

**COMBINING ORGANIZING AND HOUSING DEVELOPMENT:
CONFLICTIVE YET SYNERGISTIC**

by

RICANNE ANNIK HADRIAN

**B.A. Political Science
Tufts University
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Signature of Author _____
**Dept of Urban Studies & Planning
May 6, 1988**

Certified by _____
**Langley Keyes
Professor
Thesis Supervisor**

Accepted by _____
**Donald Schon
Chairperson, MCP Program**

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ABSTRACT

Numerous tensions and dilemmas occur when community-based development organizations (cbdo) combine the roles of organizing and housing development. Nevertheless, combining these roles can be potentially synergistic.

Through indepth analysis of two specific case studies, complemented by examples from twelve additional organizations, sixty interviews and the existing literature on the subject, I have explored how some organizations have attempted to ease the inherent tensions in combining community organizing and housing development. Furthermore, I illustrate how in combining the roles they can in fact reinforce and strengthen each other.

The thesis includes: five reasons why community-based development organizations need to organize; a review of the literature; a typology of ten tensions cbdo's may face when combining organizing and housing development; case studies of East Brooklyn Churches/Nehemiah and The Coalition for a Better Acre, and analysis of how they have ameliorated the tensions and combined the roles synergistically; and some concluding observations and remarks.

THESIS SUPERVISOR: LANGLEY KEYES

TITLE: PROFESSOR OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

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Without the guidance of Lang Keyes, my advisor, this exploration would not have become a thesis. His unyielding encouragement, direction, challenging and inspiration have helped me through some of the "hard times" at MIT.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Ann Hadrian Cote, and in the memory of Jerry Cote, without whom I would not be where I am today.

In the words of Robert Bellah:

"We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to the bottom of ourselves on our own. We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love and learning... we are not simply ends in ourselves, either as individuals or as a society. We are parts of a larger whole that we can neither forget nor imagine." (from HABITS OF THE HEART)

TO BE OF USE

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals,
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is as common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopie vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry,
and a person for work that is real.

MARGE PIERCY

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This inquiry grew out of my personal desire to explore how organizing and housing development can be combined in community-based organizations. Because of my need to link my organizing past with my future in developing affordable housing and my commitment to community empowerment and self-determination, I wanted to explore how community-based organizations have attempted to combine the roles of community organizing, or process-building, and housing development, or product generating. I chose to focus on housing development not because I believe it is the most important need in our communities today, but rather because it is the issue closest to my heart.

Putting the word "community" before "development" changes the meaning of development. For me, community development should not be just development in or for a community but of and by that community. Community development via housing as a vehicle is more than the struggle for a product, or land, bricks and mortar. It is also the struggle for power, or the inclusion of a community's residents in determining their own future and in the day-to-day political, economic and psychological decisions which affect their lives.

On one hand, empowerment is gained by building processes through which people can take control of their lives and neighborhoods. On the other hand, empowerment can be gained by

building and controlling the products which affect their lives. I believe that community-based development organizations must incorporate both goals of building processes as well as products -- incorporating community organizing in their housing development work -- if their mission is to achieve community empowerment and control over the development process.

Despite this point of view, I began this exploration with the awareness that there are conflictive tensions which arise when community-based organizations combine organizing and housing development, and I began with this premise. However, through my research I have found that some community-based development organizations have combined these roles to reinforce and strengthen each other, in many cases creating a synergism.

OVERVIEW: INHERENTLY CONFLICTIVE YET POTENTIALLY SYNERGISTIC

Numerous tensions and dilemmas occur when community-based development organizations (cbdo's) combine the roles of community organizing and housing development. Nevertheless, combining these roles can be potentially synergistic.

Through indepth analysis of two specific case studies, complemented by examples from twelve additional organizations, sixty interviews and the existing literature on the subject, I have investigated how some community-based organizations have combined the roles of organizing and housing development. This

exploration has shed light on the following questions:

- * What dilemmas, tensions and conflicts have occurred?
- * How have these organizations attempted to ease these tensions?
- * How can the roles be complementary rather than conflictive?

CASE STUDIES/METHODOLOGY

The two organizations I chose for the indepth case studies are:

1) East Brooklyn Churches/The Nehemiah Project, Brooklyn, NY

Started in 1980 as an Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) organizing project working on a variety of neighborhood issues, EBC later got involved in housing development. With the assistance of a retired builder I.D. Robbins, EBC built "Nehemiah I" a 1,000 unit housing development in the Brownsville neighborhood of East Brooklyn.

2) The Coalition for a Better Acre (CBA) (Lowell, MA)

Started in 1982 as a reaction to the city of Lowell's urban renewal plan for the Acre neighborhood, CBA from inception has been engaged in both organizing and housing development activities. In addition to building 60 homeownership units, CBA has also organized around a number of issues in the Acre, including crime, drugs, and cultural awareness. As well, CBA initiated and is working closely with a tenant council at North Canal, a

267 unit HUD-distressed Section 221(d)(3) development.

These case studies are supplemented by discussions with staff and leaders from 12 other community-based organizations, including: Somerville United Neighborhoods/SUNCDC; Allston-Brighton CDC; Fields Corner CDC; Symphony Tenants Organizing Project (STOP)/Fenway CDC; Inquilinos Boricuas En Accion (IBA), South End; Jamaica Plain NDC; Urban Edge, Roxbury; Nuestra Comunidad DC, Roxbury; Dudley St. Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), Roxbury; People Acting Through Community Effort (PACE)/Stop Wasting Abandoned Property (SWAP), Providence; Woodlawn Organization, Chicago; and SouthEast Community Organization (SECO), Baltimore.

However, I chose to focus on EBC and CBA because they are two of the best examples I could find of community-based organizations which are combining both roles of organizing and housing development. The purpose of the case studies is not to describe the growth, current state, and success or failure of each organization, within their unique historical, political and spatial context. Rather, I wanted to explore these organizations to better understand how they have attempted to ease the inherent tensions in combining both organizing and housing development.

Primary tools of study, analysis and information collection included: 1) Field observations, by attending staff and community meetings 2) Interviews with current and former staff

members, board members, steering and sponsoring committee leaders, and less active members 3) Interviews with other community leaders and players not involved with the organizations and 4) Review of organizational meeting minutes and documents.

THESIS OUTLINE

After the introductory comments and overview of CHAPTER ONE, I will provide a context for this inquiry in CHAPTER TWO. This will include: definition of terms, five reasons why community-based development organizations need to incorporate organizing in their housing development work, and characteristics of a well-built cbdo.

CHAPTER THREE will include a review of the existing literature in the field and then a typology of tensions which cbdo's face when combining organizing and housing development. Examples from the twelve additional cases will be used to illustrate these tensions. CHAPTER FOUR AND CHAPTER FIVE will be the case studies of East Brooklyn Churches/Nehemiah and The Coalition for a Better Acre, respectively.

Using the typology of tensions in chapter three as a framework, in CHAPTER SIX I will analyze how EBC and CBA have successfully combined the roles of organizing and housing development, at least ameliorating the tensions and at best creating a synergism. Finally, CHAPTER SEVEN will include some concluding observations.

CHAPTER TWO: THE CONTEXT

History is a repository of ideas
you assemble from and build on.

Robert Venturi

In this chapter I will provide a context for chapters three through six, including: 1) definition of terms to be used 2) five reasons why community-based development organizations need to incorporate community organizing in their housing development work and 3) characteristics of a well-built cbdo, including five cbdo organizational models.

SOME DEFINITIONS

We cannot invent a language of new grunts.
We start where we find ourselves,
at this time and place.

Marge Piercy

It is necessary to briefly define terms such as community, community organizing, community-based housing development and other related buzzwords to provide a common reader-based language for this exploration.

Community

Many have differentiated between the terms "neighborhood" and "community" by defining the former in "geographic" terms, or an imaginary line drawn around a given territory, and the latter in "people" terms, or the residents who live within that

boundary. However, community is more than just a bounded area or a specified population -- it is about a set of relationships within that community or neighborhood. As well, a community can have a variety of uncohesive factions within it.

In the words of Mike Miller, Director of the Organize Training Center in San Francisco, community is best defined as "a group of people who support and challenge each other to act, both individually and collectively, to affirm, defend, and advance their values and self-interest."¹

Community organizing

Creating an organization isn't like building a house brick by brick, plank by plank, into a fixed, permanent structure. An organization is dynamic, not static.

Lee Staples

Simply put, community organizing is people joining together to gain more control over their lives, neighborhoods, and conditions that they face on a day to day basis. The premise behind community organizing is that together people can best assess their own needs, set their goals, strategize a plan, and take direct action to help themselves. Organizing can lead to self-determination and "empowerment" of a person, a group or a community.

Nevertheless, community organizing means different things to

¹Mike Miller, "Organizing: A Map for Explorers," Christianity and Crisis, February 1987, p.1.

different people. It can mean organizing in a workplace for better pay or working conditions; organizing in a neighborhood around local issues such as stop signs and street lights; organizing at the state level around a particular legislative agenda; or organizing at the national level for a massive demonstration.

In my mind, however, building a community-based organization is not the same as organizing in a community around a special need, issue or agenda. The primary goal of building a community-based organization is to create a lasting entity through which people can work together for self-determination, gain skills, and work on a variety of issues that arise over time. It is usually grounded in a specific area or neighborhood. Working collectively on issues is a vehicle to develop leadership, skills, self-confidence, and to build the power of the organization, as well as an end in itself.

Community-based housing development

Community based housing development can be defined as:

efforts in which members of a community group or tenants join together to produce, rehabilitate, manage, and/or own housing. The central feature is that control and often ownership of the housing is in the hands of the individuals who live in the housing or in the community.²

Community-based housing development grew in response to two

²Rachel Bratt, "Community-Based Housing: Strengths of the Strategy Amid Dilemmas That Won't Go Away," in Neighborhood Policy and Programs - Past and Present, (NY: MacMillan Press, 1988, forthcoming), p. 22.

impetuses: first, the failure of the market to provide affordable housing for low income people and combat deterioration and displacement, and second the growing belief in the United States during the past 35 years that residents have an inherent right to be involved in the community development of their neighborhoods.

The first impetus -- the need to fill the gap left by the market -- is fairly straightforward. Product-oriented in mandate, it is relatively easy to gage and measure this component of community-based housing development.

The second impetus -- the movement to a more "bottom-up" instead of a "top-down" model of community development -- is more complex. It is process-oriented in mandate, and much more difficult to measure and "get a handle on."

As well, these impetuses led to the growth of community-based organizing efforts in the 1970's. After two decades of "movement politics" -- from the anti-war to the Yippie movements -- many social change activists began to see that their struggles had to be institutionalized and grounded in democratically run community organizations. Called the "backyard revolution"³ by Harry Boyte, this identifiable citizens' movement based on the Alinsky tradition of organizing emerged in the mid-1970's.

³ Harry Boyte, The Backyard Revolution, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980)

Empowerment

Empowerment is a process through which people can individually and collectively gain more control over the situations that influence their lives. Although interdependent and overlapping, I cull three distinct types of empowerment: political, economic, and personal/psychological.*

Gaining **political empowerment** means that people have access or control over the decisionmaking processes which affects their day to day lives. It means more opportunities and structures for participation in political institutions. An example would be gaining control over the designation of publicly held land for development in a community.

Gaining **economic empowerment** means that people have access to or control over the economic institutions which provide resources, products and services in one's community. An example would be gaining direct control over or owning the commodities which affect our lives, such as housing. Ownership can be defined as single family homeownership, but also can include other tenure structures such as cooperatives, condominiums, land trusts, and mutual housing associations.

Gaining **personal/psychological empowerment** is perhaps the most difficult to define and obtain, as our society fails to institutionally support and value individual growth for low income and disenfranchised people. Gaining this type of

*Janet Howley, "CDC's and Empowerment of Low-Income People" Have They Been Successful?" (Masters Thesis, Tufts, Department of Urban & Environmental Policy, 1987.)

empowerment means a person realizes a level of self-esteem that comes from having a better sense of control of his/her destiny. Other characteristics of psychological empowerment include an increase in skills, in self-image and self-confidence in one's ability to take control, and in having a sense of choice.

Community control

Indeed the problem with the concept of community control is, that it is a thoroughly amorphous concept, unclear and vague, ill-defined and wobbly like a huge marshmallow. It means different things to different people, yet it has become an unquestioned given, seldom if ever critically examined by those advocating it.⁵

Marjaleena Repo

Ideally, true "community control" would be the nexus of obtaining political, economic and personal/psychological empowerment.

For example, if a community group has successfully filed and won a Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) challenge, it has achieved some combination of political and economic empowerment. On the other hand, if a community leader like Leslie Greenberg successfully leads a group of 50 of her neighbors in a meeting with a city official to get more stop signs posted on her block, she has been personally empowered and the group politically empowered. Finally, if the members of a local community development corporation build and manage affordable housing, economic empowerment has occurred.

⁵Marjaleena Repo, "The Fallacy of Community Control," in Community or Class Struggle (Cowley et al, eds, date unknown).

However, rarely are all three components of empowerment obtained concurrently. Practically, community control usually means that an organization has moved closer to obtaining pieces of this nexus from time to time.

WHY ORGANIZING IS NECESSARY

Due to the conflicts which arise when cbdo's combine organizing and housing development, many cbdo's have either greatly reduced, abandoned or never got into the business or organizing. Although I strongly believe that combining organizing and development leads to better housing development and adds the explicit goals of education and empowerment that housing development does not necessarily include, I do not wish to explore these more subjective arguments here. Rather, I will outline five reasons why cbdo's need to organize in order to strengthen their housing development work.

1) Beyond the statute: "moral imperative"

Cbdo's are implicitly different than for-profit developers because they have a "community base." Community-based development corporations grew out of the notion that: 1) residents have crucial knowledge about their community's conditions, needs, desires and workings that few private developers can garner and 2) residents have inherent rights to decide about the direction and future of their community. This gives cbdo's a "moral imperative" of sorts.

If community based development organizations are committed to the community participation part of their mission, then, they must have a systematic method of involving residents.

2) Competitive edge

In areas where housing values have increased rapidly and gentrification and displacement have replaced disinvestment, cbdo's increasingly compete with private developers for scarce land and resources. They need the political muscle of the community to pressure city and state agencies for control of publicly-held parcels or to quicken the foreclosure process of tax delinquent privately-held land.

In addition, since cbdo's cannot consistently compete with private developers in terms of scale and efficiency because of their limited access to resources, they must organize residents to illustrate to public agencies why they should be designated developer of a particular site instead of a private developer.

3) Resident involvement and legitimacy within the community

Cbdo's need to provide a role for their tenants, residents, and other members of the community. Given the management issues and adversary problems that can arise between landlord and tenant and landlord and community, it is critical that cbdo's find a mechanism to integrate community residents into the power structure of their organizations. This is not for purposes of cooptation, but so that tenants and community

residents can learn and understand the pushes and pulls of making affordable housing work. If cbdo's are to "speak" for the community, they must have legitimacy within that community.

4) Support for affordable housing

Cbdo's need to create a receptive environment for affordable housing production. They need to put political pressure on city officials, state legislatures and Congress for funding for both operating and project expenses. A recent local example of this is the battle in the Massachusetts legislature to increase the appropriation for the Community Enterprise Economic Development (CEED) budget for operating expenses for cbdo's. Since many of the staff people of cbdo's are either viewed as "technocrats with a self-interest" or are not from the community in which they work, it is critical that cbdo's can generate community residents' phone calls, letters and lobbying activities when needed.

As well, cbdo's must play a role in helping community residents understand the need for affordable housing. In particular, property owners and abutters who oppose low-income or special needs housing proposals in their neighborhoods because they want to maximize their property values must be educated.

5) The greater need

Perhaps most importantly, housing development realistically

benefits only a small number of people annually. For every affordable unit created by non-profits in Boston in 1987, at least ten were lost to speculation and condominium conversion.⁶ Regulatory mechanisms, such as rent control or condo conversion restrictions, can assist the thousands and thousands of people that housing production does not.

The reality is that political organizing and lobbying is needed to pass legislation to protect tenants, retain the current affordable housing stock, and assure that the new stock remains affordable over the long term. Cbdo's must work toward the broader goals of keeping people "in" housing, instead of just building housing for those that "fall out."

As well, if cbdo's are to play a role in advancing alternatives to the standard market mechanisms, they must organize in communities to educate people about various forms of tenure, including limited equity cooperatives, mutual housing associations, and land trusts.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELL-BUILT CBDO

I uphold six commonly cited characteristics to measure a successfully built community-based organization, including:

1) Leader rather than staff-dominated. Leaders are community people in the cbdo's target area who ultimately control the organization, hiring staff to assist them in their efforts. A "team effort" can be utilized, but it is the community

⁶ Lewis Finfer, January 20, 1988.

residents who should control the direction and major decisions of the organization.

2) Leaders have a "real base" of people in the community that they both represent and are accountable to.

3) The "base" or membership is involved in an ongoing way in the life of the organization, minimally through paying dues and maximally through direct participation in organizational activities.

4) The organization represents the people it claims to represent, and can "deliver" to prove its accountability. Operationally, delivery means among other things having the ability to consistently turn out large numbers of people to public meetings as well as producing housing.

5) The organization is partially supported with money that comes from and is raised by its members through dues and other grassroots fundraising strategies, as well as from development projects.

6) The organization does not simply talk about or study issues in the community, but takes some direct and tangible action. Action is needed to both produce victories to build on and as a vehicle to train leaders, teach skills, test ideas and evaluate. As well, education is a primary goal.

In turn, from analyzing how a number of community-based development organizations have evolved I have identified five basic organizational forms of cbdo's (SEE APPENDIX I).

CHAPTER THREE: CONFLICTIVE...

Debate over the movement from organizing to housing development in community-based organizations has raged since this movement occurred and has been described and articulated in the literature. However, not a great deal has been written on the subject of combining organizing and housing development in cbdo's.

Nevertheless, the existing literature has surfaced some of the tensions which cbdo's face when combining both roles. A continuum of opinions exist, from the belief that combining the roles is completely incompatible and conflictive, to the belief that combining the roles is both feasible and necessary.

BACKGROUND TO "THE DEBATE":FROM PROTEST TO DEVELOPMENT

Although the distinctions are not simple and clear, many community organizing projects in the sixties and early seventies sought only political and personal/psychological empowerment for their members. However without control of or access to capital, many of these groups became frustrated by their important but limited gains -- economic empowerment became the "missing link". As well, many of the groups' leaders believed the slow process and many compromises they had to make in order to win legislative or regulatory changes were power-draining instead of power-building. In response, an increasing sense of "let's build it ourselves" swelled and a

number of community-based organizations turned toward production as a vehicle to further their mission. Many of these groups moved from "protest" -- or battling with city hall to gain political and economic resources and to change the structure of the system itself -- to "direct development" -- or leveraging the system to gain the resources and assistance needed to produce housing by themselves.

The shift from protest to housing development of many cbo's has been documented by many observers in the field. For example, Langley Keyes outlines how "the neighborhood movement has been transformed since the turf focused protest of the late 1960's."⁷ Keyes, professor of City and Regional Planning at MIT, states that five elements in the Massachusetts model of neighborhood organization emerged in the 1960's, including: 1) area focus and concern for turf, 2) control of area-impacted decisions, 3) resident participation, 4) access to resources, and 5) community and confrontation. In the 1980's, he argues, "turf, control and participation have dropped into the background as attention has focused on resources and communication." In Keyes' words:

The holistic model of community control... of neat boundaries within which the "community" participates in the decision-making process about the social, economic and physical development issues has given way to a more pragmatic approach... The concepts of 'dealmaking' and 'entrepreneurship' seem more relevant to the activities of these local professionals than participation and

⁷Langley Keyes, "The Shifting Focus of Neighborhood Groups: The Massachusetts Experience," (unpublished paper, 1987), p.1.

confrontation.⁸

"THE DEBATE"

INHERENTLY CONFLICTIVE

"How long can you walk that fine line?"

Stan Holt

In 1975 in the journal Just Economics, Stan Holt warned that community organizing and community based housing development are incompatible. A former lead organizer at SouthEast Community Organization (SECO) in Baltimore, Holt argued that the movement from protest to development ultimately coopted direct action organizing for four primary reasons:

1) "Cooptation" - Housing development depends on a partnership of public, private and community institutions and players. In turn, the organizing arm will have to follow the development arm in "massaging" and participation in consensus oriented" sessions. "Cooperation must replace confrontation which is detrimental to the development process."

2) "Change in goals" - The values of the organization will shift. "Peoples perceptions of their needs give way to what a planning analysis of sociological statistics dictates the people need."

⁸ Langley Keyes, p.4.

3) "Financial dependency" - The organizing arm of the cbo will become dependent on the development arm. "The control of the organization will shift to the CDC and, beyond the CDC, to those who supply its' money."

4) "Institutionalization" - Housing development tends to encourage a new type of organizational leadership "with more education, higher class structure, fewer roots in the community, and less commitment to building the organization."⁹

Over ten years later Holt's thoughts have not changed greatly, although he has softened a bit. In his words:

Doing both is okay as long as the organization decides which is its primary goal. Development requires building consensus for power behind a particular position, and organizing requires people setting the agenda for their community. These goals are very different. Either one role must be subservient to the other, or the cbo should spin-off the development arm entirely.¹⁰

"IT'S TOUGH WEARING TWO HATS"

In the August 1987 issue of Shelterforce, Joan Clarkson highlights the issues and conflicts that community organizations and residents face as they increase their role in controlling and providing affordable housing. Clarkson, former co-chair of the National Tenants Union and boardmember of the

⁹ Stan Holt, "What Every Community Organization Should Know About Community Development," Just Economics, April 1975, p.3.

¹⁰ Stan Holt, March 8, 1988.

California Housing and Information Network (CHAIN), asserts that "the degree to which development activities can be integrated with organizing presents interesting, if difficult questions for housing groups."¹¹

Clarkson states that many organizations believe that there are important reasons for separating the tasks, including:

- 1) "Cooperation vs conflict" -- The key to successful development projects -- grants, loans, building permits -- must come from agencies and corporations that have traditionally been more a part of the problem than the solution. "It may be difficult for a group, who has been fighting a bank's redlining policies... to get that bank to provide financing for a development project."

- 2) "Focus on what you do best" -- Separating the two roles allows the cbo to focus on what it does best. "The developer physically secures and responsibly manages affordable housing and the organizer insures community control over decisions effecting its well being."

- 3) "Organizing vs. managing" -- If the community decides to own the project, it must be prepared to become the landlord. "A group that is uncomfortable wearing the hat

¹¹ Joan Clarkson, "From Organizing to Housing Development: It's Tough Wearing Two Hats," Shelterforce, July/August 1987, p.15.

of landlord runs the risk of failure by refusing to act when it might be in the best interest of the project to do so." As well, there is an "intrinsic conflict between the empowerment which organizing elicits, and the control which management demands."

Despite these precautions, Clarkson does point out some of the benefits of combining both organizing and housing development. For example, she quotes Mike Loftin, a community organizer for Voice of the People in Chicago, "Empowerment is a fitting goal of developers in its own right. Otherwise, our bricks and mortar differ little from that of the private developer." Clarkson ends by admitting that:

The tensions that exist in the managing and owning of property are inherently necessary. But most of the disagreements are resolved when there is proper planning, training and dialogue. Tension is not 100 percent bad when the result provides a stronger commitment to affordable housing.^{1 2}

NATURAL PROGRESSION

In his book Chain of Change, Mel King argues that community economic development is a natural progression or stage in the struggle for community development. King, a longtime activist and force in the development of the Black community in Boston for over 30 years, formulates a theory about three stages of development -- the service stage, the organizing stage, and the institution-building stage -- which roughly correspond to

^{1 2} Joan Clarkson, p. 17.

the decades of the fifties, the sixties and seventies. He begins with the following:

Although no evolutionary process is completely smooth; at times events in the community appear to double back on themselves, overlap or reiterate one another... the theory provides an outline for what appears to me to be the major direction and types of change in our community over the past several decades.¹³

King's three stages are briefly:

1) The service stage -- The fifties and early sixties were the period of "being dependent." "During that time we fought to have access to services available to others in the society."

2) The organizing stage -- The mid-sixties was a time of organizing and understanding that "not only are we deserving of services in our own right as members of this society, but we are also **capable** of serving ourselves on our own terms."

3) The institution-building stage -- In the late-sixties and through the seventies, the community began to build its' own institutions, understanding that "the society as it stands will never meet our needs on our terms because our terms are contradictory to many of its' basic premises... Beyond just getting our share, we were working to change to quality and character of our share."¹⁴

¹³ Mel King, Chain of Change, (Boston: South End Press, 1987), p. xxv.

¹⁴ Mel King, Chain of Change, p. xxvi.

King believes that all of the stages have been steps toward the process of community development which "will integrate our lives in all the possible human and political dimensions."

COMPLEMENTARITY

In response to Holt's article in Just Economics, Pablo Eisenberg argues that in certain circumstances organizing and housing development are complementary activities. Eisenberg, President of the Center for Community Change in Washington, D.C., states:

Stan Holt's article... performs an urgently needed service in focusing our attention on the relational problems between economic development programs and organizing activities within a community-based organization...but what he fails to add is that these pitfalls are not peculiar to economic development activities; they are the same ones that face peoples organizations and community organizers in all their efforts.¹⁵

Eisenberg goes on to argue that:

1) "CDC's grow out of local efforts/commitment is clear" --

Many CDC's are the result of local indigenous struggles and maintain a commitment to local priorities and politics. He challenges Holt's claim that CDC's do not have neighborhood interests at heart as they are "introduced from the outside without any local motivation."

2) "No one model of CDC" -- Like other community

¹⁵ Pablo Eisenberg, "Another View of Community Development: A Response to Stan Holt's Article," Just Economics, June 1975, p.17.

organizations, cbo's vary in objectives, strategies, style and leadership. "What can work in one community may not be applicable to another, There are community organizations that have maintained a balance between development and organizational activities without sacrificing community interests and accountability."

3) "Need for flexibility" -- All community organizations need to be flexible. "The art of organizing is based on flexibility, the ability to adapt to circumstances, resources, people and potential leadership, keeping in mind that change, not structures, is the ultimate goal of the organizer."

4) "Need to deliver" -- Organizations must deliver benefits or services to their constituents, or else they will not be able to sustain themselves in the longrun.

Nevertheless, Eisenberg does admit that there are dangers in combining both roles:

Enough experience has now accumulated to belie the most dire predictions of the community organizers and activists who felt that development would inevitable divert citizen organizations from their main function..... But there is also evidence to show that moving from organizing into development is neither without pitfalls and dangers, nor a simple process. It can require significant changes in organizational structure, staff composition, decision-making processes, and the institutions and groups who must be considered partners. And development is an inherently

difficult process, whatever the auspices.¹⁶

CONGRUENT AND INTERDEPENDENT

In the Winter 1988 issue of "The Neighborhood Funding Bulletin Board" of the Development Training Institute, Jeff Nugent writes:

The time for arguing which is more effective -- organizing or development -- is long passed. The best strategy is not "either-or" but "both-and."¹⁷

Nugent, Director of National Internship, believes that the ultimate goals of each type of organization are not only congruent, they are interdependent. He states that the nature of the argument is often reduced to the somewhat simplistic level of empowerment versus production. Furthermore, he says the notion that "constituency organizing supposedly builds leadership and secures political gains, while development delivers tangible, visible products" is not absolute. In reality, he points out, housing development also produces leadership and organizing often also produces tangible results.

Nugent's primary argument focuses on the need of cbo's to mobilize citizen pressure for a particular proposal. In his words:

¹⁶ Pablo Eisenberg, p.13.

¹⁷ Jeff Nugent, "Is the Question Really Organizing vs. Development?", Neighborhood Funding, Winter 1988.

Without a large constituent base of grassroots support, development groups are sometimes at a disadvantage in trying to exert public pressure to gain government funding for their projects. Obtaining the public funds requires a dual approach where concessions are made to the development organization out of fear of the community group. The development group is then able to use those resources to produce tangible results based on the political muscle exerted by its counterpart.¹⁸

TYOLOGY OF TENSIONS

The tensions that cbdo's may face when combining organizing and housing development uncovered in the literature provides a contour for a "typology of tensions." Complemented by over 60 interviews, the case studies and less indepth explorations of twelve other cases, I have gathered a list of 10 primary tensions that cbdo's may face when combining organizing and housing development. I do not view this typology of tensions as a complete and finite list, but rather as a springboard and framework for analysis.

Before the list of ten tensions, however, I offer a brief overview of the primary differences between organizing and housing development in the following matrix:

¹⁸ Jeff Nugent article.

	<u>ORGANIZING</u>	<u>HOUSING DEVELOPMENT</u>
goals:	building people and process for power	building structures and products for people
tactics:	conflictive relationships; oppositional	cooperative relationships; negotiation
skills:	"soft" listening; leadership training; organizational development.	"hard" financial/technical skills; ability to "broker" deals.
timing: (short term)	requires quick action for winnable goals, but slow tedious building process.	requires ability to move quickly on decisions as "time is money".
measurements for "success":	# of people participating & victories won; skills of leaders & strong org built.	# & cost of units produced; skills of staff developed; track & maintenance record.
focus:	process-oriented, on organization building, leadership development, power & empowerment.	product-oriented, technical, specific control over development process.
resources:	\$\$\$ harder to come by	\$\$\$ easier to obtain because "safer" activity
lessons/approach:	community problems are systemic; must problem solve collectively; incremental change is ok, but long term goal is structural changes.	short term economic gain is sufficient; incremental change, but long term goal is community impact.

TEN TENSIONS

When the ideal of community is adhered to with consistency and determination it is a source of serious and irresolvable tensions. This does not mean that the ideal misrepresents human needs and desires, or that it should be wholly given up. It does mean, however, that the ideal needs to be reflected on and with some care, for it demands far more of us than most of us realize.¹⁹

Glenn Tinder

In light of these differences between organizing and housing development work, the following tensions are the primary dilemmas cbdo's can face when combining organizing and housing development.

1) DIFFERING GOALS/MISSION

Organizing and housing development have different goals -- process building vs product generating.

In organizing, the explicit message is that the problems a community faces are systemic and systematic. In turn, the goal of organizing is to help people build by and for themselves a process and organization through which they can collectively problem-solve for their community.

Housing development, on the other hand, does not have an explicit goal of building a community-based and controlled power organization through which people can fight for structural change of the system. Although community-based housing development can led to changes in the conventional market mechanisms and can strive for the decommodization of

¹⁹Glenn Tinder, Community: Reflections on a Tragic Ideal, (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1980), p 1.

housing -- via vehicles such as limited equity cooperatives and mutual housing associations -- the primary goal of housing development alone is usually production, not education or empowerment.

Combining these differing goals can lead to conflict, especially if a cbdo's mission is not clear and priorities set.

2) DIFFERING TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

These differing goals dictate different tactics, strategies and workplans for cbdo's.

Organizing to gain power is oppositional and conflictive in nature. Housing development requires "team building" among the various parties to get a project done. Many believe that this team building dictates the need for cooperative relationships.

These different tactics can led to tension in a cbdo, as leaders and staff people increasingly believe that the housing development work is coopting or hampering the ability of the cbdo to organize effectively. For example, SouthEast Community Organization (SECO) in Baltimore ran into this problem as the fear that the dealmaking of development was replacing the direct action of organizing grew.

3) DIFFERING MEASUREMENTS OF "SUCCESS"

Since organizing and housing development have different goals, each evokes different definitions of "success" and "winning" which can create conflicts in cbdo's.

In housing development, success is measured by a number of concrete factors, including: 1) The cost and number of units produced 2) The number of people served 3) If skills of staff are developed 4) How well timetables are met 5) Maintenance record in units and 6) Impact on surrounding community.

In organizing, success is measured by a number of other factors, including: 1) The number of people participating in decision-making and if skills of leaders and members are developed 2) The number and size of victories obtained 3) If sense of self-worth and self-respect grows in the community 4) How strong and powerful an organization is built and 5) Changing power relationships and structures.

4) CONTROL OVER TIMING

Organizing and housing development have different timetables. With organizing time is needed, as building a broad-based democratic institution is a slow process. With housing development "time is money", and the less time taken to complete a project, the better. Although in the long term both organizing and housing development are slow, tedious processes, in the short term they differ in a number of ways.

With organizing there is some control over timing, although often the organization is still responding to others' agendas. In general, organizing requires quick action on winnable goals for short term victories to keep people engaged.

With housing development there is little control over

timing. The ability of an organization to move quickly in response to others is necessary, but follow through and patience is required. There are few short term development victories to keep people engaged, and leaders often have less a sense of control over the process.

5) STAFF, LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organizers and development staffers don't always have equal power in the cbdo's organizational hierarchy.

One reason for this is that housing development is perceived to be "technical" in nature and therefore requires "hard skills". People believe that development staffers have more instead of different skills than organizers, and consequently development staffers often wield more power in the cbdo than organizers. This unequal power became a problem at People Acting Through Community Effort (PACE)/Stop Wasting Abandoned Property (SWAP) in Providence and eventually caused a number of internal staff problems.

In turn, salaries for development staff people are generally higher than for organizers. Since salary is one of society's strongest measures of and reward for quality of work, this creates a tension between staffers, working equally as hard but at different jobs.

As well, leaders in cbdo's don't have equal power for many of the same reasons. This is especially true in an organization with clear distinctions between the organizing and housing

development work. One cause of this unequal power is that it is directly institutionalized in the cbdo's structure. For example, the organizing committee may be required to have its' decisions approved by the Board before action because they are considered controversial, but the development committee may be free to act on its' decisions without board approval.

6) WEARING THE LANDLORD HAT/MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS

Organizing is primarily people-oriented and housing development is primarily product-oriented.

In building and maintaining a housing development, a cbdo must make some tough decisions about issues such as resident selection, integration and evictions of "bad" tenants. A cbdo which is also engaged in organizing can run the risk of failure by refusing to act in the best interest of the project because it is worried about the people. For example, at Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corporation it was psychologically difficult for staff members to evict a person from one of their buildings, even though she had broken a number of agreements and was over a half year delinquent on her rent.

Consequently, the development arm can sometimes become the target of the cbdo's organizing efforts. For example in Somerville in the late 1970's Somerville United Neighborhoods (SUN) organized against the SUN CDC, the cdc which it had in fact formed. The negative reverberations of this kind of scenario cannot be understated.

7) STRUGGLE OVER LIMITED RESOURCES

Combining organizing and housing development can put a drain on leadership and staff time, energy and financial resources.

First, staff people are usually overworked and underpaid, so asking them to at least expand their knowledge of and appreciate the importance of combining the roles is difficult. As well, even if cbdo's can find staff who will be dedicated to both roles, the tension develops over the issue of "dividing good leaders' time."

Related to the struggle over limited people resources is the issue of limited financial resources. Since most community-based affordable housing efforts are not income generating, the possibilities of self-sufficiency through development have been overstated. Therefore, both organizing and housing development efforts compete for operating capital.

Since housing development is a "safer" activity because it doesn't explicitly challenge the system and delivers a concrete product which fulfills other peoples' agendas, it is funded more readily than organizing work. As well, since there are decreasing grants available for organizing work, lack of money can drive an organization to work more on housing development projects. For example, Symphony Tenants Organizing Project (STOP) in the Fenway cites the lack of funds for organizing work as the primary reason why many STOP leaders became more involved in the Fenway CDC, as money was available for development work.

8) CONFLICT OF INTEREST/LEGITIMACY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Combining organizing and housing development can lead to a number of conflicts of interest for a cbdo.

First, combining both roles can impede the ability of a cbdo to "legitimately" review other development proposals in its' target area because it is no longer just "an agent of the community" but also seen as "in business for itself". For example, a major landlord in Fenway who is a slumlord target of Fenway CDC and other tenant groups organized against the cdc to attempt to prohibit them from getting a necessary zoning variance. The landlord, after filing a lawsuit against the cdc went to them saying "Let's cut a deal: if you leave me alone, I'll leave you alone."

Related to the issue of potential conflict of interest is the broader issue of legitimacy within the community. Combining organizing and housing development can adversely affect a cbdo's legitimacy within its' target area. Since every community has a number of constituencies and power bases with varying interests, at some point a cbdo is usually forced to grapple with the dilemma of which interest to promote and represent. If a cbdo is committed to representing and building housing for poorer people in the neighborhood, its' organizing work may alienate other constituencies. Both Fields Corner and Allston Brighton CDC's have long histories of grappling with uncohesive interests in their communities.

9) CREDIBILITY OUTSIDE OF COMMUNITY

Combining the different tactics and strategies of organizing and housing development sends mixed signals to the outside world.

These mixed messages can confuse and alienate potential allies as well as opponents. For example, city officials may restrain their support for a cbdo's development project because they have already been or fear that they may become a target of the group's organizing efforts. For example, this was an issue raised by a number of banks in Somerville after the relationship between Somerville United Neighborhoods and SUNCDC heated up.

10) "CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALISM"

There is a distinct culture of behavior among public agencies, foundations and other funding sources which dictates a "certain way of doing business" and unwritten rules of behavior. This can create tensions within development staffers themselves, between development staffers and organizers, and between the organization and the outside world.

These unwritten rules of behavior and protocol of the "inside" affect the staff of cbdo's on the "outside". In particular, development staffers often don't know "where they fit", as negotiating with public officials "downtown" can be a large part of their job. In order to feel a sense of belonging development staffers often build relationships with public

sector people, who also tend to be of a similar class and background. Because of these relationships, development staffers often feel badly about taking an aggressive or demanding stance against their public sector colleagues, which is often necessary in an organizing drive.

Tensions between development staffers and organizers can develop as well. Organizing does not always fit into this culture of professionalism. For example, bringing 25 people to the bargaining table about a development plan with a city official isn't considered an acceptable way of doing business, yet this is one of the basic tenets of and necessary for community organizing. Sometimes development staffers do not want these more aggressive tactics to be used, preferring a more cooperative approach.

As well in cities like Boston, San Francisco and New York -- with public agencies relatively "progressive" compared with other cities -- many development staffers and organizers move readily between community-based organizations and public agencies further exacerbating this dilemma.

In the following two chapters I will describe the cases of EBC and CBA. Using this typology of tensions as a framework for analysis, in chapter six I will draw from the case studies specific examples of how the tensions of combining organizing and housing development can be ameliorated, and in fact can complement and reinforce each other.

CHAPTER FOUR: EAST BROOKLYN CHURCHES/THE NEHEMIAH PLAN

Where would you find over 1,000 inner-city homes for only \$37,500 to \$45,000, a Biblical prophet, a former 1950's Levittown-like suburban builder-turned columnist-turned low income housing builder, 7,000 people at a groundbreaking ceremony, and Johnnie Ray Youngblood? In the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF NEHEMIAH

Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer disgrace.

So we built the wall; and all the wall was joined together to half its' height. For the people had a mind to work.

The Book of Nehemiah: 2.17, 4.6

I first approached Nehemiah by car, warned by friends not to take the slow and sometimes dangerous "New Lots Ave" train to East Brooklyn.

Bounded on one side by 6 public housing high and low rise projects, on another side by a high concrete wall with barbed wire fencing enclosing old railroad yards, and on a third side by the elevated line along Livonia Ave, the Nehemiah project is in the middle of devastated acres in East Brooklyn. Although many of the rowhouses and single detached homes from the early 20th century still stand in Brownsville -- with fancy brick

facades of art deco patterns signifying renovation over the years -- much of the land is vacant, trashed with blocks of nothing but broken brick, junk yards and garbage heaps 7 - 8 feet high. There are more "missing teeth" in the blocks of the Brownsville neighborhood than there are standing structures. Named for the biblical prophet who rebuilt Jerusalem in the 5th century B.C. after the Babylonian captivity, the Nehemiah project represents an oasis of hope for the Brownsville neighborhood.

On that freezing cold and icy January morning on Powell St. in the middle of the Nehemiah neighborhood, I first came upon an older man bundled up and holding a stick with a nail at the end of it. "What are you doing?" I asked, to which he replied with a warm smile "Someone has to pick up the papers off the street in the winter to keep our neighborhood clean." My fear quickly dissipated with his welcoming face.

A lifelong Bronx resident and now retired, this gentleman chatted with me about his new Nehemiah home. He admitted it was a long way from where he was born and later raised his own family, but he explained that moving out of the projects and having this sense of community was worth it. He pointed out the ample front and back yards and his barbecue which his family and neighbors gather around all summer long, as well as the awnings he added on last fall. The proud Vice President of the Powell St. Block Association, he told me that they had won the "model block" award in 1986.

For this man Nehemiah means much more than a housing unit which provides shelter, it means pride of ownership and being a part of a new community. Other residents whom I doorknocked told much the same story; Nehemiah has meant security of tenure, stability and a sense of community for which they had always longed and dreamed.

What led to East Brooklyn's "second rising?"²⁰ The power and tenacity of EBC, coupled with the development expertise of I.D. Robbins, made this housing activist's dream come true.

THE SETTING

Initially developed by Charles Brown in the 19th century, the three square mile neighborhood of Brownsville grew and changed dramatically during the early to mid-20th century. Due to displacement caused by the construction of the Williamsburg Bridge, the overcrowding of N.Y.'s Lower East Side, and an expanding transportation system to East Brooklyn, Brownsville became home to thousands of Jewish immigrants who worked primarily in the textile and needle industries. Later, the neighborhood drew Germans, Poles, Italians, Russians, Greeks and Blacks. The area grew so rapidly, with small frame houses quickly and cheaply slapped up to keep pace with demand, that Jacob Riis was provoked to call the neighborhood "a nasty little slum."

²⁰ Jim Sleeper, "East Brooklyn's Second Rising," City Limits, December 1982, p. 12.

Yet as Brownsville grew in numbers, its' economic base grew as well. By the mid-twenties, over 370 small primarily family-owned stores graced both sides of Pitkin Ave, the commercial hub of the area. Its' showpiece, Loew's Theatre, held 3700 and cost three million dollars.²¹ As incomes increased, most of the white working class residents moved to outlying areas such as East Flatbush, Crown Heights, Long Island and as far as Westchester County. Concurrently, the decline in blue collar manufacturing jobs in Brooklyn and the entire city meant fewer jobs for the neighborhood. Brownsville's population grew increasingly non-white and poor. The housing stock began to deteriorate and disinvestment spread through the forties and fifties.

During the late sixties, the situation was exacerbated by lack of code enforcement, blockbusting, redlining and fraud and swindling by real estate firms and speculators at the expense of the Federal Housing Administration's guaranteed mortgage program -- all of Brooklyn lost almost \$200 million of federally backed loans.²² East Brooklyn's population, as high as 300,000 residents in 1925, was 73,908 in 1980.²³ The area has consistently been plagued with arson-for-profit, high

²¹Toby Sanchez, "Brownsville: A New Jerusalem Atop the Old," City Limits, Dec. 1982, p. 17.

²²Martin Gottlieb, "FHA Case recalls Bushwick in 1970's," NY Times, Feb. 2, 1986, p 36.

²³U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980, p 44.

unemployment, crime, drugs, low voter participation, and general disinvestment.

EAST BROOKLYN CHURCHES

Contrary to common opinion, we are not a grassroots organization. Grass roots grow in smooth soil. Grass roots are shallow roots. Grass roots are tender roots. Our roots are **deep** roots. Our roots are **tough** roots. Our roots are **determined** roots.²⁴

Rev. Johnnie Ray Youngblood
Pastor of St Paul's
Community Baptist Church

East Brooklyn Churches, an ecumenical organization of 52 local religious groups representing more than 50,000 dues paying members, was founded in 1980. Committed to "the building of a powerful local political base, the training of local leadership, and a process of action and reflection in the context of democratic and Judeo-Christian values,"²⁵ EBC may not be a "grassroots" organization according to Youngblood, but it certainly is a broad-based and powerful one.

IAF's Role

Important to EBC's development is the Industrial Areas Foundation/The Saul Alinsky Institute (IAF), founded in 1940 by

²⁴ Jim Sleeper, "East Brooklyn's Second Rising," p 13.

²⁵ "Briefing Sheet on the Nehemiah Plan", East Brooklyn Churches, 1984.

Bishop Sheil of Chicago's Back of the Yards Council, Marshall Field of Marshall Field & Co fame, and Saul Alinsky, "dean" of modern community organizing. IAF is a nationwide organizing/training group which assists local communities and congregations in the formation of sponsoring committees, supervision of their professional staff, and training of leaders to develop lasting "power" organizations.

IAF's stated mission is "to build strength and power so that people and their institutions can enjoy the values of dignity, self-respect, justice and freedom."²⁶ It has a working relationship with 30 groups across the country. Committed to building broad-based citizen's organizations, IAF's organizing model is rooted in the belief that one of the largest reservoirs of untapped power is in institutions, such as parishes, congregations, synagogues, social groups like the Lions or VFW, service agencies and merchant associations. These institutions form the center of IAF organizations, as they have the people, the values and the money to build lasting organizations rooted in the traditions and patterns of their communities.

EBC's Organizing Model

EBC's first leaders asked IAF to send an organizer to assist them with their efforts. In turn, EBC was created according to

²⁶ Industrial Areas Foundation, "Organizing for Family and Congregation," p 2.

IAF's six steps of building broad-based organizations, including: 1) raising initial seed money from local churches, regional church bodies, and national denominations 2) hiring and training a professional organizer who developed the core leadership of the organization (50 - 200 leaders) 3) developing lay leaders and members beyond the core leadership 4) creating a multi-issue program and plan of action 5) doing research followed by direct action on issues and 6) reflection. In the words of Ed Chambers who took over IAF after Saul Alinsky's death:

"It is a systematic patterning and sewing, much like a quilt, of the pieces of diversity and differences among people and their institutions."²⁷

The Early Days

EBC initially formed with a sponsoring committee of only seven churches and spent its' first year primarily building a funding base and identifying and training religious and lay leaders. According to Mike Gecan, chief IAF liaison to EBC:

"We said (to the pastors) that you have to be able to prove that you're serious about power by raising alot of money and investing it in the training of leaders who are in it for the long haul."²⁸

The initial organizing teams, headed by the pastors and other religious leaders, consisted of 8 - 10 people who targeted and interviewed current or potential leaders in their

²⁷ IAF, "Organizing for Family and Congregation," p.18.

²⁸ Jim Sleeper, "East Brooklyn's Second Rising," p.15.

institutions.

Next EBC began to organize church members by concentrating on small, winnable issues. "Long before we took on larger issues, we spent time with each congregation, developing relationships with people who were potential leaders," states Stephen Roberson, an EBC organizer, "then we started up on smaller neighborhood problems, developing a track record and becoming respected."²⁹

For example, in over 100 house meetings involving roughly 2,000 people, the search for a consensus about community needs led to concerns about unsanitary supermarket conditions. EBC members then worked to upgrade unsanitary supermarkets. With "inspection badges" and evaluation forms, EBC members inspected local supermarkets and rated each store in a formal report. Seven of the ten stores targeted signed agreements right away. After an EBC delegates' meeting which included the impending threat of boycotts, the last three store owners responded by participating with EBC in upgrading their produce, service and sanitary conditions.

Next, EBC members fought for street signs in their neighborhood. Sarah Plowden, EBC leader and currently Director of Women Ministry at St. Paul's Church, speaking of her 20 hours of volunteer work a week during the early days of EBC said "I would wake up before sunrise to go out and count

²⁹ Ethan Schwartz, "Church Group Wins City's Help in Brooklyn Housing Drive," NY Times, August 18, 1985, p 43.

missing street signs for a good hour before going to work in the morning."³⁰ Finally, EBC leaders initiated a massive voter registration drive in 1984 which registered over 10,000 people.

Based on concrete work on these issues with tangible results, through which local leadership was found, trained and tested, EBC gained legitimacy and power in the neighborhood.

Staff

EBC's staff is quite small for an organization of its size; there is one full-time professional organizer, Mike Gecan, and one part-time administrative assistant donated by St. Paul's Church. Unlike other community organizations which heavily rely on their staff to drum up members and activists, the EBC leadership through their organizational networks are responsible for "turning people out" for hearings, meetings and actions. In turn, the staff person's primary role is to facilitate, train and develop leaders, as well as to coordinate organizational activities. According to IAF:

The organizer's job is like a tutor's -- to share insights, to teach methods of analysis and provide tools of research, to challenge citizens to sharpen their public skills, and to develop their ability to reflect and to act.³¹

The organizer is hired and fired by the local organization.

Leadership

³⁰ Sarah Plowden, Jan. 14, 1988.

³¹ IAF, "Organizing for Family and Congregation," p. 20.

EBC's leadership structure is more complex. The core of the organization is about 150 leaders who represent their respective institutions. If any of these leaders are not able to delivery either people or money to the organization, they are voted out of their leadership positions by their peers. In turn, the elected leadership maintains its' quality and reliability through a "disciplined system of mutual accountability."

The EBC leaders with whom I spoke were all committed to an internal training process in which the central value is to find and teach other leaders. Leadership to them is not a form of individual power or aggrandizement, but rather a means to continue to expand the number of leaders in the interest of collective power.

The EBC Board consists of elected representatives from the institutional members and meets monthly. It is primarily responsible for policy-making, communications and coordination. The Board has numerous sub-committees, or "teams", in which the nitty gritty work of EBC is carried out. The most important subcommittees -- the action and strategy teams -- exist for each issue in which EBC is engaged. Both Board and non-Board members sit on these committees and each year a competitive election is held for the leadership posts of these teams. For example, the Nehemiah Strategy Team was responsible for the planning and strategizing for the development of Nehemiah, and the Nehemiah Action Team was responsible for coordinating and

implementing the action plan. EBC highly encourages leaders, however, to be involved in action and strategy teams alternatively, so a schism between the "idea people" and the "implementation people" doesn't grow.

Funding Base

EBC is financially supported by its' membership institutions. At first IAF fronted the initial costs of the organizer, but as the number of local churches and institutions grew, EBC has become increasingly self-sufficient. The religious groups are committed to fundraising for EBC not only because the organization has built housing that has serviced their members, but also EBC has helped build the membership and strength of these institutions.

IAF's financing premise is that the organization must become self-sufficient and self-determining by the end of the third year or it should go out of business. The bulk of the money raised goes toward paying the organizer a decent wage on which he/she can support a family, and for leadership training and development.

THE NEHEMIAH I PROJECT

Catapulted by the need for affordable housing in East Brooklyn and inspired by a series of articles on neighborhood revitalization by Daily News columnist and retired builder I.D.

Robbins, EBC decided to try Robbin's ideas and hired him to undertake the project.

Briefly, Robbins' believes that a "critical mass" is needed and that an affordable housing development must be "big enough to provide the basis for stable community in which families can reinforce each other."^{3 2} In turn, Robbins avoids small infill and rehab projects, preferring large tracts of land on which he can employ his mass production techniques to cut costs. Finally, Robbins believes that strong community support is a prerequisite.

After numerous meetings with Robbins and a lengthy planning process, during which over 8,000 people voted on all of the plan's major elements, EBC targeted 1,000 units to be built in Brownsville and 1,550 in neighboring East New York.

Bricks and Mortar

The first phase of the Nehemiah plan in Brownsville consists of 1,000 row houses, with 70 per square blocks on a total of 13 square blocks. Each house is two stories with a full basement and pitched roof, and contains 2 or 3 bedrooms. The two and three bedroom units are roughly 1,000 and 1,200 square feet, respectively. The homes have brick fronts, fire walls and air conditioner sleeves. Each unit has one off-street parking space, a 40 square foot front yard and a 42 square foot rear

^{3 2} I.D. Robbins, "Affordable Housing and How to Build It," speech before National Council of State Housing Agencies, October 29, 1987, Westin Hotel, Boston.

yard.

The basis of Nehemiah is simple yet turns on its innovations. In Robbins' words, "The conventional wisdom in the field is cockeyed and doesn't apply here."³³ The actual physical production of the units is fairly straightforward, based on high volume and assembly line construction. A number of building techniques -- including laying a block of foundations at one time and utilizing prefabricated components, from roof trusses to window frames -- help speed up production and lower costs.

Because of these building techniques, the "soft" costs of the project, including legal, architectural and financing costs, were only 6% of the total development costs, compared to 25% for conventional projects. Although the construction is done with union workers, most of whom are minority, many of them are apprentices who get paid less than hourly union wages. Finally, since I.D. Robbins is retired and financially comfortable, he volunteers his time and is not paid a salary, receiving only a small reimbursement per unit for his expenses related to the project.

Dollars and Cents

The cost to the buyer has been roughly \$37,500 to \$45,000, depending upon the purchase date and whether the unit is a 2 or 3 bedroom or has 1 or 2 bathrooms. Approved applicants receive

³³ I.D. Robbins, Jan. 7, 1988.

a \$10,000 interest-free loan from the city, which keeps a second mortgage on the property until the \$10,000 is recouped upon resale. Residents put in \$5,000 of their own money for the down payment, which they can borrow from EBC's revolving loan fund, and receive a State of New York's Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) below market interest rate of 9.9% for the remainder of the mortgage. This brings the total monthly payments to \$300 - \$400. Roughly 40% of the first 1,000 buyers have come from the nearby public housing projects, although local preference was purposely not mandated by EBC.

Block Associations

Each "block" of 21 Nehemiah homes has a block association which collects dues, oversees financial decisions such as water and sewer bills, identifies and resolves block issues, and represents block concerns to the EBC Board. The block associations have set up crime watches or worked to get rid of illegal abutting uses, such as junk dealers. As well, many have organized social and cultural events to promote a broader sense of community at Nehemiah. Many block association leaders and residents are actively involved in EBC as well, although it was not a prerequisite for applying for a Nehemiah home.

EBC's relationship to the Nehemiah Trust

The political will and muscle of EBC led the development of Nehemiah in every step in the process. In the words of I.D.

Robbins, "We may genuflect to God and the Pope, but not to the local politicians. We needed EBC's power every step of the way."^{3 4}

In turn, leaders give Robbins a great deal of control over the day-to-day details of building Nehemiah. They trust him completely. This trust is the result of the solid relationships Robbins has built with EBC staff and leaders, based on mutual admiration, honesty, and respect built over the years in working together.

However, this is not to say that leaders don't consider themselves involved in the development process. For example, EBC leaders created a \$12 million dollar capital pool for no interest construction loans, convincing the national parent bodies of EBC -- including the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses and the Lutheran synod -- to put up \$6 million, \$1 million and \$1 million, respectively. This revolving loan pool is run by the Nehemiah Trust, on which any group can have one seat and a vote if it contributes \$1 million or more. Currently the 3 Trustees include one representative from the Catholic and Episcopal dioceses and the Lutheran synod, with I.D. Robbins and Mike Gecan attending all Trust meetings. The Trust and EBC are the general partners of Nehemiah I in Brownsville.

Next, Brooklyn's Roman Catholic Bishop Francis Mugavero and EBC leaders went to Mayor Ed Koch and secured a commitment of: 1) assembled and cleared free city land; 2) the \$10,000

^{3 4} I.D. Robbins, Jan. 7, 1988.

interest-free city loans per unit; 3) the below market interest rate for mortgages; and 4) abatements of property taxes for 10 years, about \$330 a year.

Land, money and construction ingenuity alone, however, would not have been enough. As Robbins put it, "The Mayor was initially frightened by us because we represented a major counterforce, but he soon realized that he had no choice but to deal with us."³⁵ For example, with the power of EBC behind him, Robbins was able to convince the city for a variance to allow only one sewer cut per block of attached houses, instead of 21 cuts for each water and sewer connection. This translated into a savings of roughly \$6,000 per unit.

In the words of Mike Gecan:

Housing development requires conflict, not just cooperation. It's the only way to get through the process. Every day we had battles, and still have battles, over little details to make the housing work. The leadership of EBC was involved in every step, and it was a terrific arena for training and leadership development.³⁶

MOVING ON: NEHEMIAH II

It is the success of the Nehemiah homes which has led EBC to move onto other important issues in the community. Although the block associations are strong and hold EBC accountable, it is "beyond the edges" of Nehemiah with which homeowners and EBC are now concerned. With drugs, crime and the lack of jobs as

³⁵ I.D. Robbins, Jan 7, 1988.

³⁶ Mike Gecan, Feb. 10, 1988.

the most cited and pressing issues, the EBC leadership has turned its' energies to focus on these problems. In the words EBC leader, Leroy Howard "Drugs and the lack of jobs combined are robbing our community of our future, our children -- what good is the housing if we don't work to solve these problems?"³⁷

Howard is the steering committee chair of "Nehemiah II", EBC's anti-drug and job creation campaign. EBC has developed an elaborate strategy to combat these toughest of community problems. Howard explained that although EBC is planning to continue to build more housing in adjacent East New York and the Rockaway neighborhood of Queens with the support and guidance of the Nehemiah Trust, it was important for EBC to move on with its' organizing efforts. This opinion is reflected by Mike Gecan as well:

"Organizing has and will always be EBC's first priority. The Nehemiah homes are just one product of our broader agenda of building a power organization which will continue to work on needs in the community as they arise."³⁸

And perhaps most succinctly but eloquently put by Sarah Plowden "We are primarily about building people, not building structures."

³⁷ Leroy Howard, Jan 14, 1988.

³⁸ Mike Gecan, February 10, 1988.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE COALITION FOR A BETTER ACRE

Development is a very political process. Basically you can either grease your way through with money or with people. Private developers have money that they can contribute to politicians' campaigns to get what they want. We have a lot of people that we can mobilize instead. People power is our great equalizer.³⁹

Debby Fox
CBA Homeownership Project
Director

THE SETTING

Founded in the early 19th century as one of the first planned industrial cities in the United States, Lowell today is a city of approximately 95,000 residents located 25 miles from Boston in the Northeast corner of Massachusetts.

In the 1900's a complex series of canals were excavated which harnessed massive hydro power used to turn the machinery of dozens of early textile manufacturing mills. It was this technology, along with the sweat and blood of thousands of immigrant laborers, which made Lowell one of the most important textile manufacturing cities in the world in mid to late 19th century.⁴⁰ However, as the textile industry turned South in the early part of the 20th century -- due to an increasingly unionized workforce among other factors -- Lowell's major industry and employer of immigrant labor gradually fled the

³⁹ Debby Fox, March 20, 1988.

⁴⁰ Coalition for A Better Acre, "The Challenge Ahead 1988-1993, Empowerment and Community Development in Lowell: The Next Five Years", 1987, p 10.

city, leaving dozens of empty mill buildings and growing unemployment. For the next five to six decades, Lowell on the whole became an "isolated ghost town."⁴¹

In the mid 1970's a group of Lowell business and political leaders began a major effort to revitalize the downtown commercial areas of the city, known as "the Lowell Plan." By using federal public investment dollars such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG) and a national Urban Park program as a leverage, these leaders attracted the national headquarters of Wang Laboratories and a number of other high tech firms to Lowell. The plan successfully accelerated the commercial and financial activity in the greater Lowell area.

There was another side to Lowell's revitalization story, however, a "dark side to the economic miracle."⁴² Along with the increased economic growth came an influx of professional gentry, an increase in demand for housing, rising property values and speculation. The older and poorer neighborhoods of the city bore the brunt of this speculation. Although rents skyrocketed, substandard living conditions persisted for the poor.

Named for the plot of land the City Fathers set aside in the 19th century for the new Irish immigrants to set up their tents as they dug the canal system and worked in the mills, Lowell's

⁴¹CBA report, "The Challenge Ahead," p 10.

⁴²Charlie Garguilo, March 14, 1988.

Acre neighborhood was the hardest hit. The Acre, less than a mile from the central business district and bounded by the Merrimack and Pawtucket Rivers, always opened its' arms to immigrants entering the US, including French Canadians, Greeks, Irish, and later Latinos and Asians. A high crime rate, unemployment, substandard housing conditions, and lack of city services has chronically plagued the Acre. Between 1974 and 1978 over 80 arson-related fires ravaged the Triangle part of the Acre, where the neighborhood's poorest live. Affordable housing became one of the biggest problems facing the Acre's working poor.

CBA's BIRTH and FIRST VICTORIES

In 1981, an article about a city-sponsored plan to demolish the Acre's Triangle and replace its' low income housing stock with market rate apartments splashed the front page of the city's daily paper, the LOWELL SUN. Adding insult to injury, the SUN printed a series of editorials supporting the city's plan in order to improve the neighborhood. One editorial included the words: "There are slums in every major city in the world... Strange as it may seem, some of the inhabitants of those jungletowns live in them because they like that kind of lifestyle."⁴³

In response, a number of community members -- including homeowners, tenants, churches, and institutional leaders --

⁴³ The LOWELL SUN, December 8, 1981, editorial page.

organized The Coalition for A Better Acre to block the city's plan. Charlie Garguilo, one of CBA's founder and current President, reflected on his involvement in those early days:

The Acre used to be home to scores of French Canadians, a 'little Canada', until urban renewal came along in the 60's. My family was a victim of that round of slum clearance... this time around, some folks at city hall were calling the renewal plan a 'Hispanic removal' plan. I wasn't going to sit back and watch this happen to my community again.⁴⁴

After a number of volatile meetings and protests, by the Spring of 1982 the CBA convinced the City to retract its' original proposal for demolition.

Garguilo spoke of his organizing efforts at that time:

We would go door to door talking with people. Since the Acre is heavily Hispanic, we would always have a team of a Spanish and an English speaking person. We also went to the local churches, businesses and Asian and Hispanic groups. People always had it in them to come together -- they just never had access or a way to galvanize.⁴⁵

Still an ad-hoc committee, CBA was also successful in registering hundreds of new voters, forcing some landlords to fix up their properties and keep rents down, and securing over one million dollars in state funds for new public housing for the Acre. After these victories, however, CBA realized that it couldn't simply react to city hall's plans for the Acre:

We had to do more than attack every plan that came along. CBA had to project a vision for the Acre. Given the reactions we got from the city in opposing its' bulldozing plan, we knew it was more than just a good idea to do this as we had the power to put forth our own agenda and win.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Charles Garguilo, March 14, 1988.

⁴⁵ Garguilo interview.

⁴⁶ Garguilo interview.

Garguilo, as former President of Massachusetts Fair Share's Lowell chapter, had learned from Gale Cincotta at a National Peoples Action annual convention that Aetna Insurance Company was considering Lowell as one of its' sites for revitalization funds. Years before Aetna had been accused in a lawsuit of practicing redlining, and as part of the court settlement the company agreed to create the "Aetna New Investment Plan" to invest money in distressed urban areas. Garguilo and CBA convinced Aetna's technical consultant, the National Training and Investment Center (NTIC), that Aetna should channel their funds through CBA. With Aetna's initial grant to CBA, including a commitment of preferred rate mortgage funds to CBA sponsored projects, the city was finally convinced to accept CBA as the prime developer in the Acre.

With Aetna's startup funds, CBA's Board hired Jerry Rubin in summer 1982 as Director and Angel Burmudez a few months later as organizer. They had both been involved in the inception of CBA, Jerry as a technical consultant to the coalition and Angel as a leader. With assistance from Adam Parker, then director of Fair Share's Lowell chapter, Jerry and Angel formerly incorporated CBA as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt non-profit organization.

FROM AD HOC COMMITTEE TO BROAD BASED ORGANIZATION

Setting priorities

Founded in the throws of protest, CBA is committed to a

carefully woven two pronged strategy of community organizing and community economic development.

First, CBA's Board prioritized its' work and set clear goals and objectives, including:

- * Retaining safe and affordable housing for poor and minority Lowell residents in the Acre and throughout the city with no displacement

- * Organizing poor minority and white Lowell residents to develop political clout and demand better city services, more resources for their neighborhood, and increase how income and subsidized housing

- * Revitalizing the Acre and implementing a resident-sponsored development agenda in that neighborhood.⁴⁷

Next, CBA developed a comprehensive site study with neighborhood input and technical assistance from a Boston architectural firm. An elaborate parcel by parcel and house by house plan was formulated, with a recommended plan of action for complete redevelopment of the area, including renovation & rehabilitation of the existing housing stock, new construction, open space, parks and playgrounds, and small business development.

Board and Leadership Structure

The makeup of the Board and membership organizational chart refreshingly reflects CBA's commitment to its' membership base, with the membership positioned at the top of the chart's diamond shape (**SEE CHART I**). With a membership of over 600 households, the only requirement to join is Acre residency or

⁴⁷ CBA Report, The Challenge Ahead, p 6.

institutional affiliation. There is no annual membership fee.

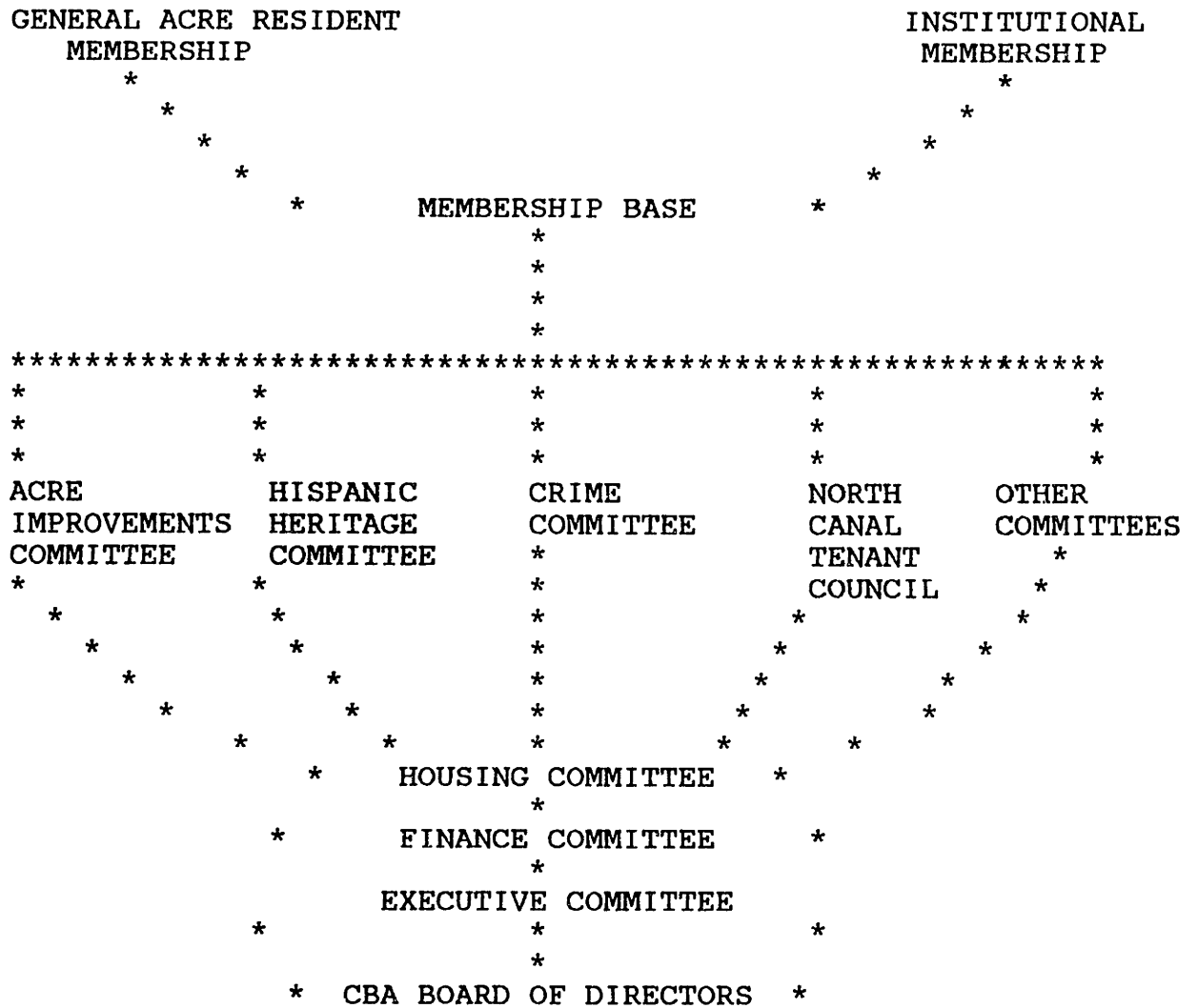
Members can join one of four standing committees, including:

1) Acre Improvements Committee, which has developed a parking lot coop, a small revolving loan fund for minor household repairs, and a neighborhood park; 2) Hispanic Heritage Committee, which has sponsored a variety of Hispanic culture and social events to foster a sense of cultural pride in the city; 3) Crime Committee, which as developed a neighborhood crime watch and has fought the drug and crime problem in the Acre and 4) The North Canal Tenant Council, a tenant group formed to oppose foreclosure of this 267 HUD-distressed property and to convert the development to limited equity cooperatives. (North Canal residency required). Both board and non-board members sit on these committees.

CBA's Board of Directors consists of 10 at large Acre representatives elected at an annual membership meeting, and 9 representatives appointed by recognized affiliate organizations. 75% of the Board is low income and 65% is Hispanic. As well, the Board has three subcommittees, Executive, Finance and Housing. These committees are central to the work of CBA and their primary tasks include: 1) Housing -- Sets policy and works on projects that are not covered by either the Acre Improvements or North Canal committees;

(CHART I)

THE COALITION FOR A BETTER ACRE
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART:
MEMBERSHIP



expenditures before presented to full Board; and 3) Executive -
- Meets to set Board agenda and troubleshoot. The board meets monthly and the committees weekly, bimonthly or as needed.

As well as CBA there is the Acre Triangle CDC. Legally a separate entity, the Acre CDC is operationally CBA's development vehicle. The Acre's Board consists of some of CBA's Directors and meets as part of regular CBA Board meetings. When an explicit CDC decision needs to be made, the CDC Board Chair calls for a quorum count, the members present discuss the pending CDC business and vote, and then they move back to CBA business.

In addition two other corporations will be founded in the next year -- a land trust and the North Canal Partnership. The organizational structure will be as follows:

- 1) North Canal Land Trust -- Trustees will include members of CBA's Board and the North Canal Tenant Council. The Land Trust will hold the groundlease for North Canal, and will sell the buildings to the North Canal Partnership.
- 2) North Canal Partnership -- With CBA and the North Canal Tenant Council as General Partners, the partnership will be the redevelopment entity for North Canal. There will be limited partners as well.

Staff Structure

The staff structure of CBA, on the other hand, is not as orderly as the leadership structure. This is primarily because

staff positions were added as needed, with the staff growing organically to 9 full-time and 4 part-time staff since 1982 (see chart II). Due to the rapid growth of the staff in the last year, the Executive Director recently reorganized the staff structure to include more direct supervision.

The Board hires and fires the Executive Director, who in turn hires other staff members with Board input. The staff is multicultural and multilingual, and many of them were born and raised in the community.

ORGANIZING VICTORIES AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The organizing and development work is so meshed together, it's hard to separate them out.⁴⁸

Arlene Dias
CBA Vice President

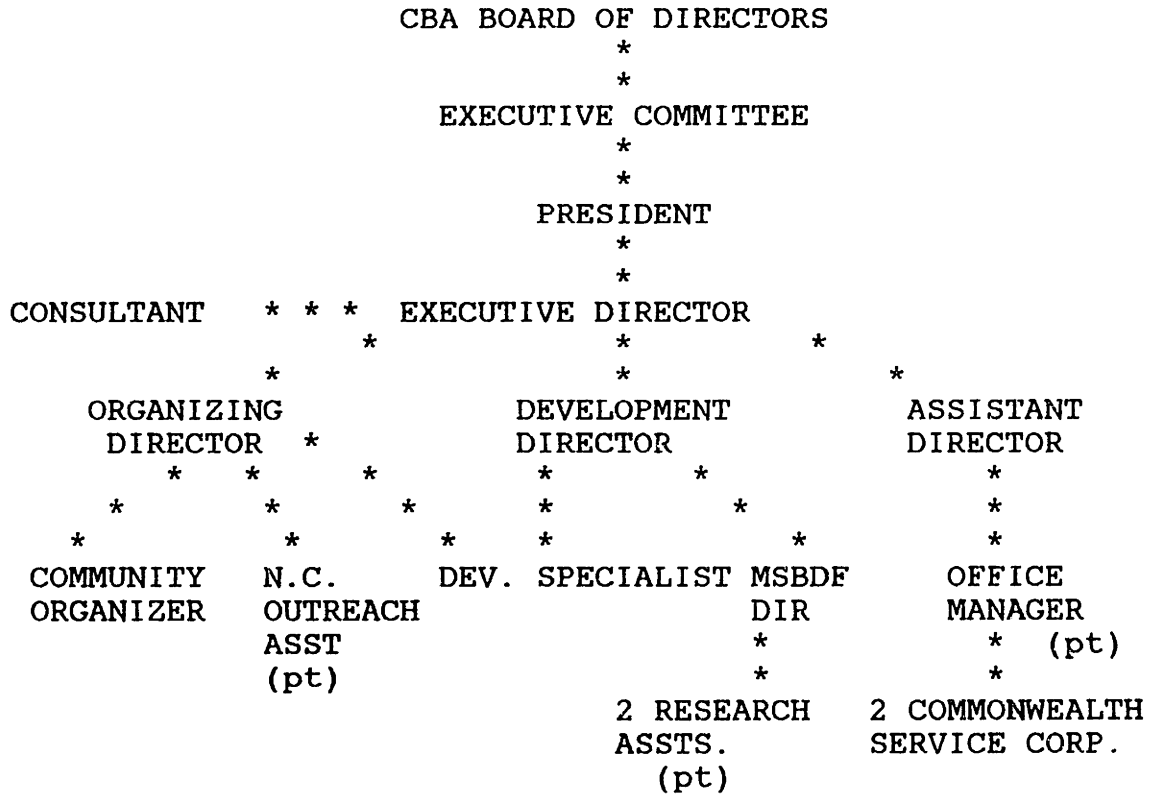
Since CBA's inception in 1982, the organization's mission has included a strong and clear commitment to issue-based community organizing as well as specific development projects. It is the strong belief of CBA leaders that community organizing and leadership development is a major long-term investment in the future of the Acre.

With organizing as the primary objective of CBA, the organization has worked on a variety of fronts to address many of the problems facing poor people in the Acre and Lowell.

⁴⁸ Arlene Dias, March 22, 1988.

(CHART II)

THE COALITION FOR A BETTER ACRE
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART:
STAFF



- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....BILL TRAYNOR
- ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....CECILIO HERNANDEZ
- DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR.....MIKE BARBER
- ORGANIZING DIRECTOR/
NORTH CANAL PROJECT COORDINATOR....PATTYE COMFORT
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZER.....DIANA QUINONES
- N.C. OUTREACH ASST.....CARMEN HERNANDEZ (PT)
- DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST.....LOUISE COSTELLO
- MSBDF DIRECTOR.....
- RESEARCH ASSISTANTS.....ANITA MOELLER (PT)
MARA BENITEZ (PT)
- OFFICE MANAGER.....JIM BROWN (PT)
- COMMONWEALTH SERVICE CORP VOLUNTEERS..MARIA GONZALEZ
MARIA LOPEZ
- CONSULTANT/NORTH CANAL.....DEBBY FOX

From winning Spanish Cable T.V., to sponsoring numerous community-building cultural events such as the bilingual play "Migrants: Cantata a Los Emigrantes", to winning a city wide rent regulation board, CBA has taken the leadership role in the Acre.

Housing Development

After blocking the city's efforts to raze the Acre and developing a community-based comprehensive plan for the neighborhood, CBA fought to implement its' vision. After two years of planning and struggling for city and state support from June 1983 to Fall 1985, CBA broke ground for the Acre Triangle Homeownership Project, developing 38 units on almost every vacant lot in the "Triangle" section of the neighborhood. The project combined new infill construction and rehabilitation of existing abandoned buildings, providing affordable homeownership for 26 Acre residents and affordable rental housing for another 37 low income residents.

All in all, CBA has developed over 70 units of affordable rental and owner occupied housing on 20 parcels in the Acre, representing over three million dollars of housing development in a few short years.

Economic Development

CBA's Minority Small Business Development Project has helped to develop nearly a dozen new Hispanic and Southeast Asian

enterprises in the Acre neighborhood since its' inception in 1986. CBA has also provided technical assistance to over 25 Minority controlled small businesses which were in danger of going under. In addition, CBA is planning a high risk loan pool, a business association, and a series of multi-lingual small business workshops.⁴⁹

CBA has collaborated with several human service organizations to develop youth employment initiatives in the Acre. The Acre/Fresh Start project employs young teens in the summer months to learn trades while working on concrete revitalization projects in the neighborhood. The Green Acres project takes a similar approach in employing youth in a community gardening effort. Both projects are designed to both employ young Acre teens and as well as to identify and develop youth leadership in the neighborhood.

Community Organizing

It is difficult to break out the organizing efforts of CBA as CBA believes that "every unit of housing built and every community project undertaken has been the direct result of a community organizing effort."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in addition to CBA's anti-displacement struggle against the city a few examples of CBA's organizing victories include:

* RENT REVIEW BOARD -- After assisting to develop a citywide

⁴⁹CBA report, "The Challenge Ahead, p. 8.

⁵⁰CBA Report, p 9.

tenant organization, CBA fought for and won the reestablishment of a Rent Regulation Board in the City of Lowell.

* CODE REFORM -- CBA worked with other Lowell groups for the reform of the Lowell Code Inspection Department and won.

* LOWELL SPANISH CABLE TV -- Under the Hispanic Heritage Committee's leadership, after a year long battle CBA fought for and won the inclusion of the Spanish International Network on Local Cable TV.

North Canal

One of the largest sources of affordable housing in the Acre neighborhood is the 267 unit North Canal Apartments. Developed in 1968 by Development Corporation of America for low and moderate income families under HUD's Section 221(d)(3) below market mortgage program, the project contains a wide spectrum of family sizes, ethnic backgrounds and income levels. Ironically, the development was built on the downtown urban renewal site of the demolished French Canadian neighborhood of which Charlie Garguilo spoke.

Soon after the project was completed, DCA went bankrupt. North Canal has significant structural problems, including water leakage and inferior cementation of the precast concrete structure. According to Andrea Beauchesne, North Canal Cochair,

"The developer nickled and dimed us to death."^{5 1} After several attempts by HUD to recover costs under the construction warranty and several agreements to get DCA to pay the HUD mortgage, DCA defaulted and walked.^{5 2} In 1975 the project mortgage was assigned to HUD and in 1981 HUD initiated foreclosure proceedings. After an aborted attempt by the Finch Group, a Boston-based development firm, to purchase North Canal from DCA, HUD took possession in early 1985. HUD planned to hold a foreclosure auction on the property.

In late 1983, CBA helped organize a tenant association to address management problems and to explore the potential for resident takeover and ownership. If HUD was allowed to auction off the property, tenants believed that a private developer would purchase North Canal at a low price, renovate the units and displace them. After a three year struggle and a successful consumer action filed by a group of 30 tenants in the project with the help of CBA, DCA was forced to transfer the deed to HUD in lieu of a foreclosure auction. In early 1988 the North Canal Tenant Council was formally incorporated, and on March 11, 1988 HUD agreed to accept a proposal from CBA and the NCTC for ownership of the property.

CBA and NCTC are now planning: 1) to form and negotiate sale to the North Canal Housing Trust Partnership; 2) A two year,

^{5 1} Andrea Beauchaesne, March 3, 1988.

^{5 2} CBA Report, p 50.

twelve million dollar rehabilitation of the project; 3) to select a management company for the property and develop of ongoing maintenance policies; 4) to develop and implement a resident relocation plan while rehab work is being done; and 5) to develop plans for a 15 year buy-out of the limited partnership investors and conversion to a limited equity cooperative.

BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR

Empowerment of poor and minority residents in the Acre is the fundamental mission of CBA.⁵³

Both organizing and development decisions are made in the CBA issue committees or by the Board, and most staff and Board members are engaged in both organizing and housing development tasks in their day to day work.

For example, at one Housing Committee meetings I attended CBA leaders discussed a 12 unit transitional housing rehab, including: 1) initial plans for the project, including review of the architect's initial schematics; 2) strategy for turnout to CDBG hearing for funding and to a Board of Appeals hearing to gain a comprehensive permit for the project; and 3) plans to meet with abutters to hear their concerns and get their written support for the project. In just this one meeting, committee members reviewed both specific development issues as well as an organizing strategy to move the project forward.

⁵³ CBA Report, p 102.

On the staff side, all staffers are encouraged to understand and incorporate both roles in their work. For example, the Acre Project Specialist is responsible for both organizing and housing development issues in the Acre. Another example is that CBA hired the Organizing and Leadership Training Center for a day long training for all staff members on basic organizing skills, such as home visits and outreach strategies.

In the words of Angel Burmudez, CBA's first paid organizer and recently-appointed tax assessor in Lowell:

"Technical expertise is the least important of the skills needed to build community-based and controlled housing. You can always hire a consultant for that. You need to have in place the leadership who knows how to ask the right questions and is willing to fight to get what they want."^{5 4}

^{5 4}Angel Burmudez, March 1, 1988.

CHAPTER SIX: ...YET SYNERGISTIC

As the indepth case studies of East Brooklyn Churches and The Coalition for a Better Acre clearly illustrate, each organization is distinctive in its' history, organizational formation and structure, issues and victories.

The purpose of exploring the case studies was not to judge them against each other or a prescribed model of my own. Rather, using the typology of tensions outlined in chapter three as a framework for analysis, I draw from the cases specific examples of how the tensions of combining organizing and housing development are ameliorated, and in many instances can complement each other in a synergistic relationship.

1) DIFFERING GOALS/MISSION

Although organizing and housing development have different goals -- process building vs. product generating -- and combining these goals in one organization can lead to conflict, the case studies offer two ways to ameliorate this tension.

Primarily, the staff and leaders of EBC and CBA all clearly believe that because their organizational objectives are well defined, clear and deeply felt by the leadership, the potential tensions which can arise due to opposing goals have not become a major issue.

EBC

EBC's primary mission is very clear. As Mike Gecan bluntly put it "Organizing has and will always be EBC's first priority. We are a power building organization first, and a development organization second."^{5 5} Reflected in the comments by EBC leaders in the case study, this clarity of purpose is deeply felt by the leadership. In fact, many Nehemiah homeowners and EBC leaders with whom I spoke said they didn't think of EBC as a housing development organization but as a community organization that happened to build some housing. It is clear that EBC's housing development work is always nested within its' organizing work.

Perhaps this strong vision is partially due to the origins of EBC; it didn't grow out of a development struggle or land control dispute, but got involved in housing development after a series of other issues. EBC has moved on from Nehemiah I -- housing development -- to Nehemiah II -- a jobs and anti-crime campaign -- illustrating the organization's commitment to its' primary goal of organizing.

CBA

CBA has the same clarity of purpose and priority and is first and foremost an empowerment organization. "The real business of the CBA," states a recent grant proposal, "is that of organizing and empowering neighborhood residents to improve

^{5 5} Mike Gecan, February 10, 1988.

life in the Acre."

However, CBA seems to grapple with the tension between organizing and housing development in a more conscious fashion than EBC, striving for synergism rather than simply amelioration of this tension. CBA believes that controlling the processes as well as the products are parts of their mission which must be balanced. In turn, they are both important components to their goal of community empowerment.

Many of CBA's leaders are quite sophisticated in discussing and analyzing the tensions between the goals of organizing and housing development. In the words of Arlene Dias, CBA Vice President:

There have been times when the Board has felt that organizing was getting lost, that we were drifting away from our primary purpose. The day to day work of development can bog you down. When this happens, we pull back, refocus, and come up with a rejuvenated organizing strategy."⁵⁶

The tone for this awareness of assuring that the organizing work of CBA is not subsumed by development was set during the early days of the organization. In the words of Jerry Rubin, CBA's first staffperson "We were always conscious of the dangers of getting involved in development."⁵⁷

In turn, CBA has made a number of intentional decisions to protect its' organizing work. One example is that although the

⁵⁶ Arlene Dias, March 22, 1988.

⁵⁷ Jerry Rubin, March 14, 1988.

North Canal Tenant Council's lawyer advised them against bringing busloads of residents to the court proceedings, CBA and NCTC did not heed his advice as they saw this as an important organization-building and leadership development opportunity. Another example is that CBA was indirectly threatened to lose its' primary operating capital funding base when in the midst of an organizing campaign against St. Joseph's Hospital. St. Joseph's -- a hospital on the fringe of the Acre that was buying up and razing wood frame houses for more parking spaces -- had informed the Catholic-affiliated Campaign for Human Development foundation which funds CBA of their organizing efforts. In the end CHD did not pull CBA's funding, thanks to a discussion which CBA leaders initiated at a CHD annual national convention. Perhaps put most succinctly by Mike Barber, CBA's Development Director:

No single development project is more important than the mission of the organization and what we're about. We constantly keep this in mind and it is why we can walk the "fine line."^{5 8}

2) DIFFERING TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

Although organizing and housing development employ different tactics and strategies -- with organizing primarily oppositional and development more cooperative -- the case studies illustrate how this tension can be remedied.

In general, EBC and CBA use both oppositional and

^{5 8} Michael Barber, March 8, 1988.

cooperative tactics in their housing development work and are relatively flexible enough to take advantage of different opportunities that arise or utilize different strategies as needed.

EBC

EBC's solution to this tension is clearly to use both oppositional and cooperative tactics and strategies in its organizing and housing development work. In fact, Gecan believes that housing development is a conflictive process which requires the use of oppositional as well as cooperative tactics to "get through the battle."

As illustrated in the case study, EBC leaders believe strongly that they had to fight for and win every concession and victory from the city and state for Nehemiah I, including the free assembled vacant land and the SONYMA below market interest rates. In the words of Sarah Plowden: "We beat up on the city for everything we got... we earned it... conflict not cooperation is the right word."⁵⁹

Although EBC does utilize both oppositional and cooperative tactics, the organization does not move both and forth between them as much as employs one after the other. This is primarily because EBC's is so "pure" about the organizing principle that community organizations should be leader not staff-dominated, that seldom does staff negotiate with city officials apart from

⁵⁹ Sarah Plowden, January 14, 1988.

the leadership. EBC will only employ more cooperative methods of negotiation through staff after the conflictive battles have been waged by the leadership.

Since EBC is self-sufficient and does not rely on city or state funding for operating expenses, unlike many other cbdo's, EBC is clearly in a privileged position to use whatever tactics or strategies in whatever order they choose to win on issues. This is precisely why IAF will begin an organizing project only after the funding base has been secured by and from the local sponsoring committee.

CBA

The close-knit weaving of organizing and housing development work at CBA dictates an intermingling of tactics and strategies as well. In the words of Staff Director Bill Traynor:

What is now a development project was once an organizing project. Before we could build, we had to win site control. And before we could get site control, we had to organize. ⁶⁰

However, CBA does employ various tactics at different times. Both Mike Barber and Debby Fox said that there have been many times when they have played "quiet, negotiating staff people roles" the same day of a hot, oppositional meeting between leaders and city officials. Barber, Fox and Traynor agree that often the staff and leadership plays a "good cop/bad cop routine". Nevertheless, Fox was quick to point out that "my ability to negotiate, my card, was that I had CBA people to

⁶⁰ Bill Traynor, February 18, 1988.

back me up. They (city officials) understood that it was ultimately much easier to negotiate with me than with a bunch of neighborhood folks."^{6 1} The entire staff agrees that using a cooperative approach can come only after CBA has fought for and won the right to sit at the table in the first place. However, after they are at the table, CBA does move back and forth between the various tactics more readily than EBC.

3) DIFFERING MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Organizing and housing development evoke different definitions of success and "winning". In housing development, success is measured by factors such as the number and cost of units produced and how well timetables are met. In organizing, success is measured by factors such as if leadership is developed and if a sense of self-worth and self-respect grows in the community.

Tensions can arise when organizing and housing development are combined because of these different gauges of accomplishment. The case studies clearly illustrate that the key to ameliorating this potential tension is to work to teach people -- in the community, city officials and beyond -- how to identify and value the successes of organizing as much as the successes of development.

^{6 1}Debby Fox, March 20, 1988.

EBC

Although EBC leaders proudly point to the 1,000 Nehemiah homes that have been built, they speak of the Nehemiah project as a vehicle for building a broader sense of self-worth and respect in their community. The products are highly valued, but it is the process of obtaining these products that is more important to them. Since organization-building is their primary preoccupation, the leaders' organizing successes and failures are weighed more heavily than the successes of their development projects.

In turn, **how** to define and measure organizing successes -- rather than if organizing and housing development successes are equally important -- is more the issue. EBC does this by clearly defining and setting tangible organizing goals. For example, leaders are expected to turn out a minimum number of people to community meetings, to find and develop other members into potential leaders, and to work to further develop their own skills. EBC leaders, not the staff, "police" each other in these efforts. If a leader does not meet his or her goals, other leaders vote him or her out of their leadership position at the next election.

But perhaps the key to abating this tension is in the issue of "success" itself. Since EBC has been successful in both its' organizing and development efforts, and the organization weighs these successes fairly equally, it is understandable why this tension has not really occurred. If the development project

failed, or the organizing efforts were not strong, then perhaps this tension would come to fruition.

CBA

As with EBC, CBA's Acre Triangle Homeownership Project has never been simply a matter of building or retaining housing stock. Rather, it has always been part of a campaign to build an organized community which can continue to demand city services, police protection and other neighborhood improvements long after the housing development work is done. In turn, the measurements of success for its' organizing are equally important as its' development projects. However the successes of organizing and housing development are seen as more interwoven at CBA than at EBC.

CBA leaders and staff acknowledge that just as the organizing efforts have aided the development work, so has the development work helped the organizing efforts. Debby Fox pointed out that the Acre Homeownership Project gave CBA a great deal of legitimacy and credibility with funding sources, banks, city and state officials. Arlene Dias added that "at first, with the organizing and all, they thought we were a bunch of crazies... Now, after the houses were rehabbed or built, city officials and other community members see us as a legitimate force that has to be reckoned with."^{6 2}

The CBA staff and leadership clearly see the successes of

^{6 2} Arlene Dias, March 22, 1988.

both their organizing and housing development efforts as synergistic not conflictive.

4) CONTROL OVER TIMING

The conventional wisdom is that organizing and housing development have different timetables which in turn creates tensions. In the short term it is true that organizing requires quick action to win immediate victories and to keep people engaged, and housing development requires more patience and less control over the timing of a particular project.

The case studies provide examples of how in practice this dichotomy is transformed. In essence, both organizations have turned the conventional notion of timing on its' head. Since EBC and CBA are primarily focussed on the long term goal of building broad-based power organizations, both organizing and housing development are seen as equally long, tedious and time-consuming processes.

EBC

EBC leaders vividly recall the two years it took to just get the organization off the ground. As well, they speak of the long organizing campaigns of cleaning up the local supermarkets, registering over 10,000 voters and winning control over the publicly held land. In their minds in the long run the organizing work is as slow if not slower than the development work. Leroy Howard pointed out that it took less

time to build the first phase of Nehemiah homes because of Robbins' pre-fab construction techniques than it did to win the food store victory. And Sarah Plowden added "You better believe that building people takes alot more time than building houses."⁶³

The primary drawback of focussing on long term goals is that it is difficult to keep people engaged without short-term tangible victories. The way EBC deals with this problem is that it has been involved in local organizing issues concurrent and apart from the construction of the Nehemiah homes. Therefore, although leaders are not directly involved in the technical details of the construction, they are constantly working on other development-related issues, gaining valuable leadership skills, and building their organization.

CBA

Like EBC, most CBA leaders and staff believe both roles are long and slow processes which require patience, time and always a sense of humor. In fact, since the organizing and housing development work at CBA is so closely united, it is difficult for CBA leaders and staff to view the timing issue differently for each role even in the short term.

Since the organizing victories are sometimes less tangible than the development products, the latter is viewed as "faster". In the words of Andrea Beauchasne, "You can see those

⁶³ Sarah Plowden, January 14, 1988.

houses that CBA built in the Acre, but how can you count how many people felt a sense of their own power last month?"⁶⁴

In focussing on the long term goal of building a lasting power organization in the community, CBA has resolved this potential tension.

5) STAFF, LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Tensions arise in cbdo's when combining organizing and housing development in regards to staff, leadership and organizational structure because:

- 1) Organizing and development staffers don't always have equal power in the organization hierarchy because development is perceived to be "technical" and requires "hard skills". In turn, this unequal power gives development staffers more of a say in organizational decisions.
- 2) Salaries for development staff people are generally higher than for organizers because of the same perceptions
- 3) Leaders involved in the different roles also have dissimilar power with development side leaders having more power. Often this dissimilar power occurs because it is institutionalized in the organization's decision-making processes.

The cases point to clear solutions to mitigate the potential tensions that can arise, including a commitment to: balance the power of various staff people and leaders and equally reward

⁶⁴ Andrea Beauschasne, March 3, 1988.

the skills involved in building a broadly-based organization as well as developing housing.

EBC

In the case of EBC, dissimilar power between organizers and development staffers does not exist for the following reasons.

First, the staff is small -- with only Gecan and a part-time assistant on the organizing side and Robbins and a part-time assistant on the development side. Since neither Gecan nor Robbins are trying to make a name for himself or is a "wall flower", and both are strong, seasoned and established people in their respective fields, the question of power is not an issue for them.

Second, EBC strictly adheres to IAF's philosophy that organizing should be accepted and perceived as a "professional" job, to be rewarded and upheld the same as other professional occupations. Accordingly, Gecan is paid very well. Robbins has chosen not to accept a salary and is only paid about \$1,000 per unit for expenses related to the project.

Third, leaders of EBC are involved in the broader development organizing and policy issues, leaving the "technical" details of building housing primarily to Robbins who is directly accountable to EBC Board.

Finally, since EBC is primarily a power-building organization and approaches the development of the Nehemiah homes as a means to their broader agenda, there is never any

question that organizing work takes precedence in EBC and its' skills are valued as much as development skills.

CBA

CBA has addressed these tensions as well, combining both roles in a fairly unique way. Unlike at EBC, organizing and development work are both incorporated in staff and leaders day-to-day work at CBA. Therefore, no staffer does "purely" development work or "purely" organizing work, but combines the roles synergistically. In turn, CBA has balanced the issues of power and money in the organization in the following ways.

First, all staffers are encouraged to understand and generally incorporate both roles in their work. In fact most of CBA's development-oriented staff people are rooted in organizing work or have been street organizers themselves. As well, the Development Director and the Organizing Director sit in parallel positions in the organization's hierarchy.

Second, staffers are financially rewarded based on experience and need rather than the kind of job they do. Therefore, some organizers are paid more than development staffers. Both staff and leaders clearly believe that development staffers do not have more skills than organizers, but just **different** skills.

Third, leaders are also engaged in both organizing and development work. Therefore, a schism of power does not occur between leaders who are engaged in different roles. 11.

addition, the staff works hard to demystify housing development for leaders and the development work does not hold greater weight than the organizing work. In the words of Mike Barber "Housing development is technical and hard, but then so is organizing."^{6 5}

6) WEARING THE LANDLORD HAT/MAKING TOUGH DECISIONS

Organizing is primarily people-oriented and housing development is primarily product-oriented. In building, rehabbing and maintaining a housing development, a cbdo must make some tough decisions about issues such as resident selection, integration and eviction of "bad" tenants.

The case studies clearly point to three primary solutions to thwarting these tensions, including: 1) not becoming a landlord and building only homeownership units 2) working to make the organization understand that refusing to act in the best interest of the project because one is worried about evicting a "problem person" will ultimately hurt the community and/or 3) in rehab projects, organizing and involving the tenants themselves in the redevelopment process.

EBC

EBC has clearly adhered primarily to the first strategy -- the organization has vowed to stay out of the landlord business. In the words of Director Mike Gecan:

^{6 5}Michael Barber, March 8, 1988.

"We purposely didn't become landlords. First, the membership wanted homeownership and second, becoming a landlord breeds a whole set of problems for a community organization."^{6 6}

Nevertheless, EBC leaders acknowledge that problems can arise with homeownership as well. This is precisely why EBC helped build the Nehemiah block associations which identify, advocate for, and solve block issues as they arise. For example, each block association creates rules for community behavior and design guidelines for exterior improvements for their block and then works to enforce them.

CBA

CBA has built and rehabbed both rental and homeownership units. Although CBA leaders acknowledge that it's "tough to wear the landlord hat", they not only have mitigated this tension but also have used their organizing efforts to aid their housing development work.

First, CBA leaders -- many of whom have been victims of irresponsible behavior on the part of some members in their community -- strongly believe that not dealing with the issue of "problem people" out of cowardice or sympathy can imperil the entire community's well being. For example, in CBA's second rehab rental project, one of the tenants was found to be dealing drugs. CBA quickly worked to solve the problem, by both organizing the other tenants and actually moving in a CBA leader to help monitor on a day-to-day basis. The organization

^{6 6} Mike Gecan, February 10, 1988.

was able to evict the person quietly and in a short period of time.

Second, and more importantly, CBA believes that simply building houses does not build community. In the words of Louise Costello, Acre Development Specialist, "This is why organizing work needs to continue both before and after the development work is done."⁶⁷ In dealing with occupied units, CBA either approaches or is approached by the existing tenants and works with them to build a strong tenant group before the renovation process begins. The tenant group then decides what work needs to be done and works in partnership with CBA. Therefore, CBA may be technically "the landlord", but tenants have a sense of control over the redevelopment and destiny of their project. The best example of this is the partnership formed between CBA and the North Canal Tenant Council.

7) STRUGGLE OVER LIMITED RESOURCES

Combining organizing and housing development can put a drain on leadership and staff time, energy and financial resources.

Since most community-based housing efforts are not income-generating, the possibilities of self-sufficiency through development have been overstated. Therefore, both organizing and housing development compete for operating capital. As well, tension can develop in particular over the issue of "dividing

⁶⁷ Louise Costello, March 10, 1988.

good leaders' time."

The case studies illustrate how combining organizing and housing development can mitigate, not exacerbate, the struggle over limited resources.

EBC

At EBC, the question of dividing staff resources and energy is not an issue as the two primary staff people have clear and defined roles, tasks and jobs. As well, leaders' time is not divided, as most of the day-to-day technical details of building construction are left to I.D. Robbins.

As Robbins himself put it "There is plenty enough work to be done that EBC leaders shouldn't have to waste their time on the construction details -- that's why they brought me in."⁶⁸ In response I asserted that if leaders themselves are involved in the details of development they will learn valuable skills which will not only empower them but also build capacity within the community to replicate their efforts in the future. Robbins response was "Hogwash! Getting immersed in day-to-day development details doesn't empower people, it disempowers them. EBC isn't about building technocrats, but about building community leaders."

In general, EBC leaders agree with Robbins and believe that control over housing development is more than just being involved in the day-to-day technical details of construction.

⁶⁸ I.D. Robbins, January 7, 1988.

EBC leaders point out how they were involved in setting the agenda for the Nehemiah homes and fighting for their existence. Furthermore, not only were hundreds of East Brooklyn's residents involved in the initial planning process for the Nehemiah homes, but also over 8,000 people voted on all of the plan's major elements in a series of lengthy community meetings.

One concrete example that Sarah Plowden pointed out was related to control over design issues. In meetings concerning the design of the houses, a number of EBC's members, primarily women, were instrumental in changing the initial interior layout of the units. Since the Nehemiah homes are built primarily for families, and often family members and in particular mothers spend much of their time in the kitchen, these women argued that the kitchens should be in the front of the homes. This way women could watch their kids playing outside as they cooked dinner. In a bold design move, Robbins agreed to put the kitchens in the front of the units. Although walking through the front door directly into the kitchen is contrary to architectural etiquette, all the homeowners with whom I spoke appreciate this design change.

As far as organizing and housing development competing for operating capital, EBC avoids this tension since operating capital is raised by the local institutional organizations. This is the primary reason why IAF insists that operating capital is raised before an organizer is sent in, and that

complete self-sufficiency by the third year is achieved or the organizer is pulled out. EBC's solution to mitigate this tension is to never let it arise in the first place.

CBA

Since each CBA staffperson is engaged in both organizing and housing development work, the issue of dividing staff resources and energy is a bit more apparent. For example, Louise Costello did admit that she doesn't spend as much time on the organizing part of her job as she would like. Overall, however, the staff believes the different roles complement each other, making each role stronger and their jobs more interesting.

Competing for leadership time between organizing and development work is not as much the issue as not having enough leaders to do all the work in which CBA is engaged. As Arlene Dias put it "the organizing and development is so meshed together" that leaders don't believe the answer to this tension is to divide the roles, but rather to develop more members as leaders to take on more responsibility.

As far as organizing and housing development work competing for operating capital, staffers at CBA believe that in general their organizing work strengthens their ability to raise funds. Since there are **different** sources of funds for organizing and development work, the issue is not of competing for the same resources but the lack of resources in general. Although housing development may be seen as a "safer" activity and has

"concrete" products, CBA argues to potential funders that previous mistakes have illustrated that an ongoing local organization is critical to the ultimate success and maintenance of the development projects.

8) CONFLICT OF INTEREST/LEGITIMACY IN THE COMMUNITY

Combining organizing and housing development can lead to a number of conflicts of interest for a cbdo. Combining both roles can impede the ability of a cbdo to "legitimately" review other development proposals in its' target area because it is no longer just "an agent of the community" but also seen as "in business for itself."

Closely related to this issue of potential conflict of interest is the broader issue of legitimacy within the community. Which constituencies and power bases in the community should a cbdo represent? If a cbdo is committed to representing and building housing for poorer people in the neighborhood, it may alienate other constituencies whom it may need. As well, since a cbdo will want to target its' members, allies and local residents to get housing units, the basic notions of open access become problematic.

Although these are some of the toughest tensions to overcome, the case studies offer some solutions in ameliorating these dilemmas.

EBC

EBC is not seen as primarily a housing development entity because the Nehemiah project is just one of the many EBC issues and activities. As well since the Nehemiah homes are homeownership and not rental units, EBC is not a landlord which is seen as in "business for itself." Furthermore, EBC has not reviewed other development projects in the area. This is primarily because there have been few other development projects in the area, as East Brooklyn's market is still characterized by disinvestment not speculation.

Nevertheless, EBC had to deal with issues of legitimacy in the community when it demanded that the city assemble and clear the land. Although most of the land was city-owned and vacant, there were a few rundown occupied houses that the city had to take by eminent domain. Primarily occupied by long term seniors who had paid off their mortgages decades ago and were having trouble maintaining their homes, EBC was accused of indirectly aiding in the displacement of "poor old ladies with no where to go." Although tensions abounded around this issue, EBC was able to use its' organizing expertise to find a solution to this development dispute. After meeting with many of the seniors EBC found that although many of them were born, raised and attached to their homes, their primary concerns were fear of displacement and security of tenure. In response, EBC supplemented the city's fair market payment for the homes so that the seniors could move into mortgage-free new Nehemiah

homes.

However, these seniors were the only group given priority on the waiting list for Nehemiah homes. All other units were awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. As illustrated in the case study, EBC membership or involvement was not a prerequisite for applying for a Nehemiah home. Consequently, some of EBC's most active leaders didn't get units. EBC's commitment to the notion of open access dictated that this was the only way the Nehemiah homes could be distributed. As well, although EBC did require that residents become members of the homeowners association, they were not required to join EBC either before or after moving into their units. Nevertheless, numerous Nehemiah homeowners have become involved in EBC. In one resident's words "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem."

Therefore as a result of their organizing EBC is a broad-based coalition deeply rooted in the community, which in turn has built bridges to and legitimacy in the community.

CBA

CBA was borne out of the fight for **both** retaining safe and affordable housing with no displacement and organizing poor minority and white residents to develop a power organization through which they could work on a variety of issues. Therefore, soon after its inception CBA had two agendas: building and retaining affordable housing and building a broad-

based organization.

However, CBA has not experienced the tensions between being "an agent of the community" and being "in business for itself." Because CBA is a broad-based organization which was built by and for Acre residents themselves, it has legitimacy in almost all facets of the community. As illustrated in the case study, CBA has organized around a number of non-development issues in the Acre which has aided its' development work, not hampered it. Even though CBA is formally a "landlord", it has avoided the typical conflict of interest because the tenants and residents of their units were engaged in the development process themselves from the beginning.

There is only one group which opposes the legitimacy of CBA in the Acre as the "agent of the community", the Acre Model Neighborhood Association (AMNO). AMNO is primarily a white homeowners association with the goal of protecting their property values. After the initial "urban renewal" struggle and CBA's organizing work, most Acre and city residents have come to realize that AMNO is a racist organization, interested not in building community but in pursuing their own narrow goals.

Therefore, it is through its' organizing efforts that CBA has ameliorated this classic tension of legitimacy.

9) CREDIBILITY OUTSIDE OF COMMUNITY

Combining the different tactics and strategies of organizing and housing development sends mixed signals to the outside

world which can confuse and alienate potential allies as well as opponents. This can create tensions in a cbdo and lead it to lose credibility with the outside community. Both EBC and CBA have different solutions to solving this tension.

EBC

Since EBC is first and foremost community-focused -- committed to building a powerful local political base and training local leadership -- in general EBC is not concerned about the mixed signals it may send to the outside world. EBC's basic philosophy is that legitimacy **within** the community is more important than credibility with the outside world. As a result of their legitimacy within the community, gained by building a broad-based and representative power organization, credibility with the outside world has followed. In the words of one Nehemiah resident:

Respect doesn't come easily without a fight. You have to show you're serious, with staying power, and that you'll stick around to hold people accountable to their word. Only then will they respect you.

One example of how this credibility has come to fruition is from a 1985 editorial analysis in Newsday by Jim Sleeper. He compares the organizing efforts of EBC with those of Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), a nationwide grassroots citizens' organization with a chapter in East Brooklyn. Sleeper points out that the city responded well to EBC and condemned ACORN primarily because EBC did years of "dues-based, parish organizing."

ACORN, on the other hand, organized a relatively small number of squatters who broke into 25 abandoned city-owned buildings in East New York to dramatize the city's failure. In Sleeper's words:

EBC didn't start any richer than ACORN; it started by training East Brooklynites to build a disciplined organization with 30,000 dues-paying members. EBC hasn't carried favor with elected officials any more than ACORN has; it has achieved winnable goals, and kept politicians honest through working relationship backed by power."^{6 9}

The difference between the groups is that EBC has build a broad-based organization with staying power and ACORN has not. This power has turned into credibility with the outside world for EBC.

CBA

CBA's primary goal is to build a power organization of poor minority and white people in Acre and in Lowell. Like EBC, CBA has gained credibility with the outside world because of combining organizing and housing development.

One example of how this credibility has come to fruition is CBA's work to gain a Massachusetts Section 774 comprehensive permit to renovate the Elias building into a twelve unit transitional housing project. In preparing for their presentation before the city of Lowell's Board of Appeals, CBA organized on a number of fronts, including: a Lowell-wide petition campaign; reached out to scores of representatives

^{6 9} Jim Sleeper, "Two Tactics to Get People Housing," Newsday, September 4, 1985.

from city and non-profit social service agencies and organizations to testify in favor of the project; and met with abutters to hear their concerns and gain their support. CBA's broad-based organizing efforts aided this development project in winning the permit, as well as gaining credibility in the community. Perhaps best illustrated by these words of Debby Fox:

In the early days, we couldn't get the city's planning director to return our phone calls. Now, the city manager is calling the organization for CBA's position on issues and our input before certain decisions are made.⁷⁰

10) CULTURE OF PROFESSIONALISM

There is a distinct culture of behavior among public agencies, foundations and other funding sources which dictates a "certain way of doing business" and unwritten rules of behavior. This "culture of professionalism" can create tensions within development staffers themselves, between development staffers and organizers, and between the organization and the outside world.

EBC

On the organizing side, EBC's Mike Gecan is one of IAF's main organizers nationwide. He has been in the business for quite a while and is committed to stay. He has a clear sense of himself, his values and his purpose for doing this work, and is

⁷⁰ Debby Fox, March 20, 1988.

not using organizing to "discover" himself as many younger organizers do. IAF is a large, stable and well-funded organization with deep and wide support systems for and comraderie among their staff. IAF organizers are considered among the "best and the brightest" in the profession, and they know it. Therefore, there is no "crisis of identity" or tension about "where he fits" for Mike Gecan.

On the development side, I.D. Robbins is a well-established, formerly retired builder who had made a name for himself in the profession before he became involved with EBC. As well, as a former president of one of the largest civic associations in the city -- and in fact ran for mayor himself in 1965 -- there is no love lost between Robbins and many current city officials. Like Gecan, Robbins is not searching for comraderie or is not searching for "where he fits". As Robbins put it "I've never had so much fun in all my life."⁷¹

CBA

CBA deals with this "culture of professionalism" problem in a different way.

First, for years the city's administration was racked with corruption, old time cronyism and hostile leaders. In turn, there has been a clear and distinct history of "them vs. us" in the organization. Unlike recently staffers have not moved readily between the public and non-profit sector so allegiances

⁷¹ I.D. Robbins, January 7, 1988.

have not been developed.

Second, many of the former and current staff of CBA were born and raised in the Acre and are deeply committed to and rooted in the community. As well, since a number of the staff are Latino, who until recently have never had a place in Lowell's public sector power structure, they have always felt "out" and not "in."

Finally, since the staff is relatively large compared to other cbdo's in cities the size of Lowell, there is a deep support system within CBA. As illustrated in the case study, Executive Director Traynor has only recently instituted a more formal supervisory structure primarily because the staff has expanded in the last year. He has always been conscious of and worked on team-building among the staff, setting a clear tone of "we're all in this together, and equally."

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING REMARKS

THOUGHTS ON A DREAM DEFERRED

the dream is in the process
and not the outcome
it is found in the struggle
for peace
and not in achieving it
in the working of the artist
and not in the creation
in the sun's rays
and not the sun
in the belief that we can.

MEL KING
CHAIN OF CHANGE

THE CIRCLE CLOSES

I began this exploration with the awareness that there are conflictive tensions which arise when community-based organizations combine organizing and housing development. This exploration shed light on the following questions:

- * What tensions and conflicts have occurred?
- * How have some organizations attempted to ease these tensions?
- * Can the roles be complementary rather than conflictive?

First, I culled a typology of ten tensions that cbdo's face when combining organizing and housing development. Then, by looking indepth at East Brooklyn Churches and The Coalition for a Better Acre I found how these organizations have ameliorated these tensions. Finally, I found that EBC and CBA have combined the roles to reinforce and strengthen each other, creating a synergism. This has indeed been a welcomed ending to this journey.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

East Brooklyn Churches and The Coalition for a Better Acre, like all community-based development organizations, are unique in their historical, political and spatial contexts. However, both organizations were both formed in communities with numerous problems and few alternatives. Perhaps EBC and CBA could take the risk of combining organizing and housing development because there was not much to lose. Nevertheless, risk-taking was only the first step; they still had to turn potential dissonance into harmony.

In analyzing the cases, I have uncovered five primary reasons why EBC and CBA have not only ameliorated the tensions of combining organizing and housing development, but also have combined the roles to reinforce and strengthen each other in a synergistic relationship. I offer these not as "five golden rules" for action and organization, but rather as observations upon which other community-based development organizations could draw.

1) CLARITY OF MISSION -- EBC and CBA have always been clear about their missions; the roles of organizing and housing development are in tandem, with organizing the primary goal. Their organizational objectives are well-defined, clear and deeply felt by the staff and leadership. This clarity not only helps the organizations get through hard times and tough decisions that arise because they combine organizing and housing development, but also allows the roles to be

combined synergistically.

2) SELF-CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE TENSIONS -- EBC and CBA not only accept the need to combine organizing and housing development believing the best strategy is not "either-or" but "both-and", but also are quite self-conscious about addressing and working through the tensions which can arise. Both staff and leaders constantly grapple with this balancing act. Because of this constant awareness, EBC and CBA are able to combine the roles synergistically.

3) PARALLEL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES -- EBC and CBA have clear staff and leadership structures, with the roles of organizing and housing development in analogous positions in the organizations. Organizers and development staffers have equal power in the organizations, as do the leadership. Therefore, staff and leadership expertise and resources are complementary and pooled instead of divided and combative.

4) SALARIES COMPARABLE -- EBC and CBA financially reward their staffers based on experience and need rather than the kind of job they do. This is primarily because both staff and leaders clearly believe that development staffers do not have more but just different skills than organizers. Since salary is one of society's strongest measure of and reward for quality of work, comparable salaries acknowledge that

staffers are working equally as hard but at different jobs.

5) FLEXIBILITY -- Although their missions and organizational structures are well-defined, this clarity has not led to rigidity but flexibility at EBC and CBA. Able to adapt to various circumstances, resources, problems and people that arise, both organizations bend and stretch to respond to the pushes and pulls of combining organizing and housing development.

"PROCESS" OR "PRODUCT"?

The debate about combining organizing and housing development boils down to the following simple question: what is more important to a community-based development organization, process-building or product generating?

As I began this exploration and contended in the introduction, putting the word "community" before "development" changes the meaning of development. Community development via housing as a vehicle is more than the struggle for a product, or land, bricks and mortar. It is also the struggle for a process, or the inclusion of a community's residents in determining their own future and in the day-to-day political, economic and psychological decisions which affect their lives. Therefore, product and process must both be parts of community-based development organizations if their mission is to achieve community empowerment and control over the development process.

East Brooklyn Churches and The Coalition for a Better Acre have combined both organizing and housing development synergistically; they have answered for themselves the process vs. product question. Both EBC and CBA are committed to building broad-based power institutions and processes through which they can achieve control over products and development in their communities.

In Mandarin there is a saying that "where there is danger, there is also opportunity." It seems that East Brooklyn Churches and The Coalition for a Better Acre have heeded these words.

APPENDIX I

FIVE COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

From analyzing how a number of community-based development organizations have evolved -- including the cases I have explored, a review of literature on other organizations nationwide, and a Center for Community Change publication entitled "Organizing for Neighborhood Development" -- I have identified five basic organizational forms of cbdo's.

Organizations with these structural forms may not have self-consciously created themselves in the image of one of these models, but rather many have evolved organically and may still be changing. Also, as might be expected with any conceptual model, in "real life" there are many variations on these basic forms.

1) Solely development corporation

A community development corporation is formed with the primary goal of development. It may have grown out of a particular local organizing campaign or issue, but is formally a development entity.

2) Spin-off

A community-based organization creates an entirely separate community development corporation (cdc). Although born out of the cbo's organizing efforts, the cdc is a fully independent entity with its own staff, board and mission, primarily concerned with economic development activities. The only formal relationship is historical, as the cbo is the forerunner of the cbdo. Informal relationships may exist, however, with the cbo leveraging political clout when the cbdo needs it.

3) Linked autonomy

Two organizations with strong links are formed, either concurrently or one closely following the other. Their links may include: sharing staff and office space, interlocking board of directors, and joint grantwriting. The cbdo is legally a separate entity, but there are strong formal relationships between the two organizations, structurally, operationally, financially and psychologically. However, each organization has its' own mission and goals.

4) Coexist

A community-based organization broadens its goals to form a development entity or includes both organizing and development roles from inception. The development arm may legally be a separate entity, or may be only a subsidiary to the community organization through a separate committee. Its' decisions may be subject to review by the board of the cbo, but it has a substantial amount of day-to-day decision-making authority. A strong formal relationship exists, and instead of one role being subservient to the other, each is an integral part of the other.

5) Joint ventures

A community-based organization, civic association or public agency joins with other nonprofit organizations or private developers to engage in development. The community organization has a direct role in decision-making, but relies on its partners to do the actual day-to-day development work. Often the cbo is a social service or advocacy agency which got involved in development because it found housing to be a critical need for its' clients.

APPENDIX II: THESIS INTERVIEWS

EAST BROOKLYN CHURCHES/NEHEMIAH

- MIKE GECAN, 2/10/88, Director of East Brooklyn Churches
Board member of Nehemiah Trust
- I. D. ROBBINS, 1/7/88, Director of Development for
Nehemiah I
- REV. JOHNNIE RAY YOUNGBLOOD, 1/13/88, President EBC
St. Paul's
- LEROY HOWARD, 1/14/88, Chair Steering Committee
- SARAH PLOWDEN, 1/14/88, leader EBC
- CORNELIA JONES, 1/13/88, original leader EBC
Nehemiah homeowner
- DOORKNOCKED A NUMBER OF NEHEMIAH RESIDENTS, 1/12 - 1/14/88

COALITION FOR A BETTER ACRE

- BILL TRAYNOR, (ongoing) CBA Executive Director
- JERRY RUBIN, 3/14/88, former CBA Executive Director
currently Assc Dir of Development
Boston Public Facilities Dept.
- MICHAEL BARBER, 3/1 & 3/8/88, CBA Development Director
- DEBBY FOX, 3/10 & 3/20/88, Acre Triangle Homeownership
Project Manager,
currently consultant to CBA
- PATTYE COMFORT, 3/1/88, CBA Organizing Director &
North Canal Tenant Council
project coordinator
- CHARLES GARGUILO, 3/14/88, CBA President, founding member
- ARLENE DIAS, 3/22/88, CBA Vice President, founding member
- ANGEL BURMUDEZ, 3/1/88, former CBA organizer
currently City of Lowell Assessor
- LOUISE COSTELLO, 3/10/88, Development Specialist
- ANDREA BEAUCHESNE, 3/3/88, Co-chair, North Canal Tenant
Council

OTHER CDBO STAFF AND LEADERS:

- MAT THALL, 12/2/87, Fenway CDC Executive Director
- BOB VAN METER, 3/3/88, Fenway CDC Acquisitions Director
formerly legislative director Mass
Tenants Organization
- MELVYN COLON, 2/9/88, Nuestra Comunidad DC Director
DSNI Board member
- ROBERT SANBORN, 2/9/88, Nuestra Comunidad Project Manager
formerly Quincy-Geneva CDC
- JIM SCHULTZ, 3/31/88, Fields Corner CDC Executive Director
- MOSSIK HACOBIAN, 4/14/88, Urban Edge Executive Director
- BOB GOLDSTEIN, 12/3/87, Allston-Brighton CDC Project
Manager
- ROGER HERZOG, 3/4/88, IBA Development Director
- BETH MARCUS, 4/4/88, JP NDC Project Manager
- PETER MEDOFF, (ongoing), DSNI Executive Director
- MARVIN MARTIN, 3/4/88, DSNI organizer
- CHE MADYUN, 3/9/88, DSNI President
- CYNTHIA LOPES-JEFFERSON, 4/6/88, Chair DSNI Dev. Comm.
- JOHN WENGLER, 2/17/88, Woodlawn (Chicago) Asst. Project
Manager

OTHER HOUSING FOLKS:

- PETER DREIER, 1/11/88, BRA Housing Director
- REBECCA BLACK, 3/2/88, Assc Dir Planning Division PFD,
formerly Exec Dir All-Bri CDC
- EILEEN HEGGARTY, 12/14/87, union organizer SEIU Local 285,
formerly organizer Michigan Ave Community
Organization/CDC (MACO) (Detroit)
- DAVID KOVEN, 2/15/88, Housing Director, Homeowners Rehab
formerly organizer for SECO (Baltimore)

- DIANE GORDON, 2/15/88, Neighborhood Reinvestment
technical assistance provider
formerly Director of MTO
- LEW FINFER, (ongoing) Mass Affordable Housing Alliance
formerly Director of SUN and 15 yrs
organizing experience
- DANNY LEBLANC, 3/3/88, OCED/EOCD CDC technical asst
director, formerly Director of SUN
- SCOTT SPENCER, (ongoing), Organizing/Leadership Training
Center, formerly SUN
- MITCHELL SVIRIDOFF, 2/5/88, Coordinating survey of 130
CDC's nationwide at New School
for Social Research
formerly Ford Foundation President
- NANCY NYE, (ongoing), Program Consultant to Local
Initiative Support Corporation's (LISC)
Support Collaborative
formerly Vice Pres, CDFC (READER)
- JEAN ENTINE, 3/14/88, Director Community Organizing
Initiative grant, Boston Foundation
- LYNN MCCORMACK, 2/25/88, MIT PHD candidate
formerly OCED/EOCD CEED Project Director
- BETH SIEGAL, 3/3/88, Mount Auburn Associates
- STAN HOLT, 3/8/88, SECO lead organizer in mid-seventies
- PAT LIBBY, 3/29/88, Director Mass Assoc. of CDC's

ACADEMICS

- LANGLEY KEYES, (ongoing), Professor, DUSP/MIT (THESIS
ADVISOR)
- RICHARD SCHRAMM, 3/3/88, Assc Prof, Urban & Environmental
Policy/TUETS
- KEN GEISER, 3/16/88, Asst Prof, UEP/Tufts
- MEL KING, (ongoing) Director Community Fellows Program MIT
[READER]
- RACHEL BRATT, 3/16/88, Assc Prof UEP/Tufts
- BEN HARRISON, 12/8/88, Prof, DUSP/MIT

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