

It Takes a Village – But the Village Needs a Vision: The Role of the “Quarterback” Organization in Comprehensive Community Development

With case studies from Chelsea, MA, Los Angeles, CA, and the rural Midwest

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June 2016

A paper submitted to Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies
and NeighborWorks America



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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my very great appreciation to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies and NeighborWorks America for supporting my research as part of the Edward M. Gramlich Fellowship in Community and Economic Development. I am particularly grateful for the invaluable guidance and input given by advisors Paul Singh and Marcea Barringer of NeighborWorks America and Alexander von Hoffman of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. In addition, Chris Herbert and Pamela Baldwin of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies and Kirsten Johnson-Obey of NeighborWorks America offered support throughout the summer, for which I am very thankful. The research would not have been possible or as enjoyable without the collaboration of staff at the three housing and community development organizations profiled in this paper: I am grateful to Carla Potts of the North East Community Action Corporation; Dean Matsubayashi and Remy de la Peza of the Little Tokyo Service Center; and Ann Houston of The Neighborhood Developers. I am also thankful to the following people, who shared their wisdom with me during the summer: Nancy Andrews of the Low Income Investment Fund, Tom Dewar of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Community Change, Prabal Chakrabarti of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Melissa Davis of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and Keri-Nicole Dillman and Ann Verrilli of the Citizens' Housing and Planning Association. Last but not least, thank you to Michael Eisenbrey and to Sam La Tronica, my fellow Gramlich fellow.

Executive Summary

The following paper explores what housing organizations can gain from engaging in partnership-driven forms of comprehensive community development. It specifically looks at housing and community development organizations that are acting as “quarterback” or “backbone” organizations for such initiatives, helping to assemble resources, guide the project’s vision and strategy, build and support relationships, and collect data. In contrast to traditional leadership models, working as a “quarterback” or “backbone” organization involves the facilitation, not the control, of an initiative (for a discussion of the term, see pages 15-17). Although these lead organizations play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability of comprehensive community development initiatives, little research has been conducted about the challenges and opportunities that they face.

A case study methodology is used in order to understand the experience of housing and community development organizations working as “quarterback” or “backbone” organizations. The three organizations and initiatives that are studied vary in location, scope, institutional form, and focus. They include the following:

- **The Neighborhood Developers and Connect** (pages 20-26): The Neighborhood Developers, a community development corporation (CDC), initiated a partnership-driven financial resource center in Chelsea, MA, where the CDC is based. Since 2012, The Neighborhood Developers has been responsible for the day-to-day management of Connect. The case study highlights how the initiative has helped The Neighborhood Developers better support the community that it serves, while also gaining national attention. It also finds that significant effort is spent by The Neighborhood Developers in managing relationships among organizations, with little funding to support this work.
- **The North East Community Action Corporation and the Tri-State Development Summit** (pages 27-33): Since 2005, the North East Community Action Corporation has led an initiative to include housing as part of a rural economic development initiative in 35 counties of southeastern Iowa, northeastern Missouri, and western Illinois. The Tri-State Development Summit is an informal initiative that emphasizes relationship-building. In building a regional identity, the initiative faces the challenges of scale and a lack of funding for rural initiatives.

- **Little Tokyo Service Center CDC and Sustainable Little Tokyo** (pages 35-41): In 2013, the Little Tokyo Service Center and Little Tokyo Community Council established Sustainable Little Tokyo, an initiative that seeks to develop a community-driven identity and future for the Little Tokyo neighborhood of Los Angeles. Sustainable Little Tokyo includes efforts to develop green infrastructure, support the arts and cultural programming, and protect the neighborhood’s small businesses in the face of new development interest in the area. The case study highlights an initiative that benefits from a long history of community-building, with institutions in place to involve the local community and build on existing relationships among strong community organizations.

Together, the three case studies point to many of the opportunities and challenges that housing organizations face in acting as “quarterbacks” or “backbone” organizations in comprehensive community development initiatives. To these initiatives, housing and community development organizations can bring their development experience, a source of revenue through real estate, and a community perspective. The opportunities for housing and community development organizations include (for more details, see pages 42-45):

- **Furthering an organization’s mission** and providing support to residents that goes beyond the provision of housing, but has a great impact on lives;
- **Pooling of material and intellectual resources** from a range of fields and sectors; and
- **Providing new opportunities** to organizations, which can go on to apply their “quarterbacking” skills in communication and management to other initiatives.

Housing and community development organizations, however, face numerous challenges in this role. The case studies highlighted the following challenges (see pages 45-47 for more detail):

- **Breaking silos and divisions** between organizations from different sectors, which requires intentional community-building efforts within an initiative;
- **Lack of funding** for the communication, management, and technical-assistance work required by lead organizations;
- Acknowledging the role of **individual leadership** in comprehensive community development, but avoiding overreliance on a small number of individuals;

- Providing enough support without **micromanaging the initiative** or the work of partner organizations; and
- **Establishing transparent decision-making models** to establish trust and a sense of ownership among participating organizations.

Comprehensive community development initiatives present an opportunity for the field to address the many challenges that low-income communities across the United States face. The hope of this paper is to help policy-makers and the staff of community development intermediaries and funders to better support comprehensive community development initiatives and the organizations that serve as the “quarterbacks” or “backbones” of these efforts.

Introduction

Housing and community-development organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to work collaboratively in order to more effectively address some of the most vexing issues that their communities face in housing, education, employment, and health, among other areas. The need to combine housing and physical development with human services is supported not only by research, but also by recent experience (Erickson et al., 2008). We only have to look back at the Great Recession, in which the bursting of the housing bubble led quickly to more widespread economic devastation, to understand that households need more than just a place to live to be resilient: after the recession they needed, among other things, new skills to find work in a changed job market and support services to keep them afloat in the meantime. Indeed, in the wake of the foreclosure crisis, many housing organizations found themselves having to provide a range of financial services to help their residents get back on their feet (Gass, 2008).

Cross-sector collaborations, however, present unique organizational challenges, to which evaluations of comprehensive community initiatives from the 1990s and 2000s have called attention: defining shared goals and strategies, aligning activities among organizations, and keeping initiatives viable in the long-term (Kubisch et al., 2010; Trent and Chavis, 2009). These challenges are even more difficult to negotiate in a competitive community-development industry that—despite recent philanthropic and federal support, such as the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department’s Promise Zones and Choice Neighborhoods initiatives—remains geared toward addressing one issue at a time.

To untangle the complications and challenges involved, practitioners and advocates have put forth the idea of a “community quarterback” (a phrase coined in 2012 by David Erickson, Ian Galloway, and Naomi Cytron of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco). The “community quarterback” supports a collaborative group by assembling material and intellectual resources, guiding its vision and strategy, and building and supporting relationships within the partnership and greater community (Erickson, Galloway, and Cytron, 2012). Although the idea is not new—evaluators and practitioners have highlighted the importance of having a “lead” or “brokering” entity to orchestrate these complex initiatives—little is known of the challenges and opportunities that organizations face in this role. This paper will provide a qualitative study of the experience of housing and community development organizations that

have taken on the quarterback role. Following a brief overview of the history of comprehensive community development and the quarterback model, three case studies from Chelsea, Massachusetts, Los Angeles, California, and the Midwest will highlight the benefits and challenges of “quarterbacking” a comprehensive community initiative, and will suggest how policymakers and funders can best support organizations taking on such a role.

PART I:

Comprehensive Community Development and the Quarterback Model

History of Comprehensive Community Development

The increasingly comprehensive approach to community development in recent years is at once a new development and a return to the movement's origins. The "settlement houses" of the nineteenth century, which are exemplary of early community development, sought to respond to a variety of challenges faced by poor immigrants living in America's industrializing cities: not only overcrowding and substandard housing, but also a lack of sanitation infrastructure, high crime, and harsh working conditions. Settlement houses developed a number of place- and people-based programs to support these workers (von Hoffman, 2012; Hayden, 1981; Phifer, 1990). This comprehensive approach was later adopted and refined by government programs during later waves of reform, including the New Deal of the 1930s and the Model Cities and War on Poverty of the 1960s (Hopkins and Ferris, 2015; von Hoffman, 2012).

It was only in the late twentieth century that community development began to focus primarily on the production of affordable housing. This shift was due in part to the availability and focus of public and philanthropic funding; funding has continued to shape the work of community development organizations (Silver, 2004). In particular, the convergence of Reagan-era cutbacks to federal programs and the proliferation of community development corporations (CDCs) shaped the housing-focused, place-based, and market-oriented community development field of today (von Hoffman, 2002; Kingsley et al., 1997). Although many CDCs support their communities with childcare, financial literacy training, and job training programs, the construction of affordable housing remains the bulk of their work (von Hoffman, 2002). The production of housing provides a stream of revenue through rents and development fees; it is also supported through government programs, like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and national intermediaries, such as NeighborWorks America, the Enterprise Community Foundation, and the Low Income Support Corporation (LISC), which provide organizations in their network with considerable material and technical support.

Comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) emerged in the 1980s and 1990s as a critique of the single-issue approach to community development that developed and matured during the second half of the twentieth century (Mossberger, 2010; Kubisch et al, 2010; Pitcoff,

1997). These ambitious long-term initiatives sought to revitalize distressed neighborhoods by addressing the multiple social, economic, physical, and civic needs of a household or a neighborhood. A number of philanthropic foundations shared this interest in neighborhood revitalization and established programs to support comprehensive community development, such as:

- Surdna Foundation's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project, a \$10 million initiative to support and strengthen existing CDCs in the South Bronx as they worked to revitalize their respective neighborhoods (Spilka and Burns, 1998);
- Annie E. Casey Foundation's Rebuilding Communities Initiative, a seven-year collaboration between the foundation and community-based organizations to improve quality of life in Boston, Washington, D.C., Denver, and Detroit (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002);
- Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative, a ten-year program that focused on creating neighborhood-based change through collaboration and comprehensive strategies (Chaskin, 2000);
- The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative for Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester, a ten-year initiative funded by Enterprise Community Partners to address eight issue areas, from the built environment to health and education (Brown et al., 2001).

Support for Comprehensive Community Development

Few of these initial CCI's remain active today, but private philanthropic organizations and intermediaries remain the primary funders of comprehensive community development initiatives. In fact, philanthropic investment in comprehensive community development has experienced a resurgence under the rubric of "collective impact." Collective impact, championed by the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, brings together organizations working in different sectors to collectively address one specific issue, with data driving the strategy (Kania and Kramer, 2011). A much-celebrated collective-impact initiative is the nonprofit StriveTogether's effort to improve student test scores and performance in three school districts in greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. Funded by KnowledgeWorks, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, and United Way of Greater Cincinnati, the initiative brings together professionals and advocates working in early-childhood development, public schools, colleges

and universities, service provision, and the private sector to establish shared goals and performance indicators (Kania and Kramer, 2011; Bridgespan Group, 2011).

In addition to philanthropic support, a number of contemporary federal programs have been developed to encourage and support comprehensive community development. These include HUD's Promise Neighborhoods, a cradle-to-college-and-career program modeled on Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone, and Choice Neighborhoods, which seeks to comprehensively revitalize distressed neighborhoods where public or HUD-assisted housing is concentrated (Ross and Stegman, 2014). The White House also established the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative (NRI) in 2011 to research and learn about past and present comprehensive community development and collective-impact initiatives. NRI brings together members from the White House Domestic Policy Council, the White House Office of Urban Affairs, and the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Education, Health and Human Services, and Treasury to explore ways to align federal resources and programs (White House, 2011).

Basic Tenets of Comprehensive Community Development

Although comprehensive community development and collective-impact initiatives vary greatly, they share a focus on comprehensiveness, collaboration, place-conscious strategies, horizontal and vertical integration, and community building (Kubisch et al, 2010; Brown, 1997; Inspiring Communities and Tamarack Institute, 2014). These tenets are described below and will be referred to throughout the paper.

Comprehensiveness:

People working as part of comprehensive community development initiatives adopt a comprehensive lens when analyzing the needs of residents (Brown, 1997). The underlying belief is that these needs are interrelated and cannot be resolved independently of one another. This comprehensive lens often translates into a strategy for addressing multiple issues. One example of this approach is the 24:1 initiative, a place-based effort encompassing twenty-four different municipalities in St. Louis County, Missouri that share one underperforming and largely segregated school district. Led by Beyond Housing, a community-based organization, 24:1 seeks to support the community, children, and families through a variety of programs and strategies, including housing, education, safety, economic opportunity, and community building.

The comprehensive lens can also translate into an initiative that tackles one specific issue facing a community, as is often the case in collective impact. Although such an initiative addresses one individual issue, it does so using a comprehensive range of organizations and solutions. Step Up Somerville, for example, engages schools, public officials, nonprofits, and local businesses to work collectively to reduce childhood obesity by encouraging healthier eating and exercise in Somerville, Massachusetts.

Collaboration:

Comprehensive community development initiatives are collaborative. The collaboration is defined as a group of individuals or organizations that engage in a deep relationship with one another by “exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing the capacity of another for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose” (Himmelman, 2002, 3). Some organizations have successfully developed new services in-house, like the nonprofit Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston’s Roxbury neighborhood, which provides not only affordable housing, but also workforce development and leadership development, access to healthy food, and cultural and recreational opportunities.

However, most comprehensive initiatives choose to provide a broader set of services through a partnership, as there are considerable risks in developing capabilities outside an organization’s core areas of expertise (von Hoffman, 2002; von Hoffman, 2012). Partnering with organizations from different fields brings not only added expertise, but also a variety of funding sources and supporting intermediaries and networks.

Place-conscious Strategies:

A place—whether it is a school district, a region, or a collection of houses—often provides a geographical boundary for comprehensive community development efforts. However, within these communities, comprehensive community development initiatives try to bridge place-based and people-based strategies. These initiatives are therefore best described as “place-conscious,” which means that, in addition to combining people- and place-based strategies, they are “less constrained by narrowly defined neighborhood boundaries, more responsive to realities of family mobility and change, and more attuned to region-wide conditions and opportunities” (Turner, 2014).

Horizontal and Vertical Integration:

Comprehensive community development is a complex operation. To bring about meaningful change, collaborative groups have to coordinate people and organizations working in different sectors (nonprofit, for-profit, and public), fields (housing, education, health, employment), and at the neighborhood, city, state, and federal levels, in order to address the structural issues underlying the problems faced by distressed neighborhoods (Turner et al., 2014).

Community Building:

Empowering a neighborhood's residents and organizations is a critical element of comprehensive community development (Chaskin, 1999). Such empowerment ensures that residents and organizations guide and take ownership of the changes made in their neighborhoods. Community building includes increasing the number of individual leaders capable of advocating for their communities; building relationships between community organizations and residents; and enabling organizations to effectively serve a greater number of people. An example of the latter is Surdna Foundation's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project in the South Bronx, which sought not to advocate for a particular vision, but rather to strengthen six CDCs working in the area by providing them with grants, technical assistance, and training over a six-year period (Brown, 1997).

Challenges of Comprehensive Community Development

Evaluations of comprehensive community development efforts have brought to light many challenges associated with cross-sector partnerships. At the Aspen Institute, Kubisch et al. studied forty-eight major comprehensive community initiatives from the 1990s and 2000s and found that although these initiatives have made significant investments in their respective communities, there is little evidence that these investments brought about transformational change (Kubisch et al., 2010). Evaluations and reviews of past efforts have highlighted a myriad of local challenges as well as general challenges related to funding, the management of partnerships, and the transition from planning to implementation (Kubisch et al., 2010; Trent and Chavis, 2009).

Funding:

Comprehensive community development initiatives face considerable challenges finding long-term, flexible funding that can be used for community building and staffing in addition to service provision. Even initiatives that receive a larger start-up grant from philanthropic foundations rely on multiple federal, state, and city grants and loans. With different requirements and timeframes attached to them, bundled funds add another layer of complexity to an initiative. For example, despite receiving catalytic funding from the Enterprise Foundation (now known as Enterprise Community Partners), the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative in the Sandtown-Winchster neighborhood of Baltimore had to marshal a total of sixty-five city, state, and federal grants (Brown et al., 2001).

Management of Partnerships:

Managing and coordinating a partnership is a full-time and often under-resourced job. It involves not only keeping partners at the table, committed, and accountable to a shared set of goals, but also meaningfully including residents and engaging with city, state, and federal politicians (Kubisch et al., 2010; Trent and Chavis, 2009). Collaborations require organizations to be deeply connected to one another—sharing information and resources—and are thus more difficult to achieve among organizations with divergent work cultures and in neighborhoods where few relationships between organizations exist. Both the New Communities Program in Chicago and the Rebuilding Communities Initiative found that there is considerable mistrust in a field as competitive as community development, where funding is scarce but demand is high (Greenberg et al., 2010; Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2002). In light of this challenge, Kubisch et al. argue that participating organizations and people have to spend time, effort, and funding “to literally and metaphorically ‘subsidize’ the relationships, sectors, and interests until new habits of thinking, acting, and collaborating enable alignment to occur more naturally” (Kubisch et al., 2010, ix).

Transitioning from Planning to Implementation:

Finally, comprehensive community development efforts often struggle during the transition between the planning and the implementation phases. Implementation requires more resources and also demands greater commitment and accountability from partners. It also requires partners to be intentional about the activities undertaken, making sure that they are integrated, mutually reinforcing, and in service of the partnership’s common goals. Success in

the implementation phase depends on a solid shared foundation: a set of well-defined strategies and activities intended to achieve clear goals; partnerships managed to ensure transparency, collective ownership, and accountability; and continuous evaluation and refinement of an initiative (Kubisch et al., 2010).

The “Quarterback” Model

The concept of a quarterback was developed to address the common organizational challenges of comprehensive community development. Traditional models of leadership emphasize a singular will, hierarchy, and control. The quarterback, by contrast, primarily facilitates and enables. In a CCI, the quarterback (whether an individual or an organization) engages with both high-level strategy, such as the articulation and maintenance of a collective vision, and with the day-to-day management of the partnership’s relationships, activities, and resources (Erickson, Galloway, and Cytron, 2012). Supporters of collective impact have developed a similar model called a “backbone” organization. The backbone organization plays the same facilitative role as the quarterback, with the added responsibility of developing a data system to evaluate and communicate results to the community and the initiative’s funders (Jolin, Schmitz, and Seldon, 2012; Kania and Kramer, 2011). What distinguishes collective impact and comprehensive community development efforts from other collaborations or joint ventures is the centralized communication, management, and evaluation infrastructure embodied by the quarterback or backbone organization.

The literature on CCIs highlights the need for quarterback-style leadership. Studies that attempt to identify best practices have emphasized the supportive role of “a single broker” in managing a partnership-driven process (Trent and Chavis, 2009, 96). The varied responsibilities of this broker include: bringing organizations and people together, facilitating new and existing relationships both within and outside the partnership, managing internal and external communications, and resolving the conflicts and misalignments that often arise in collaborations; helping to articulate and work toward a common vision and goal; involving the community, the public sector, and the broader public; coordinating funding sources; and taking the lead on developing a data system (Kubisch et al, 2010; Trent and Chavis, 2009).

Practitioners of comprehensive community development, too, have long recognized the need for a “lead,” “convening,” or “orchestrating” agency, but have struggled to define what shape it should take, often learning through trial and error. Past foundation-led and federal

initiatives have depended on individuals (e.g., Anita Miller of Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program or Geoffrey Canada of the Harlem Children’s Zone), existing nonprofits (e.g., Rebuilding Communities Initiative), a combination of local intermediaries and existing organizations (e.g., Neighborhood Improvement Initiative), new public agencies coordinating local efforts (e.g., Model Cities), new nonprofits (e.g., New Communities Program), or local site teams (e.g., Making Connections).

Despite the wealth of experience, there has been little systematic analysis of the characteristics required of a quarterback or backbone organization, leaving considerable room for debate. The most focused analysis of the organizational qualities of quarterback or backbone organizations comes from management and leadership literature, where the model translates as “complex systems leadership” (Plowman et al., 2007; Lichtenstein et al., 2006). The literature on complex systems leadership seeks to carve out a role for leadership in non-linear, dynamic, and multifarious systems. Because such systems are difficult to control and constantly adapting to external forces, the traditional leadership model, which depends on a predetermined vision, strict hierarchy, and control, does not apply (Plowman et al., 2007; Lichtenstein et al., 2006).

What emerges in the place of traditional leadership is a new type of leadership that seeks not to control outcomes, but to enable each part of the system to work collectively toward a shared goal. Jenny Onyx and Rosemary Jill Leonard have applied the lens of “complex systems” to community development, exploring the role of leadership in five successful instances of community mobilization and development in South America, Australia, and Sweden. They extract seven common leadership characteristics, the following three of which deviate from the conventional leadership literature. The leaders they studied:

- were embedded in their respective communities’ informal and formal networks, but not in positions of control, and they shared information;
- made decisions collectively, and negotiated trade-offs with partners;
- made crucial connections between organizations and people outside and inside the initiative (Onyx and Leonard, 2010).

The facilitation and communication skills highlighted above are reflected in the findings of in-depth evaluations of the New Communities Project (NCP; funded by the MacArthur Foundation) and the Rebuilding Communities Initiative (RCI; funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation); both of these CCI intentionally developed their governance and oversight structure around a “lead agency.” The evaluation of NCP highlighted the role that collaborating

organizations can play in the successful rollout of a CCI. In NCP, lead agencies were made responsible for collaboratively developing and implementing neighborhood-based quality-of-life plans that covered issues related to housing, employment, health, and safety. Their ability to bring partners together and collaboratively create and advance a quality-of-life plan differed significantly based on the capacity of other organizations in the partnership and their history of working with one another (Greenberg et al., 2010). In neighborhoods where tensions and mistrust existed, lead agencies had to focus on building trust, both between individual organizations and in the community as a whole, before they were able to focus on developing their quality-of-life plan.

PART II: **Case studies from Chelsea, Massachusetts, Los Angeles, California, and the Midwest**

This paper focuses on housing and community development organizations as quarterbacks, with the hope of better understanding the skills, perspectives, and experiences housing and community development organizations can bring to this role. The paper studies three cases of lead agencies quarterbacking for comprehensive initiatives: The Neighborhood Developers (TND) for Connect, a financial resource center in Chelsea, Massachusetts; North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC) for the Tri-State Development Summit and Housing Committee, a regional economic development initiative in the Midwest; and the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) for Sustainable Little Tokyo in Los Angeles. Based on these case studies, the paper offers insights about the opportunities and challenges of the quarterback role. The three organizations selected for study are all NeighborWorks America member organizations and have strong housing and real-estate-development arms.¹ However, all three organizations—two community development corporations and one community action corporation—also provide services other than housing as part of their work.

The three case studies reflect a range of different initiatives and contexts: a regional, a citywide, and a neighborhood initiative; a rural case study in addition to two urban ones; and a range of programmatic foci and funding programs (Table 1). The three quarterback organizations also play different roles within their partnerships. Whereas TND and LTSC comprehensively lead Connect and Sustainable Little Tokyo, NECAC has a more limited role in the Tri-State Development Summit: it coordinates the inclusion of housing as part of the regional economic development initiative. (Tri-State is directed not by NECAC, but by a steering committee and the Great River Economic Development Foundation). The NECAC case study highlights the secondary quarterbacking role that an organization can play by incorporating housing into a larger initiative.

The case studies have been informed by extensive interviews with the executive directors and staffs of the lead organizations as well as with collaborating organizations and individuals. Additional information was collected from grant applications, reports, budgets,

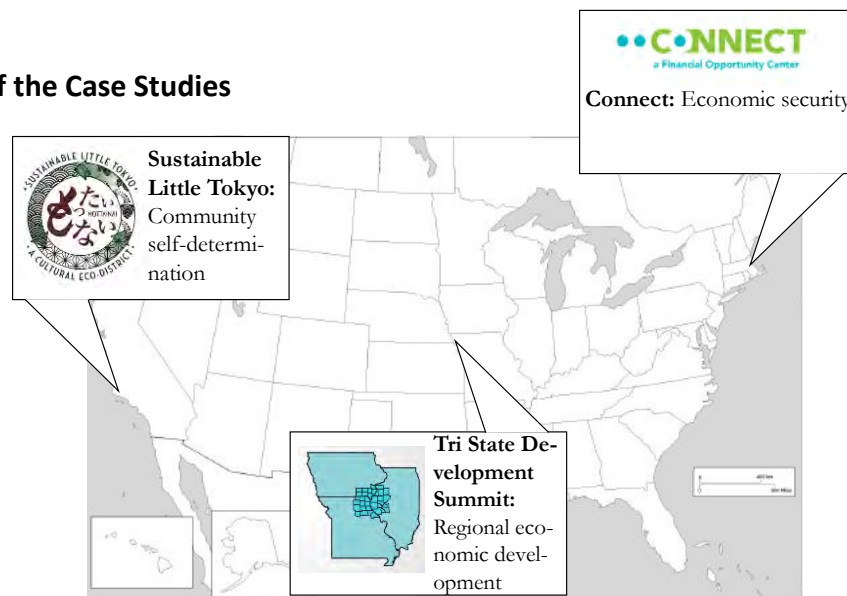
¹ NeighborWorks America and the Joint Center for Housing Studies are co-sponsors of the Gramlich Fellowship in Economic and Community Development.

memoranda of understanding, and media articles. Rather than being an overview of the field of lead agencies, this paper provides a closer view of their roles and experiences.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Three Case Studies

Initiative	Connect	Tri-State Development Summit/Housing Committee	Sustainable Little Tokyo
Mission	Financial security	Regional economic development	Cultural eco-district
Location	Chelsea, MA (pop. ~ 35,000)	35 counties in southeastern Iowa, northeastern Missouri, and western Illinois (pop. ~ 680,000)	Little Tokyo, Los Angeles (pop. ~ 1,800)
Time	2012-present	2005-present	2013-present
Lead organization	The Neighborhood Developers CDC (NWO)	North East Community Action Corporation (NWO)	Little Tokyo Service Center CDC (NWO)
Core partners	Career Source, Centro Latino, Bunker Hill Community College, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, Metro Credit Union	Southeast Iowa Regional Planning and Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials	Little Tokyo Community Council and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
Main funding program	Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Program	Private donations and NeighborWorks America	Low Income Investment Fund and Citi Foundation Partners in Progress

Figure 1: Locations of the Case Studies



A Partnership-Driven Financial Service Center in Chelsea, MA: The Neighborhood Developers and Connect

Snapshot:

Mission: Provide bundled resources in order to help people achieve economic security

Model: Partnership-driven financial resource center

Core Programs:

- Household financial stability
- Housing stabilization
- Financial education and services
- Workforce development

Location: Chelsea, MA

Quarterback: The Neighborhood Developers

Partners:

- The Neighborhood Developers (Chelsea, MA, and Revere, MA)
- Centro Latino (Chelsea, MA, and Cambridge, MA)
- Metro Credit Union (Chelsea, MA)
- Career Source (Chelsea, MA)
- Bunker Hill Community College (Charlestown, MA)
- Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (Boston, MA)

Funders: Department of Labor and Metro North Regional Employment Board, LISC, United Way, and NeighborWorks America

Initiative:

Connect is a financial resource center located in the small but densely populated and diverse working-class city of Chelsea, Massachusetts, just north of Boston. The initiative was started by The Neighborhood Developers (TND), a community development corporation with a long history of building affordable housing in Chelsea and Revere, to help residents achieve greater economic security. Although the median household income in Chelsea is approximately \$48,725 per year, almost one in five households earn less than \$15,000 per year (U.S. Census, 2010-2014). To raise local incomes, TND began to provide financial education services and individual development accounts in 2005, but quickly realized that their clients needed a more comprehensive set of services. Ann Houston, TND's Executive Director, explains: "What we saw was people coming in with really complex needs. If they wanted to look for a job or take an

English-as-a-second-language class, they had to go all over the region.” This realization led Houston to create an advisory committee in 2011 to research the best practices of financial resource centers, which have been extensively developed by LISC, and recruit partner institutions. A \$3 million Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Grant helped fully launch the project in 2012.

Per year, four thousand people walk through the doors of Connect, which is housed in a bright and colorful extension of TND’s office in central Chelsea. The financial resource center’s mission is to help their clients achieve greater economic security by tackling multiple challenges at once and under one roof. Although Connect’s clients come from all over the Boston metropolitan area, they share similar challenges finding work and making ends meet in low-wage jobs: almost half of Connect’s clients are first-generation immigrants, a third do not have high school diplomas, and 48 percent earn \$15,000 a year or less (Connect, 2015). Each of these hurdles is difficult to overcome; when taken together, they present an almost insurmountable challenge. Although clients often come to Connect for one service only, Connect encourages them to use a mix of services it specializes in: employment, financial education and services, housing stabilization, and skill development.

At the heart of this financial resource center is a partnership between six human-services, housing, and financial organizations. These organizations have agreed to offer their education, employment, housing, and finance-related services through Connect. TND decided to adopt a partnership model for Connect in order to take full advantage of the experts that already existed in the Boston metropolitan area and to avoid the resource-intensive development of new in-house services. The six partners include:

- Centro Latino, an immigrant-focused human-service agency working in Chelsea and Cambridge;
- the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership, a regional housing agency focusing on homelessness and housing stability;
- Metro Credit Union, a Chelsea-based financial agency with locations across Massachusetts;
- Career Source One-Stop Career Center, a workforce development agency based in Chelsea;
- and Charlestown-based Bunker Hill Community College, which recently opened a Chelsea campus.

The partnership aims not only to increase the number of services available to the organizations' clients—thus helping to improve their financial strength and stability—but also to break down the barriers between these organizations by creating an integrated, data-driven service delivery model.

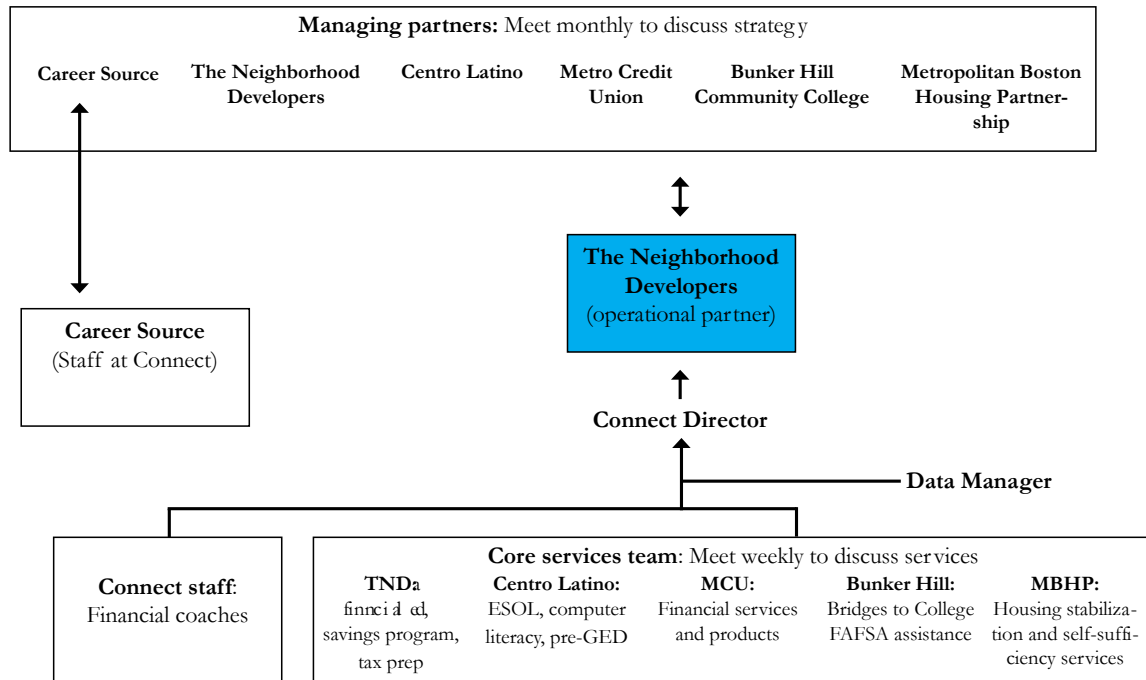
Structure:

Connect is divided into three interconnected parts: a core team of Connect staff, a group of member organizations, and TND, the managing partner (Figure 2). The work is guided by a partnership agreement signed by the six member organizations, outlining their roles, responsibilities, and deliverables as well as an agreed-upon decision-making process, communication structure, and fundraising plans. Each of the six organizations signed on with different levels of responsibility, which have changed over time. For example, Career Source, which used to be based in Everett and Chelsea, relocated its team to the Connect facility in Chelsea and increased the amount of services that it provides as part of Connect.

The partnership of the six organizations is managed through monthly and weekly meetings and a shared database. Cross-agency meetings at both the staff and management levels bring together officers from the six organizations to discuss everything from the budget and fundraising plans to outcomes, cases and referrals, and ways to improve service delivery. Key to evaluating the results of the partnership is a common intake form, which provides information on the financial, employment, and educational status of clients, and a shared Salesforce data system, which is used to track client demographics, intake, service utilization, referrals, and outcomes.

A core team of Connect staff ties the initiative together. The team consists of a director, who is in charge of overseeing the Connect staff and coordinating between the partner organizations; a data manager, who is in charge of maintaining the shared database; one-on-one financial coaches, who introduce clients to the available services and work with them to establish a plan; and staff members, who provide Connect services on behalf of partner organizations.

Figure 2: Organizational Structure of Connect



Source: The Neighborhood Developers

Quarterback:

The Neighborhood Developers plays a number of roles in Connect. When it was first founded in 1979, TND’s mission as a CDC was to build and improve the quality of affordable housing in Chelsea and later Revere, a municipality bordering Chelsea to the north and east. The quality of housing in these two densely built neighborhoods of three-story apartment buildings often suffered due to deferred maintenance, over-crowding, and a weak real estate market. Working in service of this mission, TND spent its first 26 years building and acquiring 346 apartments and 38 homes for sale.

In 2006, TND took on a more comprehensive, resident-driven approach toward neighborhood revitalization. The organization developed financial-literacy programs and worked to strengthen the social capital of residents by hosting NeighborCircles. First developed by Lawrence CDC, NeighborCircles is a model of resident engagement that brings together small groups of residents around a dinner table to define common opportunities and challenges and brainstorm ways in which to address them. In addition, TND works with local stakeholders, businesses, and residents to develop comprehensive action plans for neighborhoods in Chelsea and Revere.

TND is involved in Connect as both a service provider and a quarterback organization. As a service provider, TND contributes a public benefits counselor, tax preparation manager, financial coach, and front desk administrator to Connect. TND had developed these services prior to the initiative's establishment. TND also founded Connect and convened an advisory committee, wrote grant proposals, and conducted research on best practices (focusing on LISC's Financial Opportunity Centers, United Way's Financial Stability Centers, and Annie E. Casey Working Families Centers).

TND continues to serve as the initiative's "operational partner" and is thus responsible for the day-to-day management of Connect. The work includes overseeing the initiative's finances, coordinating services, and managing the shared data system. TND is also responsible for managing Connect's core staff and facility, which was built as part of an extension of TND's existing space (TND, as the operational partner, led the capital campaign to support this expansion). TND funds its role as quarterback primarily through revenue earned by its development arm.

Ann Houston highlights two characteristics of TND that serve it well in the quarterback role. The first is TND's track record of success on large-scale projects. Having accomplished complex developments such as the Box District, a collaboration with the City of Chelsea and Mitchell Properties to transform ten acres of formerly industrial land into a mixed-income residential neighborhood in Chelsea, TND had already demonstrated to other organizations that it could deliver on commitments and manage large-scale projects. The second is TND's on-the-ground work in the community, which allows Connect to better understand and respond to the needs of its clients. "Connect serves a much broader area than our community," says Ann Houston, "but because we're rooted in Chelsea and Revere, we have a more intimate understanding of the struggles of our neighbors, who then become our clients, than we might have if we were sitting in an office downtown."

Challenges:

According to Houston, the quarterback role has proven to be "an incredibly complex, organizationally challenging effort," with challenges related to funding, management of the partnership, and creation of a shared database at the fore.

Funding: There is little funding available for the administrative and managerial work of a quarterback. A Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Grant, administered by the Metro North Regional Employment Board, initially funded the initiative, but did not cover the full cost

of administering the partnership. TND supported its services and duties as an operational partner with revenue generated from its real estate development side.

In light of such shortfalls in funding, it is important that the quarterback organization be fiscally strong. Houston argues that “a real critical part of getting comprehensive community development initiatives going is an organization that has the capacity to carry the work without clear compensation.” Houston highlights the important role that NeighborWorks America has played for TND in providing regular assessments of her organization that emphasize its strength and sustainability alongside the quality of its services. In addition to fiscal strength, quarterbacks need clear and accountable management systems, a developed data and evaluation infrastructure, and strong communication systems.

Making and managing partnerships: Understanding and accommodating different work cultures proved key to making the partnership between the six organizations work. Each organization signed on to Connect with a different commitment, and the relationships between partners and Connect have changed over time, with some partners becoming more or less engaged. Each organization also had a different staffing model, workflow, and way of evaluating its work, which at times caused tensions to flare up between different organizations. “We had to consciously build a culture,” says Houston. “We put pictures with names in the Connect office, and made sure to invite everybody to everything.”

Shared database: Organizations involved in a CCI strain to meet the initiative’s requirements as well as their own. For example, the shared data system added to the work of the organizations’ officers, who had to input data into a shared database on top of their own. Tensions dissolved when the shared data began to prove that bundling services together helped clients improve their income, net worth, and credit scores.

Opportunities:

Houston believes that TND’s investment in Connect has yielded substantial returns to the organization and the community that it serves. TND’s mission is to improve quality of life and economic opportunities for residents living in Chelsea and Revere, and Connect is helping TND achieve those goals. Data collected by Connect using the shared intake form and database have shown that the median change to monthly net income for a client has been \$604; median change in net worth was \$4,209, and median change to credit score was 36 points (Connect, 2015). These figures represent a substantial step forward for the ability of a person to pay his or her rent or find employment.

Working as part of Connect has also opened up new doors and possibilities for TND and partnering organizations. Recent visits to Connect by Janet Yellen, Chair of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, Christopher Lu, Department of Labor Deputy Secretary, and Hilda Solis, former Secretary of Labor, have attracted national attention to the initiative and the organizations involved. Through its work as a quarterback, TND has also gained new skills and experiences that will allow it to take on additional comprehensive community development projects in the future. They include the skills needed to manage a complex and dynamic partnership, and experience building new communication and evaluation infrastructure. These skills are already being applied to Chelsea Thrives, a new partnership-driven initiative of thirty organizations that is being led by TND and funded by the Boston Federal Reserve as part of its Working Cities program.

Looking to the Future:

With three years of experience under their belts, officers of Connect are working to improve the model that they started with in 2012. They are in what Houston likes to call the “Connect 2.0” stage, during which partner organizations are working to streamline the intake form and learn about the different paths that clients take. They are also refining the selection of services based on perceived needs. “We need to add numeracy courses,” says Houston. “We have literacy courses, but to get into health or advanced manufacturing, you need to have math. These are things that we’re learning together.”

TND sees its role as quarterback changing over time, with the CDC becoming less of a driver as Connect grows stronger and more self-sufficient. “What’s happened over the past four years is that partners have increasingly taken ownership of the initiative,” says Houston, adding that “truly one of the most satisfying things is that each of the partners is stepping up and owning their area of expertise.” Mt. Auburn, an assessment firm that evaluated Connect in 2014, described a similar shift in responsibilities, from Connect leading the fundraising effort to Connect partners becoming more involved (Siegel, Bromberg, and Kornetsky, 2015).

Member organizations, too, are taking ownership of new offshoots of Connect. Career Source, for example, is in the early planning stages of spearheading a pathway to financial service jobs, in collaboration with local community colleges, Metro Credit Union, and other lenders. The Neighborhood Developers are watching this development from the sidelines, demonstrating that they know when to step up and when to hold back.

Incorporating Housing into an Economic Development Agenda: North East Community Action Corporation and the Tri-State Development Summit

Snapshot:

Mission: To define, debate, and address common economic development and quality-of-life issues facing the Tri-State area

Model: Informal network

Program: Regional economic development

- Housing
- Connectivity
- Tourism
- Transportation

Location: 35 counties in northeastern Missouri, Western Illinois, and southeastern Iowa

Quarterback of housing committee: North East Community Action Corporation (Bowling Green, MO)

Partners of housing committee:

- North East Community Action Corporation (Bowling Green, MO)
- Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (West Burlington, IA)
- Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials (Quincy, IL)

Funders: Private donations and NeighborWorks America

Initiative:

In 1993, a disastrous flood of the Mississippi River cost the Midwest a total of \$15 billion in damage (Larson, 1996). The failure of the levees along the Mississippi and the ensuing catastrophic flooding in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri proved a painful lesson that the economy of the Tri-State area—thirty-five counties in northeastern Missouri, western Illinois, and southeastern Iowa—depend on the same river, rail tracks, and highways. Consequently, in 1996, leaders from the thirty-five counties came together to form the Tri-State Development Summit, an informal regional initiative that seeks to encourage economic development in 35 counties in northeastern Missouri, southeastern Iowa, and western Illinois.

The core focus of the Tri-State Development Summit is an annual convening that brings together 400-500 residents and officials from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors; the organization has hosted ten summits since it was founded in 1996. Organized by a steering committee and facilitated by the Great River Economic Development Foundation, an

organization that works to retain and attract new businesses in Quincy and Adams Counties, Illinois, the convenings serve as a platform for regional stakeholders to voice, define, and address common issues and opportunities facing the tri-state area.

The convenings are also an opportunity to develop a “tri-state of mind,” which lies at the heart of the Tri-State Development Summit’s theory of change. In addition to depending on a common transportation network, the residents of the tri-state area cross state boundaries on a daily basis to live, work, and access basic necessities. “Our employees work and live in different states,” explains Patrick Poepping, a founding member of the steering committee and principal of the engineering firm Poepping, Bach, & Associates, Inc. “They don’t care about state borders, but the politicians working in our state capitals, that’s all they think about.”

The Tri-State Development Summit therefore seeks to articulate this shared identity and speak with a common voice to politicians representing the 35 counties on issues such as aging infrastructure, attracting employers, retaining a younger population, meeting the needs of aging residents, trade, and agriculture. By representing the region at hearings and to congressional delegations, the Tri-State Development Summit has resulted in a number of accomplishments, including the construction of 1,400 miles of four-lane highways in the area. Furthermore, the championing of a regional agenda has indirectly supported the establishment of a three-state compact to build an \$80 million intermodal port in Quincy, Illinois.² The involvement of governors, senators, and congressmen from the three states at the Tri-State Development Summit has been critical to these accomplishments.

In 2005, the North East Community Action Corporation, a housing and social service agency serving twelve mostly rural counties north of St. Louis, Missouri, established a Tri-State Summit Housing Committee, a subcommittee of the Tri-State Development Summit, in partnership with the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission and the Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials. The Housing Commission was established to make affordable and high-quality housing a more integrated part of the region’s economic development plan, and its members seek to accomplish this goal through quarterly meetings and biannual conferences.

Structure:

The model and tools employed by the Tri-State Development Summit are less formal than the structured and outcomes-oriented approach of the models put forth by the prevalent

² For more information, see: <http://midamericaport.com/>

theories of comprehensive community development and collective impact. The goal is broadly defined as regional economic development and the focus of the Tri-State Development Summit has been on relationship building, with few specific objectives and benchmarks. The Tri-State Development Summit was founded as an informal network to establish relationships between people and organizations working in the tri-state area, and still functions as such. The founding members of the steering committee value the informality and the flexibility that a network model allows. The inclusiveness of the public summits attracts more people who might otherwise be reluctant to take on extra responsibilities, with the benefit of spreading the notion of the “tri-state of mind” and expanding the summit’s network of contacts. Tom Boland of Hannibal, Missouri, the former chair of the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission and a founder of the Tri-State Development Summit, highlights as an accomplishment of the summit the fact that “people from 35 counties in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri know each other on a first-name basis.”

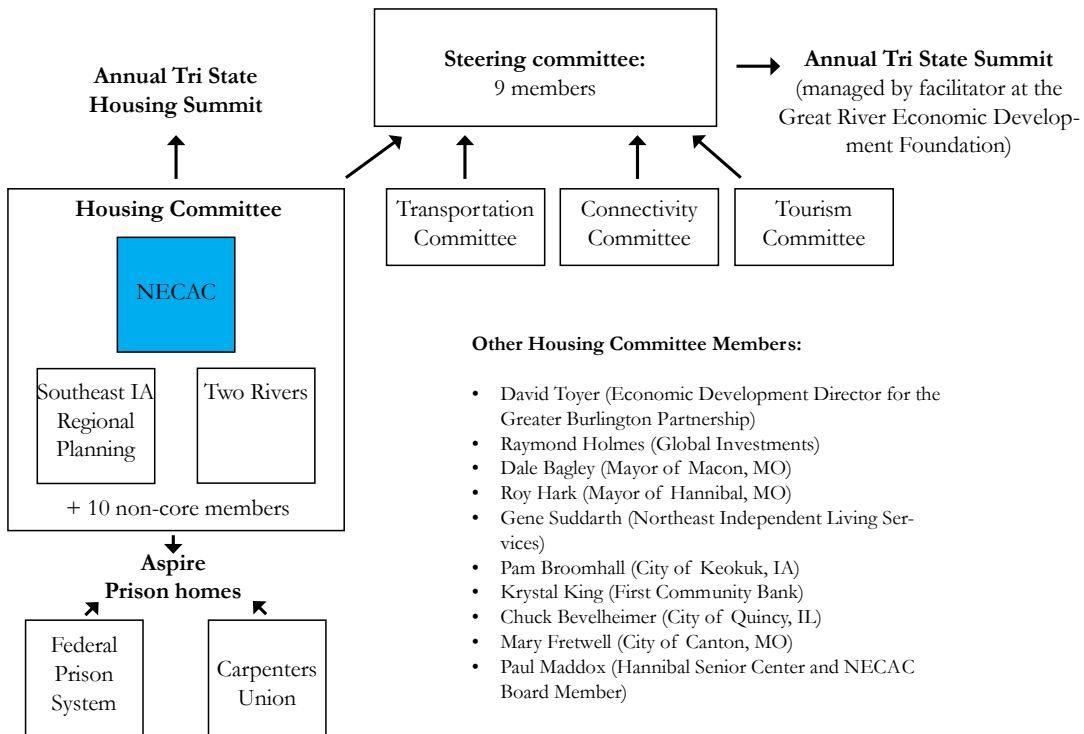
In addition to a steering committee, the Tri-State Development Summit has four task forces that meet regularly throughout the year to address issues related to connectivity, tourism, transportation, and housing in the tri-state area. The Housing Committee has grown since it was first established in 2005; today, it also includes diverse organizations such as an economic development group in Iowa, a bank, an independent living organization for seniors, and the mayors of Macomb, IL and Hannibal, MO, although the original three organizations remain as a core group.

The Housing Committee’s mission is to “1.) [increase] affordable housing options for the region’s workforce, 2.) [provide] counseling to first time homebuyers, 3.) [identify] funding sources for housing development throughout the region” (Tri-State Development Summit, 2015). To this end, it meets quarterly as a group and hosts a yearly public summit on housing, where common issues and opportunities are identified and addressed as they relate to the mission of the committee and the Tri-State Development Summit. The Housing Committee’s members are also currently embarking on a larger cooperating project to create a construction workforce development program in a federal prison.

The Tri-State Development Summit’s ability to take on the form of a more traditional CCI is challenged by the sheer geographical size of the initiative and its informal nature. One of the key issues is that because the Tri-State Development Summit is not a formal organization, it cannot fundraise on its own. It thus relies primarily on donations from the private sector to

organize the summits. Maggie Strong, the vice president of the Great River Economic Development Foundation, believes that the informal nature of the initiative also makes it difficult to track progress toward and maintain accountability for shared goals. It also means that there is no funding to hire anyone to gather data: “It’s a full-time job just to mine the data that exists to figure out what are we measuring and how are we affecting that. We know we are moving the needle on issues, but we do not have the data.” The lack of funding and available data may also be partially explained by the initiative’s location in rural America, which does not have the same access to philanthropic foundations, funding (the Community Development Block Grant, for example, is limited to urban areas), and data resources as urban areas.

Figure 3: Organizational structure of the Tri-State Development Summit



Quarterback:

Over the past decade, NECAC—and specifically Carla Potts, the organization’s deputy director of housing developments—has acted as a quarterback for the Housing Committee. NECAC was founded in Bowling Green, Missouri in 1965, a year after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act. Funded by the federal Community Services Block Grant, NECAC sought to empower residents living in rural Pike, Ralls, and Monroe Counties by connecting them to a variety of social service programs, including youth education, home economics classes, and construction training. A tri-partite board consisting of one public official, one civic interest representative, and one low-income resident from each county was established to guide the organization’s work.

Over fifty years, NECAC has grown not only in reach, but also in size. The organization added six more rural counties, three metropolitan counties north of St. Louis, and a range of new social services, health programs, and housing options to ensure the financial stability of its constituency. The average median household income in NECAC’s twelve counties is \$35,626, with many residents struggling to find living-wage jobs (U.S. Dept. of H.U.D.). Today, the \$30.1 million agency has a strong housing-development department that, in addition to providing homeownership and foreclosure counseling, has built and rehabilitated more than 1,300 units for low-income elderly people, families, and the disabled (NECAC, 2010). The organization also runs programs to weatherize homes and remove environmental contaminants.

NECAC’s work as a quarterback of the Tri-State Housing Committee has been varied. Although the yearly Tri-State Housing Summits are planned collectively with the core group, NECAC is responsible for executing them using funds that it receives from NeighborWorks America. NECAC also brings to the Tri-State Development Summit and the Housing Committee relationships with organizations such as federal home banks, unions, and public agencies.

NECAC’s relationship with the U.S. Department of Agriculture has proven especially advantageous to the Tri-State Development Summit. Since 1998, NECAC has worked with the USDA’s Rural Development Department on a self-help program. According to Patrick Poepping, hearing Tammye Treviño, then the under-secretary of USDA Rural Development, speak at the Tri-State Housing Summit in 2013 inspired the group to apply for the USDA’s Great Region designation, which they were awarded that same year; the fact that Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack is from Mount Pleasant, Iowa also helped.

The USDA Great Region award has helped the Tri-State Development Summit formalize somewhat. The Tri-State Development Summit developed an economic plan in order to qualify for the designation and has since received training and technical assistance from the USDA. In addition, the designation provides initiatives that are part of the Tri-State Development Summit with additional points when applying for USDA funding, which is awarded using a point system.

Opportunities:

One of the Tri-State Development Summit's goals is to strengthen the region by fostering cross-sector relationships. Although there is little collaboration among the summit's different task forces, each of which works independently in its own sector, the yearly summit creates connections between people working in different fields. The idea is that these relationships will materialize in future partnerships, especially as economic development projects require new housing. One example highlighted by Potts is the future modernization of the locks and dams on the Mississippi. The hope is that once the state approves the budget for these necessary upgrades, the Tri-State Development Summit, which has been pushing for these modernizations, will turn to NECAC for assistance in building workforce housing for temporary workers that will also benefit long-term residents.

Another benefit of working as part of the Tri-State Development Summit highlighted by Potts is the ability to make connections with organizations whose purview has traditionally been outside the housing field. "Nonprofits are geared to thinking that we have to partner with organizations that are like us," says Potts. "It took some changing of perspective to partner with lenders, unions, economic development directors, and business people." Being part of interdisciplinary meetings has challenged deeply held beliefs about different types of organizations and their ability to hold power.

The Aspire Partnership Homes program is one example of the Tri-State Housing Committee's three core organizations working with unusual partners to collectively address a number of issues: affordable housing, job training, and recidivism rates. Still in its initial phase, this collaboration between the Housing Committee, the Joint Apprenticeship Program of the Carpenters Union, and the Federal Department of Probation and Parole will teach construction skills to inmates in Fort Madison, Iowa through hands-on training within the prison. The two-bedroom homes built as part of this program will be sold through NECAC, the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission, and the Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials to low-income buyers for \$35,000, excluding the cost for land, fees, and a foundation. Inmates that

graduate from the program will be eligible to join the Carpenters Union once they are released. “We’ve been pitching the Aspire Homes program, and the big pitching point is that it is a self-sustaining program: once the homes are sold the money returns to the program,” explains Carla Potts.

Potts highlights the development of the Aspire Program as an example of why it is important to have a strong team to work with. When the Missouri Department of Corrections turned down the program, the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission took over the project and found it a home in Fort Madison, Iowa. “If we didn’t have that partnership, we’d still be beating our heads against the wall trying to get the program going,” says Potts.

Challenges:

The Housing Committee of the Tri-State Development Summit faces a number of challenges that are in part due to the size of the initiative and its rural nature.

Funding: A lack of funding presents a major barrier to working collectively on housing issues in the tri-state area. This is due to the relative scarcity of federal and foundation grants for community development initiatives in rural areas, as well as a lack of flexible funding that can cross state lines. Most of the funding mechanisms currently used by the Housing Committee’s three core organizations, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, are limited to their respective states and do not provide funding for the type of work that lead organizations typically undertake.

Parallel play: Because of the lack of funding, the housing organizations have been working individually to build more housing in their respective states, with NECAC providing additional support to help build organizational capacity. NECAC is helping the Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials with HUD-approved housing counseling and is encouraging both of its fellow core organizations to qualify to administer the USDA’s 502 loan program, which requires no down payment from prospective homebuyers. “We’re learning from each other,” says Elaine Davis, the housing coordinator of the Two Rivers Regional Council of Public Officials.

Looking to the Future

What keeps the Tri-State Development Summit and the Housing Committee running despite their limited budget is a shared belief that the 35 counties are stronger if they work together. The summit is made possible through small donations from private sector businesses

and pro bono labor; NECAC funds the Housing Committee summits through NeighborWorks grants.

However, the hours spent talking on the phone, meeting in person, and traveling to meetings and summits represent a considerable commitment, especially for individual organizations that have to remain accountable to their constituencies and board members. This collaboration is made more difficult in a competitive environment. With funds from Illinois sequestered due to the state's budget impasse, Chuck Bevelheimer, the director of planning and development for the City of Quincy, Illinois, put forth a fundamental question: "How do you keep the initiative going when you have budget restraints being placed on you?"

Strengthening the region through transportation, connectivity, tourism, and housing requires a long-term vision. It has taken the Tri-State Development Summit eighteen years to secure a Great Regions designation; the time has been spent cultivating strong relationships among organizations and the politicians that represent the area. With certain key members close to retirement, succession planning is a priority for the Tri-State Development Summit and the Housing Committee. Younger members are being brought into the initiative, with the hope that they can build on this foundation and continue to strengthen the region's economic base.

Building Community Capacity to Guide Development in Los Angeles: Little Tokyo Service Center and Sustainable Little Tokyo

Snapshot:

Mission: Develop a community-driven future and identity for the Little Tokyo neighborhood in Los Angeles based on green initiatives, small business development, and cultural and arts programming

Model: Formal network structured around broad community development goal

Program: A cultural eco-district

- Green infrastructure
- Arts and culture
- Economic development

Time: 2013-present

Location: Little Tokyo, Los Angeles

Quarterback: Little Tokyo Service Center CDC

Partners: Little Tokyo Service Center, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Little Tokyo Community Council

Funders: Partners in Progress, Enterprise, LISC, Surdna Foundation, California Arts Council, Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and National Resource Defense Council

Initiative:

Los Angeles' Little Tokyo is one of three remaining Japantowns in the United States. For over 130 years, this bustling neighborhood, which is the heart of the Japanese-American community of Southern California and home to many Japanese temples, cultural institutions, restaurants, and shops, has had to fight the plans of private and public entities in order to maintain its history and culture. Starting with the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War, the Little Tokyo community has had a long history of displacement under the many urban renewal plans of Los Angeles, which has led to a considerable loss of population in the neighborhood.

A new light-rail line is planned to run through downtown Los Angeles and Little Tokyo, presenting new challenges and opportunities for the neighborhood. This light-rail corridor, expected to open in 2021, will connect the Blue, Expo, Red, and Purple Lines, with the new stop in Little Tokyo expected to become one of the busiest transit stops in all of Los Angeles. This

project has left many residents, business owners, and institutions in the neighborhood bracing for change, especially against the background of an ongoing demographic shift caused by higher-income households moving into newly-built apartments in the area.

The Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), a community development corporation with deep ties to the community, and the Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC) recognized an important window in which to proactively guide neighborhood change. The two organizations had already been in conversation with the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the City of L.A. to fight an initial plan to build an over-ground line, which would have cut the neighborhood in half, and had negotiated a number of benefits, including a construction mitigation fund and marketing for local businesses. With considerable experience in real estate development and planning, LTSC saw three large publicly owned lots adjacent to the metro station as an opportunity for the neighborhood.

Consequently, in collaboration with LTCC, LTSC launched Sustainable Little Tokyo in 2013 to guide this new development so as to make it both environmentally sustainable and respectful of the area's long history and culture. The planning vision of a Cultural Eco-District aims to achieve both of these goals. Developed with the community during a three-day charrette in September of 2013, the plan addresses housing affordability, arts and culture, water and energy efficiency, and economic development; it is rooted in the Japanese cultural values of "mottainai" (what a shame to waste), "kodomo tameni" (for future generations), and "banbutsu" (interconnectedness).

The initiative's overarching goal is to sustain an economically, culturally, and environmentally strong Little Tokyo and to ensure the self-determination that Little Tokyo has fought for since the Second World War. The initiative has been working towards this goal in two ways. First, it has sought to make the mindset and behaviors of businesses, residents, and organizations more environmentally-friendly; this has mostly been accomplished through small actions, such as the greening of local festivals, that educate the public about green initiatives. Second, it is trying to have the City of L.A. codify the initiative's values into its base zoning, which is currently being updated, and into RFPs for the publicly owned and underutilized parcels adjacent to the new station. The leadership of Sustainable Little Tokyo are working with the community to make sure that they are prepared to meaningfully contribute to these two processes.

Structure:

The governance structure of the initiative is divided into three parts: an executive cabinet, a steering committee, and three subcommittees that focus on issues of community engagement, real estate, and arts and culture. This governance structure was developed through Sustainable Little Tokyo's participation in the Target Cities Program run by EcoDistricts, an organization based in Cambridge, MA that seeks to integrate sustainable measures into plans for new and existing neighborhoods.

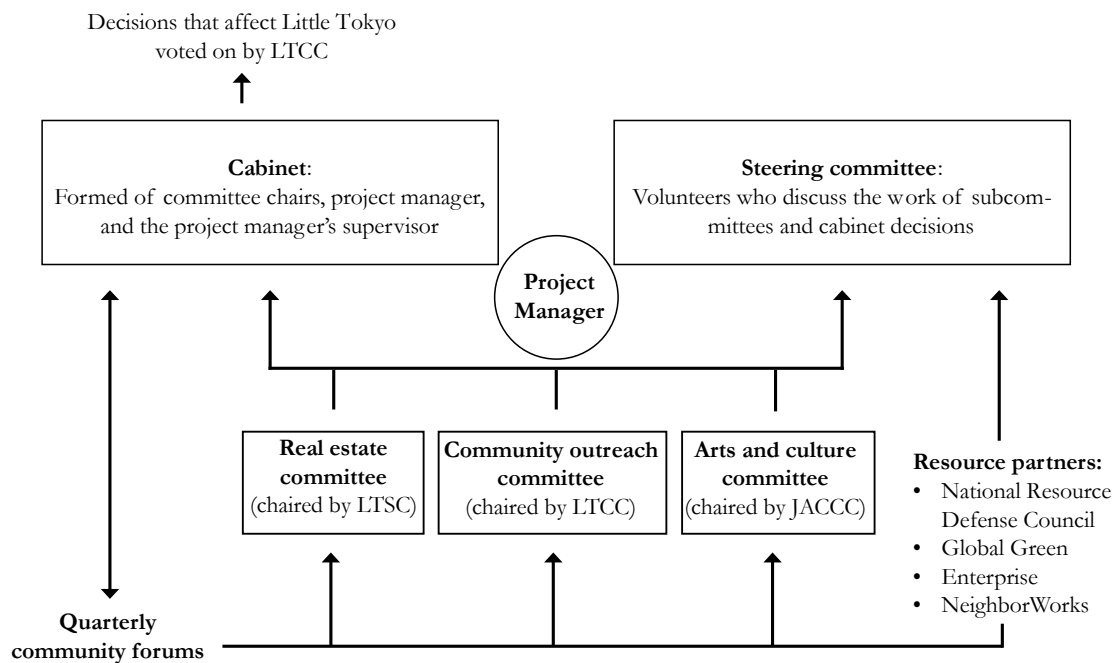
The three subcommittees are responsible for discussing and implementing programs in their respective areas. Each of the three main organizations involved in Sustainable Little Tokyo—LTSC, LTCC, and the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC)—chairs one of the subcommittees. They establish short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals and define which organizations are responsible for meeting them. The committee chairs are responsible for informing the steering committee and cabinet about progress towards those goals. The steering committee and cabinet, which is made up of the three co-chairs and the initiative's two staff members, provide a space for higher-level discussion of the initiative's planning, strategizing, and fundraising, and ensure that the work done by the three subcommittees fits in the larger picture. Finally, quarterly community forums engage the public in Sustainable Little Tokyo's work.

Sustainable Little Tokyo is built upon long-term relationships in Little Tokyo. Little Tokyo is home to strong Japanese American institutions, such as the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), JACCC, and numerous temples and churches, which have helped preserve this ethnic enclave through local and international support. Many of the neighborhood's organizations have a long history of working together as part of the Little Tokyo Community Council, a community-driven neighborhood council formed in the 1990s to make sure that the community is educated, organized, and able to speak with one voice. Today, the community council plays a critical role in the neighborhood by providing a neutral space where organizations, institutions, businesses, and residents can come together monthly to discuss concerns, share information, and work collectively on issues. Leslie Ito, the executive director of the JACCC, credits the partners' past working experience for establishing the trust and respect necessary to manage the collaborative relationships of Sustainable Little Tokyo.

The community council plays a key role in the Sustainable Little Tokyo initiative. "The idea was that if this is to be a community-driven project where we want wide representation

and investment from community stakeholders, then it should be hosted by a community-driven space,” says Kristin Fukushima, a Little Tokyo Community Council employee and Sustainable Little Tokyo’s project manager. The initiative’s collaboration with LTCC broadens its sphere of community input, since LTCC includes some organizations and members that are not formally part of Sustainable Little Tokyo. In addition, because Sustainable Little Tokyo is a coalition that represents a variety of interests in Little Tokyo, the inclusion of LTCC provides the initiative a more neutral and collective position from which larger mission-driven organizations, like the LTSC and JACCC, can advocate for the community, without falling into the trap of a conflict of interest.

Figure 4: Organizational Structure of Sustainable Little Tokyo



Quarterback:

The Little Tokyo Service Center helped establish the initiative and participates in every layer of its governance. In addition, LTSC helped secure Citi Foundation and Low Income Investment Fund Partners in Progress funding, a one-year \$250,000 grant provided to support community quarterbacks. The grant kick-started Sustainable Little Tokyo and allowed it to take the holistic form that it did. Yet Dean Matsubayashi, the organization’s executive director, hesitates to call LTSC a leading organization. This is because he believes that it puts too much emphasis on the individual organization, when it is the collective nature of the initiative that will

determine its success. “All the different pieces that need to come together for something to happen and to move forward are way beyond anyone’s control,” says Matsubayashi. “So it should be more about how we can position ourselves and others to have an impact on those different people.”

LTSC sees itself less as a leader and more as an enabler that recognizes the strengths of different organizations, which is how the quarterback definition differs from the conventional notion of leadership. When the organization received the Partners in Progress grant, LTSC shared the funding with its partners. This helped pay for the project manager, who is housed at the community council. This supporting role also requires knowing when to step up as well as when to step down: “A big part of Sustainable Little Tokyo that’s developing now is around the arts and culture. LTSC, given its background, makes no sense driving it. The Japanese American Cultural and Community Center makes perfect sense, so they’re the ones driving that piece,” explains Matsubayashi.

LTSC has served a leadership role in the community and in greater Los Angeles since it was founded. LTSC started off as a social service organization, but in 1994, it became a community development corporation to focus on affordable housing, real estate, and planning. “We came out of a community-wide effort to exercise more control over planning and development in Little Tokyo,” says Matsubayashi, describing how they were asked to build affordable housing after a community struggle to save the San Pedro Firm building, a single-residency occupancy building that was torn down by the City of Los Angeles to build a luxury hotel in its place.

As the real estate development arm of LTSC grew stronger, LTSC began collaborating with other organizations to build affordable housing, first in other Asian Pacific Islander neighborhoods and later in South Los Angeles and the Valley. LTSC also received funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Section 4 program to provide technical assistance to groups across L.A. In addition to its continued social service programs, LTSC provides real estate, organizing, and planning services to support their mission of fostering self-determination—helping Little Tokyo, Japanese Americans, and the low-income community at large play an active, meaningful role in development.

LTSC, through its experience in real estate, brings important skills to the project. “We feel like we are an organization that has technical understanding and paid staff to lend to Sustainable Little Tokyo, and given how important the issue is to our organization, we have

rejigged our plans to really allow for our staff to focus on this initiative,” says Remy de la Peza, LTSC’s director of planning. Through its work in real estate and planning, the organization has developed a sophisticated understanding of the land-use process in the city, strong relationships with local politicians, and an ability to structure complex deals. “We’re able to tackle this complicated world of development, negotiation, and funding, and empower the community to have an impact,” de la Peza describes. Chris Komai, the chair of the Little Tokyo Community Council, and Fukushima, the initiative’s project manager, see LTSC’s experience in development as critical to meeting the goals of Sustainable Little Tokyo.

Opportunities:

Working as part of this initiative has put the LTSC in touch with many organizations that are not traditional partners of housing and community development organizations, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Global Green, National Historic Trust for Preservation, and (through the work of JACCC) the National Endowment for the Arts. These new relationships have provided Sustainable Little Tokyo with greater resources, often in the form of technical assistance. For example, LTSC has developed a working relationship with the Los Angeles office of the National Resource Defense Council, which is working on creating a LEED rating for neighborhoods and is providing Sustainable Little Tokyo with technical support related to sustainability. The relationships have also provided more funding for LTSC and Sustainable Little Tokyo. In August of 2015, LTSC received a three-year \$3 million grant from ArtPlace America, a collaboration between banks, foundations, and federal agencies to bring art and culture into comprehensive community initiatives.

In addition, the missions of LTSC and Sustainable Little Tokyo are closely aligned around the neighborhood’s right to self-determination. Working as part of Sustainable Little Tokyo has thus helped LTSC be more effective in working towards its mission. “We recognize that no one organization can get the work done,” says Matsubayashi. “It really requires a community-wide effort and one that’s pretty horizontal.” LTSC officers have also been addressing the issue of equity in transit-oriented development by being a member and fiscal sponsor of Alliance for Community Transit LA (ACT LA). This loose association of organizations includes community development agencies, public health organizations, social services, environmental groups, and organizing groups, and hopes to pass a citywide ordinance to make sure that communities are meaningfully engaged in large infrastructure projects.

Challenges:

The Sustainable Little Tokyo visioning plan broadly defines sustainability to include helping the small businesses that make the neighborhood so vibrant prepare for the growing market pressures in Little Tokyo and downtown L.A. The coalition is still working on developing new strategies to better integrate the area's many Japanese American and immigrant business owners, who often are too busy to become part of Sustainable Little Tokyo. Chris Komai, the current board chair of LTCC, remarked that the community council was once more evenly composed of organizations, businesses, and residents, but that, as of late, it has been dominated by nonprofits.

The lack of coordination between government bodies is another challenge. "There's not a whole lot of coordination on the government side, so to be coming in as an outsider, as a nonprofit, and force coordination is challenging," explains de la Peza. The local offices of Enterprise and Global Green have helped LTSC better understand this field and its local politics; other organizations involved in Sustainable Little Tokyo that have done work with different agencies have also helped form coalitions that benefit the initiative.

Looking Towards the Future:

As the initiative moves forward, the members of Sustainable Little Tokyo are refining the initiative's governance structure and updating its visioning document. "It is important to not let that vision be static and to ensure that the community is familiar with that vision," says de la Peza. "It needs to be something that the community understands and is interacting with."

Because the missions of LTSC and Sustainable Little Tokyo are intertwined, LTSC plans to continue to play an active role in the initiative, building internal capacity to further integrate it into LTSC's work plans (it already is part of the work plan for LTSC's community-outreach, planning, and real-estate arms). JACCC, too, is planning for continued participation: Leslie Ito, JACCC's executive director, was able to secure some funding from the Surdna Foundation to cover JACCC's involvement in Sustainable Little Tokyo. Fukushima recognizes the importance of her own role in maintaining and guiding the initiative's energy: "Everyone in these initiatives has multiple hats, so something like Sustainable Little Tokyo is one more thing that gets added to everyone's plate," says Fukushima. Building additional staff capacity is therefore a priority for the officers of Sustainable Little Tokyo.

PART 3: **Takeaways and Challenges**

On the basis of these three case studies and the literature on comprehensive community development and collective impact, this third and final part of the report will offer some conclusions about why it is important for housing and community development organizations to engage in such initiatives, what housing and community development organizations can bring to the role of the lead agency, and the challenges associated with this role.

Why Is the Comprehensive Approach Important for Housing Organizations?

Furthering Missions:

Engaging in comprehensive community development can stretch an organization's capacities. However, the payoff is that it can enable an organization to have a larger impact and provide a greater range of services to its community. All three organizations studied here—The Neighborhood Developers (TND), the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), and the North East Community Action Corporation (NECAC)—saw their respective initiatives as ways of furthering their organizations' work and missions, not by developing new lines of business, but by playing the role of a facilitator. For example, Connect's mission—helping households and people achieve greater economic security—feeds directly into TND's mission of empowering communities by building homes, social capital, and household financial assets. TND had already expanded beyond its traditional line of business, housing, when it began providing financial and community building services in 2006. However, TND's management work as part of Connect has strengthened its ability to improve the financial stability of its clients by providing them with a place where they can access a greater range of services.

Pooling of Material and Intellectual Resources:

Cross-sector partnerships pool together material and intellectual resources from a variety of sectors. All three initiatives brought non-traditional partners such as environmental groups, cultural institutions, and economic development groups to the same table as housing and community development organizations. Thanks to its work with local cultural and arts-focused groups, LTSC was able to secure a \$3 million three-year grant from ArtPlace in August 2015 to include arts and culture in its comprehensive community development initiative.

These partnerships present a new way for housing organizations to generate political support and funding, which is growing scarcer despite a growing demand for affordable housing. The proven links between housing and other areas of concern, such as health and employment, provide opportunities for housing and community development organizations to make their efforts integral to problem-solving strategies in those areas. Although none of the case studies focused on health, this is a growing field where there are opportunities for collaboration between community development and health organizations. Research has shown that stable, safe, and affordable housing has an impact on the health of a household by, for example, making more resources available to receive health services and eat healthy food, limiting exposure to environmental toxins, and reducing the stress caused by living in high-crime neighborhoods (Maqbool, Viveiros, and Ault, 2015). Not only can being part of a more integrated initiative help secure more support for housing, it could also help organizations better serve their constituents, many of whom face the chronic health issues associated with poverty and old age.

New Opportunities:

Being a part of broader initiatives also opens up new opportunities for the organizations involved, especially those acting in the capacity of a lead agency. Leading a comprehensive community development initiative requires the development of communication and governance infrastructures necessary for the effective management of a partnership. The development of this infrastructure enables organizations to take on similar roles in other partnerships. For example, TND is currently helping to lead Chelsea Thrives, working alongside the City of Chelsea and Roca, an organization that works with at-risk men. Part of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston's Working Cities challenge, Chelsea Thrives brings together thirty partners in the city to help stabilize a highly transient, low-income corridor and has partnered with Massachusetts General Hospital to reduce asthma triggers in homes by better enforcing building codes (Working Cities, 2015). In turn, the initiative helps expand the community engagement work of TND and also allows the organization to better align its work in housing with resident and municipal priorities in Chelsea.

What Can Housing and Community Development Organizations Bring to the Quarterback Role?

The three case studies highlighted a number of skills, perspectives, and experiences that housing and community-development organizations can bring to the lead-agency role.

Development Experience:

Since being founded, LTSC, TND, and the NECAC have developed strong housing and real estate development arms. The three organizations have refined the skills that they use to marshal funding, collaborate with other team members, and navigate the political and planning landscape. This experience has proven especially important for a more place-based initiative like Sustainable Little Tokyo, where the built environment in terms of zoning, future development, and transportation plays a big role in defining the future character of the neighborhood. Pursuing affordable housing deals despite tight financing and, at times, against local opposition has also helped cultivate the dogged perseverance and entrepreneurialism needed to complete a project on time and on budget. TND credits the Box District, a TND-led public-private partnership to transform a 10.5-acre brownfield into a high-density housing complex, for providing a signal to other organizations that the CDC is able to successfully complete innovative and complex projects.

Sources of Revenue:

Despite the ebbs and flows of the market, real estate development provides a stream of income from rent and developers' fees. These additional funds can be used to cross-subsidize other operations. TND, for example, were able to cover the financial services that they provide as part of Connect with revenue raised through their real estate development arm. Establishing a business model is an important consideration for these initiatives, freeing them from being entirely dependent on grants.

Community Perspective:

The three housing and community development organizations profiled in this report are rooted in their communities. Unlike larger housing developers, they focus their development work primarily in the neighborhoods and regions where they are based and which they represent. In addition to having invested in these neighborhoods and regions, the organizations are committed to making residents active agents of change through a variety of means, such as bringing together small groups of people to build community capital or ensuring broad

representation from the community on the boards of organizations. The involvement of neighborhood residents is especially important for comprehensive community development, which often emphasizes community-building work in order to strengthen the ability of individuals and organizations to advocate for and guide change. This community capacity and ownership is paramount to the long-term viability and accountability of initiatives.

The community engagement work of community development organizations translates into their work in comprehensive community development initiatives. Involving residents in deciding the future of the neighborhood is integral to the work of LTSC. In addition to educating residents and other stakeholders about the role and process of urban planning in Los Angeles, LTSC co-founded the Little Tokyo Community Council in the 1990s to provide a platform for community members to collectively address shared issues. This priority is reflected in the structure of Sustainable Little Tokyo. The initiative developed its vision of a cultural eco-district with residents during a three-day charette in the fall of 2013, and continues to host quarterly community forums in order to bring more voices into its work.

Housing and Community Development Resources:

Finally, all three initiatives involved housing and community development intermediaries in their work—NeighborWorks America, LISC, and Enterprise. These partnerships would not have had access to these intermediaries had they not had active housing and community development organizations on board. The three intermediaries support the initiatives through small grants, technical assistance, and personal support. In Sustainable Little Tokyo, the staffs of intermediaries participate in the planning and execution of the initiative, providing both technical expertise and advice on the direction of the initiative. In addition to the material and intellectual support provided by larger intermediaries, their presence and investment in building the capacity of their member organizations help build confidence in the lead agencies' abilities.

Quarterbacking Challenges

If engaging in comprehensive community development tests organizational abilities, managing such initiatives tests them all the more. The three lead agencies profiled in this paper face a number of challenges and opportunities.

Breaking Silos:

A number of challenges that lead agencies face relate to the type of work that they are expected to take on. A major responsibility of the quarterback or backbone organization is to bring partners to the table and to build and support relationships within and outside the initiative. TND found that working in close collaboration with organizations outside its traditional field required additional relationship-building and time spent understanding and acknowledging different work cultures. In addition to holding weekly and monthly meetings among staff and managing partners, TND had to consciously build a culture for Connect that resolved staff tensions.

Breaking the tendency of different organizations to separate into “silos” is a challenge not only within an initiative, but also with external partners. The experiences of people working as part of Sustainable Little Tokyo and the Tri-State Development Summit highlight the difficulty of working on projects that cross professional and geographical boundaries in a context where boundaries are strong and respected. For the Tri-State Development Summit, the challenge lies in finding sources of funding that can cross state boundaries and provide opportunities for its members to collaborate on projects, whereas Sustainable Little Tokyo must better coordinate among various city departments that generally do not communicate with one another. Community development initiatives should follow the lead of the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative and explore where their goals could be better met by cross-sector initiatives. Prioritizing outcomes—e.g., economic stability—rather than outputs—e.g., people receiving job training—could provide a framework for encouraging more collaborative work between sectors and fields.

Funding Challenges:

Staff at all three organizations spoke of a lack of long-term, flexible funding for their work. Being underfunded divides the attentions and priorities of the very people who have been granted the responsibility of keeping other organizations and people committed and on track. This problem is further compounded by the fact that these organizations need to meet their own fundraising goals in addition to those of their initiatives. This tension is currently coming to a head in the Tri-State Development Summit due to the budget sequestration in Illinois, which means that some of the participating organizations are having a hard time funding their own work, let alone contributing to the initiative. The Little Tokyo Service Center addressed this tension between individual and collective goals by making Sustainable Little Tokyo part of the work plan of its community and economic development arm. This integration has helped break

down the distinction between LTSC's contributions to Sustainable Little Tokyo and its other work.

Strengthening Partner Organizations:

All three lead agencies provided technical assistance to and shared resources with their partner organizations. Carla Potts of NECAC emphasized the necessity of having a strong team in order to share responsibilities and take the lead on individual initiatives. That experience was shared by Sustainable Little Tokyo and also by Connect, where a workforce development partner is currently taking the lead on developing a pathway to finance the initiative's jobs program. Strengthening the capabilities of partners and allowing them to take the lead on certain initiatives improves a partnership's ability to work towards a common goal, but is not as easy in a competitive field like community development where many organizations compete for a small pot of money. In addition, few organizations receive funding to provide technical assistance to their collaborators.

The Role of Individual Leadership:

Strong individual leadership clearly helps organizations develop the capacity to take on leadership roles of their own. Having a charismatic leader who is able to solve problems and bring a variety of people together is an important part of the puzzle, alongside staff capacity, external support, and working relationships. However, initiatives should avoid placing too much emphasis on any single person in an organization in case that person leaves the organization. One of the initiatives highlighted suffered a blow when the former director of planning left the lead organization; the initiative then had to rebuild the knowledge and experience that left with him. Since then, the initiative has developed more transparent ways of sharing experience and knowledge to better weather any changes in leadership. Organizations should work to share as much information and knowledge as possible among the organization's staff, and should work with the staff of partnering organizations to build up a collective and accessible knowledge base.

Governance and Transparency:

Perhaps the biggest challenge for leading agencies is walking the fine line between managing the initiative and being a good collaborator, providing enough guidance without being too controlling. Although there is no simple solution to this challenge, establishing open communication and governance infrastructures is key, especially in terms of grant writing, establishing relationships, and external communication. For example, when funds are acquired

for the initiative, lead agencies should be able and willing to show how those funds are serving the initiative and work with partnering organizations to decide how to allocate them.

Without such transparency, lead agencies run the risk of appearing to use the initiative's funding and publicity solely for themselves. Even though LTSC's mission of supporting community self-determination dovetails with that of Sustainable Little Tokyo, LTSC understands the important role of the Little Tokyo Community Council, which includes core team members as well as other Little Tokyo stakeholders, allowing more voices to be heard in the conversation. The initiative's project manager is thus based in the Little Tokyo Community Council. The field could benefit from paying more attention to the organizational and governance structures of these initiatives and to how members are involved in different aspects of decision-making.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In complex, cross-sector partnerships, leadership is necessary for initiatives to stay on track and remain viable in the long term. This paper has explored the role of the quarterback or backbone organization in comprehensive community development, focusing on the experiences of housing and community development organizations. Although each of the case studies represents a unique context with its own opportunities and limitations, funders, policymakers, and intermediaries can support lead agencies by providing funding for staffing, streamlining community-development programs, and sharing best practices.

To run with the quarterback metaphor, lead agencies need coaches. Intermediaries and funders play a critical role in the experience of lead agencies by providing them and their initiatives with a variety of technical and material resources. Intermediaries could go further by highlighting and disseminating best practices that help lead agencies prepare for the challenges that they will face. With a broader view of the field of community development, intermediaries are also favorably positioned to systematically study and highlight the characteristics and requirements of the quarterback or backbone organization to ensure that their added capacity benefits the whole partnership.

Municipal governments and federal agencies could also play a larger role in supporting these organizations as they work to address systemic social issues. Research on how cities could creatively fund the work of lead agencies and community development initiatives would not only help to make them more viable in the long run, but ultimately contribute to many municipal programs.

However, there is no silver bullet for the lack of funding, especially for staffing and capacity building. Figuring out how to fund the work of a lead agency in the long term will require initiative not only from the federal government, local government, and foundations—which together continue to shape the work that organizations do—but also from the organizations themselves. To avoid being entirely grant-funded and thus vulnerable to political cycles, organizations should look for internal ways to fund their involvement in comprehensive community development through cross-subsidization or by developing a business model for the initiative. These tasks present a real challenge for organizations and should be the focus of future research.

Practitioners in the field also need to examine how the allocation of limited resources might re-create the inequalities that many comprehensive community-development initiatives seek to address. The case studies here show the advantages of funding well-established organizations (like LTSC, TND, and NECAC) with track records of success. CCIs help distribute resources when quarterback organizations share them with and strengthen weaker partners. But in an era of scarce funding, backing only strong organizations may lead to missed opportunities in neighborhoods where organizations are weak. Funders may need to take risks on CCIs in disadvantaged areas, which will have quarterbacks less experienced and robust than The Neighborhood Developers, the North East Community Action Corporation, or the Little Tokyo Service Center.

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