

# The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/ Community Collaborations

Loomis Mayfield  
Maureen Hellwig  
Brian Banks

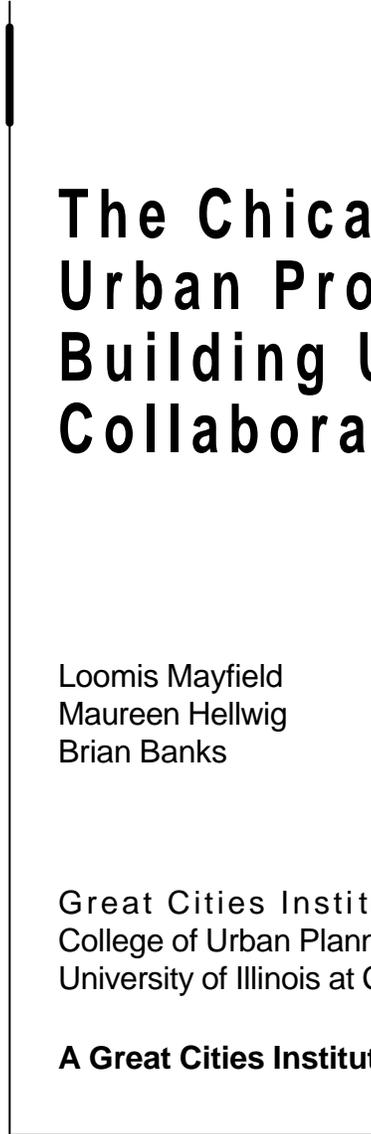
Great Cities Institute  
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs  
University of Illinois at Chicago

A Great Cities Institute Working Paper



**UIC**





# **The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/ Community Collaborations**

Loomis Mayfield  
Maureen Hellwig  
Brian Banks

Great Cities Institute  
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs  
University of Illinois at Chicago

**A Great Cities Institute Working Paper**

**April 1998**



## The Great Cities Institute

The Great Cities Institute is an interdisciplinary, applied urban research unit within the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Its mission is to create, disseminate, and apply interdisciplinary knowledge on urban areas. Faculty from UIC and elsewhere work collaboratively on urban issues through interdisciplinary research, outreach and education projects.

## About the Authors

Loomis Mayfield is the Coordinator of the University of Illinois at Chicago Neighborhoods Initiative. Maureen Hellwig is the Program Coordinator of the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG) at Loyola University, Chicago. Brian Banks is a Research/Action Coordinator at PRAG.

## Additional Copies

Great Cities Institute (MC 107)  
College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
412 S. Peoria Street, Suite 400  
Chicago IL 60607-7067  
Phone: 312-996-8700  
FAX: 312-996-8933

ã **Loomis Mayfield, Maureen Hellwig, Brian Banks**

This paper is available on the Great Cities Institute Web Site: [www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci](http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/gci)

**Great Cities Institute Publication Number:** GCP-98-5

The views expressed in this report represent those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the Great Cities Institute or the University of Illinois at Chicago.

# **The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations**

## **Abstract**

Modern university/community relationships are sometimes marked by division and hostility. Key problems in the relationship include the assumed objectivity of the academy; the real estate interests of universities; and the alliance of real estate interests and political figures in opposition to community concerns. The history and description of these relationships in Chicago indicates there are other historical trends which have led to fruitful partnerships, including: the influence of the settlement house movement; the strength and diversity of community groups; change and diversity in the university; and the influence of the civil rights movement. This article uses the examples of the Neighborhoods Initiative at the University of Illinois at Chicago and the Policy Research Action Group, a consortium of four universities Loyola, DePaul, Chicago State University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago and community partners, to show how strong, viable collaborations can occur. Their experiences point to a new research model and some key "lessons learned" on how to use collaborative partnerships to enhance the way society deals with today's urban problems.



# The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

*If PRAG went away, my guess is that within a year somebody would try to reinvent it-- someone would reinvent a way to bring faculty and CBOs [community based organizations] together (a Community Center Director quoted in Stoecker, 1996)*

*Of the lessons learned in two-and-one-half years of the Neighborhoods Initiative, perhaps the most important is what the concept of a community's needs means.... The complexity has become ever more obvious to UIC and community partners as a result of collaborative planning, joint effort in implementing the plans, changing a project design or strategy when the context demands the change, and the many detailed conversations among partners as they confront challenges to completing a project (Lieber and Pinsker, 1998, p. 139).*

## **Town and Gown, Chicago Style**

The institution of the university dates back to medieval times in the Western world; so does the fact of distinct interests between universities and the communities in which they reside. The very term "town and gown" refers to this difference, and how the two sides are often antagonistic. However, as some modern university/community collaborations in Chicago indicate, hostility is not the only outcome of these distinct interests. Two examples outlined later in this article are the Neighborhoods Initiative at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG), a consortium of four universities (Loyola, DePaul, Chicago State University, and UIC) and community partners.

To get to the point of true university/community collaborations, though, Chicago had to go through its share of university/community conflict. Three points, pulled out of the social history of the city, are important in the development of the Chicago model of modern university/community partnerships: 1.) the strength and vitality of Chicago's community life; 2.) the political and social reform influence of the Chicago settlement house movement; and 3.) the preeminent importance of real estate interests in politics and public policy in modern Chicago -- the growth machine.

## **Chicago's Community Life**

Chicago's strong community life and its numerous community organizations are well known. The existence of vibrant community organization comes from the diversity of its population and the pattern of neighborhood residence. Continually since its incorporation in the 1830's, Chicago reflected the broad national trends in immigration and internal migration of people, perhaps more so than any other U.S. city. The nation's immigration in the 19th century was dominated by people from northern and western Europe, followed in the next decades by immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Ward, 1971; Kleppner, 1985, pp. 15-21).

In 1890, people of first or second generation immigration peaked as a proportion of Chicago's population at 77.7%. This category continued to be a clear majority of the city until the 1940's, but the only thing consistent in this group was its diversity, as a cursory look at the demographic makeup of Chicago indicates. In 1900, foreign born and second generation Germans made up 25.2% of the city's total population. Irish were second with 13.3%, Poles third with 6.6%, and Swedes fourth with 6.1%. From 1930 through 1970, Polish people were the largest immigrant group. In 1930, first and second generation Poles were 11.9% of the city. Germans were second with 11.2%, Irish third with 5.7%, and

## The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

Italians fourth with 5.4% (Chicago Department of Development and Planning, 1976; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). Even today, this base of ethnic communities still beckons to people from overseas; Poland, for example, is still ranked second in the list of national origins of Chicago's foreign born immigrants, behind Mexico.

Foreign immigration dropped off, due first to World War I and then the legal restrictions of the 1920's. Chicago, however, continued to get new residents who mirrored the broad patterns of internal migration of the nation. People from the South began to take the place of European immigrants in the entry level jobs of Chicago's factories, whites coming up predominantly in the 1910's and 1920's, and African Americans coming from the 1910's through the 1960s (Kirby, 1983). In 1910, 2% of the city's population was of African American heritage; this proportion continued to increase through 1980, to 39.6% (dropping to 39.1% in 1990). And, as the main source of U.S. immigration shifted from Europe to Asia and the nations of south and central America since the 1960s, Chicago's immigration pattern has followed this trend. By 1990, 19.6% of the city's population was Latino, with over 60% of Mexican heritage and about 20% Puerto Rican; and 3.7% was of Asian heritage (Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 1995).

These groups continue to feed a vibrant community focus. Now, as in the past, Chicago's ethnic and racial groups reside close together, creating strong community ties and institutions even as neighborhoods change in composition. The city council is elected by wards and city services are organized and delivered along the same lines. This encourages local ethnic and neighborhood politics, which means even those social groups with small percentages of the total population influence the election of local officials and have access to politics and policy at higher levels of government (Pacyga, 1995; Kleppner, 1985, pp. 15-21).

Organized communities tried to influence conditions and policy. Even before World War II this lesson was embodied in the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC). The Council was the result of the efforts of Saul Alinsky, often referred to as the "Father of Community Organizing." In the 1930's, BYNC united the Packinghouse Workers Union and Catholic church leaders around wages and conditions in the infamous Chicago Stockyards. The Council went on to address issues like nutrition, housing and city services. In the 1960s The Woodlawn Organization was organized as a vehicle to address issues the African American community had with the University of Chicago expansion. Another example, the Northwest Community Organization, was pulled together by Alinsky at the request of Catholic pastors in the predominantly Polish area of West Town to deal with urban renewal. By the 1970s similar organizations proliferated throughout Chicago's neighborhoods. Then community development corporations, focused on issues like housing or commercial and industrial development, spun off from the early multi-issue community-based organizations (CBOs).

### ***The Settlement House Movement***

The settlement house is an even earlier example of the city's strong community life, and aspects of its history are important for later development of university/community collaborations. Chicago was home to one of the best known settlements, Hull House, founded by Jane Addams and Ellen Gate Starr in 1889. Addams, a middle class product of seminary education in Rockford, Illinois, pioneered a new response to urban problems by deviating from the "charitable ladies" model prevalent at the time. In this model, wealthy ladies visited the poor to dispense their largesse and then retreated to the security of the mansion. In general, they faulted bad personal moral conditions as the root of the problems and considered the poor to blame for their own misfortune. They exercised social control by imposing a middle class morality on working class life. Addams rejected this type of relationship and became a part of the working class community on Chicago's West Side to work with the poor. Hull House and

subsequent settlements were neighborhood-based and their staff set out to examine the conditions their neighbors faced as an alternative explanation of their poverty.

Settlement house staff were primarily upper and middle class women, often with a college education. Their immersion in the realities of working class life, however, led many house workers -- particularly those in Hull House -- away from the "charitable ladies" model to investigate social and political reforms to alleviate the material conditions of the poor. Rather than insisting on moral change on an individual basis, Hull House fostered community leadership in labor organizing and politics.

In addition to their links to the community, settlement houses were also connected to universities and academic life in Chicago. This was sometimes reinforced by the religious affiliations of private schools; for example, Northwestern University, a Methodist institution in nearby Evanston, and the University of Chicago, with its Baptist roots, opened settlement houses of their own in Chicago. The Chicago Theological Seminary founded the first department of sociology in 1890 and Graham Taylor, a pastor, came to it as a Christian Sociology professor with a keen interest to work with Hull House. He went on to start the Chicago Commons settlement house in 1894 (Stockwell, 1996; Harkavy and Puckett, 1994).

Many of the settlement houses which lasted to the 1960s and 1970s changed their roles, but continued their interaction with community life by taking on functions of community development corporations and community based social centers.

Addams, Starr, Taylor, and other people from the settlement houses developed a model of community based research to inform public discourse on urban issues and affect university based analysis. In particular, the University of Chicago had important links to the settlement house movement, which affected the development of the discipline of sociology. As some of its faculty and students worked with the houses, they were influenced by the social surveys, maps, and analyses produced by settlement house staff and used some of the concepts and work to develop the emerging Chicago School of Sociology. However, as sociology developed into a social science, the academics, mostly male, disdained the social activism done by the settlement house workers, mostly female, in the field. University academics assumed a pose of scientific objectivity; the creation of new knowledge, not reform or activism, was their vocation (Harkavy and Puckett, 1994).

The academics in the Chicago School seized on the settlement house philosophy of attention and immersion in community life and took it back to the Ivory Tower for their own purposes. They looked on the community as a laboratory to investigate issues, and the residents as test subjects. The method of participant observation was one outcome of this academic model. However, while the researcher could be *in* the community, they were not to be *of* the community. Neither reform nor service was necessarily the desired outcome of this practice, only the creation of new knowledge. Universities saw their service to community residents as mainly being one of education, if residents could meet the school's standards and afford the tuition. Effects on policy came indirectly at best, through the general diffusion of academic analysis to public officials. This Ivory Tower view of gown walled off from town became the dominant perspective of academic researchers.

### ***University Expansion and Real Estate Development***

At the time of the founding of settlement houses, the university system was devoted to a small clientele.

After World War II, the system expanded, moving from an elite institution to embrace a broader, mass base. The proportion of the population with some higher education has gradually increased over time, as Table 1 indicates. Using the 18 to 24 year old population as a base, in 1900, enrollment in higher education was at 2.3%; by 1950, this increased to 14.3%; in 1970, to 35.8%; and by 1990, to 51.1% (Snyder, 1993).

The Chicago Response to Urban Problems:  
Building University/Community Collaborations

**Table 1**  
**Percent of 18-24 Year Old Population Enrolled in Higher Education, Selected Years**

<u>Period</u>	<u>% Enrollment</u>
1899-1900	2.3
1919-1920	4.7
1939-1940	9.1
Fall, 1950	14.3
Fall, 1961	23.6
Fall, 1970	35.8
Fall, 1980	40.2
Fall, 1990	51.1

---

Source: Snyder, 1993, Table 24, pp. 76-77.

Public funding for higher education increased somewhat for both private and public institutions, to support tuition payments, teaching, and research. In total revenue for higher education, the proportion from government funds jumped to nearly half of the revenue in the post-World War II period, as noted in Table 2 (N.B.: Direct government aid to students was not included in the totals until after 1975). Government support as a proportion of all revenue has dropped in recent years. The proportion of revenue from student fees has remained relatively stable throughout the 20th century, accounting for about a quarter of revenue (Snyder, 1993).

**Table 2**  
**Source of Government Funds for Higher Education Institutions, Selected Years**

<u>Period</u>	<u>Federal \$</u> <u>(in thousands)</u>	<u>State \$</u> <u>(in thousands)</u>	<u>Local \$</u> <u>(in thousands)</u>	<u>All Gov't Funds as</u> <u>% of Total Revenue</u>
1919-1920	12,783	61,690	(*)	37.2
1939-1940	38,860	151,222	24,392	29.9
1949-1950	524,319	491,958	61,378	45.3
1959-1960	1,036,988	1,374,476	151,715	44.3
1969-1970	3,146,869	5,787,910	774,803	45.1
1979-1980	7,771,726	18,378,299	1,587,552	47.3
1989-1990	14,016,432	38,349,239	3,639,902	40.1

Source: Snyder, 1993, Table 33, p. 89.

N.B.: Direct government aid to students was not included in the totals until 1975.

\* *Included with state total*

Universities also needed more physical space for buildings and the housing of students, faculty, and staff. The typical university approach to this need was to take space from its surrounding community through real estate development. Land was also purchased to create buffers of empty land between the university and its “neighbors,” a physical manifestation of the standoffish Ivory Tower mentality.

Two specific examples of this in Chicago have particular relevance to this discussion, the University of Chicago (U of C) and the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). The U of C was founded in the 19th century in the Hyde Park community on the South Side of Chicago, approximately four miles south of the heart of downtown, the Loop. At the time, it was far from the city’s small African American population near the downtown area. As this population grew, the area where they were allowed to reside, Chicago’s so-called “Black Belt,” expanded south and west of the downtown area. By the 1920’s, African Americans began moving into the communities of Kenwood and Hyde Park around the university.

## The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

The U of C, as a major landowner in Hyde Park, considered it in its interest to stem the onslaught of blight, a term used to indicate deteriorating buildings and land values, but steeped in racism. One indicator of blight was the presence of racial minorities in neighborhoods. The university tried to protect its interests by private means at first, in direct and indirect ways. Directly, it bought up parcels of land and attached racially restrictive covenants to any redevelopment plans; indirectly, it subsidized white homeowner associations that acted to limit the settlement of minorities and fought the legal battle to sustain racial covenants as acceptable practice. By the post-World War II period, however, it was clear this was not enough. The U of C sought to deal with slums by establishing a local planning agency, the South East Chicago Commission (SECC). Through the SECC, it used public resources to protect its private interests by developing the nation's first urban renewal plan. It sought to stem the rapid succession of racial change by accepting some middle class African American residences, while opposing any public housing and failing to provide low income housing. It used another organization, the Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference, to try to allay racial fears of change and garner support for its renewal plans.

The U of C pursued its ends and gained legal changes and public funds through its political connections. The local alderman from 1947 through 1955, Robert Merriam, supported the plans; he was the Republican nominee for mayor in 1955, following in the footsteps of his father, Charles Merriam, a prominent university professor who ran in 1911 and 1919. Merriam lost his mayoral race to Richard J. Daley. Shortly after this election, the university's board of trustees gained Daley's support for their plans in return for their future political support (Hirsch, 1983, pp. 135-170).

The U of C's use of political power to fulfill its interest therefore not only presaged national urban renewal efforts, but was also the precursor to a key facet of the power base of the Daley regime. Daley incorporated real estate and business interests in the formal organization of government bodies and policies, receiving their political and financial support in return. These interests gained in policy and the use of public funds to protect their real estate investments. Daley's machine, an urban regime of politicians and real estate interests, became a clear manifestation of a city's growth machine (Mayfield, 1996; Ferman, 1996).

However, it was a growth machine which was firmly in the hands of the master politician, Daley, as the example of UIC shows. The University of Illinois system had a two-year branch campus at Navy Pier. Daley wanted a full campus in the city, as a crowning jewel of his administration and an educational opportunity for the city's middle and working class families. While business groups supported plans to set it on the south side of the Loop on vacant railroad yards, the cost of the land was too high for the city. Government agencies, in consultation with community groups, had already bought up 238 acres of land on the near West Side in the Harrison-Halsted community for an urban renewal project. While his aides denied there were any plans to use the land for the university, Daley single handedly converted over 100 acres of the land to use for the new campus in 1960 and secretly committed to the University of Illinois on the project (Bennett, 1989; Rosen 1980).

By the 1960s, the area held a mixed population of Italian, Greek, Russian, African American, and Puerto Rican ancestry but it remained firmly in the political control of Italian leaders who were close allies of Daley. Community residents disregarded rumors of the impending land transfer, assuming their community's political representatives would protect their homes. To the surprise of many of the homeowners and business proprietors of the area, their elected officials had no influence with Daley on this issue.

Hull House was located in the area and had continued its community organizing. When the city finally

announced the site for the university campus, the reaction was furious. Community members, led by Florence Scala, were bitter over their treatment. One resident said, "They shoved us around. They think we're too poor and stupid. They wouldn't treat Gold Coast people this way, or people in Lake Forest," referring to an area of the city and a suburb with upper class residents (*Chicago Daily News*, 1961). Protests, including a sit-in by Hull House women in Daley's offices, had little more effect on the plans than the influence of local Democratic bosses. The only moderation of the planned college was to allow the original building of Hull House, slated for demolition, to remain as a museum on campus.

More recently, people in the Pilsen community south of the UIC campus -- mainly of Mexican heritage -- have echoed these earlier protests after the university acquired an additional 40 acres of land south of the campus in 1993 and 1994. While the acreage was mostly vacant, development by UIC displaced the Maxwell Street Market, which harkened back to the older open air markets of immigrant communities and evoked a sentimental attachment due to its long history at that location. This new expansion came under the son of the first Mayor Daley, Richard M. Daley, the Chicago mayor since 1989.

Perhaps of greater importance to several of the community groups in the area was the concern over the gentrification effects from the university's development plans. This conflict is ongoing at the time of this writing. This type of university/community conflict over real estate is one example of the opposition to the growth machine under both Daley regimes.

### **Civil Rights, Black Politics and Chicago Universities**

For a brief period between the regimes of Richard J. and Richard M. Daley, a different style of government emerged. In particular, demographic change in the city with the growth of the African American community and the civil rights movement led to a shuffling of political coalitions. In 1983, a coalition of anti-growth machine interests elected Chicago's first African American mayor, Harold Washington. Some of the same pressures leading to the defeat of the machine also caused universities to reexamine their relationship with community groups and become more responsive.

Chicago's Democratic political machine held tight control over politics in the African American community during Daley's regime. With the growth of the civil rights movement, however, he came under more criticism. One famous incident happened in 1963, when he was booed off the stage at a civil rights rally in response to his allegation that "there are no ghettos in Chicago." The black wards began to elect anti-machine independents to city council, starting with Charles Chew in 1963 and, in 1967, A.A. "Sammy" Rayner and William Cousins, Jr. In 1972, Congressman Ralph Metcalfe, an Olympic track star who had himself been recruited by Daley to enter politics in 1955, broke with the machine over repeated incidents of police brutality. African American leaders began to organize for a city-wide campaign, prompting State Senator Richard Newhouse to run for mayor in 1975. Daley easily won renomination, but lost a slight majority in the black wards against two opponents. This foreshadowed future developments and success for black independent politics (Grimshaw, 1992).

By the time of Richard J. Daley's death in 1976, the political system opened up somewhat more. Daley's home ward alderman, Michael Bilandic, was picked by party leaders to take the mayor's office. But under Bilandic, it came to appear that the "city that works" could not work without Daley. In the winter of late 1978 and early 1979, massive snow storms taxed city services and the city appeared incapable of handling the situation. Jane Byrne, a former Daley commissioner, was lucky enough to be Bilandic's only primary opponent in 1979 and profited from the disgust over the breakdown. She put together a campaign staff of anti-machine reformers and became the city's first woman mayor. After her election, though, she turned to the machine regulars to get the power to govern. She also

## The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

continued racial conflict from Daley's regime, inflaming African American efforts to mobilize (Kleppner, 1985).

This conflict led to Harold Washington's election as the city's first African American mayor in 1983. He was successful because he brought together many of the disparate elements of Chicago politics. A product of Chicago's political machine, he was also Chicago's first reform mayor. His father was a precinct worker in Chicago's Democratic machine, and Washington grew up learning this style of pragmatic, service oriented, non-ideological politics. At Roosevelt University, where he became the student body president, Washington was a coalition builder rather than a radical. Former Congressman Gus Savage, a classmate, remarked, "I was elected to the student council by the more radical students, and Harold had the more moderate ones behind him. It was a predominately white university, but the whites would vote for Harold, not because he was a Tom -- he wasn't -- but because he could deal with all sides" (Camper, Devall, Kass, 1986). Throughout his political career, Washington used the political savvy he developed working with his father and the pragmatic coalition-building skills he exhibited in college. Machine support ensured Washington's access to jobs on the public payroll for constituents and his elections to the state legislature.

During this same period, the Latino community was also bringing forth its own leaders to take an active role in the city. Chicago's first Latino member of congress, Luis Gutierrez, started his political career as an activist in a local university. He later transferred this activism to the neighborhoods as he worked with the Northwest Community Organization in the West Town area of Chicago. In 1987, he was recruited by Washington to run for city council; after Washington's death later that year, he advanced in his career by working with machine officials.

As racial minority populations grew in Chicago, affecting politics, they also increasingly sought higher education; by the 1970s, approximately a quarter of African Americans and Latinos aged 18 to 21 were in college (*American Almanac 1993-1994*, 1993, Table 263, p. 169). These minority students on the inside of universities began to pressure the established order. Students of racial minorities from around the country took over university buildings demanding special studies programs and centers devoted to race and nationality. Other issues also mobilized students to affect university policies and the politics of the nation. The feminist movement, for example, emerged in the 1960s to counter gender based inequities and, inside the academy, develop feminist based research and women's studies programs. One issue of great importance to the student body was the Vietnam War. Anti-war activists opposed to the Vietnam war mobilized on campus and off. During the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, police and students engaged in bloody confrontation broadcast around the world.

The students were not entirely alone in the university system in promoting changes. Faculty and staff of universities had also changed in composition, although at much slower rates than the student population. The increase in higher education meant there were more diverse university personnel, from different experiences. Some were from the racial and ethnic communities which had heretofore been in conflict with aspects of university development.

Chicago universities were both a point of political contention and a place to start political careers. In spite of efforts to the contrary, universities were not separated from the communities around them. Increasingly, events such as the civil rights movement affected those inside and outside the university in ways which led to greater demands being placed on the university, and an emerging willingness on the part of some in the university to consent to some of those demands.

### **The Evolution of a New University/Community Relationship and a New Research Model**

As the 1980s were coming to a close, and Chicago was coping with the death of Harold Washington and the emergence of the second Mayor Daley, a series of disturbing articles regarding the efficacy of the work of community organizations appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* (McCarron, 1988). The tone of the series echoed a frequently quoted phrase of Richard J. Daley when he lashed out at community organizations that critiqued his administration, i.e., "What trees do you plant?" In the context of the ongoing debate over downtown development vs. neighborhood development, the *Tribune* threw down the gauntlet, suggesting the limited value of local, smaller projects as compared to the benefits of large scale initiatives by developers focused on the central business district.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, along with a number of their grantees, felt the sting of this criticism and looked for a way to craft an appropriate response. The foundation sponsored a conference in September, 1989, to generate papers and discussion of the scope of issues faced by Chicago neighborhoods and the positive impact community organization had on the city. This effort brought together community activists and university faculty, many of them active in the Washington campaign. Discussion developed around the concept of an ongoing structure to further this interaction, which was not tied to either a political candidacy or any episodic attack on community groups. Two academics, who had already stepped out of the Ivory Tower and were relatively comfortable with the view from the street, assumed leadership in responding to the MacArthur idea, Phil Nyden of Loyola University in Chicago and Wim Wiewel of UIC.

Nyden chaired the Sociology Department at Loyola. He had come there in 1979 from Calumet College in northwest Indiana, where he had been involved in researching labor issues associated with the plight of the steelworkers. In the mid-eighties, he had his first taste of collaborative research through his involvement in a fair housing research project, headed up by Gary Orfield, that involved several academics as well as some fair housing organizations, such as the Oak Park Regional Housing Center and the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities. This was followed by community-focused research, working with community organizations like Organization of the North East in the neighborhoods surrounding the north side campus of the university.

Wiewel worked with community organizations through UIC's Center for Urban Economic Development (UICUED), where he was director from 1983 to 1993. UICUED was founded in 1978 by Rob Mier, a faculty member of the School of Urban Planning, who later served as Washington's commissioner of the Department of Economic Development. It was an early advocate of university/community collaboration. The Center's faculty and staff reflected the increasing racial diversity of the university faculty in modern times, and the individuals brought their own strong connections to community groups to their work. Its mission emphasized the production of research, analysis, and technical assistance to community groups to help groups in planning and development. It also encouraged a communal research atmosphere, different from the normal entrepreneurial model of faculty research, where experts used their knowledge, skill, and contacts to get grants and funding for themselves personally.

The experience of Wiewel and Nyden suggested a new kind of conference that solicited not only papers from academics, but from community activists as well, to spark debate over the need for community organizations to actively engage in affecting public policy concerning uneven development and a whole host of other issue areas. While community organizations were pleased to be invited to the table to share the wisdom and expertise gained from their experience, many remained skeptical regarding long term collaboration with universities because of previous negative encounters. These encounters generally were characterized by academic attitudes of superiority and aloofness that viewed the role of the community as a "laboratory" for them to go to for data and live subjects. There

was no sense of partnership with (nor accountability to) the community for what was written. The MacArthur conference laid the groundwork for a whole new experience, suggesting the possibility of a collaborative relationship between the university and community, a relationship that acknowledged expertise on both sides that could be harnessed for the good of the town without discarding the gown. Nyden and Wiewel (1991) took papers from the conference and edited a book to gain wider currency of these views.

In the collaborative research model, "academics and non-academics work together in identifying the research issues, developing the research design, collecting the data, analyzing the data, writing up the results, and even working with policy makers and practitioners in designing programs and policies" (Nyden, Figert, Shibley, Burrows, 1997, p. 4; see also Nyden and Wiewel, 1992). This is research done *with* the community, not *to* it.

### ***Policy Research Action Group***

The conference was a success at bringing together community activists and academics. At the conference, the idea to form a new organization was made in general discussion. Doug Gills, an academic connected to UICUED with strong ties to the black political independent movement, was one forceful proponent of the concept. Nyden and Wiewel took the suggestion and, with others from the conference, developed the basis for the Policy Research Action Group (PRAG). Along with their own universities, Loyola and UIC, they invited DePaul University as a third university partner and representatives from about 15 non-profit organizations who had an interest in research at the community level. Many of the community representatives had college or graduate school training themselves. Because of the geographic diversity of the universities and CBOs, from the start PRAG promoted efforts across the Chicago metropolitan area, although the bulk of its projects have focused inside the city. The MacArthur Foundation agreed to fund this initiative.

Since its inception in 1989, PRAG has adopted three approaches to collaborative research. The first involves sending graduate and undergraduate students to work with non-profit organizations, community-based and citywide, to assist them in carrying out their own policy research agenda. This approach utilizes a request-for-proposal process whereby community organizations are urged to submit proposals for using student interns to carry out some policy research. These proposals are then reviewed by a committee of academics and community representatives from PRAG's "Core Group" which functions as PRAG's leadership team.

In the first year, about 50 proposals were submitted for 12 paid internships. The number of interns offered each year depends on funding. Student applications for the slots are awarded on a competitive basis, reviewed by a sub-committee of PRAG's Core Group. Applications are recruited primarily through PRAG's member universities, but students from other Chicago institutions may apply and have been awarded internships from time to time. The interns' work is directed by university and CBO staff working in collaboration; however, the direct supervision of the work has usually been done by the CBO staffer, as the intern usually works from the community location.

Since 1989, 144 community-based research projects have been supported in this way. Students have contributed to research for projects that focused on: the impact of Empowerment Zone incentives on local employment, planning commercial revitalization, the role of not-for-profits in managing affordable housing, environmental clean-up, evaluating Latino participation in community college vocational education programs, barriers to employment faced by public housing residents, etc. (For a more extensive list of projects, contact the authors or see Nyden, Figert, Shibley, Burrows, 1997).

In the early 1990s, PRAG applied for funding to the US Department of Education under the University/Community Service program. To date, two rounds of three year grants have been awarded.

Prior to the second round PRAG added a fourth university to its consortium. As a smaller, predominantly African American institution, Chicago State University added an important new dimension to PRAG. This funding was used to develop four substantive collaborative partnerships, with each university joining with a CBO to plan and carry out a three year research and action agenda.

## The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

The partnerships are somewhat unique due to the fact that the CBOs were written into the budget and received funding for staff and some related project expenses just as the universities did. This went a long way in convincing CBOs that the universities were committed to equal partnerships. Each project had a faculty member, a CBO staff person, a graduate research assistant and an undergraduate intern assigned to work on the project. Partnership projects address the following issues: the impact of welfare reform on three Chicago communities; the role of African American churches in community development in one West Side neighborhood; the need for technical assistance for smaller organizations to develop project ideas and proposals to capture Empowerment Zone dollars; development of a program to assist victims of violence and their families on Chicago's South Side.

In addition to the community based internships and the partnership projects, PRAG employs a third approach to policy research: the Working Group. Working Groups are designed to bring together community activists and academics from around the city and the region to address a policy issue that transcends individual neighborhood boundaries. Each Working Group decides on a research agenda, carries out the research with the assistance of PRAG staff and a graduate research assistant, and then devises an action plan based on the research that is intended to affect policy changes.

Two particular Working Group efforts are illustrative of the benefits of this approach. One of the earliest focused on the phenomenon of stable neighborhoods showing long-term racial and economic diversity in Chicago. Since too often diversity was just a stage on the road to resegregation, research was designed to examine the characteristics of *stable* diverse neighborhoods as well as the policies needed to encourage such an unusual occurrence. What began as a Chicago project was expanded to include nine cities as the result of a special grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This was a collaborative effort between a non-profit group, the Leadership Council of Metropolitan Chicago, faculty from Loyola University, and faculty and community partners from the other cities studied (Nyden, Maly, and Lukehart, 1997).

A Working Group on adult education and workforce preparation was pulled together by staff from three CBOs, two of them neighborhood settlement houses dating from the turn of the century (Erie Neighborhood House and Association House), and a social center, Instituto del Progreso Latino. They were convinced that CBOs did very effective work in this arena. However, they were equally convinced that the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) were less effective but controlled the lion's share of public funds available to deliver adult literacy and vocational education and training. Initially a study was done to investigate and describe best practice characteristics of CBOs engaged in workforce preparation and to estimate the cost of that best practice. This initial study of effective models was followed by a series of reports related to performance measured by completions and placement in jobs.

The reports documented for CBOs the strong performance they intuitively suspected, but were pleased to have confirmed. Conversely, research suggested that the CCC was not doing very well, in spite of their considerable resources (Hellwig and Wilson, 1996).

Based on the research, which was a joint effort of community based providers, staff at the Great Cities Institute of UIC, and PRAG staff, an action agenda was designed to change public policy on the local and state level. A Community Alliance for Training and Education (CATE) was formed that has been pursuing three bills intended to increase funding for community based providers and connect funding to performance.

As PRAG developed, Chicago universities -- particularly those involved in PRAG -- started their own centers for working in collaboration with community groups. DePaul started the Monsignor John J. Egan Urban Center and Chicago State University started the Neighborhood Assistance Center. At Loyola, Nyden developed the Center for Urban Research and Learning.

### ***UIC Neighborhoods Initiative***

In 1994, UIC began the Neighborhoods Initiative (UICNI) under its new Great Cities program. Great Cities expresses UIC's commitment to address urban issues through teaching, research and service partnerships in education, health, economic development, public safety, arts and culture. It was developed by the chancellor, James Stukel, and his special assistant, Wiewel. Stukel is now President of the entire University of Illinois system and has encouraged similar programs for the other two main campuses in the state system, Partnership Illinois in Urbana and Capital Outreach in Springfield. Wiewel, who is now Dean of the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs at UIC, has looked over the entire program since its inception. UICNI is housed in the Great Cities Institute and draws in existing university centers working with community groups, such as UICUED, and community based projects in other colleges, such as Education, Health, Architecture and Art, and Social Work (*Great Cities Directory of Programs, 1995-1996, 1996*).

UICNI is the largest new project started under Great Cities. It is a comprehensive community development program based on a partnership model between UIC and two nearby neighborhoods, Pilsen and the Near West Side. Pilsen is the community due south of the university, home to about 40,000 people, mostly of Mexican heritage, and the Near West Side area is an African-American area of about 10,000 people, just northwest of the campus.

As part of the Great Cities program, UIC made a long term financial commitment to support UICNI with funds for staff, office expenses, and resources to develop projects. In addition, major grants from HUD funded a series of projects in the neighborhoods. UICNI received a HUD grant from the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program in 1995 and, a five year grant from the HUD Joint Community Development Program (JCD) in 1996. Several of the projects started under the HUD grants received support from other private foundations and government agencies to continue and expand their work (Wiewel and Broski, 1997).

Organizationally, UICNI began with a large and diverse Planning Committee which included all the university and community personnel involved in the various projects and UICNI committees. This body proved to be too large to function administratively, and a smaller advisory board or Steering Committee (SC) developed with five members each from the university and the community areas, a representative of the city of Chicago, and the coordinators. The larger Planning Committee is brought together semi-annually in an Update Meeting to see progress on the projects. An on-going process evaluation is led by two UIC faculty, Mike Lieber and Eve Pinsker from the UIC Department of Anthropology. They describe the SC meetings as "one of relaxed engagement. SC members appear to be quite comfortable with one another, with serious talk being interspersed with occasional banter. While SC members do not hesitate to disagree with one another, the nature of debate is professional and positions are well articulated" (Lieber and Pinsker, 1998, p. 101; see also Wiewel and Lieber,

forthcoming).

Collaborative partnerships are key to UICNI projects. Both sides gain from their experience, and develop their capacity and their perspective. The university does not view its involvement as either charity or public relations, although charitable service is done and, hopefully, good press comes from its involvement; rather, it sees the project as integrally related to informing its research and developing its teaching functions.

UICNI has worked in about 40 projects which cover the range of community development, including: leadership and business development, health promotion, job training, commercial development, affordable housing development, neighborhood design, development of an arts institution, educational programs, community writing projects, family counseling, community day care provision and training, career development for high school students, job training, etc. University Internet accounts and training were provided to community partners, as well as help with World Wide Web pages and a listserv for UICNI partners. University classes to develop community plans are run out of the City Design Center in Architecture and in Urban Planning. Over forty faculty and seventy students from UIC, and over fifty community partners, have participated in various aspects of the projects (for a complete list of projects, contact the authors).

Obviously, some UICNI projects are progressing faster than others, and the relationship between university and community partners varies. UICNI's relationship with one of its community partners, The Resurrection Project (TRP) in Pilsen, is one of the more successful collaborations. TRP is a community-based development corporation started in 1990 by a coalition of socially active churches. Many of its staff were trained by the Industrial Areas Foundation, the modern day community organizing body founded by Alinsky (Hurtig, 1996). While TRP had issues with the university plans on expansion, it saw the development of UICNI as an opportunity to expand its organizational capacity. It had enjoyed cooperative experiences with some individual UIC faculty and UICUED on research projects. As UICNI developed, TRP became involved with several of the projects, including the development of an arts and cultural center, a health center, and an affordable housing fund for home repairs.

TRP's associate director, Ismael Guerrero, writing an article with Wiewel, identified three characteristics of the success his organization has with the UICNI, which parallel the success indicators guiding the evaluation. They saw tangible results, mutual respect, and mutual benefits as the indicators of successful projects between UIC and TRP (Wiewel and Guerrero, 1997).

They saw *tangible results* in the partnership, producing research and projects which deal with specific concerns of community members; one such being a rent study in Pilsen which gave TRP the information they needed to promote its case for subsidized housing with the City of Chicago's Department of Housing. They also emphasized the *mutual respect* the two sides of the partnership enjoyed. Given the history of the relationships between UIC and the views of community groups, this achievement should not be taken lightly. And, both sides saw the *mutual benefits* in the projects. TRP gained organizational capacity, with resources to help hire more staff and involvement in more projects.

UIC faculty and students benefited by gaining experience and information to guide their teaching, education, and research.

### Lessons Learned

Reflection on both the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative and the Policy Research Action Group, as models of a new way to approach research, yields several lessons for consideration. Many of the "lessons learned" outlined below were drawn directly from Lieber and Pinsker's evaluation of UICNI, but Nyden and his colleagues have also listed similar ones from their experience with community based research (Nyden, Figert, Shibley, Burrows, 1997; Lieber and Pinsker, 1998). Some of these include:

- \* Successful projects are tailored responses to jointly perceived needs that develop useful knowledge and skills within the community. This kind of activity, often called "capacity building," is common to almost all collaborative projects, and includes skills in accessing and manipulating information and connecting community organizations with resources inside and outside the community--agencies, other organizations, electronic information sources, and experts in various fields.
- \* Collaborative projects take time to develop. However, the result of the time spent is worth the investment. It produces stronger and lasting relationships of value to both the university and the community.
- \* Each of the partners needs some working knowledge of the structure and operation of the other's organization or institution such that occasional (and inevitable) emergencies can be allowed for and alternative times to do project work planned for.
- \* Each of the partners must recognize that the major goal of the project is not the same as the specific objective to be achieved toward that goal and that the goal is always more important than the objective. *Flexibility in achieving goals is essential to a successful partnership.*
- \* Trust is essential to a partnership *to the extent that each partner knows what to expect from the other in regard to the particular project.* Because partners' organizations tend to be hierarchically organized (faculty/department/College, director/ Board of Directors/community organization), there are often levels of trust and mistrust between and among partners.
- \* "Top-down" and "bottom-up" planning are rhetorical terms, not descriptions of actual processes. With very few exceptions, collaborative projects are mixtures of both.
- \* The success of a project does not depend on whether the project idea originates in the community or in the university, nor on who takes the lead in designing the project. What is necessary is a well articulated project design based on experience with and insight into

## The Chicago Response to Urban Problems: Building University/Community Collaborations

the community, refined by an ongoing conversation among partners and participants about the goals, objectives, and implementation before and during the life of the project.

- \* Whenever possible, the sharing of financial resources goes along way to cementing a collaborative relationship. Universities have access to grants that community groups seldom have the capacity to apply for.

As the two examples of PRAG and UICNI indicate, the Chicago model of university/community collaboration is related to the circumstances and history of the city, its universities, and its community groups. Other places may not have the same mix of attributes, limiting the effectiveness of this model beyond Chicago. However, the lessons learned from the Chicago experience can help guide others in developing similar collaborations. To sum up, there are several considerations that recommend expanded use of this model:

**First**, in the process of working with others, researchers and activists realize that they can accomplish more collectively than separately. Part of the success of collaborations is their ability to use scarce resources more effectively.

**Second**, collaboration builds capacity, in the community and in the university. Community participants learn specific research skills and academics learn to put a face on their work, increasing the likelihood that their effort may effect changes in public policy.

**Third**, the energy that goes into developing a collaboration is not lost. Even after the project is over a network of relationships remains and serves as a base on which to build new projects and encourage the developments of new collaborators on both the university and community side of the process.

## References

American Almanac 1993-1994 (1993). Austin: Reference Press.

Bennett, Larry (1989). "Post-War Redevelopment in Chicago: The Declining Politics of Party and the Rise of Neighborhood Politics." Pp. 161-177 in Unequal Partnerships: The Political Economy of Urban Redevelopment in Postwar America, Gregory D. Squires, ed. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Camper, John, Cheryl Devall and John Kass, (1986) "The Road to City Hall: A Half-Century of Black Political Evolution Set the Stage for the Harold Washington 'Revolution'", The Chicago Tribune Sunday Magazine, November 16.

Chicago Daily News, (1961). October 1.

Chicago Department of Development and Planning (1976). The People of Chicago: Who We Are and Who We Have Been. Chicago: City of Chicago.

Chicago Fact Book Consortium (1995). Local Community Fact Book Chicago Metropolitan Area 1990. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers.

Ferman, Barbara (1996). Challenging the Growth Machine: Neighborhood Politics in Chicago and Pittsburgh. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.

Great Cities Directory of Programs, 1995-1996 (1996). Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago.

Grimshaw, William J. (1992) Bitter Fruit: Black Politics and the Chicago Machine, 1931-1991. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Harkavy, Ira and John L. Puckett, (1994). "A Lessons form Hull House for the Contemporary Urban University," Social Science Review 17: 299-321.

Hellwig, Maureen and Derek Wilson (1996). "Models of Effective Workforce Preparation Programs." A report of the Policy Research Action Group, Loyola University, Chicago.

Hirsch, Arnold R. (1983). Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hurtig, Janise (1996). "Pilsen: Parishes and Churches in a Mexican-American Neighborhood." Pp. 139-177 in Religious Organizations and Structural Change in Metropolitan Chicago: The Research Report of the Religion in Urban America Program, Lowell Livezey, ed. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago.

**The Chicago Response to Urban Problems:  
Building University/Community Collaborations**

Kirby, Jack Temple (1983). "The Southern Exodus, 1910-1960: A Primer for Historians." Journal of Southern History 49: 585-600.

Kleppner, Paul. (1985). Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Lieber, Mike and Eve Pinsker (1998). "Evaluation of the Neighborhoods Initiative 1996-1997." Unpublished report.

Mayfield, Loomis (1994). "Chicago Wasn't Ready for Reform." Journal of Urban History 20: 564-576.

Mayfield, Loomis (1996). "The Reorganization of Urban Politics: The Chicago Growth Machine After World War II." Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh.

McCarron, John. (1988) "Chicago on Hold." *Chicago Tribune*, series of articles from August 28 to September 4.

Nyden, Philip; Anne Figert; Mark Shibley; Darryl Burrows (1997). Building Community: Social Science in Action. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Nyden, Philip, Michael Maly, and John Lukehart (1997). The Emergence of Stable Racially and Ethnically Diverse Urban Communities: A Case Study of Nine U.S. Cities. Housing Policy Debate, Volume 8, Issue 2, Fannie Mae Foundation.

Nyden, Philip and Wim Wiewel, eds. (1991). Challenging Uneven Development: An Urban Agenda for the 1990s. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Nyden, Philip and Wim Wiewel (1992). "Collaborative Research: Harnessing the Tensions between Research and Practitioner." American Sociologist. Winter.

Pacyga, Dominic A. (1995) "Chicago's Ethnic Neighborhoods: The Myth of Stability and the Reality of Change," pp. 604-617 in Ethnic Chicago: A Multicultural Portrait. Melvin G. Holli and Peter d'A. Jones, eds. Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 4th ed.

Rosen, George (1980). Decision-Making Chicago-Style: The Genesis of a University of Illinois Campus. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Snyder, Thomas D. (1993). 120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Stoecker, Randy (1996). "PRAG: Creative Tensions and Opportunities." Evaluation report, Policy Research Action Group, Loyola University, Chicago.

Stockwell, Clinton E. (1996). "Graham Taylor Urban Pioneer" CTS Register 86: 1-23.

Trolander, Judith Ann (1975). Settlement Houses and the Great Depression Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

U.S. Bureau of the Census (1975). Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Part 1, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Ward, David (1971). Cities and Immigrants. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wiewel, Wim, and David Broski [1997]. "University Involvement in the Community: Developing a Partnership Model." Renaissance 1: 16-23.

Wiewel, Wim, and Ismael Guerrero (1997). "Long-term Collaboration -- Building Relationships and Achieving Results through a Neighborhoods Initiative Program: The Resurrection Project." Metropolitan Universities 8: 123-134..

Wiewel, Wim, and Michael Lieber (forthcoming). "Goal Achievement, Relationship Building, and Incrementalism: The Challenge of University-Community Partnerships." Journal of Planning Education and Research.







