue organizations that can collaborate citywide to achieve systemic change.

### **Analysis of Findings: The Case for Building Powerful, Multi-Neighborhood, Multi-Issue Organizations in Hartford**

Our interviews and review of several organizing and resident engagement initiatives in Hartford make us optimistic about the real potential for building on the assets we uncovered in our research. There is a visible, heart-felt pride in the city among many we interviewed. Key stakeholders appear deeply committed to making the capital city the best it can be and appreciate what Hartford has to offer. The City has established an ongoing commitment to neighborhood-oriented government and a renewed commitment to community-oriented policing. Attitudes of both police officers and the neighborhoods toward one another have improved, in part due to organizing and the regularized, officially sanctioned channels for meeting and collaboration that have been established. Hartford has a solid foundation of community-based organizations and other entities that play important complementary roles of neighborhood planning, civic engagement, provision of services, and community development. So many of the people we met show a sincere interest, knowledge, and enthusiasm for neighborhood organizing as another critical, community role. The combination of support for organizing from the City, the community foundation, and the United Way is unique in a city of Hartford's size, and is a significant asset that can be used to attract national funding interest.

Our investigation found many organizing strengths in Hartford. The CCP focus on resident agenda-setting that builds on existing organizations, and the flexibility to broadly define quality of life issues have allowed some very good resident-led organizing to occur. Several solid organizers have emerged and received training and support, allowing them to grow and in some cases even mentor other organizers. The development of

increasingly diverse neighborhood leadership has been a critically important investment, with the result that several former community leaders became organizers themselves.

Neighborhood organizing in Hartford helped turn the city around after a period of increased drug and gang activity. According to former Interim Police Chief Pawlina, the PSCs contributed significantly to reducing crime and improving public safety. “Their high point was in 1999, and Hartford had its lowest crime rate in 25-30 years that year.” CCP also fostered multi-neighborhood and citywide collaboration, cutting across class, race, and turf issues to win the Community Court, a million-dollar investment in a new approach to misdemeanor crimes. Collaboration across neighborhoods continues today, exemplified by the relationship among West End, Parkville, and Asylum Hill, as well as recent HART-initiated citywide efforts to secure more police officers.

Hartford is in an excellent position to build on these strengths and take organizing to the next level. Many of the stakeholders we interviewed cited HART, CHANE, and AHOP in their heydays as examples of the kind of organizing that is needed in Hartford. Looking at these examples and drawing on our experience working in other parts of the country, we believe that developing cohesive, multi-issue, constituency-led organizations is a prime requisite of effective neighborhood organizing and what is most needed now in Hartford. Whatever strategies are undertaken to support organizing in the City, the goal should be to foster an environment conducive to, and provide adequate resources for, creating and/or strengthening powerful, representative, and highly competent organizations – rooted in the community and accountable to residents – that make organizing their central means for getting things done for their constituencies and the City as a whole. A key focus of the work of these organizations should be deep engagement with leadership development strategies that build on the resident-led efforts we have seen in Hartford but also go well beyond them.

Community organizing does not need to follow a single track or approach to be effective, but, to have major impact, it does need to result in the creation of organizations with the volunteer leadership, staff, resources, and technical assistance required to tackle the central issues. Developing sustainable power is crucial to winning lasting community benefits.

Our working definition of “community organizing” is:

The process of building an increasingly powerful, broad-based, democratic, independent organization rooted in and representative of its community (race, ethnicity, class, gender, age) –

- ◆ that has a vision for the transformation of its community and engages in multi-issue organizing to achieve systemic change;
- ◆ that engages in the ongoing process of actively reaching out, involving large numbers of people, surfacing leaders and giving them training and increasing responsibility and authority, and helping them move into effective action on the issues that most concern them; and
- ◆ that builds its membership, leadership, knowledge, power, and capacity over time, so it can make increasingly significant gains on the issues it cares about.

There are a number of important reasons why building powerful, multi-neighborhood, multi-issue organizations is crucial for enhancing Hartford's future:

- They provide social fabric and greater stability (as the PSCs and CBOs have shown) in a city that has extreme poverty.
- They provide city officials and major institutions with one representative group to relate to for a particular geographic area, making it far easier to involve people in planning and problem solving and in collaborations on particular issues or projects. In this way they can be a more effective and efficient vehicle for resident engagement.
- They build self-help capacity – such as block clubs, block watches, clean-ups, and alerts on public safety – while giving every resident a reason and means to be involved in improving city life.
- They develop bigger projects that can be an asset to the city – such as overcoming discrimination and creating jobs through the Jobs Funnel, creating partnerships for better schools through the Learning Corridor, and developing more holistic approaches to criminal justice like the Community Court.
- They can help ensure the efficient use of limited resources – targeted to the projects and activities that residents find make the biggest difference (for example PSCs determined that raucous parties and vandalism were more detrimental than nonviolent robberies).
- They can increase Hartford's power to get policy reforms and resources needed in the city, by marshalling their constituency on issues like securing equitable funding for schools from the State, with backing from suburbs in the region.
- They can develop leaders who are vital to Hartford's future, as organizing groups have already done with leaders like Mayor Perez, Jim Boucher, Yolanda Rivera, Marie Kirkley-Bey, Marilyn Rosetti, Dawn Fuller, Hyacinth Yennie, and Karen Cato Calloway.

Looking at the challenges faced by high poverty cities around the country, we would argue that many of Hartford's problems will require regional and statewide solutions in order to distribute resources more equitably over the long term. Hartford will need powerful community organizations that can effectively partner with other organizations in the suburbs and throughout the state to engage in region-wide and eventually statewide organizing to bring constituency views and voices to policy debates. The type of organizing that occurred around the recent school equity fight involving Hartford groups as well as ICEJ and others in the suburbs is an important precedent that can be built on in the future.

Our interviews underscored the critical importance of organizing and meaningfully engaging young people in greater numbers in working for Hartford's future. The city already has a number of youth development and youth leadership initiatives underway, and these need to be complemented by significant youth organizing and "youth leadership development for change" strategies so that young people – especially in communities of color – can participate in strategizing and mobilizing for positive

social change as part of mutually responsive, intergenerational efforts. There are already promising examples of youth organizing to build on, including work HART has done and the West End Civic Association's current youth organizing around school suspension issues.

Hartford's powerful, multi-issue, intergenerational organizations of the future also need to be "learning organizations" in the fullest sense if they are to continuously grow in effectiveness and influence. In a fully participatory manner involving their constituencies, they will need to invest in building knowledge about the fundamental causes of neighborhood and city problems they seek to address, open themselves to involvement with others in pursuing meaningful solutions, and make learning through trial and error, reflection and systematic assessment integral to their strategic planning and decision making. Developing standards for community organizing is a piece of the learning and self-assessment process, and examples of these are included in Appendix III. Another piece of the process is to have an approach to evaluation that understands community organizing and incorporates organizational learning and growth as central goals. A third piece is the availability of ongoing training and technical assistance that supports learning within and across organizations, organizers, and leaders.

### **Hand in Hand: Creating Funding and Capacity-Building Systems to Strengthen Community Organizing in Hartford**

In the following sections we briefly lay out a vision emerging from our interviews and assessment to guide future support for organizing in Hartford. It centers on building powerful, multi-neighborhood, multi-issue, resident-led organizations that will use organizing to create systemic change and demonstrably improve communities. In the final section of this report, we provide recommendations for how to support and implement this vision. The recommendations build not only on what we have found through our work to date in Hartford, but also on a review of several collaborative funding and capacity-building models – described in the next section – and our experience with and knowledge of notable systems for supporting organizing around the country.

#### **We see two essential elements to a long-term strategy for strengthening community organizing in Hartford – expanded funding, and intensive capacity-building.**

The first would be provided by a Funding Collaborative that would expand financial support for grassroots organizations, help current supporters attract others to support this vital work, and help all of these funders collaborate in developing investment strategies which will maximize their impact in building strong grassroots organizing groups in Hartford.

The second would be the responsibility of a new Capacity-Building Alliance. It would engage a cross-section of people who are committed to and highly informed about community organizing to work together to create and implement new long-range

strategies for developing strong community organizing groups in key communities throughout Hartford. Its role would be to ensure these groups receive the expert training, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities they need to rapidly expand their power, capacity, ability to work together, and impact.

## **Funding Collaborative Models**

### **Neighborhood Development Support Collaborative, Hartford**

The Neighborhood Development Support Collaborative (NSC) was developed about ten years ago in Hartford by the United Way, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG), and LISC. The collaborative was the result of a three-year process initiated by United Way, which was concerned about the quality of work of the CDCs it funded, and was not sure how to adequately assess their performance. Now about 20 funders participate in the collaborative. The collaborative pools its funds and makes joint decisions about which CDCs to support. Initially CDCs funded by the United Way and HFPG were grandfathered in. Then an assessment of all the CDCs was done to establish a baseline. The grantees were given intensive, hands-on technical assistance so that the weaker ones had an opportunity to improve. Those that did not improve were defunded over the course of a year.

Key elements of the collaborative include:

*The central role played by LISC*—LISC is the administrative agent for the collaborative and helps to educate the funders about community development so they can effectively assess grantees and make funding decisions. LISC provides TA, along with the part-time collaborative staff. National LISC has recently developed a new diagnostic tool to assess and improve CDC capacity that is being used in Hartford.

*The active role played by funders*—An important reason the collaborative model works is that funders continue to show up and are engaged in the process. The steering committee members bring a diversity of skills and experience to the table and also learn a lot about community development in the process. The collaborative members have made an investment of their time – the steering committee meets quarterly and the executive committee meets monthly.

*The separation of funding and TA roles*—The integration of organizational development TA into the mission of the collaborative is critical to supporting good outcomes by grantees. By keeping the roles somewhat separate, so that LISC provides organizational development TA and the collaborative makes funding decisions, the CDCs can develop a fruitful and trusting relationship with their TA provider with less fear that showing their weaknesses will jeopardize their funding.

*Linkage to community empowerment*—Early on the collaborative emphasized the link of CDCs to community empowerment. Staff and a number of funders see organizing



as a necessary and complementary strategy to community development. In fact, the NSC explored the possibility of adding a community organizing funding component to the existing structure. However, while the idea was appealing to several of the independent foundations, it went too far beyond the comfort zone of more conservative funders such as banks and insurance companies, so the concept was not developed further.

Most stakeholders we interviewed that were familiar with the NSC thought it was a highly effective model. The collaborative process has weeded out the poor performing CDCs, and improved the capacity and performance of the CDCs that continue to be funded. There is more collaboration and cooperation across neighborhood lines, as some of the weakest CDCs that were defunded also had been some of the most divisive.

We did hear a few concerns expressed about the model. One criticism was that the three-year process to establish the NSC should have taken less time. Another was that the weeding out of poor-performing CDCs had the unintended effect of eliminating the more racially diverse organizations. A third concern is that under the collaborative model, the overall resources going to community development are apparently less than when each funder made individual grants to CDCs. A fourth concern is that the NSC funding criteria do not adequately direct funding to the communities with the greatest need.

The collaborative concept holds real potential to support community organizing. At least a few challenges to transferring the model would need to be overcome. One is the lack of an entity in Hartford that can play a role comparable to LISC in terms of housing the collaborative, educating funders about organizing, and providing hands-on TA to grantees. Another is the question of how many funders would support a community organizing collaborative, and how can the accountability mechanisms be put in place to reassure funders that their investment is well spent. These issues will be explored in our recommendations.

### **Initiative for Neighborhood and Citywide Organizing (INCO), New York, NY**

New York City's new Initiative for Neighborhood and Citywide Organizing takes the next step. It was recently launched with a commitment of over \$3 million from the Neighborhood Opportunities Fund (NOF). INCO provides funding for community organizing to supplement the community development work which has been supported for many years by the Neighborhood Opportunities Fund. The Fund and its predecessor, Neighborhoods 2000, are very similar to Hartford's Neighborhood Support Collaborative.

More than twenty-five funders now support the Neighborhood Opportunities Fund. These include such large foundations as Ford and Rockefeller, the New York Community Trust, the United Way, small family foundations, banks and other corporations, LISC and the Enterprise Foundation. The Fund divides its contributions to support both development and organizing through the CDC support program and INCO.

The new Initiative for Neighborhood and Citywide Organizing emerged from discussions initiated with the Fund's leaders by the Association for Neighborhood Housing and Development, a citywide housing coalition composed of CDCs, community and tenant organizing groups and others committed to affordable housing. It also emanated from funders who saw the need for poor communities to have a stronger voice on neighborhood as well as citywide issues. It is highly significant that many of INCO's funders – including financial institutions – are very interested in seeing an increase in “organizing”, saying that they value community groups at least as much for their roots in the community and their advocacy for the poor as for their development capacity.

ANHD members were deeply involved in designing this new organizing support program. Their goal is to “raise the standards and culture of organizing throughout the city”. Funding from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation financed the planning, including a consultant's survey of the organizing potential and needs of groups in New York City. While conducting her research, the consultant met with organizing groups and helped them hammer out a joint definition of “organizing” that is proving to be very useful in guiding the grant program. This research fed into ANHD's strategic planning process and eventually led to the new regranting program.

With input from ANHD, the Fund developed a Request for Proposals for sufficient pass-through funding to enable selected organizing groups and CDCs (those really serious about organizing) each to hire full-time organizers, as well as get centralized training and technical assistance from experienced organizers. This is providing each of fifteen organizations with \$50,000 per year for four years. In addition to strengthening community organizing capacity within the neighborhoods, ANHD's program is geared to “strengthen community participation in collaborative city-wide housing policy campaigns” with ANHD, building on the Platform which ANHD developed, including enforcing the Mayor's pledge to add \$500 million in new funding for housing development.

Funding decisions were made by the Neighborhood Opportunities Fund. As a membership organization, ANHD was anxious to avoid being the decision-maker or conduit on the money so that it wouldn't alienate 87 of its 102 members when it made 15 grants. Furthermore, ANHD agreed with funders on the importance of them becoming fully invested in the program for the long-run through making the grant decisions and monitoring the results, believing that “They are our partners and it's up to us to help them and treat them in good faith.”

ANHD has, in fact, had a real influence on the grants. First, its consultant involved ANHD members in defining “community organizing”, thus setting criteria for eligible grantees. Second, committees of the organizing groups within ANHD and the Fund met together for months to hammer out agreement on the RFP, overcoming differences in culture, understanding, and goals to wind up with a process they all liked. Third, over several meetings ANHD staff trained the funders on the review committees on how to screen the proposals and identify good organizing. Fourth, ANHD developed the rating systems for the proposals. Fifth, ANHD chose a consultant who worked with

NOF's consultant to screen out all ineligible proposals. Sixth, those consultants worked with the review committees as they narrowed the proposals to twenty. Seventh, they also accompanied the review committees on site visits and in developing written reports on each of the groups visited. Eighth, ANHD staff was in the room during the deliberations to answer questions and ensure that the funders struck an appropriate balance between experienced groups and grantees with less experience whose capacity ANHD was particularly anxious to build.

**Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative (BNC), Baltimore, MD**

The Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative funds all kinds of groups, from CDCs to neighborhood organizing groups, to groups involved in "healthy neighborhoods" (the program now being replicated in Hartford in the Rising Star neighborhoods).

The Collaborative has two staff people – an Executive Director and a TA Coordinator who works directly with the groups. Its board is composed of funders exclusively, but other trusted groups are involved in meetings when funding decisions are made (Legal Aid, Citizens Planning and Housing Association, etc.). The Director can see advantages to having the board itself include the mix of funders and community groups they now involve in funding decisions.

The Collaborative disburses \$400,000-500,000 per year. The typical grant is \$50,000 in general support each year for three years. Most of the groups use the funds to hire an organizer since that is the hardest to fund elsewhere. In addition, the Collaborative provides small amounts of money to enable groups to go to training conferences, and also makes one shot capacity-building grants of \$5,000-10,000 for consultants to help with strategic planning or other major needs. Capacity-building is central for the groups.

An example of their grantees is Operation Reachout Southwest. It emerged out of a joint initiative by CPHA, the Neighborhood Design Center, and Community Law Project organizing the area near Bon Secours hospital. A sympathizer within the hospital backed the organizing and BNC made a grant, which added an organizer to staff the coalition. It has gradually become an organization, which is addressing many different issues, which come from its 11 member groups. Their rule is to limit each meeting to tackling five issues so that they can focus and resolve issues. Over time they have leveraged other money and become an effective CBO.

BNC has twice put funding into the initial organizing of a group, which had no staff, and, while the results were mixed, they had some success. BNC now runs hiring workshops, which they're finding very useful for groups hiring their first organizer or ED. A consultant, Tom Adams – whose specialty is leadership transition – is now providing interim directors to help groups through their very earliest days as they get ready to hire their first person.

BNC also provides –

- Peer networking meetings each quarter
- 25 forums on a range of issues, developments, EITC outreach, organizing and arts, etc.

One year they convened a training program for community organizers but they weren't able to offer it again. It was helpful, covered a whole series of topics, but they learned that they should have clarified what 'organizing' was at the beginning and surfaced differences in the approaches people were following.

The funding Collaborative has increased the money available for organizing, funders have learned from each other so they understand the city better, they have become more engaged with their grantees, and they do more multiyear funding and joint or aligned funding. In particular some family foundations have learned a lot.

### *Neighbor to Neighbor, Seattle, WA*

Neighbor to Neighbor (NtN) provides small grants to new and emerging nonprofit organizations working on immigrant and refugee issues in two sections of Seattle. It was created at the initiative of the Seattle Foundation when its "small grants" partnership with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation was phased out, ending that program through which the two foundations provided grants of \$5-10,000 to emerging groups in South Seattle. NtN is administered by the Seattle Foundation, but grant decisions are made collaboratively.

Neighbor to Neighbor has succeeded in attracting funding from several corporations and small foundations, including ones which would not normally make grants to small organizations without track records or the stamp of approval of an established board. The program demonstrates that funders with relatively little experience funding small neighborhood groups are more willing to make these somewhat risky commitments through a collaborative "small grants program" because the amounts of money involved are small and the collaborative decision-making process gives them an opportunity to learn from other funders about the city and particular groups within key neighborhoods.

NtN disburses between \$100,000 and \$160,000 each year. A part-time consultant with strong community organizing experience staffs the fund and scours the community for potential grantees. Originally she also provided training and technical assistance for those groups also, but, thanks to an initiative by NtN, there is now a Nonprofit Assistance Center with a staff of 6-7 people which provides management support assistance. There are also consultant funds for people to assist with the community groups' organizing, organizational development, fundraising, and other needs. The consultant also helps introduce NtN grantees to the Seattle Foundation and other larger funders when they get to the stage where they need larger grants and have the potential to attract such support.

## **Recommendations for Strengthening Neighborhood Organizing in Hartford**

Our recommendations are presented in brief, outline format to touch the key highlights. We look forward to fleshing them out in greater detail in consultation with the steering committee.

### **1. Overall Goal and Strategy of Funding Organizing**

- **We recommend that the primary goal of the funders be the building of powerful, resident-led, multi-issue organizations that can achieve increasingly significant neighborhood improvements on resident-defined issues and work together, and with others, to address citywide issues.**

The most effective way to achieve this goal, especially given limited resources, is to foster the development of incorporated, sustainable, multi-issue and multi-neighborhood organizations. There are countless examples of the benefits such organizations can bring at the neighborhood level. At the citywide level, the jobs funnel is an excellent example of what can be achieved through citywide collaboration rooted in organizing. The potential to achieve other equally effective solutions to resident concerns – and become an effective voice for urban constituencies at City Hall and in the State capitol – lies in a clear commitment to “community organizing” which goes well beyond resident engagement, and strong support to create and sustain permanent 501c3 organizations that work across more than one neighborhood. It is neither feasible nor desirable to create and sustain 17 different neighborhood organizing groups. The strategy of building several larger, more powerful organizations makes sense in both fiscal and impact terms. However, these larger organizations must also effectively organize and represent the lowest-income and neediest residents in the city.

- **We recommend that the systems that currently foster resident engagement and citizen participation be maintained and strengthened.**

Opportunities for regular, ongoing neighborhood input and communication with City agencies and the police department are critical to reducing crime and improving quality of life. We envision that these systems will continue, and that as strong, multi-issue, multi-neighborhood organizations are developed, they will use these routes for citizen participation to expand their impact and that they will join with others to improve these avenues for resident engagement in the future.

### **2. Design of New Structure to Support Organizing**

- **We recommend that two strong entities be created to fund and strengthen community organizing in Hartford—a Funding Collaborative and a Capacity-Building Alliance.**

### Funding Collaborative for Community Organizing:

Following the precedent of other funding collaboratives, a new Funding Collaborative for Community Organizing (FC) would work to expand funding for organizing in the city and region, while also helping various funders improve the quality of their grant-making. The committee overseeing the Collaborative would include representatives of all institutions that contribute funds to the Collaborative. As with the Neighborhood Support Collaborative, there are several advantages to having this structure—it provides a forum for shared learning, making grant-making decisions, attracting more funders and more resources, and strengthening members' commitment to Hartford neighborhoods and to organizing as a community change strategy.

### Capacity-Building Alliance:

The Capacity-Building Alliance would be a small new nonprofit created specifically to help grassroots groups develop their power and capacity over time. Its role would be to ensure these groups receive the expert training, technical assistance, and peer learning opportunities they need to rapidly expand their power, capacity, ability to work together, and impact. The Alliance would base its program of support upon long-range strategies developed by a cross-section of people who are committed to and highly informed about community organizing in Hartford, including strategies for –

- strengthening groups which are currently organizing neighborhood residents and
- supporting the creation of new multi-neighborhood, multi-issue organizations where people now lack such vehicles for representation and influence.

Its long-range goal would be the existence of strong, influential, and constructive community organizing groups in all of Hartford's lower income neighborhoods.

Money alone is not the answer to building strong, capable organizations. Serious attention must also be given to capacity-building, and this requires concerted, carefully thought through measures for providing groups with the best possible training and consulting help and with opportunities to work together on broader agendas. As we envision it, the Capacity-Building Alliance would enlist "alumni" of community organizing groups and other key strategists in thinking through how best to do this. With a dynamic, highly skilled and creative Executive Director who knows organizing "cold", this alliance would then oversee a long-term capacity-building effort combining training, consulting, peer learning and opportunities to work together on broader issues and concerns. The Capacity-Building Alliance would add great new cooperation, talent and energy to the challenging task of moving community organizing in Hartford to a new level.

There are strong advantages to creating two groups to play these complementary but different roles. Like the distinctive roles played in the community development field by the Neighborhood Support Collaborative and LISC, this would keep the grant-making role somewhat separate from the technical assistance and strategic planning role. By

reaching beyond the funding community for other leaders who can help build a participatory process for devising long-term strategies for strengthening organizing, the alliance would be in an excellent position to build strong support systems, foster learning, and influence funders, grassroots groups and others in the joint search for new ways to strengthen Hartford through bottom-up processes.

The Alliance would oversee the program and be involved in a serious learning effort that would have two components: one—a continuing analysis of city, regional, state, and national trends, and their implications for Hartford; the other—an ongoing assessment process that fosters learning about what’s going well, what isn’t, what needs attention, and what steps should be taken next. This would be a formative and participatory learning process designed to lead to midcourse corrections and continuing refinement of plans.

The Alliance would have a creative role as well—developing new programs to explore areas needing special attention, such as the development of organizations and organizers in the very lowest income areas and in monolingual Spanish areas; and youth organizing, especially among very poor kids, perhaps tied into a high school curriculum (drawing on models here and elsewhere such as the ACORN High Schools, and perhaps fitting in with the new Public Service Academy). It might also explore relationships with ongoing educational programs at Trinity College, the University of Hartford, and the University of Connecticut and/or possible new offering on community organizing at Capitol City Community College to take advantage of its access to students from lower income neighborhoods.

This model will only work if the non-funder representatives chosen for the Capacity-Building Alliance understand organizing, are well-respected, and can truly be impartial. Anyone who is clearly promoting an isolated agenda or does not have the experience or skills to play an active role in shaping the future directions of the Alliance will cause more harm than good. In addition, the Alliance staff will need to have a special combination of skills and experience to be able to devote concentrated attention to these tasks, doing some direct technical assistance, effectively supervising others doing TA, fundraising from outside the city, and engaging in creative program development.

While the work of the Alliance would need to be intensive during the formative stages of this effort, after the first 3-6 months we envision a much less demanding time commitment by members, such as participation in quarterly day-long meetings.

#### Summary of Proposed Structure and Responsibilities:

##### Funding Collaborative Composition—

- Membership includes all institutions that contribute funds to the Collaborative.

##### Funding Collaborative Duties—

- Makes final funding decisions for grants to groups and TA providers.
- Conducts outreach to and recruitment of potential new funders.

- Develops and pursues “outside” funding strategies.
- Provides a forum for learning more about Hartford, its neighborhoods, and citywide concerns as well as successful approaches to organizing in Hartford and other cities.
- Explores regional and statewide issues as they affect Hartford.

#### Capacity-Building Alliance Composition—

- Membership includes several members of the Funders Collaborative and a majority of non-funders.
- Non-funder members ideally are people who are respected for their commitment to organizing, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity, long-range view, and balance of competing interests. We envision that at least some of these persons would come from the neighborhoods.
- Possible size of the Alliance could be four funders and five non-funders.

#### Capacity-Building Alliance Duties—

- Defines community organizing and develops standards for organizing.
- Creates a long-term plan to develop strong community organizing groups in Hartford.
- Creates and oversees a multifaceted system for developing the capacity of current organizing groups and creating new ones in such neighborhoods as the North End which now lack organizing groups
- Drafts the process and criteria for awarding grants for the Funding Collaborative to consider adopting.
- Reviews funding proposals and makes recommendations to the Funders Collaborative for grants to groups and TA providers.
- Hires and supervises Alliance staff of an Executive Director and part-time staff .
- Creates and facilitates learning forums for Funding Collaborative.
- Establishes a Training Cooperative which develops a training curriculum which takes full advantage of the knowledge and skills of people throughout the Hartford region and elsewhere who can provide community organizers in Hartford with the training they need and want; representatives of organizing groups would be involved in development of this cooperative curriculum and identifying trainers for each component of the program.
- Facilitates monthly meetings of organizers and leaders to discuss issues of common concern, engage in educational program on trends and issues in the city and region, explore approaches from other places, and look at opportunities to work together on issues and to otherwise collaborate.
- Supports development of new programs to meet the needs of Hartford’s neighborhoods (for example, programs to support youth organizing, recruit more diverse organizers into the field, and address re-entry of formerly incarcerated).
- Creates and sustains evaluation and organizational learning processes with grantees, as well as for the Alliance and FC.
- Modifies and expands the program over time.



## Capacity-Building Alliance Executive Director:

### Qualifications—

- Outstanding senior experience as organizer and/or organizational development specialist committed to organizing (minimum 10 years unless has other relevant experience and qualifications).
- Familiarity with diverse approaches to organizing; experience with multi-racial and low-income organizing, and building coalitions and alliances.
- Experience in organizational development, strategic planning, and fundraising.
- Ability to engage in big picture, strategic thinking about the future of organizing in Hartford.
- Preferably familiar with Hartford neighborhood organizing scene.

### Duties—

- Provides staff leadership in developing Alliance strategies and implementing pursuit of program development goals developed by Alliance.
- Provides hands-on organizational development support to grantees.
- Helps grantees develop training and TA Cooperative.
- Assists Alliance in creating learning forums for Funders Collaborative.

### 3. Funding Strategy

- **We recommend that initially the Capacity-Building Alliance develop an RFP process to fund one entity or collaborative effort in each of three geographic areas – the South End, the central city, and the North End. The Alliance would also develop a process to provide small grants to smaller, more nascent efforts.**

Criteria for funding would include, at a minimum:

- Multi-neighborhood organizing (to avoid shotgun weddings, the groups should show evidence of prior collaboration);
- Multi-issue focus;
- Evidence of real power-based organizing;
- Ability to work collectively toward citywide change;
- Plan for organizing in very poor neighborhoods;
- Extra points for willingness to collaborate actively with other neighborhood entities, such as PSCs, NRZs, and Rising Stars, including being open to possibly incorporating these committees into the umbrella organizations.
- Extra points for solid leadership development plans.
- Extra points for strategies that involve young people.

It is critical that this new process builds on the organizing that is already going well and takes it to the next level. Many people we interviewed cited HART at its height as an example of the kind of inclusive organizing, with serious leadership development, accountability to the grassroots, and ability to produce major gains --that Hartford's neighborhoods need. It will be important that good organizing efforts currently underway

are not jeopardized under the new structure. In addition, there appears to be increasing collaboration in some parts of the city between adjacent neighborhoods and among PSCs, NRZs and others. These efforts should be encouraged and may provide a good foundation for building new community organizations.

At the same time, special attention must be paid to areas of the city that do not have strong (or any) organizing groups. Thus the North End requires a different approach. Stakeholders pointed out to us the great importance of the North End having a strong community organization, given the concentration of poverty, high violent crime rates, environmental hazards, and other pressing issues. There has not been strong organizing in the North End in over two decades, and organizing is needed to complement the physical development and other work being undertaken by the City, private institutions, and ONE/CHANE as a CDC. While we know that the neighborhoods are now fragmented, with many territorial conflicts, we recommend that one or two consultants (preferably reflecting the racial composition of the North End) be retained to do pre-organizing work and to ascertain whether there are sufficient numbers of emerging and older leaders who are willing to work together to create a new organizing effort. If so, steps should be taken to create a sponsoring committee for a new organizing group. Funds should be set aside to seed that new organization, if there is a decision to create it, and to hire initial staff.

Ideally the FC would make long-term funding commitments to community groups. One way to maximize the assurance of funding while taking into account the reluctance of some funders to make grants of three or more years would be to make a two-year commitment and then, after a review of the first year's experience, authorize a third year of funding to grantees that have achieved sufficient progress. Over time, as resources allow, other community organizing groups would be supported as well.

Smaller grants should be available to sponsor nascent organizing efforts in some of the unorganized areas throughout the city or where existing PSCs, NRZs and other entities want to come together to form an organizing group. This could resemble Seattle's Neighborhood to Neighbor or other "neighborhood small grant programs" developed by community foundations with support from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

Ideally the Alliance and FC would be 'agnostic' in their support of organizing models, including those associated with such organizing networks as NPA, IAF, ACORN, PICO, and Gamaliel – as long as grant applicants meet the criteria for receiving funds.

**In this scenario, the positive elements and connections that exist in the current CCP program would be maintained and enhanced.**

- We envision that whether particular PSCs continue to exist in their present form or morph into something new – this would probably vary from neighborhood to neighborhood – resident leaders would be involved in developing the proposals

for multi-neighborhood organizing and setting the agenda for issues they want to work on.

- Current PSCs would be encouraged to come together citywide to nominate one or two candidates to fill non-funder slots on the Alliance board. This would be part of a broader effort to solicit nominations from all the stakeholders, including NRZs.
- PSCs and NRZs also would be eligible to apply for seed money to build new broader organizing groups which become multi-issue, multi-neighborhood, and institute a disciplined process of organizing a constituency and developing leaders. It is possible that some PSCs that are and will continue to be focused on civic engagement rather than organizing, would decide instead to merge with their NRZs (CSS/CON already has) in order to consolidate their leadership, broaden their impact, and continue to be supported through supplemental funding for Hartford 2000.
- All of the organizers and leaders we met with indicated that public safety and quality of life issues remain at the top of the residents' priority list, so these issues will continue to be a primary concern for organizing. There was also broad agreement among neighborhood leaders as well as police officials on the importance of maintaining a formalized collaborative relationship on crime and safety issues. It is vital to continue all of the invaluable processes that now foster good communication and common efforts between citizens and the police department. These include monthly neighborhood and citywide meetings between resident leaders, the police department and other city agencies – open to grantees and any other PSCs that want to come. It is, however, essential to revamp and revitalize those meetings to provide a more effective means of improving neighborhood-City relations and the delivery of services than the current monthly meetings, which have low attendance and lack strategic focus. The recent appointment of the permanent police chief, Patrick Harnett, provides an important focal point for these meetings, which can be a vehicle for neighborhoods to articulate their public safety agenda to the new chief.

#### **4. Technical Assistance and Training Cooperative**

- **We recommend that training and technical assistance be provided through a combination of a new Training Cooperative and grants for technical assistance tailored to the needs of particular community groups.**

Each group receiving a grant would have a pot of funds available for technical assistance and training. The grantee would submit proposals to the Capacity-Building Alliance, specifying the uses of the TA money and the TA/training provider to be used. We anticipate that some of the grantees would choose to continue receiving training from UCAN.

One of the notable assets of the Hartford region is the variety of people who have extensive experience in community organizing. There are many “alumni” who, after years of working in Clay Hill, Asylum Hill or another neighborhood, are now working elsewhere in the nonprofit sector or in private or public institutions. Collectively, they represent an enormous resource that should be tapped as support for strong community organizing expands.

It is also clear that the training needs of people in various neighborhood groups differ enormously. Some organizers are experienced but need highly experienced people to be coaches, mentors, and trainers so that they can learn new skills and be exposed to new ideas. Others are new to the work, from the neighborhoods or from local universities, and in need of training in the basics of organizing as well as an opportunity to get together periodically with their peers and trainers for reflection on their experience and peer support. The groups themselves are at various stages, quite strong in some cases and nascent or struggling in others. Some are parts of broader networks; others are independent and isolated.

Creation of a Training Cooperative as an integral part of the Capacity-Building Alliance’s support for organizing would enable groups in the city to maximize their access to the training they need and want. The cooperative approach would give people from different grassroots groups an opportunity to come together to decide – in dialogue with Alliance staff and others – what their primary training needs are. They could be involved in designing the curriculum, choosing the main topics (such as conducting effective one-on-ones or involving churches more heavily in an organization), and then deciding which trainer or “alumnus” could best lead that part of the curriculum.

This model will ensure that organizers benefit from ongoing organizing TA and have the flexibility to draw on the organizing expertise available in Hartford as well as expertise from other parts of the country. The Cooperative could explore potential linkages with area post-secondary schools around curriculum development.

In addition to the informal mentorship anticipated between senior and junior organizers within organizations, there would be further mentorship through the coop. The cooperative could also serve as a forum for peer learning and exploration of joint work on issues.

In addition, the grantees will need extensive technical assistance which is tailored to the particular needs of each organization and which is delivered by people who are chosen by the grassroots groups themselves, with recommendations made available at groups’ request by the Capacity-Building Alliance. This individualized assistance should include access to people outside Hartford as well as in the region so that groups have access to the people they believe can be most helpful to them.

## 5. Accountability, Performance, and Evaluation

- **We recommend that the Capacity-Building Alliance clarify the key elements of community organizing, adopt a set of standards for organizing, and develop an evaluation and organizational learning process which helps strengthen local groups, the Alliance, and the Funding Collaborative.**

The Capacity-Building Alliance and grantees themselves will play important roles in ensuring accountability and evaluating performance. The Alliance's responsibilities would include defining "organizing" and adopting standards for organizing. This would help overcome the current confusion between "organizing" and "civic engagement". More importantly, it would provide standards for then monitoring progress, assessing success and refining future plans.

Several funders that support community organizing have developed good materials that set standards for organizing. Some organizing groups have developed their own internal performance measures as well. (Examples of each are attached in Appendix III.) The monthly meetings of organizers and leaders will provide opportunities for the Alliance to monitor how groups are doing. The Training Cooperative will be an important mechanism to identify skill gaps and increase learning, thereby improving performance. These are some of the many ways that a culture of organizational learning can be infused throughout the structure.

Other mechanisms can be put in place to strengthen overall accountability as well. Developing a semi-annual self-assessment and reporting system will allow for the enforcement of accountability by grantees. The selection of an outside evaluator who has an in-depth understanding of community organizing will allow for a formative and participatory evaluation process that facilitates mid-course corrections and enhancement of the grantees' capacities.

Funding guidelines can require that each grantee have at least one senior organizer who will manage the organizing project and supervise new or less experienced organizers. The funding guidelines can also provide clear guidance on job qualifications and pay ranges for each to help ensure that the staff are sufficiently skilled and compensated.

This initiative is of enormous importance to the future of Hartford. It therefore will be critical that the strategic leaders of the initiative – funders, grassroots leaders, and others who are highly knowledgeable and strategic about organizing to bring about positive change – have assistance in devising a process of evaluation and organizational learning which is geared specifically to giving them real-time feedback on what is working well, what isn't, and what new factors have intervened to block progress or open up new opportunities. If well designed, this could be of enormous help to the Capacity-Building Alliance and its partners in the community and donor worlds by enabling them to keep making course corrections to strengthen their efforts. It would also help keep

people involved in the Alliance by creating an engaging learning environment which participants would find stimulating, useful, and an additional reason for staying involved.

## 6. Financing and Budget

- **We recommend a fundraising target of \$1,000,000 to implement the new structure.**

In order to administer the Collaborative, and provide sufficient resources for organizing groups to hire and retain quality organizing staff and quality TA, the existing resources that support organizing must be enhanced. Our proposed budget is intended to direct the lion's share of the resources directly to community organizations for operating support, technical assistance, and training. We believe that potential new funders – including national foundations – will want to participate in a visionary program that has the real potential to grow strong organizations.

### Annual Budget (fully-funded)

Large grants pool (the North End portion would cover temporary consultant until ED could be hired for new organization)	\$ 475,000
Small grants pool (to seed nascent organizing)	\$ 50,000
Technical assistance pool (assumes \$50k x 3 grantees; TA to nascent groups; Training Coop)	\$ 200,000
Staffing and administration (includes director, part-time AA and other part-time staff/consultants, overhead)	\$ 150,000
Evaluation and organizational learning	\$ 75,000
Program development	\$ 50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>

### Minimum Start-Up Budget (First Year)

Large grants pool	\$300,000
Small grants pool (to seed nascent organizing)	\$ 25,000
Technical assistance pool (assumes \$25k x 3 grantees)	\$ 75,000
Staffing and administration (includes director, overhead)	\$100,000
Evaluation and organizational learning	\$ 25,000
Program development	\$ 25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$550,000</b>

### Projected Annual Revenue

Based on our discussions with potential funders, there is a lot of interest in funding a quality community organizing support program with strong standards and accountability. The unique situation of Hartford having support for organizing coming from the City, the community foundation and the United Way sends a strong message to

other potential funders. Some local funders may be willing to participate if their contribution can be earmarked to serve a particular geographic location such as the North End which is of great concern to the City and some funders and/or, in the case of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, specific neighborhoods where this foundation is already invested.

Our experience in national fundraising leads us to believe that a strong case could be made for national foundations to invest in this new initiative if it is started with the level of ambition and creativity, quality of staff and quality of institutional and leadership commitment we are recommending, at least during the stage when initial capacity-building is so vital. Specific pieces of the program could attract national funders, such as leadership development, youth organizing, organizing on education or other specific issues, and evaluation and organizational learning.

*NOTE: In the listing of funders and amounts to follow, no one entity has committed a specific dollar amount (except the City) – these figures are meant to be illustrative of the potential to raise significant funds:*

Potential Funding:

City of Hartford	\$200,000
Hartford Foundation	\$500,000
United Way	\$ 50,000
Hartford Courant Foundation	\$ 25,000
Travelers Foundation	\$ 25,000
Other sources	\$150,000 – 300,000
Projected Total	\$550,000 – 1,000,000

The City of Hartford has indicated that it can commit \$200,000 per year for at least the first three years. The City is also committed to sustaining ongoing resident engagement through the Mayor’s Office of Constituency Services.

‘Other sources’ could include: UTC, Fleet/Bank of America, Northeast Utilities, The Hartford, Aetna, The Phoenix Foundation, Melville Trust, Fisher Foundation, Anthem Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Ford Foundation, Discount Foundation, Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), Needmor Fund, other national and regional funders.

**7. Transition Plan**

- **We recommend a six-month transition period in which CCP continues to be supported while the Funding Collaborative and Capacity-Building Alliance get up and running.**

We envision the following key elements in the transition process:

CCP Transition—The CCP program as such is already in a state of transition, with interim funding being provided to maintain 8.5 organizers in some neighborhoods. In the next phase of this transition we recommend that the current organizers continue to be funded for 6 months. UCAN would also continue to be funded for 6 months with somewhat increased funding so that groups that desire its assistance will have access to help in preparing for the changes (i.e., nominate community representatives to the Alliance and respond to the RFP) and to meet UCAN’s ongoing training needs. During this interim period UCAN should also help make the monthly citywide meetings more effective. With the new police chief now in place, the monthly meetings can be an opportunity for the neighborhoods to organize their public safety agenda and work with the new chief to help shape the city’s community policing and crime prevention strategy.

Interim Alliance—The three core funders (the City, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and United Way) would quickly choose three or four non-funders to work with them as an interim decision-making body. Roles of the interim committee would be to –

- Conduct outreach to other funders to participate in the new Funding Collaborative;
- Issue a call for nominations for non-funder representation on the permanent Capacity-Building Alliance board;
- Develop and issue the RFP, and manage the process for receiving proposals that will be considered and awarded through the new process outlined above, involving the Alliance and the FC;
- Identify an interim ‘home’ (i.e. fiscal agent) for the Alliance, preferably on ‘neutral’ turf;
- Identify and engage interim staff for the committee (most likely a consultant or temporary hire), and develop a job description and scouting plan for a permanent Executive Director for the Alliance;
- Take initial steps towards incorporating the Capacity-Building Alliance and seeking a 501(c)(3) tax exemption

There would also be a transition process of outreach by the interim committee to the neighborhoods (PSCs, NRZs, others) to help them understand the new structure, where they may fit in the new structure, and how it will be beneficial to their communities in the long run. Coordination with the City would also be needed around transition from the CCP to the new system.

The interim committee would devote the first three months of the transition period to these areas. Ideally the Alliance and Funding Collaborative could be put in place during the fourth month so that the Alliance could hire its Executive Director and the Funding Collaborative could award grants by the end of the six-month period.

Transition costs—The existing outlay for CCP would be enhanced by \$10,000 for six months to reflect a stepped up role by UCAN so that groups desiring its assistance during



this phase would have full access to it. This would need to be supplemented by the cost of hiring a consultant or interim staff to help the committee carry out its functions until the Alliance and Collaborative are operational, which could be in the range of an additional \$35,000-50,000.

Timeline—see attached Transition Timeline.

## **Conclusion**

Hartford has many great assets as well as serious challenges. Fortunately there is broad agreement on the depth of the crisis and on the solutions, including the need for a strong Mayor and strong neighborhoods, and for a period of capacity-building which is geared to maximizing the involvement of Hartford's residents to join with others in tackling the central issues the region faces.

To tap the potential for maximizing the contribution which “ordinary” residents make to the city and the region, further investment is necessary. It is time to build on the strengths of the city's best neighborhood efforts to build a set of powerful, constructive and highly effective organizations which, through community organizing, can contribute in major ways to transforming the neighborhoods and the city in general. This can be done by developing a Funders Collaborative through which new as well as current supporters of grassroots organizations can work together on an increasingly sophisticated strategy for building those organizations and fostering collaboration at the citywide, regional and state levels. It can be greatly enhanced by developing a Capacity-Building Alliance to focus on the equally important non-funding challenges of building the power and capacity of grassroots groups. It would harness the knowledge and energies of people with exceptional experience with community organizing and community change – people from outside the funding world as well as lead funders – in working together to develop that sophisticated strategy in concert with the Funders Collaborative and neighborhood leaders. It would also add critical expertise as well as opportunities for peer learning, peer support, and collaboration on policy issues and joint concerns.

With this investment and these institutions, Hartford will be far better positioned to meet its current challenges and to shape a more positive future.

## **Appendix I: List of People Interviewed**

Eddie Perez, Mayor of Hartford  
Lee Erdman, COO, City of Hartford  
George Jones, Hartford Police Department  
Rae Ann Palmer, Hartford Police Department  
Mark Pawlina, Former Acting Chief, Hartford Police Department  
Jim Boucher, member, City Council  
Mike Bangser, President, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving (HFPG)  
Chris Hall, Vice President for Programs and Special Projects, HFPG  
Hubert Sapp, Senior Program Officer, HFPG  
Paula Gilberto, United Way  
Kate Miller, Hartford Courant Foundation  
John Motley, Travelers Foundation  
Jack Mimnaugh, UCAN  
Alta Lash, Trinity Center for Neighborhoods (and UCAN)  
Lorenzo Jones, UCAN  
Jennifer Hadlock, West End Civic Association organizer  
Dawn Fuller, West End leader  
Jerry Maine, and other West End leaders (at Association meeting)  
Carl Dudley, Hartford Seminary and Chair WECA/NRZ  
Josh Laporte, Parkville organizer  
Karen Cato Calloway, Asylum Hill organizer  
Marilyn Rosetti, Director, HART  
Tara Parish, Lead Organizer, HART  
Charmaine Craig, HART leader  
Lois Ross, Blue Hills Civic Association organizer  
Thirman Milner, Interim Executive Director, ONE/CHANE  
Naomi McCoy, Upper Albany Neighborhood Collaborative  
Ann Pratt, Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice  
Andrea Pereira, Hartford LISC  
Linda Bayer, Hartford 2000  
Bernadine Silvers, Chair of Hartford 2000 and President of CSS/CON  
Kathy Kosmaler, Co-chair, South End NRZ  
Hyacinth Yennie, Chair, Barry Square NRZ  
Jackie Fongemie, Behind the Rocks leader  
Edie Lacey, Chair, Frog Hollow NRZ  
Francesca Reale, Co-chair, South Green NRZ  
Helen Nixon, Northeast Revitalization Association/NRZ  
Carl Williams, Southend Neighborhood Revitalization Association/NRZ  
Glen Geathers, Project Manager, Hartford Economic Development Commission  
Don Poland, Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc.  
Bob Kantor, Fannie Mae  
Marie Kirkley-Bey, Connecticut House of Representatives  
Yolanda Rivera, Executive Director, Hartford Construction Jobs Initiative  
Ken Johnson, Executive Director, NINA

Enid Rey, Village for Families and Children  
Garland Yates, Annie E. Casey Foundation  
Eunice Leitzing, Director, Neighbor to Neighbor, Seattle, WA  
Ann Sherrill, Executive Director, Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative, Baltimore, MD  
Irene Baldwin, Executive Director, Association For Neighborhood Housing and  
Development, New York, NY  
Rick Cohen, Executive Director, National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy,  
Washington, DC  
Jean Rudd, former Executive Director, the Woods Fund, Chicago, IL  
Henry Allen, Executive Director, The Hyams Foundation, Boston, MA  
Spence Limbocker, Executive Director, Neighborhood Funders Group, Washington, DC  
Jane Becker, consultant to the Chicago Community Organizing Initiative, Chicago, IL

## **Appendix II: Evaluation of the Comprehensive Community Partnership Program**

### Introduction

The history of the Comprehensive Communities Partnership (CCP) Program has been recounted in numerous documents; a brief recap is provided here.

The program was created in 1994 at the invitation of the federal Department of Justice as a tool to reduce crime, increase safety, and improve the quality of life in Hartford's neighborhoods at a time of extreme poverty, gang warfare, racial divisions, and poor community-government relations.

Residents were engaged actively in the design of the program through monthly meetings, which continued once CCP was established. In fact, this June marks the tenth anniversary of the Community Planning and Mobilization Committee meetings.

The key components of CCP from the outset were:

- Resident-led identification of safety and quality of life issues, through the Problem Solving Committees (PSCs).
- Collaboration with the Police Department, which was to engage in community-oriented policing.
- Collaboration with other City agencies, which were to engage in community-oriented government.

The CCP strategy of resident engagement, according to CCP documents, made a distinction between participatory groups and programmatic groups (such as CDCs and service providers) in the neighborhood, with PSCs being driven by participatory groups. United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods (UCAN) has been the sole technical assistance provider to the PSCs since the program's inception.

In 1998 funds became available from the City to hire block watch organizers for each of the PSCs. In 2003 state and federal funding sources shrank, putting the program in jeopardy and requiring a reduction in the number of organizer slots available.

This evaluation focuses primarily on the resident piece of this three-legged triangle. The evaluation is formative, meaning that it focuses primarily on the design of the program and the process of implementation, in order to make judgments about how to improve or build on the program as we move forward.

### Assessment pieces

#### 1. Organizational structure

Accounts by those who were present when the program was first conceived and launched agree that the original model for CCP generated a great deal of resident energy and enthusiasm. PSCs were established in all seventeen Hartford neighborhoods, and the monthly citywide meetings were well attended. The concept of the three-legged triangle (residents, police, and City) worked well as long as all three legs were committed, active participants in realizing the goals of the program. The CCP support mechanisms, which included CCP staff (located either at the Police Department or City Manager's office) and UCAN staff, were able to assist the PSCs in their agenda-setting and resident engagement goals.

However, over the ten-year life of the program, this structure has been put to the test and has proved inadequate in some regards.

a. PSCs

One strength of the program was that it sought to build on existing neighborhood organizing efforts, rather than create new structures where others already existed. For example, HART, West End Civic Association, and Blue Hills Civic Association were already in existence, and when funding for organizers became available, they hired and supervised the organizers for their neighborhoods. Also, CCP emphasized the need for resident engagement in every neighborhood in the city. So areas without a community organization were still given the opportunity to set up a PSC, and were given assistance to do so. However, on the flip side, where no organization already existed, the program did not seek to build a new one. Thus PSCs in some neighborhoods have existed for 10 years without having evolved into more stable structures that can grow and become more powerful. It may have been unrealistic and even unwise to expect a public safety program to seek to create new organizations. On the other hand, given the dearth of strong, resident-led organizations in the city today, it will be important as we look ahead to incorporate this goal into future efforts to support organizing.

b. Definition of 'organizing'

The CCP strategy of resident engagement, according to CCP documents, was based on the principle of "neighborhood organizing that holds that residents of a particular neighborhood have the right to establish priorities for that neighborhood." The goal is to "offer the opportunity for all residents to be involved and puts 'agenda-setting' in the hands of the neighborhoods." One could argue that this neighborhood organizing component is the lynchpin of the whole structure. Yet, without a more detailed set of standards and objectives for organizing, this broad definition, while well-intended, has allowed for confusion that has weakened the goals of the program.

While flexibility can be viewed as a positive way to respect neighborhood agenda-setting, in the absence of accountability it can provide an opportunity to use resources not necessarily for their intended purpose. One neighborhood may decide that organizing means passing out flyers to residents, for another it means being a social worker for the community. For yet another it means building new leadership among residents and giving

them the tools to create change in their neighborhood. All three of these are examples we heard in our interviews of what CCP organizing is supposed to accomplish. This ability to loosely interpret the purpose of organizing was exacerbated once funds were available to hire organizers. Several people interviewed expressed frustration that some PSCs and community organizations in charge of organizers used them to do things other than organize. It was felt that this created a bad name for all of the organizing going on through the CCP.

This broad definition of organizing also had consequences as other neighborhood resident-engagement initiatives arrived on the scene, such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Zones (NRZs) and most recently the homeownership initiative. The NRZs will be discussed in greater detail in a separate section. Here it suffices to say that while some people see the PSCs and NRZs as playing very different, and complementary roles, for other people, including many City officials, the lines are blurred, causing frustration that there are two entities in many neighborhoods that appear to be playing the same role. The recent creation of a new nonprofit, Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc, which has hired several outreach workers, who have also been described as community organizers, adds to the confusion. All of these activities can be viewed as helping residents establish priorities for their neighborhood, and therefore fall within the loose definition of organizing under the CCP program. However, we will argue that there are key differences in the goals and strategies of each that make them distinct. Clearer goals, definitions and standards for neighborhood organizing can eliminate confusion and strengthen outcomes.

### c. monthly meetings

The continuation of the monthly meetings that began during the program design phase provided an important new opportunity for residents from all the neighborhoods to come together. According to CCP's documentation, the meetings serve the purpose of allowing PSCs to share experience and learn from each other; obtain information about new programs and initiatives in the city; get updates from the City and Police Department on pressing issues; and work on matters of common concern. During the early years of CCP, all accounts indicate that the monthly meetings were indeed achieving all of these goals. In a city rife with racial and class tensions and serious turf issues, this regular coming together should be viewed as a major accomplishment of the program. The creation of the Community Court and reduction in violent crime are other impressive accomplishments.

However, over time it appears that these meetings have failed to sustain the same enthusiasm or achieve the same goals. Some of the central players in CCP don't even know that the monthly meetings still occur. Some of the problems people cited are:

- Some think that the insertion of organizers into the CCP program in 1998 had the effect of diminishing or redirecting the enthusiasm of leaders away from the citywide focus, while others feel the addition of organizers was a crucial improvement.
- Currently only a few neighborhoods make the effort to turn out leaders at the meetings, so that they are no longer truly citywide in representation.

- The meetings focus on information sharing only, and are not an effective vehicle for taking on issues of citywide concern.
- There were reports that the meetings, for at least some length of time, were not even being used to foster leadership development, as they were being planned and chaired by UCAN staff. This has changed recently and now there are regular planning meetings so that resident leaders can prepare for and run the meetings.

The response of several resident leaders to our questions about the monthly meetings summed up the situation—that they have been effective in the past and could be effective in the future. Presently they are an underutilized opportunity to build bridges across neighborhoods and take on citywide issues.

#### d. Conflicting roles

It is to the City’s credit that for ten years, with several changes in political leadership, the CCP program has survived intact. Even with the current funding crisis, the City under a new strong mayor remains committed to supporting neighborhood organizing. However, there are inherent concerns with having an organizing program housed in a city agency, whether the police department or the city manager’s office. It is inevitable that conflicts of interest will arise when residents who seek to improve the quality of life in their communities pressure the City to respond to their concerns. Organizers, leaders, and representatives of the City itself expressed their desire to see the program relocated to a more neutral entity. There are other reasons to move the program out of the City. Until recently the City’s accountability mechanisms focused on contract compliance, rather than outcome-based performance. In addition, the prospects for raising outside funds to support neighborhood organizing are curtailed due to restrictions that many funders place on contributing to a City agency program.

Another inherently contradictory role was that of UCAN. Their training and TA role will be discussed below in detail, but here it is important to note a key structural change that occurred in 1998 when funding became available to hire organizers for each PSC. Because some PSCs did not have a community organization in their neighborhood that could house the organizer, UCAN became the ‘employer’ of several organizers. This weakened the organizational structure, because UCAN was put in the difficult position of issuing pay checks to the organizers, without having the authority to supervise them. This authority rested with whoever the PSC designated. In addition to the challenges this structural change posed for UCAN, it raised accountability issues that will be addressed below.

## 2. Strategies

### a. three-legged triangle

One of the key strategies of CCP has been collaboration between residents, the police, and City agencies to improve public safety and quality of life in the neighborhoods. While the public safety/quality of life focus makes sense in the context of crime

prevention, residents want to address many other pressing issues, such as youth issues, schools, and housing. The program has been flexible enough to accommodate these broader strategies, and should continue to do so.

It is argued that in order for the model to be effective, all three legs of the triangle have to be in place and committed to the goals of the program. The resident piece has been uneven for a number of reasons. The most glaring problem cited by all interviewed is the lack of any real organizing in the North End. Even when funds were still available to hire more organizers, the North End residents were not organized enough to take advantage of those resources. When resources shrank, only current organizers were funded and slots for other neighborhoods were eliminated. Crime rates have gone up in the North End. In some other neighborhoods, the organizing has been inconsistent due to high turnover in organizing staff. The other legs of the triangle have been inconsistent as well. In particular, the attempt by a former deputy City Manager to recentralize the police department and abandon the community policing model was viewed as a significant blow to the program that demoralized residents and diminished their expectations.

b. block watch model

The 'block watch' strategy that the organizers were expected to follow has proven to have its problems as well. This model focuses on setting up a block watch or block group for each street in the neighborhood, and is a very labor intensive way of fostering resident engagement that some organizers do not find particularly effective. As organizers have sought to use different approaches to organizing, for example by organizing around issues rather than around block clubs, they have been hamstrung by expectations from their supervisors, resident leaders, or the City to adhere to the block watch model. The block watch model may be effective at helping residents communicate crime problems to the police, but may not be the most appropriate mechanism for encouraging collective action. If anything, the block group model seems to keep residents in the mindset of only thinking about issues on their own block, not issues of neighborhood or citywide concern.

c. number of neighborhoods

When the program was established, all 17 neighborhoods were invited to participate in the design of CCP and to set up their own PSC. A few years later, the NRZ program was implemented, and NRZs were allowed to define their own geographic boundaries, which do not match with the PSC boundaries. Residents themselves feel a very strong identification with their own neighborhoods, and by all accounts PSCs oppose the idea of having to operate within a larger geographic area. However, it will be difficult to effectively foster and maintain citywide organizing, with collaboration across adjacent neighborhoods, with the current structure. This is particularly true given the current and likely future financial constraints of the program. When funding for organizers was introduced, 14 PSCs were eligible to have their own organizer. Currently there are 8.5 organizers funded through the program, with \$28,000 available for each to cover salary, benefits, and overhead costs.



There is almost universal agreement that this is not enough money to adequately pay and retain a good organizer. To fund a decent salary for each organizer in every single neighborhood is probably not feasible. Therefore, in both financial and strategic terms, the size of geographic area supported by the program should be re-examined.

### 3. Staffing and Supervision

#### a. City staff

Except for a brief period when the City had three liaisons on staff, one person has been primarily responsible for overseeing the program, which has been located at the City Manager's office or at the Police Department. By that person's own account, it has been a challenge to impose accountability on the program because of the politicized environment in which the program operates. An attempt to fire an organizer could easily result in a phone call from an angry town committee or city council member. Also, while key City staff have been passionate supporters of the program and support the concept of neighborhood organizing, they do not themselves have a background in organizing, making it difficult for them to assess the effectiveness of the PSCs' and organizers' work, or help them improve their performance. This problem was compounded by the City's past emphasis on contract compliance rather than outcome-based performance.

#### b. Organizing staff

While some of the groups participating in the program already had organizers on staff, in 1998 funds were made available to allow each PSC to hire its own organizer. The quality of the organizers has varied tremendously, for several reasons. As mentioned earlier, the amount available for each organizer—including salary, overhead, and benefits—is \$28,000, a figure that has not changed in the last five years. Many stakeholders believe that this amount is too low to attract and retain talented individuals.

A second problem is the lack of clear lines of authority and accountability. At least half of the organizers are paid by UCAN, which serves as the fiscal agent, yet UCAN does not have supervisory responsibility over these individuals. Neither does the City, which channels the funds for the salaries through UCAN. Supervision lies with a person or organization in the neighborhood. This person may or may not have supervisory experience, and also may or may not have an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the organizer. A common job description for organizers does not exist either. A frequent complaint mentioned above is that some neighborhoods try to use their organizer for purposes other than those intended by CCP. Some neighborhood leaders complain that their organizer is not accountable to residents and does not support resident goals. These factors have contributed to high turnover rates among organizers, and uneven, inconsistent organizing in several neighborhoods.

Despite these staffing problems, several organizers have been cited repeatedly as doing good work that advances the CCP goals of neighborhood organizing—including those in the West End, Parkville and Asylum Hill. The West End and Asylum Hill organizers

have been involved in the program for many years. The Parkville organizer is being supervised and mentored by the West End organizer (this arrangement came about at the request of the Parkville PSC). All three organizers have a very collaborative relationship that allows for peer learning and growth. The fact that the West End was able to raise additional funds to pay its organizer has allowed the organization to retain her over time and for her to grow into a more senior organizer position. Another effective staffing model is at HART, which has 3.5 CCP organizers. HART was able to raise additional funds as well, in order to have a senior organizer who supervises and mentors the more junior organizing staff. Thus, with proper supervision and mentorship, good organizers are capable of playing an effective role.

#### 4. Training and TA

While the program is administered by City staff, virtually all of the responsibility for training and technical assistance has been delegated to UCAN through a contractual relationship with the City. Given the lack of in-depth knowledge and expertise of organizing within City agencies, having an entity that understands and can teach organizing is a critical component of the program. UCAN responsibilities have included weekly trainings for organizers, the monthly meetings, and one-on-one TA. In the last few years, cutbacks in funds forced UCAN to scale back its role.

Assessing UCAN's effectiveness as the sole training and TA provider is not easy, due to some of the factors already mentioned. One is the fact that UCAN became the "employer" of record for several organizers without actually having supervisory authority. This complicated UCAN's role and undoubtedly distracted them from their focus on TA. Another is that the City did not establish performance-based standards for any of the program elements, such as the outcomes to be achieved by the PSCs, the organizers, or the training and TA provider. UCAN cannot be judged against standards that do not exist. A third is that money for the program has not been consistent and reliable in the last few years, making it difficult for those involved to stay invested and have the resources needed to maintain a strong and steady level of activity.

Despite these challenges, it is clear that several of the organizers who are viewed as the most effective in the program credit UCAN with training and mentoring them. UCAN's introductory organizer training in particular seems to have been effective in helping new, inexperienced organizers learn the ropes. Some organizers were able to access additional training from the National Training and Information Center (NTIC). UCAN also gets praise for having initiated and continued the monthly citywide meetings, which early on were instrumental in generating enthusiasm among neighborhood leaders for collective activity, resulting in the Community Court victories (see 'Results'). UCAN enjoys strong loyalty among many organizers and community leaders, who strongly identify UCAN with the program.

However, there are some stakeholders who believe that UCAN has not provided adequate technical support and training. A few people charged that: at certain points UCAN staff were chairing the monthly meetings rather than helping leaders plans and run the

meetings; in recent years the monthly meetings generally are not used for strategic purposes that advance a citywide agenda but merely for information sharing; the weekly organizer meetings do not have planned training components built into them and often are not useful; the UCAN staff are uneven in their willingness or ability to provide one-on-one guidance to some organizers; UCAN believes in one model of organizing and one model is all they teach.

It is unclear to what extent some of these problems are due to recent funding cuts that constrain UCAN's effectiveness. Current funding for training and TA is clearly inadequate—UCAN receives funding to provide 20 hours of support each month to all of the PSCs and organizers and to convene citywide meetings. On the other hand, UCAN has shown its potential to build and support an organization through funding of other work that has led to the development of Create Change, which has a base in North Hartford and in other parts of the state, and works on criminal justice issues.

In a more accountable structure that contains standards against which to measure performance UCAN could play an effective technical assistance role for at least some of the neighborhoods, but clearly more is needed. Opening up additional training and TA options would allow neighborhoods that want to explore different organizing approaches and teaching styles to do so.

## 5. Monitoring and Performance

Community organizing is considered a difficult endeavor to evaluate. However, recent efforts by several foundations to assess and quantify the outcomes of organizing prove that, with a clear set of goals and objectives, the quality of organizing and benefits reaped by organizing can be measured. From its inception the CCP program did not seek to document and measure its outcomes in this way. The monitoring function played by the City consisted of ensuring compliance with contracts, such as the submission of required paperwork. The PSCs were not required to set short- and long-term goals and track their progress in achieving them. Once CCP organizers were hired their performance was not subject to review by the City. Their direct supervisors may have monitored each organizer's performance, but the standards they used were inconsistent and in some cases did not even reflect the goals of the program. There were no stated goals and objectives for the training and TA provided by UCAN. In short, performance measurement was not a component of CCP.

Recently the City has worked to change that by requiring each PSC to complete a work plan. Progress on meeting the work plan objectives is to be measured quarterly. This is such a recent program reform that it is too early to determine the effectiveness of these new assessment tools in measuring each neighborhood's progress. Some organizers have suggested that the work plans would be more effective if they related to a set of larger overall program goals. Also, the work plans do not measure collaboration of PSCs across neighborhoods or citywide, or other important factors key to community organizing success.

## 6. Program Financing

There have been several challenges related to the financing of the CCC program:

- The primary sources of funds from state and federal law enforcement grants are dwindling if not completely gone.
- Even when the program was ‘fully funded’, the resources available to provide an organizer for each neighborhood have been insufficient to attract and retain quality staff.
- The uncertainty of program funding over the last few years has had a harmful effect on the morale (and potentially the performance) of stakeholders, including resident leaders, organizers, and UCAN staff.

The program needs a consistent, multi-year source of funding at higher levels so that stakeholders can feel invested in achieving its goals and can engage in longer-term planning.

## 7. Program Results

As discussed above, until recently program administrators did not establish benchmarks or measure performance in any tangible way. An undated report (perhaps four years into the program) prepared by UCAN attempted to highlight some of the programs accomplishments and flag some of its challenges. These include:

- CCP created a citywide monthly forum for residents from all the neighborhoods to get together, putting aside turf, race and class divisions. The forum allows groups to share information, report on issues of concern, and collaborate on citywide problems. One example of collaboration mentioned in the report was addressing the negative consequences of a rise in pay phones on street corners.
- A resident-led PSC was established in every neighborhood. However, the report noted that attendance at PSC meetings varied and after several years efforts to reach out to more residents had waned.
- City employees were trained in “Community Oriented Government”. Relations improved between neighborhoods and some (but not all) City agencies.

Our interviews have surfaced more recent results attributed at least in part to the CCP program:

- By 1999 crime rates were way down, and interim Police Chief Pawlina attributed this in part to the success of the CCP program. The development of a ‘hot spots’ system for identifying criminal activity has been an effective way for residents to communicate public safety concerns to the police department.
- Despite setbacks when the police department was recentralized, attitudes of the neighborhoods and the police toward each other have improved, and community oriented policing is assumed to be the basis for sound crime fighting.

- In the late 1990s residents came together citywide to address nuisance crimes, and fought for and won the Community Court. Subsequently when the Court was at risk of being inundated with suburban cases, residents again rallied together, and succeeded in keeping the suburban cases limited to one day a week.
- Last year HART facilitated residents coming together citywide to fight for more police officers. Residents won a new class at the police academy, which will help to replace officers being lost through attrition.
- Asylum Hill residents won \$300,000 to preserve a boys and girls club.
- West End residents won a new community center in an historic building; won new garbage cans citywide to deter rats; won bond money to rehab a local school; and compelled a slumlord to sell her buildings.
- West End and Parkville have made progress in their efforts to broaden leadership among low-income and racially diverse residents.
- West End, Parkville and Asylum Hill are collaborating informally and plan to work jointly on several issues, including youth, education and housing.
- HART has built new relationships with leaders in the North End, who were honored at the last HART convention.

While the CCP program has suffered from many structural challenges related to funding, organization, and accountability, it has accomplished some impressive outcomes despite these problems. The concept of neighborhood organizing is a sound one, which shows demonstrable potential to empower residents so they can improve the quality of life in their community.

However, to take organizing to the next level in Hartford, several key issues need to be addressed. These include: the many conflicting layers of resident engagement; the lack of strong neighborhood organizations and consistent citywide organizing; the immediate funding crisis that hinders effective organizing; the lack of quality community organizers, and the need for a clearly articulated vision and set of goals and strategies for organizing.

### **Appendix III: Definitions of Organizing and Organizing Standards**

In addition to our own working definition of community organizing, included in the report, this section provides some other examples of how to define organizing and develop standards for organizing so that it can be effectively evaluated. The Capacity-Building Alliance could draw on these and other models as it develops its own definitions and standards.

#### **ANHD Definition of Community Organizing**

This definition was developed through extensive discussion among CDCs that are doing “organizing” as well as “community organizing groups” in NYC. Nancy Nye, a consultant to ANHD, took the groups through this process which the groups felt was extremely useful as they designed the Initiative for Neighborhood and Citywide Organizing (INCO) and set criteria for awarding grants through a competitive RFP process.

The definition of community organizing includes:

- **Local leadership development** – Demonstrated by participation of local residents in decision-making around issue selection, strategy development and campaign implementation.
- **Neighborhood and Issue Organizing** – Demonstrated by implementation of campaigns to affect changes in service delivery, regulatory and/or legislative reform, land use decisions, and investment patterns on neighborhood and housing issues in order to place more control of those decisions under the control of low- and moderate-income neighborhood residents.
- **Membership-based** – An ability to demonstrate a base of membership, either individual members, institutional members, or both.
- **Action-oriented** – The willingness to engage in direct action tactics as appropriate at either local or city-wide campaigns.
- **Collaborative** – The willingness and capacity to contribute to ANHD policy campaigns developed through NOAI and consistent with local issues and concerns.

#### **Other good language on community organizing from this process:**

- Multi-issue organizations that are organizing neighborhood residents to build power to engage in civic issues of concern to the community...to make (officials) aware of community problems, enlist their support for improvements, and to get action.
- Focus on leadership development through training and participation in committees and associations with the goal of building power for residents.
- Amplifying and integrating the capability for leadership development, neighborhood and issue organizing, building a membership base, engaging in direct action and contributing to broader policy campaigns.

INCO also developed a set of program requirements in its RFP process that can serve as a set of standards for organizing more broadly than just around housing issues.

### **Standards for Organizing: INCO Program Requirements**

(excerpted from 9/22/03 INCO RFP)

1. Undertake neighborhood-based organizing activities around housing related issues. Grantees will develop work plans with quantifiable outcomes around neighborhood organizing efforts.
2. Build local leadership around the issue of affordable housing preservation and other pieces of the ANHD platform. Activities include increasing leaders' participation in citywide meetings, testifying at public hearings and forums, planning and participating in meetings with public and/or elected officials, and substantial neighborhood turnout at public meetings or rallies.
3. Be substantially involved in the development and implementation of citywide policy campaigns. Success will be measured by the level of participation of neighborhood leaders in citywide events and the ability to mobilize neighborhood residents around issue campaigns.
4. Participate in training and technical assistance. It is expected that grantees will participate in classes, workshops and meetings if the initiative and take full advantage of technical assistance resources offered. More experienced groups may be asked to mentor and train less experienced grantees.
5. At the beginning of each program year, develop detailed work plans on planned activities and outcomes. Work plans must be approved by the initiative as a condition for funding.
6. Provide timely reports as required by the initiative, and participate in program documentation and evaluation activities as requested by the initiative.

### **Standards for Organizing: Internal and External Evaluation at ACORN**

(based on interview with Steve Kest at ACORN)

1. Numbers – “they are pretty numbers driven”
  - weekly statistics from each office
  - exact data varies
  - standard data-- # of new members, member participation at events and actions, dues collected, and other grassroots income
  - central analysis is generated within a day
2. Qualitative analysis -- done by regional directors and senior organizers
  - spend time with leadership
  - help organizers evaluate campaigns and staff development
3. Evaluation and training meetings -- held throughout the year
  - 4 head organizer meetings for 3 days each year
  - mid-year management meetings for 4 days
  - review of counseling and union operations every 6 months
  - management council of 8 or 9 meets 4-6 times per year

- week-long national trainings give opportunity for senior staff to aggressively evaluate organizers (lead organizers, mid-level staff, beginners)
4. Self-evaluation and annual plan -- each office has to do both each December, and present plan to senior organizers for critique, etc.
    - follow standard format
    - include statistics and analysis of campaigns
    - leadership development
    - staff recruitment and retention
    - peer review and discussion “helps them be more creative”
  5. Outside evaluation -- During 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, ACORN invited in 50 ‘friends’ at various points in the year to talk about the work that they were doing and to give critical feedback to ACORN.
    - A whole series of evaluation meetings led to development of a new strategic plan.
    - The people they brought in were people they’d worked with – heads of other networks, union people, funders, etc – who met with senior staff and leaders;
    - They talked about their own models and things they’d done that they thought ACORN could learn from;
    - Also expressed evaluations and critiques based on existing knowledge of ACORN.

### **Community Organizing Evaluation Outline**

(excerpt from Margie Fine and Bill Dempsey report, Veatch Program)

- A. Criteria for Evaluating the Group’s Initiation and Design
  - Clarity of issues stimulating action
  - Clarity of vision suggesting common agenda/actions
  - Quantity and quality of participants willing to join the effort
  - Usefulness and effectiveness of models for partnership, participation, and accountability
  - Clarity and acceptance of results
  - Use and quality of strategy chart
- B. Criteria for Evaluating Empowerment
  - Degree to which those most affected by the organization’s mission and goals actually shaped the effort
  - Degree to which disadvantaged people (such as low-income, women, people of color) hold leadership positions
  - Quality and quantity of information shared among all members of the effort
  - Quality and extent of community organizing training provided by the group



- Degree to which language, data and other forms of communication encourage grassroots participation
- Quality and quantity of long-term resources retained by those who were without them prior to the organization's intervention

#### C. Criteria for Assessing Ability to Affect Policy Changes

- Degree to which public or private decision makers are engaged by the organization
- Degree to which public or private policy makers are called upon to commit to the organization's mission and goals
- Quantity and quality of policy changes identified and acted upon
- Community awareness and support for proposed policy changes

#### D. Criteria for Evaluating Results

- Specific Benefits provided to low-income people, people of color, women or other disadvantaged resident that would not have existed absent this program
- Specific lessons that have been learned and are directly shaping the organization's future work
- Mechanisms for gathering high quality information and encouraging reflection on how this information can be used to improve the organization's programs

#### E. Criteria for Evaluating Participation

- Diversity of participants by ethnicity, gender, organizational affiliation or issue area, geography, income, sexual orientation, or other relevant factors
- Quality of power sharing among participants
- Quantity and quality of financial, human and technical resources contributed by the participants
- Effectiveness of communication among members
- Quantity and quality of knowledge and skills shared among members and level of new learning gained by members
- Quantity and quality of members' oral and written presentations by membership for external and internal purposes.