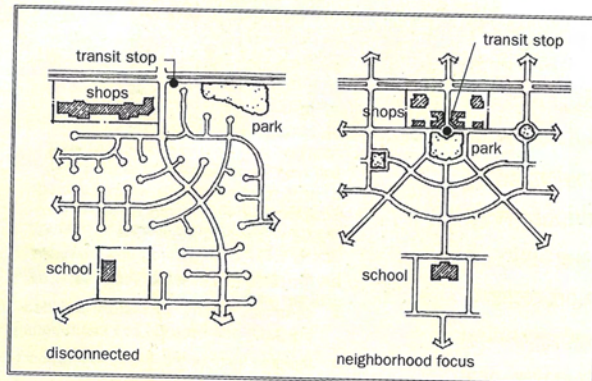


Neighborhood and Community

It is at the scale of neighborhood and community that many of our ills must be addressed. Strong communities support individuals and families while



encouraging personal responsibility. Communities provide the framework that fashions large government programs into effective tools for change.

Many of the underpinnings of neighborhood and community have been lost. The local institutions, unique history, cultural diversity, and common meeting places that once knit neighborhoods together have

been undermined by urban decay on one side and urban flight on the other. The physical basis of community—walkable streets—has been degraded by crime in some areas and by auto congestion in others. Usable public space and civic facilities have decayed, resulting in loss of community and loss of hope.

Neighborhoods are part of a regional continuum. Clear connections to the region, between neighborhoods and within communities, are essential. Clarifying the structure of neighborhoods within the city and identifying their critical links—social, cultural, civic, economic, and physical—to the region are fundamental steps in a consolidated planning process. Too often existing jurisdictional boundaries do not match the reality of a neighborhood. Many

services—police, education, health, and housing—are uncoordinated and too many decisions are made by remote bureaucracies.

The fundamental building block of a region and city should be its neighborhoods—not remote jurisdictions. Neighborhoods are the physical and social expression of community and its sustaining infrastructure. Preserving usable public space and local history and establishing thriving neighborhood centers are essential to fostering healthy communities. Integrated economic development, housing, and social programs should in all cases enhance local identity and community.

The physical configuration of a neighborhood often affects its social and economic dynamic.

Social Fabric: Reclaiming Neighborhood Institutions

Community planning too often focuses on pathology—on problems rather than possibilities. The social fabric of a neighborhood is forged by its local institutions—schools, churches, marketplaces, parks, libraries—and, on a more intimate level, by its human connections—block clubs, baby-sitting cooperatives, family-shared meals, and casual conversations over the back fence. Each of these elements, which knit isolated individuals into a community, has been under assault for decades. Numerous public institutions—even when they remain community-based—have become increasingly bureaucratized and public trust has eroded. Fear of crime has rendered many parks and other public spaces unusable.

The fundamental task of neighborhood revitalization is to reclaim and reinvigorate local institutions in a form adapted to the modern age. Crime, drugs, or closure of a neighborhood business or school frequently produces brief bursts of activity and organization, only to subside quickly. Effective community mobilization, on the other hand, requires a sustained effort to identify the community's strengths and to mobilize those strengths in the service of a long-term vision.

Promising strategies include:

> Community policing efforts, in which police officers come to know the neighborhood residents and address their problems before they become acute,

can replace the faceless officers in cruisers responding only to reports of crimes. The efforts of the community police officer can be supported by neighborhood watches, block parents, and safe house programs that engage citizens in their own public safety needs.

> Site-based management for local schools can provide local control and stimulate participation in this most vital of community institutions. Local schools can become the focus for school-linked child health, family maintenance, and other support services, such as adult education, job training, and evening recreation for youths.

> Neighborhood family resource centers can provide one-stop shopping (and comprehensive eligibility) for such public benefits as health care, counseling, family planning, child daycare, Head Start programs, and other services that are typically scattered throughout the city.

> Cultural centers can offer a focus for the expression of cultural pride and act as incubators for community prosperity. They can also provide collateral retail opportunities and serve as a focus for community meetings and cultural celebrations such as Juneteenth, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, and Carnival.



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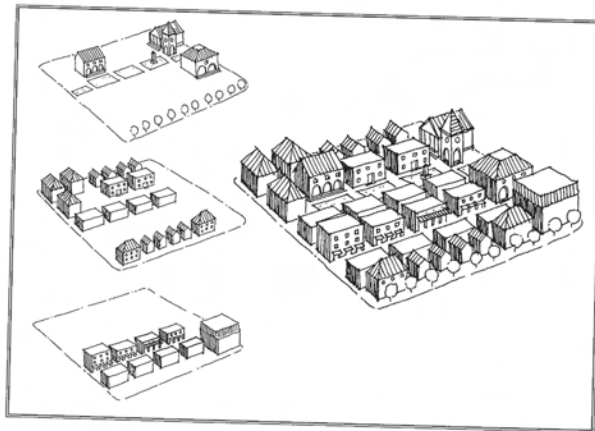
There was much increased volunteerism. One reason is that in which to volunteer their efforts will communities, they can and should day and evening service and achieve a hub for adult recreation, and child health screening; and a venue

Diversity is a key concept for creating resilient economies and rich local cultures. Heterogeneous communities have qualities that can generate opportunities for individuals and families. For example, mixed socio-economic neighborhoods can provide a range of positive role models for struggling youths, and neighborhoods with a broad age distribution can attain stability by allowing people to age in place. The greatest challenges and opportunities exist in neighborhoods with cultural and racial diversity.

Communities should seek balance in their economic, physical, and human development. Balanced social development means that a range of services and opportunities accompany economic growth. Balanced

economic development requires diversifying the job base rather than becoming dependent on any one major employer or market, public or private. It means creating jobs at many scales: local and corporate, service-oriented and export-directed. Supporting new start-up businesses as well as preserving existing enterprises is part of the strategic planning necessary for a balanced local economy.

Balanced physical development means planning mixed-use projects that integrate the social and commercial centers of a neighborhood. It means balancing



Balanced neighborhoods bring together the social and commercial centers of the community.

the car with effective transit systems and opportunities for the pedestrian.

Consolidated planning should seek balance by mixing families, singles, the elderly, and the young. It should combine the new and the old, the big and the small. Providing a mix of housing types, ownership opportunities, and housing costs for a diverse population—from affordable rentals to homes for affluent community members—is central to a healthy community. Every attempt should be made to balance employment opportunities with local services and civic identity. Identifying existing conditions and envisioning the missing elements—in population, housing, social programs, jobs, and facilities—is fundamental to consolidated planning.

Social Fabric: Supporting Cultural Diversity

Throughout America, financially successful members of inner-city communities have moved into more affluent neighborhoods, leaving behind only the poor. Bereft of their natural leaders, many autonomous inner-city institutions that formerly supported the life of the community have failed and been replaced by distant, anonymous, publicly-funded institutions. Whole neighborhoods are now composed almost entirely of renters who feel little attachment to their community and have little ability to influence its quality of life. Conversely, many who have an economic stake in the community do not live there.

The decline of the family has also led to age segregation in many communities. Teen gangs now provide youths with many of the functions once supplied by the family. Conversely, many elderly persons fearing youth violence and often finding little support from their own middle-aged children, are retreating into gated adult communities, senior citizens' homes, and skilled-care facilities.

The increasing income and age segregation of our cities is to some extent offset by growing ethnic diversity. The mix of cultures in the inner city provides potentially fertile ground for the growth of human understanding and cultural richness. However, reality often falls short of the ideal. Diverse cultural groups live among each other, but not with each other, while

competing for scarce jobs, social services, and for political power.

While the solutions for closing wide income gaps lie primarily in the economic and physical strategies discussed below, numerous approaches are available to increase ethnic and age diversity and to promote unity within the community. These include:

- > mentoring programs, in which teens are trained and employed to mentor or tutor younger children, and elders are enlisted to work with youths;
- > cultural awareness and cultural pride programs, including the "rites of passage" programs that are showing great promise in many communities;
- > music and art festivals and competitions, artists' live/work spaces, and other ways to bring culture into the community;
- > door-to-door outreach and community organizing programs;
- > conflict-resolution training for youths; and
- > leadership training to create community leaders and replace those lost to more affluent areas.

The Importance
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