The Role of Catalyst Organizations in the Formation of Metropolitan Coalitions: Metropolitics in Baltimore and Chicago

by

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ABSTRACT

An evaluation of recent “metropolitics” efforts in Baltimore and Chicago reveals several keys to success for organizations aiming to build coalitions between the inner city and declining and low-tax base suburbs. Regional catalyst organizations (RCOs) need to devise compelling metropolitics strategies, cultivate dynamic leadership, manage organizational complexity, and learn, adjust, and persevere in order to succeed in regional coalition-building efforts.

In addition, RCOs face significant challenges in trying to institutionalize metropolitics work, achieve scale in building coalitions, and obtain adequate funding and resources. They must make an array of strategic decisions, including how much to pursue a conflict approach, where to build coalitions, what issues to target, whether to organize at the elite or grassroots level, and whom to partner with.

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Acknowledgments

Before coming to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in 1998, I picked up a copy of Myron Orfield’s Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability. At the time, I had been following land use and development issues as a reporter for Greenwire, a daily environmental news service. Orfield’s account of a new kind of urban-suburban political coalition struck a cord amid my growing concern about sprawl and other regional issues.

After completing one year in MIT’s city planning program, I decided to revisit Orfield’s ideas and see how metropolitics was progressing elsewhere, hoping to learn more about its potential. The result is this study on the role of catalyst organizations in the formation of metropolitics coalitions.

Many people have assisted me in this project. Larry Susskind offered thoughtful advising and well-placed comments throughout the process, and kept me striving to improve the final product. Bernie Frieden and Karl Seidman produced helpful suggestions on late drafts. My roommates Jason Disterhoft, Mark Greif, and Donnan Steele provided invaluable editing and humor in the homestretch.

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Any errors, omissions, or oversights in the pages that follow are, of course, purely my own.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In several metropolitan areas across the U.S., regional coalitions are beginning to form between inner-city, declining inner-ring suburban, and low-tax base exurban interests. These “metropolitics” coalitions aim to bring about redistribution of resources and opportunity within metro regions. Such efforts stem from the work of Myron Orfield, an enterprising Minnesota state legislator who forged a winning metropolitics coalition in the Twin Cities during the 1990s. While Orfield worked as an individual to catalyze urban-suburban alliances in the Minnesota legislature, elsewhere, organizations have emerged to build regional coalitions. This study examines the early experiences of regional catalyst organizations (RCOs), aiming to discover what they do and how they can succeed in forming metropolitics coalitions.

These coalition-building activities are occurring amid a surge of interest in regional reform. Metropolitanism ebbs and flows in America, and we are currently at high tide. The smart growth and anti-sprawl movements have piqued concern about regional land use, transportation, and environmental issues. Meanwhile, persistent poverty in urban areas and the spread of decline into older suburban communities have underscored the metropolitan nature of inner-city problems. Finally, recent years have brought an explosion of popular and academic writing on metropolitanism.1

Historically, regional reform efforts have focused on problems of efficiency within fragmented metropolitan areas. What distinguishes metropolitics as a new reform strategy is its emphasis on equity issues. Metropolitics coalitions focus on problems that are rarely, if ever, addressed at the metropolitan scale, such as school funding, infrastructure investment, fiscal disparities, and affordable housing. While many metropolitans have long wished to take on such issues, they have lacked viable political strategies to do so. Orfield’s innovation has been the realization that changing regional demographics and social conditions afford the opportunity to create self interest-based majority coalitions around issues of metropolitan equity.

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1 Among the most notable works are National Research Council 1999; Katz 2000; Hamilton 1999; Rusk 1999; Orfield 1997a; Savitch and Vogel 1996; Dodge 1996; Downs 1994; Rusk 1993; and Peirce 1993.
The power of Orfield's analytic framework and the success of his organizing efforts in Minnesota have generated real excitement among regional equity advocates. Within the past four years, sponsoring organizations have commissioned Orfield to complete almost 30 metropolitics studies for major metro regions. These studies chart regional trends and present a series of color maps identifying potential metropolitics coalitions.

Several organizations have seized upon the metropolitics strategy and begun coalition-building work. Barring individual advocates for metropolitics or support from high-level political leaders, organizations are the logical agents to coordinate such efforts. This study will examine the cases of two regional catalyst organizations that are attempting to establish metropolitics coalitions according to the Orfield model – the Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) in Baltimore and the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations (MAC) in Chicago. The case studies are intended to be of use to organizations and practitioners doing metropolitics work, as well as policy-makers and academics interested in metropolitanism and regional coalition building.

Chapter 2 places metropolitics within the context of the history of metropolitanism in the U.S. Orfield's experiences in the Twin Cities are recounted in Chapter 3, which provides a baseline case to consider the work being done by RCOs.

Chapters 4 and 5 present original case studies of CPHA and MAC, offering in-depth description and analysis of each organization's early efforts. Chapter 6 draws from these cases to construct a theoretical framework regarding the role of RCOs in the formation of metropolitics coalitions. It examines the reasons why metropolitics coalitions do not form on their own, the nature of RCOs, the outcomes they seek, and the actions they take. In conclusion, Chapter 7 discusses major challenges that RCOs face, strategic decisions that they must make, and keys to success in metropolitics coalition building.
Chapter 2

Metropolitanism in the U.S. and the Promise of Metropolitics

“Americans will always cooperate – only after they have exhausted all the alternatives.”

– Winston Churchill

This chapter places the political strategy of metropolitics within the context of the history of metropolitanism in the United States. It begins with a theoretical discussion of the efficiency and equity problems that arise from fractured metropolitan regions that have large numbers of local governments and little regional planning or policy. Then, it reviews the possible responses to metropolitan fragmentation and presents a history of their application over the past century. It goes on to show that while these responses have addressed some key governance and service-delivery issues, they have failed to substantively address growing concerns about equity across metropolitan regions. The chapter concludes with an introduction of the metropolitics model of regional coalition building, which provides a promising mechanism to address this thorny equity side of metropolitanism.

Why Metropolitanism?

The case for metropolitanism in the United States is far from new (Jones 1942; Wood 1961; Maxey 1922; National Municipal League 1930). To understand why metropolitanism continues to be a significant issue (Katz 2000; National Research Council 1999; Hamilton 1999), current statistics about local government are helpful. The U.S. has more than 19,000 municipalities, 16,000 townships and towns, and 33,000 special-purpose districts. The average metropolitan area\(^2\) has more than 100 local governments – 40 special districts, 24 municipalities, 19

\(^2\) Metropolitan areas for the purpose of this report will tend to follow the US Census Bureau’s definition of primary metropolitan statistical area. This corresponds with a functional labor market or natural economic region based around a core city. The precise PMSA definition is: “a large population nucleus together with adjacent communities (counties) which have a high degree of economic and social integration with that nucleus.”
independent school districts, 16 townships, and two counties. The Chicago metropolitan area provides an extreme example of local government mosaic, with 940 local governments holding taxing authority, 318 special purpose governments, and 623 special districts including schools.3

This metropolitan governmental fragmentation drives three different kinds of problems — two having to do with efficiency and one with equity.4 The first problem that arises from jurisdictional fragmentation is inefficiencies in scale of service delivery. The optimal scale of delivery for many services goes beyond the borders of individual local governments. Historically determined political boundaries often have very little to do with the most efficient delivery of public services, resulting in high duplication costs. Many efforts to regionalize services, then, are attempts to achieve efficiency gains by capturing economies of scale. The metropolitan scale is more fitting for services such as transportation, waste disposal, water treatment, and sewer provision. This economies of scale problem is the one that has been addressed the most successfully through regionalization efforts in the U.S.

The second metropolitan efficiency problem results from externalities, or spillovers that occur across jurisdictional boundaries. A basic tenet of economic efficiency requires that those who receive external benefits pay for them. Spillover effects arise across the region from the provision of many services, including police, cultural and sports facilities, roads, parks and open space, and environmental goods such as clean air and water. In addition, there are an array of negative externalities associated with concentrated urban poverty, from suburban reluctance to venture into the city due to congestion or crime, to increased decline in older suburbs, to sprawl at the metropolitan fringe as households attempt to escape urban ills.

The recent economic interdependency literature argues that the city provides positive externalities to adjacent suburbs. Research by Voith (1996, 1998), Brooks and Summers (1997) Ledebur and Barnes (1992, 1993), and Savitch et al. (1993) suggests that suburbs fare better on several measures when the urban core is healthy. If such an economic interdependency spillover effect does exist, then it would be in the interest of suburban communities to act regionally to shore up the health of central cities.

3 Hamilton 1999:14-5.
4 Economist Anita Summers discusses these basic arguments in favor of metropolitanism with great clarity in her chapter “Regionalization Efforts Between Big Cities and Their Suburbs: Rhetoric and Reality” in Urban Suburban Dependencies, edited by Rosalind Greenstein and Wim Wievel (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2000).
In light of the two regional efficiency problems of optimal scale and externalities, British scholar L.J. Sharpe suggests that the following functions should be provided or coordinated to some degree at the metropolitan level:

- land use planning,
- highway provision,
- public transit,
- general utilities,
- recreation areas,
- housing,
- sewer infrastructure,
- waste disposal,
- water supply,
- police,
- fire protection,
- major cultural institutions, and
- environmental protection

But the efficient provision of the above services is not the sole task of metropolitanism. A formidable set of equity concerns also results from metropolitan fragmentation (Rusk 1993; Orfield 1997a; Swanstrom 1996). Fragmented regions encourage growth in fiscal disparities, economic and racial segregation, and concentration of poverty. The result is a highly unequal distribution of quality schools and services, low- and moderate-income housing, transportation access, proximity to jobs, and racial discrimination (Harrison 2000). Most alarming to urban scholars such as William Julius Wilson is the degree to which metropolitan policies and development patterns encourage the isolation and further concentration of the poor, generating stark disparities in life opportunity across the region (Wilson 1987; Wilson 1996; Jargowsky 1997; National Research Council 1999).

The complex metropolitan processes that lead to such inequities are increasingly well-documented (National Research Council 1999; Downs 1994). Foremost among the causes of metro disparities are policies of exclusionary and fiscal zoning that exclude the poor from

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communities and increase fiscal burdens upon cities and older communities that must provide services for low-income populations. The greater the number of jurisdictions in a region, the greater the incentive exists to use these zoning tools (Fischel 1999), thereby increasing disparities. The inequities generated by jurisdictional fragmentation are largely an issue of fiscal capacity, as large cities must deliver extensive services to the poor within their boundaries. Economist Anita Summers has found that intergovernmental aid from the state and federal level does not adequately compensate cities for the additional costs they bear for high poverty, leaving a substantial financial burden on the core (Summers and Jakubowski 1996).

There are two different justifications for remedying intra-metropolitan inequities. One is a moral argument, suggesting that such sharp disparities in opportunity are neither fair nor desirable from a social welfare standpoint. This drive for social justice has long drawn urbanists and those concerned with poverty toward metropolitanism. Another justification for reducing regional inequities is the worry that such disparities weaken the economic health of the region. Increasingly, metropolitanists argue that metropolitan regions are the logical economic units in a globalized economy (Jacobs 1984; Kanter 1995; Ledebur and Barnes 1998), and that extreme poverty or disparities within a region may weaken its economic competitiveness (Peirce 1993; Wallis 1995).

Intra-metropolitan disparities arising from governmental fragmentation suggest a need to deal with problems such as fiscal disparities, affordable housing, economic development competition, education, poverty alleviation, and regional land use planning. Yet such equity concerns have been addressed very infrequently via metropolitan solutions. Many ardent metropolitanists are most concerned with this set of issues, but often cloak their equity concerns in arguments about efficiency (Gottlieb 2000). The growing literature on economic interdependencies between city and suburbs is a prime example of metropolitanism advocates justifying redistribution by discussing regional efficiency, not equity.

**Responses to the Metropolitan Problem**

Summed up by regional scholar Kathryn Foster, “the metropolitan problem is the dilemma of how to achieve effective, efficient and equitable governance and service delivery in politically
decentralized metropolitan areas. There are many possible responses to this problem, ranging from maintaining the status quo, to governmental or structural reforms, to changes in metropolitan governance.

The easiest and most common American response is to do nothing. This response often arises from a combination of complacency, denial of metropolitan problems, and the challenges posed by trying to implement regional reform. The do-nothing, status quo approach to metro fragmentation has found intellectual justification in the public choice school of urban economics. Public choice theory emerged from the work of Charles Tiebout (1956), who argued that efficient regions operate as markets for services. Localities compete by offering different bundles of goods and services, leading to different tax levels. Citizens then “vote with their feet,” choosing to live in the jurisdiction whose combination of taxes and services best matches their personal preferences and willingness to pay (Parks and Oakerson 1989; Ostrom et al. 1961; Ostrom et al. 1988). Under this economic conception of the metropolis, there are efficiency and consumer welfare gains for citizens as they sort into a patchwork of socioeconomically homogeneous communities.

Metropolitanists offer several counter-arguments against public choice theory as a justification for continued fragmentation. First, they point out that the market analogy does not hold for governments. Local governments, by and large, cannot enter and exit the government market as firms do. In addition, the dynamics of competition for residents are not the same as for product consumers. Finally, while firms do not have to serve every possible consumer, those governments that are not in a position to exclude residents through practices such as fiscal zoning must serve those who remain. For many urban residents who have become ghettoized through poverty, there does not appear to be as much “choice” in the metropolitan landscape as public choice proponents suggest.

True believers in the public choice school would suggest that the metropolitan problem is not one of too much jurisdictional fragmentation, but rather not enough. However, a tradeoff exists between the efficiency gains of fragmented local government systems and the equity gains of a

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6 Foster 2000:84.
7 Adam Smith spoke of an “invisible hand” guiding efficient outcomes in free markets; public choice advocates claim that an “invisible foot” is at work in metropolitan regions.
8 Hamilton 1999:198.
more consolidated system. The American system of fiscal federalism, which provides transfers and grants-in-aid to cities and local governments from the state and federal levels, is an attempt to capture the efficiency gains achieved through numerous local governments while compensating for the disparities that result from such a landscape (Oates 1972; Musgrave 1959; Ladd and Doolittle 1982).

Beyond public choice theory and the passive do-nothing approach, there are several active responses to the metropolitan problem (see National Research Council 1999:20-21, chapter 4; Summers 2000). These responses fall into two broad categories — changes in government structure and regional governance reform. The distinction, although blurry at times, provides a helpful framework for thinking about different types of metropolitan solutions.

Government solutions are structural ones dealing with the boundaries of general-purpose government. The solution of regionalizing through government reform has a long tradition in the U.S., ranging from annexation and city-county consolidation efforts to attempts to create tiered regional government systems. The governance approach is more focused upon government processes and functions than structure. It tends to accept jurisdictional boundaries and looks to address metropolitan efficiency and equity concerns via a functional and issue-oriented approach. It includes functional arrangements for the provision of services, discussion of metropolitan policy issues, and encouragement of regional cooperation. Examples of the metro governance approach include many state land use and growth management efforts, regional tax-base sharing schemes, and coordinated economic development. The trend over the past century in America has been from metropolitan government to governance responses (Wallis 1994a, 1994b).

The most aggressive structural response to metropolitan problems would be the creation of a single general-purpose regional government. Such a maneuver has never occurred in America, but a related and more common response has been annexation (Rusk 1993). Another less-frequently used structural response has been city-county consolidation. Only three regions have


10 Equity concerns aside, the economic literature concludes that the efficiency of governmental fragmentation depends upon the service being delivered (see Miceli 1993). Local government is more efficient for labor-intensive services such as police and fire, while the metropolitan scale is more efficient for capital-intensive services such as transportation, water treatment, and sewers. The literature on the impact of fragmentation on disparities is "smaller and less compelling" (National Research Council 1999:8), in part due to methodological and measurement challenges.

11 Hamilton 1999:33-34.
created truly federated metropolitan government systems — the Metropolitan Council in the Twin Cities, Portland’s Metropolitan Service District, and Metro Miami-Dade County. In this tiered metro government model, existing municipal boundaries remain, but local jurisdictions yield some of their services and authority to a regional government.

Turning to governance responses, the most popular one has been the creation of special-purpose districts to provide services at the metropolitan level (Foster 1997). Where formal districts are not created, interlocal service agreements often serve the same objective. Multipurpose service districts, such as Seattle’s Department of Metropolitan Services, are more rare. An array of sub-state regional planning commissions (RPCs) and councils of governments (COGs) aim to address metropolitan concerns, but often are purely advisory and lack enforcement power.

Another set of responses to metropolitan problems comes from the federal and state levels. These higher levels of government can offer incentives, sanctions, and/or mandates to encourage regional thinking and action. Since local government is the product of state legislation and policy, states have the power to change the legal framework that shapes metropolitan development. Much of the current smart growth movement centers on the state’s power to legislate or otherwise encourage regional land-use planning and growth management.

Finally, metropolitanization appears in the form of redistribution and equalization policies. Equalization options include transfers or grants-in-aid from higher levels of government, state or federal assumption of local services, tax exporting, and regional tax-base sharing. Michael Pagano classifies these as “fiscal stretching” policies, in contrast with government structural reforms that effectively stretch political boundaries (2000). A recent National Research Council committee examining metropolitanism suggests that such redistributive policies historically have been weak (1999:7).

The above-mentioned metropolitan solutions are considered the traditional responses to problems of government fragmentation. But, there is a growing realization that governance responses to metropolitan inequities include a broad array of policies that aim to alleviate poverty and increase opportunity for individuals. Responses intended to increase opportunity across the metropolitan landscape include inclusionary zoning policies, curbing exclusionary zoning, housing subsidies,
place-based poverty-reduction initiatives, regional worker- and household-mobility programs, human capital investment, and anti-discrimination policies.\footnote{12 National Research Council 1999:79-95.}

The emphasis upon different types of metropolitan approaches has changed dramatically over time in the U.S. It is important to examine this history in order to better gauge the prospects of current regional efforts and the emerging political strategy of metropolitics.

**A History of Metropolitanism in the U.S.**

Alan Wallis suggests that the U.S. has experienced two major waves of regionalism and is currently in the midst of a third (Wallis 1994a, 1994b). The first wave occurred at the turn of the last century, focusing on government structural reforms such as annexations and the birth of metropolitan service districts. The second wave began in the 1960s, with a top-down program of federal grants encouraging metropolitan planning in regions that were becoming increasingly polycentric through suburbanization. Wallis describes a current third wave of regionalism characterized by governance arrangements involving a broader array of sectors and actors. Wallis' framework is somewhat simplistic, as periods and approaches overlap, but it is a good start.

Modern American metropolitanism was born out of the rapid growth of industrializing cities in the 19th century. The first big regional push came with a sweep of annexations that took place during the post-Civil War era through the 1920s (Jackson 1985). The major force underlying this move to expand the city limits was a desire for scale and service efficiency at a time of drastic urban growth. The economies of scale benefits from annexation were obvious to city residents. Adjacent areas sometimes viewed annexation favorably, as residents beyond the city limits sought improved services and sanitation. However, much of the time suburbs resisted annexation moves. Annexations in the mid-19th century were often conducted by legislative fiat over the objections of subsumed communities.\footnote{13} The pro-annexation tendency in state legislatures reflected the power of urban interests in an era of big city boosterism and machine politics.

The rush of annexations came to a virtual complete stop by the late 1920s in the older Northeast and Midwest. They continued in growing regions with remaining unincorporated areas in the
South and West (e.g., Atlanta, Dallas, Phoenix, San Jose), but the abrupt halt elsewhere was notable. What had changed? The primary answer is one that appears throughout the history of American metropolitanism—a shift in population and power to the suburbs. States responded to this shift by changing laws regarding annexation and consolidation, making it easier for towns to incorporate and granting local self-determination on annexation proposals. Even after these significant legal changes, many suburbs still found annexation attractive. A suburb’s stance hinged on its ability to provide its own services. The first instance of annexation courtship denied was Brookline’s rejection of Boston’s advances in 1873. By that point, Brookline was self-sufficient and wealthy enough to view annexation to Boston as a losing proposal. Other suburbs became increasingly independent as a result of Progressive-era reforms that encouraged more efficient public administration. Finally, the suburbs gained an important tool and incentive to stave off annexation with the advent of zoning, which cemented local regulatory and exclusionary power (Fischel 1999).

As annexation surged and then slowed to a crawl, cities began to make extensive use of metropolitan single-service districts (Foster 1997). Special-purpose service districts have been the most extensively used metropolitanization tool over time, addressing service and infrastructure needs without adding more comprehensive layers of government. Boston was an early pioneer in this area, with the first sewage district in 1889, parks in 1892, and water supply in 1895.

While special districts continue to evolve and be used extensively to achieve economies of scale over regions, they are not without their drawbacks. Among the criticisms waged against special districts has been their lack of accountability, as they are often run by appointed, not elected, officials. Others point out that while special districts achieve efficiency gains through economies of scale, they also further metropolitan fragmentation and complexity by adding additional layers of governance. Finally, the single-issue focus of most special-purpose districts can hamper coordination and cooperation around other key regional issues.

With annexation rendered politically infeasible throughout much of the nation by the 1930s, metro reformers turned to other government responses. The stress still was very much on structural solutions, so progressive reformers pushed for city-county consolidations, tiered-government schemes, and multipurpose service districts.

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The calls for city-county consolidation brought about a period of activity during the 1960s. Major consolidations at the time included Miami-Dade County in 1957 (Stowers 1996), Nashville-Davidson in 1962 (Hawkins 1966), Jacksonville-Duval in 1967 (Swanson 1996), and Indianapolis-Marion in 1969 (Blomquist and Parks 1995). Overall, this approach has been a tough sell at the ballot box, as there have been only 31 city-county consolidations in the U.S. According to the National Association of Counties, there have been 23 successful referenda out of 134 attempts at city-county consolidation since 1921.\(^\text{14}\) When it does succeed, consolidation tends to happen in metro areas with relatively small populations; the only voter-approved consolidations in regions with populations over 200,000 have been Jacksonville, Nashville, and Lexington, Kentucky.\(^\text{15}\) In those regions where consolidation has occurred, it has been partial, with separate local governments retaining significant powers and services. Some municipalities usually remain outside of the consolidated body altogether. In this light, the term “consolidation” proves a bit of a misnomer (Hawkins et al 1991).\(^\text{16}\)

While some reformers fought battles over consolidation, others worked for a two-tiered government or federated approach. This approach, however, found even less success, with only three American examples in the Twin Cities, Portland, and Miami. This model is more prevalent outside the U.S., in cities such as Toronto, London, Barcelona, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Istanbul.

The federal role in encouraging metropolitanism was minimal during the first half of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had been influenced by the regionalist ideas and writings of the Regional Plan Association of America while serving as governor of New York during the 1920s.\(^\text{17}\) As a result, the New Deal spawned regional initiatives such as the Tennessee Valley Authority and the greenbelt towns program. America’s only hands-on engagement with regional planning at the federal level came through the National Planning Board, which produced “a


\(^{15}\) Hamilton 1999:95.

\(^{16}\) The literature evaluating city-county consolidations also questions whether these reforms have had the desired equity consequences (Erie et al. 1972; Swanson 1996; Blomquist and Parks 1995; Carl Vinson Institute of Government 1989).

\(^{17}\) The idealistic visions of the leaders of the RPAA – Lewis Mumford, Benton MacKaye, Clarence Stein, and Patrick Geddes – focused more upon landscape regions than metropolitan areas. In the writings of Mumford (1925, 1927) and MacKaye (1928), “metropolitanism” connoted the dark specter of the city creeping out into the countryside to corrupt the natural region. They much preferred the term “regionalism.” (See also Sussman 1976.)
prodigious multiplication of paper”18 between 1933 and 1943, but very little in terms of plan implementation.

A more substantial federal role in regional planning emerged during the 1960s. This “second wave” of regionalism consisted of top-down mandates and incentives from the feds for regional councils and local governments to work on metropolitan issues. Much like the first wave of structural reforms, these efforts tended to concentrate upon encouraging the effective and efficient provision of infrastructure and services. However, recognizing the limited political feasibility of changing local government boundaries, the federal response in the 1960s was to bring improved governance to polycentric regions through mandated planning and coordination (Wallis 1994a).

A stepped-up federal role in metropolitanism began with the creation of the Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations by Congress in 1959. The body was tasked with monitoring the operation of the federal system and making recommendations about metro affairs. Next came a series of laws that made comprehensive planning and coordinated action the basis for federal grants and loans. The Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 stated that “to the maximum extent possible … all federal aid for development purposes shall be consistent with and further the objectives of state, regional and local comprehensive planning.” By 1977, 39 federal programs required sub-state regional comprehensive planning (Wallis 1994a:168). Major program areas included housing planning assistance, highways and mass transit, services to the aging, economic development, air and water pollution, workforce development, criminal justice, and the A-95 program tying local government grants to regional planning goals.

Annual federal funding in support of metropolitan efforts rose to $800 million during this period (Hamilton 1999:235). This healthy flow of funds led to a rapid growth of regional councils, with the first council of governments (COG) emerging in Detroit in 1954. Regional planning councils (RPCs), which began in Los Angeles County in 1922, also grew dramatically in number. At the peak of support in the late 1970s, there were more than 650 COGs and RPCs relying upon federal funding.

The legacy of COGs and RPCs has been less than stunning. The growth of regional councils during the 1960s and 70s did encourage a cooperation movement around service delivery

18 Hall 1988:160.
(Banfield 1990), as voluntary service and joint-powers agreements and contracting became more common among municipalities. Some RPCs have been effective in serving as repositories for metropolitan data and producing regional reports. However, COGs and most regional councils by their nature are voluntary and advisory, lacking political power and enforcement authority. Controversial regional equity issues are rarely, if ever, addressed.

After a sharp decrease in federal funding during the Reagan years, a meaningful federal role in metropolitanism crept back with two environmental laws under George Bush – the 1990 Clean Air Act and the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Both tied key federal highway and infrastructure funds to environmental performance and regional planning. ISTEA gave more teeth to regional planning councils, making metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) – sometimes newly formed, sometimes holdovers from previous councils – responsible for regional transportation investment decisions. Although MPOs have been significantly empowered to engage in transportation planning and equity issues, like their regional council predecessors, they have tended to steer clear of controversy, often carving up the funding pie for member governments instead of engaging in more ambitious planning (Krumholz 1997; Wachs and Dill 1999; Lewis 1998).

In contrast with the federal government, states have far greater potential influence upon metropolitan planning, policies and outcomes. After all, local governments are created and regulated by states. Only rarely have states gone so far as to create tiered metropolitan governments, as in the Twin Cities and Portland – both instances where a perceived environmental crisis encouraged strong state action. In a less dramatic vein, several Western states have modified laws to make municipal incorporation more difficult and annexation by cities easier. Twelve states – again, mostly in the West – have created boundary review commissions to oversee jurisdictional boundary issues.19

State legislatures have been the main focus for growth management efforts. Hawaii ventured first into this area, when it adopted a state land use plan in 1961 to protect its agricultural lands from development pressure. Vermont legislated a comprehensive statewide land use approach in 1970 and Maine followed in 1971. The subsequent proliferation of growth management measures passed in state legislatures during the 1970s came to be known as the “quiet revolution” in land-use planning (Bosselman 1972). The current smart growth movement picks up where that
revolution laid off, addressing concerns about urban sprawl and the impacts of unplanned regional development. States such as Maryland, Tennessee, and Washington have recently strengthened their growth management laws, and more than one thousand land-use reform bills were introduced in state legislatures last year alone (American Planning Association 1999). Although these efforts represent some of the most aggressive metropolitan initiatives currently under consideration, the jury is out as to the ultimate effectiveness of emerging growth management practices.

Finally, state courts have provided an important forum for issues of metropolitan equity. Most courts have upheld the exclusionary zoning rights of local governments, but the Mt. Laurel rulings on affordable housing in New Jersey stand out as a bold exception. In 1975 and again in 1983, the New Jersey Supreme Court required that each suburb in the state make provisions to provide its “fair share” of affordable housing for the region. Plaintiffs in the Mt. Laurel cases argued from the 14th amendment of the U.S. Constitution, claiming that local exclusionary zoning measures denied citizens due process and equal protection under the law (Haar 1996).

Meanwhile, many state courts have ruled in favor of increased metropolitan equity in school finance cases such as the 1971 Serrano decision in California. Successful or threatened lawsuits have resulted in two-thirds of all states adopting school equalization formulae, or “foundation” grants, to increase per-pupil state aid to poor school districts.

Modern Metropolitanism

Metropolitanism ebbed to a low tide during the 1980s (Wallis 1994a). There are multiple reasons for the decline in interest and activity. A leadership-oriented explanation focuses on President Ronald Reagan and his emphasis on devolution and localism (Norris 1994). Regional programs and funds were cut drastically during his presidency; of the 39 federal programs supporting regionalism when Reagan came into office, all but one were terminated, faced reduced funding, or had their missions redirected. As a result of the funding cut, already weak regional councils shifted from traditional planning work to brokering and entrepreneurial service provision. Forced to rely more upon member governments for funding, COGs further shied away from controversial issues (Atkins 1993).

The 1980s also saw a relative dearth of vocal academic support for metropolitanism. A series of studies from the public choice school of economics suggested that metropolitan reform efforts often did not lead to desired efficiency or equity improvements (see Hamilton 1999:119-129). In a stunning turn of events, the Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (ACIR), which had served as a major source of information on regional affairs and advocated for metropolitan reorganization since the 1950s, went from champion of metropolitanism to public choice advocate (U.S. ACIR 1991, 1993). ACIR’s shift left a major gap in regionalism advocacy and research. The commission was shut down in 1996 after being identified by House Republicans as unnecessary (Burke 1998).

Other trends led to the decline of regionalism during the 1980s. Voters had been consistently voting against metropolitan reform proposals, indicating an overall satisfaction with the status quo and government services. Continuing suburbanization and growth of population nodes outside the central city further tipped the power balance toward suburbs, leading many suburbanites to question their connection with the city. Finally, the “Me” generation’s general shift toward conservatism and the individual brought the focus away from traditional metropolitan equity concerns (Hamilton 1999).

Following this decline of interest in metropolitanism during the 1980s was a sharp resurgence in the 1990s. Continuing patterns of metropolitan growth and decline led to revived concern about issues such as sprawl, transportation, economic development competition, the environment, and inner-city poverty and its impacts. Many factors are at play in this metro resurgence (Hamilton 1999:280-4). One reason is the increased visibility of persistent urban problems and fiscal woes, coupled with a growing sense that these ills impact the region. Metropolitanism also has received greater exposure in the media, as well as through several popular and academic books (Peirce 1993; Rusk 1993; Downs 1994; Dodge 1996; Savitch and Vogel 1996; Orfield 1997a). Scholarly attention returned with the growth of urban-suburban interdependency arguments (see Gottlieb 2000 and Ihlanfeldt 1995 for reviews; Greenstein and Wiewel 2000). And three decades after the creation of the first community development corporations, some urban thinkers began to question whether the “inside game” of community development could ever succeed in addressing urban poverty without an “outside game” of metropolitan policy reform (Rusk 1999; Swanstrom et al. forthcoming). Arguably, a sense of regional identity may be growing among previously isolated suburbanites, amid an increase in urban volunteerism and lifestyles and commutes that regularly bring people into contact with many parts of the region. Finally, the spread of traditional urban
problems such as crime, poverty, traffic congestion, and loss of open space to older, inner-ring suburbs has done much to prod metropolitan thinking (Orfield 1997a).

The result of these trends is the "new regionalism" movement that has emerged during the 1990s. While this third wave of regionalism addresses the same problems of metropolitan efficiency and equity as previous efforts, there are some important differences this time around. Wallis argues that current metropolitanists are more concerned than ever with regional governance, in contrast to structural reforms (1994b, 1994c). Current regional efforts also include more sectors and actors than ever (Yaro 2000). Metro advocates have expanded beyond academics, planners, and select government officials to include business groups (Kantor 2000), non-profits, the media, and churches. While this expansion of regional players can broaden support and the ultimate feasibility of given proposals, it also places new emphasis on the role of leadership (Partners for Livable Communities 1999).

Amid these many civic and governmental actors, new regionalists emphasize the importance of networks in achieving reforms. Stemming from the work of political scientist Robert Putnam, new regionalists talk about the need to build social capital (Putnam 1993) and a regional civic infrastructure (Wallis 1993). Part of this includes engaging in deliberative processes that encourage the formation of regional identity and visions for the metropolis. The locus of action for many new regionalists reformers has been the state. Discouraged by the relative ineffectiveness of COGs and metropolitan planning organizations in addressing lingering metropolitan problems, reformers have decided to go one level up and devise political campaigns for state legislatures.

The arguments employed in favor of metropolitanism also have changed somewhat with the new regionalists. America's three waves of regionalism have roughly corresponded with three different justifications for metropolitanism. The first wave's emphasis on structural government reforms was driven by calls for greater efficiency, although boosterism and the power of the industrial monocentric city also played a role. The federal role in the second wave held onto efficiency arguments, but in the age of the Great Society, the appeal was also to preserve and provide charity for ailing cities. With the third wave, discussion tends to focus upon economic interdependence between city and suburbs and the need to cooperate within healthy regions in order to compete in the global economy.

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20 Hamilton 1999, chapter 8.
This argumentative progression clearly follows the shift of population and power to the suburbs (Weir 1996). Political scientist Todd Swanstrom claims that the recent push toward interdependency arguments has been necessitated by the crumbling of the two former pillars of urban policy – political self-interest (1st wave) and liberal compassion (2nd wave). While the shift in argument is understandable in this light, Swanstrom argues that interdependency studies alone are not compelling, especially at a time when the growth of polycentric regions has raised arguments for the functional independence of “edge cities” (Garreau 1991; Pascal 1987). Swanstrom urges new regionalists preoccupied with economics to expose the ideas that underlie their interdependency arguments – the concept of a regional citizen with responsibilities (Long 1962; Downs 1994), and the moral call for wealth redistribution in light of growing intra-metropolitan disparities (Swanstrom 1996).

**Metropolitanism’s Record and the Promise of Metropolitics**

Where have there been successes within this history of metropolitanism? Aside from a flurry of annexations at the turn of the last century, structural reforms such as city-county consolidations and tiered metropolitan governments have been rare. The most progress has been made in addressing a discrete set of regional issues including transportation, water treatment and supply, sewers, air and water pollution, parks, and solid waste – often through special-purpose districts. Transportation in particular has been a catalyzing force for metropolitan efforts. A fair amount of regionalization also has occurred around the provision of airports, sports arenas, convention centers, and other cultural attractions (Summers 2000). The broad implication from these regional successes is that metropolitanism has worked where there are clear economies of scale, or externalities that can easily be captured within the metropolitan area (Gyourko 1997).²¹

Despite repeated imperatives from metro reformers, planners, and academics over the past century, an array of metro equity issues fail to be addressed in a meaningful way – affordable housing, fiscal disparities, concentrated poverty, education, and economic development competition foremost among them. The hot-button issues – affordable housing, education, and fiscal disparities – all have strong redistributive components. It is little wonder, then, that the
only significant progress for metro reform around education has come from court rulings. To
date, only New Jersey’s state supreme court has overridden local zoning power to push for a more
equitable distribution of affordable housing. In sum, metropolitanism has progressed in
capturing economies of scale for many services, but history has provided few instances of success
in addressing the thorny equity side of regionalism.

In her review of major regionalization efforts between cities and suburbs in the U.S., economist
Anita Summers observes that while redistribution often is “the driving force of the rhetoric on
regionalizing,” existing interjurisdictional arrangements are most often based upon the principles
of public finance. The tenets of public finance hold that redistributive functions should be the
responsibility of higher levels of state and federal government (Ladd and Doolittle 1982). As a
result, most city-suburban collaborations are based on economies of scale. The implication is
that if regional reformers ever hope to address metropolitan equity issues in a substantive way,
they will have to make the case at a higher level of government. What would the politics of such
an appeal look like? Enter Myron Orfield and the metropolitics approach to regional coalition
building (Orfield 1997a).

Orfield, an entrepreneurial state legislator from Minnesota, observed demographic trends in the
Twin Cities region during the early 1990s and saw a political opportunity to address issues of
metropolitan equity. Orfield forged a coalition among stakeholders from the inner-city, declining
inner-ring suburbs, and outer-ring low tax-base suburbs to fight for an ambitious slate of bills in
the state legislature. This “metropolitics” coalition succeeded in passing legislation to encourage
regional fair-share housing, expand tax-base sharing, and boost the power of the Twin Cities’
Metropolitan Council. While many of the legislative efforts ended up in gubernatorial vetoes,
Minnesota’s metropolitics experience generated significant excitement among metropolitanists seeking a viable strategy to promote regional equity.

Orfield’s approach marks a new kind of metropolitan strategy. First, it rests upon an understanding of metropolitan trends that have left many suburbs with a list of problems traditionally associated with inner cities. Many older suburbs share concerns with the central city about insufficient tax base to support schools and key services, decaying infrastructure, and increasing crime and poverty (Harrison 2000). With these shared concerns, Orfield saw the opportunity to build a coalition based upon the self-interest of ailing municipalities across the region. Metropolitics suggests that the mathematics of self-interest can yield coalitions with the potential to win in the state legislature on issues such as metropolitan tax-base sharing, increased state aid, regional fair-share housing, and other equity concerns. The metropolitics approach also presumes that the proper forum for fights over metropolitan reform is in the state legislature – a conviction shared by many new regionalists.

The metropolitics approach, in contrast to most other regionalism efforts, relies heavily upon conflict. Proposals for metropolitan equity and redistribution of resources elicit fierce opposition from wealthy suburban interests, so the success of metropolitics depends upon the creation of broad and durable political coalitions that can weather intense conflict. In this respect, metropolitics stands in stark contrast to much of the regionalism literature that espouses consensus approaches to metropolitan problem solving (Dodge 1996; Peirce 1993). The metropolitics strategy rests upon the understanding that equity concerns are often poorly addressed through consensual processes.

Orfield’s political strategy and seeming success in Minnesota have provided a breath of fresh air for metropolitanists. Economist and long-time metropolitan scholar Anthony Downs has called metropolitics “the first new idea of the urban scene in many years.”25 Regionalist David Rusk dubbed it “the most important regional reform model in the nation.”26 The late economist Ben Harrison said that Orfield has offered “the most well thought out and popularly accessible critique of conventional urban development that perhaps any social critic has yet produced” (2000:148).

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More importantly, foundations and civic organizations across the nation have shown interest in metropolitics. Orfield has been commissioned to create studies that document regional trends and map potential metropolitics coalitions for almost 30 major metropolitan regions. In each region, there is a partner organization trying to figure out how to apply Orfield’s ideas about building coalitions to their metropolitan area (see appendix). The question very much on the mind of these organizations is what does it take to create successful metropolitics coalitions in complex regions?

Many factors bear upon this question, but the remainder of this study will focus on the role of “regional catalyst organizations” in the formation of metropolitics coalitions. The organizations that have come forward to work on the metropolitics model of regional coalition building have the potential to address many of the major barriers to metropolitan reform – agency, leadership, power, constituency, and resources. They aim to build constituencies for metropolitanism, act as agents to promote metropolitanism, and raise and/or provide resources for the effort. As a result, catalyst organizations that work to create metropolitics coalitions are worthy subjects of study.

The aim is to learn about what these entities do, understand the barriers and challenges they face, and offer insights on how they might operate more effectively. This will be done through case studies of organizations in two cities that are attempting to establish metropolitics coalitions according to the Orfield model – the Citizens Planning and Housing Association in Baltimore and the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations in Chicago. Before a presentation of these cases, the next chapter reviews the efforts of Myron Orfield in the Twin Cities – the only place to register a substantive metropolitics victory thus far.
Chapter 3

The Twin Cities and Myron Orfield

In keeping with their Scandinavian heritage, the Twin Cities have long prided themselves on being progressive laboratories for public policy. In terms of responses to metropolitan concerns, the region has the unique Metropolitan Council and the nation’s only legislated tax-base sharing system to address fiscal disparities. While these efforts and others have long been the envy of metropolitanists, the region lost its innovative edge during the 1980s. The Met Council faded from prominence and even faced threats of abolition by Governor Arne Carlson in 1991. It was in this environment that a young state legislator from Minneapolis came to revitalize debate around metropolitanism in the Twin Cities during the 1990s. Orfield worked tirelessly between 1992 and 1995 to build what he called a “metropolitics” coalition in the state legislature to pass bills addressing equity concerns across the region.

The Twin Cities provides a baseline case to study the role of catalyst agents in building metropolitics coalitions. This chapter recounts the efforts of Orfield in Minnesota, beginning with general background on the Twin Cities region, previous attempts at metropolitanism, and important regional actors. The case itself discusses what Orfield did to forge a metropolitics coalition, how it worked, and lessons learned from the experience.

The Twin Cities Region

The metropolitan region around Minneapolis and St. Paul is commonly defined as comprising seven counties and 187 municipalities and townships. This definition corresponds with the domain of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council, hailed as one of the few examples of metropolitan government in the U.S. The large number of jurisdictions makes for a typically fractured metropolitan landscape. Thus defined, the Twin Cities region contains about 2.5 million people and 1.7 million jobs. A broader consideration of the Twin Cities region might include the entire state of Minnesota and parts of the neighboring states of Wisconsin, Iowa, and North and South Dakota.
Map 2-6. Twin Cities Metropolitan Subregions, 1996

The Twin Cities metro area dominates the state and broader region economically, culturally, and in many ways politically. However, no one jurisdiction within the region has ever been large enough to dominate the others, especially with two competing cities in the core. As a result, local governments in the region have always had to find a way to create coalitions around issues.27

For regions of comparable size, the Twin Cities MSA historically has fared well in terms of indicators such as education, income, and poverty and crime rates (Harrigan 1996:208). But trends began to shift during the 1980s, as the Twin Cities and some suburbs fell prey to increasing poverty, growth in crime, and job decentralization (Orfield 1997a). By the time Orfield entered the state legislature in 1990, there was no sense of regional crisis similar to that which gave birth to the Met Council in 1967. However, patterns of decline were drawing increased attention in a region unaccustomed to Rust Belt-type problems.

One important characteristic of the region is its relative racial homogeneity. Regional scholars often note that two of America’s greatest metro success stories are also predominately white. Nonwhite minorities rose from a scant 3% of the region’s population in 1970 to 10% in 1990. The minority share of city population went from 5% to 25% over the same period. Meanwhile, the white population in Minneapolis and St. Paul fell by almost 200,000.

Another defining characteristic of the Twin Cities is its tradition of rational political discourse (National Research Council 1999:110). Some would go so far as to say that a tradition of consensus-building and -seeking has been passed on from the region’s Scandinavian pioneers. A corollary to this political culture of good government is the Twin Cities’ lack of big city machine politics that have made the suburbs suspicious of cooperation with the city in other metro regions (Weir 2000:134). This culture affords the Twin Cities region the potential to cope with problems associated with jurisdictional fragmentation.

Metropolitan Efforts and Actors in the Twin Cities

The most significant aspect of metropolitanism in the Twin Cities is its oft-studied yet never copied Metropolitan Council (Harrigan 1996). The Met Council was created by the legislature in 1967, largely having evolved out of a council of governments formed one decade earlier. The

27 Interview with Robert Einsweiler, April 24, 2000.
impetus for the Met Council came from two clear threats posed by growth in the region – water pollution and sewer problems. Nitrate pollution was seeping into water wells, leading to public health problems including an alarming rash of "blue babies" suffering from nitrate poisoning. The problem of sewer construction had become so chaotic that the federal government threatened to withhold home mortgage insurance for the region unless steps were taken.

As political pressure grew to address these concerns, the Met Council was born, and its first task was to solve the sewer issue. It quickly formed the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission to run a system of treatment plants and trunk sewer lines. This move established a model for the Met Council, as it went on to create the Metropolitan Transit Commission and the Regional Transit Board. From the start, the Met Council separated its regional planning and policymaking role on issues such as transit, airports, water quality, housing and land use, from program implementation, which was the domain of special districts that the council supervised (Harrigan 1996:213). Under this system of regional governance, the Met Council appointed members to most regional commissions, had approval power over their capital budgets, and worked on regional plans that were to provide development guidelines for local governments.

The Met Council’s achievements and growth during its first decade were impressive. It proposed and helped to pass the Fiscal Disparities Act in the state legislature in 1971, created a seven-county system of parks, defined areas for development within a border called a metropolitan urban service area (MUSA), and gained the power to review development projects of “metropolitan significance.” The Met Council held a range of formal power through its regional plan and procedures to review proposals before the council, as well as the Land Planning Act of 1976 requiring local governments to submit comprehensive plans to the council.

Despite this array of powers, the Met Council began to lose its potency during the 1980s. Without an independent grassroots organization advancing a regional agenda and a loss of support in the legislature (Weir 2000:137), the Met Council grew more timid over time. Over the last two decades, the council did little to resist pressure to accommodate growth in outlying suburbs, and had little if any say in major development decisions including a racetrack, domed stadium, and the Mall of America (Harrigan 1996). However, with a revived debate over regionalism spurred by Orfield during the 1990s, the role of the Met Council has recently been reconsidered and strengthened.
The Citizens League, a nonpartisan civic organization, played an important role in the creation of the Met Council and the Twin Cities tax-base sharing system. During a previous heyday for regionalism during the 1960s and 1970s, the Citizens League sponsored influential research on metropolitan policy. As support for regionalism waned during the 1980s, so did the efforts of the Citizens League. Part of the reason had to do with the Citizens League’s connections with the business community. While business elites were a significant part of regional reforms such as the Met Council and the Fiscal Disparities Act, a wave of corporate restructuring during the 1980s left remaining firms with less of a vested interest in local matters. Although initially resistant to Orfield’s approach and proposals during the 1990s, the Citizens League has taken up renewed interest in regionalism, in particular regional civic organizations.

A new wave of civic and church organizations have embraced regionalism with Orfield’s efforts over the past decade. The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability was formed in 1994 as an umbrella organization to bring together church, environmental, neighborhood, and good government groups around a regional agenda. Church coalitions such as the Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing, Interfaith Action, and the St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance have tended to work on housing issues. Regional land-use planning and growth management concerns are addressed by groups such as 1,000 Friends of Minnesota and Transit for Livable Communities.

Orfield and Metropolitics in the Twin Cities

Myron Orfield entered the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1990 at a time when the Met Council had become “nearly moribund” (Weir 2000:129) and discourse about metropolitanism in the Twin Cities was virtually nonexistent. At 28 years old, Orfield was the youngest member of the House, representing the upper middle income Minneapolis district where he had grown up. Orfield’s Democratic Farmer Laborer party held about 60 percent of the state House, dominating

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28 Harrigan 1996. See also Kanter 2000.
29 This account of the Twin Cities metropolitics experience draws heavily from three sources: Myron Orfield’s Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability (Brookings and Lincoln, 1997); Chapter 11 in David Rusk’s Inside Game/Outside Game: Winning Strategies for Saving Urban America (Century Foundation and Brookings, 1999); and a case study written by Mollye Wolahan for MIT’s Department of Urban Studies and Planning titled “A New Regionalist Agenda” (1998).
Minneapolis and St. Paul. Slightly more than half of the suburban seats were held by Independent-Republicans.\textsuperscript{30}

Young and idealistic, Orfield came into the legislature already interested in poverty, central city decline, and metropolitan equity. As a law student at the University of Chicago, he rode with police on Chicago’s South Side and directly observed inner-city ills. When these rides crossed over the city limits into Chicago’s south suburbs, Orfield noted that many of these older suburbs faced the same issues of persistent decay as the inner city (Wolahan 1998). This experience provided the intellectual foundation for Orfield’s metropolitan strategy, and arguably his most lasting contribution – the realization that the suburbs are not a monolith. Once Orfield combined this observation about suburban decline with his conviction that suburban districts are increasingly where political power lies, he had the core of his metropolitics approach.

Orfield’s early metropolitan thinking also was informed by his brother, Gary Orfield, an academic expert on school desegregation. Orfield, also an attorney and part-time law professor, found himself highly influenced by the arguments of William Julius Wilson and other urban scholars on the problems of concentrated poverty (Wilson 1987 and 1996; Jargowski 1997; Massey and Denton 1993).

While the norm for freshman legislators was to stand on the sidelines, Orfield introduced and passed legislation in 1991 to study the economic health of developed areas within the Twin Cities and its inner-ring suburbs. Orfield also began to collect data and conduct his own research on metropolitan issues. Spurred by his brother, Myron focused his data collection on schools. These early efforts underscored some key characteristics about Orfield. His professorial side left him very interested and compelled by data and analysis about urban problems. By hitting the ground running in the legislature on issues that he felt were important and underexplored, Orfield also displayed his confidence and entrepreneurial drive.

Through his research, Orfield became more comfortable with the idea that it would be possible to form a legislative coalition linking inner city and certain suburban interests. On any number of issues – infrastructure spending, tax base, affordable housing, transportation – Orfield saw the potential to forge a winning coalition. In 1992, he decided to begin with an issue that he thought

\textsuperscript{30} Party affiliations are part of what distinguishes Minnesota politics from the rest of the nation. The state’s Democratic Farmer Labor party corresponds with Democrats elsewhere, while the Independent-
could generate support and elicit minimal controversy – sewers. Since 1987, the Twin Cities region had financed its sewers through a uniform payment fee for operations and capital costs. As sewer capacity expanded rapidly in southern and western suburbs, the system meant that older, declining communities were subsidizing growth in already fast-growing areas. Between 1987 and 1991, the region spent more than $50 million to add new sewer capacity, mostly in what Orfield had come to term the “favored quarter” of wealthy suburbs to the south and west. The Twin Cities ended up spending $6 million in excess of what they incurred in sewer costs, effectively subsidizing new sewers and treatment plants on the fringe, often for the wealthy. Orfield saw this as an equity issue that could mobilize political support in communities that were subsidizing development elsewhere.

Orfield went on to introduce the Metropolitan Infrastructure Stability Act, which required that growing areas pay a larger portion of new sewer pricing. It also placed a growth management condition on receipt of state highway funds. Orfield did not do much background work to shore up a coalition around the bill, figuring its benefits would be self-evident to urban and inner-ring suburban interests. He felt the issue addressed metropolitan equity, was manageable in scope, and did not explicitly involve thorny race or class issues as with affordable housing.

However, the bill faced strong opposition on several fronts, including developers, real estate agents, and growing exurban communities. The Met Council, which created the uniform sewer pricing system, also opposed the bill. Orfield figured that northern inner-ring suburbs would back the legislation, and was surprised when they did not. He learned that the influential North Metro Mayors Association was comprised of both declining inner-ring suburbs and growing middle-income communities. Many of the middle-income areas benefited from the uniform pricing system, precluding support from the North Metro Mayors Association (NMMA).

As the bill ground to a standstill in the House, Orfield had learned three important lessons. First, patterns of regional development were not well understood. Second, considerable opposition from powerful forces such as homebuilders and developers would confront even seemingly uncontroversial legislation such as the sewer proposal. Finally, while Orfield was counting on the northern suburbs to shore up a metropolitan coalition, he realized that the politics of such suburbs were more complicated than he first acknowledged. Although the NMMA would not support the bill, Orfield’s discussions with the organization built relationships and led him to realize that they Republicans align with the GOP.
could become allies around a regional reform agenda. Orfield ultimately withdrew the sewer bill in exchange for a $400,000 study of metropolitan infrastructure and highway finance to be conducted by the University of Minnesota.

This first campaign led Orfield to realize how much he needed to educate legislators and the public about metropolitan trends and issues. During 1992, Orfield bought mapping software and began to create images of the regional socioeconomic data he had been collecting. He hired a staffer within the legislature during the summer to assist with maps documenting poverty, infrastructure spending, tax base, job locations, and school spending throughout the region. These maps became the focal point for Orfield’s metropolitan arguments over the next few years. Orfield took the maps and his stories about regional development patterns to more than 100 meetings with legislators and organizations during 1992. The maps gave new, colorful expression to his growing convictions about socioeconomic decline in many older and low tax capacity suburbs.

Orfield ended up with more than 300 maps illustrating demographic, educational, economic and fiscal trends and disparities across the Twin Cities region. Much has been made of Orfield’s use of maps (Rusk 1999:223-5), but the case is often overstated. Similar maps using Census data have been generated by regional planning agencies for decades. The difference in this case was the messenger, his energy, and the existence of a coherent metropolitan story and legislative agenda in tandem with the images. The maps are only a tool, but Orfield used them to the utmost. Stemming from his efforts in the Twin Cities, Orfield has established the nonprofit Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, which has made maps and studies of almost 30 other metropolitan regions. The fact that many of these regions have failed to mobilize significant popular or legislative excitement around metropolitanism underscores the fact that the maps are no silver bullet. Some involved with metropolitics campaigns elsewhere say the maps actually can become a distraction; people become too focused on map and data analysis, losing sight of political campaigns.

Between the 1992 and 1993 sessions, Orfield had continual discussions and debates with policymakers and academics about possible metropolitan solutions to the trends he was documenting – fair-share housing, strengthened tax-base sharing, regional land use, and governmental reform among them. These consultations marked Orfield’s willingness to draw from a large network of people to strategize and further his efforts.
Map 2-5. Serious Crime in the Twin Cities

Source: Minnesota House of Representatives, House Research Office; Minneapolis Police Department, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

Serious crimes (Part I) include homicide, rape, robbery, assaults, burglary, theft, and arson.

Map 3-8. Children Receiving Free and Reduced-Cost Lunches in Twin Cities Metro Elementary Schools,\textsuperscript{a} 1993

Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.
\textsuperscript{a} Each polygon represents one elementary school.

Source: Myron Orfield. 1997. \textit{Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability.}

Source: Myron Orfield. 1997. \textit{Metropolitics: A Regional Agenda for Community and Stability.}\textsuperscript{a}
Map 4-2. Effective Net Tax Capacity per Household, Post-Fiscal Disparities, Twin Cities Region, 1980–93

Source: Minnesota House of Representatives, House Research Office.

Map 5-3. Sewer Subsidy per Twin Cities Household

Sources: Principal investigation by Thomas Luce Jr., Barbara Lukermann, and Herbert Mohring, "Regional Sewer System Rate Structure Study" (Minneapolis: Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, December 7, 1992); Metropolitan Waste Control Commission. Cartography by Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis

During the fall 1992 election, the Democrat Farmer Laborer party gained several seats in inner ring suburbs of the Twin Cities, lending Orfield confidence about the prospects for a metropolitics coalition and going beyond sewers to other metropolitan issues. With newly minted maps in hand, Orfield decided to focus his outreach efforts on the NMMA. The northern suburbs had largely missed out on the industrial and commercial growth enjoyed by the region’s “favored quarter.” For those northern suburbs that were still experiencing growth, they often did not have the tax base to keep up with service demands.

Orfield reasoned that the NMMA represented a crucial bloc of support for any of the metropolitan issues he wanted to push in the legislature. Counting votes in the state House, Orfield figured the area represented by the NMMA had 26 members. When combined with the 18 House members from the Twin Cities, much of a metropolitics coalition would be in place if these two blocs united.

Orfield threw himself into individual and groups meetings with north suburban officials. He quickly learned that city managers were particularly helpful, as they tended to be sympathetic to the development trends he was documenting, were keenly political, and knew who had to be convinced about joining a political coalition in the area. His message and strategy on the whole resonated with officials in these initial meetings. However, many suburban officials had a difficult time imagining themselves partnering with the cities. Orfield said many viewed such as an alliance as a sort of political degradation. Several officials responded to the prospect of joining a legislative coalition with hesitance due to politics or uncertainty about the prospects of such an effort. Orfield’s response was to go out and keep recruiting influential figures in the NMMA and elsewhere in the northern suburbs to shore up support and build momentum.

According to Orfield, getting maximum visible support in the suburbs was critical. Orfield developed relationships with powerful leaders within the NMMA and its lobbyist in the legislature, and they helped spread his message about a metropolitan coalition.

Orfield’s feverish work and pitching in the northern suburbs paid off in January 1993 when the NMMA’s 17 cities endorsed a metropolitan coalition at a public event. Through his meetings with officials, Orfield learned that the NMMA did not feel comfortable at the time addressing tax-base sharing or Met Council reform, but could support affordable housing and transportation efforts. As Orfield and his growing list of allies fought for an array of metro legislation over the
next three years, the NMMA and its representatives in the legislature lent crucial political support and votes to each successive bill.

Orfield stresses the importance of this work to reach out to the northern, older suburbs and draw them in to a potential metropolitics coalition. Orfield’s experience approaching officials in the northern suburbs was key to the coalition-building process. The typical format for a meeting – whether it was with an individual or before a group – was to show several maps, tell a story about metropolitan trends and development patterns, discuss whether the story resonates or they are interested in getting involved with a coalition, and get names about whom to talk with in the area. Through these many meetings, Orfield was performing several key functions at once. First, he was educating officials about the metropolitan nature of many of their concerns. Second, he was building relationships for future discussions and work, gaining credibility with local officials in the process. Third, Orfield used the meetings to learn about the concerns and politics of key suburbs and leaders.

A crucial aspect of these meetings was that Orfield always went in with legislative proposals for mayors and managers to consider. Orfield felt it was important to have such proposals to ground the conversation and avoid loose talk about the abstract merits of metropolitanism. According to Tom Scott of the University of Minnesota, Orfield’s bill-centric approach to holding conversations was central to forming a viable and cohesive political coalition. By having tangible proposals to discuss, Scott says that “it was not an issue of asking groups to maybe kinda join in and all the other problems of coalition-building.”

Through this string of meetings with the NMMA and elsewhere, Orfield displayed his strong entrepreneurial skills and salesmanship. Orfield said his job through this process was to sell an idea. Toward this end, Orfield went to countless lunch and evening meetings to make his pitch. In addition to his keen sense of politics and how to position issues, Orfield drew heavily upon his own charisma, saying such interactions depended upon making personal connections with people.

Heading into the 1993 legislative session, Orfield decided to float several metro bills, but focused his energy on affordable housing legislation. One reason for the housing focus was as a response to the interests and concerns expressed by the NMMA. Orfield’s readings on concentrated

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31 Interview with Myron Orfield, January 11, 2000.
32 Interview with Myron Orfield, November 11, 1999.
poverty and the success of the Gautreaux housing mobility case (Rosenbaum 1995) also led him to feel that distributing affordable housing more evenly across the region was an important policy goal.

The bills introduced by Orfield under the Metropolitan Community Stability Act covered affordable housing, reform of the Met Council, urban reinvestment, land use, transportation, and welfare. All of the bills except for the one regarding reinvestment were voted on in the legislature. The housing, transportation, and land use measures passed both chambers, but only the land use bill, which protected farmers from storm sewer and public road assessments, escaped vetoes from Republican governor Arne Carlson. While little of the metropolitan legislative package was signed into law, the efforts and votes in the legislature solidified the budding metropolitics coalition.

The most significant component of Orfield's metro package in 1993 was the Comprehensive Choice Housing Act. The bill aimed to remove barriers to affordable housing construction in communities that did not provide their "fair share" of units, and required municipalities to commit to build specific amounts of low- or moderate-income housing in order to receive federal or state funding for public works. Under the proposal, housing goals for communities would be set by an administrative law judge. If the municipality did not meet its affordable housing goals, it would be required to remove "unreasonable" zoning barriers. Municipalities also would be required to cooperate with affordable housing developers and ensure that low- and moderate-income units remained affordable.

The housing bill was the product of extensive meetings leading into the 1993 legislative session with the NMMA, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, the Met Council, the Legal Aid Society, and community groups. In particular, after Orfield secured the support of the NMMA, he moved to shore up support in the central cities. He held meetings at the offices of the Urban Coalition, an umbrella organization representing low-income and minority communities, in the fall of 1992 and winter of 1993. At these meetings, Orfield discussed metropolitan trends and urban communities, and talked about the potential impact of his legislative proposals. Support at first was mixed, as Orfield had to convince community development groups that his agenda would not take away resources from the city, but instead would work in parallel with local revitalization efforts.

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33 Interview with Tom Scott, January 3, 2000.
Orfield realized that the controversial fair-share housing provision would go nowhere in the legislature without some Republican support. He lobbied moderate Republicans from older inner-ring suburbs, but could not get any co-sponsors even after repeatedly softening the bill’s provisions. Governor Carlson’s deputy chief of staff, Curt Johnson, repeated spoke out against the housing measure and Orfield’s conflict-oriented approach. Finally, the Republican caucus met with Carlson and said they would not sustain the governor’s veto power in the Democrat-controlled legislature if he failed to veto the housing bill. A version of the bill did pass both houses and Carlson responded with a veto. Proponents of the measure countered by folding the housing bill in its entirety into an omnibus tax bill, figuring Carlson would not veto such key budget legislation. But Carlson stood firm and held up the tax bill with a veto threat. Orfield then amended the housing bill to incorporate a list of changes requested by Carlson in an April 1993 letter. After this version of the housing bill passed both chambers, the governor still vetoed it.

With growing attention to metropolitanism, the governor established an Advisory Commission on Metropolitan Governance at the end of 1993. The panel, co-chaired by Orfield, met between legislative sessions and was comprised of gubernatorial and bipartisan legislative appointees. The commission steered clear of controversial recommendations regarding affordable housing or fiscal disparities. Its most notable work centered around reform of the Met Council, recommending that the independent Regional Transit Board, Metro Transit Commission, and Metro Waste Council be folded as operating agencies into the Met Council. The commission barely had enough votes to recommend the election of Met Council members.

Following the commission’s work, the legislature in 1994 ended up passing the recommended Met Council restructuring, but not the election measure. The Metropolitan Reorganization Act, signed into law by Gov. Carlson, transformed the Met Council from a $40 million per year regional planning agency to a $600 million regional government with control over sewers and transit. Orfield felt the restructuring occurred due to the increasing clamor for metro reform, as well as the fact that Republicans preferred organizational reforms to legislation that would address more controversial equity issues.

In 1994, Orfield and an expanded metropolitics coalition came back with the Comprehensive Choice Housing Act. The legislative battles and vetoes had solidified the coalition, and while the
Democrats still controlled the legislature, Orfield moved to broaden support. A major focus this time was bringing church groups into the coalition. The Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing was the first church group to take interest in the housing legislation. The St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance followed with public rallies for the bill in February. Other organizations such as the Catholic Office for Social Justice, Interfaith Action, and the Joint Ministries Project held meetings and events to drum up support. By the end of the year, 175 churches were backing fair-share housing legislation. Even so, the housing bill faced the same fate as in 1993. Again, at the governor’s request, Orfield removed provisions requiring penalties for jurisdictions that did not meet affordable housing goals, but Carlson vetoed the bill again.

To further build grassroots and community support for a metropolitan agenda, Orfield helped to form the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability in mid-1994. With local foundation funding for staff, the umbrella group aimed to bring together church groups, environmentalists (a group had not been involved with metropolitics to date), inner-city interests and neighborhood groups. In particular, the alliance was tasked with doing more of the regional education and lobbying work around metropolitan issues that Orfield had been doing solo for a few years.

Up until this juncture, Orfield had passed legislation and built coalitions without significant interest group or grassroots involvement. His first moves were focused on the legislature and contacting suburban officials. It was after momentum began to grow around specific metropolitan issues that inner-city interests and churches began to champion bills. Part of Orfield’s approach was to introduce bills and see where people lined up. Orfield’s own style was not grassroots, but he understood the importance of building support for metropolitanism from the bottom up, and continued to speak to any community group that was important to draw into a broad metropolitics coalition. Meanwhile, the broadening of the coalition and repeated legislative efforts began to draw consistent attention and support in the press.

In catalyzing a metropolitics coalition to support regional initiatives over three years, Orfield was in constant motion. Orfield tirelessly carted his maps and regional data to meeting after meeting, making approximately 70 speeches in 1993 and 100 in 1994 as he worked to educate and build a base for a metropolitics coalition. Orfield’s energy and resolve have led to characterizations ranging from Ross Perot with a “have maps, will travel” routine to “the Energizer Bunny of

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34 Interview with Ed Goetz, January 7, 2000.
urban policy.” Due to the Minnesota legislature’s brief session – between two and five months in alternating years – Orfield could afford to spend his time away from the capital doing research, shoring up metro strategies and conducting meetings.

Besides the energy and sweat to pull it all off, he was constantly strategizing and using his political acumen to consider how to position issues. As opposition rose, he adjusted on legislation and offered compromises in an effort to broaden and strengthen the metro coalition. And throughout, he kept learning about how to frame issues, address interests, position the politics to keep bills moving and support growing. By 1994, Orfield was keeping the coalition of urban and older suburban interests together and energized by working on several fronts at once – housing, transportation, Met Council reform, and reinvestment. The broad array of issues included in the Metropolitan Community Stability Act kept more interests engaged, built momentum, and increased learning.

The legislative climate changed in fall of 1994, as the Republican Revolution came to Minnesota. The Democrats lost 13 seats in the House – six from inner-ring and low-tax capacity suburbs crucial to preserving a metropolitics voting bloc. The Republican gains left them with 65 seats in the House, while the Democrat number had fallen to 69 seats. More importantly, the person who yielded the single vote that prevented more metropolitan victories over the past three years, Governor Arne Carlson, was reelected. After the election, Orfield felt the metropolitics coalition had lost enough votes to preclude substantive action on affordable housing. Heartened by response to a tax-base sharing bill at the end of the 1994 session, he turned to fiscal disparities as the main metropolitan issue in 1995.

Minnesota’s unique Fiscal Disparities Act had been passed under Republican leadership by one vote in the House in 1971. The bill, which was implemented in 1975, established a system whereby jurisdictions throughout the region contributed 40% of any increase in assessed value of commercial and industrial property into a tax pool. This tax base was then redistributed back to local governments on the basis of a fiscal capacity measure, so that jurisdictions with a lower fiscal capacity received more from the pool. By 1998, the fiscal disparities fund was up to $410 million, with 137 jurisdictions as tax-base recipients and 49 municipalities serving as

35 The St. Paul Pioneer Press commented: “No matter how skeptical listeners are, Orfield perseveres with more maps, more data, more explanations. His detractors tire, retreat, and devise new assaults. Orfield, the Energizer Bunny of urban policy, keeps going and going and going.” in “Urban Visionary or Suburban Villain?” April 17, 1994.
contributors. According to a 1991 Minnesota state legislative committee report, the Twin Cities tax-base sharing system had reduced fiscal disparities between jurisdictions in the region from a ratio of 22:1 to 4:1. With so many jurisdictions contributing their tax base into the pool for redistribution, there have been attempts to repeal the system in the legislature almost every year. But the efforts, often led by legislators from wealthy suburbs in the south and west, have never succeeded.

While putting together legislation in 1994, Orfield proposed a reinvestment bill late in the session that would have expanded the Twin Cities tax-base sharing system to include growth in residential values. Under Orfield’s proposal, the tax base pool generated from homes valued at more than $150,000 would go to finance affordable housing. Orfield introduced the measure late in the year and “had admittedly not prepared the political ground well.” When Orfield altered the bill to lift the requirement that taxes pooled from high-end residential uses go toward affordable housing construction, it immediately gained strong popularity in central city, inner-ring and mid-developing suburbs. The revised Housing Disparities Act ended up being killed in the Senate in exchange for votes on a controversial nuclear waste bill, but Orfield came back with tax-base sharing in 1995.

In 1995, Orfield unveiled the Metro Fair Tax Base Act, with full support from the North Metro Mayors Association. The bill modified the Twin Cities fiscal disparities formula to redistribute almost $1 billion throughout the region. Politicians, churches and the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability lobbied state Representative Charlie Weaver, a Republican from the declining older suburb of Anoka whose father had authored Minnesota’s original fiscal disparities law, to sponsor the bill. Facing sharp pressure from members of the Republican caucus who would lose out under the proposal, Weaver and other GOP moderates opposed the bill. Orfield then began to scale back the bill, leaving provisions around industrial and commercial taxes the same as the current law, and having taxes pooled from growth in residential tax base for homes values above $200,000. This shrank the size of the pool substantially from $1 billion to $44 million, but shifted the percentage of contributing jurisdictions from 25% to 17%. After much floor debate in the legislature, the bill passed 71-63 in the House and 36-30 in the Senate. Governor Carlson awaited with another veto.

Despite that fact that the metropolitics effort fell one key vote short again, Orfield came away feeling that tax-base sharing was a powerful entry point to metropolitics and further metropolitanism. In appealing to the self-interests of fiscally ailing jurisdictions throughout the region, Orfield felt that this issue could split the suburbs for a winning coalition. He has called tax-base sharing “the glue that keeps everyone friends and hanging together to do anything important on affordable housing and land-use reforms” (Heuer 1996). This lesson came about due to Orfield’s continuing perseverance and willingness to adjust, compromise, and learn as he went along.

In response to the pressure that had built up over the three previously vetoed housing bills, Democratic state Senator Ted Mondale and the newly appointed Met Council chair Curt Johnson began work during the summer of 1994 on compromise legislation. The result was the Metropolitan Livable Communities Act, which ultimately was signed into law in 1995. The act gave the Met Council the statutory authority to negotiate housing goals for jurisdictions and withhold funds for cities that did not voluntarily participate in a regional housing fund – a power the council already had. It also included funding for brownfields redevelopment and a housing demonstration project. The MLCA was one of the only pieces of metropolitan legislation to be signed by Governor Carlson; Orfield called the victory “more symbolic than substantive” as the concession made during the negotiation process made the housing provisions, in particular, toothless (see Goetz forthcoming). Still, Orfield notes that the relatively weak MLCA broke a legislative deadlock, and adopted the basic approach of the 1993 housing bill (Orfield 1997:152). He drew an analogy to the passage of the 1957 federal Civil Rights Act – a weak precursor to the 1964 law – saying the MLCA could provide a framework for further action.

After three intense years of legislative battles, the metropolitics coalition rested during 1996. It came back in 1997 with an effort to make the Met Council an elected, instead of gubernatorially appointed, body. Since the Met Council’s reorganization in 1994, it had become the third largest unit of government in Minnesota after the state and Hennepin County. In rallying support for the election bill, Orfield argued that the public would demand representation from such a large taxing

37 Beyond the question of political feasibility, debate exists over the policy impacts of implementing regional tax-base sharing. Rusk argues that such a policy alone will do little to combat sprawl or the concentration of poverty; it’s only more money. Economists such as Thomas Luce who have examined the impacts of regional revenue sharing have often questioned how much such schemes achieve (Luce 1998), or whether the equity gains offset efficiency losses from Tiebout sorting (Fischel 1998). In spite of such policy concerns, Orfield maintains that tax-base sharing allows a strong metropolitics coalition to form and move on to other important metropolitan equity issues.
body. Governor Carlson had voted in favor of similar legislation as a state representative during the 1970s, but this time vetoed the measure after it passed the legislature, saying it would add another unwarranted layer of government. Metropolitan legislation that was signed by Carlson in 1997 included a voluntary statewide land use planning bill passed and $19.4 million for brownfields redevelopment.

**Analysis**

If one reads the account of the Twin Cities experience in Orfield's *Metropolitics*, it is easy to become confused as to what actually was accomplished. On the one hand, there is what the metropolitics coalition passed through the legislature before falling under the governor's veto pen: three fair share housing bills, new tax-base sharing for high-end residential development, restructuring of regional sewer and transportation agencies and expansion of Met Council powers, and conversion of the Met Council from an appointed to elected body. However, this long list of accomplishments is narrowed considerably when it is filtered through what was actually passed into law – the restructuring of the Met Council and the Metropolitan Livable Communities Act.

Did metropolitics succeed in the Twin Cities? The answer is somewhat open-ended, as the metropolitics coalition continues to work in and out of the state legislature. But Orfield certainly succeeded in initially catalyzing coalitions across city and suburbs where none had existed before around metro equity issues. The coalition also seriously addressed metropolitan issues and solutions that other states have not. But, Orfield had a very difficult time garnering support from Republicans from inner suburban districts, even those who would logically have benefited from any of his proposals. In addition, the metro-oriented strategy in the state legislature faced the difficulty of luring votes from rural areas. Even with these challenges, Orfield mustered enough support in the legislature – only to repeatedly face the governor's decisive veto (Weir 2000:139). Perhaps the coalition would have sustained more victories under a more sympathetic governor. However, from another view, many of the legislators who backed some of the more controversial bills were emboldened by the promise of a veto from the governor, so the true strength of the coalition was uncertain.\footnote{Interview with Richard Bolan, December 16, 1999.} Another approach would have been to build grassroots political support to force the governor to withhold a veto, but this was not the central focus of Orfield’s approach.
Beyond the legislative record, the metropolitics coalition built relationship across organizations and jurisdictions where none had existed before. However, there is some question about whether the coalition truly remained inbetween votes, or was an ad hoc alliance on a bill-by-bill basis. It is difficult to speculate on these matters, but the seeding of the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability suggests more of an institutionalized effort around regional reform and metropolitics. Officials and citizens had an unprecedented amount of exposure to and education about metropolitanism during the 1990s – to the point of routine newspaper coverage.

But through his approach, Orfield managed to alienate some powerful stakeholders. The metropolitics coalition was as important for who was excluded as included. Until he worked on the compromise Metropolitan Livable Communities Act, Curt Johnson spoke strongly against the efforts, dubbing Orfield’s “divide and conquer tactics a ‘toxin’ poisoning Minnesota politics.” Governor Carlson clearly found Orfield to be a political nuisance, accusing Orfield and his allies of a “high-tax, wealth-redistribution, social-engineering agenda.”

Orfield’s tactics may have caused many Republicans to hunker down in the legislature and encouraged vetoes from Carlson out of personal dislike. Some critics suggest that while Orfield made a significant contribution in reviving a long-dormant debate over metropolitanism in the Twin Cities, his conflict-oriented approach did more harm than good in a political culture that often strives toward consensus.

Orfield possessed several notable strengths as an agent working to catalyze a metropolitics coalition. Several of his own personal traits and characteristics were indispensable – his energy, charisma, intelligence, persuasiveness and political acumen foremost among them. Orfield’s decision to focus his attention more on organizing and convincing elected officials than building grassroots support proved both a strength and weakness. Tiring as it was, meeting individually with suburban officials and legislative leaders consumes less energy and requires less coverage than a more thorough grassroots organizing approach. This freed up time for Orfield to keep working to refine metropolitics strategies and position the agenda. On the downside, his decision to focus more on the self-interests of elected leaders left the effort open to repeated vetoes from Governor Carlson. Similarly, the absence of a powerful grassroots base backing up the legislative metropolitics coalition made it difficult to split Republicans from their party caucus.

39 Heuer 1996.
40 Interview with Lyle Wray, January 12, 2000.
Many of Orfield’s strengths as a catalyzing agent had to do with his position as a state legislator. His job description was to forge winning political coalitions, and he had the temperament and skills to create and weather ongoing conflict, argument and debate. Although he used an array of allies to build support for legislation over the years, he was positioned to keep offering and revamping bills in the legislature. From this vantage point, he could always offer and shape incentives for people to join a metropolitics coalition around a given bill.

From Orfield’s vantage as an individual, and not organizational, catalyst, he enjoyed several benefits of relative independence. Resources to support his efforts came easily, as he was paid by the state to legislate, form coalitions, and pass bills. Working for the state and his constituents, Orfield did not have to worry about fundraising or collecting membership dues to support operating expenses for his work. The freedom and time that this gave Orfield to focus on catalyzing and positioning a metropolitics coalition cannot be underestimated. Although the politics of the legislature required constant juggling and compromise, Orfield himself did not have to juggle multiple organizational goals in order to work on his metropolitan agenda. While Orfield did a remarkable amount for one individual, a threat always existed that it would be too much for one person. In a sense, again, the need for a broad-base grassroots approach was made clear by the gap between legislative passage and enactment into law. As an individual person, Orfield did a remarkable amount; he could have gone even further as part of an effective organization.

Reflecting upon his experience in the Twin Cities, Orfield in Metropolitics ended up with the following list of 11 lessons for successful metropolitics coalition building:

1. Understand the region’s demographics and make maps
2. Reach out and organize the issue on a personal level
3. Build a broad, inclusive coalition
4. It’s the older suburbs, stupid
   [author’s interpretation: concentrate on declining, first-generation suburbs]
5. Reach into central cities to make sure the message is understood
6. Seek out the region’s religious community
7. Seek out the philanthropic community, established reform groups, and business leaders
8. Draw in distinct but compatible issues and organizations
9. Seek out the media
10. Prepare for controversy
11. Move simultaneously on several fronts and accept good compromises

Orfield and his allies did not implement each of the above lessons with equal proficiency, but certainly touched upon all of them. Besides the above, the major aspects of Orfield’s approach include: starting with personal connections with suburban officials, centering conversations around specific legislative proposals, relentlessly going on the road to educate others and make the pitch, learning along the way about strategies and politics, and constantly broadening the coalition.

This study now moves to two organizations that have tried to adapt the metropolitics coalition building strategies illustrated above to different metropolitan regions. Barring entrepreneurial efforts from individual actors similar to Orfield, or strong gubernatorial leadership, the logical catalyst for metropolitics coalitions is at an organizational level. Indeed, in metropolitan areas across the country, organizations have been the agents seeking to bring about metropolitics coalitions.

The Baltimore and Chicago case studies focus upon “regional catalyst organizations.” What precisely is meant by this term? One could think of it very broadly as signifying any kind of organizational agent at work on metropolitan issues. In this light, business groups working on regional economic development, “thousand-friends” organizations fighting for smart growth measures, or even special-purpose districts might be considered regional catalyst organizations.

But, for the purpose of this study, a regional catalyst organization is far more specific. In the following two cases, a regional catalyst organization (RCO) is defined as an organization that engages in various activities to catalyze metropolitics coalitions. RCOs raise consciousness about regional issues and work to piece together coalitions of inner-city, declining inner-ring suburb, and low tax-base exurban interests that deal with issues of metropolitan equity. The aim of the RCO is to gather political support among these constituencies to fight for redistribution of resources and opportunities within a metropolitan area. This work logically occurs at the state legislative level.
Methodology

Cases selected for this study were drawn from the universe of places that have commissioned Orfield to conduct metropolitics studies of their metropolitan regions. I decided to focus on two organizations that have used these reports as a starting-point for metropolitics coalition-building – the Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) in Baltimore and the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations (MAC) in Chicago.

These two cases were chosen for several reasons. The first stemmed from my personal interest in the fate of older, deindustrializing Rust Belt cities and regions. In addition, while many RCOs tentatively began regional work since receiving Orfield studies, both CPHA and MAC have actively worked on metro issues and metropolitics for the last few years. When Orfield and others were asked about promising organizations to study, these two were mentioned repeatedly. Finally, CPHA and MAC, as well as Orfield in the Twin Cities, have had experience with tax-base sharing campaigns, providing a common point of comparison.

CPHA in Baltimore and MAC in Chicago are different from Orfield in the Twin Cities in two major ways. First, they are organizations and not individual catalysts, raising different sets of organizational and political challenges. Second, they are in much earlier stages of their regional and metropolitics work, and have yet to engage in a series of legislative battles. Because of these differences, the Baltimore and Chicago cases will focus on a greater level of organizational detail than the Twin Cities account. The CPHA and MAC cases also will discuss the regional activities that these organizations engage in outside of the metropolitics coalition-building model. This detail on how RCOs are organized and operate is included because it dictates how they participate in metropolitics work.

The main source of data for the case studies was a series of interviews conducted between November 1999 and April 2000 with people involved with the catalyst organizations and other actors engaged in metropolitan efforts. The cases also draw upon relevant documents, grant proposals, and background literature.

The nature of this study is both exploratory and descriptive, discovering and identifying important variables about catalyst organizations and their activities. The case studies are meant to paint
pictures that will be of use to organizations and practitioners that are working to create regional coalitions for metropolitan solutions. It also provides insights for policy-makers and academics who have long been interested in metropolitanism, but lack a framework for thinking about the formation of metro coalitions around equity concerns. Much of the literature to date on regional coalition building offers little guidance about effective design, operation and actions for organizations working to forge metro coalitions (see Rusk 1999, chapter 13).

Several weaknesses must be acknowledged in this research design. There is a high level of endogeneity among the cases selected, making pure scientific observations or conclusions difficult. Both CPHA and MAC communicate regularly with Orfield about their work, and CPHA is seeking assistance from MAC’s parent organization, the Gamaliel Foundation. In addition, there is the problem of a lack of long-term data on regional catalyst organizations. While this precludes evaluation of the ultimate effectiveness of RCOs such as CPHA and MAC, the purpose of this thesis is to explore their roles and actions and identify keys to success in metropolitics coalition building. Finally, the case study method, while rich in detail, makes cross-case comparison and generalization difficult. Even with these methodological flaws, I believe that the research design and case study approach are sound, and can draw upon the early experiences of regional catalyst organizations to provide important insights into metropolitics.
Chapter 4

Baltimore and the Citizens Planning and Housing Association

While there has been a fair amount of discussion around metropolitanism in the Baltimore region over the past decade, one organization has tried to build a metropolitics-style coalition around equity concerns. The Citizens Planning and Housing Association (CPHA) has been doing work with a metropolitan focus for the last four years and has been highly influenced by Orfield’s analysis and political strategy.

This chapter will provide an investigation of the early experience of CPHA in doing regional work and trying to build a metropolitics coalition around the issue of tax-base sharing. It begins with background on the Baltimore region and major metropolitan efforts and actors. Then, it explores why CPHA got into regional work, what it has done, and how it has worked.

The Baltimore Region

Situated along the densely populated and urbanized mid-Atlantic corridor, defining a metropolitan region in conjunction with Baltimore is no simple task. The Census Bureau has designated the primary metropolitan statistical area as the city of Baltimore and six surrounding counties – Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne’s. However, most other definitions of the region omit Queen Anne’s County, as the Chesapeake Bay provides a functional barrier to the city. The Baltimore Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency, and other metro actors such as CPHA think of the region as the city and five counties, leaving out Queen Anne’s. Thus defined, the region contains more than 2.4 million people and 1.4 million jobs, with a radius from downtown of about 25 miles.

This definition still omits major parts of the true labor market area. The Baltimore labor market has strong ties to Washington, D.C. to the south, as well as Philadelphia to the north. The more functional metro scale may be better captured by the Census Bureau’s consolidated metropolitan statistical area, which included the District of Columbia as of 1993.
An important thing to consider about the Baltimore region is its relatively low degree of jurisdictional fragmentation in comparison to other metropolitan areas. Six local governments dominate the region – the city of Baltimore and the above-mentioned five surrounding counties. The region contains only 12 incorporated municipalities with populations over 2,500; there are no municipalities within either Baltimore or Howard counties (Norris and Stenberg forthcoming). Thus, decision-making, budgets and service provision are located primarily at the county level. The result is a system with very powerful county executives, who wield their influence both within their jurisdictions and in Annapolis.

Although this limited number of local governments suggests the potential for greater cooperation, Baltimore has fared as poorly in addressing metropolitan issues as far more fragmented regions. As in other regions, certain economies-of-scale issues are addressed through voluntary agreements (water supply, water and sewage treatment, solid waste management, transportation; some recent work on crime and economic development). Yet issues involving significant redistribution of resources or opportunity (housing, education, fiscal disparities) have not been addressed in Baltimore. Autonomous county executives have steered clear of controversial regional issues, and opted for voluntary, consensual efforts.

Disparities between Baltimore and its suburbs are sharp. The city of Baltimore lost 1,000 residents per month during the 1990s, with total population down to 620,000 from a peak of 950,000 in 1950. One-quarter of Baltimore’s residents are in poverty, while the city houses 60% of the region’s poor. With this concentrated poverty have come problems of crime, poor schools, and urban decay. Even with up to 50% of Baltimore’s $2.25 billion budget coming from federal and state grants, the loss of jobs and tax base combined with high service demands translate into a potential debt of $153 million for the city over the next four years.42

While Baltimore bleeds, many suburbs are clamoring for growth management measures to stem the flow. Baltimore’s suburbs now are home to 65% of the region’s population, further weakening the city’s relative power in the state legislature. Yet many of Baltimore’s inner-ring suburbs are beginning to experience the city’s ills, especially Baltimore County, which wraps around the city in a crescent shape. As an indicator of the spread of urban decay, Baltimore

42 Maryland has also taken over many of Baltimore’s services – including the city jail, community college, BWI Airport, and the Port Baltimore – in order to relieve fiscal strain.
Figure 1: Baltimore Subregions

Note:
BA - Bel Air
BP - Brooklyn Park
P - Pumphrey
L-BH - Lansdowne-Baltimore Highlands
LT - Luthersville-Timonium

Categories

- Central City (1)
- High Social Need Inner Places (27)
- High Social Need Outer Places (25)
- Low Social Need Places (49)

County recently established an Office of Neighborhood Conservation. Other metropolitan woes
spread more evenly across the region, such as traffic congestion and air pollution.43

Overlaid upon these regional concerns is a tense racial climate. Sixty percent of Baltimore is
African American, compared to 25% for the whole region. While organizations such as
Baltimore’s Archdiocese and Interfaith Action for Racial Justice recently have tried to hold race
dialogues, this continues to be a barrier to cooperation across segregated jurisdictions.

Another barrier to regional governance has been the perception that the city suffers from
ineffective management. While the city has maintained respectable bond ratings considering its
fiscal pressures, suburbs continue to claim government incompetence as a reason to avoid
regional redistribution policies. New Baltimore mayor Martin O’Malley was elected in
November 1999 on a platform of accountability, so it remains to be seen whether a change in city
government could spur more regional collaboration – or force suburban communities to use other
arguments when denying their interdependence with the city.

Metropolitan Efforts and Actors in Baltimore

A flurry of interest in metropolitanism sprouted from the civic and business sectors starting in the
1980s, spurred by a series of reports highlighting regional trends and disparities. The first spark
came with a study commissioned by the Morris Goldseker Foundation in 1986 titled Baltimore
2000: A Choice of Futures. Over the next twelve years, five more significant regional studies
would emerge. These included:

- a Citistates report by journalist Neal Peirce (1991),
- David Rusk’s Baltimore Unbound: A Strategy for Regional Renewal (1996),
- the Greater Baltimore Committee’s One Region – One Future (1997),
- Myron Orfield’s Baltimore Metropolitics report for the Citizens Planning and Housing
Association (1997), and
- a State of the Region benchmarking report by the GBC and Greater Baltimore Alliance

43 The US EPA has declared the Baltimore region a severe non-attainment area for ozone standards.
All of these studies analyzed metropolitan problems facing the region, often focusing on the woes of the city, and made recommendations for regional policy and governance. While none of the ambitious recommendations have been followed (Norris and Stenberg forthcoming), each study spurred discussion and some organizing – in particular Rusk’s book commissioned by the Abell Foundation. Throughout this period of increased awareness about the regional nature of Baltimore’s problems, metropolitanism gained support from elites in the business, media and policy worlds.

Some recent efforts at the state and federal levels have tried to address equity concerns in the Baltimore region. Maryland’s most studied policy initiative within the past few years has been its “Smart Growth” program to stem sprawl and encourage investment in established communities. Riding a new wave of concern about growth issues, in 1997 Governor Parris Glendening pushed through a package of bills in Annapolis to direct investment to urbanized regions. The prolonged public discussion over smart growth has done much to increase awareness about issues related to metropolitan development, setting the stage for subsequent regional efforts in Baltimore.

HUD led another metropolitan initiative in Baltimore that generated considerable controversy and exposed the racial tensions underlying many of the region’s problems. HUD chose Baltimore as a pilot site for its Moving to Opportunity program, based upon the Gautreaux case in Chicago, which helped move poor, inner-city public housing residents to suburban housing. The implementation of the program set off a firestorm of controversy, eliciting rallies and a spate of letters-to-the-editor in opposition. When US Senator Barbara Mikulski, long an ardent supporter of the city and progressive causes, withdrew her support for the embattled program, HUD decided to cancel the pilot. The program ultimately led to the quiet moving of 300 families, but scars over the ugly Moving to Opportunity fight are still felt throughout the region. HUD’s Bridges to Work program, which provides reverse-commuting services to poor workers living in central cities, has survived in Baltimore without anywhere near the level of controversy engendered by Moving to Opportunity.

In terms of metropolitan institutions, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council serves as the region’s quasi-governmental regional planning agency. This reformed council of governments is made up of local elected executives (Norris 1994). Its most significant impact comes through the BMC’s Transportation Steering Committee, which serves as the region’s metropolitan planning organization administering federal transportation dollars under TEA-21 legislation. Although the
BMC has a significant impact over regional transportation decisions, like many comparableegional councils, the BMC’s planning and policy role otherwise is largely advisory. The BMC
has been an early target for reform by the Citizens Planning and Housing Association and its
allies for improved transportation equity outcomes.

Arguably the most influential civic organization in the region is the Greater Baltimore Committee
– a group of major business leaders. The GBC is widely acknowledged as the driving force
behind Baltimore’s downtown renaissance and revitalization of the harbor in the 1980s. Its
power is felt both in Baltimore and Annapolis. The GBC began to focus on regional concerns on
the heels of the publication of Rusk’s *Baltimore Unbound* in 1996. In the tradition of similar
business organizations that have championed metropolitanism (Kanter 2000), the GBC completed
a brief, but strongly worded report in 1997 titled *One Region – One Future*, and had a full-time
staffer working on regionalism for three years starting in 1996. The GBC has focused on regional
economic stability and competitiveness, endorsing progressive reform proposals ranging from
tax-base sharing to growth management to fair-share housing.

The GBC helped to create a new regional entity at the height of its regionalism work in 1997 –
the Greater Baltimore Alliance. The GBA has been charged with creating a centralized
marketing entity for the region for business attraction and retention. Part of the GBA’s task has
been to increase coordination of economic development attraction efforts among counties, which
frequently engage in cutthroat competition for firms. The GBA’s regional economic
development work had focused on marketing and information brokering, but it has begun to move
into workforce development. The GBA took some power and money away from the GBC in
order to exist, yet while its mission is explicitly regional, it leaves policy and lobbying work to
the GBC.

The archdiocese of Baltimore has been closest to CPHA in leading grassroots, educational efforts
around the Baltimore region. The region’s Catholic leadership invited Rusk to speak about his
Baltimore study in 1996, and connected his analysis of regional disinvestments patterns with
shrinking congregations and growing church maintenance needs. Under the leadership of Father
Richard Lawrence, the archdiocese developed a six-week seminar on regionalism to be held at
parishes throughout the metropolitan area. To date, the seminars, which include a professionally
produced video and scriptural passages to stimulate discussion, have involved more than 3,000
people.
At another level of education, the Baltimore Sun has remained sympathetic to metropolitanism, from its decision to commission a Citistates report on the region by journalist Neal Pierce in 1991, to its 1998 five-part series of editorials entitled “Regionalism That Works.” Its editorial board has not aggressively pursued coverage of regionalism in the style of other major dailies in the civic journalism school (e.g., the Atlanta Constitution or Charlotte Observer), but it has picked up the issue with some frequency.

Finally, local foundations have been crucial supporters of regionalism efforts in Baltimore. The Abell Foundation commissioned Rusk’s Baltimore Unbound in 1996 and has supported the three major metropolitan efforts since – the GBC, CPHA, and the archdiocese. Similarly, the Morris Goldseker Foundation has made multi-year commitments to these initiatives.

CPHA’s Move to Metropolitanism

The Citizens Planning and Housing Association might seem like an unlikely candidate to wage a regional campaign in the Baltimore region. Fifty-nine years old, CPHA has traditionally worked in distressed urban core neighborhoods within the city boundaries. It was formed in the 1940s to eradicate slum housing in East Baltimore and quickly made a name for itself by pushing for Baltimore’s first housing code and court. Its urban revitalization efforts have expanded broadly since its founding to including community and youth organizing, neighborhood planning, advocacy for decent housing and schools, leadership development, and anti-rat and liquor billboard campaigns.

It was before this backdrop of efforts in distressed Baltimore City neighborhoods that CPHA began to consider doing regional work in 1994. The spark came from a handful of vocal board members who felt that CPHA needed to broaden its scope beyond the purely local, neighborhood level in order to address persistent urban social and economic problems. CPHA’s primary motivation for exploring regionalism was to benefit its core constituency – low-income city residents. The focus was upon urban interests and the potential for metropolitan solutions to save the ailing city.
CPHA had one previous experience beyond the city limits during the 1970s, operating a land-use planning office in neighboring Baltimore County. Some members of CPHA's board at the time lived in Greenspring Valley, home of environmental landscape designer Ian McHarg and a fight over rapid suburban development in the early 1970s. When a new county executive decided to make land use planning a priority after his election, CPHA worked on creating new land use codes to protect the landscape from speculation and development pressures. The office became a money drain on CPHA during the 1980s and closed in 1985, never having developed much of a base in Baltimore County.

With the Baltimore County experience more than a decade old, CPHA's board of directors decided to establish an ad hoc committee in 1994 to consider involvement with metropolitan issues. The regional committee of six people met monthly and interviewed key figures in the region about metropolitanism and CPHA. Of particular influence was Al Barry, then assistant planning director for Baltimore, who made a strong pitch for metropolitanism and the role that CPHA could play.

In November 1995, the ad hoc committee recommended establishing a formal standing committee on the region. However, the prospect of working outside the city generated considerable debate and controversy within CPHA. Many board members expressed the concern that regional efforts would take away from CPHA's core mission in urban neighborhoods. Metro advocates tried to allay such fears by pointing out that the entire organization had been expanding under a new executive director – staff grew from eight in 1996 to 42 at present – and that a new program would take advantage of new resources. A small group on the board remained fiercely opposed, but the Committee on the Region was established in 1996.

With strong participation from committee volunteer and chair Al Barry, the Committee on the Region obtained seed grants from the Abell and Goldseker foundations in early 1996. At this time, Barry heard Myron Orfield speak about his regional experiences in the Twin Cities during a kickoff for David Rusk's *Baltimore Unbound* study. Barry quickly arranged for Orfield to prepare a report and maps documenting regional conditions and trends for the Baltimore region. Mary Matheny then was hired to staff the new Campaign for Regional Solutions within CPHA in October 1996.
Matheny primarily served as the campaign’s sole staffer during its first two years, working in conjunction with volunteers from the Committee on the Region, in particular Barry. Much as the case with Orfield in the Twin Cities, Matheny provided a dynamic, passionate, and personable leader for the budding campaign. With a long background in politics and political organizing, she brought a nuanced appreciation of movements to the campaign. Matheny quickly parlayed her talents to build the regional program, serving as a formidable educator and salesperson around metropolitan issues and solutions.

Matheny and the Committee on the Region spent the better part of the campaign’s first year strategizing about what its work would look like. In November 1997, it released a summary of Orfield’s report that officially kicked off the campaign. The campaign’s stated objective in CPHA’s Understanding Our Larger Neighborhood was “to craft an agenda of specific regional strategies that hold promise for ensuring the long-term vitality of the Baltimore region and to build a region-wide constituency of support for that agenda’s implementation.” The committee acknowledged that many regional studies and commissions had come and gone, and that the failure to date of regional initiatives has been due to a lack of political resolve in the face of uncertain public support. … Without a compelling common agenda around which people and organizations with divergent interests can be brought together as a regional community, there can be no political constituency; and without the assurance of that constituency, political leadership for a regional agenda is unlikely (CPHA 1997:1).

The committee said that it “seeks to help define that common agenda, develop that political constituency, and thereby encourage that political leadership.” CPHA’s sense was that dealing with political officials directly at the start would be worthless, especially in light of the dominance of county governments and executives. Political will would have to be built from below.

The Committee on the Region began to decide how to proceed with its campaign through the work of volunteer subcommittees starting in 1996. The initial three subcommittees covered education and the media, organizing, and campaign development. For more than one year, the campaign development group worked to formulate an agenda, considering focusing on issues ranging from fiscal disparities to affordable housing to transportation to the environmental quality of the Chesapeake Bay.
Figure 8: Percentage Change in Real Median Household Income, 1979-1989

Note: 1979 incomes were adjusted upwards by a factor of 1.708 to account for inflation. 1979 Consumer Price Index: 72.6
1989 Consumer Price Index: 124.0

Places with "No data" either did not exist in 1980 or had fewer than 50 households in either 1980 or 1990.

% Change Real Median Income by Place

-57
to
-0.1% (15)
0
to
9.9% (31)
10
to
24.9% (24)
25% or more (22)
No data (10)

While the campaign ended up settling on transportation and tax-base sharing as its focus, it has struggled with such committees and decision-making structures. Meetings within initial subcommittees and the Committee on the Region often lacked structure while discussion wandered. CPHA experimented with using its Committee on the Region to expand outreach efforts, educating members about how to hold conversations about metro issues, but the effort lost steam. Matheny complained of the bureaucratic burdens imposed by managing the increasingly moribund committees, and questioned whether time would be better spent going out and making contacts. She chose to suspend the Committee on the Region’s monthly meetings for most of 1999, freeing her and Barry up for more direct work. Yet the resulting lack of broad consensus on vision and strategy for the campaign has frustrated CPHA’s regional efforts. In response, Matheny recently reorganized and expanded the Committee on the Region, and established a new set of working groups.

Meanwhile, the initial divide that existed on CPHA’s board over whether to tackle metropolitanism persisted. A host of issues arose from doing regional work within an existing community organization, starting with CPHA’s motto – “The City Is What We Make It.” Since its launch in 1996, the Campaign for Regional Solutions has had to cut this motto off the stationary and folders that it uses for outreach. It has proven an apt metaphor for some of the tensions that have emerged within the organization around the new regional work.

The overriding question was how to make CPHA’s city strategy – its focus for almost six decades – coexist with a regional strategy. It served as a case of culture shock as much as, if not more than, mission shock. With its emphasis on community planning, CPHA had always tended toward “traditional” organizing techniques. The long-standing organizing culture of CPHA supported local, door-to-door organizing, emphasizing the knowledge of low-income residents. The organizer did not inform or lead, but rather facilitated and built power around tangible issues of immediate concern to a neighborhood.

The type of organizing that the Campaign for Regional Solutions practiced was very different. Instead of door-to-door grassroots efforts, members of the Committee on the Region and Mary Matheny set out to organize organizations and influence policy. Long-time organizers and board members wondered why this new program was talking to organizations and established leaders instead of neighborhood residents. The chair of one CPHA committee repeatedly asked Matheny: “When will you start talking with real people?” The implication in CPHA’s organizing culture
was that “real” people are those who are not organizational leaders and are poor. A second point of tension with the campaign’s organizing efforts was its focus outside of Baltimore. Many within the organization wondered why precious resources were being devoted to meetings and efforts out in Annapolis and Baltimore County.

Integrating the regional program into CPHA’s other activities has been a challenge. When Matheny initially sought access to CPHA’s community organizers to spread information on the regional work, she faced resistance. Organizers were reluctant to do another program’s work, and did not want to change their way of doing business. CPHA staff who resented the new campaign called it “the regional dynasty.” As CPHA’s community organizers continued to spend time dealing with rats, crime, and tough door-to-door efforts in distressed urban neighborhoods, Matheny, the new regional staffer, was down in Annapolis lobbying for Smart Growth legislation. The cultural rift appeared wide. Yet, at the same time, Matheny was receiving directions from her committee not to worry about the elitist label, and to keep venturing beyond the city’s neighborhoods to meet with leaders.

The tensions were not as bad in 1996 when all of CPHA’s programs were dramatically expanding. Then, after one year in existence, the campaign found itself competing for administrative support and more obviously out-of-sync with business-as-usual at CPHA. Until recently, organizers refused to include a discussion of regional issues in their efforts. But things began to turn a corner in 1998 after Mary Gonzales of Chicago’s Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations came to speak at CPHA’s annual meeting. Gonzales had been spearheading a comparable regional effort in the Chicago region (see chapter 5), and spoke passionately about the importance of regionalism from a neighborhood perspective. The talk excited many people within the organization and brought the campaign’s efforts into focus for many who had wondered about its purpose.

The internal work at CPHA has taken a significant amount of energy from the campaign’s stated goals. Instead, staff have devoted time trying to change the culture of the existing organization to accommodate the new regional efforts. Reflecting upon internal organizational dynamics, Matheny says she would have devoted more to groundwork early on with CPHA staff and organizers, in particular. If the regional campaign had been more integrated into CPHA from the start, she would have had to spend less time in subsequent years trying to win the support of those who should have been partners from the beginning (Matheny 2000).
CPHA and Transportation

Amid these internal organizational tensions, the Campaign for Regional Solutions decided in 1997 to concentrate on tax-base sharing and transportation. The tax-base sharing focus came largely out of CPHA’s work with Myron Orfield and a belief that it might provide an entry-point for regional problem solving. Regional transportation emerged as an agenda item for several reasons. First, it kept intersecting many of CPHA’s other programs and efforts, such as the organization’s already existing transportation committee. Second, compared to topics such as land use or fiscal disparities, transportation was relatively easy for the average citizen to wrap her mind around. The third reason was more opportunistic, as the regional campaign had been approached during its first month in existence by other non-profits for collaborative work on transportation. Some observers were surprised that CPHA chose not to pursue a regional housing campaign, but with the tensions over HUD’s Moving to Opportunity program still in the air, the campaign subcommittee felt that working on other issues would be more productive and ultimately successful.

CPHA’s regional transportation work has not been an example of metropolitics coalition building. At the same time, it has seen the most success of any of the Campaign for Regional Solutions’ efforts. CPHA’s regional transportation work began after it was approached by the Environmental Defense Fund and Chesapeake Bay Foundation for a partnership. Both had done work on land-use and transportation planning in Washington, DC, and were seeking to expand their activities north into Baltimore. However, neither organization had a presence in Baltimore and lacked community organizing experience. The three agreed to form the Baltimore Regional Partnership in 1997, and received start-up grants from the Ford and Surdna foundations, as well as George Soros’s Open Space Institute. These were the first such national foundation funds ever secured by CPHA. The partnership, which initially was staffed and located within CPHA’s Campaign for Regional Solutions, expanded in 1998 to include 1,000 Friends of Maryland and the Urban League of Baltimore. Despite its broad name, the Baltimore Regional Partnership (BRP) has concentrated almost exclusively on transportation issues.

The BRP initially chose to focus on the region’s metropolitan planning organization, the Transportation Steering Committee of the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. CPHA and the BRP raised several issues with the public process utilized by the TSC, which decides how to spend
about $750 million per year in federal and state transportation funds. The BRP protested a
distribution of votes on the TSC that was not proportional to population in the region, a lack of
participation by elected officials in crucial funding decisions, and the TSC’s failure to promote
citizen participation.

Staff from Baltimore Regional Partnership member organizations began to show up at TSC
meetings and offer critiques during a review of the region’s 20-year transportation plan. As
criticisms against the TSC mounted, the BRP effectively got the MPO in trouble with its
regulator, the Federal Highway Administration. Due to a volley of complaints filed during the
TSC’s three-year recertification process in 1998, the FHA decided to grant only a one-year
recertification – an unprecedented move for the agency. After an MPO peer review process in
October 1999, the FHA further shocked the TSC by granting only a six-month recertification,
sending a clear message that it needed to enact reforms to come in line with federal TEA-21
requirements, or run the risk of losing federal funds.

While efforts to reform the TSC have taken center stage for CPHA and the BRP, the partnership
has engaged in several other transportation efforts. Last year, it put together a guide for citizen
participation with the MPO, and issued reports on the state of buses in Baltimore and access to
low-skilled jobs throughout the region (CPHA 1999a, 1999b). CPHA has secured a US
EPA/Department of Transportation pilot grant for the BRP to link transportation and land use,
and worked in Annapolis to change farebox recovery requirements that impose a heavy burden on
transit budgets. Finally, CPHA’s recent creation of a grassroots group called the Transit Riders
League opens the door for metropolitics coalition building around transportation issues.

CPHA’s extensive work with the BRP points to its general willingness to partner with other
organizations. CPHA also has developed close relationships with the archdiocese and the Greater
Baltimore Committee, both of which also began regional work in 1996. Yet despite the BRP’s
successes, the collaboration has placed a strain upon CPHA’s regional work. Fundraising and
administration for the partnership consumes a significant portion of Matheny’s time, while two
other BRP staff positions are split between CPHA and 1,000 Friends of Maryland. Meanwhile,
the BRP’s five member organizations have argued over the partnership’s goals, and questioned
whether it is truly separate from CPHA’s regional campaign. Foundations have liberally funded
the collaborative effort – to the point where the BRP cross-funds CPHA’s other regional
activities. But as the BRP meetings and bureaucracy pile up, Matheny has wondered if the partnership has been greater than the sum of its parts.

To distinguish this transportation work from metropolitics coalition building, the Baltimore Regional Partnership so far has relied upon pressure tactics from a limited number of elite advocacy groups. Their leverage largely has come through calls for accountability, holding the MPO responsible for upholding the TEA-21 law. Even though this work to increase fairness in the TSC’s process could very naturally appeal to interests in a metropolitics coalition, CPHA has not aggressively pursued this path. The possibility for broad grassroots organizing exists with the new Transit Riders League, but the results remain to be seen.

**CPHA and Tax-Base Sharing**

In contrast with its transportation efforts thus far, CPHA’s work around tax-base sharing is in the model of metropolitics coalition building. The effort to try to build a metropolitics coalition around tax-base sharing has been a very tough road in the Baltimore region. There are many reasons for this: the challenge of existing jurisdictional boundaries, staff and resource limitations, and lack of clarity around strategy.

CPHA’s tax-base sharing work began with Orfield’s metropolitics report. While Orfield was working on the report, he met with several Maryland state legislators about regional revenue sharing and got a cool reception. The initial response was that any such proposal would have to go through Maryland’s power county executives first. Few legislators spoke beyond the county executive issue to address the merits of a tax-base sharing scheme itself; those who did expressed a great deal of skepticism. One state representative from Baltimore, Sandy Rosenberg, had already taken to the idea and been introducing revenue-sharing legislation without cosponsors since 1993. But during the first year of CPHA’s campaign, no leaders would touch tax-base sharing – even city representatives (with the exception of Rosenberg).

With these first legislative responses predictably chilly, CPHA created a working group to study and develop revenue-sharing models and think about how to position the issue in Baltimore. From 1997 through 1999, Matheny and the Committee on the Region did this work in close partnership with the Greater Baltimore Committee. The GBC supported regional revenue sharing
primarily to create a shared interest in economic development through the region. The planning and strategizing sessions, which also including the archdiocese, were loosely structured and periodic – as with many of the regional campaign’s meetings. Matheny and Barry held occasional one-on-one meetings with legislators or leaders of key organizations, but overall the effort moved slowly.

In December 1998, the GBC sponsored a visit to the Twin Cities to learn about their fiscal disparities system. Both the GBC and CPHA – Committee on the Region chair Barry went on the trip – learned lessons that caused a shift in thinking about applying the Twin Cities model to Baltimore. In contrast with Minnesota’s Fiscal Disparities Act, the delegation from Baltimore realized that its tax base was far more dependent upon residential than industrial growth. In addition, the Twin Cities had taxing structures for schools separate from local government property taxes.

The GBC and CPHA returned from this trip and came up with a tax-base sharing bill more tailored to Baltimore. House Bill 970, introduced at the start of the 1999 legislative session, would have shared growth in tax revenue from commercial and residential uses and placed responsibility for administering the pool with the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. The idea behind the latter measure was to increase accountability at the regional planning agency that CPHA otherwise had been warring against. While formulating the bill, CPHA consulted with legislators and partners for input and responses.

Even though it co-sponsored the legislation, Matheny says that the GBC backed away from a leadership role on tax-base sharing after the Twin Cities trip – a major loss considering the added legitimacy that the GBC lent to the effort. Matheny speculates that the GBC began to feel that the issue was too controversial. At the same time, a leadership change at the GBC led to an overall shift in focus away from regionalism toward issues of crime and safety.

To the surprise of CPHA and the GBC, in February 1999, the powerful speaker of Maryland’s House of Delegates, Casper Taylor, spoke in favor of tax-base sharing at a business group meeting. Following this rare public display of support for such a controversial regional policy, Taylor agreed to speak again at a May 1999 event put together by CPHA’s Campaign for Regional Solutions. With Taylor seemingly interested in tax-base sharing, CPHA sought to remove the proposed bill from a scheduled committee hearing, preferring to build more grassroots
and political support before a public forum was held in Annapolis. However, the hearing was never rescheduled and the bill went before the House Ways and Means Committee, garnering only three city votes in favor.

Despite the decisive committee vote against the bill, there was the sense that the bill gained some traction through the process. It generated substantive testimony and questions in Annapolis, and gained some new legislative interest along the way. Since that vote, CPHA has held a hearing before the state Senate Committee on Budget and Taxation in January 2000 to educate them about the issue. Otherwise the only activity in Annapolis has been a handful of individual meetings with potentially sympathetic delegates. This year, CPHA has decided to hold off on introducing legislation as Baltimore’s new mayor settles into the job.

Even with its halting efforts to date, Matheny feels that CPHA has rushed the tax-base sharing issue and legislation, stressing the need to build further support from below. But CPHA has lacked a clear strategy all along about how to proceed with tax-base sharing. CPHA has never truly prioritized the effort, instead concentrating staff resources on transportation work and more short-range issues. Committees that have tried to nail down a specific outreach and campaign strategy around tax-base sharing have met too sporadically, making consensus more difficult. The process has left the fledgling effort without a tangible proposal and vision to rally staff and potential coalition members around, resulting in frustration about the direction of the tax-base sharing work.

Part of the lack of vision and strategy around tax-base sharing has to do with the difficulty of the region’s unique jurisdictional boundaries. Matheny was not aware at the start of CPHA’s tax-base sharing work of the near-monolithic power of Baltimore’s neighboring counties and, ironically, has found herself wishing for a more fragmented jurisdictional landscape. Such a desire fits with the political strategy of metropolitics, which depends upon splitting the suburbs and piecing together support in a state legislature. In a region where you can get the six most influential politicians around one table, there are fewer pieces with which to build a metropolitics coalition. Al Barry notes that in Maryland’s centralized, leadership-controlled political system, legislation that does not come from the political leadership requires a sustained education and organizing campaign. For CPHA, this political reality translates into the need for one-on-ones with civic groups and leaders at the sub-county level to build a critical mass of support.
CPHA has tried to advance such an outreach strategy with limited staff resources. The effort recently has focused on a series of meetings with civic organizations and leaders in Baltimore County. Yet these meetings – sometimes one-on-ones to establish new relationships, often presentations before largely audiences – have not explicitly sought to build coalitions around specific proposals, tax-base sharing or otherwise. Instead, they center around broad discussions of regional trends and CPHA’s work.

Matheny has questioned the effectiveness of these recent forays into Baltimore County. She, by and large, no longer conducts this kind of outreach; instead, a CPHA policy associate arranges and runs these meetings. Whereas Matheny was able to build relationships and tap into suburban concerns through such outreach, the staffer who currently goes out into Baltimore County lacks the same charisma.

During her first two years on the job, effective one-on-one meetings with officials and organizations – especially in declining inner-ring suburbs – were a major focus of Matheny’s work. Why does she no longer assume this role? In short, she has been bogged down in CPHA’s office managing the burgeoning program. In many ways, the expansion of CPHA’s staff contributed to this problem. The campaign added a program associate position in 1998 to help with regional research, strategizing, and making presentations. In 1999, three more staff came on board to work primarily on transportation. One has served as transportation projects coordinator, while the other two staff are field organizers. Defining roles, especially between work for CPHA and the BRP, has often led to tension within the growing staff.

These staff additions brought changes to the structure of work within the regional campaign. Matheny found more of her time taken up by staff management and program administration. Whereas she used to get out for about ten meetings per week to build relationships and connections, now it is more like two. The new staff added administrative and fundraising duties for growing programs, but also added to overall organizational complexity, as Matheny continued to build the regional program, mind various partnerships, strategize around various activities, and manage corresponding committees.

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44 During one interview, Matheny described her current juggling of regional programs and responsibilities as akin to “Lucy on the conveyor belt” from the I Love Lucy sitcom.
One response to these staff resource and management constraints has been to cut back on the number of one-on-one coalition building meetings, and instead focus on mass education events. The campaign has held well-attended public forums on metro issues in November 1997, April 1998, May 1999, and April 2000, drawing participants from across the region. In addition, it has conducted outreach at summer fairs throughout the region, tailoring its message about metropolitan issues to the concerns of different communities. In terms of print materials, the campaign has put out newsletters and two transportation studies, and the BRP produces email updates about its activities. While such efforts further CPHA’s regional awareness goals, they do no constitute coalition building.

With CPHA’s early difficulty in building a strategic base of power for metropolitics, the regional campaign has decided to take out a consulting and training contract with the Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation. Gamaliel has been working closely with Orfield in several Midwestern regions to build metropolitics coalitions around equity issues (see chapter 5 for more on the Gamaliel Foundation and its Chicago partner, the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations). Its style of community organizing through church affiliates is similar to that of the Industrial Areas Foundation. Over time, Gamaliel will provide strategic consulting and leadership training for CPHA, with an eye toward increasing the reach and volume of its regional work.

One challenge to the long-term sustainability of CPHA’s regional work is funding. Thus far, Matheny has been extremely successful in raising funds from an array of sources. However, many of the foundation and government grants have been narrowly targeted to specific programs such as the BRP. As a result, even when staff has expanded, it has not necessarily increased capacity to do the core work of metropolitics – going out to build relationships and common ground with specific urban and suburban interests. Another funding concern is reliance upon local foundations. The Abell Foundation has sharply cut its grant amount, indicating concern about when CPHA’s regional work will go beyond basic education to register more tangible results.

Overriding the issues of funding and internal support within the organization is the question of whether the Campaign for Regional Solutions should be housed within CPHA in the first place. Several staff and Committee on the Region members have felt from the beginning that the campaign eventually would need to spin off from CPHA. One concern has been the degree to
which the regional work is out scale with the rest of the organization, in terms of membership base, quality of work, and technological demands, such as geographical information system capability. In terms of fundraising, the regional campaign currently is self-sustaining, yet some board members want to see it remain within CPHA due to the publicity and money it brings in.

Lately, the regional work has become more integrated into and accepted by CPHA as a whole. Matheny gives several reasons for this hard-fought change. First, following Gonzales’ visit in 1998, CPHA decided to work with the Gamaliel Foundation to strategize and expand its regional organizing efforts. As a result, CPHA has sent members of its regional staff, as well as CPHA organizers, to Gamaliel trainings. Those who have attended the intensive, week-long training have come back rejuvenated about CPHA’s regional work. In particular, the director of CPHA’s leadership and training program has taken to the regional effort, and worked hard to find a way to make it part of her training curriculum. In addition, during her three years leading CPHA, Casciani became more of an advocate for the regional work.

However, the ongoing question of the relationship of the regional program within CPHA has been stalled by a period of leadership flux within the organization. A strategic planning process was put on hold when Casciani departed in 1999. CPHA re-started this process in early 2000, but budgets and programs have been essentially frozen through next year. Among the decisions to be made is whether CPHA will become more policy-focused and how much it will emphasize the regional work. In the meantime, a new batch of board members must come up to speed with the relevant issues and history.

Analysis

So how has CPHA’s regional work fared thus far? Within four years, it has become recognized as the leading voice for metropolitanism in the region. Building off of the success of smart growth in Maryland, CPHA has helped to increase overall literacy about various regional issues, through its commissioning of Orfield’s report and its outreach to organizations. However, the Campaign for Regional Solutions’ ability to reach across jurisdictional boundaries to build a metropolitics coalition has been limited. Instead, CPHA’s greatest successes have come through an aggressive array of regional transportation efforts – reform of Baltimore’s Transportation Steering Committee, an agreement by the MPO to conduct a regional visioning process, the
creation of a Transit Riders League, and securing a major federal pilot grant to link land-use and transportation planning. However, these efforts do not fall within the model of metropolitics coalition building.

CPHA provides a case of an organization that has set out to work within the metropolitics model of addressing regional equity, yet really has not. Part of this has to do with the politics and unique jurisdictional boundaries of the Baltimore region. Yet many of CPHA’s early struggles have come from internal conflicts about whether it should be doing regional work, and the efforts required to build support and change the organization from within. It would not be surprising if this represents a common set of problems for metropolitics catalysts that emerge from already existing organizations.

As a regional catalyst organization, CPHA exhibits several strengths and weaknesses. Among the pluses, CPHA offers an existing infrastructure of administration and programs that, in theory, could bolster the regional work. It also has the resources to create a new program with a degree of institutional staying power. CPHA’s reputation is relatively strong within the city, with a record of engaging in important fights for urban interests. When it came to attracting seed money for the regional program, the Abell Foundation funded what it considered to be a somewhat unrealistic proposal on the merits of CPHA’s reputation. In some urban circles, CPHA has broad drawing power, as evidenced by its successful Neighborhood Congress initiative in 1999, where CPHA brought together more than 100 Baltimore organizations to frame the debate in a heated mayoral election. Finally, CPHA’s dedicated, intelligent, and politically savvy regional staff provide a major asset.

Meanwhile, CPHA carries some baggage that hurts its position in building regional coalitions. First, aside from a brief, quiet stint in Baltimore County during the 1970s, CPHA has no regional membership base. The organization is historically associated with the city, leaving suburbs suspicious of CPHA’s role in regional efforts. If CPHA were to assume a convening role, or be the table at which a regional discussion was convened, it remains uncertain whether suburbs – even those whom it would benefit – would come. Beyond this, CPHA is relatively unknown throughout the greater Baltimore area – something that could help or harm their efforts.

Several major challenges emerge in CPHA’s fledgling efforts to catalyze a Baltimore metropolitics coalition. First, jurisdictional boundaries and the landscape of regional power
provide two large strikes against metropolitics work in Baltimore. Contrary to Orfield’s assertion in the Twin Cities, Baltimore’s suburbs are monoliths in terms of the size and power of surrounding counties. With the inability to split the suburbs by picking off municipal officials, CPHA must resort to more labor-intensive grassroots education tactics to build support below the powerful county executives.

While these political boundary lines provide an external constraint on regional coalition building, CPHA faces the internal challenge of settling upon a clear metropolitics strategy. This entails bringing its regional mission in line with its other work, and putting in place more effective decision-making structures. The effort of trying to figure out what they have been doing has often taken the regional campaign away from its stated mission during its first few years. Once a more coherent vision for building a metropolitics coalition is agreed upon, CPHA can work on forging proposals that serve as rallying points for coalition members – whether it is for tax-base sharing or another metropolitan issue.

CPHA’s final major challenges have to do with the sustainability of its work, and the time frame required to build winning coalitions. Will this regional work continue to be housed at CPHA? How much/what kind of a staff will there be? What is the future of support from local foundations? How long can CPHA continue its general regional education efforts before it needs to galvanize potential partners around specific legislative proposals?

Lessons learned from the CPHA experience include the importance of internal harmony and support for regional catalyst organizations, the need to produce coherent visions and strategies for metropolitics work, and the threat of getting bogged down amid the organizational complexity of running several regional programs. The next chapter turns to an organization that has fared somewhat better in its early metropolitics efforts – Chicago’s Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations.
Chapter 5

Chicago and the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations

Metropolitan thinking in Chicago goes back to Daniel Burnham’s famous 1909 plan for the region. However, Chicagoland’s explosion of local governments – 1,246 units at last count – provide ongoing challenges to regional cooperation and reform, contributing to stark disparities across the region. The 1990s brought an upswelling of interest in regional issues, with the emergence of several civic organizations working on metropolitanism.

One of these new regional organizations – the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations (MAC) – draws upon Chicago’s tradition as the birthplace of modern Alinsky-style community organizing. MAC came together as a grassroots, interfaith coalition in 1997 to address issues of metropolitan equity. It united five already existing affiliates of the Gamaliel Foundation, a national faith-based community organizing network. Since its inception, MAC has worked on education finance, transportation, public safety, mortgage credit, and regional tax-base sharing. MAC’s goal has been to expand its church membership and leadership in order to secure a grassroots base for a Chicago metropolitics coalition. Its early experience represents the most interesting and promising metropolitics effort in the country.

This chapter opens with a basic description of the region and its emerging regional civic infrastructure. Since MAC comes from the Saul Alinsky school of community organizing, a brief discussion of faith-based community organizing follows. The case study begins with the Gamaliel Foundation’s turn toward metropolitanism and its decision to form MAC. The rest of the case explores and analyzes MAC’s regional efforts, in particular its year-old tax-base sharing campaign. The chapter concludes with lessons learned from MAC’s experience in trying to build metropolitics coalitions.
The Chicago Region

The Chicago metropolitan region fans out from the shores of Lake Michigan to include six counties – Cook, DuPage, Will, Kane, McHenry, and Lake. The Chicago economy realistically spills over into northwestern Indiana and as far north as Wisconsin, but the common conception of the metro region is Chicago and its six surrounding counties. As such, the Chicago region contains 7.5 million people and 4 million jobs, while covering 3,700 square miles.

By some measures, Chicago has the most fragmented governance landscape of any metro region in the U.S. Its 1,246 units of local government within the region are five times as many per capita as metro Los Angeles and seven times as many as New York City. Within this pastiche are 262 municipalities, and more than 300 school districts and 500 special-purpose districts.

While Chicago has achieved a degree of functional regionalism around transportation and service provision, regional disparities and segregation remain stark. Chicago, its suburbs in southern and western Cook County, and older satellite cities such as Joliet, Aurora and Waukegan all suffer from weak tax bases, high crime rates, low levels of education spending, and low median household incomes (Orfield 1996). Meanwhile, suburbs in southern Lake County, the North Shore, and northwestern Cook and DuPage counties are faring well on these counts and enjoying healthy growth. For example, while the region gained 460,000 jobs between 1980 and 1990, 80% of them went to suburbs in the north and west. The income gap between Chicago and its suburbs rose by 24% during 1980s. As of 1990, Chicago’s poverty rate was at 22%, compared to 5% for the suburbs.

The racial divide is particularly pronounced throughout the region, as Chicago and Gary-Hammond in Indiana are considered two of the top three most segregated areas in the nation. In 1990, 62% of Chicago was minority, compared to less than 20% for most suburban counties. Latinos are projected to be the largest racial group in the city by 2005.

A 1991 study on fiscal disparities in the region sampled 40 of the region’s 260 municipalities and found that revenue-raising ability ranged from 45% of the regional mean for North Chicago to 309% of the regional average in wealthy suburban Lake Forest. Measuring this revenue-raising capacity relative to the cost of service provision, nine municipalities from the sample had a fiscal capacity less than 80% of the region’s average, while 13 were more than 150% above the mean.
Map 8-2. Chicago Municipalities Divided into Regions

Regions (Municipalities)
- Central City (1)
- Inner suburbs (87)
- Northwest suburbs (104)
- Outer suburbs (61)
- South developing suburbs (9)

Such fiscal strains are especially apparent when it comes to school funding. With the state providing only 30% of the funding for the region’s schools, fiscal disparities have led to a 3-to-1 gap in annual operating expenditures per student across districts.

Amid these regional trends, Chicago has steadily been losing power in the state legislature (Weir 1996). Chicago’s largely Republican suburbs have a long tradition of distancing themselves from the city and its history of political corruption. However, the Chicago Democratic machine under Mayor Daley in the 1960s managed to cut deals in Springfield to serve its interests. This deal-making approach became less effective as the suburbs gained population. Suburbanization dictated votes, as Chicago’s percentage of the region’s population has fallen from 70% in 1950 to 32% in 1990. Redistricting in the state House in 1991 granted more seats to Chicago’s suburbs than the city or “downstate” for the first time in Illinois history. When GOP took over legislature in 1993, Senate President Pate Philip announced: “[Suburbanites have] always been paying for Chicago, they’ve been doing it forever. … The day of the free ride is over.”

Metropolitan Efforts and Actors in Chicago

Chicago has never been held up as an example of progressive regionalism along with places such as Portland and the Twin Cities, but key constituencies have helped to spark interest in metropolitanism over the past decade. Chicago’s most dramatic metropolitan experiment has been the Gautreaux consent decree, which moved thousands of public housing residents to middle-class suburbs. Subsequent studies of the Gautreaux program, which moved families by random assignment, found that the move to suburban housing opportunities had positive impacts on employment and education outcomes for individuals from extreme poverty areas.

Two recent legislative packages in Illinois have had significant metropolitan equity components. The state’s $12 billion Illinois FIRST transportation package that passed in 1999 included a significant emphasis on transit amid its core efforts to build and repair infrastructure. In addition, recent school finance legislation has moved to reduce disparities by raising the foundation level of funding per pupil to $4,225, providing additional funds for high-poverty districts, and creating a $1.4 billion capital fund to rebuild schools.
As with many other metropolitan regions, Chicago has an advisory regional planning agency that focused primarily upon transportation and voluntary service agreements. However, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission is unique in how it shares its transportation duties with other metro organizations. NIPC, which was created by the state in 1957, is charged with developing general plans about land use development, transportation, and key services such as water, sewage, and stormwater treatment. However, the Chicago Area Transportation Study serves as the region’s MPO, with responsibility for preparing and adopting Chicago’s metro transportation plans. These two planning agencies try to coordinate their work with the Regional Transit Authority, which aims to encourage more regional cooperation between the Chicago Transit Authority, regional Metra rail, and PACE suburban bus systems. The end result is a relatively complex and jumbled regional transportation planning system.

Regional service districts are especially common in the Chicago region due to funding mechanisms permitted by the state. State law allows municipalities to issue bonds only up to 5% of assessed property values. Special districts face no such limits on their bonding authority, and have proliferated as a result for parks, water, and other services. Meanwhile, nine subregional municipal conferences, or councils of governments, have emerged within the region to lobby the state and address remaining service provision concerns (Lindstrom 1998).

But the major regionalism story for Chicago over the past decade has been the explosion of metro activity outside of the public sector. Much of the charge has been led by the Commercial Club of Chicago’s Metropolits 2020 project, which last year released a plan seeking ambitious regional reforms in education, transportation, land use, governance, and economic development. The Commercial Club, a 122 year-old organization made up of leaders from major Chicagoland businesses and institutions, sponsored Elmer Johnson, a former General Motors executive, to conduct a two-year planning process to produce the Chicago Metropolis 2020 report. Like the Burnham plan sponsored by the Commercial Club 90 years before, Metropolis 2020 put forth bold visions, especially for a business-sponsored document, on issues such as economic and racial segregation, the negative impacts of sprawl, auto dependence, and destructive competition for tax revenue. The Commercial Club has subsequently formed a nonprofit organization to conduct further outreach on regional issues and guide implementation of the plan’s recommendations.

45 Weir 2000:147.
Another regional civic organization, the Metropolitan Planning Council, complements the work of Metropolis 2020 with a more broad constituency of business, civic, and planning leaders. The MPC has been conducting regional policy advocacy and research since 1934, and currently works in the areas of housing, transportation, and urban and regional development.

The MacArthur Foundation has helped to build Chicago’s regional civic infrastructure during the 1990s with a new focus on metropolitanism. The influential funder established a regional program in 1996 to build capacity among institutions to address metropolitan issues. MacArthur sought to help clarify regional problems facing Chicago, explore possible solutions, develop organizational capacity, and encourage education and outreach on regionalism. Many nonprofits that have recently taken regional leadership roles, especially around sprawl issues, have relied upon MacArthur’s support. These include the Environmental Law and Policy Center, Business and Professional People for the Public Interest, the Leadership Council for Open Metropolitan Communities, and the Openlands Project.

Of particular note have been the efforts of the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), a policy and community planning nonprofit. CNT facilitated the development of a citizens transportation plan that has been endorsed by more than 70 other organizations. It has done work on regional environmental concerns and convened a Metropolitan Initiative Forum in 1997 to discuss major metro issues. CNT president Scott Bernstein notes that Chicago is beginning to have a problem that metropolitanists in other less active regions would envy – too many voices for reform. CNT has developed a poster that chaotically outlines aspects of the many competing regional transportation plans developed in the public and civic sectors that are currently under consideration.

However, with all this growing activity around regionalism in Chicago, there is only one truly grassroots community organizing effort to address issues of metropolitanism – the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations. Since MAC and its metropolitics effort come out of the tradition of Alinsky-style organizing, it is worth examining faith-based community organizing briefly.
Faith-Based Community Organizing

Modern community organizing was born with Saul Alinsky’s efforts in Chicago’s “Back of the Yards” neighborhoods during the 1930s (Rogers 1990). Influenced by the Congress of Industrial Organization’s labor organizing drives, Alinsky began his work among poor city residents with strong convictions about the nature of power and the need to build strong citizens organizations to fight for social justice. Alinsky worked to create alliances among existing neighborhood institutions, encouraging poor workers to engage in democratic decision-making. His methods often involved high-publicity conflict tactics, where large numbers of poor confronted business and government interests.

Alinsky’s approach relies heavily upon the skills and efforts of community organizers to catalyze powerful citizens organizations. Following the Alinsky model, community organizers challenge, provoke and agitate individuals to act on their passions and work to further their self-interest. Through one-on-one meetings, organizers seek to understand local concerns and tap into potential anger and leadership within a community. Organizers then assemble committed individuals, and instruct them in how to build organizations to influence political and economic decision-making (see Alinsky 1946, 1971). Alinsky’s practice emphasized work and recruitment through religious institutions, meticulous planning of organizing projects, and a passion for social justice (McClory 2000). Alinsky formalized these conflict-based community organizing techniques through the creation of the Industrial Areas Foundation in 1940. The IAF continues to serve as a headquarters and funding conduit for community organizing projects across the country, and provide a training network for organizers.

Much of the Alinsky approach centers upon training organizers, clergy and lay leaders in the methods of forming and maintaining an organization. This school of community organizing places a high priority on leadership development, which often can be seen as the primary goal. Organizers tend to be less concerned about the final ends of a specific campaign than the means and intermediate ends of developing organizations and citizen leaders. As a result, organizers often have focused on local issues so as to galvanize interest and momentum among community members.

Alinsky-style organizing is very difficult work, posing an array of challenges. First, it requires highly skilled organizers to motivate citizens, build organizations, and construct viable
campaigns. Aside from the talents that the job requires, it takes large stores of energy and devotion. Many organizers burn out after relatively brief stints—sometimes due to poorly conceived campaigns, often due to the challenges of engaging citizenry in devastated neighborhoods. Finally, there are abiding tensions at the core of any community organizing work. How much does the organizer do without making the effort dependent upon her? How much does she focus on the success of specific campaigns relative to more broad leadership development goals?

Where the IAF and Alinsky-style organizing have succeeded, the accomplishments have been impressive. Notable IAF organizations include Communities Organized for Public Service in San Antonio, United Neighborhood Organization in Los Angeles, and Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (Wilson 1999). Such entities have successfully mounted living wage and school reform campaigns, along with many more local initiatives, while building power and hope in distressed urban areas.

There are several risks inherent in the Alinsky organizing model. One has to do with the above-mentioned tension between building organizations and leadership and succeeding on specific campaigns. Many organizations perpetually organize, but lack the focus of an end. The approach is very labor- and time-intensive, making sustainability a challenge and burnout a frequent reality for both organizers and organized. Finally, some question the ultimate effectiveness of conflict-based approaches to organizing, and advocate for different types of grassroots consensus organizing.

Since Alinsky’s death in 1972, his teachings and approach have lived on with the IAF, which has increased its emphasis on both faith-based organizing and institutionalized leadership training. Several other national community-organizing networks largely modeled after the IAF emerged during the 1980s, including the Gamaliel Foundation, the Direct Action and Research Training Center, the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing. Many of these networks and smaller organizing centers across the country have been formed by people who trained with the IAF (Robinson and Hanna 1994).

46 The IAF has its own iron rule – never do for people what they can do for themselves. Still, Ernesto Cortes, an IAF organizer who has built many powerful organizations in Texas, acknowledges that a dialectic exists for organizers: “It won’t happen without you, but it can’t be dependent upon you” (Moyers 1990:147).
Recent trends in organizing point to more regional, faith-based efforts. The shift to a more metropolitan scale has come about for several reasons. Many long-time organizers claim that the problems facing distressed urban neighborhoods require more broad bases of power than ever. Others suggest that regional faith-based coalitions show promise in addressing persistent problems of racism and inequality within metro areas (Wilson 1999; Rusk 1999; Richmond 2000).

Rusk lays out three strengths of church-based coalitions in addressing metropolitan equity. First, faith-based organizing efforts can mobilize thousands of people in support of regional reforms. They also have the potential to influence central-city politicians who are concerned about loss of power through metropolitan initiatives. Finally, churches can apply moral arguments to regional debates that often devolve into technical discussions of infrastructure, tax base, and the effects of concentrated poverty (see Pilla 1996).47 With respect to metropolitics, Rusk argues that this moral dimension “is necessary to push the calculus of political self-interest to the point of critical mass.”48 In addition to their moral strength, growth management advocate Henry Richmond claims that churches enjoy higher standing and better communication with urban and inner-suburban neighborhoods and their elected officials than many national minority groups and community development corporations.49

The Gamaliel Foundation and Metropolitanism

The Chicago-based Gamaliel Foundation has done the most to bring together faith-based community organizing and metropolitanism. Through its community organizing projects, Gamaliel follows in the footsteps of Alinsky in working to create powerful citizen organizations. However, what distinguishes Gamaliel is its interest in and commitment to issues of metropolitanism and regional equity.50

Gamaliel has taken on an abiding tension of faith-based community organizing in trying to be both church- and issue-based. Its primary goal is to build strong metropolitan organizations out

47 Rusk 1999:333-5.
of church membership and train citizen leaders for action. But Gamaliel also has a predetermined issue focus, as Gamaliel affiliates work to increase metropolitan equity through their campaigns. Through its organizing work in Chicago and elsewhere, Gamaliel has adopted a grassroots approach to metropolitics coalition building. As a result, Gamaliel affiliates must deal with the challenges of Alinsky-style organizing on top of the challenges posed by metropolitics coalition building.

Gamaliel, which has 50 affiliates mostly throughout the Midwest, bears a strong resemblance to the IAF. It provides organizing strategies, regular leadership training, and assistance on projects for its affiliates. Founder and president Gregory Galluzzo created Gamaliel as an “organizing institute” during the 1980s. Galluzzo, a former Jesuit priest, had trained with the IAF in Chicago during a heyday of organizing activity during the 1960s and early 1970s. When Galluzzo returned from a Jesuit mission in the late 1970s, he found that much of the previous organizing activity had fizzled, and IAF moved its central offices to New York.

Galluzzo aimed to fill Chicago’s gap in quality Alinsky-style organizing, and created the Gamaliel Foundation in 1986.51 Gamaliel has expanded rapidly since its inception to develop a presence in 12 states and most major metropolitan areas in the Midwest. Current Gamaliel affiliate sites include: Chicago, Peoria, Northwest Indiana, Iowa’s Quad Cities, Detroit, Saginaw, the Twin Cities, Saint Louis, Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Racine, Buffalo, Oakland, and South Africa.

Gamaliel’s shift toward metropolitanism and metropolitan organizing had its origins in the Twin Cities metropolitics experience. Pamela Twiss of the Saint Paul Ecumenical Alliance of Congregations – a Gamaliel affiliate in Minnesota – worked closely with Myron Orfield during the early 1990s and had discussions with Galluzzo about what was going on in the Twin Cities. These discussions about metropolitanism and political strategies to increase metropolitan equity came at a time when Galluzzo had seen a dramatic expansion in Gamaliel’s work, but began to question the ultimate effectiveness of traditional community organizing around local issues. Galluzzo could point to several Gamaliel organizing projects that had lost tough battles – school

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50 The IAF has recently expanded its organizing work to the regional scale around issues such as health insurance, but has not explicitly focused upon problems associated with the fragmentation of metropolitan areas.
reform and stadium work in Milwaukee, several initiatives in Gary, Indiana – because the organizations behind them were limited to inner-city interests. Spurred by deliberation over what was going on in the Twin Cities, a conviction emerged among Gamaliel’s leadership that organizing at the neighborhood level was no longer sufficient, and that regional organizing was essential to address core problems facing neighborhoods.52

Since community organizers are trained in the art of power analysis and determining where decisions affecting citizens’ lives are made, the shift to metropolitan issues made clear sense to several Gamaliel veterans. Many organizers were accustomed to working and organizing at a neighborhood scale, yet had observed over their careers that the major forces shaping low-income communities resided at higher regional, national, and global levels. Gamaliel decided that it would supplement the more local work done by its affiliate churches and organizations with the creation of metropolitan power organizations to address issues of regional policy and equity.

Gamaliel has used its annual national leadership assemblies and ongoing consulting work with affiliate organizations to educate and form agendas around metropolitan issues. Staff have worked to connect local concerns expressed by Gamaliel affiliates with metropolitan issues such as sprawl, fiscal disparities, transportation and infrastructure investment, education spending, and affordable housing. As part of this work, Gamaliel has developed strong relationships with regional thinkers such as Orfield, David Rusk, Henry Richmond, and John Powell, and called upon these scholars to discuss metro policies and speak at leadership training sessions. Gamaliel also has created a public policy organization within the foundation called the American Metropolitan Equities Network (AMEN), which conducts research on metropolitanism and helps affiliates strategize around regional issues.

With an eye toward building power for metropolitanism at a national level, Gamaliel currently is engaged in an aggressive expansion campaign. It has begun to move beyond its traditional base in the Midwest to launch affiliates in California and the East. Starting in 1999, Gamaliel aims to expand into ten new sites per year over the next decade. The hope is that metropolitan

51 Gamaliel was reorganized from an already existing entity, and Galluzzo inherited an organizational name that fit his new nonprofit perfectly. In the New Testament, Gamaliel mentored Saint Paul, who in turn, helped organize Jesus Christ.
52 Galluzzo often says that his turn toward metropolitanism left him feeling like his first 30 years in organizing were “spent cleaning out the engine room of the Titanic.”
organizations within the Gamaliel network will be able to learn from one another while also influencing policy at the federal level.

Gamaliel’s work in building metropolitan power organizations throughout the Midwest has yielded several accomplishments thus far. Affiliates in Chicago and Detroit obtained millions of dollars for drug prevention and treatment from the federal government. In the Twin Cities, four Gamaliel affiliates helped to secure $60 million in state funds to clean up landfills and toxic sites in the urban core. In Columbus, Building Responsibility, Equity and Dignity (BREAD) successfully lobbied for the creation of transit centers to provide connections to jobs in the suburbs along with on-site support services (Gamaliel Foundation 1999). One of the most successful metropolitan Gamaliel coalitions has been in Northwest Indiana around Gary, Hammond and East Chicago. The Northwest Indiana Federation successfully blocked the relocation of county juvenile courts from Gary to suburban Crown Point, as well as a federal courthouse from Hammond.\(^{53}\)

The Birth of the Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations

While the Gamaliel efforts mentioned above have involved organizing at a metropolitan level, they have not necessarily employed metropolitics coalition-building strategies. In many ways, Chicago’s Metropolitan Alliance of Congregations is Gamaliel’s flagship effort when it comes to metropolitics. In part, this is because it is in Gamaliel’s backyard of Chicago, and draws upon the organization’s top minds and resources. But, more importantly, it is led by Mary Gonzales – arguably Chicago’s most skilled and successful community organizer.\(^{54}\) Gonzales and Gamaliel president Galluzzo, who married in 1979, have created a formidable community organizing team over the past two decades in Chicago, starting with the formation of the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO) to empower Chicago’s Mexican-Americans (Cruz 1990), through their current collaboration on MAC.

\(^{54}\) In a 1990 compilation of essays titled After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois, Wilfredo Cruz writes that “Gonzales is considered the best and most dynamic organizer in Chicago” (16). While the author has little comparative perspective among organizers – within Chicago or otherwise – the claim was confirmed repeatedly by others during field research.
The board of the Gamaliel Foundation initiated MAC’s creation in 1995, out of a perceived need for a larger power base to address metropolitan issues in Chicago. MAC brought together five already existing Gamaliel affiliates – the Alliance of Congregations Transforming the Southside (ACTS); Interfaith Southsiders Allied in Action and Hope (ISAIAH); the Joliet Area Churches Organized Body (JACOB); Pilsen Neighbors Community Council (PNCC); and the South Suburban Action Conference (SSAC). Currently, MAC is composed of almost 150 congregations and community institutions in the Chicago metropo area, and continues to grow. MAC’s stated mission is to build a grassroots constituency for metropolitan equity, and prepare members to act upon a regional agenda.

This regional mission has been overlaid on top of the local organizing efforts and missions of already existing Gamaliel affiliates. MAC has largely been able to avoid the problems of competing local and regional programs by skillfully managing relationships with affiliates and making sure to deliver on the interests of member churches. Local affiliates continue to work with churches on local projects, develop leaders, and promote church membership. At the same time, MAC organizers educate member congregations about how their local concerns are tied to metropolitan development patterns and policies. At times, this has divided leadership within Gamaliel member congregations, as some laypeople and clergy become excited by regional campaigns while others focus on more local issues.

MAC’s primary task during its first few years has been to build a membership base across the Chicago metro area. Gonzales, MAC and Gamaliel staff have strategized about where to concentrate church recruitment efforts in order to increase power and influence. MAC teamed up with Orfield shortly after he completed a 1996 study on Chicago for the MacArthur Foundation, and used his maps to think about the spatial components of a potential Chicagoland metropolitics coalition.55 Due to its five founding organizations, MAC already had a relatively strong church presence in Chicago’s South Side, the declining suburbs in south Cook County, and Joliet to the southwest of the city. As a result, MAC has decided to focus its current expansion work on Chicago’s north side and suburbs, and the west side of the city.

MAC has employed a standard Gamaliel approach in doing this expansion work. It starts by making a MAC organizer responsible for expansion into an area, with the goal of bringing a fixed

55 For those familiar with Orfield’s metropolitics maps, these are the communities that are literally and figuratively “in the red.”
number of churches into the organization by a certain date. The organizer starts by approaching pastors who have heard of MAC or might be interested in its approach. MAC offers the resources typically afforded by Gamaliel membership — leadership training and development, and strategic consulting on issues of concern to the congregation — church attendance and expansion often foremost among them. While appealing to the self-interest of each pastor and congregation, MAC also begins to talk about the metropolitan nature of the problems that each community is facing. Through this process, the MAC organizer aims to develop interest among a seed group of religious leaders who will agree to form a sponsoring committee. The sponsoring committee must raise enough money to pay for a MAC organizer to work in the area, and arranges “come-and-see” events where MAC organizers and other speakers connected to Gamaliel discuss MAC and metropolitan issues.

These initial come-and-see events are followed by the bread-and-butter of Alinsky-style organizing — “one-on-ones.” A series of one-on-one conversations are held within congregations among combinations of organizers, clergy and lay people, providing information about concerns in the community and revealing potential leaders. This process is meant to build momentum until the sponsoring committee is ready to commit to becoming a Gamaliel affiliate. Member churches then must devote between 1 and 1.5% of their pledge and plate income to the affiliate, which in turn ends up funding MAC.

The ongoing expansion work of MAC is extremely time-, staff-, and meeting-intensive. Thus far, MAC has been fairly successful in shoring up support for metro work from its initial five affiliates. But efforts to expand north and west of the city have been slow-going. Staff constraints have provided the largest impediment to more rapid expansion. MAC has a staff of eight that splits duties between regional and local affiliate work.

David Hatch, who started the ISAIAH Gamaliel affiliate on the south side of Chicago, has been working to draw in northern parts of the city and suburbs. But he has been frustrated by a strong Industrial Areas Foundation presence there. The IAF, which returned to Chicago in 1996 with United Power for Action and Justice after a 20-year hiatus from the city, had a jump-start on MAC in recruiting congregations in the north. Hatch says that most of the northern congregations that would have considered joining MAC have already affiliated with United Power. Beyond this initial hurdle, Hatch, who still maintains some responsibilities on the south side, talks about the endless string of meetings, often over large distances, that he must juggle to keep building a
sponsoring committee in the north. MAC is just beginning to build relationships on Chicago’s largely African-American west side.

Once a congregation is paying into a MAC affiliate – or MAC itself where a regional affiliate has yet to form – it is required to form a “core team” of clergy and lay people. This group of at least 10 congregation members commits to attend week-long Gamaliel leadership training sessions, engage in local projects and programs, and further MAC’s metropolitan work. The core teams, along with MAC organizers, helped to coordinate and conduct thousands of one-on-ones in preparation for MAC’s kickoff event in 1997. The typical community organizing approach for building a new core team is to engage it early with a winnable project – something as simple as getting a stop sign added to a corner, if necessary – to solidify confidence and leadership. But with the flurry of congregations that joined MAC at its birth, core team development has been rushed for many. As a result, many core teams that appeared energized in 1997 have recently faltered, requiring MAC organizers now to go back and focus again on basic core team development activities.

The one-on-ones leading into MAC’s launch in 1997 required highly skilled organizing on behalf of MAC. The first challenge, as always with organizing, was getting congregation members and potential leaders engaged. The logistical work of managing the endless string of one-on-ones also proved challenging. Within these meetings, MAC organizers had to carefully listen to and process concerns, while also educating people about metropolitan issues. Through their experience and quality training with Gamaliel, MAC organizers proved artful in cultivating leadership while not exerting too much of their own influence.

Gonzales said that achieving this balance as an organizer was not as difficult as it might seem, claiming that any local concern could be shown to stem from a regional problem. The challenge, then, was to find out which issues would garner the most support while proving ripe for reform. While MAC was focused on the regional scale, its staff and leadership maintained an open mind about which issues to pursue. Gonzales’ leadership skills and sharp organizing instincts kept these initial one-on-ones moving forward with momentum through a process that often gets stalled in less well-run organizing campaigns.

MAC said that three metro concerns emerged from the one-on-ones: distribution of financial resources across the region, in particular school funding; transportation; and public safety. Late
in 1996, MAC held issue forums with experts on each of the three topics; each forum drew about 400 MAC leaders. Out of this process, MAC’s initial sponsoring committee began to design possible campaigns around school finance, transportation, and safety. Leading into the founding convention in 1997, MAC leaders also conducted a series of one-on-ones with public officials about the emerging campaigns.

At its rousing founding convention in May 1997, MAC drew more than 5,000 congregational members committed to fighting for metropolitan equity in the region. MAC’s newly elected executive committee identified four keys issues to address: 1) funding for public education, 2) federal transportation spending, 3) property tax burdens and fiscal disparities, and 4) fair distribution of private credit throughout the region, in particular mortgages.

The purpose of MAC’s process was both to build the organization and its leaders, as well as to learn as much as possible about issues and interests for upcoming campaigns. MAC’s decision to work on four broad issues reflected its desire for a diversified approach to keep its sprawling constituency engaged. MAC also began to reach outside of its growing organization to talk with policy experts and public officials – something that it has not been as aggressive about in subsequent regional work.

Even with such a large coalition managing different interests and actors, MAC succeeded in establishing effective decision-making processes early on. The main decision-making power for MAC rests with a delegate congress, which draws mostly lay representatives from church core teams. MAC also established a metro clergy caucus, which has met quarterly and tends to draw about 100 people per meeting. Much of Gamaliel’s leadership training focuses on how to effectively run meetings and arrive at strategic decisions, so it is no wonder that Gonzales and her staff ran a tight ship. MAC staff certainly guides many of these decisions – one doubts that lay people came into their first one-on-ones concerned about fiscal disparities and regional tax-base sharing. Yet MAC skillfully and methodically built consensus from within leading into the kickoff about the importance of their four chosen issues.
MAC Attacks Metro Issues

Coming off the momentum of the kickoff meeting, MAC began issue work on several fronts. Much of this early work responded to concerns raised by members during one-on-ones and did not fall within the model of metropolitics coalition building. The first effort began one day after MAC’s founding convention, as busloads of clergy and laypeople went to the state capital in Springfield for an intensive month of lobbying on school finance reform. A school funding debate had been brewing on-and-off in Illinois for two decades, and with a finance equity lawsuit in the courts and growing political will, 1997 looked like it would be the year when reform would happen.

Many different civic groups and political leaders were involved with the school finance reform package that eventually passed, and MAC played a significant role. During May 1997, MAC ran an Alinsky-style “action” on Governor Jim Edgar when it found out that he was to address a chamber of commerce meeting in the southwest suburbs. Three hundred leaders from MAC showed up at the meeting and demanded to speak with the Republican governor. Edgar ended up meeting with the group for 15 minutes, and committed to working with the Democratic leader of the state House to pass school finance legislation. MAC then went on to demand accountability and action from House Speaker Michael Madigan, taking four busloads of pastors to his law office. Meanwhile, teams of MAC leaders regularly met with individual legislators in Springfield to express their concerns and display their numbers.

MAC’s major goal around school finance was to separate funding of public schools from local property taxes. Legislation backed by Edgar and Madigan would have done this, providing level funding for Illinois schools by relying more upon state coffers and a progressive increase in the state income tax. According to one analysis of the bill, the funding changes would have left 86% of taxpayers across the state better off. This legislative approach had a metropolitics feel to it, as MAC and its allies relied upon majority self-interest and conflict politics in the legislature to try to achieve finance equity goals.

It was a controversial proposition, but with so many legislators standing to gain and heavy lobbying from MAC, the state House approved the bill. However, companion legislation never reached a Senate vote, as GOP Senate leader Pate Philip refused to call the bill to the floor. Philip, whose district lies in Chicago’s wealthy DuPage County suburbs, did not respond to
pressures applied by MAC or others on the issue. MAC staged multiple actions in DuPage, including sending busloads of MAC members to Philip's home, but the Senate leader would not budge. MAC claims that it had the votes to win narrowly in the Senate, and that Philip's decision not to call the bill made the difference.

Eventually, school finance reform legislation passed the Illinois General Assembly during a special session and was signed into law by the governor in December 1997. The legislation enhanced tools for effective school management, raised the foundation level of funding, and created a state capital bonding program. Aside from the foundation level component, the law's most significant equity component was a four-year commitment of $1.3 billion in state transfers to low-performing, low-capacity school districts. This pot of money will be used up in 2001, however, and MAC sees another opportunity to raise the issue of tax reform and school finance equity. It is considering mounting another campaign next year to highlight the fiscal pressures that arise from the state's heavy reliance upon local property taxes for school funding.

Another early focus for MAC has been regional transportation planning and investment. Like the Citizens Planning and Housing Association in Baltimore, MAC teamed up with other organizations working on transportation issues in Chicago to put pressure on the region's metropolitan planning organization to make its planning process more responsive to low-income communities. MAC and partners such as the Center for Neighborhood Technology, the Environmental Law and Policy Center, and the Metropolitan Planning Council focused on the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS). The coalition brought busloads of citizens to a CATS meeting in the suburb of Schaumburg to raise concerns about the representative nature of the body and its choice of meeting place far from the city during business hours.

MAC and its transportation equity partners convened a historic meeting with US Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater in August 1998. At the meeting, Slater pledged federal support to promote urban-suburban transit links and increase citizen participation on MPOs. MAC has used its numbers to successfully push for the resumption of nighttime bus service in Joliet after a nine-year hiatus. It also worked to save the Blue Line of Chicago's elevated train system, which passes through several low-income and minority communities, from demolition.

In its public safety work, MAC joined with a Gamaliel affiliate in Detroit to fight against drugs. MAC and MOSES targeted the federal High-Intensity Drug Trafficking program, which offers
significant drug-elimination funding for communities along borders or ports of entry. Midwestern cities never had been eligible for such funding, but MAC and MOSES made a joint plea to the feds for consideration. After a meeting with federal officials in Detroit, they gained designation for the program, with most of the funding going toward expanded policing.

MAC is involved with one initiative that more closely resembles a program than a campaign. It is an effort to attract $1 billion in affordable mortgages for low-income communities throughout Chicagoland over the next two decades. The initiative is part of MAC’s Rebuilding America’s Communities Campaign, which aims to promote metropolitan equity through the redistribution of public and private wealth. While MAC’s focus on metropolitan tax-base sharing addresses the public wealth side, the mortgage program is an ambitious effort to mobilize private capital. MAC has partnered with the New Cities Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit low-income housing developer in the south suburbs, to work to obtain the mortgage commitments and recruit and train 13,000 low-income families to take advantage of the program. The size of the mortgage initiative has threatened to consume much of MAC’s precious staff time, but Gonzales has worked to establish effective collaborations with MAC’s nonprofit and banking partners.

MAC’s ongoing expansion and multiple regional campaigns point to extreme organizational complexity. Each of MAC’s eight organizers is responsible for a designated geographic area, where the focus may be expansion or shoring up and responding to current Gamaliel affiliates and congregations. In addition, each staffer works on specific tasks for MAC, from managing core team development to staffing the mortgage initiative to laying the groundwork for a tax-base sharing campaign. The extreme demands of building the organization and its leadership, while facilitating complex political campaigns and programs to increase metro equity are felt by the entire dedicated staff.

Gonzales has been the field general and quarterback keeping MAC’s complexity from overwhelming its early efforts. Her charisma, energy, vision, and optimism provide a center for the varied regional work. She has done an amazing juggling act to keep the various programs, actors, and interests moving along, but some fear that few understand how all of MAC’s activities and strategies come together. Gamaliel stresses transparency in its citizen organizations, and Galluzzo worries that his wife has created a regional entity that only she can understand and manage. Despite such fears, Gonzales and MAC have a very strong network to draw upon through the Gamaliel Foundation and its partners.
Among the administrative responsibilities that Gonzales must juggle is fundraising. Any such responsibility keeps Gonzales from doing what she does best – going out to agitate and organize others for action. But MAC has fared relatively well in its fundraising efforts thus far, benefiting from the success of the Gamaliel Foundation. However, Gonzales is concerned about funding sustainability over time – a constant problem for broad-based community organizing efforts. IAF organizations aspire to no foundation contributions so as to insure their independence and cement member commitment through dues. In taking on metropolitanism, Gamaliel has tried to keep its foundation funding at one-third.

MAC’s current budgets draw two-thirds of their funding from foundation support. MAC has relied heavily upon foundations to build an initial base for its work, but realizes that foundations tend not to offer ongoing core operating support for community organizing – especially when campaigns turn more political. MAC plans to launch a contribution campaign this year in hopes of achieving its funding balance goal of one-third member contributions, one-third foundation grants, and one-third other contributions.

MAC and Tax-Base Sharing

Within the past year, MAC has begun to apply its growing membership base to build a metropolitics coalition around tax-base sharing. Myron Orfield’s initial metropolitics study in 1996 for the MacArthur Foundation laid the groundwork for considerations of regional revenue-sharing in Chicago. He met with Illinois legislators at the time of the report’s release, generating some discussion but no local follow-through. It was during this time that MAC was preparing for its launch and began to build a relationship with Orfield, emerging as the organization to move forward from his maps to try to create a Chicagoland metropolitics coalition.

During its first two years, MAC leadership was thinking about how to position the organization to work on tax-base sharing. It began concerted work on the issue in spring of 1999, focusing largely on efforts within MAC. MAC’s first year on tax-base sharing has had three components: a general strategizing phase that has relied heavily upon a task force, focus groups to learn further about the viability of the issue, and a first round of discussions with mayors in the south Cook County suburbs. MAC has held off on floating a bill in the legislature, instead concentrating on
educating its leaders and conducting a power analysis around the issue – standard activities within MAC’s community organizing culture.

MAC has set aside almost one full-time equivalent position for tax-base sharing work. While all MAC staff are involved with the process of laying the groundwork for a future metropolitics coalition by building membership in communities in the red, three staff are explicitly working on tax-base sharing. Gonzales maintains an oversight role, helping with administration, fundraising, and strategizing. The staff lead is David Hatch, who currently devotes half his time to building the tax-base sharing effort, largely through staffing a 40-person tax-base sharing task force made up of MAC leaders. Much of his energy goes to building a MAC presence on the north side and north suburbs. In addition, Hatch is working to bring in congregations from his former turf on the south side, making for many days with hours spent commuting between distant organizing assignments – a common complaint of MAC’s regional organizers. Another MAC organizer, George Hemberger with JACOB in Joliet, devotes about one-fifth of his time to tax-base sharing.

Managing this division of labor poses challenges, but the MAC team has managed well. Hatch’s passion about the problem of fiscal disparities and belief in the potential to forge a metropolitics coalition around it drives his work. Gonzales, Hemberger, and Hatch all possess high-order political and organizing skills cultivated through years of experience. Their strengths have buoyed the effort in the face of limited staff resources, political challenges, and the nagging problem of covering such a vast region.

The Metropolitan Equity Task Force has been meeting two or three times per month over the past year to hone a strategy around tax-base sharing and train leaders to have conversations on the topic. The task force is assigned with conducting research and policy analysis on how to position the complex issue. Hatch has used his political knowledge to produce for the task force an initial power analysis of the region – who would and would not support given proposals. MAC decided to hire a Chicago-based consultant to present models of potential tax-base sharing schemes to the task force. This was done, in part, at the behest of one of MAC’s biggest funders, the MacArthur Foundation, which found that Orfield ran into resistance when he initially presented revenue-sharing models in Chicago; policymakers who had long worked on tax and school funding issues dubbed Orfield a carpetbagger.
The task force reviewed the tax-base sharing models, and focused upon one in which 80% of the region’s jurisdictions would end up “winners”, or tax-base recipients, through a redistribution formula. At this stage of the process, Gonzales expressed concern that the task force was spending too much time thinking through policy instead of devising political strategies. She feared that the task force’s prolonged discussion of revenue-sharing models was turning MAC’s active leaders into complacent wonks. In the finest community organizing tradition, she slammed the task force during a tense meeting and challenged them to move forward. She had Mike Kruglik of Gamaliel’s AMEN project came to speak to the task force in an effort to step up their political astuteness. The result was a sharp increase in discussion within the task force about key political dynamics and players in the region and the state.

The task force is viewed as MAC’s delivery mechanism for education and outreach on tax-base sharing. Its basic approach is similar to Orfield’s and, in theory, CPHA’s – bone up on regional issues, schedule meetings with political and organizational leaders and listen to their concerns, discuss the regional nature of these concerns, and explore the prospects for a metropolitics coalition around given issues. Although the MAC organizers focusing on tax-base sharing are capable of all of the above, MAC’s strategy is to build up task force members so that they can go out to carry on the necessary conversations and increase the scope of the campaign. As a result, much of Hatch’s work with the task force has been in training its 40 members to put together effective presentations on the topic. Many task force members who previously had no public speaking or political experience now are able to go out and hold sophisticated conversations on tax policy, sprawl, exclusionary zoning, economic development competition and school funding. MAC’s ability to cultivate powerful citizen leaders has been truly impressive.

Task force co-chair Wynell Vernett-Butler says that even though there are significant time and participation demands for the task force, it has not been particularly difficult getting people involved. A core team of six or seven people on the task force has shown special dedication and appears ready to keep fighting for tax-base sharing. She notes that pastors on the task force have not been able to devote as much to the work, as they must divide time between other competing tasks.

Seeking ways to learn about the viability of tax-base sharing, MAC last year convened an ad hoc advisory group. This group, comprised of policymakers and people from advocacy and research organizations, was involved with strategizing over how to position a tax-base sharing campaign in
Illinois. Their main task was to help create a focus group tool to determine how tax-base sharing proposals would be perceived in declining and low-tax base suburbs. Again, at the urging of the MacArthur Foundation, MAC hired an outside political consultant to assist in the focus group process, as well as to work on MAC’s outreach materials and image. The consultant held four focus groups in suburbs that would benefit from tax-base sharing and brought the results back to the advisory group.

The focus group findings did not come as a surprise to MAC, but confirmed several suspicions. The study indicated that a great deal of distrust existed when politicians raised the issue of taxes. Yet focus group participants were more comfortable if the topic was broached by a church-affiliated group. Racial fear appeared to be a highly significant issue, while residents of second-ring suburbs often denied that their communities were experiencing decline. In terms of regional concerns, traffic congestion proved to be an extremely hot-button issue. Finally, MAC learned lessons about regional awareness and overall comfort with metro terminology (e.g., ‘equity’ was associated with home mortgages and not social justice; ‘fairness’ resonated more with people). A general conclusion from the focus group findings and evaluation by the advisory committee was that more public education was required before a legislative campaign could be waged.

The advisory committee process demonstrated MAC’s willingness to engage outside expertise. However, it also underscored MAC’s lack of ongoing engagement with other organizations in the coalition-building process. Several participants on the advisory committee were very interested in and excited by MAC’s regional grassroots organizing efforts, and enjoyed the opportunity to participate. Yet, the committee disbanded at the end of the focus group process, and several members remain in the dark about MAC’s current efforts.

Business interests have been glaringly missing from MAC’s work, especially in light of Elmer Johnson’s emphasis on metropolitan equity and regional tax-base sharing in the recent *Metropolis 2020* plan. Meanwhile, task force co-chair Butler is worried that MAC has not been talking about its work and tax-base sharing with city organizations. MAC has laid low from the press, aiming to build its capacity and campaigns before making a media push. Whereas the press strategy is largely intentional, much of MAC’s reluctance to partner with different types of organizations to build a base for metropolitics comes from an organizing culture that stresses distrust of many other entities and constant internal development.
After virtual nonstop urgings from Orfield to make contact with suburban officials, members of MAC’s tax-base sharing task force held a series of conversations in south Cook County in February. The meetings with 20 mayors and city managers from declining suburbs marked MAC’s first major outreach to build a base for metropolitics beyond its member congregations. MAC decided to venture first into south Cook County for several reasons. Through its South Suburban Action Conference Gamaliel affiliate, it already has relationships and a presence in south Cook County. South Cook County also is increasingly where African Americans and poor people are moving when displaced out of the city. In terms of the political calculus of the region, it is firmly “in the red” on Orfield’s maps and could prove an important swing vote in any type of metropolitics coalition.

The meetings with south Cook County mayors and managers were much like Orfield’s in the suburbs north of the Twin Cities, but later in the process. They served the same several purposes: building relationships where none existed before; getting a sense of the major interests and concerns of local officials; educating them about fiscal disparities and tax-base sharing; finding out where power lies in the region; and gauging initial willingness to engage in a fight over tax-base sharing in the state legislature.

One thing that distinguished these meetings from those held by Orfield was the manner in which they were convened. MAC organizers did not set up any of the meetings; rather, task force leaders arranged and ran them. The task force would place between three and five MAC leaders in each meeting, making sure to include a member of the clergy and to present a racial and gender mix. During the meetings, MAC leaders would discuss fiscal disparities, relate personal stories about how tax capacity has impacted their lives, and often the pastor would speak to a moral imperative to act. The MAC delegates also would present maps and numbers from possible tax-base sharing runs, and then get responses from the mayors.

Several members of the task force met every day during the February blitz, whether preparing for or conducting meetings. Many were devoting far more time to the campaign than Hatch or any other MAC staff. Overall, Hatch was quite pleased with the initial effort, feeling that task force members were compelling during the meetings and had made connections with several officials.

Mayors and managers offered a range of responses, and none were completely resistant to the idea of tax-base sharing. All of the suburban officials had an understanding of the fierceness of
interjurisdictional economic development competition in the region and its impact on their tax coffers. According to Hatch (he and Hemberger sat in on almost all of the meetings), about one-quarter of the officials already had some familiarity with revenue sharing and were initially supportive. A few maintained a purely local stance throughout the conversation, expressing a belief that their municipalities could grow out of tax-base pressures. Several mayors expressed concerns about the politics of a revenue-sharing battle in the legislature, wanting to protect relationships in Springfield. Hatch felt that after this first round of meetings, about six officials would be willing to actively engage in a tax-base sharing fight.

MAC learned important lessons from this initial round of meetings with south Cook County mayors and managers. First, many of the mayors are part-time and are not heavily engaged with decision-making, often relying upon key advisors or city managers. Even mayors who were concerned about the impacts of fiscal disparities on their jurisdictions said they did not have the time or energy to work on the issue at a regional scale, especially the intensive work of building political coalitions. Finally, while many had heard of Orfield and his analysis of Chicago, there was not a lot of clear, deep thinking among officials on the nature of regional problems.

The task force’s next step in south Cook County will be to go back for second meetings with the mayors and managers with the most support and influence. MAC also plans to talk with its member pastors in the area and get them to bring their mayors to a group meeting. Through this process, MAC hopes to solidify a political and geographic bloc of support for tax-base sharing. However, it will have to split the area’s already existing municipal alliance – the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association – as three of its members would be “losers,” or contributors, under most tax-base sharing schemes. Even with this challenge, MAC hopes to catalyze a committed south suburban bloc that can approach the city for a coalition.

MAC aim to repeat the process it has gone through in the south suburbs in other parts of the region. Once MAC has duplicated the effort in other key areas of Chicagoland where it has expanded its membership, the growing coalition will approach state legislators. For now, there is widespread agreement on the task force that MAC needs a better understanding of the political process and dynamics surrounding tax-base sharing before a bill is introduced in Springfield. The task force also is considering sponsoring workshops or assemblies to increase awareness about fiscal disparities in the Chicago region.
Meanwhile, Hemberger worries that citizen leaders within JACOB, an older Gamaliel affiliate in Joliet, are becoming restless around tax-base sharing. He says that many wonder whether MAC has a long-term strategy for tax-base sharing beyond the current string of meetings. If such a strategy does exist among top MAC staff, it is not felt throughout the entire organization.

This dynamic brings MAC back to the question of when it will introduce a tangible tax-base sharing proposal – both to maintain momentum and focus among its leaders and to test the waters in the legislature. Orfield keeps urging MAC to float a bill, see who lines up in favor and against, and proceed from there. But MAC, by its nature as a community organizing and leadership-development entity, is more inclined to the ongoing, incremental grassroots approach to build power and political will. Even so, MAC is constantly reevaluating its strategy and considering its next move.

Analysis

Overall, MAC has gotten off to a promising start. Even though it has yet to make any major legislative pushes beyond its initial education finance effort, MAC is steadily building a base for metropolitics. In the meantime, the organization has scored regional victories outside of its tax-base sharing work.

MAC is particularly notable for its clear metropolitics vision and strategy. The approach is well understood throughout the organization – build support for viable issues, expand membership to fill in the metropolitics map, create leaders from congregation core teams and the tax-base sharing task force, hold relationship-building meetings with officials and public leaders, and constantly strategize about how to position issues. The question remains whether MAC will be able to fully actualize this strategy – and fast enough to keep its membership engaged. Thus far, MAC has taken the right steps.

MAC also is doing a good job of managing the core challenges of community organizing – engaging and developing citizen leaders, fighting off fatigue among staff, and developing coherent campaigns out of fractured consensus. MAC faces several obstacles to bringing in new membership – from competition with the IAF to resistance from churches that disdain the Alinsky
approach in particular and engagement in worldly politics in general. Still, MAC continues to steadily build its organization.

Much of MAC’s early success can be attributed to its dynamic leadership and skilled staff. It is an impressive group, starting with Gonzales and Galluzzo. Even with such a talented team, MAC staff often express frustration with how difficult the work is.

While MAC has placed a high priority on leadership development among its staff and member congregations, it has done little to cultivate relationships outside of the organization. MAC has decided to build its own organization from within. It reaps the benefits of such investments now, but there may be negative consequences down the line from not partnering with other organizations to expand its reach.

MAC has constantly been learning and adjusting in its early experiences. It exhibits the characteristics of a learning organization through its focus group work, meetings with mayors, and engagement in multiple regional campaigns. Through all these efforts, MAC has reflected upon its role, gained a sense of potential allies, and learned how to run effective meetings on metro issues. These learning experiences are not limited to a few staff members, but are spread throughout the organization.

MAC’s approach to regional work indicates that, even for highly dynamic and strategic organizations, culture matters. MAC has tended not to stray from its religious base to work with civic groups. Strategic concerns about efficiency have contributed to this approach, but it also can be attributed to the nature of the catalyst organization. MAC has been relatively suspicious or unwilling to work with business and civic interests; it is just beginning to meet with suburban officials. MAC’s link to the Gamaliel Foundation’s network keeps it from becoming more isolated.

MAC faces several major challenges in trying to build metropolitics coalitions. The organizational complexity of MAC is formidable, yet Gonzales has done quite well with internal management. MAC’s diversity of regional projects allows it to engage its membership on several issues and hedge against failure, but the sheer weight of its range of projects could stymie future efforts.
Building a metropolitics base through grassroots organizing demands a huge amount of resources and effort from MAC. In many ways, MAC engages in thicker organizing and engagement than either CPHA or Orfield. MAC excels in cultivating leaders, yet still faces challenges in assembling the army necessary to cover its vast region. Finally, fundraising is more difficult for MAC than for a civic organization like CPHA since its community organizing work is overtly political. Raising private foundation and business money for organizing work provides a constant challenge.
Chapter 6

The Role of the Regional Catalyst Organization

The concluding chapters draw from the previous Twin Cities, Baltimore, and Chicago case studies to answer the following research questions: what do regional catalyst organizations do, and how can they succeed in creating metropolitics coalitions? This chapter provides a theoretical framework to understand the role of RCOs by examining the reasons why metropolitics coalitions do not form on their own, the nature of RCOs, the outcomes they seek, and the actions they take. The concluding chapter goes on to discuss major challenges that RCOs face, strategic decisions that they must make, and keys to success.

Barriers to Metropolitics

If metropolitics is a political strategy that relies upon the self-interests of central city and ailing suburban communities, why don’t metropolitics coalitions form naturally on their own? Why is there any need for a catalyst agent to make metropolitics happen?

One major reason why metropolitics has not happened of its own accord in places such as Baltimore and Chicago has to do with the strength of localism in the face of proposed regional reforms. The tradition of home rule runs deep in each of the regions studied – from Chicagoland’s 262 municipalities to the six major jurisdictions of the Baltimore region. Local autonomy is closely guarded, with citizens valuing access to decision-makers and the accountability afforded by local government. Although awareness about regional issues has been on the upswing in each case study site during the 1990s, underpinning these local tendencies are a general lack of civic participation and regional identity at the metropolitan level. Racial and class tensions are other aspects of localism that have kept metropolitics from proceeding without a catalyst. Baltimore’s fight over the Moving to Opportunity program and Chicago’s high levels of segregation point to the importance of this barrier.
Affluent communities can be relied upon to oppose redistributive measures that limit their autonomy. But more important to understand is why communities that would benefit from metropolitics proposals do not create coalitions on their own. Potentially sympathetic politicians and organizations withhold support for a number of reasons. Some fear that any form of metropolitanism will erode their urban power base. Others lack familiarity with regional issues and are wary of new alliances. Orfield’s meetings with the Urban Coalition in the Twin Cities were an attempt to get past these hurdles. Finally, potential metropolitics coalition members often are skeptical about ultimate payoffs, as both Orfield and MAC heard in initial conversations with suburban officials.

A lack of information about regional trends and possible policy responses also has kept metropolitics coalitions from forming of their own accord. While Chicago’s Metropolis 2020 plan and Baltimore’s recent flurry of regional reports have generated discussion and support in elite civic and policy circles, many decision-makers who would logically form the core of a metropolitics coalition remain unfamiliar with regional issues and jargon. Conversations held with suburban officials in Baltimore and Chicago reveal that busy suburban mayors and city managers have had little incentive to become regional experts or advocates.

But even with good information on metropolitan trends and a sense of regional identity, metropolitics cannot advance without a strategy around which to forge a coalition. Many of the reports generated in Baltimore and Chicago have stopped at the problem-framing stage, or offered politically unrealistic reform proposals (e.g. Rusk 1996 on fair-share housing). Metropolitics demands viable legislative strategies that serve as rallying points to align political self-interests.

Another barrier to spontaneous metropolitics coalition formation in Baltimore and Chicago has been a lack of social capital or regional civic infrastructure (Putnam 1993; Wallis 1993). Prospective metropolitics allies often have not developed relationships across jurisdictional boundaries. If and when relationships do exist, they often are based on suspicion or mistrust. Suburbs of Baltimore and Chicago have long viewed their urban neighbors as corrupt and mismanaged. Orfield found that many declining suburbs in the Twin Cities initially viewed collaboration with urban interests as a form of political degradation. Although metropolitics

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56 See Dimond 2000.
57 For a clear discussion of why urban and minority communities resist metropolitanism, see powell 2000.
relies heavily upon self-interest, it still requires trust and cooperation for a coalition to come together and weather political battles.

In light of ongoing suburbanization and the declining political power of the central city (Weir 1996; Paget 1998), political leaders in Baltimore and Chicago have been hesitant to assume regional leadership. Several county executives from suburban Baltimore have expressed general support for regional measures, but suggest that they will not lead until a solid constituency is in place. Meanwhile, traditional regional reform advocates from the civic sector, such as Chicago’s Metropolitan Planning Council and, recently, Baltimore’s Greater Baltimore Committee, have been reluctant to champion a metropolitics approach to address equity concerns. With a lack of agents and constituencies advocating for reform, mobilizing resources in support of such a campaign becomes more of a challenge.

Reflecting upon the experiences in Baltimore and Chicago, the following list of barriers to metropolitics coalition formation emerges:

- Lack of leadership/regional change agent
- Lack of constituency
- Lack of resources
- Lack of information on metropolitan issues/sense of regional identity
- Lack of tangible proposals to rally around
- Lack of social capital/regional civic infrastructure
- Greater power of the “have” suburbs

The cases indicate that metropolitics is not self-evident, and will not happen of its own accord. However, RCOs in Baltimore, Chicago, and elsewhere have recognized the strength of metropolitics as a theory of action – its potential to forge viable constituencies for regional reform in light of current power alignments within regions and state legislatures. Excited by the promise of metropolitics to address regional equity concerns, RCOs have emerged as change agents aiming to address barriers to metropolitics and forge winning coalitions.
The Nature of RCOs

For the purpose of this study, an RCO is defined as an organization that engages in various activities to catalyze metropolitics coalitions. The Baltimore and Chicago cases build upon this loose definition with more detailed pictures of RCOs. Perhaps the most important characteristic to emerge is the fact that both CPHA’s Campaign for Regional Solutions and MAC are part of already existing organizations. Although MAC is more of a stand-alone entity than the regional campaign within CPHA, it essentially is an outgrowth of the Gamaliel Foundation and unites preexisting affiliates.

These organizational ties provide several strengths for RCOs. Affiliations with preexisting organizations give RCOs stores of experience – although not necessarily in regional affairs – and a degree of organizational infrastructure to draw upon. Instead of starting from scratch, RCOs begin metropolitics work with a reputation and legitimacy from their previous efforts. RCOs also operate within networks of organizations that can help them increase their power and effectiveness. The networks associated with CPHA and MAC historically have not been involved with metropolitanism. The makeup and constituencies of Chicago’s Commercial Club, the Greater Baltimore Committee, and the Citizens League in the Twin Cities are different from those of CPHA and MAC. Urban, minority, and low-income communities have more representation in regional reform efforts through these RCOs.

However, being situated within preexisting organizations also provides challenges for RCOs, requiring them to achieve internal consensus about potentially conflicting goals and priorities. Regional work at RCOs in both Baltimore and Chicago has been laid on top of local efforts, adding to organizational complexity. For an organization such as CPHA, taking on regional work initially served as a source of conflict. While MAC’s mission is more explicitly targeted to the metropolitan scale, it still must balance the many objectives of a larger network of organizations.

Another key characteristic of RCOs such as CPHA and MAC is their staying power. As ongoing institutions, RCOs can keep working to achieve their regional missions over time, regardless of
leadership or staffing changes. Although the RCOs examined in this paper are quite young, longevity is crucial given the long-term nature of metropolitan reform.\textsuperscript{58}

What Outcomes Do RCOs Seek?

Drawing from the Baltimore and Chicago cases, what are the outcomes that RCOs seek? At one level, the ultimate metropolitics goal for CPHA and MAC is clear. They seek a redistribution of resources and/or opportunity across the metropolitan region. The chosen means to achieve this outcome is the formation of coalitions of inner-city, declining inner-ring suburban, and low tax-base exurban interests. RCOs work to gather political support among these constituencies to fight for metropolitan equity at the state legislative level. Along these lines, the chief outcome sought by an RCO is the successful passage of metropolitics legislation.

However, CPHA and MAC recognize that there are many intermediate steps along the way to this outcome. They have identified intermediate outcomes that they see as necessary prerequisites to successful metropolitics coalition building. CPHA and MAC seek increased awareness among citizens and officials about metropolitan issues, new relationships across jurisdictional boundaries, and the development of leaders to advocate for regional reform.

The outcomes of regional education, relationship building, and leadership development are sought both as means to the ultimate end of a winning metropolitics coalition, and as ends in themselves. MAC provides an interesting case, as community organizers tend to prioritize leadership and organizational development over progress on specific agenda items. However, MAC strives to achieve two parallel outcomes – powerful citizens organizations and leaders, and increased metropolitan equity. When asked about possible conflicts or tensions in pursuit of these two outcomes, Gonzales and other MAC organizers stress the primary importance of building leaders. CPHA, although also rooted in community empowerment, places more of an emphasis on issue outcomes. The relative emphasis placed upon various outcomes – intermediate and ultimate – logically will vary among different RCOs.

\textsuperscript{58} Robert Yaro, executive director of the Regional Plan Association of New York, argues that any successful regional reform follows the Three Ts and Three Ps – Things Take Time, requiring Persistence, Patience, and Perseverance (2000:74-75).
At the same time, RCOs seek other outcomes that are outside of the realm of regional work or metropolitics strategies. CPHA continues its diverse set of urban revitalization activities in Baltimore, while MAC works to satisfy the needs of its affiliate churches. This diversity of organizational goals distinguishes RCO work from the comparably simple and more directed metropolitics efforts of an individual catalyst such as Orfield.

So, when Matheny and Gonzales are asked to judge the success of their young organizations, each says that they are making hard-fought progress— even without legislative metropolitics victories under their belts. They point to measures such as the creation of relationships across jurisdictional boundaries, increased awareness about regional issues, victories on non-metropolitics regional efforts, cultivation of leadership, and growth in constituencies for regional reforms. Even with these accomplishments, the question remains as to whether CPHA and MAC eventually will move beyond these activities to register legislative victories.

What Do RCOs Do?

RCOs are engaged in a significant amount of regional work outside of metropolitics coalition building. The greatest successes of CPHA's Campaign for Regional Solutions have come through its transportation efforts, which thus far have not entailed metropolitics legislative strategies. MAC has established a $1 billion mortgage program to increase private credit flows to low-income households, and drawn upon its regional base to work on transportation and crime. RCOs devote significant resources to non-legislative metropolitan campaigns.

While these activities may not be strictly classified as metropolitics, they do bring together broad coalitions of interests to address problems of metropolitan equity. Again, CPHA and MAC view these non-metropolitics activities as both means toward metropolitics coalitions and ends in themselves. Some of the efforts are opportunistic, such as CPHA foray into regional transportation planning. Much of it is done to increase awareness of and support for metropolitanism in general.

At another level, as new organizations, CPHA and MAC recognize the benefits of diversifying their efforts in order to manage risk. Juggling an array of issues, programs, partners, funding sources, and political strategies allow RCOs to hedge against failure and increase organizational
learning at an early stage in their life cycle. CPHA has aggressively diversified its transportation efforts, but slowed considerably on tax-base sharing. MAC has more components to its regional work, and has begun to run the risk of spreading itself too thin.

While non-metropolitics regional work is a major focus for RCOs, this research project is concerned with the formation of metropolitics coalitions. It is important to note, however, that any metropolitics work is constantly informed, impacted, and constrained by the other activities of RCOs. That said, the CPHA and MAC cases provide a framework to think about what RCOs do in response to barriers to metropolitics.

In deciding to work on metropolitics coalitions, CPHA and MAC have assumed leadership roles. Both Baltimore and Chicago have several entities working on regional reform, but CPHA and MAC have emerged as leaders – both in addressing equity concerns head-on and seeking viable solutions. They have produced leadership through the work of staff, and cultivated leadership among other organizations and constituents. CPHA has quickly emerged as the top voice on regionalism in Baltimore. In contrast, MAC has taken a relatively low public profile amid Chicago’s growing regional civic infrastructure, yet has been hard at work behind the scenes serving as a catalyst for reforms.

As soon as CPHA and MAC moved onto the scene as regional change agents, they began to work to forge constituencies for metropolitics. This has been an ongoing and energy-intensive process, involving a parade of meetings and presentations with officials, civic groups, and grassroots leaders across the region about metropolitan concerns and possible remedies. Both CPHA and MAC have used Orfield's maps as a launching point to target efforts. They have combined this socioeconomic and geographic information with continual analysis of political dynamics and interests in order to determine where and around what issues metropolitics coalitions can form.

In order to push a regional agenda, CPHA and MAC have had to gather resources. They necessarily began with fundraising to put staff in place, and have continually tried to expand their programs. But in doing coalition-building work that requires extensive contact over vast regions, CPHA and MAC also have had to think about how to muster adequate human resources – whether deploying staff, using grassroots leaders, or working in tandem with other organizations.
CPHA and MAC have devoted a significant amount of effort to providing information and raising awareness about regional issues, underscoring the importance of relentless education in setting the stage for metropolitics. RCOs educate through one-on-ones, group presentations, public events, reports, and courting of the press. Through such outreach, CPHA and MAC have aimed to make public officials and citizens recognize connections between their fiscal and social concerns and regional trends and policies. This process of discussing metro issues goes beyond providing information on the region to address another barrier to metropolitics – lack of regional identity and vision. Even the simple act of showing regional maps can help to build a sense of metropolitan identity and “image” the region (Lynch 1960; Vale and Warner forthcoming).

Orfield was particularly effective in this regard as an individual catalyst, especially in making personal connections. Faced with scarce staff resources, both CPHA and MAC have not done this outreach as much as either would have hoped. CPHA has decreased the number of one-on-one meetings it conducts, instead making presentations to suburban groups to raise regional awareness. MAC has more of a coherent strategy, taking the last year to educate its tax-base sharing task force, which will now coordinate informational meetings and discussions with elected officials and groups throughout the region.

With information on the region and potential metropolitics constituencies, CPHA and MAC have begun to work to devise viable strategies. Both understand that while education is a crucial first component, metropolitics coalitions need to rally around compelling legislative proposals. RCOs think through possible strategies, learn more about regional issues and the politics surrounding them, and experiment.

Finally, CPHA and MAC are constantly building relationships and establishing connections around metropolitan concerns where none had existed before. This is a natural by-product of the string of constituency-building and outreach meetings. RCO collaborative work on non-metropolitics efforts, such as transportation for both CPHA and MAC, also serves to create social capital and expand regional civic infrastructure.

To recap, RCOs do the following in their efforts to build metropolitics coalitions:

- Produce regional leadership
- Forge a constituency for reforms
- Gather resources – people, money, and time – to push an agenda
- Provide information on metropolitan issues, helping to create a sense of regional identity
- Devise and experiment with metropolitics strategies, and
- Build relationships, social capital, and regional civic infrastructure

Examining the above list, one must wonder what is unique about metropolitics in comparison with other types of political campaigns. The barriers to metropolitics and actions taken by RCOs apply to many coalition-building reform efforts. However, several unique conditions add degrees of complexity to the metropolitics enterprise. RCOs must contend with a lack of historical precedent in dealing with metropolitan equity, large numbers of jurisdictions and stakeholders, and a culture of distrust across political boundaries. In addition, RCOs often are new to both metropolitan issues and intensive political organizing efforts.

CPHA and MAC both have engaged in all of the above activities in their metropolitics work. However, it is important to note how the nature of the catalyst organization (or individual, in the case of Orfield) influences the coalition-building process. CPHA's role as a Baltimore civic organization and MAC's identity as a faith-based community organizing entity largely dictate their approaches. In simplified terms, MAC has specialized in building leadership and power, while CPHA has excelled at disseminating information and partnering with other organizations. As an individual analyst and legislator, Orfield's strengths have been education and devising legislative strategies.

While CPHA and MAC have tried to build relationships across sectors and organizations, they have remained most comfortable with familiar allies and cultures. CPHA has worked to engage other civic organizations in Baltimore County suburbs, and MAC has spent its first year on tax-base sharing largely focused on educating and developing leadership among its member congregations. Both CPHA and MAC recognize the importance of collaboration and cross-cutting partnerships in moving metropolitics forward. Yet CPHA's tendency to join with other advocacy groups in bureaucracy-intensive collaborations, and MAC's focus on grassroots leadership development point to the role of organizational culture in influencing tactics.

Another notable characteristic of RCOs has been their hesitance thus far to push legislative metropolitics proposals. The largest reason for this is the early stage of RCO involvement with metropolitics. But there are other explanations for RCOs' reluctance to experiment with metropolitics strategies as freely as Orfield did in the Minnesota legislature. One possible
explanation is that, as a legislator, Orfield was familiar with the legislative process and better positioned to offer bills; CPHA and MAC operate in non-legislative spheres. But, considering the relative ease of introducing legislation (passage is another story), this explanation is not compelling.

The nature of the metropolitics coalition-building issue selected by both CPHA and MAC – regional tax-base sharing – probably has more to do with the lack of legislative proposals. Although Orfield has repeatedly argued that tax-base sharing can serve as an entry-point into regional cooperation, any legislative tax proposal is highly charged. The boundaries of the Baltimore region preclude the political viability of almost any legislation modeled on Minnesota’s fiscal disparities system. As young organizations working to build strong coalitions and relationships, CPHA and MAC are understandably wary of the potential negative impact of offering bills that are soundly defeated in the legislature. At the same time, CPHA and MAC are missing out on important learning experiences afforded by experimenting with metropolitics strategies.
Conclusion

This study has looked at early experiences with metropolitics through the work of regional catalyst organizations. In the Baltimore and Chicago cases, CPHA and MAC have yet to bring about legislative metropolitics victories. However, they have successfully pursued other regional efforts outside of the metropolitics model, and taken intermediate steps—education, relationship-building, and leadership development among them—toward creating metropolitics coalitions. The process is ongoing.

The in-depth descriptions of CPHA and MAC can inform the work of other RCOs trying to build metropolitics coalitions. This concluding analysis examines the major challenges that RCOs face, the strategic decisions that they make, and keys to success for RCOs in building metropolitics coalitions.

Major Challenges that RCOs Face

CPHA and MAC have faced an array of challenges in taking on metropolitics work. But three major challenges stood out across the cases: institutionalizing the work, achieving scale, and obtaining adequate funding and resources.

Institutionalizing the work

Two kinds of issues emerge as RCOs try to institutionalize their regional and metropolitics efforts. The first set of issues center around the challenge of preexisting organizations taking on regional agendas. Once metropolitan work is integrated within an RCO, the issue becomes how to make sure that metropolitics coalition building is central to its efforts.

CPHA illustrates the potential difficulty of integrating regional work into an organization that historically has not focused on metropolitanism. Reflecting on her experiences, Matheny says
that taking on a regional agenda represents a sea-change in focus, culture, and day-to-day activity for many organizations. She urges metropolitics practitioners within RCOs to “begin at home,” building consensus among board members, staff, and key constituents about the connection between the organization’s historical work and new regional efforts (Matheny 2000).

In many ways, CPHA did not lay this groundwork adequately, and its initial work has been marked by internal debates and uncertainty about taking on a metro campaign. Even with a dedicated and skilled staff, these internal tensions and paradigm shifts around method and mission have slowed down progress in setting an agenda and going out to build coalitions. This institutionalization effort proceeded more easily for MAC because it was a newly formed umbrella organization with an explicitly metropolitan mission from the start. However, most RCOs are preexisting organizations with non-regional missions, so CPHA’s experience and difficulties are important to consider.

The Baltimore and Chicago cases point to the importance of not skipping steps in these internal processes. CPHA’s Campaign for Regional Solutions never adequately resolved its board-level debates or got CPHA’s organizing staff involved with its efforts. MAC sped through the development of its congregational core teams and has been having trouble sustaining involvement. Both now have to go back to redo these basic steps and restore confidence within their organizations.

Once an RCO is comfortable with its regional mission, its next challenge is making metropolitics coalition building an ongoing and central part of its work. With multiple regional programs demanding scarce resources and time, RCOs face incentives to work on non-metropolitics efforts that offer more immediate payoffs. Many of these other efforts educate and build support for regional reform on the way toward a metropolitics coalition. However, they do not explicitly lay the foundation for legislative metropolitics coalitions. With its recent tax-base sharing work, MAC is trying to make metropolitics coalition building more central to the organization. The effort has required firm leadership and vigilance on behalf of Gonzales and Hatch.
Achieving scale

With so many jurisdictions and stakeholders to engage, RCOs are constantly challenged by the scale demands of regional coalition building. The work requires considerable amounts of time, energy and effort. Orfield suggests that “there are not a lot of people with the internal horsepower or fortitude to do it.” 59

Constrained by limited staff resources and organizational reach, CPHA and MAC constantly strategize about how they will cover all the red areas on Orfield’s maps and keep moving toward building viable coalitions. Even when staff at CPHA and MAC feel clear about their regional coalition building strategies, the seeming endlessness of the work elicits sighs. After MAC completed an intensive month of one-on-ones with suburban officials in south Cook County, it was faced with the fact that it needed to repeat the process many times over throughout the Chicago region. Risk of burnout would appear to be high, although little evidence exists in the cases.

Obtaining adequate funding and resources

RCOs require healthy funding levels to cover a broad range of activities and geographic terrain. As a legislator paid by Minnesota’s taxpayers, Orfield was funded to do much of his coalition-building work. Fundraising is more of a challenge for organizations such as CPHA and MAC.

Thus far, CPHA and MAC have been quite successful in gathering money to build their campaigns, relying heavily upon foundation grants. But, future funding remains in question, as foundation interest in regionalism may wane. Concerned about long-term sustainability, MAC is looking to diversify its funding sources and decrease its dependency upon grants. Baltimore’s Campaign for Regional Solutions, which is almost entirely funded through grants, continues to consider moving out of CPHA to become a member-supported regional civic organization. Both understand that foundation funding may become more scarce if and when their work turns more toward political advocacy and coalition building. Meanwhile, dedicated funding streams limit the type of work that CPHA and MAC staff can do. Much of CPHA’s funding for the Baltimore

59 Interview with Myron Orfield, January 11, 2000.
Regional Partnership goes to transportation work, while MAC receives money for projects outside of its basic membership-building activities.

In terms of staff, both MAC and CPHA have limited resources devoted to metropolitics coalition building beyond Gonzales and Matheny. Two organizers split their time in Chicago among many duties to work part-time on tax-base sharing. Their organizing skill, political experience, and strong support from Gonzales serve them well, but time limitations are felt as MAC struggles to expand across Chicagoland. With Matheny often bogged down in administrative work in Baltimore, CPHA has one staffer explicitly working on metropolitics and making contact with suburban officials and groups.

**Strategic Decisions that RCOs Make**

Beyond these three basic challenges, RCOs faces several strategic decisions in trying to build metropolitics coalitions. An examination of these key choices provides further comparison across the three cases while shedding light on effective practices.

**How much conflict?**

Metropolitics’ biggest strength – the potential to form self interest-based majority coalitions around issues of regional equity – may also prove its biggest weakness. The conflict approach that underpins metropolitics has stymied progress in all three cases. While Orfield succeeded in passing several pieces of progressive legislation in the Minnesota legislature, very little passed the desk of Governor Arne Carlson.

A similar situation occurred in Chicago around school finance, where a proposal to separate school funding from local property taxes had majority support in the Illinois Senate, but was never called to the floor by Senate majority leader Pate Philip. The co-chair of MAC’s tax-base sharing task force has made a personal vow to figure out “what makes Pate tick”\(^{60}\); but one begins

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\(^{60}\) Interview with Wynell Vernett-Butler, March 31, 2000.
to wonder what kind of sustained progress can be made using tactics that alienate key players in the legislative process.

CPHA and MAC realize that it is not possible to substantively discuss equity issues without creating conflict. However, RCOs must decide how much of an “us-versus-them” attitude to take in building coalitions, and weigh the potential costs of confrontational approaches.

**Where to build coalitions?**

Orfield’s maps suggest that RCOs should build coalitions across jurisdictions that are “in the red”, or have suffered negative impacts in the wake of regional trends. Yet RCOs must start by determining whether existing jurisdictional boundaries permit a metropolitics approach. For starters, metropolitics requires that metropolitan area(s) dominate the state legislature. If this prerequisite is satisfied, most metro regions are sufficiently fragmented to make metropolitics strategically possible.

However, CPHA quickly learned that a small number of big jurisdictions makes metropolitics coalition building quite difficult. As current lines are drawn, CPHA has found it nearly impossible to split the suburbs within powerful county governments that encompass both wealthy and ailing communities. Ironically, CPHA wishes that it had a more jurisdictionally fragmented landscape for coalition-building purposes. The grass is always greener in the other region, however, as MAC and Orfield wish that they had fewer jurisdictions to deal and meet with.

The regional catalyst in each case has targeted early outreach efforts to a key sub-region – declining northern suburbs in the Twin Cities, southern Cook County in Chicago, and inner Baltimore County in Baltimore. Orfield, MAC, and CPHA all have aimed to shore up support in these suburban regions before pitching metropolitics to urban interests. One reason for this outreach sequence is the delicate nature of city politics, as issues of race and power often prevent low-income communities from embracing a metro agenda. While it may make sense for RCOs to start by engaging older declining suburbs, taking the city granted for too long can present liabilities.
What scale of organizing?

Metropolitics ultimately is about organizing – political, grassroots, and whatever else it takes to forge a viable metro coalition. The three cases differ significantly in organizing approaches. In simplified terms, Orfield concentrated on organizing elected officials, CPHA has worked primarily on organizing organizations, while MAC has devoted its energy to organizing congregations and their members for a grassroots base. A successful metropolitics effort entails some degree of all three – elected officials, organizations, and grassroots leadership. The politics and the civic and jurisdictional boundaries of a region often dictate an organizing emphasis. For example, faced with powerful and reluctant county executives in Baltimore, CPHA decided that it had to build civic and grassroots support from below.

Orfield’s approach of going straight to political leaders may be more direct, and certainly requires less work than the grassroots approach taken by MAC. However, without a broad-based movement and support for metro reforms, Orfield’s tactics run into the problem of resistance from high-level actors (i.e. Governor Carlson in Minnesota and state Senator Philip in Illinois). The Gamaliel Foundation and MAC use this point to justify their relentless grassroots regional education and leadership-building efforts.

Decisions about organizing scale depend heavily upon the culture and goals of the RCO. As a community-organizing entity committed to creating powerful leaders and organizations, MAC emphasizes broad-based, grassroots organizing. CPHA straddles the line between the community-empowerment and policy-outcome worlds, and its organizing approach reflects this position.

Which issues to focus on?

CPHA and MAC have decided to work on transportation, tax-base sharing, school funding, private mortgage investment, and public safety during their first few years. CPHA currently is considering adding housing to its regional campaign. The only issue around which CPHA and MAC have adopted a truly metropolitics approach thus far is tax-base sharing.
In selecting and positioning any of the above issues, CPHA and MAC conducted thorough investigation and evaluation. This has entailed listening to the concerns of leaders and constituents throughout the region, conducting power analyses around specific issues, and learning from previous efforts. RCOs recognize that while many regional issues can be addressed in each region, a winning combination of momentum and politics surround only a few – perhaps, for instance, education in Chicago and transportation in Baltimore. Opportunism also plays an important role, as CPHA never thought it would focus on regional transportation planning until approached by other organizations. While both CPHA and MAC have started with tax-base sharing as their central metropolitics issue, they have intentionally diversified their efforts, balancing legislative and non-legislative work.

**What sequence of actions?**

As young organizations, CPHA and MAC have worked to score early regional victories. MAC went to Springfield the day after its founding event to lobby for education finance reform, while CPHA has thrown itself into regional transportation planning. The search for early wins has meant large amounts of work for RCOs outside of the metropolitics legislative model.

Neither CPHA nor MAC adopted Orfield’s approach of leading off with an aggressive series of meetings with suburban mayors, city managers and state legislators. Instead, both MAC and CPHA have devoted most of their initial resources on regional tax-base sharing to studying the issue, educating potential constituencies other than elected officials, and working to devise viable strategies. Why have these RCOs not led with a flurry of suburban meetings, despite Orfield’s repeated urgings to do so? There are a variety of possible reasons: internal organizational conflicts; lack of resources (people, time, money, energy) to support such efforts; fear or discomfort in expanding beyond familiar civic or organizing cultures; lack of willingness to float bills in the legislature; or perhaps alternative strategies that suggest making such contacts later. Any of these reasons are logical. However, both CPHA and MAC have learned a great deal thus far from their limited meetings with legislators and suburban officials; other RCOs might do well to heed Orfield’s advice and devote more early energy to such meetings.
Whom to partner with?

In order to build a broad metropolitics coalition, RCOs need to partner with a wide array of organizations and stakeholders. CPHA has been aggressive in its efforts to partner, forming a core leadership team around metropolitanism in Baltimore with the Greater Baltimore Committee (GBC) and archdiocese. In addition, CPHA has brought in environmental and anti-sprawl concerns through its work on the Baltimore Regional Partnership (BRP). With these efforts, however, have come some partnering headaches, as the BRP struggles with its purpose and mission, and changes in leadership at the GBC have diminished its emphasis on regionalism.

In keeping with its community organizing tradition, MAC has concentrated more upon shoring up its own base of leaders. Its non-metropolitics work, especially around transportation, has involved collaboration with other pro-metro groups. But aside from the use of an advisory council to discuss the politics of tax-base sharing in Chicago, MAC has not made a point of cultivating relationships with other organizations. MAC has been wary of work with environmental groups around redistribution proposals, fearing that many of their wealthy supporters would end up opposing metropolitics efforts.

One consideration in deciding whom to seek out for partners is the need to increase power and legitimacy. Business interests are especially important in this respect (e.g., the GBC and tax-base sharing in Baltimore). Even if business groups shy away from controversial metropolitics efforts, they can endorse other RCO activities and build relationships around other issues.61

Both RCOs have exhibited troubling disjuncts with business. MAC has not seriously engaged the Metropolitan Planning Council or the Commercial Club since Elmer Johnson completed the Metropolis 2020 report. In Baltimore, a recent leadership change at the Greater Baltimore Committee has shifted its emphasis away from regionalism, and CPHA’s formerly strong relationship with the GBC has been weakened.

Another partnering consideration is finding organizations that complement an RCO’s core competencies. CPHA has done this through its recent work with the Gamaliel Foundation, which is helping CPHA to strategize and build more grassroots support for its campaigns. Likewise,
MAC has brought in consultants and experts through Gamaliel to inform its work. Such relationships draw in new strengths, points of view, and resources. RCOs can become stuck in familiar roles and ways of operating; they must acknowledge their organizational limitations and seek partners to fill in the gaps.

**Which goals or outcomes to prioritize?**

As discussed in the previous chapter, RCOs prioritize among a complex set of organizational goals. Registering a legislative metropolitics victory is only one of several desired outcomes. RCOs also seek intermediate outcomes – such as increased awareness about regional issues, the creation of new relationships across jurisdictional boundaries, and leadership development – both as means to metropolitics and as ends in themselves. Each RCO must be clear about its relative emphasis on non-regional, regional, and metropolitics outcomes in order to purposefully achieve any of them.

**Keys to Success**

The case studies of CPHA and MAC reveal the complexities involved with doing metropolitics work. There are no silver bullets in such efforts, but several keys to success emerge for RCOs.62

**Creating compelling metropolitics visions and strategies**

Successful RCOs generate clear visions and strategies for their metropolitics work. As organizations, they create internal roadmaps for how to build campaigns and pull together interests around specific issues. As catalysts, they devise compelling strategies for potential coalition members to rally around.

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61 Kanter 2000.
62 At the end of *Metropolitics*, Orfield draws from his experiences in the Twin Cities to lay out eleven lessons for regional coalition building (1997:167-171). His list, included in chapter 3 of this thesis, outlines the basic coalition-building activities demanded by metropolitics. It does not, however, analyze key success factors for organizations aiming to catalyze metropolitics coalitions.
From an organizational standpoint, devising such visions and strategies requires functional and responsive decision-making. The CPHA case provides an example of how wavering in this area can put serious metropolitics work on hold. MAC’s leadership has devised more clear ideas about how it can achieve its coalition-building goals. Gonzales and staff have absorbed information on the region and its politics, evaluated MAC’s capacity, and laid out a game plan for expansion and coalition building. MAC has displayed its strategic vision in working to expand church membership in key areas of the Chicagoland region, developing leadership on church core teams and the tax-base sharing task force, and beginning to hold meetings with blocs of mayors. Considering the long-term nature of metropolitics work, the clear vision for where MAC is going keeps people engaged.

Once an RCO has forged an organizational metropolitics vision, it must venture forth to generate metropolitics proposals that give communities that are “in the red” incentives to be involved. Orfield realized the importance of leading with compelling strategies, and always went into meetings with proposals for people to consider and respond to. At this stage, CPHA and MAC are just beginning to seriously do this kind of strategizing.

**Cultivating dynamic leadership**

Each case centered upon a highly dynamic and talented leader – Orfield in the Twin Cities, Matheny at CPHA, and Gonzales at MAC. This appears to be a minimal requirement to take on the challenging work of metropolitics. Being able to devise smart strategies and informative presentations about regional issues is not enough. Leaders at the helm of RCOs need to be able to sell ideas and proposals, spot and seize opportunities, excite others, and build relationships. They must be charismatic, confident, compelling, entrepreneurial, and politically savvy. Such high levels of skill, energy and commitment are necessary to jump start metropolitics.

At the same time, unless coalition-building efforts focus solely on state legislators or elected officials, it is too much terrain for one person to cover. The scale and long-term nature of metropolitics coalition building dictate that it cannot become a one-person show. So RCOs must not only have highly effective leaders at their center, but also need to cultivate leadership throughout and beyond their organizations. As RCOs organize for a broad base of support, they
must enlist staff and volunteers to manage the endless list of meetings and relationships. Leadership training then becomes a crucial aspect of an RCO’s work. It provides a central focus and strength for MAC, which stresses the development of citizen leaders to push and shape regional agendas. In comparison, CPHA’s training of staff and its Committee on the Region has been ad hoc and, hence, relatively ineffective.

Another approach would be to engage in collaborative leadership with other organizations to build metropolitics coalitions (Chrislip and Larson 1994). While both CPHA and MAC have sought out partners (CPHA more so), neither has enlisted them in building a base for metropolitics.

Managing organizational complexity

Perhaps the most important finding from the CPHA and MAC cases is that regional catalyst organizations are engaged in much more than metropolitics coalition building. RCOs build their young organizations, raise funds, and work to get early victories under their belts. All of this must be done to gather momentum before RCOs feel comfortable working on metropolitics bills and coalitions in the state legislature.

With RCOs operating so many regional initiatives outside of the model of metropolitics, the longer-term, high-energy work of forging a regional coalition in the state legislature must compete with many other programs for resources. It can be easy for an RCO to let metropolitics coalition building work go on the backburner in light of other demands.

Another aspect of organizational complexity for RCOs is the existence of multiple goals or objectives. CPHA must find a way to negotiate both its regional- and neighborhood-focused missions. MAC must balance the interests of member congregations with its desire to work on metropolitan issues. MAC also juggles the goals of building leaders and winning specific campaigns. These challenges of managing multiple programs and objectives are not faced by individual catalysts.

It is an artform to keep all the balls in the air. Even the most confident staff at CPHA and MAC speak with exhaustion about how difficult it can be. The difficulty of managing it all is why
Matheny and Gonzales have spent less time in one-on-one meetings with potential members of metropolitics coalitions.

Amid the organizational juggling, RCOs and their central leaders must fight not to get bogged down. It is easy for an effective RCO leader to become lost in administrative bureaucracy, especially staff management and fundraising. This has largely occurred at CPHA, where Matheny used to venture out of the office several times a week to talk with others about metropolitics; now she rarely goes out to the suburbs. The same threat exists for Gonzales in Chicago, although MAC has managed to create several impressive leaders from its tax-base sharing task force, and is strategic about deploying its most talented organizers across the metro region. Metropolitics requires the agility of a political campaign, and depends more upon skilled organizers than effective bureaucrats. Institutionalizing such dynamic work is a challenge, and runs counter to many aspects of organizational culture and bureaucracy (Wilson 1989).

**Learning, adjustment, and perseverance**

Coordinating a metropolitics effort is a fluid process, and regional catalysts are constantly learning important lessons about interests, issues, and politics. CPHA realized along the way that Minnesota’s tax-base sharing model is not easily transferable to Baltimore’s jurisdictional and tax structure. Orfield adjusted his legislative strategy when the Twin Cities’ northern suburbs said they wanted to work on affordable housing. MAC initiated a suburban focus group process to better inform their tax-base sharing work. RCOs must keep their eyes open and feet moving quickly in order to understand the landscape for metropolitics.

Orfield’s process of introducing a slate of bills speeds up the learning, adjustment, and follow-through process. Both CPHA and MAC are engaged in much more front-end learning about regional politics and issues. They are in a paradoxical position, as they could learn much more by floating bills and seeing what happened, but hesitate in light of the risks involved. Short of the legislature, all cases point to the importance of talking with suburban officials about their concerns and problems.
Through their ongoing work, effective RCOs become learning organizations (Schon and Argyris 1978), building off the relationships and experiences of many people to create institutional knowledge and add depth to metropolitics efforts.

It is interesting to note that these keys to success – creating visions and strategies, cultivating leadership, managing complexity, and learning and perseverance – center around basic leadership traits (Heifetz 1994; Burns 1978). This makes sense given the fact that RCOs have emerged to fill a leadership gap in the regional coalition-formation process.

Orfield and metropolitics face an array of skeptics and critics (Hamilton 1999; National Research Council 1999; Summers 2000). Many take issue with the conflict-based approach to regional coalition building. Some are not comfortable with conflict and tension, and find the idea of steamrolling opponents in heated political battle distasteful. Others feel that the conflict approach represents a strategic mistake; even if a metropolitics coalition does register legislative victories, they ultimately may not prove stable (Susskind and Cruikshank 1987).

Others question whether metropolitics is possible in the first place. Why has Minnesota been the only site of a successful legislative metropolitics coalition if the strategy is based upon self-interest? Will objective self-interests be recognized by potential metropolitics communities elsewhere, and, if so, can they overcome race- and class-based concerns and biases? Does metropolitics contain enough of a positive vision for the region, or will its reliance upon economic self-interest fail to mobilize adequate support?

All are valid questions and concerns. Yet, as with previous regional reform efforts, there is the risk that thoughtful debate over the desirability and feasibility of metropolitics will devolve into polarized exchanges between metro nay-sayers and eternal regional optimists. Such transactions would distract from the noteworthy fact that metropolitics offers a new political strategy to address metropolitan equity concerns. This fact alone makes metropolitics worthy of study.

It is too early to judge the ultimate success of the metropolitics efforts being conducted across the U.S. However, it is possible to examine the coalition-building process to understand how it does
and does not proceed. This paper has examined the metropolitics coalition building process through the efforts of regional catalyst organizations. RCOs face challenges in trying to institutionalize metropolitics, achieve scale in building coalitions, and raise resources to do the work. They must make an array of strategic decisions about issues to work on, partners to work with, organizing scale, and priorities. Finally, RCOs need to devise compelling metropolitics strategies, cultivate dynamic leadership, manage organizational complexity, and learn, adjust, and persevere in order to succeed.

The cases indicate that metropolitics is quite challenging work. RCOs have yet to score legislative victories, if they ever will. However, they have achieved several intermediate outcomes along the way, and are proceeding with visions and strategies about how to build broad coalitions to further regional equity. Future research should continue to chart the progress of these and other early experiments, as well as explore other factors that contribute to the formation of metropolitics coalitions (Foster 2000).
## Appendix

### Regions with Metropolitics Studies

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<th>Local Partner(s)</th>
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<td>St. Louis County Economic Council; St. Louis City Community Development Agency; Citizens for Modern Transit; several Methodist, Catholic, and Baptist churches and church-based groups; several families and individuals</td>
<td>Metropolitan Congregations United for St. Louis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
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<td>San Francisco Bay Area</td>
<td>Nathan Cummings Foundation, Goldman Fund</td>
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<td>Sustainable Everglades Initiative</td>
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<td>Washington, DC</td>
<td>Cafritz, Graham, and Meyer foundations, Robert Kogod and Russ Ramsey</td>
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Source: Metropolitan Area Research Corporation Web site, November 1999
# Interviews

## Twin Cities

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Myron Orfield</td>
<td>Minnesota state legislator</td>
<td>Sept. 28, 1999; Nov. 11, 1999; Jan. 11, 2000; Apr. 27, 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Richard Bolan</td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td>Dec. 16, 1999</td>
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<td>John Adams</td>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
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<td>Tom Scott</td>
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<td>Edward Goetz</td>
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<td>Lyle Wray</td>
<td>Citizens League</td>
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<td>Kenneth Meter</td>
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<td>Feb. 15, 2000</td>
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<td>Robert Einsweiler</td>
<td>former Met Council</td>
<td>Apr. 24, 2000</td>
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## Baltimore

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<tr>
<td>Mary Matheny</td>
<td>Citizens Planning and Housing Association</td>
<td>Nov. 4, 1999; Jan. 10, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 2000; Mar. 22, 2000</td>
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<td>Ursula Powidzki</td>
<td>Baltimore Advisors</td>
<td>Jan. 5, 2000</td>
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<td>Joan Davidson</td>
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<td>Cheryl Casciani</td>
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<td>Donald Norris</td>
<td>Univ. of MD-Baltimore County</td>
<td>Jan. 11, 18, 2000</td>
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<td>Father Richard Lawrence</td>
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<td>Michelle Wirzberger</td>
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<td>Cathy Schap</td>
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<td>Marcia Myers</td>
<td>Baltimore Sun</td>
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<td>Al Barry</td>
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<td>Ann Sherill</td>
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<td>Harold Wolman</td>
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<td>Patricia Atkins</td>
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<td>Dru Schmidt-Perkins</td>
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<td>Mary Logan</td>
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<td>Gregory Galluzzo</td>
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<td>Mary Gonzales</td>
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<td>Feb. 14, 2000; Mar. 29, 31, 2000; Apr. 3, 2000</td>
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<td>David Hatch</td>
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<td>Jill Patton</td>
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<td>Tom Lenz</td>
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<td>Larry Christmas</td>
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<td>Dr. Ann Smith</td>
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<td>Rey Lopez Calderon</td>
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<td>Rebecca Riley</td>
<td>MacArthur Foundation</td>
<td>Apr. 21, 2000</td>
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References


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Swanstrom, Todd, Peter Dreier, and John Mollenkopf. Forthcoming. Place Matters.


