

BUILDING A PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD FROM THE INSIDE OUT: A SPRINGFIELD,
OHIO EXPERIMENT WITH ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the impact of the Springfield Promise Neighborhood (SPN) initiative on the City of Springfield, Ohio. Launched in August, 2010, SPN adopted an asset-based and resident-driven strategy to transform vulnerable neighborhoods by ensuring the academic and social success of the youth within a defined geographic locality. SPN was conceived as an initiative that would eventually impact all of Springfield by engaging citizens and youth to envision and achieve a preferred future story. The early piloting of the model has taken place in partnership with Lincoln Elementary School and its attendance zone, which represents a 110-block area surrounding the school. This case analysis has been undertaken in order to reflect on the progress made and the lessons learned from the initial six years of the project and consider how these findings could be integrated into a scalable model that could influence other neighborhoods within Springfield.

PREFACE

“I hope at least that the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and women, and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love”

Paulo Friere (as quoted in Vella, 2003)

“The object is to keep busy being something...as opposed to doing something. We are all sent here to bring more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness and more love into this world.

That is too big a job to be accomplished by just a few.”

Richard Bolles (2005)

In many ways, this preface is not the introduction that I thought I would craft. I attempted to use my academic voice while writing this paper; however, something of my interiority has been clanging to come out. Because, in the end, this paper is about a deeply personal story for me. Yes, it is the story of an initiative called Springfield Promise Neighborhood, known locally as “Promise.” It is the story of the various participants and stakeholders who contributed to this unique attempt at neighborhood revitalization and school redesign in Springfield, Ohio. And, it is the story of my interaction with the residents and parents and teachers and service providers in a deeply fragile neighborhood. But choosing to return to the place of this story and ask what the impact of Promise was turned out to be a risky proposition. What if my research revealed that the six years of my life that I dedicated to this project turned out to not have produced much fruit after all?

One morning, as I sat in our gray arm chair, this question, and my own profound sense of self-doubt, floated through my head. I was dutifully reading an article for my community development literature review in the quiet moments before the children woke up and the hustle and bustle of getting ready for school began. It was in that moment of reflection that my

daughter came and sat down on the couch next to me. Unprompted, she asserted in her innocent eight-year-old voice, “Dad, I want to go back to Promise.” Intrigued by her declaration, I peppered her with questions, attempting to understand where this sentiment welled up from.

Deep inside, she clearly held good memories of children that she played alongside at Promise events and laughing adults that hugged and cared for her and her Dad. These bonds meant something to her, something deep and unobservable. Indeed, it will strike some as odd that the neighborhood with a smoke-blackened, boarded up house made her feel safe emotionally. Others will find it ironic that the neighborhood with a blue tarp roof house on Catherine Street sheltered her spirit most during her most crucial developmental years. Yet others will find it paradoxical that the neighborhood with abandoned lots of lead infused dirt provided fertile soil for her sense of value and self-worth to grow. But this is what happened.

The questions will never entirely leave me. I will always wonder what I could have, or should have, done differently. But my daughter’s comment that morning made me realize that at the least my time laboring alongside the smiling Ms. Gloria, the thankful Ms. Carmen, the insightful Mr. Salley, the guitar wielding Pastor Cotto, and all the other cast of Promise characters, did in fact bring more gratitude, more kindness, more forgiveness, and more love into the world. This, in the end, is what prompted a response from my daughter. And very occasionally, I allow myself to feel like it was enough.

So what follows is the story of “a little neighborhood that could.” But before I get to that story, I think it will be useful for you to understand something about the past that shaped me and that shaped my worldview before I joined in the emerging Promise story. I brought to my experience of Promise an international perspective. My parents were teachers and administrators in American Baptist-supported schools in Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire)

for most of my life up through my junior year of high school. That experience afforded me a lot of amazing experiences. But it also created moments of cognitive dissonance.

One of my favorite experiences from my youth was sitting under the shade of the palm tree with my Congolese friends in the village of Moanza eating freshly harvested peanuts. However, as I grew older, I came to realize that for my friends this was a meal, a critical source of protein, not just a snack, as was my case. Meanwhile, my American friends from our years on home assignment had ready access to electricity, running water, three meals a day, and thought nothing of it. These two extreme life experiences sewed in me a desire to figure out why there were such opportunity disparities and how I could be a part of bridging the divide.

Part of my response to these life questions was to become, in time, a community developer. So my exploration of Promise is largely an attempt to understand this field of endeavor. Community development is a small field, and little understood outside the confines of academia, at least in this country. This is less true in the developing world, where some of the best (and worst) community development stories and theories have been forged. And it was in the developing world that I first “cut my teeth” in the field of community development. So by way of providing background into my own origin story, and by way of introducing you to the field of community development, I would like to invite you to travel with me briefly to Africa, to a continent of tractors and cattle....

Africa: A continent of tractors

It was another hot and bright day – the kind you only get when you are under the African sun just a few kilometers south of the equator. I had taken to wearing one of the handmade grass reed hats that they sell in the local marketplace to shade my eyes. I was trudging up the long hill that wound its way up to the city of Kikwit in the southwestern Bandundu province of the D.R. Congo. As I turned onto the path that led to the offices of the Department of Health and

Development – where I was interning with the Mennonite Central Committee – I passed by a small, long-since broken down tractor.

I never learned the tractor's story. I suspect that, like many similar relics from a bygone era, the tractor was the remnant of some foreigner's good but misguided intention to increase the food production capability of the "natives." Perhaps it functioned as intended for a season or two before the migrating sand of equatorial Africa had its way and the component parts of the tractor began to fail. The tractor would not have suffered this fate if the foreign capital that was used to whisk away raw material from the continent had instead been strategically invested in factories to produce needed parts, in building trade schools to equip local mechanics in tractor repair, and in cultivating a middle-class consumer base capable of affording repairs. But that is not the story of Africa and so the tractor – a rusted, metal carcass – sits forgotten and unused.

I say forgotten, but that is not entirely true. Deep down in the psyche of the community a memory likely remains – a demoralizing memory of having to return, after a brief reprieve, to the labor intensive and back-breaking process of burning the fields, hoeing the soil bent over with a baby strapped to one's back, planting and harvesting the manioc by hand, sun drying the tubers to leach the cyanide poisoning, pounding the dried root into flour, and then cooking the flour into a meal over an open fire with wood and water collected from afar. A message was absorbed through this and similar events in the life of the community, that their only hope for an easier life was to wait for the resources and solutions of outside experts. Social psychologists refer to the type of phenomenon that this tractor represents as "learned helplessness."

Africa: A continent of cows

Fast forward several years and I am back under the African sun. This time, I am entering the village of Achibu, paying a visit with the staff of the community development arm of the Anglican Church of Uganda, Nebbi Diocese. I was a part of the staff's international support

system while serving with World Renew in northwest Uganda. We were greeted by a proud twelve-person leadership group of the village who brought with them their team of two Acholi cattle. The cattle's driver had the team yoked together, ready to show off his plowing ability in a demonstration field across from the local church. It was the kind of day I reveled in – the bright sun was warming my face as I breathed in the verdant green of Africa's savannah grasslands surrounding me. The rich, full blue of the sky was punctuated by the deep red of the church's clay walls. The scene spoke to me of life and hope and possibility.

The events leading up to this day started a couple of years prior. The community of Achibu had taken important steps in choosing its future trajectory. With coaching support from the community development staff, the village had deliberated their needs, finally settling on food security as a top priority. A process of guided exploration helped the village arrive at the conclusion that the use of cattle would help to address their need. Livestock farming is not part of the Alur culture, but people knew the stories from the ethnic groups in eastern Uganda where it is commonplace. Village leaders, with staff encouragement, networked with resource partners, securing training support from the government's extension office and financial support from World Renew in a 50/50 cost share arrangement.

The result of this process, as we discovered it that day, was that people had experienced a nine-fold increase in their crop yields. This meant a more stable food source, with extra product to sell in order to be able to afford school fees and other basic needs. Quality of life was increasing, but so was hope and pride and resiliency in the face of hardship. The previous year, one of the cows had died. It had been a monumental effort to recover, but they had achieved it. The successes that they were now seeing were the result of decisions that the community had driven, and driven collectively. As such, the benefits were widespread and more sustainable.

The difference between these two stories – the tractor verses the cattle – speak to a powerful truth. Where communities end up depends on the narrative that they adopt. One narrative tells us that good ideas come from elsewhere, that we cannot do for ourselves. The second narrative assumes the opposite; that the basic ingredients needed to start crafting a better future story are already present. Achibu reminds us that our unique relationships, abilities, knowledge, skills, and other assets are enough to get us started on a journey toward greater, and more broadly experienced, prosperity and vitality. The field of community development contains within it a suite of tools and insights that can help people, groups, and communities, like Achibu, take charge of their own destinies. What follow is an exploration into this field, as I experienced it in an urban setting in the State of Ohio.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABCDAsset Based Community Development
- CCFCommunity Capitals Framework
- FAST.....Families and Schools Together
- NHP.....Neighborhood Housing Partnership
- REM.....Ripple Effect Mapping
- SPNSpringfield Promise Neighborhood
- SPNASpringfield Promise Neighborhood Association
- VISTA.....Volunteers in Service to America
- VLT.....Vision Leadership Team

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

For eight years of my career, I served as the Community Coordinator for a nonprofit organization, Think Tank. During six of those years, I was contracted to work on a collaborative initiative called Springfield Promise Neighborhood, or SPN. The theory of change that undergirds SPN is founded on the premise that an essential component of generating positive change in a distressed neighborhood is by ensuring the social and academic success of its youth. To accomplish this goal, SPN believes in the power of building an environment that facilitates their eventual graduation from high school with the life and learning skills necessary to succeed in employment or in higher education.

Two primary components of such a facilitative environment can be described as a “thriving neighborhood” and a “thriving school.” To achieve these two broad outcomes, several outputs are particularly important. These include (1) youth development (especially extended day and extended year learning opportunities), (2) school readiness (especially early childhood development leading to preparedness to start kindergarten), (3) school responsiveness (especially the climate and infrastructure that allows students and teachers to do their best work), and (4) family, neighborhood, and community partnerships (especially parent engagement, neighborhood support, and community linkages).

My focus in the SPN initiative was to build a set of practices and processes that would result in a thriving neighborhood. The activities I undertook to achieve this end fell into three categories. First, I endeavored to build stronger school-parent ties. Second, I worked to increase the capacity of residents to take collective action to create an internally defined preferred future. Lastly, I reached out to community institutions and agencies to create mutually beneficial linkages with the school and neighborhood.

The intent of this paper is to examine the impact of the SPN initiative on the City of Springfield, Ohio. Launched in August, 2010, the SPN adopted an asset-based and resident-driven strategy to transform vulnerable neighborhoods by ensuring the academic and social success of the youth within a defined geographic locality. SPN was conceived as an initiative that would eventually impact all of Springfield by engaging citizens and youth to envision and achieve a preferred future story. However, the early piloting of the model took in partnership with Lincoln Elementary School and its attendance zone, which represents a 110-block area surrounding the school.

James Coleman, the preeminent sociologist in the 1960s who wrote the federal study *Equality of Education Opportunity*, found that differences in school resources explain only a portion of the variance in student achievement between districts. Coleman's conclusion? "Show me the neighborhoods where most of the kids have encyclopedias at home and plans to go to college... and I will show you the high-scoring school (Briggs, 2009, p. 30)." The compelling research conducted by Coleman and many other authors since his landmark study suggest it is important not only to improve the contributions schools and parents make to a child's success, but also to look for ways to shape the social and geographic context in which the child lives, plays, and learns.

Homeownership, diversity of income levels, exposure to crime and violence, and many other factors play an important role in the life and career trajectory of youth. Xavier de Souza Briggs (2005) puts it this way in *The geography of opportunity: Race and housing choice in metropolitan America*, "More than any other factor, high levels of segregation by race and class, by neighborhood and municipality, determine the quality of schools and other public services, rates of street crime and associated levels of fear and insecurity, geographic access to jobs, exposure to environmental hazards, and prospects for building assets (p. 311)." As Briggs goes

on to point out, the link in America between place and well-being are disturbing in a society that declares equality of opportunity a core value.

Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom (2001) conclude in the succinct title to their geopolitical analysis of cities and suburbs, “Place matters.” Under the Obama administration, this notion that place matters became more prominent with the advent of such federally funded programs as the Promise Zones Initiative. While introducing the program, designed to partner with local communities and businesses to create jobs, expand access to educational opportunities and spur economic mobility and security, Obama stated his belief that, “a child’s course in life should be determined, not by the zip code she’s born in, but by the strength of her work ethic and the scope of her dreams (Promise Zone, 2010).”

The economic and social cost of the increasing class segregation has been growing since the 1970s. In 2010, Springfield, Ohio undertook the challenge to identify ways that the success rates for youth might be increased via a place-based effort. Although it was never resourced by the federal government, the opportunity to attract Promise Zone funding brought community leaders to the table to conceptualize and eventually launch the Springfield Promise Neighborhood initiative. Initially, the community committed to three years of support for a pilot project designed to simultaneously enhance youth achievement, as measured by standardized tests, and generate rejuvenation in the Lincoln neighborhood that comprises the attendance zone for Lincoln Elementary School. My hope is that this analysis will benefit both Springfield, which can use the findings contained herein to scale what is working in this place-based approach to other neighborhoods, while also adding to the community development literature by identifying the underlying mechanisms by change occurs.

CHAPTER 2. NEIGHBORHOODS AND REVITALIZATION

A review of “neighborhood effects” by Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002) indicates the individual and community level benefits of social processes in less advantaged neighborhoods include positive social interaction, increased feelings of safety, as well as collective efficacy and resources. Moreover, Ohmer and Beck (2006) contend that the efficacy embraced by the collective provides a unique structural arrangement that allows individuals with common needs to combine and maximize their efforts toward a common end. In order to understand the neighborhood effects of the Lincoln Elementary community on the families and youth within the school’s attendance zone, we must first understand the larger story of the greater Springfield region.

There are powerful, systemic economic and political forces that countervail against the potential of citizens and marginalized groups to achieve their full potential through self-determination. Community development can play a critical role in developing people’s critical awareness of these forces and policy frameworks, what can be accomplished within them, and how to build alliances to work with them, or to build campaigns to change them. And so what began as the pathology of the poor, the at-risk youth, the ex-offender, the homeless, the illegal immigrant, the minority, the everyday citizen without specialized knowledge, now becomes the analysis of the anatomy of the educational, correctional, political, social, and other systems that created these labels and conceptions.

As Purdue states, “the lack of time and resources to build the capacity of community participation and the need to show results quickly make it difficult to spread commitment (Tett, 2010, p. 89).” Achieving just and lasting change toward the fulfillment of the truly democratic and learning society is, by its very nature, a long-term enterprise. Under today’s climate, however, resources flow toward programs with more immediately measurable outcomes.

Granting agencies that distribute resources nearly all require that the deficits and problems take priority over assets and processes. Within this context, it would appear that the impact of community coaching will wax or wane depending on the prevailing resource priorities. Those of us in this general field of work react to the demands of the day and dilute the process in order to satisfy funder expectations. And so, praxis is only partially achieved.

2.1. An overview of neighborhood revitalization

Based on extensive research into urban development, Downs (1981) postulates that neighborhoods are in a constant state of fluctuation. Neighborhoods change, he observes, when their characteristics change. Fluctuations in a neighborhood's characteristics can occur through shifts in, "population, its physical state, its economic traits, its public services, or the community's expectations about [itself] (p. 62)." These changes can be thought of as a continuum divided into five stages, extending from a "Healthy" state to an "Unhealthy" state. Downs' framework for understanding neighborhoods and their conditions begs the following set of questions. First, what is a thriving, or healthy, community? And, how can communities achieve – and sustain – a thriving, or healthy, state? These questions have been considered from a variety of angles by researchers, practitioners, and politicians alike for decades.

The Knight Foundation, for example, conducted interviews with 43,000 people across 26 cities and towns to better understand the community attributes that matter the most. From the perspective of the interviewees, the communities to which people felt emotionally attached, and would fight to remain members of, provide safety, basic services, work and educational opportunities, openness and social offerings, trusted leadership, civic involvement, social cohesion, and aesthetics. Interestingly, openness, social offerings, and aesthetics were consistently ranked at the top, forming the core of what the Knight foundation terms the "soul"

of the community, the qualities that cultivate an emotional attachment to place (Knight, 2017). Neighborhoods can initiate openness, social offerings, and aesthetics projects at low cost.

For a community or neighborhood to achieve and sustain these qualities over time, however, a few concepts must be taken into account. First, we must differentiate between the concepts of growth and development. Economic growth can be measured by an increase in the total economic activity of the community. For a time, it was wrongly assumed that increased economic activity is always good, sustainable, and broadly experienced. Economic development seeks, instead, to ensure that the lives of people are improved as a result of any increased community and economic activity, and that any change that occurs is focused and permanent. Development efforts span a scope of activities, from real incomes, literacy and education, health status, housing availability, and air and water quality, to the feeling safety.

The reason this discussion is vital is because of Downs' research that concludes neighborhoods are constantly in a state of fluctuation. The community I explore in this paper – Springfield – experienced economic growth in the 1890s through the 1950s. However, when manufacturing began a steep decline in the region and nation, the community was not prepared to innovate and build a new future story. In other words, Springfield had experienced economic growth, but not community development. It had not prepared itself sufficiently for the inevitable decline in durable goods production. As a result, a period of decline ensued that has spanned multiple generations and has resulted in significant outmigration.

2.2. The Community Capitals Framework

Flora and Flora (2009), in their Community Capitals Framework (CCF), provide a useful analytical tool for understanding Springfield's decline. Healthy communities have sufficient

stocks and flows of multiple forms of community capital, including tangible capital (built, financial, and natural) and intangible capital (social, human, political, and cultural). Over reliance, on the part of Springfield, on the availability of industrial work had atrophied its intangible capital. The economic base, for example, could have been diversified by investing more heavily in its cultural and historical assets (cultural capital). Similarly, Springfield could have done more to build the more educated workforce that the modern creative and information economy is built on. And, the trust and cohesion that are necessary for imagining a different future and acting upon it could have intentionally been fortified.

Despite its deep and significant setbacks, Springfield appears to be on the cusp of a rebound. It is worth remembering, as Flora and Flora postulate, a community's movement toward a lasting and "healthy" state occurs more in the form of an upward spiral than a linear progression. And typically, the genesis of an upward spiral is a convergence of the capacities and connections of local residents with the built, natural, or financial assets of their community (Emery & Flora, 2006).

This paper serves as an exploration of this principle within the community development field – that people and their networks are the engine for change. The intension of this paper is to examine the potential that may exist for integrating – as part of a larger economic development strategy that currently includes downtown stabilization, corridor development, business attraction, and workforce training – neighborhood renewal. After all, a neighborhood's "soul" serves as the primary point of intersection between residents and their community.

Specifically, we will document and analyze the methods and impacts of the six years I worked on a collaborative project called the Springfield Promise Neighborhood (or, SPN). SPN is an ideal test of the Spiraling Up theory because, unlike many other urban revitalization efforts that focus on an infusion of capital to spur housing, business, or other development activities,

SPN lacked large investments. The primary contribution by the network of a dozen early funders who collaborated to launch the initiative came in the form of salary for two contracted staff. Nearly everything the initiative accomplished in its first six years was achieved through partnerships and volunteers cultivated by the SPN staff.

2.3. The architecture of change

SPN was conceived as a means to move Springfield's distressed (or "unhealthy" to use Down's terminology) neighborhoods through a focus on increasing youth success rates. What marks SPN as unique is the broad systems approach that it applies to the work. The neighborhood school was seen as critical, but so were the norms, relationships, and the participation of families, residents in the neighborhood, and the broader community. At the time of my involvement with the SPN initiative, we described our work as falling within program areas that research told us were significant in the lives of youth, including school readiness, youth enrichment, school design, and family and community partnerships. However, as I look back, what we were ultimately doing was aligning community and neighborhood assets and investing in what Flora and Flora term the "entrepreneurial social infrastructure" of a community.

Tseng and Seidman (2007), in their systems view of "social infrastructure," created a model that describes the basic architecture of communities and identifies key levers for change that can be applied to schools or neighborhoods alike. Every community has assets that can be leveraged to increase the quality of life of its inhabitants, including social capital (connections and trust between people), human capital (education, skills, and the health of the population), political capital (power distribution), financial capital (the community's debt and available

credit), built capital (roads, parks, buildings, and other man-made structures and places), and natural capital (surrounding environment and natural resources).

The key to generating an upward spiral in a neighborhood or community – or within a school as part of the school design process – has to do with how the available assets are organized. When a community’s available capital is intentionally aligned to achieve broadly experienced wellbeing for youth and families, the trajectory of the neighborhood will bend toward a “healthy” status. Assets are experienced, used, and organized through the neighborhood’s “social process.” Tseng and Seidman (date) understand social process to represent the ongoing transactions between two or more people or groups in a setting (the Lincoln neighborhood, in the case of this paper). These transactions (1) influence the communication and feedback loops between groups, (2) shape the roles of youth and residents within the setting, (3) are repeated, resulting in behaviors that get recalibrated based on feedback, with patterns being reinforced over time, and (4) are relational units, not existing solely “in the heads” of any one person or group, but rather in their inter-relationships.

In Figure 1 below, I overlay Flora and Flora’s CCF framework over the Tseng and Seidman social process model. I will use this adapted, hybrid mental model to discuss the methods used by, and analyze the impacts of, the SPN initiative on the Lincoln neighborhood. My expectation in conducting this research is that we will discover that SPN’s approach to influencing the relationships, norms, and participation of parents, youth, civic and faith-based associations, and other institutions and programs, will have resulted in better alignment and utilization of existing assets. This, in turn, will have generated improvements in quality of life factors, from improved academic performance by youth to a greater sense of hope and purpose by residents.

But first, we must examine the research and theoretical underpinnings that shaped the initiative in the first place and informed the processes that were adopted and implemented. These methods and processes drew from the field of community development, a field with a variety of tools and methods of shaping a neighborhood’s social process and, therefore, impacting its future trajectory. We turn first to an exploration of social infrastructure. Social infrastructure plays an important role in such essential sectors as health and the economy, and in the revitalization stories of neighborhoods and communities.

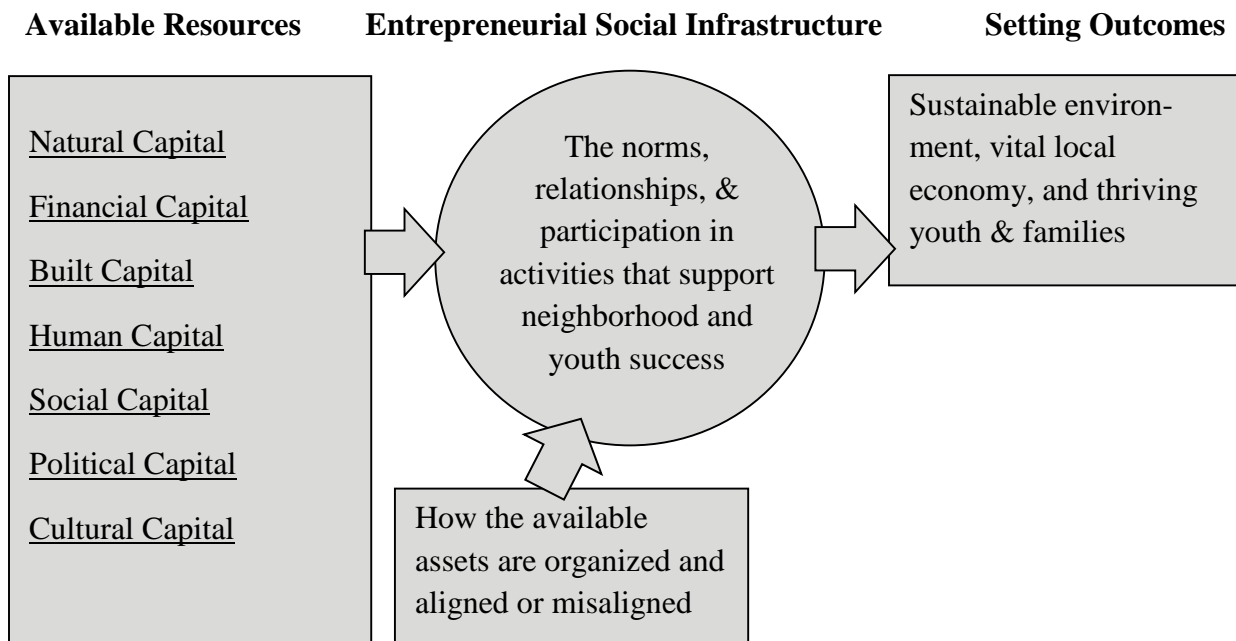


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial social infrastructure

2.4. Entrepreneurial social infrastructure grows a peace garden

When I think about the rather abstract concept of entrepreneurial social infrastructure, I think of the example of the Auburn J. Toliver Community Peace Garden, a themed pocket park that now rests at the corner of Prairie and Limestone Streets in the Lincoln neighborhood. This little one-lot park tells a big story about the importance of social process as a mechanism for aligning and enhancing existing capital. Today, the park boasts a gazebo to promote citizen

interaction, colorful artwork and decorative or memorial flowers, a small library, a water cistern to capture rainwater runoff, and a sign commemorating Tolliver, a citizen known for his influence on the lives of many youth, including the garden's caretaker. When I began my work with SPN, however, what is now a park was merely a vacant lot well known for its trash and weeds.

What changed? This park did not spring into existence because of some outside investment of new money. Rather, it emerged out of a conversation with a Lincoln resident who wanted to do a project that made a statement about the potential for a south side Springfield renaissance. This central change ingredient of passion and imagination slowly began to attract additional resources. A local developer permitted the use of the property, as doing so would eliminate the parcel from his list of lots he had to mow. The city, as part of an effort to reduce storm water runoff, built the water cistern. A summer youth employment program provided supplemental labor, as well as Wittenberg University's community service students. Prominent south side families paid for the gazebo and maintained the park. And the Ohio State University Extension program supplied soil, seed, and flower boxes.

The key point is that all of these institutions and resources existed long before the pocket park. What changed was not an influx of new capital, but rather the development of a social process; that is, an infrastructure that allowed the exchange of information and flow of capital through a growing network of increasingly dense relationships that allowed the interests of each partner to be met in a coordinated fashion. Eventually, the park was picked up by the local news outlet (Cooper, 2015). What this story illustrates at the micro level is true of larger bounded social constructs, such as neighborhoods, cities, and regions. Below, I explore how the same social process concept has been applied to other larger endeavors, such as in the field of community economic development.

2.5. Entrepreneurial social infrastructure grows neighborhood health

McKnight (2013) identifies seven unique functions that neighborhoods play in the lives of residents. These include health, security, environment, economy, food, the raising of children, and mutual care. There is an iterative relationship between residents and their neighborhood that increases or limits the production of wellbeing in these, and associated, areas. Systems theory (Foster-Fisherman, 2010) reminds us that communities are composed of multiple functions and component parts. The same is true for us as individuals. Neighborhood transformation, then, requires a layered approach that both moves individual residents along a path toward greater capacity, while simultaneously increasing the capacity of the community systems that influence, and can be influenced by, the residents one is working with.

For the purpose of illustrating just how interconnected the various parts of our lives are, we will begin by exploring the complexities of just one component of what communities exist to support, as outlined by McKnight: our health. When we first hear the word, we think of health as the presence or absence of disease or infirmity. Simple, right? In fact, health also includes social, psychological, cultural, and environmental dimensions and consequences (Mikkonen & Raphael, 2010). The factors influencing the health of residents or neighborhoods are known as determinants. These determinants can be understood as falling into one of several categories, including behavioral, environmental, socio-economic, biological, and healthcare.

Studies (Chahar, 2017) have shown that, counter to what one might think, our biology (biology, genetics) only accounts for 15% of one's health. The remainder of one's health is influenced by what health professionals refer to as social determinants. The social determinants that factor into one's health can be divided up as follows: The physical environment (i.e., air quality, built infrastructure) accounts for 10% of our health; healthcare (i.e., access, care system quality, wait times), accounts for 20%; socio-economic factors (i.e., education levels,

employment and income, community safety, family support) account for 40%; health behaviors (tobacco use, diet and exercise) account for 30% of one's health.

In other words, health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities. We know that taking care of ourselves by eating well and staying active, not smoking, getting the recommended immunizations and screening tests, and seeing a doctor when we are sick all influence our health. As Killing Wood (2008) asserts,

Our health is also determined in part by access to social and economic opportunities; the resources and supports available in our homes, neighborhoods, and communities; the quality of our schooling; the safety of our workplaces; the cleanliness of our water, food, and air; and the nature of our social interactions and relationships” (p. 17).

Zappia and Punttenney (2012) compile the various individual and community factors that influence health into a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing health disparities within a place-based perspective. The framework recognizes that there is a complex pathway from the health disparities associated with poverty to improvements in the health status indicators that indicate well-being. “What differentiates this model from its predecessors,” assert Zappia and Punttenney, “is the recognition that residents of low-income neighborhoods are not simply passive victims of the effects of their neighborhood environment, though they may indeed be victimized by it. Instead, individuals are understood to exert agency in two distinct ways – within and upon the environment in which they live (p. 15).”

In Figure 2 below, I show the Zappia and Punttenney model. Their framework helps to advance and deepen the importance of the entrepreneurial social infrastructure to improve neighborhood outcomes. Following extensive research, Zappia and Punttenney conclude that,

Interventions that target both the physical and social contexts for health via the mechanism of human agency have the most potential for success. Engaging residents in altering the conditions in which they make choices can produce a ‘snowball effect’ in which more involvement and action produces more confidence to change the future, and more confidence produces behaviors and decisions that are more likely to promote health (p. 16).

A Comprehensive Framework for Understanding and Addressing Health Disparities

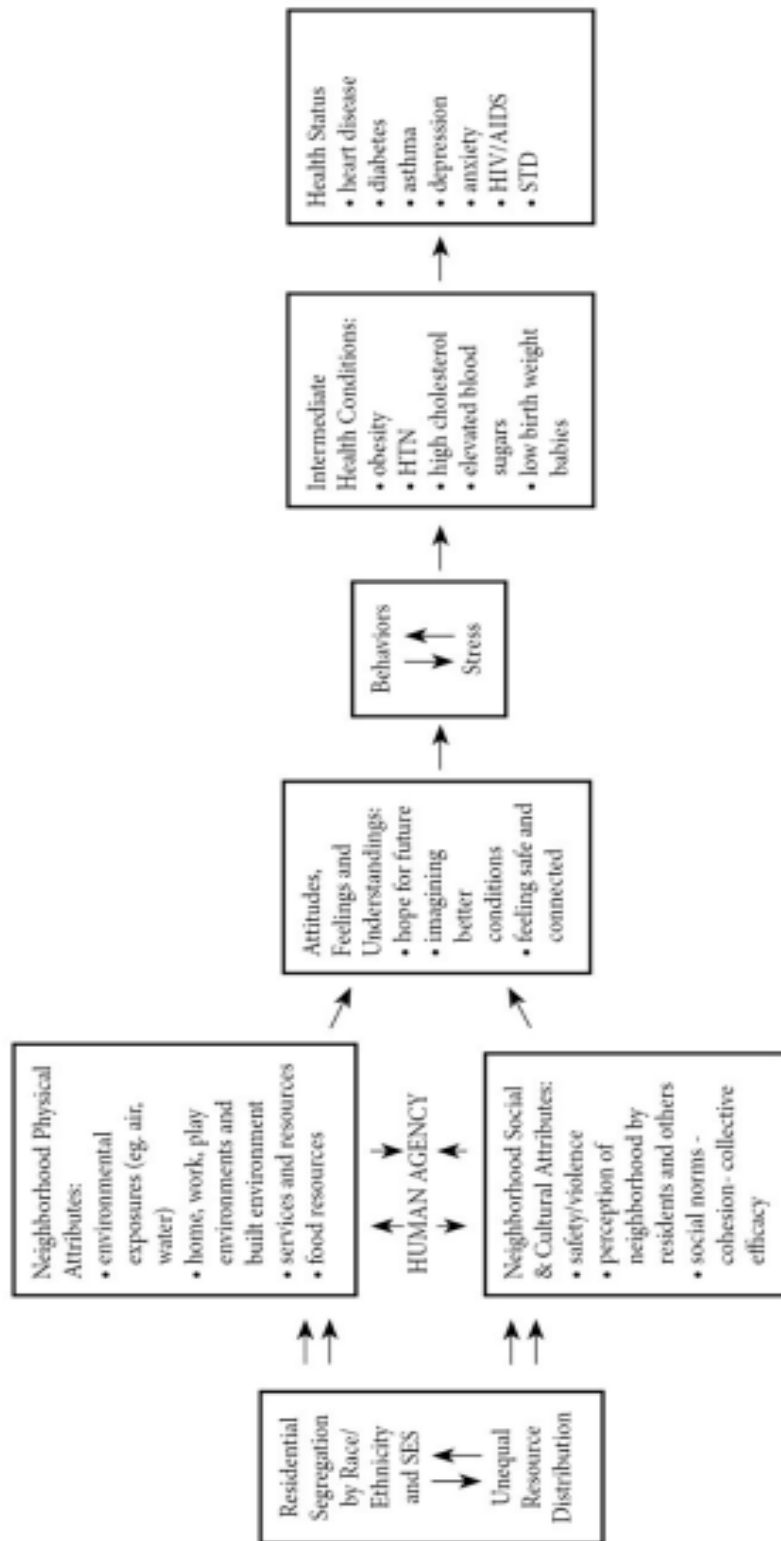


Figure 2. Entrepreneurial social infrastructure and neighborhood health

Effective social process will align and catalyze the tangible resources of financial, built, and natural capital (here understood as neighborhood physical attributes) and intangible resources of human, social, cultural, and political capital (here referred to as neighborhood social and cultural attributes). Catalyzing a neighborhood's capital will shift the attitudes, feelings, and understandings of residents, leading to changed behaviors that result in improved health conditions and health status.

The question remains, how does one cultivate a robust entrepreneurial social infrastructure (here understood as human agency) in a neighborhood that sets in motion the chain of events that produces greater well-being? And the answer brings us back to the principles and practices in our survey of the community development literature. Clearly, understanding the interconnected parts of the whole is crucial. And, working *with* neighbors and youth, beginning by listening and building upon strengths, focusing on leadership and self-governance, and building social capital will collectively generate the collective agency and efficacy to achieve long-term results over time. This is true for health, but it is also true for McKnight's other community functions, including the local economy.

2.6. Entrepreneurial social infrastructure grows prosperity

Increasingly, researchers are also discovering that entrepreneurial social infrastructure promotes wellbeing, broadly defined. To explore this research, I will focus briefly on the question of how entrepreneurial social infrastructure strengthens local economies and builds prosperity, an especially critical topic in chronically distressed neighborhoods where barriers, such as inadequate transportation and daycare options, make traditional employment more problematic. In this context, self-employment and small-business development activities that meet local niche demand has proven a viable option for increasing prosperity (Leigh & Blakely,

2013). The question then is, what community conditions best cultivate a spirit of innovation and nurture the capacity of civic, social, and business entrepreneurs alike?

Key to developing an entrepreneurial social infrastructure is the concept of social capital. Popularized through the research of James Comer and Robert Putnam, social capital refers to, “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust” (Putnam, 1995, p. 664). Social capital is understood to have three primary dimensions that include bonding social capital, which refers to intra-group connections, bridging social capital, which refers to inter-group connections, and linking social capital, which refers to connections between people or groups where explicit power imbalances exist.

Communities that experience strong bridging, bonding, and linking connections have the social infrastructure necessary to thrive in the face of adversity. Flora, Flora, Sharp, and Newlon (1997), in their analysis of several communities, concluded that the divergent economic outcomes could not be explained purely by traditional economic forces. They hypothesized that social infrastructure, which facilitates the more effective use of other community resources (including human, natural, and built capital), was a deciding factor in each community’s level of social and economic resiliency.

This paper adds to the growing body of research on entrepreneurial social infrastructure by exploring the means by which social process can engender quality of life gains, especially in distressed neighborhoods. Various studies and surveys of the existing research on the subject conclude that there is a link between social capital and economic outcomes (see Iyer, Kitson, & Toh, 2006). This link is strong enough that Shaffer, Deller, and Marcouiller (2004), in their model of community economics, assume that such social functions and activities as society, decision-making, and rules are of equal importance to space, markets, and resources in generating community economic development.

Putnam's (1993) analysis of Italy, for example, concluded that social capital, in the form of strong civic engagement, led to better economic performance in the north, as opposed to the south, where social networks and norms of trust and reciprocity were weaker. In Bangladesh, social capital, in the form of micro-credit and savings groups for marginalized populations, is used to facilitate the acquisition of capital, as well as business acumen (Dowla, 2006). And in the historically poor Appalachian region of the USA, researches have concluded that the existence of social infrastructure has had a net positive impact on economic growth in terms of employment, the number of private establishments, and per capita income (Mecken, Bader, & Polson, 2006).

Although the research appears to indicate a causal relationship between entrepreneurial social infrastructure and such quality of life outcomes as an improved economy, less is known of the process by which social capital helps to facilitate the conversion of human, natural, financial, built, and other resources into broadly felt opportunity gains. What is clear in the literature is that communities experiencing dense networks of mutually reinforcing norms of reciprocity have greater capacity for taking collective action to achieve internally defined objectives (see Flora & Flora, 2013). In other words, social infrastructure translates into a greater sense of agency, or self-determination, as people learn the skill of visualizing, establishing objectives, and working to achieve, a preferred future by capitalizing on the opportunities that exist for change.

Discussions on the topic find that, among other things, entrepreneurship is seen as a way for people to exercise their self-determination and self-control (e.g., Loustel, 2011).

Entrepreneurship is connected to one's imagination and creativity, state the authors, in developing new services, goods, or organizing ideas that meet people's needs with greater efficiency. This understanding of entrepreneurship resonates with the discussion of social infrastructure above. This paper postulates, therefore, that entrepreneurial social infrastructure

facilitates improved community and economic performance, in part, by promoting the characteristics of self-determination and creativity that are essential for entrepreneurs of all types, whether business, civic, or social entrepreneurs.

2.7. The story of four rising neighborhoods

As we have seen above, social process plays a role in important domains of human life, including health and neighborhood economics. It also plays a role in McKnight's other community functions, such as safety and the raising of children (see Matthews, 2006 for an interesting discussion on the topic). However, for the sake of time, we will move on now to look at four neighborhoods that are on the rebound and explore the unique triggers that strengthened their social infrastructure and, therefore, their resiliency. I chose these neighborhoods because they are well known and well documented within the community development field.

2.7.1. Diamond neighborhood: Activating the power of place

As recounted in *Activating the power of place: A case study of market creek* (Castillo, 2015), the Diamond neighborhood of San Diego has historically been marked by high rates of poverty and mobility. In the face of these challenges the Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI), which is the implementation arm of the Jacobs Family Foundation, decided to implement a resident ownership of neighborhood change model. As part of its commitment, JCNI plans to transition ownership to the neighborhood when the foundation intentionally sunsets in 2030. Central to the JCNI's work has been the development of the Market Creek Plaza, a project designed and co-owned with residents, and providing a centralizing point for the neighborhood, as well as an economic and cultural benefits for the residents.

The emerging Diamond Neighborhoods story demonstrates three key dynamics to consider when it comes to revitalization. One, significant and targeted investments on the part of the funding community can yield inspiring results. Two, these results do not happen merely because of the size of the investment, but because the emphasis is on capacity-building and local ownership. And three, it is essential in historically underinvested neighborhoods to keep front and center an eye for wealth building and asset creation. These themes are strikingly rare within the economic development and philanthropic circles; however, the impacts of the model are telling and these themes should be taken into account in revitalization efforts.

2.7.2. Columbia City Neighborhood: Innovating community planning

As recounted in *Neighbor power: Building community the Seattle way* (Diers, 2004), the Columbia City neighborhood has been an active participant of Seattle's Department of Neighborhood's community-initiated planning process. Through the planning process, Columbia City residents identified several projects they wished to see come to fruition. Over the years, Columbia City, along with 37 other neighborhoods, helped to recruited 30,000 people to implement over 4,000 plan recommendations and \$1,850,000 worth of projects collectively, inspiring a 43% citizen participation rate in neighborhood activities. In Columbia City, projects included everything from a Powerful Schools initiative to a business district revitalization effort.

Seattle experimented with an innovative city-supported, bottom-up approach to neighborhood revitalization in Columbia City and elsewhere. To me, this story illustrates that thoughtful, planned, participatory processes are both possible and desirable. The capacities and gifts and networks of neighbors and neighborhoods can be harnessed to achieve uncommon results with the right kind of community-centric, asset-based model. People tend to rise or stoop to the level of expectation that society has of us.

2.7.3. Dudley Street Neighborhood: A march toward self-determination

The Dudley Street neighborhood of Boston became a well-known story among community development practitioners because they achieved the distinction of being the only neighborhood ever to successfully petition for the right to practice eminent domain. The neighborhood pursued this course of action out of concern that, if left to city government, any attempt to develop Dudley Street would result in gentrification, and the interesting, multicultural tapestry that made it a vibrant community would be reshaped by outside forces. Their ability to achieve this important landmark came because of the existence of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a collaborative organization representing business and non-profit leaders, as well as residents. Early iterations of what became the DSNI did not stick until the Riley Foundation decided to make a targeted, strategic investment in the Dudley Street neighborhood. Importantly, the foundation viewed itself as a partner in the revitalization process, not the driver, and patiently waited for the DSNI to emerge before investing, a process that took over two years.

The Dudley Street story is recounted in detail in *Streets of hope: The fall and rise of an urban neighborhood* (Medoff, 1994). Among other lessons, I think the Dudley Street story informs us that revitalization takes organization. The Dudley Street neighborhood achieved several important milestones along its journey toward self-determination. The blend of patient, outside investment on the part of the Riley foundation, through its unique neighborhood-focused partnership approach, combined with the willingness of the non-profit and business community to collaborate, and the push of the residents to own the agenda, served to make the DSNI possible. And, the existence of the DSNI made eminent domain and the village plan and self-determination generally possible.

2.7.4. Tupelo, Mississippi: The art of leading by stepping back

The Tupelo story, as documented in *Tupelo: The evolution of a community* (Grisham, 1999) recounts the arc of an urban-rural community, not unlike Springfield. Tupelo is remarkable because it is the county seat in Lee County, one of the poorest counties in the poorest state in the union. Decades later, Tupelo has received multiple recognitions by the US Department of Agriculture, *US News & World Report*, and several other agencies and publicans for their model of community owned and directed change. The story is all the more remarkable because Tupelo does not have any advantage in terms of agricultural assets or other amenities. Local leadership, and a commitment to build the social structure capable of facilitating economic and educational innovation, that set the community on a path toward greater resiliency.

The Tupelo story serves as an important reminder not to limit the scope of one's viewpoint. Often, communities limit themselves by assuming that the only tools available to generate a better life are the tools available to the traditional economic development department. In Tupelo, the turnaround began when a socially-minded business person, the owner of the local newspaper, convinced other business persons that it was in their self-interest to create an investment pool to hire a veterinarian to create a process by which their cotton farmers might succeed in dairy. Having achieved that initial success built the community's capacity to seek out other innovations and tackle more and more complex issues and projects.

2.8. Concluding thoughts

Unfortunately, communities sometimes “isolate their [low-income] residents from social contacts with mainstream society,” which restricts the flow of information and social supports that encourage agency and solidarity (Green & Haines, 2012, p. 149). What follows is an analysis of an attempt in Springfield, Ohio, to reverse that trend and cultivate an entrepreneurial

social infrastructure in the distressed Lincoln neighborhood. To attempt to understand the impact of the effort, I chose to explore the perspectives of three critical stakeholder groups, including the parents/residents, the educators of the neighborhood school, and professional service providers that supported the residents. My goal was to use the feedback gleaned from these three stakeholder groups to test my assumptions about the impact of SPN.

My assumptions going into the research were (1) the place-based, resident-driven principles and practices adopted by the SPN initiative led to the emergence of an entrepreneurial social infrastructure, (2) there would be evidence of a greater aligned and strengthened stock and flow of the neighborhood's capital set as a result of the emerging entrepreneurial social infrastructure, and (3) understanding the impact of the SPN initiative would yield insights that could improve the wellbeing of Springfield's residents in other neighborhoods. To test these assumptions, I employed Ripple Effect Mapping. In preparing for my research, I conducted a literature review of the field of community development. Below are some insights I gleaned while seeking to ground my understanding of the change process and the principles and practices that facilitate development.

CHAPTER 3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Brown and Hannis (2008) make the point that community development, as a field of practice, does not have a single unifying description. Some frequently used definitions included in their text are, “A process that increases the assets and attributes which a community is able to draw upon in order to improve their lives,” “People acting collectively with others who share some common concern,” and “The capacity of local populations to respond collectively to events and issues that affect them (p. 10).” Others, such as the Tamerak Institute refer to community development as, “the process by which citizens are engaged to work and learn together on behalf of their communities to create and realize bold visions for the future” (Tamarack, 2017, page). Importantly, this past year, both the International Association for Community Development and the Community Development Society adopted the following common definition of community development.

“Community development is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic opportunity, equality and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings (CDJ, 2016).”

At the heart of the definitions listed above is the notion that communities are not static, that bold visions of the future can be achieved over time. Empowering people to envision that bold future and work collectively to attain it is central to the field. And shaping the social processes of a neighborhood or community (i.e., the norms, relationships, and participation) is necessary to capitalize on this potential and achieve a preferred future. To use the language of the CCF, intangible resources of a neighborhood (its human, social, cultural, and political capital) must be harnessed to achieve the desired end. Sustainable, lasting change occurs when people – and their capacities and networks – are connected to a neighborhood’s tangible assets (its built, financial, and natural capital). In fact, this theme in the literature is so evident that one

might call it a principle. Below, we explore this and other principles that guide community developers in their work with communities.

3.1. Community development principles

In Figure 3, you can observe a variety of community development principles drawn from various reputable sources. This chart is insightful on its own merit, but it one might find it useful to dissect these lists of principles. In my analysis of the principles outlined here, I observe that some principles speak to the core values that underpin the work of community development, others speak to how these values are implemented by prescribing specific approaches to community development, and others speak to key concepts that describe the essential ingredients that facilitate community development.

3.1.1. Toward a typology of community development principles

Sample values-based principles (the WHY)

- Human beings can transform their world;
- Sustainability – building communities that exhibit economic vitality, socially well-being, and healthy ecosystems;
- Community ownership – value and facilitate community control; and
- Social Justice – address social inequities in society.

Sample strategy-based principles (the WHO and the HOW)

- Promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence the decisions that affect their lives;

Empowerment Evaluation	Community Development Society	Michael & Judy Bopp	CD Alliance of Scotland
Improvement – help people improve performance Community ownership – value and facilitate community control	Promote active and representative participation toward enabling all community members to meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives	Human being can transform their world Development comes from within Healing is a part of development	Empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities
Inclusion – invite involvement, participation, diversity Social justice – address social inequities in society	Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues and the impacts associated with alternative courses of action	Justice No vision, no development Development process must be rooted in the culture of the people	Participation – support people to take part in decision making
Democratic participation – open participation and fair decision making Capacity building – enhance stakeholder ability to evaluate and improve planning and implementation	Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect disadvantaged members	Interconnectedness: The holistic approach The hurt of one is the hurt of all; the honor of one is the honor of all Unity Participation	Inclusion, equity of opportunity and anti-discrimination – recognizing that some people may need additional support to overcome barriers they face
Community knowledge – respect community knowledge Learning – apply data to evaluate practices, decisions	Work actively to enhance the leadership capacity of community members, leaders, and groups within the community	Spirit Morals and ethics Learning	Self-determination – supporting the right of people to make their own choices
Evidence-based strategies – respect and use both community and scholarly knowledge Accountability – emphasize outcomes	Be open to using the full range of action strategies to work toward the long-term sustainability and well-being of the community	Sustainability Move to the positive Be the change you want to see	Partnership – recognizing that many agencies can contribute to community development

Figure 3. Principles of community development

- Engage community members in learning about and understanding community issues and the impacts associated with alternative courses of action; and
- Incorporate the diverse interests and cultures of the community in the development process; and disengage from support of any effort that is likely to adversely affect disadvantaged members of a community.

Sample factor-based principles (with WHAT?)

- Empowerment – increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence issues that affect them and their communities;
- Self-determination – supporting the right of people to make their own choices;
- Capacity – enhance stakeholder ability to evaluate and improve planning and implementation; and
- Community knowledge – respect and value community knowledge

3.1.2. The core operating principles of Think Tank

SPN’s approach to parent and community engagement was shaped by the five principles that we learned over time to prioritize at Think Tank. Think Tank has applied these principles to diverse contexts with success, from impacting the father absence issue to increasing prosperity among the chronically poor. I will briefly discuss each of Think Tank’s five principle, then conclude with a look at how they work together to engender change within a sample sector, our health.

Each of these principles serve as component parts of what it means to rebuild the social fabric of society. The effort to rebuild the fabric of the Lincoln neighborhood was counter to a national trend toward increased socio-economic segregation and isolation, a phenomenon that is

having a negative over-all effect on the state of the nation (see the extensive research at www.equality-of-opportunity.org). The entrepreneurial social infrastructure that emerges from the implementation of these five principles should theoretically produce the collective agency and efficacy that broadly experienced quality of life improvements require.

3.1.2.1. Holistic: Recognizing the interconnected parts

Systems theory helped to advance our understanding of the interconnected parts of communities. According to Foster-Fisherman (2006), social systems, such as what I experienced in the Lincoln community, are a bounded set of interrelated activities that together constitute a single entity. They are parts connected by a web of relationships mutually influencing each other's behavior and acting as a whole. This fact serves to reinforce the critical nature of relationships between and among the various subsystems that make up the regularly interacting groups of individuals, activities, and organizations and their social and physical environment.

In other words, change occurs in the neighborhood when the relationship (and the energy and information that are transmitted) between parts are influenced, more so than by changing the parts themselves. Importantly, youth and residents are made up of a mix of social, emotional, physical, financial, spiritual and other interdependent component parts. Similarly, residents live in relationship to others in a neighborhood, which is itself a composite of multiple components – from public, private, and nonprofit institutions to civic associations and informal family structures to individual residents and their physical environment – that collide through relationships and dynamically produce social norms, the local economy, and other factors of neighborhood life. Not only that, but neighborhoods are part of larger community and regional systems and relationships. Understanding the whole bounded system is imperative.

3.1.2.2. Listen first and build on strengths

David Cooperrider's extensive research into the factors that cultivate success in organizations and human systems led to the development of the Appreciative Inquiry model. Cooperrider's research led him to assert that, "We have reached the end of problem solving as a mode of inquiry capable of inspiring, mobilizing, and sustaining human system change. The future of [community] development belongs to methods that affirm, compel, and accelerate anticipatory learning involving larger and larger levels of collectivity" (2015, page). In other words, the primary way to discover the root causes of success in neighborhoods is through inquiry and by building on the community's positive core.

Rans and Green (2005) assert that each and every neighborhood has gifted individuals and groups that can (and should be) supported by numerous local institutions: "parks, schools, libraries, churches, businesses - all have a role to play... as property owners, gathering centers, economic entities and incubators for community leadership (p. 3)." Cormac Russell (2017), suggests that community efforts that organize around the fixing of problems instead of enhancement of dreams or the provision of services instead of the strengthening of relationships inadvertently contribute to the following four unintended harms. A top-down obsession with what is wrong, what is broken, and what is pathological within people:

- 1) Defines those being helped, not by their gifts and their capacities and what they can bring to the solution, but by their deficiencies and their problems;
- 2) Money which is intended to go to those who need the help, does not. It actually goes to those who are paid to provide the services to those who need help;
- 3) Active citizenship – the power to take action and to respond at the grassroots level – retreats in the face of ever-increasing technocracy and expertise; and

- 4) Neighborhoods that have been defined as deficient start to internalize that map and believe that the only way that things will change is from outside experts or resources.

3.1.2.3. Do with, not to or for

When society focuses on fixing problems and providing services to or for youth and residents in distressed neighborhoods, local empowerment and capacity are short circuited. In the process, "the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (Killing Wood, 2008, p. 10) is atrophied with detrimental effects. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard academic, states, "When we do change to people, they experience it as violence, but when people do change for themselves, they experience it as liberation (quoted by Russell, 2017). Rebuilding the muscle of self-mastery and liberation requires the discipline to interact with youth and residents as co-producers of the future that they seek for the neighborhood.

In 1969, Sherry Arnstein conceptualized the Ladder of Civic Participation, a model that continues to influence community engagement research to this day. In Arnstein's model, there are eight rungs that move from a low degree of civic participation to high degree. These eight rungs can be lumped into three categories of participation, including nonparticipation, tokenism, and citizen control. At the outset of SPN, every effort was made to establish citizen control over the process, both as a practical measure to ensure a greater chance at sustaining the initiative, and also because it was viewed as the only morally justifiable position. Achieving empowerment and citizen control began with an emphasis on listening, learning, and building from strengths.

3.1.2.4. Promote leadership and self-governance

When it comes to the community change processes, doing *with* requires that indigenous leadership is cultivated. Done effectively, these leaders will take over the responsibilities that

the community developer or organizer carries forward initially. When individuals are involved in their community in a service or leadership role, there is a direct influence on their interpersonal relationships, including a sense of identification with the community that protects against feelings of isolation or anonymity (Wandersman & Florin, 2000). With social relationships come a sense of familiarity and safety, mutual concern and support, and the opportunity to be appreciated for one's contributions to group life rather than for narrower aspects of rank and achievement (Killer Wood, 2008).

In Lincoln, our approach to leadership “emphasized the clarification of values, development of self-awareness, ability to build trust, capacity to listen and serve others, collaborative work, and change for the common good” (Astin, 1996, p. 5). The basic premises embedded into the formal and informal leadership development practices were the notion that (1) leadership ought to bring about desirable social change, (2) leadership is an iterative process and not a position or title, (3) all youth and residents are potential leaders, and (4) service is a powerful vehicle for leadership growth (see HERI, 1996).

3.1.2.5. Build social capital

If leadership and self-governance is an iterative process, then attention must be paid, not just individuals and their skills, but also to their social, or relational, environment. The strength of interpersonal relationships as the foundation of social power and personal empowerment. Moreover, community empowerment requires a number of characteristics including a belief system based on the strengths of the group, a network of peer social support, and active involvement and participation in the community (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). This relational fabric that forms the foundation of sustainable change is referred to in the community development literature as social capital.

The concept of social capital has been explored a great deal in recent years (Putnam, 2003). Social capital refers to the collective value of all social networks—who you know—and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other—norms of trust and reciprocity (Putnam, 1995). Clearly, based on conceptual understanding, social capital is a concept inherent in the work of community development, a feature of the definition of community capacity, and a product of the identification and mobilization of individual, associational, and institutional assets.

3.1.3. Concluding thoughts

Ultimately, the interdependent nature of the concepts of empowerment, capacity, social capital, and strengths mean that one of these underlying values in the community development literature cannot be addressed without acknowledging the others. When enacted through processes and practices, these principles are intended to build the sense of agency and the collective efficacy of a neighborhood. And, according to an independent analysis of one of Think Tank’s poverty alleviation initiatives in Springfield, the application of these principles resulted in \$302,000 worth of social returns on investment.

In other words, these principles have real economic value when a use din program design. Importantly, each of the principles is a necessary component of the processes and outcomes of an inside-out, relationally-driven approach to community development. In later portions of this paper, we will explore the impact of the SPN initiative. Important to this analysis is to understand whether or not the principles that were adopted, as outlined in this chapter, did indeed strengthen the collective efficacy of the neighborhood to shape the long-term outcome of its youth. Before leaving this literature review, however, we must first explore the suite of practices that comprise the community development toolkit.

3.2. Community development practices

The extensive body of research on the field of community development describes various categories of tools available to practitioners to move communities and neighborhoods toward Downs' "healthy" status. To help organize a review of this literature, I drew from Christenson's (1989) content analysis of articles published in the *Journal of the Community Development Society*, the major forum for community development professionals. Christenson detailed three major themes that emerged from his analysis: (1) a self-help, non-directive, or cooperative theme; (2) a technical intervention, planning, or assistance theme; and (3) a conflict or confrontation theme.

I have merged these themes with the terminology used by current practitioners to develop a typology of community development that assisted me in selecting the approach I would take in shaping the social process of the Lincoln neighborhood. This typology includes the conflict theme that has emerged as the *community organizing* approach to community development, the self-help theme that has emerged as the *community building* approach, and the technical intervention theme that has emerged as the *community and economic development* approach. To this list I add a fourth approach, *community education*. Community education, though it has profoundly influenced the other three themes, has not been adequately explored as a uniquely important approach within the continuum of community development methods. As will be explored through the literature review, each approach has a useful set of tools to aid the practitioner to accomplish social change. Figure 4 below outlines these themes.

3.2.1. Community and economic development: The technical toolkit

The technical assistance approach to community development is firmly rooted in rational planning (Green & Haines, 2012). In this approach, the community development practitioner

assumes a consulting relationship with the neighborhood, providing expertise in such technical areas as housing development, downtown revitalization, or economic growth. Often this work is facilitated by a mix of nonprofit organizations, such as Community Development Corporations and government agencies, such as a municipality's Community Development Department, a state run jobs center, or a federally funded Small Business Development Centers. Additionally, in poor neighborhoods, a high concentration of health and human services are provided to residents through the mediating force of case managers and other trained professionals.

This approach is generally more concerned with the end product – families achieving self-sufficiency, residents having greater access to affordable housing, etc. – than the process by which these goals are obtained. Examples exist, however, of institutions and municipalities providing expertise within a process-oriented context. As Savannah, Georgia's former City Manager, the late Henry Moore, stated when describing his Grants for Blocks program, "We [were creating] a truly citizen-driven government. In overseeing this program, and spreading this movement through the city, my main goal [was] just to keep the staff out of its way" (Green, 2009, page). Form and function, product and process... when these competing concepts collide in technical community or economic interventions, what results can produce broadly experienced wellbeing improvements.

3.2.2. Community organizing: The conflict toolkit

Born of Conflict Theory, as it is known in the field of Sociology, community organizing, sometimes known as issue organizing, is one of the most established traditions in community development (Stoecker, 2013). While there are multiple variations, the common element of all organizing activity includes residents mobilizing around a problem and taking on powerful institutions in their community through direct, public confrontation and action. Community

organizing, which can include political work such as voter registration, “uses a variety of tactics to... demonstrate the value of power” (Green & Haines, 2012, page).

Saul Alinsky popularized the organizing approach to development, famously stating that the, “first rule of change is controversy. You can't get away from it for the simple reason all issues are controversial. Change means movement, and movement means friction, and friction means heat, and heat means controversy” (Alinsky, 2017, page). The conflict toolkit is especially useful when societal power imbalances pit the self-interest of resourced institutions against the felt needs of a marginalized population.

3.2.3. Community building: The self-help toolkit

Community building is defined here as, “those projects which seek to build new relationships among members in a community and develop change out of the connections these relationships provide for solving member-defined problems” (Hess, 1999, page). This approach counters the service delivery model that assumes that the solutions to human and social ills rest in the hands of professional doctors, teachers, lawyers, or police. Rather than seeing professional services (which generally do not offer a clear-cut definition of success) as the solution to community issues, the self-help theme perceives the essential problem to be weakened communities. Strong neighborhoods set an internal agenda first through relationship building, then seek out the support of institutions and professionals to achieve their stated aims.

John McKnight and John Kretzman popularized this notion with the establishment of the Asset-Based Community Development model and institute. As they state, “Every single person has capabilities, abilities and gifts. Living a good life depends on whether those capabilities can be used, abilities expressed and gifts given. If they are, the person will be valued, feel powerful and well-connected to the people around them. And the community around the person will be

more powerful because of the contribution the person is making” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1998, page). In this approach to community development, the essential role of the practitioner is the weaving together of relationships between and among people and their gifts and aspirations.

3.2.4. Community education: The empowerment toolkit

Community educators, whether they are working with youth, adults, or communities, “will always concentrate on purposeful learning and education in communities” (Tett, 2013, page). Community educators work in community colleges providing job skills training, in community action agencies facilitating recovery groups, and at local art museums teaching painting. The strand of community education that most closely connects to this research project is education for social change; that is, education that, “brings about change in understanding both of self and society that leads on to a more equitable life for everyone” (p. 107).

Myles Horton, co-founder of the Highlander Folk School, is an example of a community education practitioner. By encouraging critical awareness, Highlander played an important role in some of the most significant social change efforts in the U.S., including the Labor and Civil Rights movements. As Myles Horton states, “If people have a position on something and you try to argue them into changing it, you’re going to strengthen that position. If you want to change people’s ideas, you shouldn’t try to convince them intellectually. What you need to do is get them into a situation where they’ll have to act on ideas not argue about them” (Horton, 1990, page). The community education toolkit helps to build people’s critical awareness about the world around them and the power that they hold to change it. Myles deeply valued other people and their experiences, which opened up pathways for change. It allowed him to see people (and systems) from a two-eyed perspective, observing them from both a “temporary sense” and a “potential sense” (p. 8). And, it gave birth in him a vision of a preferred future in which people

develop the ability to govern themselves, which, in turn, engenders a generative and truly democratic society. Ultimately, holding such a vision within allows one to persist and endure over the long haul, despite the inevitable adversities that community educators will face

At the heart of community education is Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is the study of a social condition carried out by those affected by the condition in order to improve their understanding of it. Improved understanding often results in increased capacity to change the context that permitted the condition to occur. PAR revolves around, “the active participation of researchers and participants in the co-construction of knowledge; the promotion of self- and critical awareness that leads to individual, collective, and/or social change; and the building of alliances between researchers and participants in the planning, implementation, and dissemination of the research process” (McIntyre, 2008, p. ix).

Stoecker (2013) observes that participatory research that values the participants as co-researchers results in increased (1) power, or the stock of resources that allows them to influence the future direction of the neighborhood, (2) action, or the act of putting power into motion to achieve results, and (3) knowledge, or the awareness of cause-and-effect relationships that illuminate existing power dynamics and assists in establishing an effective course of action (p. 27). I reference PAR here because Ripple Asset Mapping, my chosen research methodology, could be considered a PAR practice. Not only does it serve as a useful method for unearthing valuable qualitative data, it also served to help participants determine their path forward.

3.3. Adopting a nested approach to community development

As Chistenson (1989) notes, most successful community development ventures have used elements of each of the categories outlined above. Although all of the approaches could be

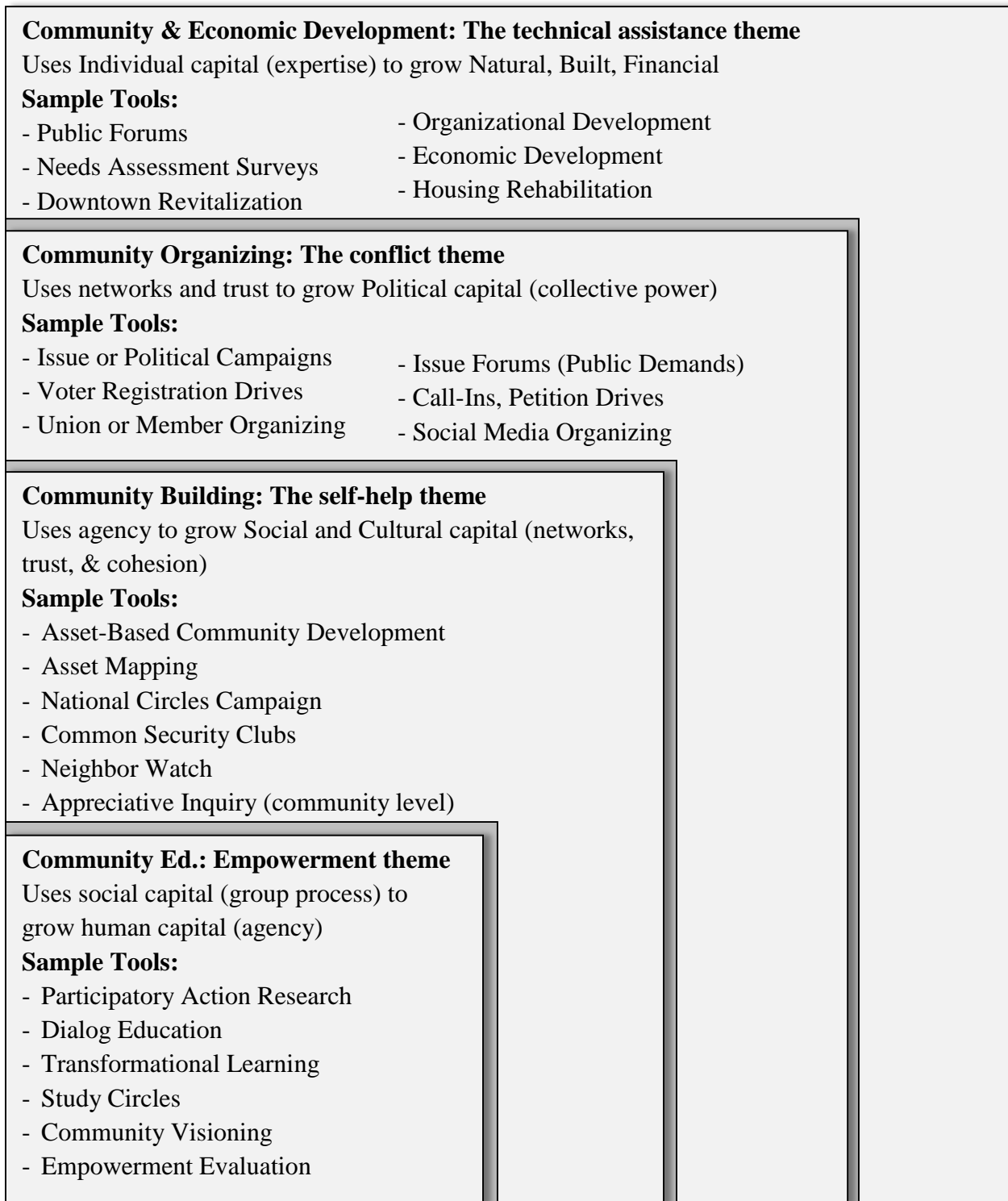


Figure 4. Practices of community development

applied simultaneously, the “nesting” concept serves to illustrate that there are areas of natural overlap and points of progression. Community building, for example, will support issue organizing campaigns by increasing participation through strengthened social networks. Community organizing, meanwhile, provides political clout behind the emerging local agenda established during community building efforts. Technical interventions in the form of economic and community development will achieve deeper, more broadly experienced, and more lasting results if it is done in response to the gifts and felt need identified through self-help and empowering activities (Hess, 1999).

Community education is conceived as the core dimension of this integrated community development model for the following reason. Whether one is researching a community organizing issue, or mapping the here-to-fore overlooked gifts of residents in a community building process, or engaging citizens to provide feedback on a technical intervention project, the first step is to engage people in a process of investigation and the co-production of knowledge. Engaging people from the outset increased capacity and agency and shapes the social process of the community or neighborhood to be able to align assets for maximum impact. Community education contains a suite of tools that help to engender individual agency and collective efficacy, which is the heart of lasting and equitable development.

One could equally think of the community development principles as interacting in a similar construct, where the values-based principles form the core of principle-centered change. These values-based principles help to define and shape, even as they are informed by, the factor-based values. The goal of sustainability, for example, can be seen as possible if such core factors as collective agency and self-governance are present. And, factors such as these are generated by the implementation of strategy-based principles that cut across all of the tools and practices. These strategy-based values help to promote the integration of such concepts as participatory

democracy into a neighborhood's mode of operating. Participatory democracy – with its emphasis on giving everyone an opportunity to contribute to the decision-making process – helps engender agency and efficacy which, in turn, creates a more sustainable environment.

CHAPTER 4. PROJECT OVERVIEW

One way to view communities is through the lens of the Harwood Institute's *community rhythms* theory (Wood, 2014). Based on decades of experience and research, the institute has observed that communities swing between five different stages, ranging from the waiting place, to the impasse stage, to the catalytic stage, to the growth stage, with some making it to the sustain/renew stage. To better understand Springfield's history against this backdrop of these community rhythms theory, read Warren Copeland's 2009 edition of *Doing Justice in Our Cities: Lessons in Public Policy from America's Heartland*.

4.1. Community context: A survey of Springfield and Clark County

Springfield's early history was catalytic in nature. As its name suggests, Springfield was first settled because of the abundance of local water sources and good agricultural land. Early entrepreneurs harnessed these natural assets to constructed mills, which attracted more settlers and more economic activity. For a time in the 1830s, Springfield became the last stop on the great National Road that moved product inland from the eastern seaboard. The community was clearly entering the growth stage. In time, Springfield became known as the "Champion City," a reference to the Champion Reaper. The Champion Reaper was an innovative farm implement technology manufactured in Springfield by International Harvester. Other manufacturers, such as the Crowell Publishing Company added to Springfield's base economy, making the city the second-largest factory complex in the world after the Krupp complex in Germany.

However, demand for the type of manufactured goods produced in Springfield greatly diminished. Springfield's golden years would end with the Great Depression. The austerity that followed the sudden closing in 1956 of the *Collier's* agricultural magazine resulted in low real estate prices and commodity sales, leading to a depressed economy. This was a deeply traumatic

event in the life of the community and the shock of it swung the community into a prolonged season in the waiting place and impasse stages. Springfield is still in a rebuilding process as it slowly begins to awaken to the memory that it once was a place rooted in catalytic innovation and entrepreneurial vitality. The rebuilding process was stymied, however, both by the community's own inertia, as well as that of larger national and global trends.

The US economy has been undergoing a period of significant transition following the disintegration of the capital-labor accord between government, labor, and business that facilitated the economic expansion from WWII to the 1970s (Peters, 2013). The strain of the transition from an industrial economy can be seen in the stagnation of purchasing power, the steady decrease in employer provided health insurance and unionized jobs, the steady increase in income inequality and the rising use of temporary help agencies, and many other factors. The post-industrial economy is built on flexible accumulation, global sourcing, and informal labor, and traditional economic development practices have struggled to respond effectively to a market system that itself has undergone globalizing structural shifts (Leigh and Blakely, 2013).

Springfield's identity as a bustling, thriving city was tied to its impressive manufacturing firms. However, as the global economy shifted, Springfield's manufacturing industry shrank as a share of the local economy (57% since 2003), Springfield has struggled to find a new identity and a new job base. As a result, just since 1990, Springfield has experienced a negative population growth rate of 13.91%. And a smaller percentage of the remaining residents, when compared to the state and national average, are of prime working years (CLR Search, 2013). These facts would appear to indicate that Springfield is having difficulty retaining (and attracting new) residents once they are old enough to pursue an independent career.

Springfield's most difficult years were in the late 1970s and 1980s. In 1979, an ugly International Harvester strike tore the community apart. By the early 1980s, due, in part to

inflation, a recession, and the loss of federal revenue-sharing program, Springfield's budget was running on deficit. This reality led the local government to turn off two-thirds of the city's street lights. Springfield's narrative only began to turn the corner when the national economy began to pick up in the 1990s. From that time, Springfield slowly began to rebuild its downtown core while diversifying its economy, which served to cushion it against the shocks of the Great Recession to a greater extent than surrounding counties.

This fact has been noted by outside groups. *Forbes* magazine noted Springfield's multiple recreational and other amenities, ranking Springfield eighth out of the ten best places to live cheaply (Forbes, 2013). In recent years, the same factors that led to this ranking have produced some positive results, including companies that have relocated to Springfield. Other important investments in the community include the choice to locate a Global Impact STEM academy on the border of the Lincoln neighborhood.

As a result of these efforts, *Site Selection* magazine has ranked Springfield second in the nation among SMAs its size for economic development (New-Sun, 2012). For the 10-year time period from 2002 to 2012, Springfield has grown the number of businesses from 6,161 to 7,907 (representing a total of 1,746 new businesses, an annual growth rate of 2.8%). Interestingly, the growth that Springfield has experienced has primarily come in the form of startups (29.4%), and through self-employment (3.6%) and early stage businesses (3.6%). Springfield and Clark County are on a generally positive trajectory, though the road ahead is long and fraught with many pitfalls. Below I explore other key trends affecting Springfield.

4.2. Neighborhood context: Cumulative causation and Lincoln's spiral

The Lincoln Elementary attendance zone encompasses a number of neighborhoods, four of which boasted homeowner associations at one point in time. Geographically, these smaller

Promise Neighborhood Parcel Map

Andrew Ziminski

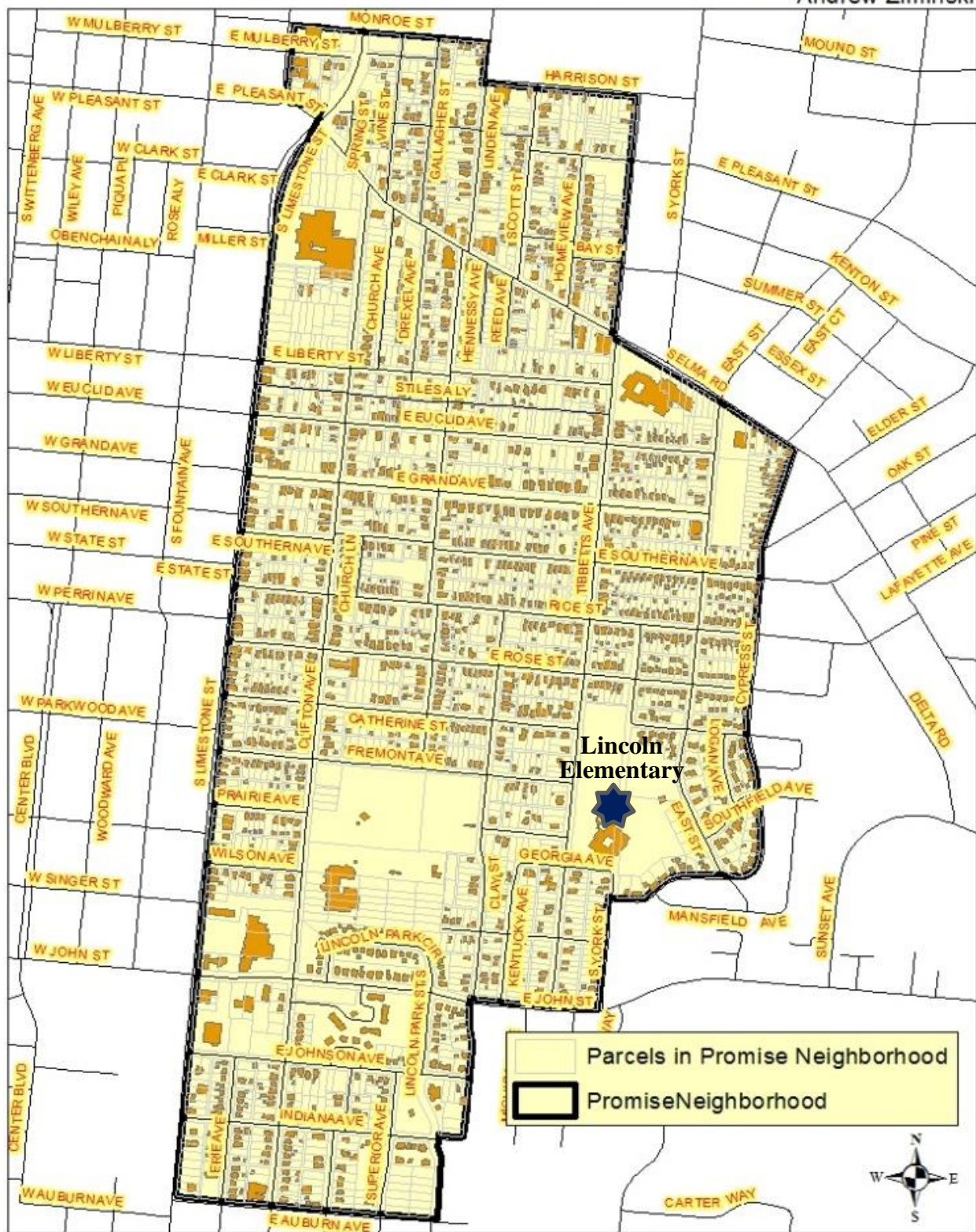


Figure 5. Lincoln neighborhood map

neighborhoods sit within what came to be called broadly as the Lincoln Promise, which is located in the southeast section of the city of Springfield, Ohio. The Lincoln Promise area (see Figure 5) is comprised of 4,800 residents (a 2.1% decrease since 2010) living in a 110-block expanse. The 4,800 residents live in 1,368 residential housing units, 27% of which are vacant and 62.6% of which are not owner occupied.

The Lincoln neighborhood is characterized as having higher than average poverty rates and a “churn,” or mobility rate of approximately 42%. The instability of the neighborhood is also characterized by high rental rates (68%), jobless rates (16%), vacant housing rates (27%), with 69% of the children growing up in single caretaker homes. Compared with the national average of \$51,000, the Lincoln median income is \$22,700 per household. See Figure 5 below for a summary of data points about the neighborhood. This information was collected with the support of the Community Development Department and the Center for Community Engagement to establish a baseline of information in 2012. These data were also used in the visioning process to help residents reflect on the strengths of their neighborhood, and areas for improvement.

Importantly, the Lincoln neighborhood also has its share of assets. One valuable resource is the neighborhood’s diversity (the neighborhood is 50% minority with a larger-than-average intergenerational mix and one of the fastest growing Spanish-speaking populations). It is also a more compact residential area than other school attendance zones, allowing for the possibility of greater social cohesion. Finally, for the purpose of this research project, the Lincoln neighborhood is dotted with many vacant properties, making urban agriculture a very real possibility, assuming the lead contaminants can be abated over time.

The Lincoln neighborhood did not always exhibit the traits detailed above. At one point, according to interviews with residents and confirmed through research by Springfield historian, Kevin Rose (personal communication, 2011), the Lincoln neighborhood was once a stable locale

platted and developed in the late 19th and early 20th century to house the labor force needed for the multiple factories that lined the railroad tracks that cut through downtown Springfield. When these factories closed up over a period of decades, the living standard and quality of life of the neighborhood began a slow decline that some feel reached a tipping point in the 1970s. Flora & Flora (2009) term this progression a “downward spiral,” a process that illustrates the effects of cumulative causation.

The factory closings led to a loss of jobs, which then led to a decrease in the neighborhood's stable population as people left to find work elsewhere. This, in turn, led to more dilapidated and abandoned properties and a shift to a higher renter occupied versus homeowner occupied rates. As the neighborhood began to become transient in nature, the social infrastructure of the neighborhood began to decay. Eventually, residents became socially isolated, leading to a general sense of insecurity and ultimately resulting in a deterioration of the public sphere of the neighborhood, or the generative space in which citizens deliberate the issues and act collectively toward a vision of a preferred future. A random sample resident experience survey of 169 residents was conducted in 2013 to establish a baseline of local sentiment. It was discovered that 30% of the population does not feel safe in the neighborhood's public spaces. And that 69% of the population feels that the neighborhood has declined or stayed the same in the last three years (though, interestingly, 59% are optimistic about its future).

The current statistics and the historical context of the Lincoln neighborhood can be understood through the lens of the CCF framework. The CCF provides a means of identifying the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities in a community by identifying the available assets that can be converted to productive use, including its intangible resources (human, social, cultural, and political), as well as its tangible resources (built, financial, and natural). All communities have resources in these seven categories that can be reduced or

dissipated, saved for future use, or invested to create new resources. When resources are invested in over an extended period of time, they become a community capital.

As can be observed in Figure 6 below, these capitals correspond to the significant events that have contributed to the downward spiral of the Lincoln neighborhood. This analysis of the Lincoln neighborhood begs an important question (a question that serves as an underlying theme of this paper): How might the declining trajectory of an under-resourced neighborhood be interrupted and energy for an upward spiral generated? This question plagued me as I began to consider what community development tools and approaches I might adopt. Also included below are the statistics that the Community Development office helped to compile in 2012 to establish a baseline of neighborhood data. These statistics were also used as part of the dialogue-to-change community visioning process to engender reflection and feedback on what was good and what people felt could be improved.

4.3. Approach overview: Asset based community development

Tasked with cultivating a “thriving neighborhood,” I considered what process might serve to effectively counter the circumstances and historical context of the Lincoln neighborhood outlined above. My impression early on was that the neighborhood’s downward spiral had passed a critical point. With the stocks and flows of cultural, social, and political capital severely deteriorated by the start of 2010 when SPN came into existence, it would require a substantial shift to change the neighborhood’s destiny. In my work in Africa, I had seen people make very significant quality of life improvements by coming together, imagining a preferred future, identifying needed expertise and resources, and taking action. However, the social and cultural attributes of village life were not readily available.

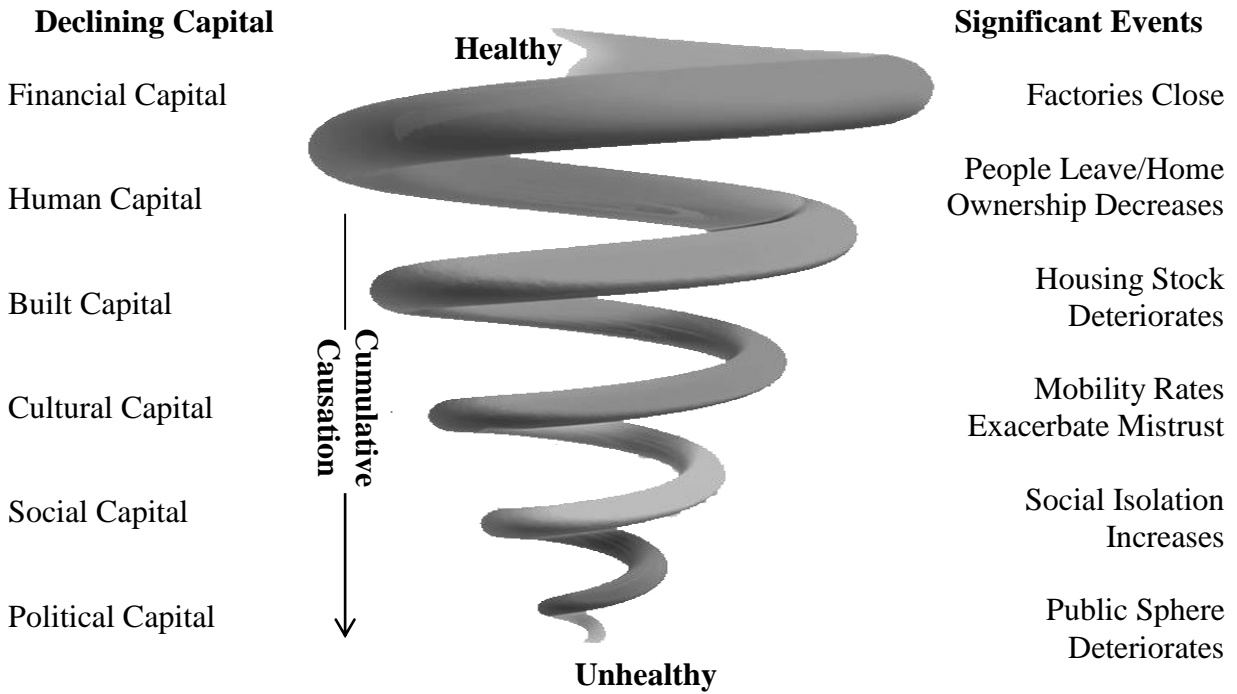


Figure 6. Cumulative causation and Lincoln’s downward spiral (Emory & Flora, 2006)

Rebuilding the sense of community, the social fabric of the neighborhood, thus seemed like the logical first step to generating an upward spiral. However, this would prove to be a challenge in a neighborhood where people’s primary interactions were either with family members or neighbors experiencing similar life circumstances or with service sector case managers through such programs as Women Infants and Children (WIC) and the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) colloquially known as “welfare.” Though unintended, such programs often serve to label people, and, in doing so, to isolate those most in need of a caring and supportive community.

Killing Woods (2008) points out that when people are kept behind the walls of service, they become invisible to their neighbors and strangers in the midst of community. Many community approaches serve to reinforce this phenomenon by leading with “needs” assessments. These assessments serve to reinforce negative perceptions. As a result, community capacity is

diminished and agency is reduced. I felt strongly that moving people to action in the Lincoln neighborhood would require a process that could change the internalized collective narrative of the neighborhood from one of learned helplessness to possibility; from passive consumer of services to powerful civic actor; from a problem needing to be fixed to that of a capable dreamer with a preferred future story waiting to emerge.

To recover, we would need the right strategy, one that could engineer what Gladwell (2002) describes as a tipping point; that is, a moment when an idea or social behavior crosses a threshold and spreads. But what idea had that level of power and “stickiness” in the face of internalized helplessness? I thought at the time that the idea that would hold that kind of traction would be the notion that people are our best resource, that everyone has value and capacity and potential. My task, then, became one of identifying and weaving together people’s unique gifts and abilities into the colorful tapestry I knew the neighborhood could be.

Gladwell asserts that if you want to bring fundamental change in people’s belief and behavior...you need to create a community around them, where those new beliefs can be practiced and expressed and nurtured. To nurture this kind of safe space into a positive social contagion, Gladwell contends, you often have to create many small movements first. So I felt I needed a methodology that would help me create multiple Action Teams, as we came to call them. These are groups of people connected by common interests, needs, or geography, and that could serve as the safe space in which to experience agency, community, and the benefits of a flourishing civic life.

With this fundamental need in mind, I elected to adopt the principles and practices of Asset Based Community Development, or ABCD. Kretzmann and McKnight first developed the ABCD model and described it in their 1993 book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. All people in ABCD are assumed to have an important role to play in the future of the

neighborhood and every resident, neighbor and youth has a gift, a talent, an asset just waiting to be tapped. In the model, assets are defined as the gifts, skills, and capacities of individuals, association, and institutions within the community or target area. Identifying and connecting those assets for productive gain in the neighborhood is the primary task. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) outline five basic steps that summarize the process of ABCD:

1. Mapping completely the capacities and assets of individuals, citizens' associations and local institutions.
2. Building relationships among local assets for mutually beneficial problem solving within the community.
3. Mobilizing the community's assets fully for economic development and information-sharing purposes.
4. Convening as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a community vision and plan.
5. Leveraging activities, investments and resources from outside the community to support asset-based, locally-defined development (p. 345).

4.3.1. Mapping the capacities of individuals, associations, institutions

Based on their research as Northwestern University faculty, Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) assert that even distressed and under-served communities possess unique combination of resources upon which to build a preferred future story. Their analysis revealed that communities that historically have been able to rebound from shocks, such as the factory closings that initiated Lincoln's downward spiral, are those communities that recognize and harness their assets for positive gain. These assets can be mapped using a combination of five categories of community

resources: the skills of local residents, the power of local voluntary associations, the resources of local institutions, their natural and built physical resources, and their local economic power.

Other authors have re-affirmed this principle across multiple studies. Goldman & Shmalz (2005), for example, found that mapping local assets encourages the community to try and solve their problems with internal solutions and resources. Meanwhile, Green and Haines (2002) observed that communities that map available skills, experience, and resources are able to identify economic development opportunities, keep existing residents invested and draw new members, all of which results in a less transient environment. And, as Peter Block (2008) points out, if residents of the community are the asset mappers, they grow in their sense of belonging and ownership and make use of their abilities to build self-reliance and take control in the transformation of their community.

4.3.2. Building relationships among local assets for problem solving

Once these strengths have been identified, the next step is to make connections between the local capacities. In some cases, there is a natural process that will connect capacities. For example, neighbors may have a tradition of connecting through the trading of skill sets (e.g., one fixes the front step while the other watches the children). In other cases, more of an active effort is required to make connections between the identified capacities of the individuals, groups or institutions (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Green and Haines (2002) emphasize the importance of this step as it provides the opportunity for residents to learn the value of cooperation and civic worth. Richardson (2004) supports this idea finding significant value in the casual conversations among participants, which led to some of the most practical applications of the identified assets.

When connections are made in this way, local residents and groups are encouraged to collaborate on how to respond to possible challenges and develop mutually beneficial relationships. This is the core of asset-, or strengths-based, development. Residents are encouraged to gather together around common issues, interests, or geography, whether a love of music or to get a street light fixed. Groups then seek out and access the associational and institutional assets around them, from getting permission to use space at the local church to practice singing, to contacting city service departments to get the light fixed. Slowly, but surely, through this process, assets are mobilized and unleashed.

4.3.3. Convening a diverse group to build a common vision, plan

Increased human and social capital is the byproduct of mobilizing assets and a crucial component of community development. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) echo this idea in their own words: "significant community development takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort" (p. 5). Therefore, the goal of identifying assets is to empower residents to recognize and make use of their abilities to build self-reliance and take control in the transformation of their community (Goldman & Schmalz, 2005). Critically, when the focus is inside, rather than outside, it puts residents in control. Consequently, the development of the community is dependent upon, and a direct result of, the power of the people. Taking such an inside-out approach often takes more time; however, it generally ensures greater sustainability.

One way to generate local ownership in the inside-out change agenda is through community visioning. A powerful, inclusive vision brings people and groups together to work toward a better future for the community. For a visioning process to be inclusive, as diverse a group as possible should be recruited to participate. Participatory planning and visioning is a,

“process by which a community envisions the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it” (Greene, et al, 2002, page). Visioning helps communities begin to identify their purpose, core values, and vision for the future. Often, community visioning occurs through specific events or functions where people gather for this purpose.

4.3.4. Mobilizing assets for economic development, information-sharing

Although the building of relationships is an ongoing process, once relationships have begun to form, the next step involves beginning to mobilize the community's assets. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) identify two main purposes behind this step: 1) development of the local economy, and 2) strengthening the community's capacity to share and shape information. This step involves encouraging local associations and institutions to contribute to the local economy as well as identifying the locations where public (or at least semi-public) communication is likely to occur. This includes finding local leaders and gathering sites that could be validated, strengthened or expanded to increase the capacity of community exchanges (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). The importance of this step is underlined by Foster-Fishman, Nowell, and Yang (2006) finding that a lack of capacity to support citizen participation, in the form of few good leaders, associations, or low social capital, is a frequently encountered barrier to community mobilization.

McKnight (1996) believes that this capacity is strengthened when a community acts as a network of informal and formal associations. These relationships provide the foundation for mobilization. Step four looks to build upon the relationships, and identification and mobilization of assets. Specifically, it aims to assemble the community to develop a mutually held identity and commonly shared vision for the future. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) assert that the plan should be based on the assets and work to creatively solve community problems. In time, power

is built as social structure emerges, reinforced by creative processes that can be found through multisectoral collaborations with residents joining together as equal partners to generate positive solutions for their community. Tied in with this vision is the final step, which involves leveraging resources from outside the community.

4.3.5. Leveraging activities, investments, and resources from outside

Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) understand ABCD to be asset-based, internally focused, and relationship driven. However, being internally focused does not preclude accessing external resources to achieve the internal neighborhood agenda identified through the community visioning process. Put another way, “focusing on the assets of lower income communities does not imply that these communities do not need additional resources from the outside” (pg. 7). In fact, the assets within distressed neighborhoods, while absolutely necessary, are usually not sufficient to meet the significant challenges they face. It is critical, however, to understand that the process of linking external capacities, knowledge, and resources to achieve local goals must be done at the appropriate time. If local capacities have not be sufficiently nurtured, and the valuation of internal abilities sufficiently strengthened, then external supports may damage the neighborhood’s growth process by stunting the population’s movement toward self-reliance.

4.4. The ABCDs of SPN

Green and Haines suggest that the form of community development that I selected to model my work after is at odds with the assumptions and standards of modern American life. The “requirement that residents participate in the solutions to common problems contradicts the accepted view today that community no longer exists. Emphasis on place rather than people also puts community development squarely in opposition with the individualistic nature of our culture

and society” (Green & Haines, 2012, p. 19). Despite these obstacles, SPN was committed to an approach that is asset- and place-based, as well as resident- and relationship-driven. Below is an overview of the community development process, with all of the success and failures included, as it was applied in the Lincoln neighborhood.

The SPN model for community revitalization assumes that the most powerful force for creating an upward spiral in any neighborhood is its human and social capital, and the social process that enlivens it. Specifically, breaking the cycle of poverty in an under-invested locale requires a concerted effort to ensure that the neighborhood’s youth start Kindergarten school ready and graduate from High School fully prepared for either college or a career. This requires both a thriving school environment and also a thriving neighborhood environment. Generating a thriving community begins with the formation of an entrepreneurial social infrastructure. The social capital that is formed through denser and stronger neighbor-to-neighbor interactions and relationships becomes the primary vehicle for unlocking the human potential that resides in every community.

In order to move toward progressive participation, which describes the convergence of both high bridging and high bonding social capital (Flora & Flora, 2011), the community’s cultural capital must be strengthened. Specifically, an increased sense of individual efficacy and communal agency must be generated. This is made possible by the strategic use of the tools and processes of ABCD, which results in community action groups forming around what they care enough about to act on. From here, intentional investments in resident leadership capacity must be facilitated while also building healthy inter-group linkages to form a network. This process can be replicated in both the general neighborhood context, as well as a school specific environment.

In time, as the linkages between the individual parents and residents, the community action groups and civic associations, and the institutions of the community, are reinforced, more complex actions will be possible. The strengthened social, human, and cultural capital will convert into improvements in the tangible capitals of the neighborhood. Urban agriculture or park restoration projects will make use of the available environmental capital. Entrepreneurship, small business development, and other community economic development strategies will also help to generate the financial capital necessary for improving the built capital.

In Figure 6 below, I outline my movement through the ABCD process. I chose to flip step 3 and 4 around, reasoning that the internal agenda should first be set before moving on to economic development activities. In the section to follow, I discuss the key programmatic components I utilized to nudge the neighborhood on to the next step, the next level of complexity. In many respects, community development is less a science and more an art form. I relied on my instincts and discernment, as well as feedback from colleagues in the field and the wisdom of residents and supporters, as I sought to implement the ABCD framework in the Lincoln neighborhood.

Below, I outline my efforts (summarized in figure 7), and those of the Lincoln community, during my six years with SPN. I did not move through the ABCD steps in an entirely chronological order. There was always a substantial amount of overlap between the various steps that occurring at any point in time. For example, the Mobilizing Assets work never stopped, nor did the listening and learning, and so on. With that caveat taken into consideration, I did follow, in general terms, the recommended progression of the ABCD approach. For this reason, I map the implementation of the SPN community engagement initiative across the ABCD steps of (1) mapping assets, (2) mobilizing them, (3) developing an internal agenda, (4) local economics and information sharing, and (5) securing outside investments.

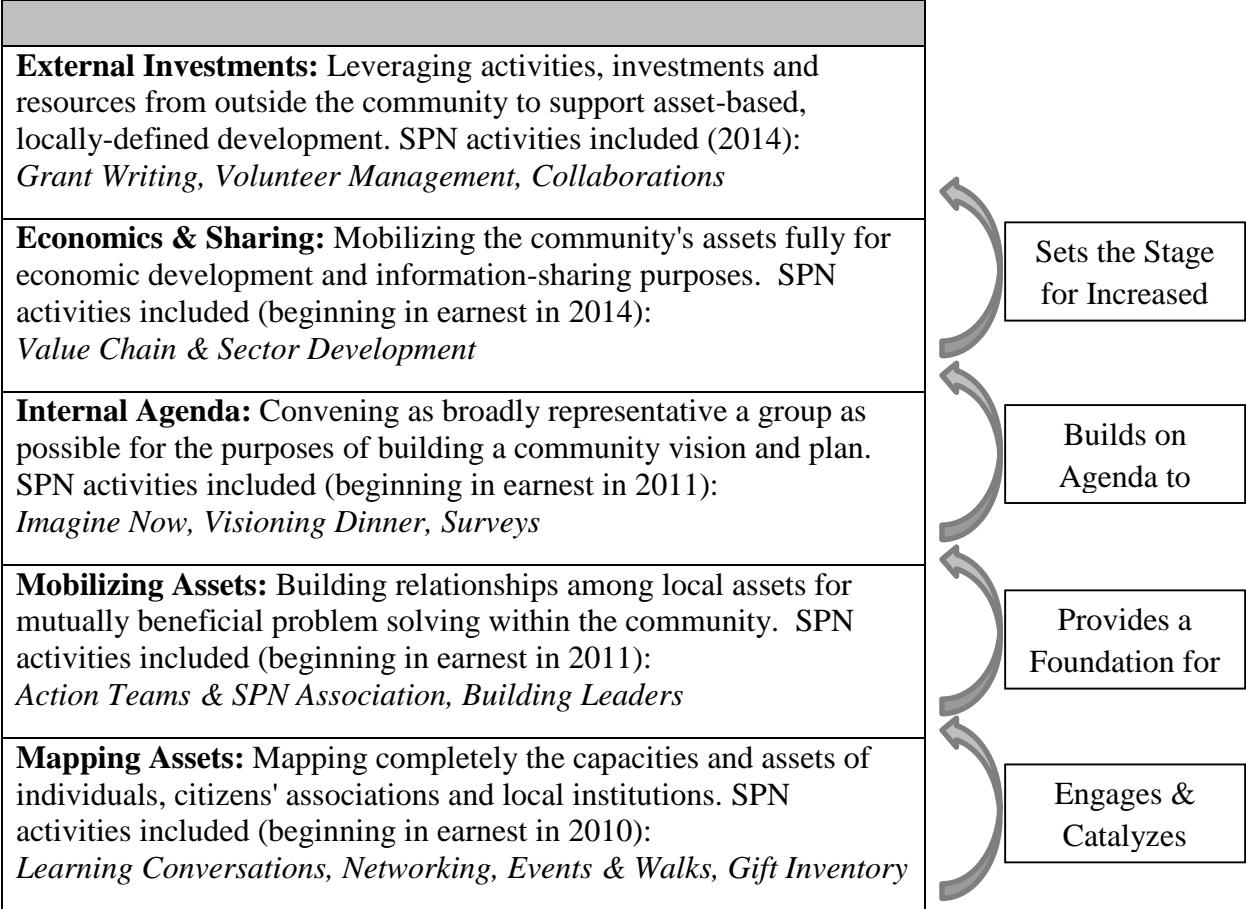


Figure 7. The ABCDs of SPN

4.4.1. Asset mapping begins

The first task I undertook when I joined the SPN initiative as its founding Neighborhood Organizer was to conduct a Listening Campaign. The objective of the Listening Campaign was threefold. First, it provided opportunities to build relationships with neighbors in the Lincoln neighborhood. Second, the interests, knowledge, skills, and abilities of neighbors were identified and recorded for later use in connecting people for mutual gain. Finally, the results of the Listening Campaign helped us to better understand the priorities of the Lincoln residents. Listening and learning was conducted using a variety of formats, which are discussed below. For participating residents, the act of listening, or being listened to, was invigorating.

I developed a list of questions, which were adapted from materials written on behalf of the ABCD Institute, that included such questions as, (1) What's good about this neighborhood? (2) If you could change one thing about this neighborhood, what would it be? (3) If others were willing to work on that issue, would you be willing to get together with them? (4) What skills, abilities, knowledge, interests, hobbies, etc. would you be interested in contributing or learning more about? I then set about creating opportunities to interact with residents to discover their gifts, dreams, and also their perceptions of the neighborhood—its current state and future story. I used a variety of approaches to creating spaces in which I could have learning conversations. As detailed below, these approaches included networking with existing relationships, conducting neighborhood walks to meet new people, and strategically participating in school and community functions. In addition, I conducted surveys in various forms and functions.

First, I began to tap into my own network of relationships. For example, I knew Debbie through my relationship with a neighborhood church. Debbie lives in the Lincoln neighborhood. I initiated a learning conversation with Debbie, who would later become a founding member of what would eventually become the Springfield Promise Neighborhood Association (SPNA). Debbie recommended that I have a learning conversation with Tony. Tony, through the learning conversation, would become an ally of SPN in the first full year of its operation, helping to organize the use of the local church for neighborhood meetings and providing, at least initially, leadership to the Neighborhood Safety Action Team.

I regularly walked the neighborhood, alternating my times in order to catch a variety of people. Through these walks, I had a number of encounters with residents who were sitting on their porches, walking the neighborhood, or working in their yard. One such person that he encountered was Steve. Steve was a long-time resident that held in his memory a picture of a more stable, dignified, and connected neighborhood. My initial conversation with Steve turned

into an opportunity to have an in-depth learning conversation in the comfort of Steve's home. Steve would later become an ally of SPN and helped to put on the first Promise Fest, which served to launch the initiative in the Lincoln neighborhood.

Apart from walking the streets, I also observed places that people naturally congregated. Through this, I figured out that the local grocery store served an important role in the neighborhood (not just of supplying food to those that did not have the means or time to go to the other grocery stores elsewhere in the city that boasted more and fresher options) as part of the connective tissue in the neighborhood. It was the place that you were bound to bump into someone that you know. So early on, I got to know Karla who worked there. She helped us secure space to set up a table to talk to folks about SPN.

I utilized school functions as an opportunity to interact with Lincoln parents and caretakers. One such occurrence was at the Lincoln open house. I initiated a conversation with JJ, soon learning of his interest in gardening and in providing students with hands-on learning experiences. JJ would become an ally of SPN, going on to lead a core group of residents to develop a school garden on the Lincoln property. Currently JJ is employed full-time in a demanding second shift job that limits his participation in the school garden. However, JJ provided the early impetus to get the garden going.

I also utilized community events as an opportunity to connect with residents. In my first week with SPN, I organized a cookout. In all, 15 youth and five adults (20 total residents) showed to the cookout. I had previously recruited Donald, an acquaintance, to be the chef for the event, a role that he has taken on during several subsequent community events. Although turnout was not great, the cookout connected me to Ida, one of the residents. Ida became an ally of SPN, supporting the formation of what became the SPNA and serving at neighborhood events.

Learning conversations, being highly relational, generated the greatest amount of direct interest in the work of SPN. However, other forms of listening have proven useful to the initiative. One of these alternative forms of listening is the survey. I developed two types of surveys which have been integrated into the work of cultivating parent and community partnerships. These two types of surveys are described below. To this day, the group of residents who also participated in the process will remark about how this experience (which incentivized their participation with a gift card per survey completed) pushed them to meet their neighbors, which turned out to be an enjoyable experience.

Inspired in part by the National Neighborhoods Indicator Project, this brief survey form allows residents to prioritize the issues affecting the neighborhood. Results of this survey, which was first piloted at a spaghetti dinner at the conclusion of the Listening Campaign, can be quickly tabulated to create a picture of what community issues have enough energy to generate meaningful action. Early on, I took the results of these surveys and organized resident meetings to discuss options around the topics that people most prioritized.

These surveys were conducted using gathering points, such as what became our first annual spaghetti dinner at Lincoln Elementary, or at the first annual Spring Fling Cookout, initially held in the Lincoln Park subdivision. We describe these gathering points in more detail later on. Over time, these experiences began to be used, less to survey issues and more to garner broader support for the emerging agenda that the early listening process resulted in.

During the summer 2014, we expended a great deal of energy establishing a baseline of neighborhood perceptions. I had in mind that this would serve as a baseline to return to every five years or so to see if there was broader traction in the neighborhood as a result of our efforts. What made the processes possible was a grant from the national NeighborWorks intermediary of housing and development organizations, of which Springfield's own Neighborhood Housing

Partnership (NHP) is a member. NHP also provided staff time to oversee the project and analyze the data. Wittenberg University's Center for Community Engagement supplied three summer interns to proctor the randomized door-to-door survey.

This effort resulted in some interesting findings. As it turns out, only 24% of residents were dissatisfied with the neighborhood. In fact, 69% of residents said that they definitely or might consider recommending the neighborhood to their peers. To justify their responses, people stated things like, “[the Lincoln neighborhood] is close to school and there play areas for children,” “family stays close, it’s where I was raised,” “everyone in my neighborhood gets along and helps each other out,” and “[there are] lots of neighborhood improvements.” Those that did not like the neighborhood referenced vacant houses, drugs, violence and guns, rental units not being kept up, speeding, and neighbors that are annoying or fighting. Safety was a particular concern with nearly half of the population afraid to walk the neighborhood at night. Still, 59% of the respondents held on to the view that things would improve over the next three years, compared with 41% that felt it would stay the same or decline.

4.4.2. Residents begin to mobilize for action

It is essential to note that I continued to take a listening posture throughout the six years of my time with SPN, even though the initial Listening Campaign concluded in January of 2011. However, substantially more of my time following the Listening Campaign was dedicated to convening, organizing, and mobilizing residents, and their neighborhood assets, for mutually beneficial activities. In total, 17 action groups – most of them project specific – facilitated 36 action projects in 2011, the first year of the mobilizing work. The action projects were made possible because of the efforts of 185 neighbors contributing over 3,000 volunteer hours.

By the start of 2015, when we were moving on from the asset mobilization phase of the ABCD process, the disparate activities and project groups of 2011 had distilled down to seven standing groups of approximately 60 total residents meeting at various points every month to discuss, envision, and create a preferred future for the neighborhood and its youth. These 60 residents were engaging other residents and community groups and students in their activities, which were serving thousands of neighbors each year.

The data collected during the asset mapping phase – which included (1) the skills, knowledge, abilities, and interests of individual residents, and (2) the community issues identified as top priorities by the residents of the neighborhood – resulted in three different types of action groups. Below, we will explore some examples from each of these types of activities, beginning with the issue-based action groups and then moving on to talk about the interest-based action groups and the school-based clubs. Within each of these categories, however, there were multiple variations.

4.4.2.1. Issue-based action groups

The results of the issue surveys completed were tabulated in graph form in 2011. The top issues identified were (1) neighborhood safety, (2) the condition of the neighborhood, (3) recreational opportunities for kids and youth, (4) supports for parents and teachers, and (5) out of school enrichment opportunities. This data confirmed what I was observing through my one-on-one learning conversations. Based on this feedback, I launched five discussions, one per each of the top priority area.

Ten meetings were organized over the spring months—two meetings per issue. This effort produced four action groups. The turnout to the initial meetings were between nine residents and 18. However, only four neighbors turned out for the two meetings connected to the

topic of Supports for Parents and Teachers. As a result, I focused first on building groups connected with the other four priorities, as there appeared to be enough energy to support the work in those areas already by convening additional planning meetings. Below I give a couple of examples of work that this process produced around the issues of safety and youth activities.

The Neighborhood Safety Action Team (NSAT) developed some potential action steps during their initial meetings. As the NSAT leadership began to narrow down its focus, it opted to set up meetings between residents and the Police Department. In 2011, the NSAT organized two such meetings, the first of which turned out 50 neighbors, as well as the Chief of Police and four police officers. Based on the interest observed in these meetings, the NSAT organized a second meeting to cover more detailed issues with the community officer assigned to the area. Finally, a 5-session Block Watch training for future Block Captains was developed, which 4 residents completed.

Over the years, following this initial burst of energy, the safety team went through ebbs and flows as various champions came and went. It is important to note, however, that a group persisted and today continues to meet monthly with the Springfield Police Department. As the neighborhood headed into 2015, and the next phase of the ABCD process began, the work started by the NSAT began to be formalized and connected to the broader fabric of the Springfield community.

The Youth Enrichment Action Team (YEAT) Meetings were held to establish a kids and youth enrichment group. Ideas were generated on how to accomplish youth programming. However, what generated the most interest and energy was the introduction of the idea of a Project Jericho summer arts camp. A committee of five residents came together as the YEAT to provide council and support (knocking on doors, mailing reminder cards, assisting instructors, etc.) for what turned out to be a very positive experience for 60 youth. This event was also

important in the life of the community. The week culminated with a performance by the youth that turned out an audience of a couple of hundred neighbors and interested members from the broader community.

Although the group did not continue to meet year-round to explore other opportunities, they did reconvene in the summer of 2012 to put on another Project Jericho art camp. This time, however, they were hired as consultants on the project due to the value they added to the effort the first summer. When other ideas surfaced through listening, the group added other activities to their resume. This list includes a few years of putting on a talent show at Lincoln Elementary School with a dozen or so acts featuring poetry readings, vocal performances, and dance routines, all bounded by food and camaraderie.

The early meetings of the Neighborhood Beautification Action Team (NBAT) centered on the topic of how to improve the condition of the neighborhood and resulted in plans for trash receptacles on strategic street corners and other ideas. However, the leaders of the group were inconsistent and, as a result, the membership did not stay focused and committed. What emerged was a core group of four residents who wanted to clean up litter in the neighborhood. The group organized weekly clean-up days over the spring (weather permitting) that resulted in 55 bags of trash being collected and disposed of, including syringes and needles. The core group received support from other neighbors and recruited a team of students from a local private school participating in a Service Day.

While the group did not continue as an organized team, the work of litter control that they began was picked up by what has now become the Springfield Promise Neighborhood Association, or SPNA. The SPNA annually does litter clean up around Earth Day in the spring and works with the Community Development office to get a dumpster placed once a year in the

neighborhood so that residents can throw away unwanted items that they could not otherwise get rid of. These services have reduced the amount of neighborhood dump sites.

A second category of action group emerged from the Listening Campaign. Unlike the issue-based groups noted above, these groups were forged out of the particular geographic attachment of residents. In some cases, the interest that tied the group together was a commitment to seeing change occur within their common block. Below, we describe examples of these categories of groups that coalesced around particular affinities.

4.4.2.2. Geography-based action groups

When I began working in the Lincoln Neighborhood, I recognized that the 110-block attendance zone was a collection of distinct blocks and neighborhoods. Three neighborhood associations were still on the books, according to Community Development Department records. I met separately with leaders of each of these groups. While these groups did not have an active constituency as the once did, their historical knowledge of the neighborhood was valuable and they likely should have been earlier on.

Regardless of the historical strength of these three neighborhood associations, there was not an organized social infrastructure to tap into to build the connectivity that would allow the sense of collective efficacy to emerge. So as I was able, I attempted to knit parts of the 110-block area into smaller geographic entities. This proved to be difficult. In part, this appears to have been due to the fact that people were wary of putting themselves out there as “leaders.” Doing so would put a mark on their back. The fear of becoming targets of reprisals from the nefarious elements of the neighborhood was very real and palpable. What follows are a couple of example of what emerged from these efforts to build groups centered on geographic affinities in spite of this backdrop.

The Wonderful Colors of Lincoln Park (a name selected through a contest with input from area children) emerged in the subsidized housing subdivision at the southern edge of the Lincoln neighborhood. This area once fit the profile of its street name – “The Projects.” A few years before the launch of SPN, however, a Hope VI grant through the Department of Housing and Urban Development had converted the large stifling, cement and brick apartment complex into a 128-unit housing complex with an attractive park at the center of the square. While the physical infrastructure had been redeveloped, the social infrastructure had not. Through my learning conversations, however, I had found several folks that would be willing to meet and figure out what to do in partnership with the Springfield Metropolitan Housing Authority center on the central square.

An eight-member group, headed up by Ms. Lyttle, formed and gave themselves the name Wonderful Colors of Lincoln Park following a naming competition with the area’s youth. Everyone in the group had a heart for the children living in their subdivision. Most were parents or grandparents themselves. Every month, the Lincoln Park team organized a themed event for the youth, usually pulling in 30-50 children. Activities ranged from a Halloween costume parade in October and Christmas feast with Santa in December to card-writing (“I love you, Mom for...”) and cookie decorating in February for Valentine’s Day.

The Grand Ave. South Neighborhood Association was a several-member team that formed to determine what to do in the several blocks north of the Clifton Ave. Church. Most of the members were men and Vietnam War veterans. They had known each other for years, but this was a chance to think about how to unite in common defense of their families. The president of the group was Mr. Johnson, who happened to be one of the very first residents I met during one of my first neighborhood walks.

Under Mr. Johnson's leadership, the group worked with the community liaison officer to get Block Watch signs and they put them in their windows. As well, they created a Block Watch training manual and went through. They reported drug dealers to the police, got the tires on their cars slashed, presumably as reprisal, and then would fearlessly start the process all over again. But eventually they became most focused on taking a plot of vacant land and converting it into a vegetable garden with a veteran memorial theme to it. Eventually, they talked the developer that had owned the lot that they were using to deed it to the group. They then renamed themselves the Veteran Garden Association.

4.4.2.3. Affinity-based action groups

Whether it was Danny's magic touch, as rural Kentucky transplant, with growing tomatoes, or Obilo's passion for hip hop and connections to musical artists with powerful stories, or Tanya's skills in making crafts, or Samantha's natural entrepreneurial bent, I discovered a vast and deep set of skills, and aspirations, and knowledge residing in the Lincoln neighborhood. What a joy it was to have the opportunity to discover so many of these gifts, and to help people consider ways that they might use them to collectively shape the trajectory of the neighborhood and allow a different future story to emerge. Most of the time, it takes being in a group of like-minded folks to really unleash and enhance these talents and to hone these interests. So I set about to help this to happen. The following are a couple such affinity groups that coalesced.

I discovered in my early learning conversations that Mr. Young from York St. had a particular interest in encouraging fathers and father-figures to be responsible and engaged fathers. In fact, Mr. Young was a trainer at the time for Urban Light Ministries in their Nurturing Fathers for Life program. Mr. Young had several neighbors whom he suspected could get behind a fatherhood-focused group. I met a pastor and another resident who had named the

same passion in conversations with me. Thus, we convened at Mr. Young's house to discuss what we could do together to make a difference for Lincoln's youth and fathers. Out of this meeting was born the POPS Club, a group of mostly retired men with a common passion, with Urban Light Ministries as advisor.

The POPS Club organized father-son breakfasts at Lincoln Elementary and organized a group of upper grade youth whom they could informally mentor during cross-walk duty before and after school. It became difficult for the group to find younger individuals to take their place and eventually, as personal and partner health concerns increased, the work of the group began to fade away. From hibernation, the one younger member of the group resurrected the club idea with support from Perrin Elementary fathers.

One time, Brian approached me looking for ideas for a project. We brainstormed ideas and eventually he settled on the idea of converting a vacant lot into a peace garden. Brian's mother served in various capacities with SPN projects, including the first talent show. Brian had been instrumental, both as a Public Dialogue Facilitator in the ImagineNow!! Campaign that we will describe below, and later as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer. Brian and his extended network of friends and family created an aspirational garden dedicated to a key member of the community, the late Auburn J. Tolliver, Sr. The garden was located on the main thoroughfare heading into Springfield from the highway. As such, this placemaking project generated a great deal of interest. It provided beauty through a lovely flower and landscaping arrangement. It provided a place for relaxation and public conversation through its pergola. And it reclaimed what had been a trashy eyesore into a piece of well-kept real estate.

People – and the city's newspaper – were abuzz with questions. Importantly, it served as an interesting microcosm of how development happens. A vision for a peace-themed pocket park was set by residents in the area. As such, maintenance and upkeep on the part of the

residents has been steady. Special projects have been supported by outside student volunteers. And institutions have supplied investments to achieve the vision, from the developer that offered the land for free, to the City of Springfield that paid for the installation of the water cistern, to the OSU Extension Office that supplied the raised bed boxes and seeds.

4.4.2.4. School-based action groups

In several instances, people had particular skills or interests that could best be realized when connected to a school in support of youth success. From Steve, a Lincoln father, that started a Cub Scout project afterschool and Dr. Cotto, pastor of a local church that kept the Sonshine Club going, to Sabrina, a VISTA volunteer, who organized a service club, there was an increase in the number of activities that youth and families could participate in. These offerings were made available apart from the organized after (and summer) school program that Promise staff was organizing and supporting. Here are a few examples of this category of groups.

When SPN began, there was a single parent in the school's parent club. Kendra was a truly gifted and wonderful parent and had the support of a wise school advisor. To build on Kendra's good work, we invited other parents, grandparents, and caretakers into the conversation. At its height, the Lincoln Bobcat Parent Club had eight members. With an increased membership, the team organizes additional activities for youth and families. These activities included monthly family movie nights, father-daughter and mother-son dances, a holiday store where students could purchase gifts for their parents, while also turning out support for school functions, such as the end-of-year horse riding award and holiday programming.

The Youth Recreation Action Troup (YRAT) came together and settled on the idea of putting on sports clinics for Lincoln students. During the spring semester of 2011, the YRAT successfully put on twice-weekly sports clinics for a total of 80 youth, with a Saturday free play

option. However, the clinics were largely being organized by one neighborhood couple with loose support from the rest of the team. In the absence of strong team cohesion, the experience of members was mixed. The group took a break over the summer and then did not resurface with the fall semester.

SPN personnel also played a role in supporting the efforts of the pre-existing Families and Schools Together (FAST) program of Wellspring, a local non-profit organization. Since SPN was launched, the FAST program has started hosting two rounds (one in the fall and one in the spring) of its 8-week family communication program at Lincoln. With SPN support, the percent of Lincoln families involved has slowly grown each session, with 16 Lincoln families represented in the most recent graduation ceremony that I attended in 2016. The number 16 represented a very significant increase in participation for the program.

I have been talking about the various categories of action groups (issue-, geographic-affinity-, and school-based) that emerged from the asset mobilization phase of the ABCD process. The fact that these groups formed is evidence of increases in the relationships and trust that comprise a neighborhood's social capital, as well as the sense of collective efficacy that binds them together. Before I move on to talk about the next phase of the ABCD process, I want to address a couple of additional key projects that were a part of reinforcing the neighborhood's social infrastructure. These projects include (1) the launch of a backbone group, the SPNA, and (2) the use of the Day of Promise to create the scaffolding for greater efficacy.

I discovered, as part of the Listening Campaign, several neighbors willing to help organize a community celebration event to launch the SPN initiative in the neighborhood. L'Tanya, for example, likes to do games with kids, so she was in charge of activities. Carlton loved to cook and was the griller at the event, and so on. This event has since become an annual occasion, called PromiseFest, that is held at Lincoln Elementary. Importantly, the first

PromiseFest was an early success for the residents, a success that drove an interest in doing more for the neighbors within the SPN boundaries. This PromiseFest planning committee became the core of what became the Springfield Promise Neighborhood Association, or SPNA, chartered to serve the entire attendance zone of Lincoln.

The SPNA is now an official neighborhood association recognized by the City of Springfield. Members of the association meet weekly and have gone through three elections for a slate of officers. The association has become known for its signature community events, such as the annual PromiseFest (fall), Spaghetti Dinner (late winter), Spring Fling Cookout (spring), and more. Already, the association was turning out roughly 1,500 residents and youth to their events in 2010, a significant accomplishment in the Lincoln neighborhood where there historically has been a lack of cohesion.

Membership fluctuates fairly often. Charles, for example, was heavily involved for until the family moved to another part of town. Bart was heavily involved in the early stages of the effort until he found employment that kept him busy during the meeting times. Jeff's health concerns, combined with a loss of interest after losing the election to be Chairperson, caused him to leave. Debbie's family, work, and other volunteer commitments caused her to have to limit her participation in the SPNA. Despite these fluctuations, what began as a small group of neighbors at the initial meeting grew to a typical weekly meeting attendance of nearly 20 SPNA members and SPN personnel.

Importantly, the SPNA has carried forward, more than any other action group, the essential understanding of the importance of celebration in weaving together the fabric of community. It does this in more demonstrative ways through its large events. But it does this in less noticeable (but equally significant) ways as well. For example, in 2011, the SPNA organized a Christmas Store. For the Christmas Store, the SPNA requested donations of new

toys, games, and other gifts from a large network of friends and church groups. SPNA members then organized the gifts into rooms like at a store, but charged for the gifts at significantly reduced rates – 50% or more. Even during economically tough times, parents and caretakers are able to purchase multiple Christmas gifts for 60-100 neighborhood children and youth from the neighborhood. Importantly, through its design, the Christmas Store maintains human dignity and allows parents to feel as if they were providing for the unique needs of their individual children. Monies earned are then used to put on a Christmas Banquet for the neighborhood, which serves about 300 residents annually.

I leaned heavily into the SPNA, imagining that it stood the best chance of becoming an association of associations, or a hub comprised of multiple action groups. To borrow from the collective impact literature, I hoped that the SPNA would become the backbone organization that could help to coordinate and strengthen the multiple projects of the various action groups. It turned out to be a more difficult task than I imagined. Each individual action group that had formed during this phase of the ABCD process had a high sense of identity, which was useful for mobilizing people to act. However, people felt threatened when asked to work as part of a shared narrative, I think because of concerns over losing this newly found sense of power and ownership in the future.

There were some events that we used to pull the disparate elements of the growing family of SPN inspired projects, activities, and groups. One of these was the Day of Promise. In coordination with Wittenberg University, we would recruit students to provide volunteer labor. We also secured funding to provide each participating group a pool of \$500 that they could use for supplies for their project. Action groups had to complete an official Day of Promise form in order to receive the support of labor and funds with a detailed budget, action plan, and list of how many neighbors they had engaged. The requirement was that only 50% of participating

volunteers could be from outside the neighborhood. Then, on one single day, everyone attacked their unique projects all at once. I believe that these small concrete projects helped to build the sense of efficacy upon which more complex projects were later developed.

Incidentally, I attempted early on to develop a similar scheme, whereby organized groups could access funds of \$1,000 by participating in a Promise Leadership Institute workshop. The goal of this initiative was to generate greater participation and interest in working together to achieve change. However, I was not able to generate a high level of interest in the program at the time. I believe that this was partly because I was attempting to do it early on in my tenure with SPN, and had not yet formed the deep relationships and connections that made later events, like the Day of Promise, a success. Over time, my relationship-building efforts created the bonds of trust that are essential to making a program like this happen in a neighborhood like Lincoln where there is a justifiable mistrust of the professional helper class.

4.4.3. An internal agenda begins to emerge

At this stage in the ABCD process, the goal is to convene as broadly representative a group as possible for the purposes of building a shared vision and plan. I was not confident at this point that we were deep enough in our connection to, and understanding of, the residents and their aspirations to partake of a traditional planning process. I was worried that following the usual path at this point would lead to the voice of the middle-class residents – who, though being the minority, are comfortable with planning and meetings – would dominate the conversation.

So, I began to cast around for alternative models that might be adapted when it came time to start naming the vision. I found the Dialogue-to-Change model, exemplified by Everyday Democracy to be intriguing. We used this model twice over two summers, in 2012 and again in 2013. The focus in the first exercise was to identify the general thrust and vision. The focus of

the second summer was to do some planning around that vision. What I liked about the Dialogue-to-Change model was that the discussions were distributed in small comfortable meetings across the neighborhood, rather than requiring people to come to a central, possibly uninviting location. Below is a description of how these processes played out, through my efforts conducting what I called the ImagineNow!! Campaign.

My goals in developing the ImagineNow!! Campaign were to (1) firmly establish the emerging neighborhood vision to anchor future actions, (2) broaden the base of support for the vision and activity of the SPN effort, (3) expand action and community through the organic formation of new relationships leading to new actions, and (4) build the capacity of resident leaders to play the listening and convening role that I had been playing previously. Of course, the overarching goal was still to use every means necessary to push the neighborhood toward a time where it was capable of perpetuating its own renewal and progress.

First, I developed a Visioning Leadership Team (VLT). The VLT was formed for the purpose of guiding the process to fulfill the objectives of the ImagineNow!! Campaign. For the VLT, I recruited representatives from institutions bordering (or otherwise serving) the Lincoln attendance zone, including Clark State Community College, the Rocking Horse Health Clinic, Hayward Middle School, the Community Development Department, the Clifton Ave. Church, the Lincoln Park Community Center, as well as resident volunteers from the various action groups. The VLT met once a month for six months, following the process from the planning stage through the Action Forum. It provided support by helping to set goals in three areas, including (1) Compiling neighborhood data, (2) Implementing the visioning process, and (3) Communicating the vision.

Next, I recruited four residents to form a pilot group and prepare the study circle materials. I first adapted some of the activities found in the Turning the Tide on Poverty

curriculum on the Everyday Democracy website. Based on the pilot group's feedback on the proposed curriculum, I created five one-and-a-half hour long dialogue sessions. The new curriculum was compiled in a binder with additional materials, tools, and tips for the residents that would be facilitating each of the five sessions. The curriculum was designed to generate dialogue among residents about (1) the direction the neighborhood needed to take to become a good place to live, work, and raise a family, (2) where things currently stood in the neighborhood, and (3) how residents might begin to move the neighborhood from point A to B.

Then, to get the word out about the community visioning process, I developed a brochure for the ImagineNow!! Campaign and a job description for Public Dialogue Facilitators (PDFs) was developed and distributed through the action groups, as well as being placed in local churches and schools. Through these efforts, the VLT recruited 20 residents as PDFs. Successful PDFs received a \$250 stipend (half up front and half at the Action Forum), as well a certificate of recognition from the City of Springfield. They were expected to attend a full-day PDF training on the newly created curriculum, to recruit their friends and neighbors and form a Dialogue Group, and to hold the equivalent of five one-and-a-half hour dialogue sessions.

Now, the table was set for SPN staff, with the support of SPNA members and the VLT, to organize a Celebration Dinner. The Celebration Dinner combined the goals of (1) celebrating neighbors and institutional partners that had contributed greatly to the SPN cause, (2) generating table dialogue about the neighborhood, which was later compiled and presented to interested parties, and (3) announcing the official launch of the dialogue-to-change process, a process that would remain open through the spring months. In total, 100 neighbors, 75 youth, and another 30 volunteers attended or participated in the event.

On the heels of the kickoff event, the PDFs that emerged to receive the training were supported to implement the program by recruiting their neighbors and facilitating the curriculum.

Importantly, the PDFs were fairly representative of the neighborhood. Of the 20 PDFs trained, two did not fulfill the expectations established in the PDF job description. A couple of other PDFs choose to co-facilitate a Dialogue Group to provide mutual support, as this was an entirely new experience for them. In total, fifteen Dialogue Groups formed and one hundred and twenty residents were recruited into the Dialogue Group process, with other South Limestone Ave. business managers and neighborhood residents speaking into the emerging community vision on an individual basis. A side benefit to the process that I had not anticipated was the pride that the PDFs had in their accomplishment. One PDF made business cards with their name listed above the words “Public Dialogue Facilitator.”

In May, the visioning process was concluded with an Action Forum. The different Dialogue Groups were asked to send delegates to present the findings of their group to their peers. In total, twenty-five residents attended the forum, which lasted three hours. The agenda began with a look at another community that was generating change internally in order to build a generative metaphor for what is possible. The attendees then did a gallery walk, observing all of the aspirations, suggestions, and plans of the different Dialogue Groups, as they were recorded on flipchart paper. This led to a facilitated discussion about observations and the emergence of patterns. It was decided that there were ten priority issue categories that residents felt needed to be addressed to develop the Lincoln neighborhood into a good place to live, work, and raise a family.

The ten areas included a *fun, safe, connected, stable, vibrant, attractive, youth-oriented, recognized, active, and supportive* neighborhood. The Action Forum concluded with each delegate placing a dot on three categories they felt should be worked on first. Certain issues emerged as having a great deal of energy behind them, which would prove to be helpful in identifying which groups to develop first. Before leaving, the delegates were then asked to place

their name, using a post-it note, on the issue they were willing to commit time and energy toward. I followed up with those that left their information to ask for their support of existing or new action groups that were forming.

Several of the points of the vision were already being worked on by existing action groups. However, the process added a few extra voices to those efforts. Additionally, two new action groups were formed, including one around neighborhood economics. Interestingly, managers from the S. Limestone business corridor were engaged and agreed to join and, after several meetings, we launched a small business association. It became difficult to maintain, however, as the majority of the businesses on the corridor are chain branches and the most engaged managers tended to get moved to other locations. Still, it was interesting to observe new ideas and new activity result from the effort.

Upon reflection, I and the PDFs, generally found the community visioning process as a whole to be fruitful despite the high level of energy and additional time commitments that it required of us. The process accomplished the goals of the ImagineNow!! Campaign, except for the following. Several of the Dialogue Groups found the exercise of physically locating their aspirations for the community on a neighborhood map to be difficult. The conceptual and abstract nature of the exercise was challenging in the Lincoln environment where people expend a great deal of effort dealing with concrete, daily stressors and issues (see Payne, DeVol, & Smith, 2001). The framing of this, and other similarly abstract exercises would need to be enhanced in future editions of the curriculum.

Other observations were that (1) the pairing of PDFs should be common practice, (2) opening up the Action Forum to as broad an audience as possible, rather than utilizing a delegate model, would likely generate more energy and ownership, (3) a one-day PDF training is probably too short to deliver consistency of performance across all of the Dialogue Groups, (4)

peer support mechanisms for PDFs over and above my support would strengthen the learning and growth of facilitators, and (5) any future versions of the VLT would need to include the targeted recruitment of highly interested individuals rather than emphasize the need for representation from all of the institutions and action groups.

The strength of the Dialogue-to-Change process is in its ability to enliven people's imaginations and expand their capacities to work together toward a better future story. Fully capitalizing on the strengths of the process require a staged approach in the case of the Lincoln neighborhood. The first round of dialogue was explicitly limited to the fleshing out of a general vision for the neighborhood, as ultimately expressed in a list of priorities and values. Some elementary planning, resulting in small, concrete action can, and likely, will take place during the first round of such an approach.

However, we decided that the development of a neighborhood plan would require a second round of dialogue. As a result, the following summer, we pulled people together to go through the same steps as those noted above. The difference this time was that we recruited and trained 10 PDFs to facilitate planning conversations around each of the 10 statements listed in the neighborhood vision established the previous summer. Over 100 people turned out to a Lee's Chicken dinner to launch the process, with each PDF empowered to cast a vision for their group as part of an invitation to participate.

The 10 Dialogue Groups met over four sessions and created an action plan using an Everyday Democracy planning template. The process produced fairly microcosmic solutions, however, resulting in projects like clean-up days at trashy corners in the neighborhood. These were substantial efforts, for sure; however, they did not fundamentally change the underlying structure of the neighborhood, nor its relationship to the broader Springfield community. And yet, these efforts possibly were a good step to get to a larger picture. The different PDFs

announced their Dialogue Group's findings and plans at a public meeting held at Lincoln Elementary School. The truth is that achieving these milestones took a monumental amount of energy and effort on my part, and I did not see a path toward greater support from the organizational framework that I was a part of to keep my buoyed.

My dwindling reserves of energy probably led to one of my greatest failures – that I did not push the neighborhood in 2014 and beyond for another round of the ImagineNow!! until it became part of the rhythm of the neighborhood. Each year we could have gone deeper, producing increasingly sophisticated plans that might have been useful in securing the next phases of the ABCD process. Once a more comprehensive plan was in place, the dialogue process could have then become a mechanism for reflection on the gains made (or lack thereof) and a recommitment to the vision. Fundamentally, an annual season of listening, reflecting, relationship-building, and learning would have helped to build the social infrastructure and human and cultural capital of the neighborhood that I was seeking to achieve.

As it was, I chose in 2014/2015 to take a more limited approach and worked with the SPNA directly to do some development planning using the input that we collected through the ImagineNow!! Campaigns of 2013/2014. We drove around the neighborhood and imagined a neighborhood center, picked some land use strategies for vacant lots, and prioritized buildings that needed to come down. Conversations were had with the county land bank, several tens of thousands of funding raised in partnership with the Clark County Prosecutor's Office and in-kind construction commitments were given by the Fuller Center for Housing. However, the SPN is not a Community Development Corporation or other development entity in the traditional sense (and therefore risk averse) and the SPNA was not a tax-exempt entity (and therefore limited in its fundraising ability). As a result, the land use plan was not enacted before my time, though a good foundation was established.

In January, 2011, the first Community Visioning Dinner was organized at Lincoln, a tradition that carried forward each year following. The dinners consist of a spaghetti meal, sometimes cooked by the residents or donated by an area business, followed by facilitated dialogue about the neighborhood and its future story. Table Facilitators are recruited from the various health and human service agencies, philanthropic organizations, educational institutions, etc. in the community. Typically, 100 to 150 adults attend the event, all neighborhood residents except for the Table Facilitators and several servers and guests from the broader community. Another 50-100 children and youth were supervised by Wittenberg University students in various Lincoln classrooms. This event has become a way to gather people, assess and display progress, and dive deeper on key issues selected by the SPNA.

Even though the ImagineNow!! Campaigns did not continue after 2013, the annual Community Visioning Dinners did. These dinners were useful for many reasons, one of which was to garner conformation and support for the direction the SPNA was heading. Most recently, the dinner was used to establish a vision for a “community chest.” For this model, residents are encouraged to donate to a “community chest” account and then the SPNA identifies students in need that could benefit from camps and other organized activities over the summer. During the dinner the previous year, the concept of a time bank to facilitate exchanges of mutual aid was introduced and 24 residents joined in the months to follow.

Importantly, during the 2015 dinner, the SPNA presented what it saw as the priorities for the following year. The attendees of the dinner affirmed that extra emphasis on urban agriculture and neighborhood safety were critical. An ambitious goal was set to grow 3,000 pounds of fresh vegetables and to reduce the amount of violent crime. During the dinner the following year, we were pleasantly surprised to announce that almost exactly 3,000 pounds of produce had been grown in the neighborhood and that, according to a study by the Clark County Prosecutor’s

Office, violent crime was, in fact, down. These goals were achieved because of our movement to through the next couple of phases of the ABCD process.

4.4.4. Sectors emerge and activities are leveraged to secure investment

During phase four, assets are mobilized for economic development and information sharing, as Kretsman and McKnight (1996) describe it. There is a deepening of the work, and a stabilizing of the infrastructure. I will use the effort at urban agriculture to describe how we began to use this phase of the ABCD process to seriously explore how the neighborhoods human and natural assets could be mobilized for economic gain. Then, we will turn our attention to talk about the safety work that occurred during this same 2015/2016 period and how we increased information sharing that produced real, on-the-ground change. Importantly, it would be impossible to describe Phase Four and Phase Five in separate sections. Doing urban agriculture and improving community safety requires investments from external resources.

4.4.4.1. Springfield Promise Grows

In 2015, based on internal SPNA discussions, and as confirmed at that year's Community Visioning Dinner, the multiple gardening efforts that had been slowly and organically cropping up over the previous years were pulled into an overarching Springfield Promise Grows committee, a standing action group of the SPNA. Seeing how there was concrete, resident-directed energy swirling around the urban agriculture theme, a team of us pursued, and were eventually granted a USDA Farm to School Planning Grant. These funds allowed the Springfield City School District to hire two part-time project staff to provide the supports that our residents needed to achieve their aims.

The effort from 2015 through 2016 resulted in the development of a value chain map. On the one end of that value chain, we uncovered potential demand partners. Through the auspices of a local, family-owned food distributor used by the Springfield City School District, resident gardeners could eventually supply a portion of what the city school lunch program required. Through a survey process, we also learned that restaurants, starting with Season's Bistro (local and family owned) might be interested in specific products, such as greens. An initial conversation with the local hospital also suggested that it might be willing to look into purchasing local ingredients, though this was very preliminary. As well, we piloted a small farm stand and successfully sold produce to residents, demonstrating there was a local market.

But there were several challenges that would need to be overcome in order to begin supplying produce to the specifications of these potential demand partners. These challenges included (1) learning how to grow food in adequate quantities and according to safety standards, (2) purchasing a vehicle to help aggregate the produce and then distribute it, (3) identifying possible labor sources for the production gardens, and (4) figuring out how we might process food, especially given that we would be growing produce over the summer and the school district would need product during the school year.

So, we set about increasing production by loosely knitting together the existing six school, community, and production gardens, while adding the new McCain St. garden and greatly expanding the backyard garden program that provided residents with a raised bed kit, soil and seeds. In addition, we explored relationships with potential support partners, including the local sheltered workshop facility that agreed to let us use their greenhouse to start plants early before moving them to the production garden sites. Also, the OSU Extension office provided technical support and helped with water access and also seed and other supplies.

We also experimented with different avenues for solving the labor issue. STRIVE, a local provider of developmental disabilities services helped water and maintain plants in their early stages. In addition, a crew of youth from the summer youth employment program were recruited with the support of OIC, the local community action agency. Even with these supports, the efforts of the residents and Farm to School staff were severely overtaxed. In the end, it was the good will of neighbors and volunteers and staff that made the gains we made possible. Other partnerships that we began to build early on might blossom into important resources down the road, including Clark State Community College, the local Clark Tech School, and the regional Global Impact STEM Academy. All of these programs have an agriculture component as part of their curricular infrastructure.

To help offset the cost of running a robust program that might produce more significant results, as well as cover the cost of a vehicle to aggregate and distribute product, as well as make other capital purchases, we attempted to apply for a Farm to School Implementation Grant. This was, in fact, secured, but only after I had left the SPN initiative. The Springfield City School District was an essential partner in garnering the USDA's support. Today, the school district even allows the produce grown to be sold at a SNAP-eligible farm stand at its schools.

Other partners, like the Clark County Combined Health District and the local Food Policy Council had been making moves that might help to solve other challenges listed above. As well, early discussions with Clark State's culinary program began the process of trying to solve the need for a certified kitchen to do food processing. While these many challenges remain, the planning grant period uncovered ample opportunities that, if harnessed appropriately, might be able to convert the emergent gardening interests of the Lincoln neighborhood into a value chain that produces economic benefit for residents.

4.4.4.2. Springfield Promise Village

The origins of the neighborhood safety efforts have already been described. From all of the listening that I did, and all of the feedback received through dialogue groups and surveys, safety was an acutely felt issue to the neighborhood. For a few years, we had been working to organize ourselves as a network of residents that care and communicate. In the last couple of years of my time with the SPN initiative, these efforts accelerated as we began to reach beyond the borders of the neighborhood to link arms with other organizations and initiatives.

For example, after a shooting, the Springfield Promise Village organized a meeting with Chief of Police and again turned out 50 residents to share and learn together. But attempts were being made to be proactive and not just reactive at this point. Residents organized a city-wide March for Peace in coordination with the Police Department's national Night Out Against Crime events. A declaration committing the signers to be advocates for peace was signed in a neighborhood ceremony that included the mayor, victims of violent crime, and others. The Springfield Promise Village committee joined a city-wide initiative and residents marched in the homecoming parade with their adopted slogan "City of Peace" painted on Fred's van. And once a month, residents would gather to equip themselves to be responsible bystanders under the guidance of trained mediators.

This energy and emerging internal organization, while still emergent and fragile in many ways, was more than enough to catch the interest of outside sources. One example of this was the Clark County Prosecutor's Office that secured a grant to hire a Neighborhood Coordinator. The Coordinator's role was to increase the connectivity between the prosecutor's office and neighborhoods impacted by violence. Among other tasks, Paul, the Coordinator, would call up an SPNA member to walk the streets with him following a gun shot and try and identify

important pieces of information from resident conversations. The Lincoln neighborhood was the primary beneficiary of the Coordinator's efforts.

4.4.4.3. Springfield Promise Neighborhood Association

Even as these two areas – food and safety – were prioritized, existing activities did not go away. One example of this fact was that we continued to facilitate the next round of community events. In 2016, my last year with the SPN, we turned out over 200 volunteers and over 1,000 attendees at this annual return-to-school festival. My estimation was that we were now in a place where we might start to be able to attract vendors and performances with a draw that might increase the growing attendance rate and generate revenue. From this revenue, it might have been possible to hire a part-time resident planner.

Incidentally, the Catholic Campaign for Human Development was already funding a part-time organizer for the SPNA, a grant that we had pursued in the hopes of being able to shift my time away from daily support tasks to continue to build out the emerging work. However, the impact of an event like PromiseFest would extend beyond any small economic gains in the near term. The long play with PromiseFest in particular was to build toward event with such size and scope that it would become part of the larger shift and improved perception of neighborhood on the part of the broader Springfield community.

While not likely to make a significant shift in and of itself, all of the energy combined might begin to create an increased interest in Lincoln as a place to live and raise a family. Such a shift, over time, would help to bump up, however slightly, the number of investors and homeowners. If strategically combined with other structural strategies, including the continued work of the Clark County Land Bank and others, these efforts might begin the long, slow process

of stabilizing the housing market and reducing churn rates. Then, real and deep impacts will begin to be experienced.

While the gardening, safety, and youth projects do not tell the entire story, but consider the following. What started as a small cookout in the Lincoln Park subdivision with two volunteers and 20 participants (five adults and 15 children), turned into an annual event that six years later attracts 200 volunteers and over 1,000 participants. What started as a series of vacant lots and rundown backyards was converted six years later into seven school, community, and production gardens and over 20 backyard gardens, collectively producing over 3,000 pounds of fresh produce. And, what started as a neighborhood concerned about walking outside at night, six years later had become a neighborhood known for its passion to build Springfield as a “City of Peace.” Imagine what another, and another, and another six years might produce!

After six months of listening and asset mapping, three-and-a-half years of mobilizing residents and developing a collectively set internal agenda, and two years of institutionalizing the efforts of residents for economic development, information sharing, and for securing external investments, the goal of building an entrepreneurial social infrastructure capable of perpetuating neighborhood progress appeared to be underway. Though still fragile, the essential elements of that infrastructure include (1) an internally identified neighborhood vision, (2) a layered network of action groups implementing a variety of action projects to attain the neighborhood vision, (3) increased connectedness between neighbors, (4) increased connectedness with institutional partners providing support in the form of both funding and volunteers, (5) a backbone organization that has the potential for providing the essential coordinating function of the listening-mobilizing-convening-resourcing process, and (6) a growing number of resident volunteers committed to the vision of a Promise Neighborhood.

As Jay VanGroningen, retired Executive Director of the Communities First Association, a professional association of community coaches, would often say to us at our biannual convenings, “As go the neighborhoods, so goes the city” (personal communication, 2013). The efforts of the SPN serve to benefit, not just the larger Lincoln Elementary community, but also the City of Springfield as a whole. The Promise arc, as recounted above, demonstrates that intentional investments in rebuilding the social fabric of neighborhoods can have a positive effect on people’s attachment to the city.

This review of the SPN initiative from a historical perspective appears to indicate that (1) ABCD can be a useful process for generating an entrepreneurial social infrastructure, (2) social infrastructure produces results over and above what one might expect any one project to accomplish, and (3) the process is replicable, even though specific steps would need to be grounded in the particular cultural context of any new locale. When such social infrastructure is developed, the community’s stock and flow of capital is better aligned and enhanced, leading, over time, to an upward spiral. Perhaps most importantly of all, when these stocks and flows of capital are strategically cultivated with the local school and its attendance zone in mind, it is possible to improve the outcomes of the youth, the future leaders of the community.

This review of SPN’s *thriving neighborhood* programming has also revealed, however, that such infrastructure, especially in a historically marginalized and deeply under-resourced neighborhood, requires a substantial and sustained investment over a lengthy period of time. As such, the responsibility of ensuring that development occurs within Springfield’s neighborhoods must be located within a paid position that is valued and supported by the community. To maximize the utility of the organizer role, more research is needed to understand what elements of the SPN model made the greatest impact per investment made.

Advances have been made in the Social Rate of Investment (or SROI) field of research. Now might be the right season to recruit a professional to conduct an impact analysis of the Promise initiative with a focus on quantitative data, such as what is gathered through standardized tests by the Springfield City School District, to complement the qualitative data that I collected during the course of my thesis research. It is now time to turn our attention to the collection of that qualitative data, beginning with a discussion about the research methodology that I chose to adopt.

CHAPTER 5. METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This case analysis has been undertaken to reflect on the progress made and the lessons learned from the initial six years of the project and consider how these findings from the pilot phase conducted in the Lincoln neighborhood could be integrated into a scalable model that could influence other neighborhoods within Springfield. SPN sought to influence the entrepreneurial social infrastructure of the neighborhood by, in part, empowering and equipping parents and residents to shape how local assets are used for the benefit of the neighborhood's families and youth. Therefore, understanding the impact of SPN will also inform the field of community development generally, as it relates to impacting distressed urban environments. To provide a useful analysis of the initiative, the following elements will be developed.

This paper began with an overview and analysis of the field of community development and its implications for understanding the impact of SPN, including a discussion of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD describes a set of principles, processes, and practices designed to build more resilient and thriving neighborhoods and communities. The unique ABCD approach to revitalization greatly informed the shaped and design of SPN's path into the Lincoln neighborhood. For this reason, understanding the field of community development generally, and ABCD specifically, lays a solid foundation for understanding the impact of the SPN initiative.

However, the ABCD toolkit does not include any particularly powerful framework of impact analysis. For this, we turn to the Community Capitals Framework (CCF). If Downs' (date) research is accurate, community characteristics shape a neighborhood's future trajectory. And, if Tseng and Friedman's (date) analysis is correct, then community characteristics are shaped by social process theory, which assumes that impact is achieved through the effective alignment of available community resources through an entrepreneurial social infrastructure.

The CCF provides a framework for understanding the critical community resource categories that support sustained change over time.

This chapter begins by describing the Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) process I used to evaluate the impact of the SPN initiative against CCF framework. I opted to use the REM methodology to understand whether, and how, the SPN affected the availability, and alignment, of the Lincoln neighborhood's stock of capital. My assumption is that if there is a positive change in the neighborhood resource base, then I can demonstrate observable impacts as a result of the SPN initiative. These findings may be used to inform the recommendations for scaling the SPN initiative across other neighborhoods in the City of Springfield, as was the original intent of the pilot project.

I conclude this chapter by providing an analysis of the actual, versus intended, impact of SPN. This analysis was co-created through focus groups of project participants and community and school leaders. Evaluating community changes resulting from SPN efforts proved to be challenging, but insightful. Findings revealed through the process proved to be very helpful in developing a locally appropriate strategy for scaling the lessons learned from the pilot phase of SPN across new neighborhoods.

5.1. Ripple Effect Mapping

I settled on REM as a methodology upon reading *A field guide to Ripple Effect Mapping* (Chazdon, Every, Hanson, Higgins, & Sero, 2017). REM is a “participatory group method for evaluating the impact of complex programs or collaboratives. The method engages program and community stakeholders to retrospectively and visually map the ‘performance story’ of the complex program or collaborative” (UME, 2014, page). REM employs elements of Appreciative Inquiry, mind mapping, group interviewing, and qualitative data analysis. I implemented my

REM evaluation using the steps outlined in “Ripple effect mapping: A ‘radiant’ way to capture program impacts” (Kollock, n.d.).

5.1.1. Identifying the intervention

Because the SPN represents a complex relationship between the local elementary school, the neighborhood that comprises the school’s attendance zone, and the larger Springfield community, I decided to hold three REM focus groups. The first REM group was held with a subset of the teachers, staff, and afterschool leaders connected to Lincoln Elementary. Next, I facilitated the same REM process with neighborhood residents and parents of school students. Finally, I held a third REM session with a group of community leaders representing health, safety, city services, higher education, pre-school, philanthropic institutions and others from the professional helping class.

5.1.2. Scheduling the event

The process of setting up these REM sessions was itself insightful. I used existing groups and networks to organize turnout for the three REM sessions outlined above. Two of the organizing groups did not exist seven years ago. This fact, in and of itself, tells an important story about the role that social process theory plays in being able to achieve more complex community tasks. If the difficult work of knitting relationships together had not occurred, it would have been more difficult to convene the groups. To encourage participation in the REM sessions, I worked with the leadership of the groups outlined above, as well as that of Lincoln Elementary School’s administrative team and the City of Springfield’s Community Development Department, to organize the sessions and extend invitations.

5.1.3. Appreciative Inquiry interviews

Each of the REM sessions began with an overview of REM as a mapping evaluation method for illustrating the ripple effects of SPN. I outlined the objective of the session as an opportunity to explore the overall changes that have taken place since the launch of the initiative. The value of understanding these changes – and their underlying causes – rests in the opportunity to validate the program, thereby creating stronger public support. As well, this data can be used to inform next steps and consider how an effective scaling of SPN might occur. The overview was immediately followed by Appreciative Inquiry conversations. These conversations took place between pairs of participants answering the following questions:

- Tell me a story about a highpoint in the Promise story
- What made that highpoint possible?

5.1.4. Mapping and reflecting

On a wall, I posted three large pieces of flipchart paper with “Promise” drawn in the center of the middle sheet. After 15 minutes of appreciative interviews, I asked each pair to report on their discussion. Findings from these report-outs were listed on flipchart paper as branches extending out from the center. These branches served as the starting point of the mapping process. With the main stems established – radiating out like spokes from the central “Promise” hub – I continued to push deeper into the narrative by continually asking “and then what happened?”

Figures 9, 10, and 11 below display the parent and resident mind map of the “Promise story,” co-created through this process, as well as the mind maps created with the professional service provider focus group and the Lincoln Elementary educator group. These are electronic representations of the flipchart mind maps from the three focus groups. I created these versions

by in-putting the information collected on the flipcharts into the free MindX software, filling in the gaps with information transcribed from recordings of all three group conversation.

Once everyone had an opportunity to speak into the Promise mind map, I then assessed my timing. For those groups that had time left at the end, I posted a new piece of flipchart paper on the wall. I asked the following questions and wrote people's responses on the new piece of flipchart paper. These questions were intended to move the discussion into a reflective state. In Figure 8 below, you can see a sampling of responses from the focus group that I held with the professional service providers.

- What do you find most interesting about the map?
- What should be done next?

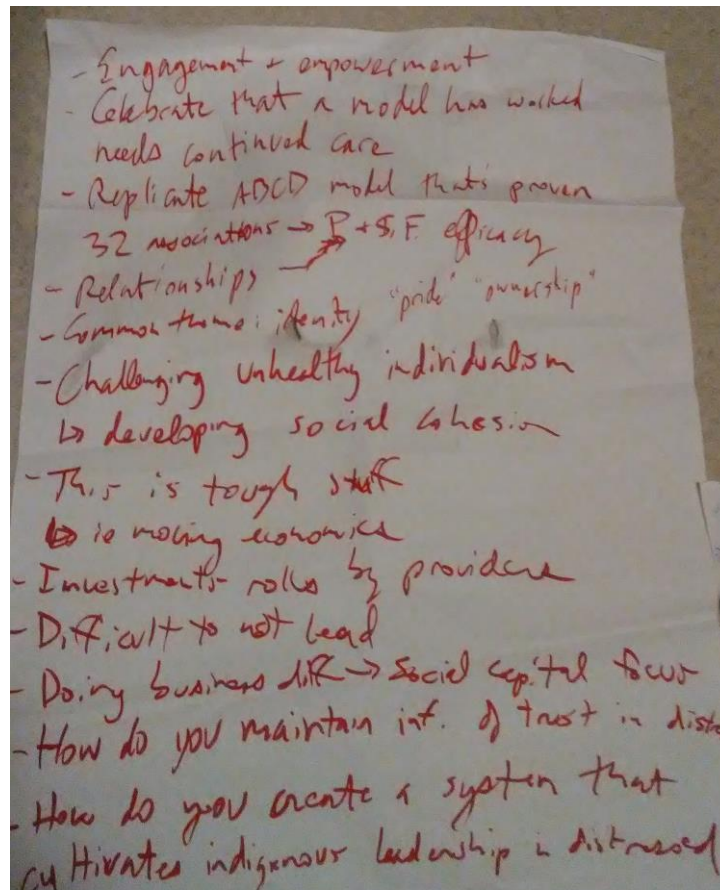


Figure 8. Sample mind map reflection

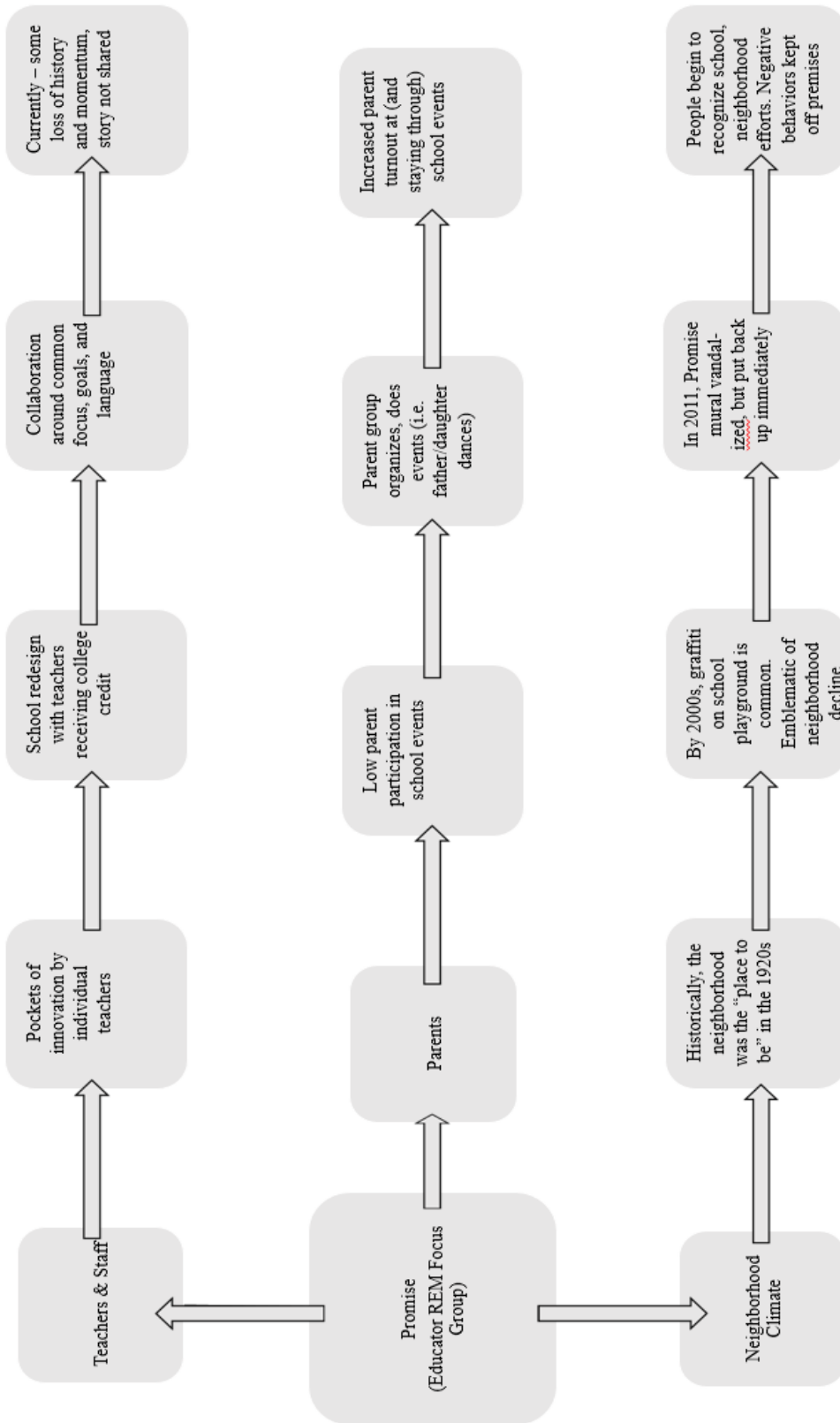


Figure 9. Lincoln educator REM focus group mind map

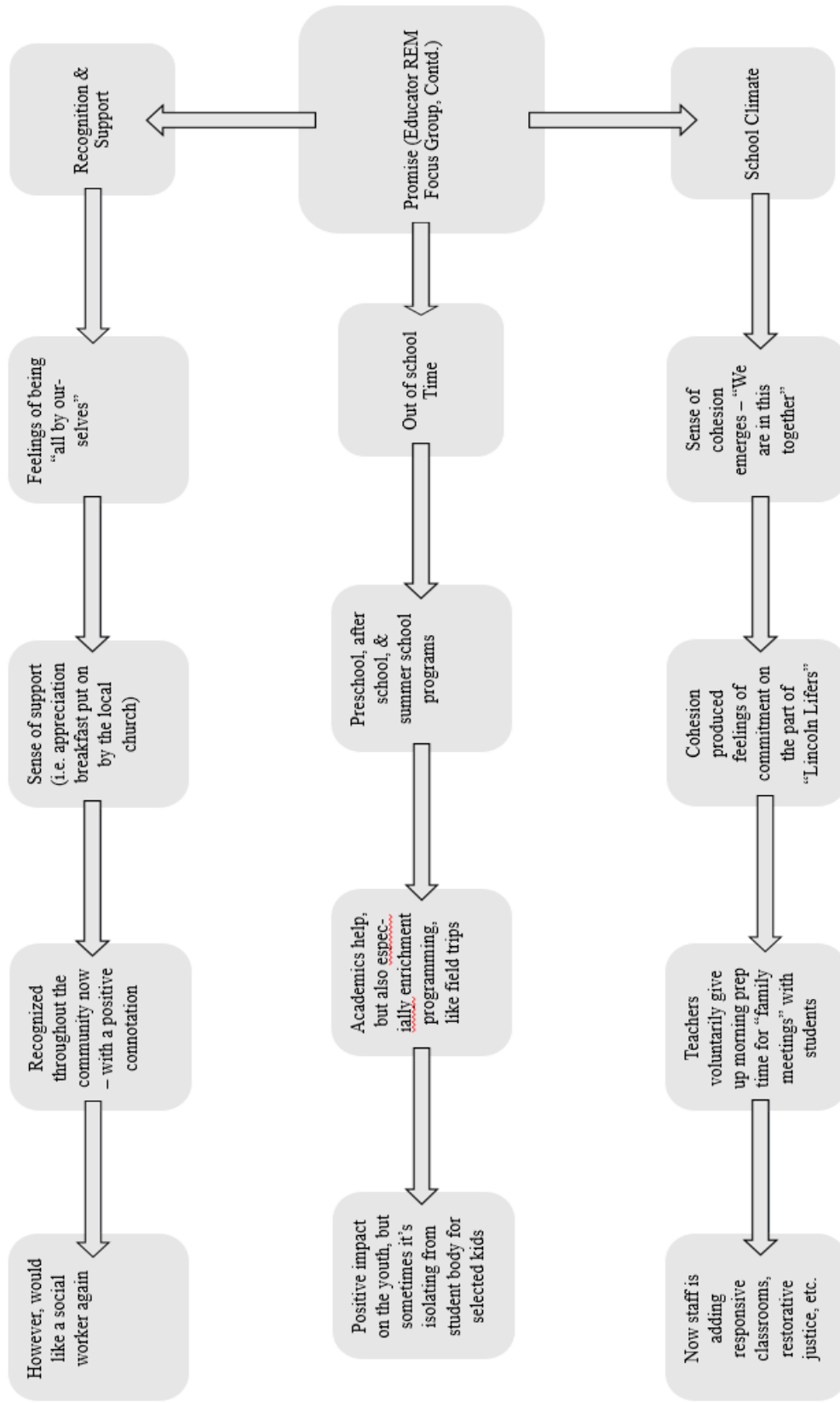


Figure 9. Lincoln educator REM focus group mind map (Continued)

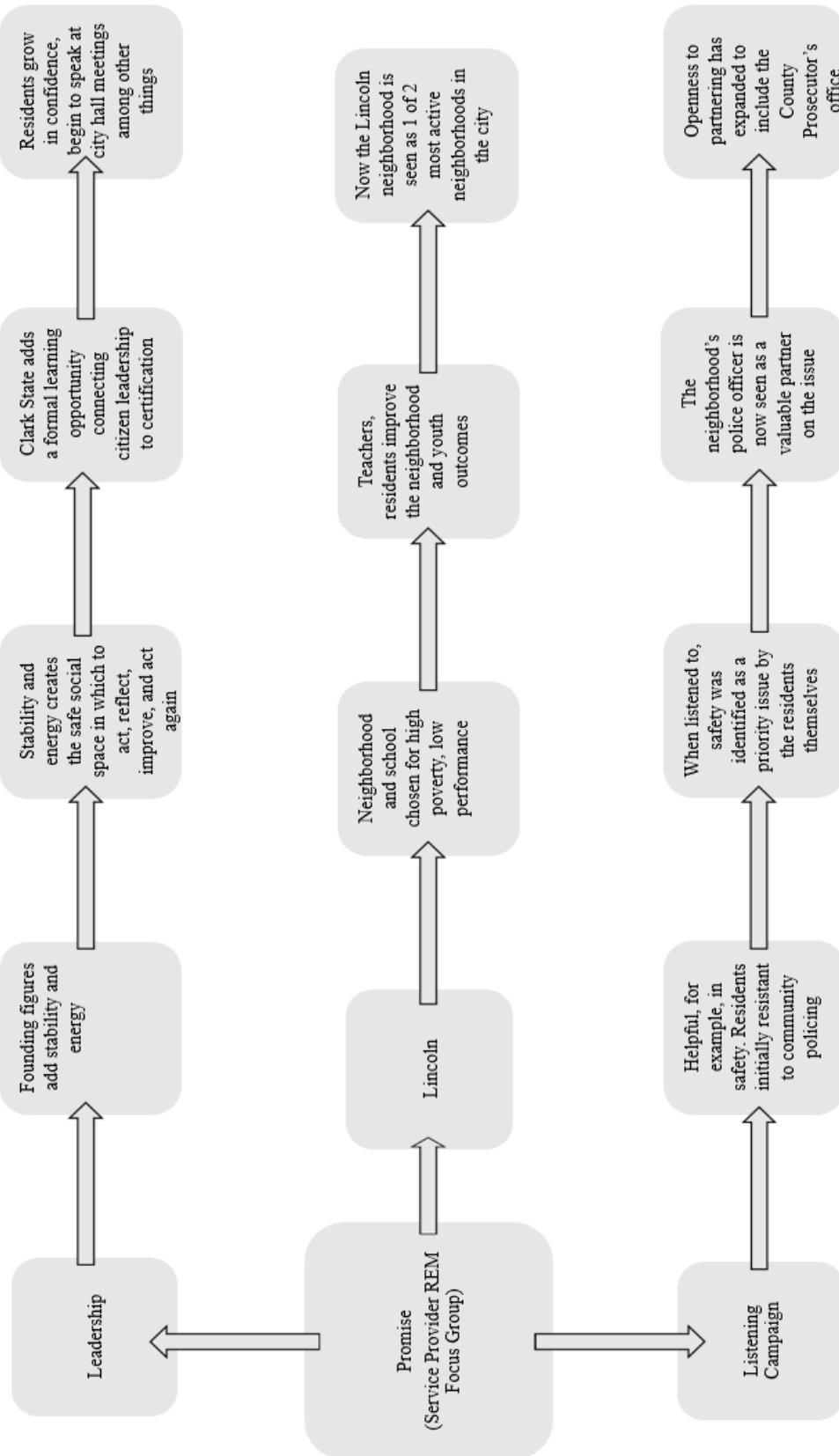


Figure 10. Provider REM focus group mind map

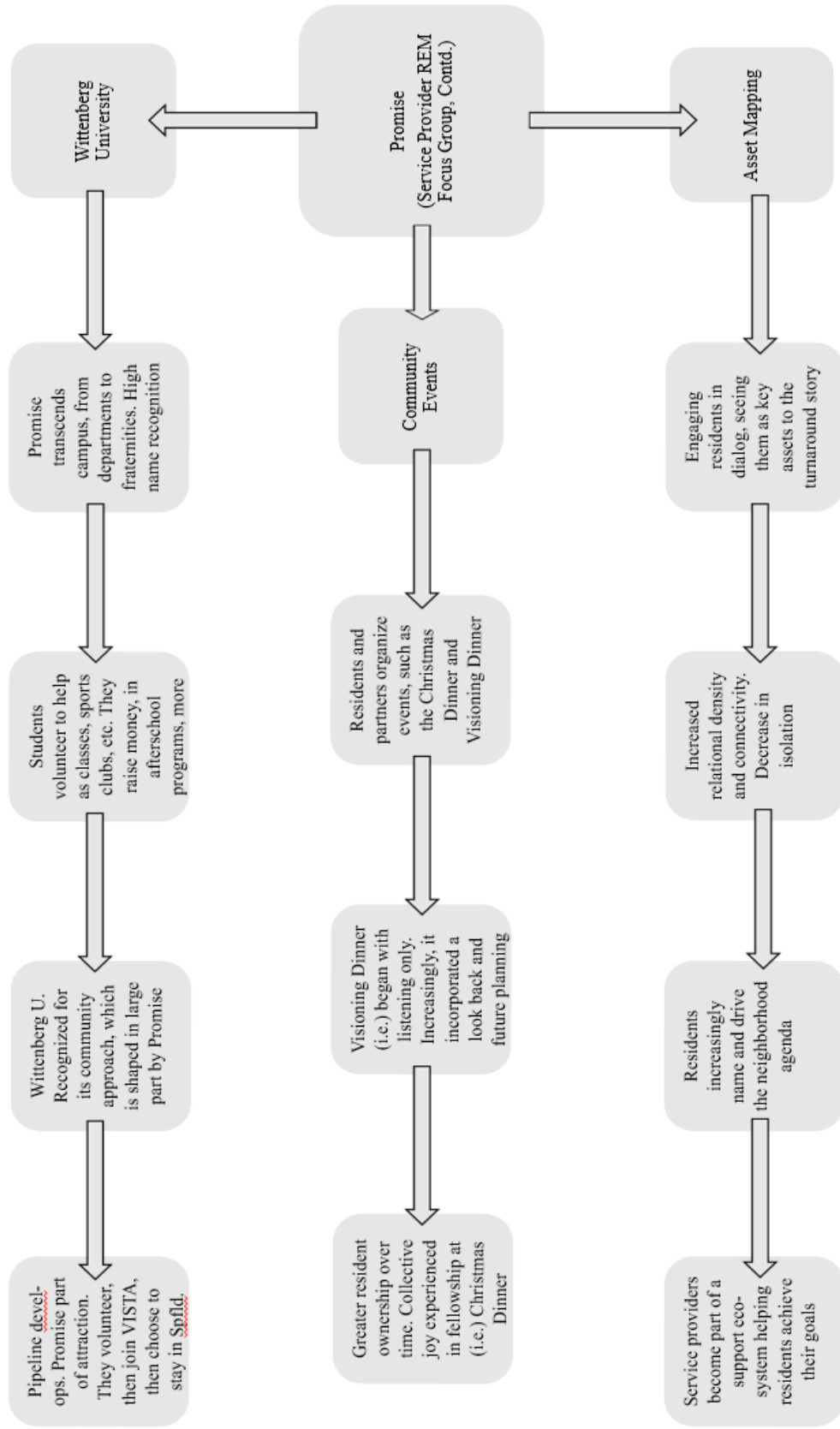


Figure 10. Provider REM focus group mind map (Continued)

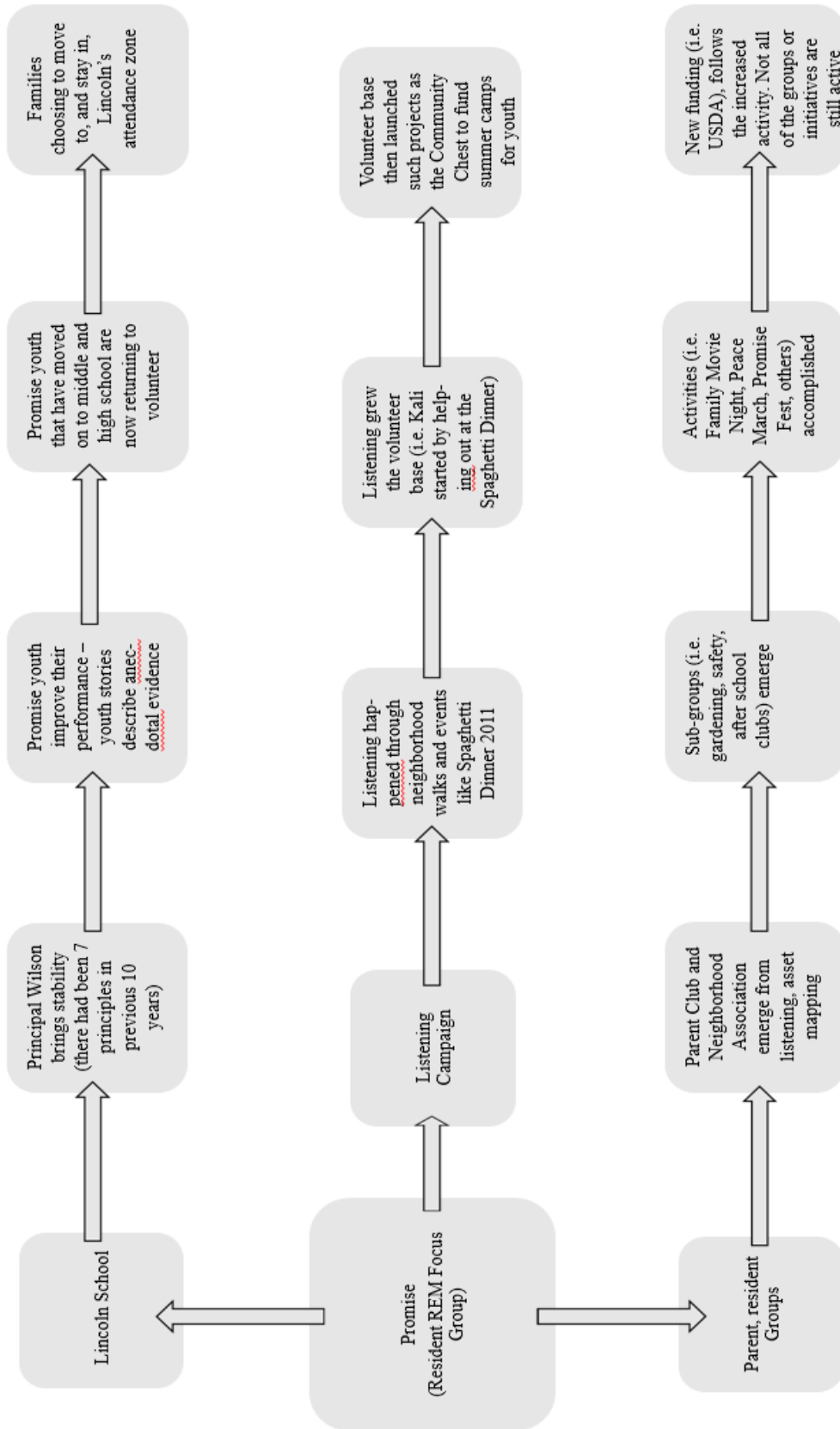


Figure 11. Parent/resident REM focus group mind map

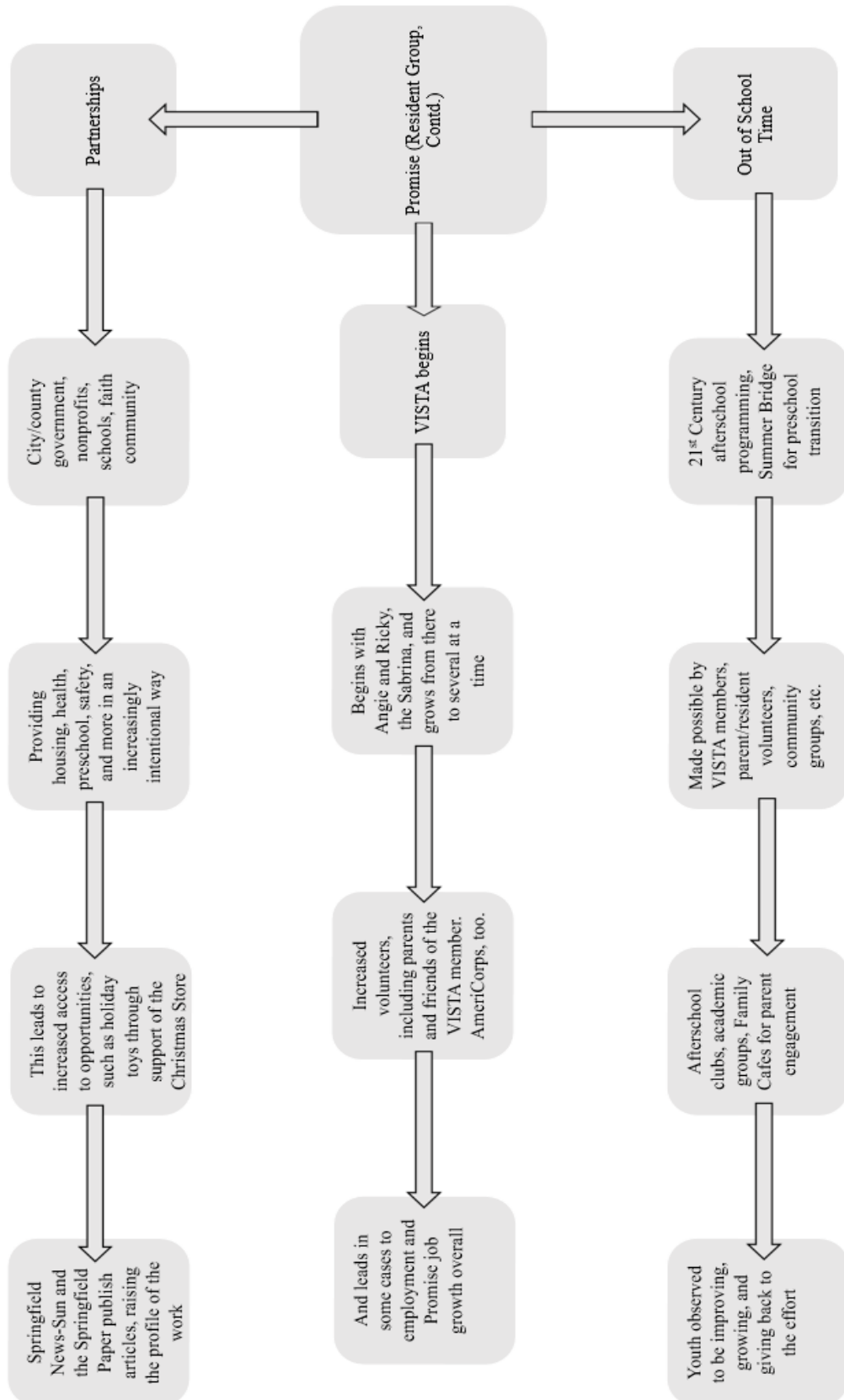


Figure 11. Parent/resident REM focus group mind map (Continued)

5.1.5. Cleaning and coding

After the three REM sessions, I organized the mind maps that each of the groups co-created. In some cases, I collected additional detail by following-up with particular participants. The data produced in the mapping process was first uploaded into the free Xmind software. Each event, or ripple, listed on the mental map were then added to a spreadsheet and coded to one of the seven capitals in the CCF. The aggregate number of each capital area identified through the REM focus group were then used to create a stacked bar graph illustrating the views of the participants about the relative impact of SPN on the neighborhood's resources.

To evaluate the categories, I used a Grounded Theory approach, as it includes a constant comparison of events, with neutral categories, or codes, and identifies themes evolving (Jones and Alony, 2011). In order to establish how to code the event, I looked for major thematic ideas, words, theories or similarities of events (Taylor and Gibbs, 2010). These codes of each individual event were then compared to each other event to identify themes. The themes were then written and theorized to data to identify the final results. Triangulation between the flipchart paper, notes, and participant feedback ensured accuracy. This provided the basis of the overall results of the combined events.

To give an example, consider the Community Chest ripple. Community Chest was documented on the flipchart paper and recorded, allowing me to triangulate the concept along with my memory of the focus group experience. The Community Chest was a fund set up to accept tax exempt donations for the purpose of providing scholarships for neighborhood youth to participate in summer educational activities. The Community Chest fund raised well over \$1,000 in its first year, representing an influx of *financial* capital into the neighborhood. Decisions about who would receive the scholarships was made by residents on the SPNA board, representing an increase in *political* capital. Per one account of the impact of the fund, the

scholarships successfully grew the *human* capital of the neighborhood by providing participating youth with new skills and strengthening existing talents.

This one ripple catalyzed, upon further analysis, three different forms of capital. At the conclusion of this analysis, of this ripple, I then noted the capital areas that it impacted on a spreadsheet. When each of the ripples were similarly mapped out, I could then convert the number of each for of capital enhancement into various charts. I found the 100% stacked chart to be the most useful in displaying comparative data between the outcomes of each of the three stakeholder groups. Below, I include the results of the three focus groups. I used this graph in the analysis step of the process.

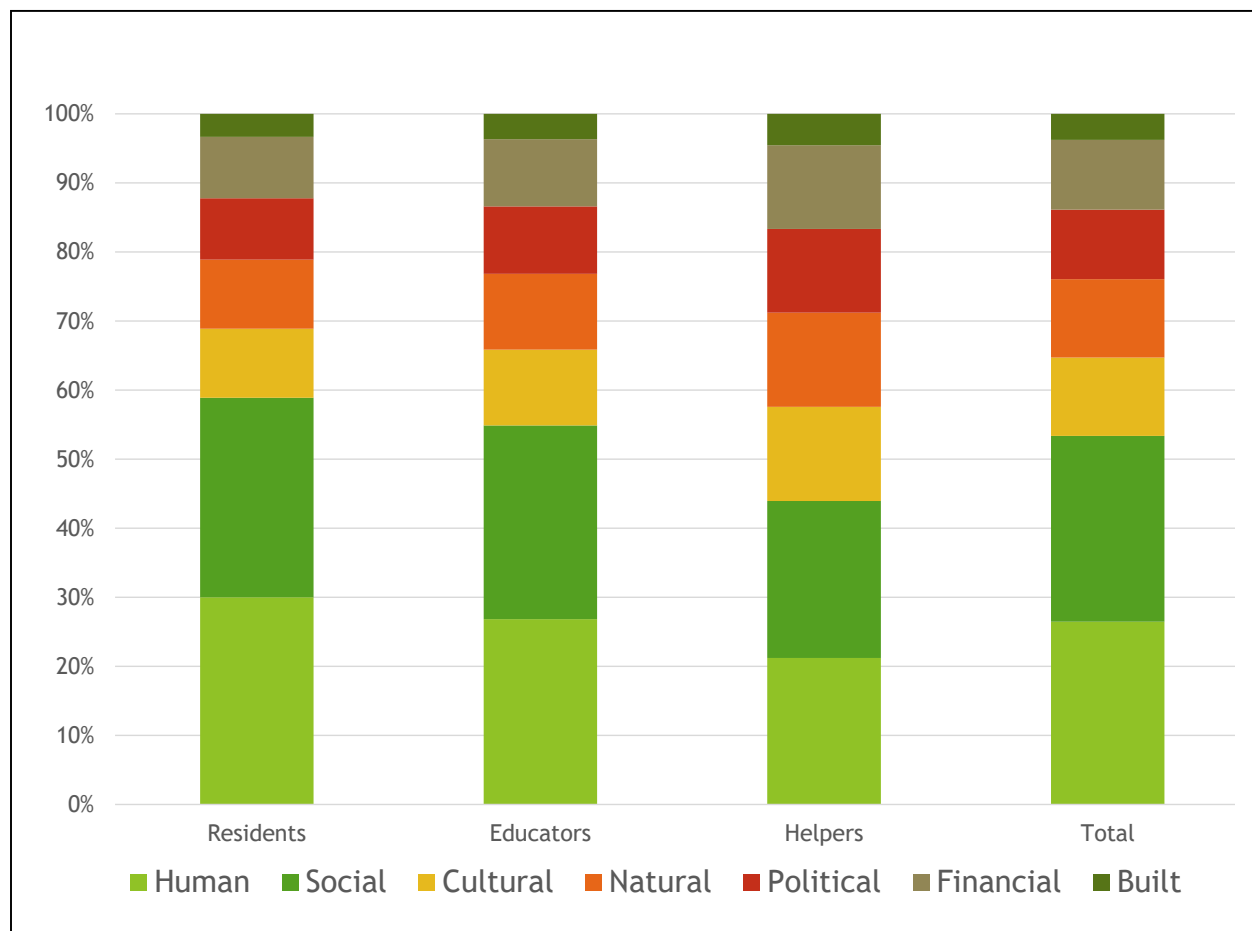


Figure 12. Views of capital impacts from the perspective of group participants

5.1.6. Analysis

Ultimately, the process proved to be a generative, inductive, discovery process that allowed me to, “develop a theoretical account of the general features of [the] topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data” (Martin and Turner, 1986, p 141). The process allowed me to explore emerging issues and themes and provided insight into areas that were unexplored by the various SPN stakeholder groups. These commonalities were then written and distributed to attendees and in some cases discussed in follow-up conversations with particular participants. Below I reflect on the process itself and its general utility.

5.2. Discussion

The ripple effect mapping process took advantage of how, in the flow of a focus group conversation, theme emerge that build in themselves. The outcome of mapping the ripples across these themes was a clearer picture, a concise summary, of what the group was think at that point in time about the impact of the SPN initiative. In the end, surfacing the participant’s thoughts and feelings about the flow and impact of the Promise story ensured the degree of clarity that decision-making requires.

In this way, not only did I find REM useful for my analysis of the program, but also useful for making recommendations going forward. Personally, I would recommend that complex programs and collaboratives, such as SPN, use this evaluation methodology on a regular basis to monitor impact and take corrective actions where needed. An important aspect to using the REM process is recruiting the right people in the right size groups around the right question for the right amount of time. Below we discuss these components of REM.

5.2.1. Recruitment

In terms of the size of each focus group, they ranged in my research from five participants to twelve. Because I did not know who might show up, I had to ask more people than what I expected would actually turn out. Taking this approach, however, left some guesswork as to how many would be involved come the day of the session. The amount of data generated ended up being approximately the same, whether the size of the group was five or twelve. Interestingly, the richness of the data may actually have been greater with the smaller size group than the larger. I asked participants to budget 75 total minutes for the session; however, as I discuss below this was not a sufficient amount of time to go through the entire process as I had intended it to flow.

In the end, I was satisfied with the people that participated. My outreach efforts, done in coordination with SPN, the neighborhood association, the school principal, and the city's Community Development Director resulted in people attending who had enough knowledge to speak into the story on multiple levels. There was one set of voices that arguably would have been the most important ones to capture – and that is the Lincoln youth that SPN was created to support. However, in an effort to be cautious about conducting research that involved this vulnerable population, I did not conduct a REM student focus group.

I also think that the process would have benefited from listening to a representative group of people that only have had a transactional interaction with SPN, such as event attendees, afterschool parents, etc. As it was, the focus groups that I facilitated attracted people with a deeper connection to the effort. However, to do so would have required a special incentive strategy to get such a group to attend. It may behoove SPN to consider how to facilitate additional REM focus groups with students and with residents that have either ended their engagement with SPN or have only ever been a beneficiary.

My strategy of meeting with each stakeholder group separately had its advantages in terms of recruitment and facilitation tactics. I think there was utility in this approach; however, I would suggest that a session should be organized that would bring as many of the participants from the various focus groups together for a forum of sorts to discuss some next step strategies. What became clear through the research process was that each element of the SPN initiative has something unique to contribute, and also something unique to gain, from interaction with other elements in the ecosystem. To illustrate that by coming together to sort through the findings from this research would be an intriguing idea.

5.2.2. Mapping

There is the question of getting people centered around the right question. Below, I discuss the focus of the groups and what seemed to work on this front. I took a slightly different emphasis with each stakeholder group. In the case of the *resident* session, we spent more time mapping the Promise story across a rough timeline, asking the question “and then what happened” repeatedly. A heavy emphasis in the *provider* session was on the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, and mapping the ripples according to the high points of each person’s experience with SPN. In the *educator* session, we moved quickly to the question, “What is different as a result of Promise?” and used that prompt to map the ripples. In none of the sessions, was there enough time to delve deeply into the reflective questions about what surprised people from the emerging mind maps and what should be done next.

Based on my experience, if I use the REM process in the future, I would do the following. If I only had a limited amount of time, I would repeat the process I used with the educator group. However, if I had a longer amount of time to devote to a session, I would start with the Appreciative Inquiry interviews, as they generated insight and energy. If I had the

option of doing multiple sessions of 45 minutes or more across a stretch of time, I would (1) begin with the timeline-oriented event mapping process, like we created in the resident session, (2) move on to the Appreciative Inquiry interview piece in a second session where people could explore their personal connection to SPN, (3) conduct a session focused on what people feel is different in the community as a result of complex program, and (4) finish up with an entire session devoted to asking people what surprised them from the emerging mind map and what should be done with it.

5.2.3. Coding

In terms of the coding process I used to try and understand the impact of SPN, as measured against the CCF framework, I would make the following observation. I think that if a researcher has the time to co-operatively code each ripple along with the participants, then coding each ripple to the CCF would make more sense. The act of coding ripples together would generate conversations that would result in a deeper understanding of the CCF model and its utility in analyzing the program's past and current impact and future options. In my case, I performed the coding exercise in seclusion. As a result, there was no getting around the fact that my personal bias would determine how ripples were categorized. Having other voices present to provide a counter point to my bias would have yielded truer results. It is recommended that time for collectively agreeing on the codes and their meaning be considered.

Also, assigning the same value to each individual ripple does not reflect reality. For example, when one participant referenced the over \$8M investment through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, I assigned that ripple a value of "1" under the "Financial Capital" column. At the same time, when a participant mentioned the \$3,000 Community Chest ripple, I also assigned that ripple a value of "1" under the "Financial Capital." But the impact of each of these

two ripples were extremely different in size and scope and intent. Much more sophisticated formulas would need to be developed to be able to ensure that the data was useful beyond simply confirming that there was growth in one or more of the community capital categories. Some means of differentiating between an \$8M and \$3,000 investment should be designed.

5.2.4. Analysis

For all of the concerns with the process of coding the ripples in the REM focus group mind maps against the CCF framework, it was useful to have the language of the CCF to be able to identify the shape and direction of the impact of the SPN initiative. Just as the CCF cumulative causation model was helpful in understanding the implications of the history of the Lincoln neighborhood and insightful when describing the elements of the downward spiral that led to the state of distress that we encountered at the launch of SPN in 2010, the language and conceptual framing of the CCF helped me understand the interrelated components and impacts of the Promise story.

Using grounded theory, I analyzed the mind maps and focus group transcriptions, and looked for patterns in the words and ideas that participants were using. After repeatedly absorbing and dissecting and reconfiguring and reflecting on the themes that seemed to be repeated across the groups, I developed my findings, which I discuss below. It was interesting to see how there was a kind of natural and accurate progression in the themes that reflected what one might expect to see, based on the research behind the CCF.

As I illustrate in figure 10 below, centering the effort on shifting the human and social capital of the neighborhood through listening and asset mapping, led to people forming an entrepreneurial social infrastructure around a shared agenda. Interestingly, that shared agenda included an overt interest, on the part of residents and staff, in engineering civic moments where

people could collide and experience support and recognition, all of which grew the neighborhood’s cultural capital. The growth in these capital categories grew the level of activity, as well as the level of political capital, the ability to influence. The community at large, and external funders, responded to the growing energy and activity and invested financial capital to shape youth outcomes and the built and natural capital of the neighborhood. While the story is more complex than what could be summarized here, it is rather interesting to observe a general upward spiral, or arc, that could help in determining possible next steps.

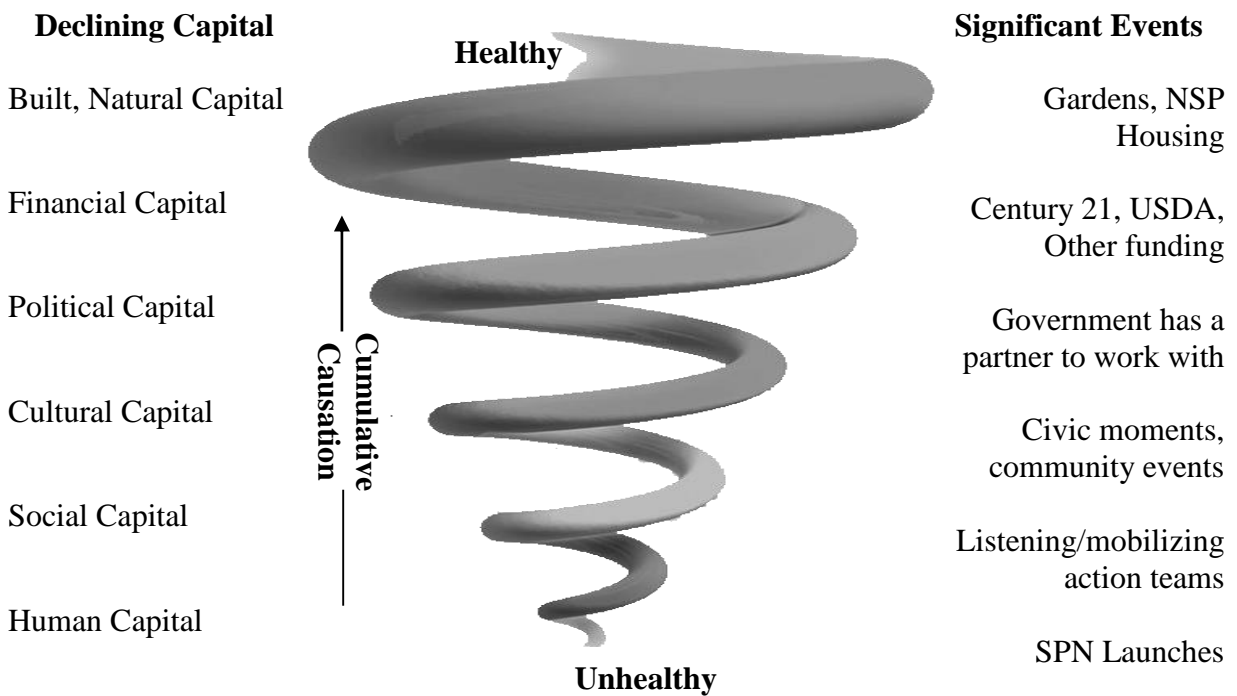


Figure 13. Cumulative causation and Lincoln’s upward spiral

CHAPTER 6. FINDINGS: RIPPLES AND THEIR WAKE

Based on the graphic representation of the results of the three REM focus groups, and informed by the qualitative data collected on chart paper, I found the following items to be the most significant findings. After listing the findings, I will discuss them in greater detail below.

1. Principled leadership catalyzes human capital development
2. When neighborhood, community, and school work together, impact grows
3. Adopting an ABCD approach facilitated the emergence of social capital
4. The existence of social infrastructure grew political capital
5. Civic moments and celebrations increased cultural capital and activity
6. Increased activity and political capital attracted tangible investments
7. Support and recognition helps to sustain the social infrastructure
8. Generating and sustaining community and economic change is “tough”

6.1. Principled leadership catalyzes human capital development

Each REM focus group session had a line of conversation that referenced the essential nature of the “heart” that went into the implementation of the parent and resident engagement process. One person put it this way,

A lot of the [Promise] stories include seeing caring in action. And I think that the high point of Promise is that we put care into the methodology. We put care into the way we do business. Which means you’re going to get care out. You’re going to create care by doing care in the first place.

Participants seemed to feel that a culture of reciprocity and genuine care began with the school, neighborhood and community leadership at the launch of the initiative. As one participant stated, “We were blessed to have people of high integrity and passion lead the fight.... [This] allowed for Promise to take hold and be a part of the school program and make a

difference in the life of the kids.” When discussing the leadership dynamic further, people spoke of their “consistently kind approach,” or the, “cool and collected nature,” that made it possible to engage diverse voices, even antagonistic ones that might otherwise have derailed the process.

These personal characteristics within the leadership fostered, “a safe place where people could come together to plan and envision and see those things come to pass. That gave a lot of confidence to the neighbors about what was going on.” Out of this safe environment, care and trust could take root. As one resident stated,

There are certain people that I could name that if it wasn't for them that I would not be the person that I am. Because they believed in me when I didn't even believe in myself. That's the difference when you care about each other.” In the end, “When we look at a cookbook, we come up with something to put together, but it takes so many ingredients to make the recipe work. And that's true for us.

I titled this section “be the change you wish to see in the world” after Gandhi, the truly transformational leader who led India's peaceful revolution to end British colonial rule.

Gandhi's point when he first made this statement was that if his fellow Indians were to choose to live as if they were already free, then they would in fact have created that alternative. Bopp & Bopp (2011), based on this concept, assert that, “in community development processes, the most powerful strategies for change always involve positive role modeling and the creation of living examples of the solutions we are proposing” (p. 103).

One could get a sense for what the “lived” Promise principles and values were from the REM focus groups. For example, one participant stated how SPN,

Rather than looking at [the] neighborhood as a problem to be solved, looked at it as a resource. You know, people are resources and have gifts to work on things that are important to them.

SPN staff, simply by living as if the neighborhood truly was full of assets and gifts waiting to be unleashed began the process of making that alternative narrative – the change they wished to see

– manifest itself in the fabric of the neighborhood and the lives of its youth. And people appeared to see themselves differently as a result.

Vaughn Grisham (1994) puts it this way. Principled and transformational leadership, “begins with the development of people” (p. 159). As Grisham explains, transformational “leaders understand the wants and needs of the constituents and seek to meet those needs by involving the constituents in the solution. In the process of so doing, followers are often converted to leaders themselves (p. 158). One REM focus group participant asked the question, “How does one create a system that continually cultivates indigenous leadership in distressed communities?” And, it would appear, part of the answer has to do with recruiting to the effort people that fully embrace and embody the core community development assumption, that people and neighborhoods have the potential to change and shape their own future story.

One participant told the story of her own evolution, as it intersected with the arc of the Lincoln neighborhood’s change trajectory. This participant had moved to Springfield from elsewhere. And their attitude was,

I didn’t want to know you. And that’s just how Springfield was, and that’s just how I fit in. I come and I go. And I took my kids where they needed to go. And the only way anyone knew where I was, was if the house was on fire.

However, this participant was shaped by the iterative relationship they had with SPN’s leadership.

But, it’s been seven years and so many people know me now. I’ve watched kids grow seven years. And I’ve watched them become teenagers, or almost teenagers. And I care about them.

As one looks at the stacked graph representing each focus group’s perspective on the forms of capital that the SPN initiative influenced, it is striking how essential human development is. From the progress made by students in their skills and the expansion of their circle of care, to the residents that grew in their self-awareness about the power they held to

choose the path forward for their neighborhood youth, to the teachers that gained college credit for designing the school that they thought would help their students achieve their highest potential, various forms of human capital growth were centrally important to the initiative. A note of caution here is that developing human capital in this way requires the consistent availability and deliberate presence that a paid staff person can provide. In other words, communities seek to replicate an ABCD model, must be willing to hire an organizer.

6.2. When neighborhood, community, and school work together, impact grows

People attributed the progress that youth have made, in part, to the out-of-school components that SPN helped to develop. One REM focus group participant recounted the following story.

What caught me most with summer programming was when we sent people to camp. And it was a difficult process [that first year] to get 45 kids from this neighborhood to leave with the permission of their parents... Now the kids bug us about going to camp. And they're bugging us way ahead in advance. And if we don't have those things in the spring, they want to know why and when things are going to start.

A number of REM focus group participants backed up the data above with anecdotal stories, naming youth that they had observed being positively impacted by the efforts of SPN.

As one person said,

A dear friend of ours started Promise when she was in first grade and now she's in ninth. I've watched her be a child, I've watched her be an adolescent. I'm watching her become a young lady. And she's struggled. And she's hit every bump and gotten every bruise from all of those phases of her life. She's made great choices, she's made not great choices. But she's remained engaged. And without Promise, she wouldn't have had a choice, because she wouldn't have known what civic engagement was. So the education was critical, but she saw by example how rolling up her sleeves could change things.

SPN shaped the local social infrastructure. That social infrastructure then shaped the bonds that emerged between the school, neighborhood, and community. One relationship came up again and again, that of the local university and Lincoln. An educator pointed out that,

We have more of a partnership with the Education Department now. ‘Cause when I went through school and I really wanted to student teach here, and [we] had to go in to put in a special word to get them to let anybody student teach here. And now we have tons of people coming in and out and there’s so much interaction with the students at Wittenberg, which I think it’s really good for... our kids to have more adults and more people who can love on them and give them some special attention. That’s been a big difference.

But what was fascinating was how much people referenced the iterative nature of the school-neighborhood-community relationship. There was a dynamism, a mutuality, a reciprocity, that emerged out of the Promise story. Not only did Lincoln students benefit from this special relationship with Wittenberg, but Wittenberg benefited as well. “We are nationally recognized now by the American Association of Colleges and Universities for our departmental civic engagement,” pointed out a REM focus group participant representing Wittenberg University.

And that’s informing the national geo-sciences.... We are helping to come up with tools to help scientists better engage with local decision makers... And that came out of our wanting to do meaningful work and realizing the power of that and how it affects our students. And for me, Promise was the start of that.

And then, the community benefited from the bond that had emerged between Wittenberg and Lincoln School. “Because of the relationship and network support that was provided to them [by SPN], they were now able to see themselves staying in this community, living in this community, and role modeling how you work and live in the community and engaging other students. What a wonderful way for them to start their post-Wittenberg careers. And I still hear those former Wittenberg students talking about it. Rather than looking at a neighborhood as a problem to be solved, to look at it as a resource. You know, people are resources and have gifts to work on things that are important to them.” Consider the fact that by providing a meaningful place to invest their time and talents, Springfield is retaining some of its young talent.

Sometimes youth were influenced by going out to more community events, such as Project Jericho production in Springfield’s downtown theatre. At other times, the youth

benefited from the neighborhood entering their space at Lincoln School. This came sometimes in the form of an afterschool club led by grandparents or residents, such a garden club or scout troop. At other times, it happened when a resident action team put on an event, such a father-son breakfast, or a talent show featuring youth talent. Yet again it sometimes can in the form of the Lincoln Bobcat Parent Club that organized monthly family movie nights, father-daughter and mother-son dances, and other activities.

Whatever the origins, the REM Educator focus group clearly saw a mutually beneficial connection between Lincoln School and the Lincoln neighborhood. “I mean, before Promise, we can remember the playground. You had to inspect it as you walked, because you never knew what you’d find.” Here, multiple participants chimed in to affirm the speaker’s sentiment as they continued, “The graffiti has gone way down. They used to spray paint the equipment all the time and you aren’t seeing it like you used to. So that’s gone way down. I mean, that first year, Promise did that mural and it got destroyed. But they put them back up and it’s been there.”

Just as the change in the neighborhood was positive for the school, the school’s progress has benefited the neighborhood. “Maybe – because we’ve gotten a good reputation for taking care of the children, plus the extras that Promise provides the neighborhood – more families have moved into the area... Maybe more families are moving in that have a vested interest in the school.” Schools are critical for attracting a more stable demographic. With a very high churn rate to contend with, any sign pointing to greater stability is worth celebrating.

Of course, the neighborhood also benefitted from the support of the broader community. An example of this was one church from the north side that decided to give up its Christmas adopt-a-family program after reading the 2009 book *When Helping Hurts* by Corbett and Fikkert. In place of the program, the congregation opted to support the neighborhood association’s Christmas Store project, “Which allowed people to buy Christmas presents for members of their

family [at much reduced rates]. We felt that that was a direction that we wanted to go because it allowed people to have their own dignity about the choices that they made. And so, in 2014 we supported the Christmas Store by donating gifts and by working at the store.” But, “The high point was actually attending the Christmas dinner. The money that is made in the store, one of the things that helps to pay for, is the Christmas dinner... And it was just an amazing experience in terms of energy and joy and celebration as a neighborhood together.”

In other words, just as the community – represented in this story by a north side church – sought to contribute to the neighborhood’s wellbeing in a genuine way, the church’s congregants experienced a deeply human moment. All sides were stretched in important ways by working together as co-laborers on the Christmas Store. And what was their conclusion? “As a church that was looking for something to do differently, we would not have been able to find an alternative thing to do if Promise had not existed. If that organization had not been in place, there would not have been something for us to work with.”

In the end, perhaps the most incisive reminder of the importance of mutuality came from a resident, who stated, “Those kids, they feel extra special, because there’s nothing like having your Mom or Dad come see what you did. And there’s nothing that makes a parent more prouder than seeing what you did. So I think some time should be spent on how we get the adults. Let’s have a party. Let’s have a barbeque. That’ll be the *Double Promise!*”

6.3. Adopting an ABCD approach facilitated the emergence of social capital

Kretzman and McKnight (1993), define ABCD as having three interrelated characteristics. ABCD, at its core, is a process that is (1) asset-based, (2) internally focused, and (3) relationally driven. Importantly, I found through the REM focus group sessions traces of each of these three characteristics woven in to the “Promise story” that emerged. To begin this

exploration into the impact of the process, as seen through the eyes of those that lived it, I must first point out that the adoption of an asset-based lens necessitates that any work in a neighborhood or community must begin with intentional acts of listening.

SPN adopted such a listening stance in its work with Lincoln school and the Lincoln neighborhood. This intentionality around listening appears to have had an important role in engendering what one participant referred to as, the many “small victories that turn into progress over time.” One participant stated that,

That was probably the most amazing experience outside of the classroom that I’ve had in my teaching career. *Someone’s looking at you and asking what your idea is of an ideal school.* And to watch a lot of it come to fruition! We worked together to make it happen, to create Promise, to do the routines, the scheduling, and the whole thing. We even received college credit for it (my emphasis)!

The youth were part of this as well. One participant spoke about how what they, “appreciate most is having the opportunity to ask kids questions and really experience all of our student’s hopes for Springfield and appreciate how excited they are about anything, absolutely anything.” The participant added, “But I think I really like talking to them. And they’ll ask me if I’m a teacher and if I have to be there. And to have the opportunity to chit chat and say I just came to talk. I think that to them that’s a moment where seeing the community show up just to care, that makes our kids care too.” As both of these quotes above dynamically illustrate, there is power in asking questions, in strategic listening.

One REM focus group participant drew a direct line between listening and improved neighborhood outcomes.

Those neighborhoods, historically for us had been resistant to community policing efforts. It has been a 180. Because now you have Tom Selner who is *their* police officer who solves the quality of life issues for them. And that all was because of the way that you started with a listening campaign was key, because then the neighbors were in control of their own destiny. And that is a key component and it’s still strong today.

The listening was all part of a larger effort to map the institutional, associational, and individual assets of the neighborhood and school. This “map” of the neighborhood’s assets, including the unique interests and ideas and networks of residents, played an important role in shaping the Lincoln journey. As one REM focus group participant remarked, “Asset mapping – shret format, dialogue that created between neighbors, common interest / common goal, that connection / that dialogue continues.” Another participant described the basic SPN approach like this, “We were taking stock of the many things that are already happening in Springfield.”

When one assumes that the neighborhood has assets waiting to be unleashed, then the work also takes a turn toward an internal focus. ABCD is an inside-out process that expects the local agenda to be imagined first, before external investments, whether expertise or financial resources, are pursued. We can see this dynamic playing out from the following comment.

“Thanks to the ABCD development model, it was just really exciting to watch the people come alive when you were asking them what their passions were and what their interests were and then they mobilized.” In the end, this participant noted, “We were kind of resource people. We were there maybe to help, but not to do it. That was just so powerful, the whole process. So some organized to work on safety and they worked with the police, but they were in charge of that process. So that was powerful.”

Another participant, put it this way, “There was an inclusive place for everybody, but those that were defined as outsiders, as nonresidents, had a role and that role was to be resources and support folks, but not to be drivers necessarily. And so it just felt like an inclusive environment, but very appropriate in terms of the ownership for driving change.” Building the effort from the inside out harnessed the psychic energy of the residents and teachers.

And just the enthusiasm, you know, like the gardening project. Some of these people were very excited about what they were doing. ‘We’re cleaning up the neighborhood.’ On Saturday morning they were out there cleaning up. Or doing their safety meetings.

They had a sense of enthusiasm because this was their project. It really just is a different way.

It is in this spirit that one REM focus group participant suggested a next step might be the exploration of how health, human, safety, housing, and neighborhood service providers might be more strategic in their investments of time, programming and resources to support the internally developed agenda. And that seemed to be the conclusion of everyone that participated in the research process. Everyone and every organization involved had something to contribute. It was a question about who was driving which component that created the potential for deep change.

Clearly from the REM focus group responses, relationships and social capital were important. In fact, one person said bluntly, “I think that it’s relationship that’s at the core of what has occurred.” Another participant put it this way, “In the work in the neighborhood, both in and out of Promise, that it’s about the relationships with a capital ‘R’. This is the foundation, not only creating a safe space, but a space where trust can build, a place where risks can be taken, where support can be given.” I saw that support shared so many times during my six years journeying with the neighborhood. In one instance, a neighbor that had engaged with SPN’s backyard garden project had her dog pass away. To help her grieve, she called up some of the other backyard gardeners to share a ceremony together. The Chairperson of the neighborhood association gave the eulogy.

In some cases, the relationships were not about creating a safe space. In some cases it was about being stretched by the relationships and the stories that came through the relationships. As one participant, a graduate of the local university who chose to remain in Springfield after graduation and serve with SPN, put it,

I think another highlight has been the relationships I’ve built with people. And getting to know SPNA members. For four years I was in a bubble at Wittenberg. There wasn’t really many different types of people.” But in the Lincoln neighborhood she was

exposed to, “people from different walks of life, I think that’s been a highlight to me. And you know, there’s real people here in Springfield. There’s people with stories.

In the Lincoln experience, relationships were woven together by design.

It’s the process that was created.... I think that has really come out of this, too, breaking that mold and getting people out of their comfort zone and getting them connected and getting them talking and finding those common interests and goals that produce something and finding the resources that help.

People seemed to feel that the process of moving from mapping assets, to creating a sense of shared agenda, to mobilizing people around the agenda, to securing external investments had an impact. As one focus group concluded, the Springfield community should, “celebrate,” and, “replicate the ABCD model, as it’s proven to work.” The approach that SPN embarked upon, it was suggested, could be shown to be a success because people felt that the Lincoln neighborhood, despite the severity of its distress, was one of a couple of neighborhoods presenting forward momentum.

The asset-based lens and listening posture that was adopted, the relationship-driven methodology, and the inside-out process that was used, seemed to have helped to coalesce an entrepreneurial social infrastructure. That is to say, new norms, relationships and participation (Tseng & Friedman, 2013) were developed that allowed for the alignment and catalyzation of the neighborhood’s and community’s capital to achieve positive impact.

A powerful example of a new norm, a new way of functioning together, came from the REM focus group of Lincoln educators. “I think Promise has given us a common focus, common goals, common language. It used to be pockets of us as teachers that used to do these wonderful things, but it wasn’t everybody.” The educator focus group also supplied an example of participation.

But I think that if it wasn’t for Promise that we wouldn’t have had a parent group at all... to help and organize events.... There are more parents coming to our programs and

staying to the end. We've had the father-daughter dance and mother-son dance and things like that. And we've had good responses to those kinds of activities.

Plus, new relationships were built, including between a resident and the community liaison police officer,

who has done wonderful things with my kid that I could never do with my kid. Somehow my kid would respond to him when he wouldn't respond to me. And the wonderful things that he does with the children in the neighborhood is just amazing. They all respect him and he takes time out to do things with them. And that's what it's all about, just helping each other. And we do, we worry about our kids and we worry about other people's kids.

There are impacts to cultivating a healthy social infrastructure that harnesses new norms, relationships, and participation. One participant talked about a palpable shift that happened when Lincoln Elementary school teachers and staff collectively redesigning certain school processes. As they recounted,

Personally, I was able, through mentoring at Lincoln with three different students over their 4th, 5th, and 6th grade years. The first three years were tough, but there was a clear change in that first 6th graders life that you could see, and all the children that come into that school every day are happy to be there because of the teachers and all of this. And it started to pay off with those children unburdening themselves in a safe place of the problems they were living at home. That personally made... every Thursday morning a great way to start."

6.4. The existence of social infrastructure grew political capital

The REM focus group of service providers and professionals took place in the City Hall Forum. That turned out to be poetically appropriate. Because political capital has to do with the ability to influence the decision-making processes that govern a community's rules and policies. And I was surprised to hear throughout my research, in numerous small, as well as more significant ways, stories about growing neighborhood influence. It started with self-governance, where residents first practiced, and gained comfort with, basic democratic processes through forming civic association. Collaborative decision-making was practiced as people determined

how to spend money and organize activities. Some residents took this experience and accepted various opportunities to join city and non-profit boards. At other times, the collective voice was needed, such as when 200 residents turned out to a planning board meeting to resist the placement of a trash transfer station in Springfield's south side.

But being in City Hall reminded one REM focus group participant of the following story. "Here, in this forum, when a lady of many years spoke about the gardens, she shared with us how many people had never tasted a fresh grown tomato. And that speaks to me as a Mom, because that's intergenerational, that's family." And, "We saw as government that night that family – not just in a biological sense, but in the neighborhood – was growing through the fruits of individual labor. And I remember her saying, 'ain't no one going to cross me, because you don't mess with grandma.' That's real and that's family."

In a separate story, one neighborhood services leader recounted how they were invited to speak to the participants of a Building Leaders to Build Community program. "I was with a group of people that... wanted to be neighborhood group leaders. And I remember the word that came out of that conversation was reciprocity." The REM focus group participant was clearly remembering an impactful experience as they finished their statement. "I was being challenged a lot that night about why won't the city do this or that. And the conversation finally and fully developed, not as a presentation, but as a part of a real conversation. I can do that, and I can get that done, and I can convince my boss WITH you." I had the good fortune of being present to witness this story as it was happening. I saw a balancing of power occur between the participating residents and the city's leadership that night.

The experiences recounted above, along with numerous others, embedded the Promise story in the psyche of the community's political infrastructure. So much so, in fact, that when it came time to apply for a Choice Neighborhood grant, City of Springfield staff invited SPN to

participate in shaping the concept design. An SPN representative then recounted in a REM focus group session about how, “the city is really looking to Promise for neighborhood engagement and mobilization and inspiration. Which, you know, is really surprising to me.”

6.5. Civic moments and celebrations increased cultural capital and activity

David Proctor (date), author of *Civic communion: The rhetoric of community building* introduces the key role that civic moments play in facilitating communication and shaping community life. As he asserts, “There are special moments in civic life – moments such as community festivals, strategic planning sessions, or community celebrations – when a community reflects upon, celebrates, and ultimately sanctifies important local images and truths” (Proctor, 2004, p. 54). These are moments of important communicative import that shape those core ingredients of community life: belonging and becoming.

When I asked the participants about a high point of their experience with Promise, a high number of responses had to do with civic moments, such as what Proctor was referencing. A larger number of REM focus group participants referenced the importance of the

Fall fest and spring fest, the big community events. ‘Cause I like to see the kids doing something productive instead of something destructive and people actually getting to meet each other and know each other and having fun. That’s my biggest thing.

Importantly, these larger community events, replete with music and activities and mingling with other residents, seemed to produce a kind of attachment to the neighborhood. These events were opportunities to get people connecting with each other and engender a sense of belonging.

Sometimes, these larger events had a more strategic focus. One such event in the life of the Lincoln neighborhood is the annual Visioning Dinner.

Initially the [Visioning Dinner] started out capturing the imagination of the folks that were there. It went slowly from a posture of listening to... that affirming process of

every year coming back together. You could start to see the shift to where there was a reporting out of action and... commitment to what was going to take place the next year.

The REM focus group participant found that having that kind of rhythm was important.

And then also seeing the shift of moving from really outsider led, facilitated type effort to more and more internal ownership from the neighborhood association. Obviously there was a lot going on behind the scenes, but particularly the focal point of presentation of that vision was meaningful.

Civic moments also occurred in small venues. In one REM focus group, a participant asserted that, “My high point was when I started the neighborhood watch. I enjoyed that. And all the people that came.” At this point in the conversation, another participant chimed in, “Remember when we used to have the meetings in your back yard? That was how we started the neighborhood watch and all that. Getting together.” In the early days of the SPN initiative, the vision of a neighborhood where residents looked out for each other was being imagined in small, backyard conversations of three or four people.

Sometimes, the best civic moments happened outside of the neighborhood. In one case, a group of us took a field trip together to visit the Weinland Park neighborhood of Columbus, Ohio’s capital. The goal was to speak with their leadership and gain inspiration and insight from their revitalization story. Clearly, this shared experience had an impact on several of the people that participated. As one REM focus group participant stated,

One thing I remember is that I went on this trip to Columbus. And I seen this neighborhood who they had to have a tragedy. It took them ten years to turn their neighborhood around [after that]. And there are people in the neighborhood who care about what they do and where they live and they also believe in themselves.

To this day, that trip has been a source of inspiration for the REM participant.

Civic moments were also occurring within the walls of Lincoln School. “We all agreed that we can work together.” pointed out one participant. “The staff [gave] up their time in the morning to start the family meetings and have that smooth transition while moving from

breakfast.” Family meetings are a unique civic moment that occur daily at Lincoln. Students circle up around their teacher in their home room every morning. The students are able to voice their concerns or joys, thereby making it possible to ease into the day having divested oneself of any worries from home or elsewhere. It turns out that in the last year, 12 educators attended a Responsive Classroom and a Restorative Schools trainings in Columbus. The new techniques available from these trainings are, “taking morning meetings a leap forward with messages and teacher language and energizers.”

What is the impact of the growth in cultural capital, and the associated feelings of belonging and attachment? As one participant put it,

I mean, I don’t know what other group I could be a part of that would make a promise to the kids that we aren’t going to let you fail. That just, that goes right to the [heart]. So those kinds of things continue to make me really love saying that I live in the Promise Zone.

At Lincoln School, teachers expressed a similar sentiment when they threw out phrases, like, “Lincoln lifer” and “once a Bobcat, always a Bobcat,” during my research.

6.6. Increased activity and political capital attracted tangible investments

When the City of Springfield was preparing to deploy the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) funds it had been awarded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, it used those funds in the Grand Ave. South area at the heart of the Lincoln neighborhood. One participant described the reasoning behind the decision to concentrate the investment there.

What clearly happened over time as the organization became known, speaking for those of us at city government, it helps to have somebody to work with. So when we decided where we were going to spend \$8.3M dollars, it was a neighborhood that had something going that we could work with.

Lincoln had become such a neighborhood.

Some of the NSP funds went to secure a green space in the heart of the Lincoln neighborhood. In poetic symmetry, this site, it turns out, was the original location of the old Lincoln Elementary School. The building's foundation had long since been buried and covered over with topsoil and grass, the debris from its walls trucked away. The site of children laughing as they walked down hallways and mingled in courtyards had disappeared as well, but new memories were about to take root. At the launch of the SPN initiative, the green space was starting to be used for a community garden, with a hoop house (think cheap green house) added later. "My favorite part of Promise" recounted one REM focus group participant, "has always been the garden. And the best part was when we was on the site where those two habitat houses are and we had plots in the dirt. And then one day you hear a kid, he stole a green pepper? He didn't steal it, he's eatin' it on his way to school. But I am very proud of Promise."

Eventually, this passion for gardening gave rise to a network of seven school, community, and production gardens and over 20 backyard gardens dispersed throughout Lincoln. By my last summer working with SPN, neighbors had grown 3,000 lbs of produce, which represented nearly \$30,000 in grocery bill savings. The sense of agency, and the collective efficacy of residents, that this increased activity represented eventually attracted the attention of the US Department of Agriculture. Multiple south side residents participated in securing a Farm to School grant for the Springfield City School District, which made it possible to hire two coordinators (including a south side resident) to begin to strategize a local food initiative to capture regional food dollars while also improving food access in a USDA identified food desert.

In terms of supporting the youth to enhance the chances of their succeeding, some of the strategically important financial capital investments that SPN helped to secure came in the form of an AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program, which provided six or more members to run a summer camp, the Century 21 grant that funded the afterschool program

for youth needing additional support, and such local partnerships as the Miami Valley Child Development Center that enhanced a Bridge program that helped get children more school ready by the time they started Kindergarten at Lincoln Elementary, Big Brothers/Big Sisters that helped to send students to its Camp Oty'Okwa location, and the Families and Schools Together program that provided additional family supports in the evenings.

These investments allowed for the development of a pipeline, or suite of interventions that moved youth from pre-school age through to their entry into Hayward Middle School. As one REM focus group participant reported,

One thing that Promise has been able to do is do some programs in the afterschool and summer and that's been important to keep touch with our children... What caught me most with summer programming was when we sent people to camp. And it was a difficult process to get 45 kids from this neighborhood to leave this neighborhood with the permission of their parents [the first year]. Now, the kids bug us about going to camp. And if we don't have [materials out about it] in the Spring, they want to know why and when things are going to start.

From financial capital (i.e., the Century 21 grant), to built capital (i.e. NSP new home builds), to natural capital (i.e., the conversion of vacant lots into gardens), Lincoln's tangible assets were beginning to see growth partway through the existence of SPN. However, this growth was founded upon the perceived increase in local capacity, local agency, and local imagination on the part of those entities making the added investments. In the case of Lincoln, the tangible capital investments made visible what was happening below the surface in the emergence of a social infrastructure. The community's investment in Lincolns' built, financial, and natural capital seemed to also serve to reinforce a feeling of support.

6.7. Support and recognition helps to sustain the social infrastructure

When I was traveling in Africa, following my year of service-learning in the DR Congo after college, I remember learning to greet my Ndebele hosts in Zimbabwe with the traditional

greeting, “Do you see me?” The proper response is, “Yes, I see you!” There is something about the human psyche, and, I think, the psyche of whole communities, that cannot help but wonder, “Do you see me?” In deeply distressed neighborhoods, as I experienced in the Lincoln neighborhood, this question is even more acute. The years of perceived inaction and lack of caring on the part of the broader community and society had been internalized. During a follow-up conversation with one resident as I conducted my research, I wondered out loud why it was difficult to achieve new norms, relationships and participation in Lincoln. And their perspective was that the neighborhood had come to believe the narrative that they could not achieve any better and that the community did not care whether or not they did.

Changing an internalized, corporately held belief system is difficult. However, SPN does appear to have facilitated a degree of growth in that hard-to-measure feeling of being valued, of being “seen.” There are significant indications that lead me to believe that this is the case. Take, for example, what one educator had to say when they remarked that,

“I think it starts with a feeling on the part of the staff here that we’re in this all by ourselves. Then all these other people come in and give us help and support. So it’s not just all on our shoulders, there other people that are helping and making an impact for these kids.”

Another educator summarized it as follows, “Well it used to be at Lincoln that it was like, ‘oh, you teach at Lincoln...?’ And now it’s, ‘oh, you teach at Lincoln?!’ It’s very positive.”

Residents expressed similar sentiments. As one REM focus group participant pointed out,

Well when I’m out in the community, everybody knows the Promise Neighborhood. When people say, ‘where do you work?’ And I say Lincoln, in the Promise Neighborhood, they connect Promise with Lincoln. And it’s a good connection. Within the community, it’s well thought of.

It was particularly telling to me that another participant from the group – who had not wanted to say much during the session – came up to me after to say how he feels good when people are impressed that he was part of Promise, part of the good things that are happening.

It was more than a feeling of being recognized, it also was about the various forms of support that different supporters in the broader community provided the effort. Some examples of this that came up in the sessions included churches that supplied appreciation meals to Lincoln staff, organizations that provided school supplies to help students, and Wittenberg University supplying student interns. The annual Thanksgiving dinner fundraiser held by the FIJI fraternity – which had adopted SPN as its philanthropic activity – also came up. You can hear the energy that these forms of support produced in how they were described.

I couldn't believe the support of the people that were there. The FIJI boys that were collecting the money said that it is the biggest fundraiser that Wittenberg has. People just kept coming left and right to support the Promise Neighborhood!

People responded to the positive recognition that they were beginning to experience pride. Several participants from the REM Provider focus remarked on the increased sense of pride that they witnessed as time went by. As one person stated,

I went to one of the dinners at the school, and the number of people that I saw wearing the Promise shirt and were proud to be a part of the neighborhood impressed me. They were talking and engaging with me and each other and the kids. It was different than my experience previously going out to the schools. It was a different feeling.

The level of psychic energy that the feeling of being supported and recognized generated helped the initiative to grow well above what might be expected from an initial first year expenditure of approximately \$75,000 on the part of community funders.

6.8. Generating and sustaining community and economic change is “tough”

One participant summarized this finding well, saying, “This all sounds good, but doing this work is tough. And we haven't figured out how to change neighborhood economics yet.” And to this point, it is important to note the forms of community capital that were under-represented in the data collected from the focus groups. The tangible capitals (natural, financial,

and built) that represent larger infrastructure changes were impacted, but not nearly to the level that the intangible capitals were. These tangible capitals require a larger degree of financial commitment on the part of the community.

There would seem to be a need for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to change, and a greater level of investment, if there were to be larger housing and economic impacts. As identified through the exercise of mapping the Promise story, community leaders in 2010 selected the Lincoln neighborhood because of its high degree of distress and associated youth outcomes. As noted earlier in the literature review, research suggests that sustaining improvements in youth outcomes will require very large structural shifts in the stability of the housing market and the level of socio-economic diversity present in the neighborhood. Additionally, the research discussed indicated that when a neighborhood has achieved the level of distress that we witnessed in the Lincoln neighborhood, a much more substantial investment is required to sustainably shift school and neighborhood outcomes.

Progress has been made, but it will be very difficult to sustain what has been achieved, and near impossible to substantially grow the progress, without additional support and a “long haul” commitment on the part of the community. As noted above, increased human and social capital had some impact on such tangible capitals by attracting the interest of city government in targeting the neighborhood for housing stabilization resources. However, this, and similar projects, were happening tangentially to each other, thereby isolating and limiting their impact. A more coordinated investment infrastructure around the emerging social infrastructure that has emerged in the Lincoln neighborhood and school will greatly strengthen family outcomes.

SPN does not have the legal framework or technical expertise, nor is it sufficiently leveraged financially, to engage in the physical infrastructure or economic improvement that Springfield’s ecosystem of housing, economic, workforce, and urban development organizations

have. Entities that do have the framework, leverage, and expertise do not have a handle on how to build the kind of social infrastructure and psychic energy that can propel lasting change. It will be important to reflect on these issues when considering how to advance the cause of stabilizing the housing context and creating the mixed income environment that the research identifies as forming the foundation of school and neighborhood stabilization efforts.

There are models emerging that could be applied to begin to create the kind of coordination that would allow the entire system to continue to move the Lincoln neighborhood forward. One such model that I would point to is the WealthWorks framework. WealthWorks is an approach to community and economic development that connects a community's assets to market demand in ways that build rooted wealth for local people, places and firms. The model brings together a range of public, private and non-profit sector partners who have self-interest in the outcomes and an openness to discovering shared or common interests. SPN was beginning to build such a value chain around local food by converting vacant lots in Lincoln into sources of food production, while exploring market needs, including the school lunch program, a local restaurant, and popup retail. This and similar efforts might be created or deepened to meet multiple goods or service needs.

Whatever the framework or model, Springfield will need to explore ways in which the different entities who have a piece of the answer can work together to sustain change and continue down the path of creating a place in Lincoln out of the space that was merely a 110-block area surrounding Lincoln Elementary School. If the SPN experiment has shown the community anything, it is that building a change effort from the inside-out with youth success as a focal point generates a kind of authentic dynamism that traditional approaches have not achieved. However, the community needs to engage in more coordinated ways if the progress made thus far is to be sustained and cultivated to the next level of housing and economic impact.

Tough though it may be, it is essential that Springfield explore ways to scale the SPN approach. A brief 2017 end-of-year fundraising pitch for SPN was made at one of the focus groups. During that pitch, we were reminded that the “S” in SPN stands for Springfield, and for the notion that this model of doing business in the city was intended to positively impact how the community functions as a whole. The “P” stands for Promise, which is the commitment that we make to the youth of the community, and the youth to themselves and to their future. And the “N” stand for Neighborhood, which reminds us of the importance of *place* as an organizing principle. Each of these aspects of SPN tell us something important about what this initiative, piloted in the Lincoln neighborhood and Lincoln school, means for the community at large.

When I think about those key elements of the name of the initiative – Springfield Promise Neighborhood – I think about the wisdom of Michael Edward (2009), author of *Civil Society*, who postulates that the work of building social processes requires communities to work on three interconnected components. These include (1) collective vision; that is, the work of establish a vision of a preferred future, (2) public sphere; that is, creating the “space” in which residents can deliberate on how to achieve that vision and participate in the solutions identified, and (3) associational environment; that is, sparking the linkages between people and organizations that will allow the gifts and capacities of private, public, and civil society actors to be amplified for the benefit of all.

SPN has played an outsized role compared to the level of investment and staff involved. And this analysis would indicate that it is because the initiative sought to impact underlying structures and processes, as Edward suggests, not just solve discrete societal problems with artificial, often temporary, fixes. There is something in what has happened that is important for Springfield to learn from. One of those lessons is that it takes “Promise,” or an aspirational and *collective vision* of a preferred future to generate the kind of psychic energy that enhances other

investments. That means that attention must be paid to the intangible (human, social, cultural, and political) capital categories, as much as the tangible (financial, natural, built) capitals.

And, the best way to generate energy is to focus on creating places out spaces; that is, building authentic, resident- and youth-centered neighborhoods with heart and soul out of the artificial boundaries that subdivide a municipality. Although there is yet much to do, SPN has shown that it is possible to cultivate heart and soul within a neighborhood by strengthening the *public sphere* through intentional listening and asset mapping. And, by strengthening the *associational environment*, SPN has generated new linkages and networks that make a pipeline for youth success and resident and parent participation possible. Imagine if Springfield might incorporate these lessons in other neighborhoods, even as it strengthens its connectivity into the Lincoln neighborhood?

CHAPTER 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In their book, *Presence: An exploration of profound change in people, organizations, and society*, Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer, and Flowers (2004) assert that living systems create themselves and are continually growing and changing. When you hold up a hand, for example, you do not see a hand but you see cells that are continually dying and regenerating in the temporary form of a hand. Ultimately, what you are observing is the universe's capability to create hands, through the mechanism of DNA. I thought about this construct while considering what I might recommend to Springfield, the community that I called home for many years. I wanted to focus on those suggestions that would result in the emergence of Springfield's neighborhood revitalization DNA, rather than on tactical approaches that would yield only temporary quality of life changes.

Edgar Cahn (date), founder of youth courts, time banks, and poverty law, uses a different terminology than DNA to describe a similar concept as Senge, Jaworski, Sharmer, and Flowers. Cahn, referencing computer science, asserts that we need to rebuild our core operating system. While the economy, as we know it today, is a specialized program, the core economy are those basic civil society functions as raising children, making neighborhoods vibrant, taking care of the elderly, making democracy work, fighting to make the environment sustainable, and more. Cahn encourages the creation a 'social Prius' to achieve this aim of rebuilding our fundamental capacities as a society.

A social Prius is, "Something that runs on two kinds of fuel. It's going to run on a thin stream of money, but it's going to run on a large stream of psychic energy. Now that psychic energy may be conscience, it may be compassion, but it's going to run on more than money (retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COn7Fc5ZurQ> on November 18, 2017)."

Below, I consider how Springfield might create that social Prius that could drive change at the neighborhood level to eventually generate an upward spiral for the whole community.

1. Create an Office of Vibrant Neighborhoods (VN)
2. Manage the six components of Springfield's new operating system
3. Support a network of resident-led VN teams at the neighborhood level
4. Strengthen community leadership capacity
5. Establish a platform for effective cooperation
6. Expand resources and capacity for participatory neighborhood planning
7. Promote investments and establish a VN Fund for project implementation
8. Strengthen community-neighborhood-school connectivity
9. Build a systemic approach to youth success and wealth creation

7.1. Create an office of Vibrant Neighborhoods (VN)

Creating a collective vision, organizing public space for deliberation, and cultivating a strong associational environment requires the full attention of a paid staff person. That staff person, armed with mini grant resources, represents the thin stream of investment that will yield the large stream of psychic energy that will drive quality of life improvements. I propose that the first step toward establishing the regenerative DNA that will produce healthy neighborhoods across Springfield over time must be to create an Office of Vibrant Neighborhoods, staffed by a Neighborhood Coach, and lodged within the Community Development Department.

The role that the Neighborhood Coach will play will be outlined below as we discuss the implementation of a Springfield's new operating system. It is critically important, based on this study, that the Neighborhood Coach embrace the community development values and principles outlined in previous chapters, including a commitment to the asset-based, inside-out, relationally

driven priorities of ABCD. Once the position is established, the Neighborhood Coach will be responsible for facilitating the following Vibrant Neighborhood roadmap.

1. Recruit neighborhoods to apply for one of four Vibrant Neighborhood slots (my experience is that limiting the effort to four neighborhoods at the start would ensure that there is sufficient capacity to go deep);
2. Select the four most appropriate neighborhoods to work with for five years and solidify the coaching relationship through a memorandum of understanding;
3. Equip and support a core team of 4-8 dedicated residents per neighborhood to meet at least once a month as a team and once a quarter with the other core teams;
4. Help the core team recruit action team members to (1) catalog the individual, associational, and institutional assets of the neighborhood, (2) coordinate a community visioning process, (3) write a Vibrant Neighborhood plan, and (4) continually revisit the asset map and make connections between civic, social, and business entrepreneurs and the resources opportunities that they require to carry on;
5. Help organize project teams to implement specific tasks identified in the Vibrant Neighborhood plan, whether developing a pocket park, organizing a neighborhood festival, or building a stronger neighborhood economy;
6. Help the core team attain additional outside investments to fulfill the identified neighborhood vision and plan; and
7. Ensure that the principles of community development (1.) are woven into the social fabric of each neighborhood.

The ultimate aim of this process is to build an entrepreneurial social infrastructure that is robust enough to perpetuate the development of the neighborhood until an upward spiral is generated. As the neighborhood gains confidence in its power to shape its own future narrative,

then the neighborhood will likely seek to move on from the first initial focus area and expand the scope of its vision. Five years of intentional Neighborhood Coach investment should be a long enough period of time to get most neighborhoods off to a solid start, though there will likely be situations where a neighborhood will need to extend its relationship with the program. Below, I will explore the key ingredients that will need to be present in order for this process to succeed. However, before we get to that, let us consider the difficult issue of the selection process and what participating neighborhoods will receive in terms of support.

Over time, with the right people guiding the process and moving in the same direction, with a shared vision with the right benchmarks and data points to assess progress, and with the right mechanisms in place to refine and address issues and needs, the selected neighborhoods will begin to see the emergence of an entrepreneurial social infrastructure capable of catalyzing existing capital and resources to achieve quality of life improvements. Once these core ingredients of an entrepreneurial ecosystem are in place, neighborhoods will begin to gain traction and forward momentum that will generate an upward spiral.

We entered into this research project assuming that (1) we would discover that the work of SPN will have shed light on how an entrepreneurial operating system might be formed, (2) that there would be evidence that an entrepreneurial operating system has positive impact on a neighborhood's stock and flow of capital, and (3) that this information would prove to be useful in thinking about other neighborhoods in the City of Springfield. My research indicates that these assumptions are, in fact, correct. And I believe that Springfield could become a model for small metropolitan communities of similar size, if it chooses to apply the level of intentionality to design outlined below. This design, shepherded by a newly created Office of Vibrant Neighborhoods, would combine the use of specific tools, and the proven principles and practices from the field of community development, to ensure quality outcomes.

7.2. Manage the six components of Springfield's new operating system

Although the community development literature reveals a powerful set of tools to utilize in revitalizing neighborhoods, I found that the entrepreneurship literature to be more concrete and easily implementable. Specifically, when I considered what people felt the priority ought to be when scaling what works in SPN to other neighborhoods, I drew from such works as Gino Wickman's (2013) *Traction: Get a grip on your business* about the entrepreneurial operating system and Macke, Markley, and Fulwider's (2014) *Energizing entrepreneurial communities: A pathway to prosperity* about developing entrepreneurial communities to be especially useful. Based on these and other works, I would suggest that the following components are essential to establishing the kind of entrepreneurial social infrastructure that will generate the desired upward spirals and quality of life improvements. These components, as posited by Wickman, include: vision; people; traction; data; issues; and processes. Below we look at how these various components can be woven together to build more resilient neighborhoods.

Gershon, author of *Social Change 2.0* offers us an example of how the civil society sector could be engaged to produce sustainable development (Sustainability, 2015). Gershon's work includes the promising practice of building core teams; that is, groups of residents who support each other and who facilitate community progress. This approach proved to have a positive affect within the Lincoln neighborhood as well. The Springfield Promise Neighborhood Association became a hub, with multiple other committees and groups radiating out. However, a clearer structure and approach could have more effectively channeled the energy into productive and sustained efforts. The concept below should help to ameliorate these weaknesses.

Core teams (whether existing neighborhood associations in historic neighborhoods or newly formed action teams in new neighborhoods) would need to be formed. These teams would be composed of at least five members who would be charged with overseeing the

revitalization process. The teams would meet twice a month the first year and then once a month during the following years. As will be discussed in more detail below, a Neighborhood Coach will support the core teams. The coach's primary role would be to cultivate these core teams and equip and support them to follow the revitalization process. Core teams are supported to build consensus around a common vision and plan for the neighborhood's growth, to regularly review progress and analyze data, as well as to discuss processes and issues that need to be improved upon or addressed. By the end of the first six months, a core team will be in place in each of the selected neighborhoods.

The day-to-day revitalization work will not be handled exclusively by the core teams. In fact, once the core teams are in place, they will spend the next six months attending trainings and recruiting additional action team members. These action teams will be organized to perform such essential and ongoing tasks as visiting places of business as part of an asset mapping effort or facilitating study circle conversations to solicit feedback on the emerging neighborhood plan. In addition, project teams may form in years two through five to implement parts of the vision, such as organizing a public art project to fulfill a placemaking goal identified in the neighborhood plan, or starting a Freedom School program to stop the summer slide, understood as the loss of academic skills and knowledge over the course of summer holidays that are particularly acute in low-income environments.

Finally, there is at the heart of this work an emphasis on identifying, connecting, supporting, and growing the civic, social, and business entrepreneurs within the neighborhood. The more these innovators – whether they run a growth business, lead a social enterprise that solves a social issue using market mechanisms, or innovatively runs an agency or nonprofit organization – are the bedrock of an entrepreneurial social infrastructure. In the end, the goal of

the core and action teams is to create the relational fabric that will facilitate an increasing number of entrepreneurs to spark new ideas and approaches that generate greater well-being.

The residents who choose to be on the core and action teams are likely innovators in their own right. So it is imperative that the Neighborhood Coach spend time with them, kindling their passion for change and cultivating their capacity to achieve it. Leadership abilities are important, as well as a good foundation in community development theory and practice. Scharmer and Kaufer (2013) posit that it is critical to build people's capacity for "presencing"; that is, for listen to the emergent future and the capability to call it into reality. In order to achieve this level of awareness and leadership, regular opportunities for training and collaboration. The Neighborhood Coach will create the space for presencing by (1) cultivating the love for listening and building on strengths, (2) strengthening the ability to see youth, residents, and neighborhoods as interconnected parts of a whole, (3) nurturing the instinct for doing the work of revitalization *with* fellow residents, not *to* or *for*, (4) increasing the abilities, skills, and knowledge necessary for leadership development and self-governance, and (5) fan into flame a passion for relationships and the rebuilding of society's social fabric.

In a recent bid to attract Promise Zone funding, Springfield identified key areas of focus, including (1) improving educational opportunities, (2) reducing violent crime, (3) promoting health, (4) increasing access to affordable housing, (5) and growing jobs and the local economy, plus (6) strengthening civic engagement across all of these sectors. With support from the Neighborhood Coach, core teams will first need to look at available data to select a focus from within these identified priorities. Having a focus will bring a higher level of concreteness to the work at hand, even though the process will look similar across each neighborhood.

Once there is a focus, then a neighborhood-wide asset mapping, community visioning, and action planning process can be implemented. This process will serve to produce a catalogue

of the neighborhood's assets which might be harnessed for positive gains in the focus area. This catalogue will include the abilities, skills, knowledge, interests, and aspirations of residents, their informal networks and civic associations, and the resources and missions of local public, private, and nonprofit institutions. Additionally, this process will result in a 10-year vision describing the preferred future story, as well as the 3-year, 1-year, and first quarter action steps that will be undertaken to achieve the vision. This phase of the effort will likely take a year to complete.

By year three, specific projects and tasks will be underway to implement various portions of the plan. Processes will, at this point, need to be put in place. These processes may have to do with how the vision and work is being communicated between the core group and the rest of the neighborhood, how resident volunteers are being recruited and their service hours logged, or how whether the budget development process is being transparent enough. Oftentimes, where there are glitches in these kinds of processes, this is where issues have their origin. Left alone, these issues can result in breaches of trust and degraded information flows. The Neighborhood Coach will work closely with the core teams to identify and priorities the process and issues that need to be addressed so as to avoid small problems igniting huge firestorms.

Data must be used for establishing baselines and targets, measuring progress, and taking incremental corrective actions to accommodate new information. The Neighborhood Coach will need to develop a robust system for providing participating team members with the appropriate data as it is needed, such as GIS tapestry data of their neighborhood. Team members, for their part, must commit to using the available data for setting informed quarterly goals, goals that will advance the cause that they selected for focus on, whether safety, health, or some other focal point. Community feedback will be important to build into the rhythm of the neighborhood work. The REM focus group model used in this research may be one useful way to obtain insights and feedback with regular stakeholder touch points.

7.3. Support a network of resident-led VN teams at the neighborhood level

The first task of this new office will need to be to explore where there is existing energy and opportunity upon which to build this new position within the community. The goal should be for the Neighborhood Coach to work with four neighborhoods in a year, extending that relationship for five years during the pilot phase, with an option of renewal. A process should be established to help narrow the list of neighborhoods to the ideal number. The Council of Neighborhood Associations might be well positioned as a vehicle for creating an acceptable process between the new office and the community's neighborhood groups.

During the startup phase, it will be important to have an intentional focus on neighborhoods where energy and momentum already exists. As other neighborhoods observe early successes, they may become motivated to strengthen their efforts in the hope of being the next locale selected for the program. Neighborhoods would need to make a formal request for support from the new office. Clear criteria for how the selection process will proceed will need to be established. Selected neighborhoods will need to make a commitment to the process for an extended period of time. For their efforts, they would get full access to the Neighborhood Coach and to a set of funds that will support the completion of a neighborhood plan and grants to accomplish specific elements of the plan.

7.4. Strengthen community leadership capacity

Infrastructure already exists in Springfield to support leadership capacity development. Clark State Community College has held a Building Leaders to Build Community certificate program, as well as a non-profit development track. The Clark County Citizen's Academy also already works with rising civic leaders, preparing them to understand Springfield's issues and the work of community organizations. But what might it look like to use this infrastructure and

create a targeted leadership program for residents, ensuring that they understand the suite of community development tools that they have in their toolkit to create change in their neighborhoods? The new Office of Vibrant Neighborhoods could begin to coordinate the development of such a program.

7.5. Establish a platform for effective coordination

As identified in the *Findings* section of this paper, sustaining momentum in neighborhoods is difficult without adequate resource investments. These resources might come in the form of expertise, or leveraged funding for housing and economic stabilization projects. Facilitating the flow of these forms of human and financial capital will be critical to the success of the VN approach. Whether it is during the planning process (as discussed below), or for facilitated through Council of Neighborhood Association meetings, or through other venues, the community of economic, safety, workforce, health and human, and other services will need to be organized to be more strategic in their connections to participating VN neighborhoods.

7.6. Expand resources and capacity for participatory neighborhood planning

Community-initiated neighborhood planning, as modeled by the City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods, includes the following principles. The Neighborhood Coach will be critical in ensuring that these principles are followed, while supporting the planning process and engaging city planners and community and economic development entities as needed. In participatory planning, the neighborhood (1) initiates the planning process, rather than city government, (2) defines its own planning area, (3) identifies its own scope of work, (4) organizes its own planning team and process, and (5) commits to strengthening participation, at minimum, to a level that matches the funds used to support the planning process.

7.7. Promote investments and establish a VN Fund for project implementation

Funding the VN effort, under the current fiscal environment, may be difficult. There may be opportunities to explore private/public partnerships to support the work. It is worth remembering here the story of Tupelo, MS. The initial investment in community development came from the business community, based on their self-interest of growing a more stable customer base with enough income to purchase their products and services. In Boston and San Diego, private philanthropy was key. And in Seattle, government funding formed the bedrock of their neighborhood strategy. In Springfield, it will likely take all of these types of investors to agree to coordinate their funding strategies if the VN strategy is to succeed.

SPN, of course, enjoys investments from several public and private sources. The commitment to fund the initial pilot phase of the SPN initiative initially came through the Funders Forum. However, as one participant in a REM Focus Group pointed out in a side conversation, the Funders Forum is designed to start, but not sustain, local efforts. The funding community of Springfield ought to take a “long haul” view when organizing to fund the VN framework. Critical to the VN framework will be the VN Fund. This fund will disperse resources to participating neighborhoods after they have completed their plans and have identified priority projects.

Neighborhoods must be expected to match the investment by the VN Fund. In most cases, the match will come in the form of volunteer hours. One can imagine how this might all work to together in the case of the Lincoln neighborhood. The existing neighborhood association – which includes the participation of residents, SPN staff and volunteers, and local faith leaders – could apply to be a part of the VN program. Participatory planning has already taken place that has recognized the value, among other things, of programming for community youth. Imagine if the neighborhood opted to organize a summer project-based learning program

in conjunction with SPN. They might apply to the VN Fund to purchase supplies and retain group leaders. Residents might choose, as their match contribution, to recruit volunteers to support Lincoln Elementary with cross-walk safety or supporting events.

7.8. Strengthen community-neighborhood-school connectivity

The Promise story is an important reminder to all of the interdependent relationship that exists between schools, the neighborhoods that comprise their attendance zone, and the larger community. David Mathews, president of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation and a former U.S. secretary of education, writes about this dynamic in his 2006 book titled *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming our Democracy*. As Mathews points out,

The adults who have the most direct influence on young people include their parents, relatives, teachers, principals, coaches, and next-door neighbors. But these aren't necessarily the people who make the decisions about school policies. Ironically, those with the greatest opportunity to shape the lives of the next generation are at the end of a long chain of authority stretching from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue through state capitals to districts to local schools and finally in classrooms.... I believe there are ways for [those who feel they are at the bottom of that pile] to enrich our schools and, at the same time, reinvigorate our democracy, which is inseparable from education.

And how should we respond to this dynamic? Rather than recommending that school improvement be relied upon as the sole catalyst for change, Mathews urges educators and citizens to first build an engaged citizenry joined in collective action, explaining that a community must have the public it needs before it can have the schools it wants. When a democratic public is formed, he concludes, it will work to improve the education of all Americans. In short, strengthening community-neighborhood-school connectivity is essential for the very future of our society, much as it is critical for the success of our youth and the vibrancy of our neighborhoods and communities.

7.9. Build a systemic approach to youth success and wealth creation

SPN has been working to build a pipeline of interventions that extend from increased pre-school opportunities through extended programming for targeted youth at the elementary and beginning middle school grades. Additional supports by the community are required to continue extending youth and family supports, through collaborations and partnerships, from cradle to calling. Similarly focused and strategic emphasis should be applied to building an economy that serves everyone within participating neighborhoods. The field of community economic development continues to mature. This expanding tool kit should be introduced early on in the evolution of each VN core team. More than ever, neighborhoods have the opportunity to shape the trajectory of their own economy by engaging their entrepreneurs and business community.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

The opening letter of a Springfield Urban Design two-day conference (Springfield Urban, 2006) asserts, “Today, the city is at an inflection point in its history. There is an unprecedented spirit of cooperation among many partners.... Springfield’s recent investments in arts, culture, historic preservation, and economic development demonstrate a strong commitment by community leaders to advance downtown revitalization and realize the potential for the successful future development of the greater Springfield region” (page). To this list of innovative investments, Springfield can add the SPN initiative and an expanded strategy that radiates out from the downtown revitalization efforts to influence the trajectory of its neighborhoods as well. If it is true that the life of a community is connected to the lift of its neighborhoods, then this experiment marks another critical inflection point in Springfield’s history.

Though tenuous, the trajectory of Springfield is a hopeful one. Sustaining the upward momentum will require investments in Springfield’s stock and flow of its capitals at the neighborhood level, on top of its current downtown focus. Through such activities, sustained over time, Springfield may reclaim its identity as a vibrant locale marked by social inclusion, economic sustainability, and ecosystem health. Lynn Tett concludes her work, *Community Education, Learning, and Development*, with an aspirational conversation about how hope and desire have creative roles to play in encouraging neighborhood and community development. It is in, “moving away from inequitable, individualized, deficit models of learning brings about change in understanding both self and society that leads on to a more equitable life for everyone. Having such a vision before us helps us to take those steps that in the end make a broad path as we walk towards a more democratically just society” (2010, p. 107).

If anything, the story of SPN illustrates that creating a “broad path” – an upward spiral with a wide enough sweep to capture everyone, including the historically marginalized, in its ascendant plunge – is possible and necessary. Such upward spirals can be intentionally generated through a focus on creating an entrepreneurial social infrastructure, the mechanism by which a neighborhood’s stock and flow of capitals are aligned and strengthened to produce broadly experienced prosperity. Springfield, which has experimented with the entrepreneurial social infrastructure-building process in the Lincoln neighborhood rests at the edge of an important decision point.

My hope is that this research into the SPN initiative helps the community of Springfield understand with greater clarity that decision point. Springfield can choose to think of the SPN initiative as a discreet project to “fix” a particular neighborhood. Our communities are littered with such projects that were never invested in at the level necessary to create a tipping point in the face of decades upon decades of under-investment in the factors that generate an upward spiral – human and social capital. Or, Springfield could embrace the learning opportunity that SPN represents and invest in the mechanisms necessary to multiply and scale what works in place-based and resident-driven strategies to other neighborhoods through the creation of an office dedicated to neighborhood revitalization and youth success.

In his book, *Dreamland: The true tale of America’s opiate epidemic*, Sam Quinones (date) documents the devastating rise of opiate addiction in America. Quinones set out to write about what he thought was the source of the epidemic, drug trafficking. But while this is one important part of the story, it is not the whole story. There also was, he discovered, a huge growth in demand for the increasingly cheap supply of black tar heroin. That growth in demand was occurring, he discovered, because of the overprescribing of Oxycontin and other addictive prescription drugs. Interestingly, he next discovered that what made it possible for both the

supply and demand networks to grow was the larger cultural and social context of the country, with our growing predilections for isolationist lifestyles.

At the conclusion of the 353-page exploration into the broad sweep of the opiate epidemic, Quinones writes, “I believe more strongly than ever that the antidote to heroin is community. If you want to keep kids off heroin, make sure people in your neighborhood do things together, in public, often.... Break down those barriers that keep people isolated. Don’t have play dates; just go out and play. Bring people out of their private rooms, whatever forms those rooms take” (p. 353). In a way, I think that this analysis of the SPN initiative demonstrates that one could substitute just about any issue for the term “heroin” in the Quinones’ quote above. Indeed, the antidote to the academic achievement gap is... *community*. The antidote to neighborhood distress is... *community*. The antidote to poverty is... *community*. If this is true, then nothing is more important than the task of continuing to explore and scale and integrate those strategies that build a sense of community, a feeling of belonging, a love of becoming.

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