Community Mobilization and Action for Results:

A New Approach to Building Local Movements To Strengthen Families and Transform Neighborhoods

A close partner of Making Connections Denver is The Piton Foundation, whose support comes from the Gary Williams Energy Corporation, an integrated oil and gas company based in Denver. Its founder, Sam Gary, has a deep commitment to children and families living in Denver's low-income neighborhoods, hence The Piton Foundation's interest in Making Connections.

Gary's interests in the oil business and community building could hardly seem more unrelated. Or so it seemed until Making Connections/Piton staff asked Gary to talk a little about his work, of which they knew little. He talked about the challenge of drilling increasingly deeper wells to extract more oil from long-pumped fields. It is now common to have to drill to 10,000 feet or more.

Gary explained that the key challenge in drilling such deep wells is not the last 1000 feet, but the initial 1000 feet. If that is not done right — correct diameter, adequate reinforcement — you will never get to 10,000 feet.

You won't be aware of it right away. You will be able to drill to perhaps 9000 feet without too much difficulty. But that's not enough. If you don't reach 10,000 feet, your big investment of money and time will be wasted. And unfortunately, there's nothing that you can do to rectify the early mistakes. You simply must start over.

Hearing this story was one of those ah-ha moments for Piton Foundation staff member Terri Bailey. It helped her clarify why Making Connections Denver needed to be putting so much emphasis on engaging residents very early in Making Connections. "Our theory of change required that residents play key roles to ensure that the transformation process would sustain itself."

That theory of change also required that a way be found to mobilize more and more residents in the work of MC in Denver, while at the same time mobilizing a range of other stakeholders—nonprofits, staff of government agencies, organizers, political leaders. An infrastructure needed to be built that would allow this kind of engagement by both residents and other stakeholders to continue and deepen over time, even after outside resources are withdrawn. In a sense this infrastructure is similar to the reinforcement that needs to be done when starting a deep-drilling process.

But this metaphor suggests another crucial element—the goal. When a deep well is started, geologists have already determined how deep that well needs to be to produce oil. The work done during the initial 1000 feet allows the drillers to achieve the goal of digging a well of a certain depth, say 10,000 feet.

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The purpose of this paper is to explain why we believe mobilization of both residents and institutions is so critical to the ultimate success of Making Connections and discuss why a locally-generated agenda for change is essential in that mobilization and change process.

CMAR's purpose is to help the 10 Making Connections sites accomplish three critical steps in the transformation process:

1. **Engage and mobilize residents of the Making Connections target neighborhoods.**

2. **Engage and mobilize other "stakeholders" in these neighborhoods** — community-based organizations, faith-based groups, political leaders, government agencies (social services, health, police, schools, etc.), nonprofits, funders, etc.

3. **Pull residents and other stakeholders together around a common agenda for change** — a clearly articulated set of results that becomes the focus for a movement. The goal is not simply to get diverse people to work together. The goal is to get these people to come up with an ambitious agenda that generates a powerful sense of momentum that can transcend specific issues and develop a sense of movement.

Indeed, we believe that the significant potential contribution of CMAR will be to:

- Show how to mobilize not just residents but also many other stakeholders.

- Show how to build no less than a movement for change led by residents *and* other stakeholders who are pulled together by a common agenda for change, an agenda they've forged together.

What this reflects is a different approach to building the power needed to make change. A more traditional mobilization approach emphasizes the need to build the power of residents (or workers, women, minorities) to demand change. The Making Connections/CMAR approach sees the power to make change coming out of the process of mobilizing both residents and other stakeholders around an agenda that they forge together. The commitment to a mutual goal generates a sense of momentum and accountability.

What is Making Connections?

Making Connections is the Casey Foundation's long-term investment in strengthening neighborhoods so they can provide safe and supportive environments in which families can successfully raise children.

In essence it is trying to blend a place-based, neighborhood revitalization strategy with a service-based, family development strategy. It is taking a comprehensive approach to confronting the struggles of families and neighborhoods: working to improve services and supports, connect families with economic opportunities and build strong social networks.

During its first few years Making Connections has been building broad partnerships in 10 cities, partnerships that hopefully will leverage resources and opportunities to improve the targeted neighborhoods.

Several compelling ideas underlie MC:

- The need to **focus on the neighborhoods** where most poor children live.

- The need to **focus on the families** of these children, not just the children themselves.

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- The need to see the key role that supportive communities can play in the life of a family and to **strengthen social networks** within these communities.

- The need to **be comprehensive**: to pull together the often disjointed services that focus on one specific need of a child or a family.

- The need to **deal with the economic realities** these families face.

- The need for a **long-term focus** and commitment.

- The need to specify and then **measure what results** from all this work.

How to go from idea to reality

In one sense what Making Connections has been about so far is figuring out how to get these potentially powerful ideas implemented. Different sites have tried different approaches. Some have focused first on the people at the top (mayors, agency heads, school superintendents), believing that if these people don't sign on, these ideas will never get implemented. Others have focused on the other end of the spectrum, residents of the target neighborhoods. Still others have tried to bring all the stakeholders together to work through a plan for implementing these ideas.

CMAR's core ideas are that:

- All these people and probably many others need to be *mobilized* around an agreed-upon, results-based agenda.

- To keep this agenda moving forward and on target, an organized, empowered community of residents is crucial. The main reason why is quite simple: the only way to sustain a transformation effort is to deeply engage the people whose lives and neighborhoods would be transformed.

- The process of mobilizing a disparate group of people around a common agenda is extremely challenging. One of the great potential contribu-

tions of MC could be figuring out whether this can be done, whether it works and how to do it.

The task of figuring out how to do it — and helping MC sites that want to try to do it — is the fundamental task we see for Community Mobilization for Action and Results.

Why community mobilization?

Why is it that we believe that "community mobilization" is so crucial? And why do we believe that an organized community of residents is essential to keep the mobilization process going?

The CMAR work group has spent a lot of time talking about this question and coming up with an explanation of why we think these two elements are essential. We want the Foundation to make a serious commitment to community mobilization through CMAR, which is why we want to provide as clear and complete an answer to this question as we can.

As we've thought about all this, we have come to realize that it would be challenging to convince nearly any foundation that the key to achieving its goals is helping mobilize a movement. We see a tension between the power of ideas and the power of a mobilization process.

Most big national foundations focus on ideas. They are looking to uncover "best practices." They are searching for promising models and effective strategies. They look to advance knowledge and, perhaps, bring about changes in policies. But these foundations are uncomfortable with movements for change. "Movements" do not seem to be the domain of foundations, especially after the political limitations imposed on them by the 1969 Tax Reform Act.

But could this focus on ideas be one reason that much of the work foundations have done over the past three decades to improve outcomes for poor families don't have enough to show in the way of concrete results in the lives of the poor? Indeed, in many ways the challenges of being poor in America — and

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the number of people facing these challenges — have gotten worse, not better, during this period.

The CMAR workgroup believes that the answer to this question is yes. Ideas — best practices — by themselves are *not* enough to change the lives and outcomes of a significant number of poor children. You can come up with a brilliant plan for improving school readiness, but without a strategy for implementing this plan, for getting school officials and parents and every other "stakeholder" to buy into and actively work for this plan, the plan by itself will never be enough.

We are convinced that the missing ingredient from all the ambitious Comprehensive Community Initiatives that have been undertaken over the past decade and a half is an understanding of and commitment to mobilization. There has been too little focus on the role of the community, how to build the community's capacity and how to unite the community and other stakeholders in a movement for change.

All of these CCIs had some important ideas at their core, ideas such as the need to be comprehensive in trying to make a difference in long-neglected communities. These ideas have been refined over the years as the initiatives developed experience on the ground.

Taken together, the ideas at the core of MC are potentially quite powerful. They have helped catalyze some impressive partnerships in several Making Connections cities. An impressive range of people and institutions have bought into the MC ideas. These ideas have motivated all the members of the CMAR Work Group.

But the fundamental question is whether these ideas — or any other set of ideas — will by themselves be powerful enough to bring about a transformation in these communities. Will they be powerful enough to change how the institutions that impact these communities do their work? Can these ideas overcome all the cultural and economic forces that

have contributed to the existing problems in these communities?

Again, CMAR's core conviction is that the answers to these questions are no. For these ideas to stimulate a transformation of these neighborhoods, no less than a movement must be built around them.

The core of what CMAR wants to do is help people in the 10 sites figure out ways to combine these powerful ideas with a better understanding of how to build a powerful movement for change.

What exactly do we mean by "community mobilization?"

Given the history of organizing in this country, it is easy to assume that "community mobilization" means organizing community residents, pure and simple. It is not what we mean. In the MC context, community mobilization means:

■ **Engaging and mobilizing a large number of residents**, including the hard-to-reach, most disenfranchised residents.

■ **Engaging and mobilizing the formal and informal organizations within the target neighborhoods:** community organizations, community development corporations, churches, block clubs, public housing resident organizations, boys' and girls' clubs, etc.

■ **Engaging and mobilizing many outside stakeholders:** the people, institutions and businesses that impact — or that could impact — these communities.

■ **Mobilizing all these pieces of the puzzle around a common, results-focused agenda** to which all the partners are committed.

Community mobilization is an all-out effort to leverage outside resources and opportunities to support a family-strengthening agenda by simultaneously working to revitalize neighborhoods,

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transform how services and supports are provided and achieve family economic security.

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Why are good ideas not enough?

Certainly MC has shown that good ideas can pull people in and get them to the table. But it hasn't yet shown that these ideas by themselves can get institutions to fundamentally change how they do their business. The problem is that there are reasons that they operate as they do. There is always self-interest.

A very large challenge is the existing culture of community development. Resources to support these neighborhoods flow in categories. They support programs that focus on one specific problem: housing, jobs, schools, social services, etc. Organizations are set up to receive this categorical support, which could be in the form of grants from foundations or contracts from individual government agencies. The problem becomes their reason for existence. The continuation of the funding becomes an issue of organizational survival.

This sets up competition among all the problems and the organizations set up to deal with these problems. Is it surprising that an invitation to work together across these categorical lines often is not heeded, especially when it becomes clear that the discussion is around eliminating these lines?

The same phenomenon affects the other side of the coin: the agencies and foundations that dispense the resources. Because of their focus on specific problems, they function as silos. They have little interaction. They inevitably compete for resources and attention.

Occasionally a charismatic mayor or agency head or school superintendent will try to break through these silos and change the way agencies do their business. They may well achieve some changes short-term. But one problem is that these individuals often have very short tenures. When that person leaves, the agencies often revert back to old ways of doing business. The rank-and-file workers go back to the familiar.

Public housing in the nation's capital is a good example of this. After decades of poor performance, the court appointed a receiver to take over the DC Public Housing Authority in the mid-1990s. He made many changes. But shortly after he left, stories began coming out in *The Washington Post* that could have been written before the receiver ever came to Washington. Maintenance that wasn't getting done. Vacancies weren't being filled. The list is long.

These failed attempts at change create their own legacy, making change even more challenging. The public comes to believe that change is impossible in these communities. With little exposure to the people who live in these neighborhoods, many people develop a "blame the victim" mentality. The task of building "public will" around an agenda for change becomes even more difficult.

On the neighborhood level, failed initiatives build a powerful legacy of disappointment and cynicism and a sense that things will never really change no matter what you do.

Is it any wonder that individuals or foundations with a lot of enthusiasm for a compelling new set of ideas often feel like they are banging their heads against a brick wall? *It is very easy to forget that most change in the world has resulted not just from positive motivation or effective persuasion but from steady pressure for change.* In CMAR's view, the key element in an effective transformation initiative such as MC is finding a source for this steady pressure.

Why is it critical to mobilize residents?

All of these challenges can be pretty discouraging until you think about what was faced in other times by

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other people. The realities of life for Blacks in the South during the era of Jim Crow produced a pervasive sense of hopelessness among many people. If ever there was a system that reflected self-interest, if ever there was a system resistant to change from outside, that was one.

But of course we've all witnessed the change that has happened around race. Somehow, the many obstacles to change were overcome. Can we learn from this part of our recent history? This is precisely one of CMAR's goals: figuring out what we can learn from other fairly recent efforts to bring about transformations in this country — equality for women, better working conditions for farm-workers, etc.

When we look at these changes, one thing stands out: the changes came at least in part from the inside, from the people who were most directly affected by the problem. Ultimately they were the ones who had to stand up and reject the status quo. CMAR believes that the roles these people can play are essential to a transformation process.

In initiatives aimed at changing long-neglected neighborhoods, many people talk about residents being the ultimate stakeholders. Residents bear the greatest costs of failed systems and have the most to gain from a transformation. But they have the least power to influence these systems. *We believe that addressing this discrepancy between importance and power is the key to sustainability.*

Residents have the potential of fulfilling several critical roles in the transformation process. As they take on these roles, this gap between importance and power will narrow. These roles for residents include:

■ Providing experience-based knowledge about the target neighborhoods.

Many people would agree with the notion that residents can bring valuable knowledge about their neighborhoods to the MC table. But acknowledging this idea and putting it into practice can be two very

different things. The reality is that it is hard for people who have spent much time studying these neighborhoods to acknowledge that they have something to learn from people who have never been to college.

"You think of yourself as a nice person and you want to say, 'Yeah, of course I know that,'" explains Denver's Terri Bailey. But saying it is very different from practicing it, she adds. *"It's not, 'Yes I value you.' It's that you contribute to me. That's different. A lot of people understand it intellectually, but if they haven't experienced it relationally, they still don't get it."*

The reality is that every neighborhood is different and the people who best understand the dynamics of their own neighborhood are long-time residents. Neighborhoods vary in infrastructure, size, shape, composition, capacity, history and much more. They have complex histories. Residents bring insights about what people living in this neighborhood are thinking, what will motivate them, what the biggest problems are, why past change efforts have failed, how the neighborhood has changed, who trusts whom, where the tensions are, how people feel about the police or the schools or other services…the list is long.

Residents are also closest to the constant change that is happening in all neighborhoods. Like the people who live in them, neighborhoods grow, mature, age and, on occasion, even die, all in response to various social, economic and political trends. An outsider is never going to completely see all these changes and understand the reality of a particular neighborhood at a particular time.

This is certainly not to say that residents are the only legitimate source of knowledge about their communities. Obviously people who have a deep understanding of issues that affect these communities — juvenile justice, health, education, etc. — also have a great deal to bring to the table. But they are the ones who are already recognized as the experts. *The key is coming to the conviction that residents themselves are also experts.*

■ Pushing for the kinds of changes that make sense.

Residents have a blended understanding of the problems. Most residents are not part of the community development culture that categorizes the problems and solutions. Many connections among problems are perfectly obvious to them. Finding a job is not enough if a person doesn't have transportation to the job or child care during it.

To expect the person in charge of employment to walk downstairs to ask the person in charge of child care subsidies to combine their resources just isn't going to happen very often. Even when it does, there's a good chance that this cooperation won't last beyond the tenures of these two individuals.

But when the community comes together with a blended understanding of what its problems are and what strategies will help, they create a framework that is blended. It has a better chance of convincing these institutions to connect their resources as part of a larger process of change. Success will build on this.

■ Keeping the change process on track.

Even when stakeholders are very committed to a MC-type process, the reality is that they all must be accountable to many agendas, not just the MC agenda. These other agendas are broader than how the families in these target neighborhoods are doing. Again, the way we see to overcome this is to have an organized group of residents for whom the MC change agenda is paramount.

This is also the reason residents need to be a big part of the accountability process. All the outside stakeholders know how busy everyone else is. They understand their often conflicting agendas. They understand how hard it is for someone to change their own agency and its processes. They have relationships with some of these other stakeholders that transcend MC. As a result, they will often be reluctant to push someone who hasn't done what they committed to doing, especially in relation to changing their own agency.

But once residents feel empowered to be at the table, they often will not let all these other considerations keep them from asking the hard questions and pushing people to meet their commitments.

Organized residents can also play a key role in keeping the other stakeholders aware of what the community is thinking today, especially if residents are deeply involved in the Local Learning Partnership. If a long-term change process simply gets community "input" in the beginning and then does its work, it may find that two years down the road residents have little interest in its work. It no longer reflects where the community is today.

Residents also often understand how much needs to change within their communities before other residents will actually feel the change. Statistics about the number of residents who have gotten jobs don't mean much to many residents if it seems like the same number of young men are hanging out at a local park, still unemployed. Residents have more interest than anyone in achieving results: it is their neighborhoods and their lives that are at stake.

The other side of this coin is that having many residents deeply engaged in the transformation process can produce an adrenaline boost for the other stakeholders. They see what a difference this work can make in people's lives. They hear stories of how one resident's son has started going to school everyday after going through the community court process. They see the number and range of people coming to public meetings. The MC ideas become more concrete. All this reinforces their own reasons for being engaged in this work over time.

■ Pushing for change over time.

All of this adds up to sustainability. Residents are the one ingredient in a long-term change initiative that will be there over time. It may be different residents, which is why the engagement process must be continuous. But if that process works, there will always be residents engaged in the process, applying that steady pressure for change that is so crucial in CMAR's view.

> *"There is a need to work with — and build the capacity of — the existing infrastructure of organizations in the target neighborhoods. The civil rights movement was built in part on an infrastructure of local organizations."*

How do you mobilize residents?

These roles that residents can and should play in MC are obviously large. It is why resident engagement must go well beyond the normal handful of residents that participate in long-term initiatives like MC. Later in this paper we lay out a lot we have learned about how to engage large numbers of residents. We want to emphasize two key points here:

First, we believe the only way to engage enough residents over a long enough period of time is to establish some kind of infrastructure. This does not mean setting up a new organization to do this. Instead, it means things like developing a group of funders and other partners who understand the importance of engagement and are willing to support it over time, building the capacity of organizations that can support the engagement process, perhaps establishing a resident training program, that kind of thing.

Second is the need to work with — and build the capacity of — the existing infrastructure of organizations in the target neighborhoods. The civil rights movement was built in part on an infrastructure of institutions and organizations, many of which were based in local communities or whose role was to support local people: churches, NAACP chapters, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, training entities such as The Highlander Center (where Rosa Parks attended a training) and many more.

Something very similar to this exists today in nearly all low-income neighborhoods. There are block clubs, public housing resident organizations, neighborhood associations, churches, boys and girls clubs, informal tutoring groups, parent organizations, business associations, Community Development Corporations, after-school programs, youth sports teams and much more.

Engaging many of these existing groups is crucial, but just as crucial is developing a strategy for building the capacity of these groups and the residents involved with them. In most communities, their capacity is quite limited, mainly as a result of little

funding. Many of these groups have only volunteer staff and minuscule budgets.

Why do you also need to mobilize other stakeholders?

In traditional organizing, the idea is to build the power of the community's organization so that it can force agencies and politicians to respond to the community's needs. Organizing has indeed often built enough power in this way to have success on specific issues. But so often after a success on an issue, the energy dissipates. It's seldom sustainable. And even the most successful organizing groups seldom are able to bring about comprehensive change in their communities.

We think this is true for two reasons. First, most if not all of the problems faced by these struggling neighborhoods are extremely complex. They are multi-issue, multi-stakeholder and multi-level. It's simply not possible to get at these problems by focusing on one or two key issues or one or two key "targets." Certainly community organizing has won many important victories on issues. But seldom has it added up to transformation of a community.

The second reason is that successful social movements seldom if ever come only from the people whose lives will be changed. Given the complex web of self-interests and inertia that make systems and institutions so difficult to change, organizing residents alone to demand changes will seldom if ever be enough. If it were, mandates would have been delivered, resources shifted and decision-makers held accountable a long time ago.

The reality is that most if not all successful movements have key allies. They garner the support of influential outsiders. Eventually they build the support of the public, who become sympathetic to their concerns. In the civil rights movement, allies included northern students, churches and other religious congregations, politicians and many others. Ultimately most of the public came to support the cause of civil

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rights largely because of the media coverage they saw. All of this together built the political will that led to the 1964 Civil Rights Act and other key changes.

These are precisely the elements that MC is trying to bring together in the 10 sites. It is CMAR's belief that you need all three elements to succeed: a constantly expanding core of residents who push hard for change, the active support of key people and institutions that impact their neighborhoods and, ultimately, public support that will allow for the kind of policy changes that will be necessary.

How do you mobilize other stakeholders?

A core CMAR belief is that it is not just residents that need to be the focus of a mobilization strategy. The other stakeholders that MC is trying to engage — the school system, the court system, the employment training system, etc. — also need to be mobilized.

Simply having one person from a particular "partner" agency or nonprofit who attends MC meetings is not, by itself, enough. That individual can be the catalyst. He or she can play a critical role as an entry point into his or her agency. But the key is working with that individual to develop a strategy for building a critical mass within the agency for change. CMAR's goal is to help sites figure out how to do this.

We think part of the answer is to hone in on results and push people to ask a crucial question: "Are we as an agency really making as large a difference as we need to make on the lives of the individuals and families we are supposed to be helping?" MC's emphasis on data pays off here: good data can be a powerful tool for pushing an agency to confront this question.

We certainly don't begin to know exactly how to do all this. Indeed, learning more about how to mobilize partner agencies is one of CMAR's critical goals.

Why is it critical to have a mutually-agreed-upon set of results drive the mobilization process?

The challenge of mobilizing MC partners is one reason CMAR believes that results are critical: results — or the lack of results — can be used as a tool to push key agencies to overcome their internal inertia and change how they work.

We would argue that all successful movements began with a focus on results — on ways that the movement would lead to concrete changes in peoples' lives. For the civil rights movement, for example, the specific issues were things like the right to vote, the right of access to public places such as restaurants, the right to equal treatment. The campaign was around civil rights and racial equity. But the goal was better health care, better education, greater economic opportunity. People didn't want to be equal just to be equal. They felt it was the way to get better schools and improve their living conditions.

Similarly, for the union movement, the issues were the right to collective bargaining. The tools were worker rights. But the goals were decent working hours, decent pay, a better standard of living, an opportunity for workers to buy a house and send their kids to college.

These goals are what can give a movement energy. They also are what can bring diverse people with diverse interests together. *We believe one reason that so much fragmentation has developed within the broad field of community development is that there hasn't been nearly enough agreement about the ultimate goals.* The housing department focuses on housing, the transportation people focus on transportation, the social services department focuses on TANF and food stamps.

We remember long debates among community people about the relative merits of community organizing vs. housing and economic development vs. social services. One person would argue that poor people will never improve their communities as a whole until they were organized and could demand

change. Another would argue that the first step had to be decent jobs and homes — people struggling for the necessities didn't have time to organize. Another would argue that the first step had to be services to get people off drugs, to get them trained, to make them better parents.

The obvious truth is that no one approach is enough. If nothing else, the past three decades should have taught us this. The first step is for people to acknowledge this reality, which we believe is something many people are now willing to do.

Even some community organizers are beginning to acknowledge that fighting and even winning on specific issues is not enough to change communities. What's the point of winning a $200 million Community Reinvestment Act agreement if it doesn't lead to people in your target neighborhoods actually being able to live in better, more stable housing? Resolving a specific issue — such as the unwillingness of local banks to lend money in a lower income neighborhood — cannot be seen as the end. It has to be seen as part of the process of achieving some broader goal. It is that broader goal that we believe can pull diverse people and institutions together.

The key is what will cause these diverse stakeholders to come together. For CMAR, the ultimate purpose is no less than building a neighborhood-based movement for change.

We believe many people in MC sites are searching for help in how to build such a movement. Must we wait for conditions and circumstances to happen to allow a movement to develop? Do you look for issues that can galvanize people? Do you search for a charismatic leader — a Rosa Parks or a Martin Luther King — to lead the movement? Or is it possible to build these conditions? To train the next Rosa Parks? To catalyze enough people to build a true movement?

This is where CMAR can help. We want to continue exploring the history of movement building and community organizing to learn more about how to build a local movement for change.

To some people, this whole discussion of building a movement around transforming a neighborhood may seem completely off base. To them, movements are essentially spontaneous. Yes, the conditions need to be right. But movements themselves are more catalyzed by a moment or a leader, not orchestrated by a group.

But we are arguing that movements such as civil rights dispel this notion. Histories of that movement suggest that in many ways it was highly orchestrated. It had and needed support by a whole network of organizations. It certainly generated emotion, but it didn't survive over so many years on emotion alone.

What is CMAR asking the foundation to do?

When Making Connections began it had a deep commitment to engaging residents and mobilizing a movement for change in the target neighborhoods. This can be seen clearly in *Making Connections Developmental Phase: Operational Plan*. For example, this initiative's "critical values" included:

- "The needs, desires and wishes of families should be at the center of any community change agenda."

- "Community ownership and participation in every step of the process is critical."

- "This work should include the hardest to reach, most disenfranchised families, work with them to address needs they identify, and help them build the capacity to pursue their own vision for change."

Among the "operating principles" were:

- "The Foundation should not 'anoint' local leaders or dictate any single governing structure; the goal should be to encourage the broadest participation by residents, families, community groups, service agencies and policy makers."

- "Cultivating leadership among the most disenfranchised families and individual should be an explicit and high priority of this work."

- "Data collection activities and information strategies should be shaped with community input and involvement and should be used to help the community learn more about itself and plot its own strategies for change."

Later, the plan states that, "The cornerstone of this activity [building a broad base of neighborhood stakeholders] involves engaging, mobilizing and including families in substantial ways in all activities related to Making Connections."

These are quite strong and very innovative statements for any foundation to make about a community-building initiative. These statements have been powerful motivators for many of us who want to find ways to put these values and principles into action.

But as we expected, putting these ideas into action has not been easy. Many sites have acknowledged that engaging residents to this degree — particularly the "hardest to reach, most disenfranchised families" — has been the biggest challenge of Making Connections.

Those of us involved in the CMAR work believe that the Foundation needs to acknowledge how difficult this has been and how far many sites are from putting into action these values and principles. If we want Making Connections to dig deeply and demonstrate the potential for transformation in these struggling neighborhoods, we have to get the resident engagement part done well now. We can't get half way through this change process and then go back to engage the residents whose lives this process is supposed to make better.

So how do we do this?

- *First, we as a foundation must reassert the necessity of achieving deep resident engagement and involvement in MC.*

It is listed as one of six "core capacities" that all sites are supposed to achieve. Given the values and principles that MC started with, it can't be seen as just one of six core capacities. We as a foundation must make it clear that achieving five of the six core capacities but not achieving deep resident engagement is not enough.

For sites with minimal resident engagement in their day-to-day work and in their learning activities, to even begin a conversation about transition to local ownership seems premature. The whole idea underlying MC — what makes it fundamentally different from other Comprehensive Community Initiatives — is that this work will reflect the perspectives of residents and involve them deeply in the change process. Residents must be part of local ownership. *But if the ownership is transferred to sites without deep resident engagement — and without an infrastructure set up to continue that level of engagement — those sites will never have residents owning the initiative.*

As we have said, the need is not just for resources for CMAR. The need is for a renewed mandate for deeply engaging residents as well as other stakeholders in a local movement for change. The Foundation has pushed on the need to make this work sustainable, a quality that has been missing from most previous CCIs. It is our conviction that building a movement that includes deeply engaged and informed residents is the key to sustainability.

As we pointed out, the Operational Plan for MC lays out this mandate, not only for engaging residents but also for finding ways to "generate the public and political will to support neighborhood-level efforts to strengthen families."

But that Operational Plan is five years old. Few if any MC staff have looked it over recently. Since it was published there have been strong pushes around the core results, the core capacities and a few key issues, such as school readiness. While the ability to engage residents is a core capacity, there are plenty of other capacity challenges to occupy site teams.

All of this is why we believe that any investment of resources in CMAR needs to be accompanied by a renewed mandate about the critical importance of

"Organizers have engaged residents very effectively in many places around specific issues. But they hadn't engaged residents around a long-term change process like MC, one that involves working with many other stakeholders."

mobilizing residents and other stakeholders into a local movement for change. This comes from our early CMAR experience of consulting with people in several sites. We have found a lot of interest in this work, but local people are feeling so many pressures from the Foundation around Making Connections that they can't invest the time and resources to use whatever knowledge and support CMAR may bring.

A few people are just uncomfortable with this work, in part we believe because they don't feel a lot of competence around it, they see it as potentially controversial or they simply don't place much value on it. The notion of mobilizing people around a common agenda is tough to communicate, especially in a foundation environment.

The bottom line is that CMAR cannot successfully push people to do things that the Foundation is not willing to do itself.

Given all this, we felt a need to make a strong argument for community mobilization.

- **Second, the Foundation needs to make it clear that it not only still believes in the importance of deep resident engagement, it is more convinced than ever that it can be achieved.**

It is extremely easy to find reasons why it's so hard to engage residents. They are constantly in survival mode. They have limited resources. They have children who need attention. They have health issues. Etcetera.

But it *can* be done. A few sites are showing that it can be done. We need to acknowledge these sites and learn how they've done it.

For example, Denver MC has engaged thousands of people. They have a detailed record of every resident who has come to MC meetings or events. They regularly get hundreds of people to major public events such as the Transforming Schools Initiative public meeting in May, which brought out more than 500 residents. And these are not the "usual suspects." Many speak only Spanish or Vietnamese. Many are not legal immigrants. Most have never been involved in community activities before MC.

Denver's LLP is run by a committee of residents. MC staff positions are regularly filled by residents. Denver's new governance body will include many residents, all of whom understand MC and have learned an enormous amount about their neighborhoods. Residents played a major role in hiring the new local site coordinator.

Our worry is that the Foundation will settle for relatively small results in MC sites and lose its focus on the prize, which is building a long-term process that can transform struggling neighborhoods.

- **Third, the Foundation needs to invest considerable resources in helping people understand how to engage residents in a long-term change process.**

This of course is the role we propose for CMAR! The reality when we started working on MC is that no one knew how to engage residents in this way. Organizers had engaged residents very effectively in many places around specific issues. But they hadn't engaged residents around a long-term change process like MC, one that involves working with many other stakeholders, often the very people that organizers had rallied against! Certainly prior CCIs did not have a lot to teach about how to do this. Our own CCI, the Rebuilding Communities Initiative, taught us a lot, but it certainly hadn't mastered this challenge.

What will CMAR's role be?

The very good news is that, as we discuss in the next section, many of us have learned a lot about how to do it. Just as important, all of us acknowledge that we have much more to learn. Denver, for example, is far from thinking it has figured it all out.

In the year or so we have been developing CMAR, we have also seen a great deal of interest in the top-

ics we are exploring. We would say that more than half the MC sites are moving towards the idea that our role as an initiative should be helping the community mobilize around the core results. Many local people have told us that the piece of work they would assign to the Foundation is to help them with this mobilization task. In other words, there is both openness and interest by many people in CMAR's potential work.

So what exactly would CMAR do? A second paper lays out our thinking about the kind of technical assistance we would be providing sites and the principles that would guide our TA. This section lays out three broad roles we see for CMAR. To state the obvious, what CMAR does in each site will depend greatly on that site's interests and needs.

1. The key role we see CMAR playing is to work with local site teams, local residents and local partners in developing strategies for involving more residents — particularly those who are the hardest to engage.

We have done a great deal of thinking about how to provide technical assistance around these topics. CMAR's TA role will of course vary by site. But in general we anticipate that the work would include:

■ **Help site teams and local partners develop a better understanding of community organizing.**

As we explain later, we believe that working with community organizers and applying some of the principles of organizing is a key step in involving residents and getting a mobilization process underway. But most people have had limited exposure to organizing. As a result, they often see only the many myths that have been built up around organizing. We think a lot of the unease with organizing comes from these myths. Often people don't understand the difference between good and bad organizing. Part of CMAR's role is educating site teams and partners about community organizing: what organizing can do, what the divisions are within the organizing

world, how organizers work, the principles and values of organizing, how to avoid putting one organizing ideology ahead of the others and much more.

■ **Help organizers better understand and see the potential of Making Connections.**

The other side of the coin is that most organizers have had very little experience working with a long-term, comprehensive community change initiative. They often understand and are experienced with coalitions around specific issues. But MC is a very different approach than what they are used to. It's a big step for most organizers to get engaged over time with something like MC. We believe there's an important role for CMAR in helping local organizers see the potential of getting involved in MC and overcome their own fear of the unknown. Part of this may involve connecting them to organizers who are deeply engaged with MC in other cities.

■ **Help site teams and partners assess their local environments.**

Most communities have dozens if not hundreds of formal and informal neighborhood-based groups — block associations, CFCs, tenant organizations, church and social groups, social service and advocacy groups and many more. They have all kinds of history together and relationships with each other. They often seem to share the same goals yet compete vigorously with each other. Often they are part of national networks or associations and they reflect this network's assumptions and approaches. In other words, there is a lot to sort out. By using TA providers who have worked for years in these communities, we think CMAR can help a lot with these assessments.

■ **Help site teams and partners work through the other challenges of getting community people and groups to work together.**

Again, the existing culture of community development runs deep in community organizations. The task is not only to get the agencies and institutions and funders to work together but to also get com-

munity groups to do so. The goal is to get them to see the larger vision and stop fighting on these little issues one at a time.

■ **Help the sites and the Foundation come up with markers that will show whether the mobilization process is on target.**

We see this as particularly critical. Just as the Foundation has correctly pushed for markers of progress on the core results, we also need to lay out markers for progress in the engagement and mobilization work.

We worry that the Foundation hasn't pushed hard enough on sites to show progress on this front. This takes us back to the deep oil-drilling metaphor. You have to know whether the first 1000 feet is being drilled correctly because, if it isn't, you will never achieve the ultimate result you want.

The markers aren't always obvious. Simply the number of residents who come to a community meeting doesn't tell you enough. We have been looking at the measurement system developed by the Development Leadership Network. It has developed indicators for three areas:

Community and organizational capacity (e.g., leadership in neighborhood organizations or resident representation in service provider planning processes).

Social relationships and networks (e.g., resident sense of social cohesion or links across race and class).

Community economic and political influence (e.g., evidence of community power or residents holding civic, elected and appointed positions).

Whether these are useful indicators remains to be seen. But the key is to work at coming up with indicators that can predict success in engaging residents and mobilizing a change process that ultimately leads to results that transform these neighborhoods.

2. As sites engage more residents, a second CMAR role would be to help the sites figure out how to pull together residents and other stakeholders into a local movement for change.

Many organizing groups have successfully engaged large numbers of residents around issues. They have often been able to use this energy to make changes on these issues. But most groups have not been able to keep this kind of engagement and energy happening long enough to bring about a transformation within their communities. We believe that the task is not just to engage and mobilize residents, but to also engage and mobilize the other stakeholders into nothing less than a local movement for change.

To succeed, MC must allow for many new relationships to develop. We think CMAR can help bridge the large gap between community people and "system" people. For example, some sites have found that having organizers and partners work together on specific, short-term activities such as pulling together a neighborhood summit can help build respect and lasting relationships. Inevitably race, class and culture is present, so CMAR may well try to help bridge some of these potential divides.

3. As we do all this, the third role for CMAR is learning from this work.

As is true of many aspects of MC, this part of CMAR's work has potential far beyond Making Connections and the Casey Foundation. Many people and institutions are struggling to figure out how to engage residents effectively. Indeed, to say it again, we believe that the main reason that most previous Comprehensive Community Initiatives have failed to come close to realizing their lofty goals has been their inability to successfully engage residents and create a local movement for change.

We want to learn as much as we can about these processes. We anticipate working very closely with the Local Learning Partnerships on learning from this work. For one thing we would see the LLPs playing

"We think CMAR can pull together insights from MC sites, from community organizing practice and from the history of change movements into a potentially powerful theory of change for transforming these neighborhoods."

an important role in developing the indicators for progress on engagement and mobilization.

But in addition we see a key role for the LLPs in the mobilization process itself, helping give it direction, providing information resources and keeping it accountable. Again, this could involve connecting one site's LLP with another site's. Based on the experience of some LLPs, we could also see LLPs modeling ways for residents to become deeply engaged in this process and contribute knowledge to it. Given that residents of these neighborhoods are traditionally the subjects, not the drivers, of research, developing ways for residents to become part of the LLPs' work can be especially powerful.

There is tremendous excitement among those involved in CMAR about its learning potential. We think it can pull together insights from MC sites, from community organizing practice and from the history of change movements into a potentially powerful theory of change for transforming these neighborhoods to make them more supportive of families and children.

What we have learned so far

Fortunately we are not starting at the beginning of this learning process, nor are we starting only with theories about how to do this. We now have considerable experience on the ground, going back to our experience with the Rebuilding Communities Initiative.

Adapt some of the principles and values of organizing

To engage a large core of residents, we have seen the usefulness of some of the principles and values that come out of community organizing.

- *One is the importance of building relationships.* In the end, organizing is about people coming together around a common understanding about how to address some issue. The beginning of that

journey can be full of conflict. There will inevitably be differences among the people you want to bring together. There will be differences especially about specific issues: what should be done with that empty lot in the neighborhood that a particular agency controls?

If these differences about specific issues come out before solid relationships are built, they can undermine the entire effort. But if the relationships are solid, then differences around specific issues can be resolved.

To build solid relationships, good organizing emphasizes principles such as the need to treat people with respect and to overcome differences in power.

- *A second principle involves the need to understand and acknowledge self interest.* Good organizers understand that you can only organize and mobilize people around ideas and goals that are important to them. A compelling idea may get some people and organizations to the MC table. But what will keep them there is self-interest: somehow the work of MC must be meeting some needs of the people engaged in the work. Seeing that self-interest is critical in being able to keep people engaged.

One obvious self-interest is money. We all know that many people have come to the MC table because they see it as a way to the Casey Foundation's money. If that is the only reason people are there, that's clearly a problem, especially if their interest is in money to support their existing programs. Many of these people will leave the table when that kind of money doesn't come quickly, a development that isn't necessarily bad.

For many people around the table, another self-interest is simply getting some specific issue in the target neighborhood dealt with, say crime or poor schools. These people need to see some concrete steps being taken on this issue. This is where we've found that a small grants effort early-on can be quite valuable. It gives people a sense

> *"One reason that there is so much resistance to seemingly rational changes is that the way things work now provides power to certain institutions and individuals, particularly the power to control resources."*

that things are being done, that it isn't all talk and long-term plans.

For institutions, their self-interest may be a political need to focus on a particular neighborhood or to meet a requirement to involve residents in a planning process. The key is finding ways to meet this short-term need while engaging these institutions in the larger MC process. The work needs to be framed in a way so that institutions can see that their work will be enhanced.

For individuals from these institutions, their personal self-interest may be to connect with something they believe could lead to the kind of changes that got them involved in this work in the first place. These people are a key target for community mobilization: as they get engaged in the process they can be crucial emissaries to — and sources of information about — their institutions. Over time they can become key advocates for changes within their systems.

The key from an organizing and mobilizing perspective is to systematically identify self-interest and then, if possible, make sure the MC work is meeting these interests.

■ *A third principle involves the need to understand and acknowledge the issues of power.* "Power" can be a very controversial word. It has certainly often been used in an organizing context in a way that alienates people. But there is a power dimension to this work. One reason that there is so much resistance to seemingly rational changes is that the way things work now provides power to certain institutions and individuals, particularly the power to control resources.

This seems like an obvious statement. But unless people are willing to acknowledge this power dimension and incorporate it into their theory of change, CMAR believes that large-scale change simply will not happen. To avoid dealing with power, people find the lowest common denominators: small changes that don't make anyone uncomfortable, in part because they don't challenge anyone's power. The best you can end up with is a series of small changes that may sound good but don't come close to adding up to "neighborhood transformation."

We believe that the only way to overcome the fractionalization that comes from the power each institution has over some part of the resources coming into a neighborhood is for the community itself to become powerful enough to impose some order on their neighborhood's environment.

In an organizing context, power means the ability to force a particular "target" to change a particular policy or practice. The problem with this approach is that it too is fractionalized: it focuses on individual issues, often issues that affect specific groups of people. It falls short in achieving the kind of broad, long-term changes that these communities need. And it risks alienating the people with the power over resources: they accede on a particular issue and build a strategy for resistance, not cooperation.

This approach also fails to deal with the need to change the existing culture, both within agencies that impact the communities and within the community development world itself, a culture of building discrete organizations and generating resources around specific programs (housing, economic development, etc.). Indeed, this need to change cultures — an extremely difficult task — is another reason we believe that a transformation initiative such as MC must deal with the issue of power.

What CMAR wants to explore is a different understanding of and approach to power. It starts with residents themselves building their own internal sense of power, one that comes from demonstrating an ability to get things done. This then changes the dynamics when residents come together with powerful institutions and individuals. The relationships are more between equals. Residents no longer are simply the subjects of an institution's work. Residents come into these relationships

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with a sense of belonging and that they are bringing something important, a sense shared by the others around the table.

The "organized power base" that is Denver's engine of change becomes a mix of residents and community groups with other stakeholders who have committed themselves to the broader MC agenda.

■ *A fourth principle involves the need to be strategic.* Engaging people is simply the first step. Good may come out of that engagement: people make connections with their neighbors. But from a mobilizing perspective, that's not enough. There needs to be a strategy for the engagement. As people become engaged, they need to be able to get involved with specific efforts to make changes in the target neighborhoods, efforts that both help MC produce results and help individual participants meet their own self-interests. Organizing's emphasis on strategy can help clarify how all the work going on in a MC neighborhood hangs together strategically, thus helping connect each piece of work to the larger initiative.

Build an infrastructure to keep engaging people over time

One striking observation from community organizing is that — with some notable exceptions — organizing efforts often don't last. They generate enormous energy around a particular issue, enough often to "win" on that issue. But few community organizers have figured out how to keep that engagement happening over time. It becomes episodic: when there is a compelling issue, people turn out. When that issue is resolved, people stop participating.

Sometimes residents drop out for other reasons. Parents struggling to reform a middle school suddenly have no more kids in that school. An active resident moves to a new neighborhood. Another resident is suddenly confronted with a health challenge. This is a challenge for more traditional leadership development strategies: if you rely on a handful of

key people, you are always going to be vulnerable to those people suddenly leaving the scene.

Similarly, community organizations often start with great energy but, over time, that energy often dissipates. A handful of residents become dominant. They often become the community's "gatekeepers." Again, how do you maintain that original energy over the length of time required for transformation?

We think the key is an infrastructure that is set up to specifically engage residents over time. We don't necessarily mean an organization; we've learned that establishing a new organization can bring its own set of problems. We mean a set of ongoing relationships among key individuals who understand the need to engage residents, a set of agreed-upon principles that underscore the importance of engaging residents, a core of funders who are willing to support this process, and a set of processes for continually reaching out to new residents (an example is Denver's story circle process).

This is also where we see small grants fitting: it can be a mechanism for both training and developing new resident leaders. One big lesson that came out of RCI was that residents learn the most through doing, not through training. Small grants allow residents to get engaged in projects that both produce some concrete changes and often produce new change agents. Nothing else builds confidence as quickly as accomplishing something: developing an after-school soccer program, getting a trash-strewn empty lot cleaned up, getting a stop sign at a dangerous intersection.

This leads to another principle: allow for different levels of engagement. Often "engaging residents" means finding people who can sit through the many meetings involved in planning and overseeing a long-term initiative. Not everyone wants or can do this. They don't really want to be on the board of an organization or be a member of an advisory committee. What they care about is cleaning up the local playground. Allowing for people to become engaged outside the formal venues is a way to reach the hard-to-engage. Structures and formal leadership roles exclude many people.

> *"What organizers can bring is a knowledge of the history of organizing in a particular city, a commitment to the principles of organizing, experience on the ground, relationships with residents, churches and many other stakeholders, and an existing infrastructure."*

Engage the existing organizing infrastructure

While our emphasis is on using the principles of organizing, not the specific doctrines of a particular organizing "network" or model, we also believe that it is important to connect with existing organizing groups.

What they can bring is a knowledge of the history of organizing in a particular city, a commitment to the principles of organizing (often including a commitment to work with those who are most disenfranchised), experience on the ground, relationships with residents, churches and many other stakeholders, and an existing infrastructure that can be strengthened and can provide sustainability.

What we can bring is resources to strengthen their organizations (many are quite weak because of a lack of funding) and an opportunity to broaden their impact.

The key is finding organizing partners who are willing to stretch beyond the orthodoxy of their approach to organizing and work with people with whom organizers have traditionally kept a distance.

Another key is to consciously try to overcome the widespread fear of organizing. Many people think that organizing mainly involves "actions" taken against "targets" (who could easily be them!). The reality is that most residents don't like being rabble rousers. They aren't comfortable confronting people. If there is another way to accomplish their goals, they will gladly pursue it. The confrontation aspect of organizing is but one element of organizing.

One of the most interesting observations from Denver has been seeing how people in government will respond to mobilized residents. The potential often excites more than scares them. They begin to see how mobilized residents can help them enormously in their work for internal reform. They begin to realize that there really is something to the notion that residents have much to teach because of their experiences with systems and agencies and, more generally, with poverty.

We think part of this happened because there was a strategy to formally educate partners about organizing. It seemed to help people understand the full range of organizing's principles and values. Several partners traveled to formal organizing trainings.

Another key is getting people to work with organizers. In Denver, organizers helped pull together Making Connections' initial "summits," a process that allowed relationships to develop between the organizers and the other partners and that showed these partners how useful organizing could be in the MC process.

Build the capacity of residents and their organizations

We can't even begin to think about how residents can partner with some powerful institutions unless we can create a sense in the community that this organized group of residents can get things done. That's one meaning of power: building an internal sense that residents can get things done. When residents sense this capacity, they can then sit down in a partnership with people who are generally regarded as smarter, more informed, and more resourced.

You can't come into a conversation like that and not feel that you belong. Having power is less about residents being able to force institutions to change and more about residents believing they have a right to sit at the same table as institutions and to have their voices heard. Once residents develop this sense of their own power—and the others sitting at the table sense that residents feel empowered in this way—we believe that profound changes will begin to happen.

Unfortunately, getting to this point of empowerment is not easy. The capacity of residents and community organizations in most low income communities is low, an inevitable result of a lack of support and opportunities. This is why a major investment in building capacity is so critical.

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> *core strategic idea built around a common agenda.*
> *RCI began to call this core strategic idea 'an engine of change.'*
> *in Denver it is the need to build an organized power base."*

Create an ethos for change

In the early stages of building a movement for change, we believe that people need to come together around a set of defined principles and values. It can't simply be a set of compelling but abstract ideas, such as the need to strengthen families. Nearly everyone can say "Amen" to that idea! The core needs to be better defined. How do we strengthen families? What specifically do we believe about what needs to happen for families in these neighborhoods to be strengthened?

We're not saying that a detailed plan needs to be laid out at this point. Instead we are arguing for a set of principles. One might be the need for agencies that are trying to help these families to work together. Another might be the need to involve these families in defining the long-term plan. Another might involve dealing with the structural and economic reasons that families in these neighborhoods are struggling.

Denver's one page set of principles is one example of what we are suggesting. Whenever a new partner joins Denver Making Connections, they must embrace these principles. It is like a covenant. The principles make it clear what the MC work in Denver will involve. They set the ground rules for how we will work together. Not everyone can embrace these principles, which is okay. *The kind of transformation that MC envisions cannot be done by consensus. If it could, it would have happened a long time ago.*

Create a strategy for change that connects all the MC work and is widely understood

With everything that needs to be done, with all the activity that MC hopefully generates, with all the people who get engaged in it, what unifies it all? How does it eventually all add up to neighborhood transformation?

Is a simple, compelling idea like the one at the core of MC enough to pull all this activity and all these people together? Is the statement of principles and values enough?

Our sense is that to truly mobilize a community, you also need a core strategic idea built around a common agenda. RCI began to call this core strategic idea "an engine of change." For example, in Denver it is the need to build an organized power base (not in the traditional organizing sense of just residents, but one that includes a range of people and organizations that are committed to the transformation process).

We see this notion as similar to a core strategy of the civil rights movement, which was getting the federal government to pass legislation (which became the Civil Rights Act of 1965) that would force fundamental changes within states, particularly around voting, an ultimate source of political power and a way to influence the myriad of issues being confronted by the movement.

This strategy was a way of achieving what people really bought into, their "common agenda," which in essence was removing the structural barriers that made one race inferior to another. Our sense is that each site needs to develop this core strategy and common agenda; there isn't one strategy or one agenda for every neighborhood.

Once you have agreement around that core strategy and agenda, a key step is making sure that this is widely understood by all the people engaged in the process. People need to see the connection between what they are doing day-to-day and what the ultimate goal of the MC process is. Without this, that day-to-day work on specific issues becomes the focus, the very problem that MC is trying to overcome.

Create space for change

Because this is not a consensus approach, the people who do embrace the ideas and principles of MC will be making themselves vulnerable. This is true for every type of person who gets involved. In Denver we've seen residents who have embraced MC being

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ostracized by the community groups to which they had been connected. Some family members resent the amount of time that residents are investing. We've seen MC staff who have had to say no to grant requests from long-time colleagues. We've had individuals from city agencies who have had their agencies the subject of actions by organizing committees affiliated with MC. The organizers themselves who have embraced MC have been pushed hard by board members or their organizing networks.

Plus, the kind of change we are talking about is a little scary. It is like walking at night in a place you've never been before. The idea of child welfare people sitting down with families…that's scary whether you are a bureaucrat or a family member. The need is to create a space where people feel safe enough to try new approaches. The idea that the Casey Foundation sanctions this space is part of it. If the foundation is committing its money and expertise and influence to allow people to try these new approaches, that can go a long ways towards easing the fear.

Within MC there is also much potential for splits: around race, power, religion, etc. This is why the principles around which the MC movement is built need to address how people will work together.

To counter all this, a great deal of support is needed for those who get involved. Part of this goes back to the importance of relationships. The residents and staff members who are deeply engaged in Denver's LLP, for example, talked extensively about the family-like atmosphere of their meetings. Individuals have developed a strong connection to others engaged in the work. They feel support.

That same sense of support is felt among the "partners" who have been meeting now for years to help develop the MC process. A series of family events and retreats in the mountains have helped build this sense of community within MC. This has strong parallels in the Civil Rights Movement, which built strong communities of support within churches, organizations such as SCLC and in many other ways.

Develop a set of results that will be enforced by an accountability system

We see that a dilemma of many long-term initiatives is that the goals are so lofty and long-term that it is extremely hard to ensure that they are staying on track month-to-month or year-to-year. This is why a movement like MC needs to be results oriented. There needs to be clarity about who is doing what and by when. There needs to be clarity about what defines success over the short-term. What changes do we need to see in the schools over the next two years to know we are on track to achieve our loftier education goals?

MC has already incorporated this idea into its process. But setting goals and setting up a process that insures that these goals are met are two discrete tasks. Indeed, we would argue that this again is a mobilization challenge.

The issue with a comprehensive initiative such as MC is that you inevitably are looking to achieve a range of goals; MC has six categories of results. Inevitably you have a range of people and groups that are working on achieving these specific results. These people are accountable to themselves, to their constituencies, to a smaller group of people in the community. But how do they stay accountable to the broader community? This is why achieving broad consensus on the goals and strategy is so critical. It helps keep people focused on how their piece of the work relates to the big picture: the ultimate transformation goal of this process.

But this kind of agreement is just one step. You also need a way to challenge people when they are not doing what they promised. This goes back to the importance of building relationships: people don't want to disappoint those they work closely with over time. Plus, with a strong relationship, when someone is challenged, they are less likely to simply withdraw from the group.

The main point here is that an accountability system needs to involve more than simply a set of con-

> *"This is why achieving broad consensus on the goals and strategy is so critical. It helps keep people focused on how their piece of the work relates to the big picture: the ultimate transformation goal of this process."*

crete short-term goals. It needs to be seen as another process that needs to be mobilized.

From a mobilization perspective, the goals also cannot just be about neighborhood changes, such as more teachers at a local school or a lower suspension rate. The goals also have to be about the number of people involved in the process, the number of leaders who have emerged, the understanding that these leaders have developed about their communities and about the process of change, etc.

Create a way to overcome separateness

In many of the MC neighborhoods, there exists great diversity: race, ethnicity, legal status, language, place of residence (such as public housing), etc. Given this reality, in these neighborhoods, mobilizing residents must involve breaking down some of these separations.

In Denver this has been one of the values of story circles, which involve a small group of residents reflecting on and responding to questions about their experiences in their communities. Story circles have clearly helped people with great differences see their similarities and start to talk and work with each other.

It has also been a value of all the organizing committees and neighborhood alliances that have been established: each one involves a variety of people who are learning to work together.

The same thing is happening at the "partner" level: people from different agencies who had little contact with each other have developed strong relationships through the experience of working together on MC.

This is one of many areas where we see important overlap with the social network exploration that is also occurring within MC.

CMAR's Learning Role

This paper has laid out a lot of what we think we're learning about mobilizing a long-term change initiative such as Making Connections. We've done this in part because we want to make sure that this "community mobilization" strategy is not seen simply as a completely untested theory. It comes directly from our experiences not just in Making Connections or even RCI but through decades of community change experiences by many of those who are part of the CMAR Work Group.

But most of these lessons should have "tentative" or "draft" attached to them. Which brings us back to one of the main reasons for investing in CMAR: there is a tremendous amount we all need and want to learn about the process of mobilizing a movement like MC. We know that the jury is still out about whether it can be done. So that is one question we want to examine. But there are many others:
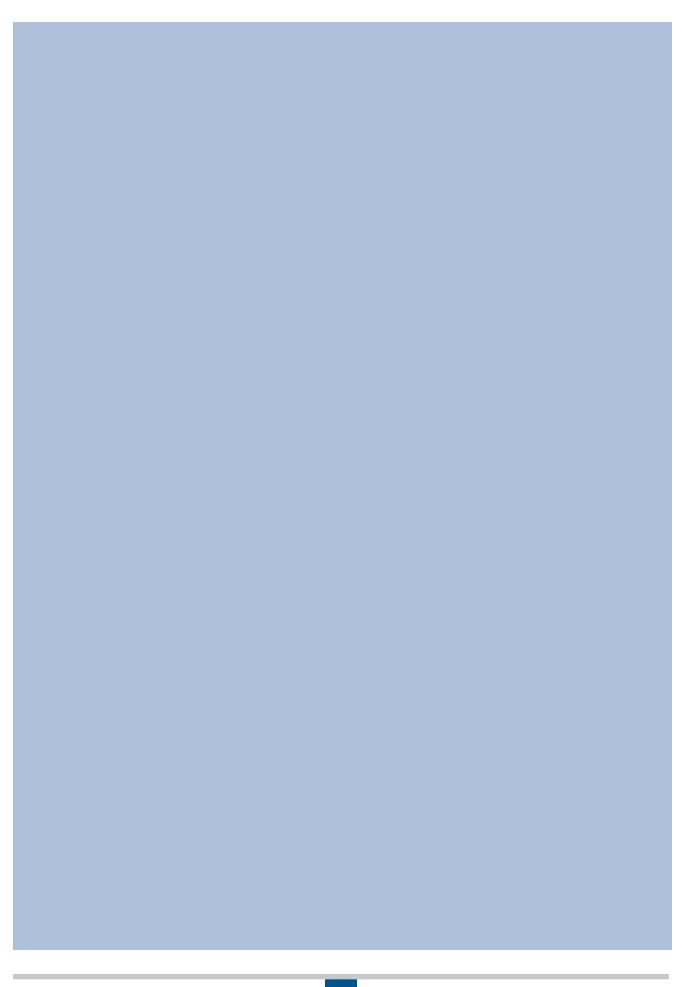
- What will work to mobilize a movement in this city, in this set of circumstances? Will there be certain places where it is impossible? How do you identify these places?

- Can you overcome that strong sense that, "This just couldn't happen here?"

- Who at a minimum needs to be around that core table of stakeholders?

- How important a role do key individuals play? Is it only possible to engage organizers to the degree they have been in Denver if you have a Mike Kromrey or Peg Logan? Are there organizers in other cities who will be as open to this as they have been? Do you need someone on the ground like a Cec Ortiz who is a natural connector?

- What about the role of key partners? Do you need someone at the level of a Myrna Hipp in Denver in city government to make this work? Do you need a mayor who makes it clear that people within the government can do this?

- Can these key internal allies really bring about cultural and policy changes within their agencies?

*"Those few movements that have succeeded are
the ones that have figured out how to sustain
the vision over an often very long period of time.
How do you achieve this on a neighborhood level?"*

- Do you need a local theory of change? Which one(s) will prove to be effective?

- What works to unite residents and other stakeholders in a movement for change? How do you overcome the inevitable tensions?

- How do you govern and manage a mobilization process?

- How do you sustain this mobilization process? The reality is that very few people and organizations have figured out how to do this. You can argue that those few movements that have succeeded are the ones that have figured out how to sustain the vision over an often very long period of time. How do you achieve this on a neighborhood level given the amount of change that is constantly occurring in all neighborhoods?

We could easily add many questions to this list. The point is that there is an enormous amount to learn. CMAR's goals are to help people in all the MC sites learn what we think we've learned so far and, as we do this, to keep learning from the sites.

"We are convinced that the missing ingredient from all the ambitious Comprehensive Community Initiatives that have been undertaken over the past decade and a half is an understanding of and commitment to mobilization."

This paper was written in 2004 by Garland Yates working with his *Making Connections* diarist, Tim Saasta. Yates, a senior program officer for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has coordinated the CMAR work. He also is the "Site Team Leader" for the Denver *Making Connections* site.

Saasta has worked as Yates' "diarist" for five years. He also is the coordinator of the Casey Foundation's Diarist Project.

The Diarist Project is a new approach the Foundation is using to learn from its efforts to strengthen families and transform struggling neighborhoods. Diarists work to capture strategies and insights of the people who are leading the neighborhood transformation work.

Making Connections is a Casey Foundation initiative to support work that demonstrates the simple premise that kids thrive when their families are strong and their community supportive. Begun in 1999, Making Connection is now an intricate network of people and groups committed to making strong families and neighborhoods their highest priorities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (aecf.org) works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. Its primary mission is to foster public policies, human service reforms and community support that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families.

CMAR coordinator Garland Yates' ideas about engaging residents in a long-term community change initiative are expressed in an interview with him published by The Diarist Project. For a copy, see below.

For more copies of this paper or of the interview with Yates about engaging residents, contact:

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