BUILDING COMMUNITY

THE TRADITION AND PROMISE OF SETTLEMENT HOUSES

Report Prepared for United Neighborhood Houses of New York

The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

Over the course of their long history, settlement houses have maintained a developmental approach to individuals, families and neighborhoods. Contrasting markedly with the deficit-oriented approach that grew out of the Charitable Organization Societies begun in the 1850s, the settlement tradition emphasizes a comprehensive approach that identifies and strengthens individual and neighborhood assets, and builds collective capacity to address community problems. In order to secure government and foundation support over the last 40 years, however, settlements have had to adjust to an increasingly fragmented and categorical funding environment. Aimed at ameliorating deficits, the structure of both public and private funding has limited opportunities to develop community-building approaches.

However, with today's widespread recognition of the limits of categorical, deficit-driven approaches, New York City settlements face an historic opportunity to demonstrate and test their traditional asset orientation against new and pressing realities. Settlements are again asking: how do we build on individual and community strengths rather than devote our limited resources to repairing deficits? How do we find common ground among diverse community elements and provide civic engagement and effective problem solving? How do we exploit our comparative advantages as organizations embedded in the community to help community voices get expressed and connected to the larger political and social arena? These questions, and the actions they inspire, can fuel the transition from a social welfare paradigm to a community-building mentality.

UNH and its member agencies are extremely grateful for the generous funding from the Ford Foundation that enables us to work with Chapin Hall to document community-building activities in settlement houses today. However, it is important to note that Harold Richman, Prudence Brown, and Janice Hirota play a much larger role-they provide us with counsel, expose us to the ideas and examples of others in the field, and are sensitive listeners and provocative questioners. Without their participation in our efforts to create a community-building culture within the settlement houses, we would not be as far along on this important road.

Lastly, this report recognizes the important contributions of the unnamed staff, board members and community residents who are the active participants in the community- building activities described herein. Their efforts inspire us to took ahead to New York as a city of neighbors.

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Executive Director
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper is the second of a series of reports prepared for the United Neighborhood Houses of New York (UNH) by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. It is part of Chapin Hall's documentation of the efforts of UNH and its settlement house members to build community---among settlement house staff and participants, within local neighborhoods, and in broader coalitions with each other and with other organizations and agencies.

The four case studies that form the core of the paper are based on fieldwork at four settlement houses. The authors wish to thank the administration, staff, and participants at each of the involved agencies who were most generous with their time, insights, and experiences. In addition, Emily Menlo Marks, executive director of UNH, and five settlement house executive directors, Donald Bluestone, Stephanie Pinder, Charles Shayne, Bernard Wohl, and Michael Zisser, carefully read earlier drafts of the report and provided useful and constructive comments.

Several Chapin Hall staff also contributed to the paper. Harold Richman and Rebecca Scone provided thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts; Anne Clary edited the paper and oversaw its publication.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

The Tradition and Promise of Settlement Houses

Janice M. Hirota, Prudence Brown, and Nancy Martin

Historically, settlement houses were quintessential community-building institutions. Settlement houses were embedded in their neighborhoods, deeply affecting the daily lives of whole communities. Their comprehensive activities and services [1] supported both individuals and Families; and, settlements amplified the voices of particular neighborhoods in larger political arenas. In addition, settlements publicly espoused a notion of 'local community' that cut across class, ethnic, and racial divisions. Moreover, settlements stood as both the promise and embodiment of the power of local collective action.

Today, a great many external and internal pressures are at work changing the role of settlements in decisive ways, often undermining the link between a settlement and its neighborhood, weakening the call to social action, and promoting the view of residents as dysfunctional and dependent clients. Pivotal among these pressures is funding: settlements have become dependent on funding from highly bureaucratized public social service agencies, each with its own particular agenda. In order to survive economically, settlements have had to shift their focus from the “community” to discrete groups of “needy” residents, bureaucratically defined. Yet, as the limits of this approach have become increasingly apparent, settlements are devising strategies to recapture or enhance their traditional community-building functions, even as they face significant public sector funding cuts, shrinking flexible resources, and increasingly complex community problems.

This report explores the contemporary focus on community building through four case studies. Each case provides a detailed look at a particular community-building effort, including discussions of its history, implementation, and place within the settlement and larger community. Each case can stand alone. Yet, in juxtaposing the four cases, the paper suggests the breadth, variety, and texture of community-building approaches undertaken by

[1] In this paper, the word “program” is used as an inclusive term that encompasses “services” and “activities.” “Services” include a range of programs that aim to meet some need of individuals and Families, such as counseling, day care, and meals for seniors. “Activities” include programs that build on the interests of individuals, such as baseball and other sports, or classes for youth and adults. These are admittedly broad definitions that are meant only to clarify the *use* of these terms in this paper.

It is important to note that services and activities are not mutually exclusive. There is a great deal of overlap, where a service, such as an after-school program, also engages the interest of participants, or an activity, such as an exercise class for seniors, also meets participant needs. Such overlap can also be seen in the deliberate linking of, for example, counseling service participants with other settlement activities, such as gardening. In part, it is this intertwining of needs, interests and capabilities, through a great range of programs, that makes for the richness and depth of settlement house offerings.

settlement houses today. Such variety highlights an essential aspect of community building: it is at heart, as discussed below, a philosophy that can be set into action in myriad ways. Taken together, the case studies allow a broad examination of the often-complex task of translating the notion of community building into action. These case studies are nor evaluations; rather, through concrete examples, the paper aims to explore the meanings, processes, and goals of building community.

The report consists of three major sections. Section I provides a brief discussion of the meanings of community- building, especially as it pertains to settlements. Section II, the core of the paper, presents the four case studies. The first of these, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, illustrates the settlement's strategy of using programs to build community across racial, ethnic, and class divisions. The second, Goddard Riverside Community Center, looks at community building through the development of civic advocacy. The third, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, considers the development and implementation of a community-building philosophy throughout the settlement as part of its effort to establish a new relationship with its community. The fourth, University Settlement, looks at the role of the settlement as it works to strengthen the institutional infrastructure of its community. Section III concludes the paper with a discussion of some overarching community-building themes that emerge from these quite distinct examples.

1. COMMUNITY BUILDING

Two major overlapping themes are central to the notion of community building.[2] First, community building promotes the development of a community's physical, economic, and social aspects. In this sense, the development of affordable housing and improvement of parks and play-grounds, the creation of new employment opportunities and Financial resources, and the strengthening of the skills of individual residents all fall within the focus of community building. Second, community building is also a philosophy that underpins and guides all aspects of an organization's work, including its governance mechanisms and management strategies, its interaction with the community, and the level and substance of staff and participant involvement. Thus, a settlement with an internalized community-building philosophy seeks opportunities in all that it does to:

- advance local leadership;
- promote resident participation;
- build social networks;
- develop common ground across different neighborhood constituencies;,
- foster a sense of identity with and commitment to the neighborhood;
- strengthen the neighborhood's institutional infrastructure; and
- connect neighborhood interests to external re-sources and decision makers.

Put simply, a settlement with a community-building perspective defines its mission in terms of the community as a whole, while continuing to maintain a focus on individuals, families, and programs. Such a settlement is concerned with the process of a community-building, effort just as much as it is with the product. Drawing on examples from the case studies below, this means that a community-building effort to reclaim a neighborhood park fosters and relies on collaborative processes and the development of individual and institutional capacity; or an effort to create a children's baseball league emphasizes the involvement of youth, parents, and community members from all neighborhood groups. These undertakings aim, then, not solely to "take back" a local facility or establish a sports program, but to do so in ways that engage and strengthen individuals, families, and the communities in which they live and work.

Community building, it is true, is not unique to settlement houses. Yet, in many ways, settlements'

[2] This discussion of community building is informed by the work of Prudence Brown and Janice M. Hirota on the report *Voices from the Filed: Learning from Comprehensive Community Initiatives* of the Aspen Institute's Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families (forthcoming). Anne C. Kubisch, Robert Chaskin, Mark Joseph, Harold Richman, and Michelle Roberts also worked on the report.

"community embeddedness,"[3] that is, their integration into the daily life and social fabric of the community, makes them well positioned to play a pivotal community-building role. The United Neighborhood Houses (UNH), a membership organization of 37 settlement houses in New York City, provides institutional support for the community-building efforts of its members by, for example, creating organization-wide forums for discussing community-building issues, supporting various documentation efforts, sponsoring a community-building -committee, and helping to introduce and promote community-building projects. In selecting these four case study settlements from the larger UNH roster, we looked for a range of activities and approaches through which to explore the implementation of community-building ideas, and the issues and obstacles that arise in the process. In part, the paper means to highlight settlements' ongoing concern with community-building values and perspectives, and to reinforce the place of such work within the settlement tradition. The detailed cases aim to encourage sharing and learning about the meaning and work of building community, to stimulate creative thinking about the approach, and to promote further community-building endeavors within settlement houses and in other agencies and organizations as well.

The case studies are largely based on data gathered by Nancy Martin through on-site interviews and observations that took place during the summer and fall of 1995. In general, interviews were conducted during a series of site visits, and included meetings with settlement administrators, staff, program participants, and community stakeholders. In some of the sites, data were also collected at project meetings and events.

II. CASE STUDIES

MOSHOLU MONTEFIORE COMMUNITY CENTER

The Children's Sports Program

Since 1944, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center has been serving residents of the North Bronx, a neighborhood that continues to be home to a largely working class population of infant families. The settlement aims many of its programs and services to the children and parents of these families, providing, in the process, social arenas within which members of different ethnic and racial groups can come together through shared interests, needs, and goals.

A major piece of this programming effort is the Children's Sports Program, which now includes teams for flag football, co-ed soccer, roller hockey, and basketball. Perhaps its most well-known component is the spring baseball league, which now draws players from the North and South Bronx, and consists of teams from the “Pee Wee” 5- and 6-year-olds to “Seniors” from 13 to 15 years old. In 1995, its sixth season, the league involved about 750 players on 49 teams.

In many ways, the sports program, and the baseball league in particular, illustrate the settlement's approach to programming and to community building. Mosholu leadership sees programming as the way to build community. The case study provides an exploration of the way programming and community-building efforts can intersect and reinforce each other. Moreover, because the baseball league has been operating since 1990, this case study, in comparison with the others presented in the paper, provides a longer perspective on community-building endeavors.

BACKGROUND

Mosholu introduced its baseball league in the spring of 1990, less than a year after Don Bluestone became the executive director of the center. In some ways, the league has its roots in his personal experiences as a resident in the neighborhood, where he grew up and now lives with his family. When one of Bluestone's sons was 5 years old, he joined a baseball league in the neighborhood, but neither he nor his father enjoyed the experience. As Bluestone sees it, this was primarily because the league had no connection to the community; perhaps more to the point, the league organizers, who did not live in the

[3] For an extended discussion of the 'community embeddedness' of settlement houses, see Prudence Brown. *Settlement Houses Today.- Their Community-Building Role,* The Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, 1995.

neighborhood, were uninterested in creating such a connection. The league undertook no outreach efforts to recruit neighborhood families; moreover, it made no attempt to develop a social network for families once they did join, not even introducing parents of participating players to each other. Essentially, the league played little role in the life of the community. This disappointing experience did, however, prove to be a valuable touchstone for Bluestone when he became executive director of Mosholu.

First, Bluestone realized, in part through his son's experience, that ‘there was nothing for kids” in the neighborhood that would engross them in informal but structured activity. Building on the belief that sports have a “powerful” appeal both to attract and to involve youth and their families, the settlement turned to the idea of baseball. “Baseball is basic,” according to Bluestone, and developing a league is a way to tap into and build on an interest, some might say a passion, already existing in the community. Furthermore, he saw a match between the need in the neighborhood for “informal activities” for youth and the ability and responsibility of the settlement to meet that need. Such a view of the role of the settlement emphasizes the provision of what were once considered typical or standard neighborhood activities. Many community service agencies, in focusing on specialized needs and on those in poverty, have, according to Bluestone, bypassed the needs of "working parents who are holding communities together." In part, he sees the role of the settlement as serving and bolstering these parents and their families through inclusive activities, such as sports or educational programs. In paying attention to and helping to strengthen this segment of the community, while also serving those in poverty, the settlement is reinforcing the fabric of the community and essentially helping the community to help itself.

The provision of such inclusive activities falls squarely within a pivotal aspect of the settlement's self-definition. Initially, the neighborhood around the settlement was essentially comprised of Irish and Jewish immigrant families. During the 1970s and 1980s, however, the Mosholu neighborhood began to change, with many families moving out. As these families left the area, others arrived; first, Puerto Rican families, many of them immigrants, and then African Americans. The influx of immigrants continues, most recently with the arrival of families from the former Soviet Union. According to settlement staff, the neighborhood composition is now roughly 65 percent Latino, 20 percent African American, and 15 percent white. Although the socioeconomic character of much of the area continues largely unchanged---working-class intact Families---there are public housing units in the neighborhood, and families living in poverty.

Within this mixture of groups, Mosholu aims to be a center that is deeply connected to the community and serves all the community’s component populations, crossing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. The statement of welcome on the center's program brochure explicitly acknowledges the difficulties of "a city torn apart by racism, anti-semitism, ethnic isolation, drugs, poverty, poor health and educational services." The brochure goes on to lay out the aim of the center to bring people together 'regardless of religion, race or ethnicity ... in a spirit of friendship, to work together to pursue common goals and interests. We are here to help make our neighborhoods a
better place to live for everyone. We are
open to all."
Such a call for interaction across groups runs counter to other trends in the community. The public schools in the area tend to be segregated; moreover, even when a school has a mixed population of students, classes are often segregated with, for example, greater proportions of white students in classes that are more academic. There is also residential clustering by racial and ethnic groups. Within this context, the settlement sees itself as one community organization that can and must provide structured ways for individuals to interact across group boundaries. Certainly, as the neighborhood population has changed, a challenge for the settlement has been to continue serving the entire neighborhood, retaining ties with older segments of the neighborhood while creating links with newcomers.

The center offers a range of activities and services to all age groups in the community, including adult education and physical fitness classes, and a variety of services for seniors, including a Meals on Wheels program and a Day Center for the Frail Elderly. A focal point of the center's work are children and youth programs, including a Child Development Center, with day care, nursery school, and Head Start services; sports clubs and leagues; weekend activities, classes, and sports; and summer day camps. There are programs for immigrants as well, including English as a second language classes and preparatory classes for the United States Citizenship and English Test. In addition, the UJA-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies provides significant funding to the settlement, where some of the programming offers "Jewish members the opportunity to learn about their culture, history and holiday traditions."

GETTING STARTED

In early 1990, in preparation for its first baseball season, Mosholu embarked on the *First* of its now extensive recruitment efforts for the league. The settlement sent flyers to all local public and parochial schools announcing the formation of the baseball league and offering membership at the rate of $45 per child for the season. From the start, the price of membership has included the full uniform of shirt, panes, hat, and socks. By mid-March, the league was filled to capacity. That first *year,* there were 14 teams with just over 200 players: four "pee wee" teams for 5- and 6-year-olds; six "minors" teams for 7- to 9-year- olds; and four 'majors" teams for 10- to 12-year-olds. Overall, the players roughly reflected the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood, with mostly Latino children, and then African Americans and whites.

According to Bluestone, everyone was 'thrilled with the numbers' during this first year. In addition to players, the settlement recruited volunteer coaches. From the start, the league coaches have been parents of players and settlement staff, all of whom volunteer their rime. Umpires, on the other hand, have always been paid, a policy that helps maintain an atmosphere of fairness on the field. The Mosholu physical education director became the league's "commissioner," another move that has helped create a sense of structure and fairness in the program, since players and parents both understand that someone is supervising the program and always know who to see when there is any problem or issue. A settlement staff person, usually the commissioner or the assistant director, attends every game. Staff presence helps ensure smooth proceedings, including adherence to explicit rules of conduct, provides participants with easy access to the settlement, and high-lights the settlement's role as sponsor. Overall, the league's first year was a big success; the only real difficulty was in getting field space from the Parks Department. At the end of the season, Mosholu held an awards ceremony and family picnic. As in subsequent years, each player received a trophy. The community reaction, according to Bluestone, was very positive; even working parents, who often feel too pressured or tired to attend evening meetings or weekend events, make time for baseball. 'People really liked being part of [the league], and the word spread throughout the community.'

Each year since the start, the league has attracted increasing numbers of children as players and adults as volunteer coaches. In 1991, the second year, the league expanded to 330 youngsters, and included softball teams for those girls who preferred softball to baseball. (All of the baseball teams are open to girls, and about 100 take part in the pee wee and bantam age brackets for 5- to 8-year-olds. After the age of 9, however, only a handful of girls play on baseball teams. Most girls 9 years old and older who want to play join the competitive girls' softball league; four girls' softball teams, for 9- to 15-year-olds, attract about 60 players.) As mentioned above, in the 1995 season, 750 children played in 49 teams across five age-graded levels (from 5- to 15-year-olds) for baseball and four girls' softball teams.

The larger community has become involved in a variety of ways. Each year, the season is "kicked-off' with a parade, with the police closing part of busy Jerome Avenue for the event. Players march in their uniforms, an participating parents and other adults join as well. One year, a Fire truck led the parade; another year, it was the band from a local

junior high school. Local merchants often join the crowd, at times to see "their" team in uniforms sporting the name of the sponsoring business. Settlement board members have become involved in the league, with about half of the 30-member board sponsoring teams, either as individuals or through their businesses.

THE BASEBALL EAGUE

The baseball league is highly organized and structured in a number of ways. Given the number of participants and teams, such organization is necessary for smooth operations. Apart from organizational logistics, structure is also demanded by the requirements of the game which, like all games, can only proceed through mutual adherence to custom and rules. This game structure, in turn, creates a social arena where participants honor the need for rules to promote a larger common good-most immediately, to allow the league to function at all. The discovery of such common ground does not always occur easily in our often-fragmented and transitional neighborhoods. The structure and rules of the game and of the league may also help facilitate interaction among strangers, providing a safe environment where people who may not interact in their daily routines can come together in shared activity. For example, in the potentially charged area of team assignments, the settlement has developed Guidelines and procedures to facilitate decision making and acceptance of those decisions. Aside from basic rules---mainly, that a child plays with the team his or her parent is coaching---the settlement runs a draft system for assigning players to teams in which the commissioner tries to mix players of different skill levels. Such community factors as friendship ties are also taken into account, as well as assigning players to teams across ethnic and racial lines. In the process, the network of acquaintances across the neighborhood grows. Players continuing from one season to the next often remain with the same team, although as players move into the next age-grade, team composition changes. As a result, continuing players usually have some old friends on their teams each season as well as new teammates.

The attempt to distribute skills through the draft system aims, of course, to create some equality of skills across teams, thereby making the games more fun for all participants and avoiding totally lopsided seasons. At the same time, the emphasis on skills coincides with the competitive nature of the league. In part, settlement administrators feel that the competition between teams tends to bolster the engagement of players and their parents, and to heighten team spirit. Moreover, the competitiveness tends to 'make skills paramount.' The resulting emphasis on what each player can contribute to the team effort often helps undercut whatever racial tension might exist between teammates or between players and the coach, even if just for the duration of each game. Settlement staff agree, of course, that it is not enough for such interaction to occur only during a game. But, they also point out that at least the league provides the structure and occasion for mingling and team effort; within the neighborhood, such informal, voluntary, and purposeful interaction does not often happen within other institutional spheres, such as the classroom. The games also often become extended social occasions, with, for example, pre-and post-game picnics, which all teammates, sometimes with their Families, are expected to attend.

The settlement has devised ways to deal with problems and issues, both to prevent problems and to intervene when necessary. For example, as the league has developed and become prominent within the community, its competitive character has also been a source of many problems. Although the competition between teams engages players, it can also evoke “craziness.” just before the mandatory congratulatory handshake with members of the winning team, for example, a losing player might first spit in his hand and then offer to shake. Settlement staff point out that the craziness born of competition mainly occurs with parents, rather than the players themselves. A Father, for example, might complain loudly that his child did not get enough playing time, attributing the perceived slight to racial motives; or a mother might vociferously contest an umpire's call. There have been times when parents and players have become so unruly, discourteous, or aggressive

that they have been expelled from the game. As mentioned above, a settlement representative attends all games, reinforcing the role of the settlement as sponsor of the league, but also acting when necessary as the final arbiter of disputes. In general, of course, the settlement tries to handle parental and player disagreements and complaints before they reach this extreme.

The commissioner is the point person to hear complaints about games, including playing time and umpire calls. If he is not at the game, everyone, he says, knows where he can be reached. And, in fact, he often finds messages waiting for him on the Monday after a Sunday game. Moreover, the commissioner is himself a part of a program approach that provides clear rules and structure from the start of any participant's involvement. This includes an enrollment process that requires in-person registration with a birth certificate, the draft system briefly described above, training sessions for coaches, and a seven-page statement of the center's baseball and softball regulations that covers rules of conduct for players, parents, and coaches, as well as safety and game rules. The sense of a safe social environment resides precisely in the sense of predictability imparted by the shared, explicit rules governing behavior both on and off the field, the organized framework within which informal interaction and shared interest in the game can take place, and the role of the commissioner, who affords parents and other community members easy access to settlement administrators, and both enforces the rules and provides authoritative recourse.

THE BASEBALL LEAGUE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE SETTLEMENT

The baseball league exemplifies many aspects of the settlement's approach to its work and its role in the community, and reflects the settlement's underlying philosophy.

Providing "Normative Programs"

The league typifies the settlement's commitment to what might be called standard or inclusive activities and services. In referring to such programs, the executive director uses the term "normative programs;" in other places, such programs are referred to as "primary services" [4], or simply "activities." [5] All of these terms refer to programs, such as after-school, summer camp, and educational classes, that meet needs and interests of people across class, race, ethnic, family status, and other classificatory boundaries. These programs differ from more specialized, categorically defined services, such as drug or teenage pregnancy programs, that serve more narrowly defined populations with specific needs. The settlement sees normative programming as meeting widely shared needs and interests; moreover, in the process of building on community interests and bringing people together, these programs help strengthen individuals, families, neighborhood relations, and the social fabric of the community.

Community Building Through Programming

The sports program at Mosholu is an important example of this settlement's normative programming. It is clear that Mosholu has developed sports activities, including the baseball league, as solid programming to meet perceived needs in the community, and especially as a way to engage children and youth. By all accounts, and perhaps most emphatically demonstrated by the large and growing number of participants, the program is meeting a need for structured, informal activity for youth. At the same time, intertwined with programming values, interests, and goals, the settlement has been able to introduce and implement community-building values and structures.

The intersection between programmatic concerns and community-building efforts has an impact on a variety of settlement house interests, both internally (within the organization) and externally (within the larger community).

Building community within the center: The baseball league promotes linkage between settlement programs in various ways. First, the league provides a point of entry into other activities and services. League families become

[4] See, for example, the discussion of "primary services" in Joan Wynn, Joan Costello, Robert Halpern, and Harold Richman, *Children, Families and Communities*: *A new Approach to Social Services,* The Cahpin Hall Center for Children at The University of Chicago, 1994.
[5] Verbal Communication with Emily Menlo Marks.

familiar with the settlement and its programs through the regular newsletter (described below), social events surrounding the league, and informal contact at games between parents and settlement administrators and other staff. Staff say that there has been spillover into the center's after-school pro-grams, for example, and especially into the country summer camp located on a 125-acre camp site in nearby Rockland County, which now serves 750 children.

Second, as the baseball league has attracted more children to the center, the new participants themselves have stimulated the development of additional programs and activities. A major example here is the relatively new sports summer camp. Through the league, settlement leadership recognized a need for a more affordable alternative to its country camp, and established a day program located at the center. In the summer of 1995, approximately 100 children took part in this camp. As another example, a parent/volunteer coach suggested an adult softball league. The settlement decided to try it in a low-key way and, after posting announcements for adults 35 and over, was surprised to recruit 48 players, ranging in age from 35 to 67 years old. The teams played twice a week through the summer, even challenging and beating the day camp staff.

The league also provides a way for settlement staff across a range of programs to interact with each other and become involved in a settlement-wide activity. Spring is now known throughout the center as the agency's baseball season.

Serving as a bridge between the community and the center: The league provides a link between the center and the community in numerous ways. As indicated above, the league provides a point of entry for children and parents into other settlement programs. It also serves as a way for the center to reach out into the community. For example, the league has raised the visibility of the settlement in the community; in fact, the name of the league itself---the Mosholu Center Children's Baseball League--- is an ongoing reminder to participants and other community members of the sponsoring agency. The league has also provided a way for the settlement to engage local merchants; a business can sponsor a team for the season and have its name imprinted on the team's uniforms. Some sponsoring merchants also provide other favors for their teams; a local pizza parlor, for example, hosts a team pizza party. The kickoff parade that starts the season also engages the community while highlighting the center.

The recruitment and communications activities around the league demonstrate the center's emphasis on strategic outreach. For example, efforts to recruit players include distribution of enrollment flyers to the public and parochial schools in the neighborhood. Moreover, settlement staff not only deliver flyers to the schools, but stuff bundles of them into each teacher's box, making it as easy- as possible for school staff and teachers to receive and distribute them to their pupils. This kind of distribution is grounded in the efforts of settlement leadership to develop personal relationships with school district administrators and school principals. The settlement takes a similar approach with flyers announcing special activities for children on school holidays and vacations.

Once children and parents are involved in the league, communications efforts continue with a weekly *Baseball/Softball Newsletter,* which mainly provides league news---brief recaps of each game played during the week, team standings, and scheduling information---but also includes information about other youth programs. In addition, more detailed brochures about settlement programs are often available at games.

The baseball league within the larger community: There is a strong sense among settlement administrators that the baseball league has helped make connections between people that simply are not made otherwise within the community. Informal acquaintanceships develop on the playing field, during pre-game team picnics, or at league-wide awards celebrations. There is no claim that such ball-field camaraderie turns into off-field friendships, but there is the awareness that the simple process of neighbor meeting neighbor on neutral turf and through a mutual interest helps build the social fabric of the community. Settlement programs cannot make friendships, but they can provide the social arena within which people can naturally come together

and interact. It is interesting to note that in this neighborhood, as in all urban settings, people who are strangers to each other do not necessarily belong to different groups or live on different blocks. Indeed, residents of the same housing complex have commented, for example, that they have finally met their neighbors at league games, and parents whose children attend the same school may interact not at school affairs, but on the playing field.

Program Fees

A large number of center programs, including the baseball league, require a fee for participation; there is a general “no refund” policy once a person has enrolled. In many programs, including the country summer camp, a limited number of scholarships are available; moreover, according to the executive director, the settlement is always open to requests for special consideration. Such a practice has many ramifications. In *Fiscal* terms, the fee requirement has enabled the settlement to continue most of its services and activities even in the current period of budget cutbacks. The practice seems to be part of a willingness among settlement leadership to recognize business aspects of the center as well as its service responsibilities and its role in the community. A businesslike approach to settlement fiscal matters means a hard-nosed grasp of program budgets, for example. But beyond Fiscal issues, the practice has important philosophical underpinnings.

The fee, combined with normative programming, helps frame the settlement as a place for the entire neighborhood, and not solely for the poor or for those with specialized needs and problems. At the same time, the fee is not meant to exclude; there are, as mentioned above, scholarships available for many programs. Settlement administrators point out that no child has ever been excluded from the baseball league because the family could not afford to pay-, in fact, administrators are hard pressed to recall even a few requests for a break in the cost to join the league.

Through experience, staff have also found that requiring some program payment means that people consider more carefully whether or not to enroll, and then, once enrolled, honor more seriously their commitment to attend. They argue, for example, that when Sunday classes were free, enrollments were high and quickly reached their limits, but attendance was frequently low. When people do not pay, they are more willing to miss a class; on the other hand, when there is a fee for the classes, enrollments again are high, but so is attendance.

The settlement not only sets a fee for most programs, but expects people to pay. This means requiring payment with registration or, at times, cracking down those who owe money to the settlement. According to the executive director, the practice of imposing and collecting fees is sharply criticized by some in the community who argue that fees keep some potential participants out of programs. However, the director points out that word would quickly spread if fees were not collected, and no one would want to pay. Moreover, the practice of an across-the-board fee policy means equal treatment across neighborhood groups.

Institutional Embeddedness

The center fosters relationships with many institutions in the neighborhood. The relationship with the school district, described above, allows the center to conduct part of its outreach through local schools, a major means of reaching neighborhood children and their families. The center also enjoys a close relationship with Montfiore Hospital, and, in fact, the central settlement office and facilities are housed in a building constructed on land donated by the hospital in 1959. The executive director recognizes the opportunities and support such pivotal community institutions can provide to the settlement, and works to maintain good relations. For example, the hospital staff have special privileges at the settlement's weight and fitness center, and the settlement has collaborated with the hospital on such programs as services for the frail elderly.

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS AND COMMUNITY- BUILDING THEMES

The Mosholu Center sports activities, including the base- ball league, demonstrate an approach to community budding through normative

programming. Using such an approach, the settlement works to develop attractive programs that aim to meet community needs. In the process, programs become the vehicles for community-building values and goals. In the end, as it happens, substantive programming aspects allow community building to occur in a natural and voluntary way, while community-building values enhance and strengthen program activities. These processual themes are visible in a number of ways:

The baseball league provides a social arena where residents can interact: The league builds on an existing interest, provides a unifying purpose for getting together, and engages people who participate voluntarily. Participants come together as equals on common ground; the settlement helps frame such ground in, for example, the uniforms that teammates buy and wear. Administrative staff feet that uniforms are an important element of the program because the players love them and, moreover, they are 'an equalizing factor.'

The league provides a structure for interaction according to formal rules: There is a structured formality of rules, roles, and expectations that both permit interaction and help guide it. Within this framework, players can work together in teams; moreover, the league can also be an arena where children encounter and internalize, as a price of participation, highly formalized rules that are paradigmatic of our bureaucratized society. In addition, parents can meet and interact informally through the league. The settlement has established explicit expectations and rides of conduct to help guide such interaction. When rules break down or expectations are disappointed, players and their families have recourse to the baseball commissioner.

Outreach is extensive and strategically planned: Settlement staff work to recruit players from all parts of the neighborhood. Here, the distribution of flyers through the public and parochial schools, critical institutions for reaching youth, plays an important role. Once players and parents are involved in the league, the settlement works to keep lines of communication open through, for example, the accessibility of settlement staff at games, the availability of the commissioner, and the weekly league newsletter.

The league has brought new community needs to the attention of the settlement: The (growing number of youth participating in the league, and especially the inclusion of different segments of the neighborhood, have alerted settlement leadership to unmet community needs. A major example here is the development of a new summer day camp. Another example shows how the league has involved the settlement in larger community concerns. When one of the main playing Fields for the league, Harris Park, was selected as the sire of a new water treatment facility, Mosholu was active in bringing the planned development to the community's attention. According to Bluestone, community protests have prompted the city to reopen the search for a site.

Strong settlement leadership has been pivotal: The league has its beginnings in the personal experiences of the executive director as a resident in the neighborhood. But the importance of the leadership vision goes beyond the creation of the league. As discussed above, the league is part of a larger approach to programming that emphasizes programs that meet widely shared needs and interests, that bring together traditional and new settlement participants, and that join people naturally in voluntary pursuits.

GODDARD RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER

The Family Council

Founded in early 1995, the Family Council of the Goddard Riverside Community Center is a center-wide forum that brings together staff and participants from all the settlement's programs to Fight reductions in social services funding and to develop an advocacy voice for the settlement house. The council pursues this agenda by sponsoring public meetings with elected officials, letter- writing campaigns, petitions, voter registration efforts, and other forms of civic activism; it also works to engage and help organize other community stakeholders, and to

create and cement links with other local and city-wide groups. A steering committee and four task-oriented committees, comprised of staff and community volunteers, organize and oversee the efforts of the council. In addition to its agenda of civic activism, the Family Council is a means for creating and reinforcing links among the 20 separate Goddard Riverside programs, and for helping to develop a common sense of mission among the settlement's programs, more than 100 staff members, and constituents. According to Goddard Riverside's own documentation of the development of the council, it:

> . . . emerged from the immediate need to oppose the budget cuts and protect our programs and the people we serve; but it is rooted in long-brewing trends at Goddard Riverside that speak of the stairs desire to work with each other and with the community.

A case study of the Family Council provides insight into how the settlement has turned the urgent need to respond to budget cuts into a means to build community, both by bringing together the various programs and individuals under its roof, and by developing a social activism role within the larger community. The study also explores how the settlement has used existing organizational interests, infrastructure, and resources to further its community- budding agenda. Moreover, given the relatively recent development of the council, the case study looks at issues that arise when fostering a new community-building project within a settlement's established programmatic structure.

BACKGROUND

Goddard Riverside is located in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and defines its catchment area as the region from 59th to 110th streets and from Central Park to the Hudson River. Although the population of this area is extremely diverse along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, the settlement serves primarily a Latino and African American population (each group comprises about 40 percent of the settlement's constituency), with smaller numbers of Asians (roughly 1 percent) and whites making up the balance. Program participants are low income and represent a variety of household types and age groups. The settlement offers a wide range of activities and services, including: permanent housing for low-income elderly, disabled, or formerly homeless adults; outreach services and a day program for homeless adults; homelessness prevention through organizing, tenant advocacy, and legal representation; neighborhood preservation projects; career awareness and college counseling programs; after-school, evening, pre-school, summer camp, and school- based programs for children and youth; and social, cultural, recreational, and counseling programs for seniors.

In part, staff see that a Goddard Riverside “family” is created by the great diversity of participants across a range of ages, races, and cultures. Such diversity, staff argue, results from the settlements 'birth-to-death' programs for all community members. This "family" provides core strength for the settlement's efforts to reach out and engage people from all segments of the neighborhood. A main goal now of the Family Council is to bring together and connect these diverse programs, staff members, and participants.

GENESIS OF THE FAMILY COUNCIL

About 3 years ago, Goddard Riverside staff began work in two broad policy and program areas. First, they aimed to create a stronger sense of community within the organization by bringing staff together to learn about each other's programs. As one worker notes, the settlement has always been a service-oriented organization with strong and diverse programming. Maintaining this quality requires “tremendous effort,” with staff making deep commitments to their own programs and the people they serve. The resulting emphasis on programs, however, has made it difficult to institutionalize ways to bring staff together in coordinated cross-program efforts. Second, Goddard Riverside staff started exploring ways to frame their programs within larger social policy issues; address the broader political climate; and develop a role as an advocate for publicly funded services.

Settlement staff carried out these two broad endeavors---strengthening internal community

and developing a social advocacy role within the larger community---through several efforts that are now perceived as the experiential and organizational bases of the Family Council. The following series of earlier projects highlights the critical importance in community-building efforts of a log- term perspective and the willingness to develop and build over time. The projects include:

- *The Goddard Riverside Roundtable:* Created 2 years ago through a decision at a staff retreat, the roundtable helps foster communications within the agency. On a voluntary basis, staff gain a hands-on sense of the various settlement programs by making on-site visits, participating in lunchtime activities, and meeting monthly to address agency policy, mission, goals, and other common concerns. One roundtable project was the creation of a staff directory.
- *Connections:* This project, originally funded through the State-Wide Settlement House Program of the New York Scare Department of Social Services, promotes greater coherence in services delivery by creating links among programs within the agency as well as between agency programs and those provided by other organizations.
- *Staff Conferences:* Over the past *3 years,* the settlement has sponsored conferences for staff to discuss policy issues and to define a role of democratic activism that reflects settlement values and aims. Although it has been difficult to continue these discussions in the course of daily settlement routines, these conferences, taken together, have laid the groundwork for expanding the role and identity of the settlement. The Fall 1994 conference was particularly pivotal. It included a panel discussion on the growing opposition among segments of the Upper West Side community to the perceived concentration of social service providers in the neighborhood. Following the meeting, Goddard Riverside staff decided to launch a campaign “to educate the community about who [they] are as human service providers.” Staff later fused this effort with Family Council goals.
- *Ad Hoc Committee on Budget Cuts: As* changing political priorities at the local, state, and federal levels threatened funding for social services, staff began to organize protests among their own program participants and in concerted efforts with other program staff. As Goddard Riverside representatives, staff implemented letter-writing and telephone campaigns, circulated petitions, testified at hearings, and attended community meetings. This work fed directly into the Family Council.

The budget cuts of the past year alarmed the Goddard Riverside staff and community. In response, the settlement has built on these earlier efforts to coordinate staff and develop a collective political consciousness. At a staff meeting in January 1995, Goddard Riverside executive director Bernard Wohl combined the themes of collaboration, a common mission, and civic activism. In discussing the need for the settlement “to become politically active and to bad a structured alliance with [its] constituents,” he suggested a "town hall' meeting of all those who know and support the agency to gather at Goddard Riverside and voice their concerns about the impending budget cuts. On February 2, nearly 300 people attended what was the first Family Council meeting. Participants represented the full diversity of the Upper West Side, including parents of children in Goddard Riverside programs, people who live in the agency’s housing, students who attend nearby Barnard College and Columbia University, and residents across all ethnic, racial, and age groups in the neighborhood. Members of the settlement's board and a staff person from the United Neighborhood Houses also attended.

THE FAMILY COUNCIL

Since that first gathering, the Family Council has met monthly and developed a busy pace of activity. For example, staff and volunteers have collected signatures for petitions and letters protesting budget cuts for essential services, met with local politicians, testified at hearings, and attended rallies and demonstrations in New York City, Albany, and Washington, D.C. These efforts have aimed to protect social programs broadly

defined. including Medicaid and other health services, public education systems, such as the city and state university systems of New York, and services for children and their families. The council has also worked to protect the right of nonprofit organizations to speak out in their communities and engage in advocacy efforts. Throughout this work, the settlement has collaborated with other community groups engaged in similar undertakings, including the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies, Citizens Committee for Children, the Same Boat Coalition, the West Side Coalition of Human Service Agencies, and The City Project. More recently, the Family Council launched a voter registration drive. Volunteers staff sidewalk registration tables each week outside Goddard Riverside offices and canvas the settlement's housing.

The initial overwhelming response to the Family Council has quieted down somewhat, as can be expected, according to staff. Approximately 40 to 60 people now attend meetings, including representatives from the community board and the offices of local politicians. The settlement provides regular updates on council activities to the members of its board. Staff also report a steady flow of phone calls to the settlement from neighborhood residents who are interested in learning about Family Council events, as well as a stable level of commitment and volunteerism among staff and constituents.

Although the Family Council may, in theory, be owned by the whole community, it has been primarily a staff-driven initiative, reflecting in part the settlement's role in conceptualizing and implementing the effort. A core group of about 12 staff members handle the bulk of the organizational work, largely providing the overall vision and structure, as well as planning activities. Early in its history, a question arose in the settlement about appointing a staff member as the Family Council's point person. Staff ultimately decided that the council “is not a one-person job;” rather, it is "community building by committee.” The Family Council steering committee has six members, all settlement administrators and program directors, who provide the primary leadership and organization for events and activities. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there are four task-oriented committees lobbying/legislation, action/rallies, administration, and voter registration. Each committee consists of volunteers from the staff and community, and is chaired by a staff person who is teamed with a neighborhood resident to share responsibilities. In addition, some 30 to 50 neighborhood residents, representing each Goddard Riverside program, volunteer to help implement plans and to link the council to other community members.

Staffing and Leadership

The management and staffing of the Family Council raise some interesting issues and point in part to the particular demands of undertaking substantial community-building efforts within a service-oriented frame-work. Although the settlement has been able to start and sustain the council without special funding, the work has entailed considerable commitments of time and effort, at the moment coming primarily from settlement staff. Given the settlement's initial lack of funds to hire a Family Council staff person, the effort has run on time squeezed out of the already busy schedules of administrators, program managers, and other staff. In addition to increased pressure on staff time, this has meant that responsibility for the council's growing agenda of activities has been far flung across the agency, at times increasing the difficulty of coordinating action and supporting continuous effort.

Active staff assert that most of their colleagues participate in the council in some way, helping to organize events, attending meetings, or publicizing council activities. In fact, however, staff feet differing degrees of interest and commitment. In part, this is due simply to individual predilections. For example, some staff see involvement in the Family Council as a way to be part of the entire settlement house community; for others, involvement means getting to know coworkers and building camaraderie. Still others feet little connection to the project.

It is important to note that the organizational structure of the settlement house itself accounts

for some of the differences in staff involvement. Several people point out that program staff have less flexibility in their schedules than administrative staff; moreover, the daily routines and duties of program staff leave little time for extra responsibilities. Although Goddard Riverside has tried to be sensitive to such time constraints by, for example, beginning and ending meetings on schedule, program staff often feel a tension between the demands of their programs and the needs of the Family Council. Therefore, despite an aim to engage program staff in cross-program activities, as well as the desire of many program staff to participate in such activities, most council work falls to administrative staff. It is much easier, in fact, for administrators to justify incorporating such efforts into their day-to-day tasks and responsibilities.

It is also difficult for many program participants to become involved with the Family Council because of time constraints. For example, working parents, especially those raising families alone, have limited free time, and attending meetings at the end of a workday often seems impossible. On occasion, the settlement has provided child care during council meetings; on the whole, however, parents say they do not need the service. Only a handful of parents normally attend Family Council meetings and events. But, as staff see it, even parents who do not attend meetings contribute a great deal to letter-writing and petition-signing campaigns organized within the day care center. One staff member points out that it is 'not easy for [these parents]' but they do their part, "They act like constituents;" moreover, within the center, they are viewed as part of the council. Such inclusion of all levels of participation contributes, of course, to the sense of a network of connections with the settlement and the neighborhood. Moreover, the institutional willingness to build over time affords individuals the opportunity to pace the development of their commitment and sense of civic engagement.

IMPACTS OF THE FAMILY COUNCIL

As discussed above, the Family Council has multiple, intersecting goals. Most immediately, it aims to influence the city, state, and federal budget process and preserve funding for social programs broadly defined, including health care, social services, and public education. Longer-range community-building goals include fostering democratic activism and developing common bonds among settlement staff, participants, and community members, especially through joint work. These goals, and the processes to achieve them, must overlap and reinforce each other.
In the short term, the Family Council has engaged in a range of advocacy work to preserve funding for social programs. Goddard Riverside staff and local politicians assert that this work, in conjunction with coalitions across the city and state, has had an impact, that funding cuts would have been worse without such determined opposition. Such work, revolving around specific and immediate ends, potentially has long-term effect on the development of democratic activism as well. One staff member sees the council as the start of a long process to affirm a shared public life and set of values. Another argues that the council affords people with no experience of activism the opportunity to learn the value of community action and the power they can have collectively." Overall, staff believe that the council effectively engages people in a democratic process, educates them about the politics that affect their lives, and provides a forum where they can voice their concerns and feel that they are heard.

Moreover, staff interpret the advocacy work of parents, seniors, and other neighborhood residents as symbolic of a new meaning of the term “constituent.” As one staff member describes it, Goddard Riverside had once considered program participants as ‘responsibilities’ who needed staff to “deliver services to them.” Now, however, participants are constituents, they are "deal[ing] with policy and with the things that affect [their] world. That's another level." In this sense, the engagement of community members in the Family Council is not meant simply to get the work done; it also begins to change the structure and balance of the relationships among settlement staff, program participants, and community stakeholders. It encourages residents to take responsibility for the services they want from their community and government at the same time that it requires staff to share authority and ownership

with program participants. In a self-reinforcing dialectical process, the more staff and residents work together, the deeper and stronger is their partnership.

Staff and residents generally believe that the Family Council has strengthened ties among community members. The monthly council meetings seem to attract diverse and continually expanding gatherings of constituents. Some staff and residents, however, reserve judgment about how extensive and long-lasting the sense of community will be. Some point out that even within the framework of the council, divisions within the community continue to be evident. For example, one active community resident reports that certain segments of the neighborhood have not been willing co participate. These non-participants include the residents of a neighborhood single-room-occupancy facility who are, she feels, less educated and less sophisticated about the political process. Yet, it is clear that other groups are joining council activities; residents of the settlement's senior apartments, for example, seem to be more easily engaged.

The critical lesson here, perhaps, lies in the need for both a long-term perspective and commitment that allow for the gradual involvement of individuals, incremental---at times spontaneous---sharing and learning,, and the development of local capacity one person at a rime. A parent, for example, mentions that she was inspired to participate in the Family Council by the commitment of involved senior citizens. In another instance, a woman attended the First council meeting in February and decided not to participate because she was "not optimistic' about the council's ability to make a difference. But after attending again in June, she reports the council has 'made her think,' and is now planning to participate regularly. Staff are beginning to see other results from the councils open engagement process as well. For example, community participants on the voter registration committee are taking greater responsibility for the committee's activities, making arrangements on their own, without staff, to canvas settlement programs and to set up sidewalk tables in an effort to register voters. Even before the current presidential primaries heated up interest in voting, the committee had succeeded in registering more than 400 people.

FUTURE OF THE FAMILY COUNCIL

There is a general feeling among staff and program participants that the Family Council will continue as a forum for social activism and advocacy to protect social services. Certainly, such substantive areas as housing, welfare, education, and youth services seem to be headed for protracted debate and budget struggles. But beyond a general mandate, the Family Council is facing major, more specific questions about its future direction, organizational structure, and evolution as part of Goddard Riverside. Staff responses to these questions tend to remain at a level of generality, ranging from an inability to predict where the council is moving to the belief that the council “is integral to everything we should be doing. ”Along the way, staff mention such concerns as a desire for more long-range proactive planning, greater community leadership, and more involvement from all segments of the neighborhood, including professionals and residents who are not program participants. The Family Council has the potential to move in these directions, although it is too early to know whether it will. Some themes about community building as a process do, however, seem clear.

The ongoing evolution of the Family Council highlights the need for community-building projects to have the time to work toward meeting both immediate goals and long-term aims, as well as the flexibility to try to merge long-term processes within shorter-term implementation. This means, for example, approaching advocacy tasks with the aim of getting the work done, but in a way that also contributes to, say the development of local leadership. Such merging is evidence in pairing a staff person with a resident to head each of the Family Council's four task-oriented committees. Time and flexibility are also important to the development of the overall frame-work of a community-building project; such projects aim for a deep connection with the people and circumstances involved, requiring long-term perspectives and commitment. Within

this framework, the council builds on a foundation of past projects in the settlement, and is itself a stage within an ongoing dynamic of development. Just a year after its founding, the council is, in a sense, beginning a new phase of its growth. A grant from the New York Foundation in early 1996 will enable Goddard Riverside to hire a full-time Family Council community organizer. This person will build on and enlarge the council's civic activism agenda while continuing to develop the settlement's internal community.

The Family Council is unique to Goddard Riverside. However, its objectives of community organizing, democratic activism, and local capacity development are widely shared among settlement houses throughout New York City. Among them is Grosvenor Neighborhood House, also located in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, some 20 blocks north of Goddard Riverside. At times the two settlement houses work together, with administrators conferring about common issues and strategies. Grosvenor, however, has chosen to participate in a local coalition affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). IAF is a national network of community mobilization groups aiming to develop organized, informed, and politically savvy constituencies that, in working for social change, can challenge “city hall” or other established powers. Grosvenor joined Westsiders Together in March 1995, at the founding of the coalition of 20 west side organizations. Overall, the group wants to identify and address community needs, but in such a way that empowers the neighborhood; this means in part working in cooperation with, but independent of, elected officials. In consultation with the community, Westsiders Together has identified and is focusing on five broad areas of primary concern for the neighborhood: safety, transportation, education, employment, and housing.

There are interesting parallels as well as points of departure between the approaches of Goddard Riverside and Grosvenor. Like the Family Council, Grosvenor's participation in the IAF continues its longstanding role in community advocacy. Both settlements want to extend and reinforce their links with the larger community. Grosvenor sees such linkage, including joining with other local organizations, as a way to increase the effectiveness and community-building impact of its advocacy work. Moreover, many of the specific activities of Westsiders Together echo those of the Family Council, including letter writing, petitioning, and participation at rallies and marches. There is, however, a major difference in the interests of the two groups. Grosvenor leadership emphasizes the IAF focus on change at the neighborhood level, and not on developments within programs, organizational structure, or staff at the settlement. For Goddard Riverside, however, these internal issues are important components of the Family Council's agenda.

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING THEMES

Although the Family Council is still at an early stage of development, it is possible to identify several key factors in its implementation and operations.

Building on existing programs: As discussed above, the conception and implementation of the Family Council has built on the work of several earlier projects. These efforts initiated cross-program dialogue among staff, strengthened interagency links across the neighborhood, and began early advocacy work around recent budget cuts.

Seizing opportunist: In addition to building on long-term staff interests, concerns, and efforts, the settlement seized an immediate situation as the impetus for developing the Family Council. In the process, the agency has been able to use the budget crisis, and its impact across the settlement and community, as a basis for staff and the community to come together, recognize their mutuality, and fight collectively for the common good.

Creating institutional networks: The settlement has a far-reaching set of relationships with other organizations. In part, such relationships are rooted in the perceived continuity and stability of the agency. In addition, long- time executive director Bernie Wohl has links to a wide range of local and municipal organizations and is seen as a person who “Will help anyone, any grassroots

agency, in any way he can." A clearly articulated goal of the Family Council is to reinforce, develop, and extend these already strong organizational relationships.

Time and flexibility are critical factors: As discussed above, time and flexibility are critical in bringing together short-term and long-term goals as well as in melding long-term processes within shorter-term implementation. Goddard Riverside staff perceive community building as a process of learning how to work together and share ideas, with the main focus on creating a collaborative spirit, not simply attending rallies and writing letters. Such long- term personal and organizational changes must be manifested in and fostered through everyday routines and decision making. Moreover, as seen in the creation of the Family Council as well as in the development of individual levels of participation, community building is often incremental, pointing again to the critical importance of flexibility and the ability to develop over time.

Setting achievable goals: As a corollary to the above, settlement house staff appear to be committed, yet patient, in realizing their visions for the Family Council. Staff acknowledge that it may be hard to know where co start with a community-building project, and argue the value of specific, incremental targets. Staff also assert there must be time for project momentum to develop. As one person says, the goal is to try to "make the world better in pieces," not all at once. Such an approach is evident in the council's attention to detail in an effort to ensure that each rally, letter, and petition is well done. In addition to fostering effective social activism, these incremental victories collectively seem to provide a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and ownership among participants.

Funding for the Family Council: In terms of furling, it is important to note two major points. First, Goddard Riverside leadership started the Family Council without special funding; the settlement continued throughout the council's First year to support its costs, including staff time. In a sense, the very existence of the council says that it is possible to carry our this kind of broad community-building project without special funding.

At the same time, however, the cost of such a project goes beyond budgetary concerns. For example, the lack of special funding means, to a large extent, that staff must be willing and able to meet the additional demands of the project within their already stretched schedules. In addition, the more successful the staff is in running a broad and multifaceted project such as the Family Council, the more active it grows, enlarging its demands for rime and effort. AitGoddard Riverside, it became increasingly important to find special funding for the project, both to reduce the pressure on staff time and to foster the effectiveness and ongoing development of the council itself. The recent New York Foundation support will allow the settlement to hire a Family Council community organizer and help move the council to its next phase.

Goddard Riverside staff provide energy, dedication, and expertise: Goddard Riverside staff have been the primary impetus of the 'Family Council so far. Their commitment and effort, supported by Bernie Wohl's vision and leadership, have been key to council accomplishments. Many staff members comment that there is no magic in community organizing; rather, it takes tremendous persistence and hard work, often without dramatic results. Thus, although at least one staff leader of the Family Council has community organizing expertise, even staff with limited or no community organizing experience are able to contribute to the effort, learning as they go along. It is important to note, however, that the organizational structure of the settlement may affect staffs ability and willingness to participate. Here, differences in the flexibility of job demands and routines, and the more specific focus of program positions seem to account, at least in part, for differing levels of participation among administrative and program staff.

KINGSBRIDGE HEIGHTS COMMUNITY CENTER

Developing and Implementing a Community- Building Philosophy

For the past several years, Kingsbridge Heights Community Center administrators have engaged

program directors and other staff in the development of a community-building vision and approach to the settlement's work. The center is now in the process of implementing these ideas. It aims ultimately to: integrate programs across the center; create, among staff and participants, a sense of connection with the whole settlement; develop a working partnership between the settlement and the larger community; and empower residents to help themselves. As a result of this effort, the settlement is starring to operate differently.

Yet, as some staff note, change has been neither easy nor evenly achieved. Such an approach entails deep and at times difficult adjustments, including reallocation of responsibility and authority, shifts in staff orientations and self-definitions, transformation of program participant roles, and redefinition of the settlements relationship with the larger community. Some programs adapt easily to a community-building approach, while others face greater difficulty. Further, some neighborhood residents are beginning to take on new roles and responsibilities, while some staff members have not wholeheartedly embraced community-building ideas. It is clear, however, that the center's administration is committed to the approach and its perceived potential. A case study of Kingsbridge Heights affords insights into the top-down, settlement-wide implementation of a community-building philosophy, including some of the issues that have arisen along the way.

BACKGROUND

According to settlement staff, the Bronx neighborhood of Kingsbridge Heights is highly diverse, with more than 20 nationalities represented. A strong work ethic marks the neighborhood, where families, many headed by single parents, 'are scraping by on $20-25,000 a year.' The settlement provides activities and services for residents across neighborhood groups, focusing particularly on children and families. Center programs include day care, after-school, summer camp, and college-oriented programs for children and youth; recreational activities, such as softball and basketball leagues, as well as discussion and support groups for adults; counseling services for individuals and families; and lunch, health care, escort services, and recreational programs for seniors.

Center staff suggest a number of reasons for adopting a community-building mission, including the following:

- *Increasingly scarce government resources: Severe* cutbacks in 1994-95 in federal, state, and municipal funding for social services threaten the survival of many settlement programs. The changing political priorities coupled with the neighborhood's traditionally low voter turnout and lack of political clout have made the neighborhood increasingly vulnerable. Settlement administrators, realizing that residents must act to retain services, targeted civic activism, including voter registration, as a critical response.

- *Many program participants have been "getting" without 'giving back"*- Staff assert that in the past many residents received services without sharing responsibility for the settlement or the neighborhood. Indeed, the settlement undercook full responsibility and authority for identifying and responding to community needs, and participants were not expected to 'give back.' In an effort to change these roles, the center is now encouraging participants to deepen their involvement by, for example, working as settlement volunteers, taking part in settlement-wide events, and attending resident committee meetings.

- *Settlement staff and program participants have been part of an unequal balance of power:* According to staff, the traditional service delivery model tends to define 'providers' as experts on community needs and 'clients" as service recipients who cannot act in their own behalf. Such perceptions promote hierarchical relationships, even in day-to-day interaction. Kingsbridge Heights staff want to transform this traditional framework into one of true partnership.

- *The Kingsbridge Heights neighborhood lacks a sense of collective values and identity:* Settlement staff see a lack of "true community' as the source of various neighborhood problems. There have been times, for example, when adults have not helped a child in trouble because there is no shared sense about when and how to act. Some staff emphasize the need to create 'common agreement [in the neighborhood] on what is right,' especially in regard to children. Although community stakeholders must devise such agreement, staff believe that the settlement is "in a good position to get this group together and implement a general code that people can live with," thereby reinforcing the social fabric of the community.

Overall, settlement staff argue that a community-building philosophy, with its emphasis on participatory models of program provision, belief in the ability of people to help themselves, and commitment to the development of local capacity and leadership, will help resolve these issues.

TRANSLATING COMMUNITY-BUILDING IDEAS INTO ACTION

In May and November 1994, Kingsbridge Heights settlement held retreats so executive staff and program directors could explore the meaning of community building and its significance for their work. As part of this work, staff used a community-building perspective to examine the settlements programs, organization, management, and relationship to the community. This self-examination was the foundation for developing new program and community- building strategies. Several broad goals arose in these discussions, including the following:

- Provide ways for community members to come together 'just as people," without fear of stigmatization;
- 'Empower the community to control its own destiny ... empower people to fight for themselves;"
- Move 'from a model that serves to a model that collaborates;"
- Focus attention on children: 'Nothing is more concrete for community building than people taking responsibility for each other's children;" and
- Foster the realization that all center programs and staff must work together as parts of the whole settlement.

Over the past year, Kingsbridge Heights program directors have promoted community-building themes within their own programs, and staff have begun implementing these themes through both program-specific and center-wide activities. In the process, it has become clear that community building is a demanding, long-term enterprise; moreover, it s easier to conceptualize and implement the notion in some programs than in others. The following explores some of these efforts, first in the settlement as a whole and then in some of its component programs.

Settlement-Wide Community-Building Strategies
Program Advisory Committee: Perhaps the most visible example of community building, at Kingsbridge Heights is the settlement-wide Program Advisory Committee (PAC), created in early 1995. This committee of neighborhood residents aims both to 'get the community involved' in the settlement and to foster the sense that programs are, in Fact, component parts of the whole settlement. All PAC members are linked in some way to settlement programs, including participants from youth and senior programs, and parents of participating children. The committee, which meets at least once a month, has 15 members, about half of whom are committed to and actively engaged in PAC work.

According to staff, PAC members are feeling their way and becoming comfortable with the power and responsibilities of their new roles. Initially, Charles Shayne, the center's executive director, and Lori Spector, the associate director, attended all PAC meetings and advised the group. During the spring of 1995, however, at the administrators' suggestion, the group elected a community member as chair. The settlement directors, in turn, have reduced their involvement, largely limiting their role to supporting and encouraging the group to take greater leadership and responsibility. In addition, staff provide PAC with guidance, support,

and supervision. Building local capacity is indeed a process, one that requires an ongoing recalibration of the balance between changing roles, responsibilities, and authority, on one hand, and continued institutional support and guidance, on the other.

Among its activities, the PAC provides an open forum for addressing local issues, such as neighborhood violence and the challenge of delivering services effectively in a highly diverse community. In addition, PAC plans neighborhood events. From all reports, its first event, The Community Trading Post, was a huge success. Held in the spring of 1995, the PAC had full responsibility for planning and running the one-day activity, at which community members traded books, toys, and clothing. Approximately 300 people attended and, according to staff, 2,000-3,000 items changed hands. The day also included a barbecue run by teenaged PAC members, a pony ride for children, and a raffle for two computers donated by the settlement. The trading post idea grew out of discussions about how community members could support each other; the PAC eventually identified the Trading Post as a way to help parents deal with the high cost of children's clothing. While addressing this specific need, the event also served as a social gathering, attracting people from all over the community, and as a civic undertaking, drawing volunteer help from residents and donations from local merchants.

Community engagement: The settlement fosters civic activism in a variety of arenas. For example, staff recruit volunteers to assist within the center both in special under- takings, such as the construction of a new playground or for providing Thanksgiving Day dinner, and in such ongoing tasks as day care, gardening, and answering switch- board telephones. In addition, through voter education and registration, staff encourage program participants to engage in the political process, including advocacy activity.
Creating "neutral turf": As mentioned above, Kingsbridge Heights is a highly diverse neighborhood where, according to staff, there is little racial tension. Still, such diversity can challenge community-building efforts. The settlement tries to stem potential racial or ethnic conflict by explicitly welcoming all community members, upholding standards of decent behavior, emphasizing the commonality of needs, and essentially making the center "neutral turf" in the community. Both by design and as a result of neighborhood demographics, a great mix of people work at and participate in settlement programs.

Language: Throughout the settlement, staff pay increased attention to the way programs and program users are described. For example, staff use the term "participant" rather than 'client' to refer to a person taking part in a settlement program, thereby aiming to defuse the traditional hierarchical relationship mentioned above. Such attention to language goes hand-in-hand with efforts to restructure the roles and interactions among settlement staff, participants, and community stakeholders.

Staff development: Settlement administrators aim to develop a strong community-building consciousness among current staff and, when hiring, to find people who agree with the approach. Promotion and hiring criteria include, along with performance factors, a willingness to embrace a community-building philosophy. Thus, staff are encouraged to take part in community events, many of which occur after hours and on week-ends. Moreover, job descriptions make it clear that staff work for the center, not for discrete programs; and job interviews, conducted by groups that include line staff, cover community-building themes. Over the past 3 years, Shayne has interviewed every person hired. As a staff member asserts, the settlement must be able to hire people who agree with and can carry out its agenda.

Budget authority: The settlement director controls all program budgets, aiming, in part, to encourage staff to think of the settlement as a whole, and not in terms of individual programs. According to Shayne, such centralization allows him, when necessary, to spread the impact of budget cuts across the settlement; similarly, wherever possible, he can spread resources across programs.

Youth Programs and Community-Building Strategies

Youth program staff aim to build community by reinforcing family ties and by encouraging parental

involvement in the center. For example, these programs have an 'open door' policy to encourage parental visits; staff also try to deepen parents' engagement in the center by asking them to volunteer in the programs and center. Other community-building strategies here include:

Parent groups: The after-school program holds monthly meetings for parents to discuss programmatic as well as broader topics, such as parenting concerns, child abuse prevention, effective nonviolent discipline, and community issues. According to staff, attendance was sparse when these meetings started 5 years ago. Settlement and youth program administrators see the meetings as a pivotal part of family *services,* and, therefore, made attendance mandatory for all parents with children in the after-school program. About 3 years ago, the settlement made attendance voluntary once again because staff felt that parents had become engaged in the meetings. Shayne points out that overall meetings draw about 80 percent attendance, one indication that parents value the discussions and the sense of engagement. It is important to note that the organized body of after-school parents comprised a ready-made coalition for recent protests against budget cuts. Parent groups have, in fact, become models for similar committees to be established in other settlement programs.

In addition, a staff member says that the meetings and other activities offer parents needed respire, recreation, and support. A Sunday softball league, for example, is seen to provide 'Space for [parents] to be themselves and have fun,' as well as a way to be 'part of a team, to feel needed and relied upon by others.' Such activities help bring together members of this very diverse neighborhood.

Connections to other settlement programs: Youth program staff are encouraged to make connections across programs by, for example, referring participants to other settlement programs and, when appropriate, having other programs provide activities to the youth programs.

Counseling Programs and Community-Building Strategies

Specialized and clinical services raise important questions in the implementation of community-building approaches. The therapist-client relationship, for example, which many view as central to therapeutic services, does not seem to fall easily into a sweeping restructuring of provider-participant interaction (see the discussion below of challenges to community building). Overall, the center's specialized youth programs are taking a slower, more gingerly approach to implementing community building than the more inclusive, everyday programs such as child care and after-school activities.

The Parent and Child Counseling Program: The Parent and Child Counseling program (PCC) works with families whose children are at risk of foster care placement. Schools and the Child Welfare Agency are the primary referral points for PCC, although hospitals, foster care agencies, and visiting nurses programs also identify and refer at-risk families. Settlement services here include group, individual, and family therapy; parenting education; and long-term treatment for families. Staff integrate community building into PCC treatment strategy in a number of ways, including:

Creating links: PCC aims to link participants to something beyond themselves, to 'build metaphors that are larger than the I-me-mine orientation.' The approach assumes that depression often arises out of a felt lack of connection to others, and may lead to a sense of powerlessness. For depressed parents, this may mean an inability to interact effectively with their children. The PCC strategy, therefore, is to develop a sense of 'meaningful participation [with others] and action towards goals.' This may entail encouraging participants to become involved in the settlement and community though the Program Advisory Committee, for example, or in their children's schools. Moreover, trough active civic involvement, staff try to help people 'see that the world belongs to them and can be responsive to their needs if they are willing to make themselves known and heard."

Group Work: While children and families continue to receive individual therapy, PCC has begun to develop a new focus on group work. Currently there are groups for adolescent boys and for

Spanish- and English-speaking mothers, with a fathers' group in planning. Staff assert that group therapy is all about community building. That is, in the process of identifying common problems and receiving primary support from 'people who share problems rather than from [the therapist] who is separate,' participants begin to see the community as a source of knowledge and help. Such a therapeutic approach bolsters the turn from a hierarchical provider-client relationship to that of partners working together.

The Child Sexual Assault program: The Child Sexual Assault program (CSA) serves children and teenagers throughout the Bronx who have been sexually assaulted. A range of agencies and services refer youth to the program, including local hospitals, the Bronx District Attorney's office, schools and guidance counselors, and mental health facilities; youth also come through word-of-mouth and self-referrals. CSA provides individual, family, and group treatment services; prevention and education workshops at, for example, community centers, schools, and day care programs; and crisis intervention, counseling, information and referral, and advocacy.

In early 1995, CSA staff met to discuss community- building ideas and to consider the meaning of "empowerment' in CSA counseling as well as in staff supervision. CSA is implementing community-building approaches gradually, trying to find points of overlap with clinical practice. Some strategies include:

Counseling techniques: CSA staff see self-help and networking techniques as conducive to a community-building approach. Staff view participants as individuals with needs beyond any specific trauma, and see treatment extending beyond the 45-minure sessions. Staff encourage participants to engage in the life of the settlement and of the larger community, working to link CSA youth to a range of settlement activities, from gardening, to advocacy, to programs aimed at developing skills and self-esteem. Staff also try to help participants recognize that they are not alone in their victimization, thereby creating a 'connecting moment' that affords a sense of "power in numbers."

Program linkages and networks: CSA administrators encourage staff to see the program as part of the larger settlement. The program links to other agency programs by, for example, providing 'Safe Touch' workshops for children in the summer camp. In addition, CSA works with organizations throughout the Bronx, including local networks focusing on violence prevention and crimes against women and children. Staff see their educational efforts as reinforcing the social fabric of the community.

CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY- BUILDING EFFORTS

By all accounts, community building at Kingsbridge Heights is a long-term process, with at times slow-to-emerge and inconsistent effects. Perhaps the greatest hurdle has been the difficulty in establishing a shared basis for the work, with common definitions, perceptions, and values among both staff and program participants. Still, staff seem to feel that the process itself has been fruitful, slowly altering roles and relationships.

Clinical Programs

There are differences of opinion on whether community building is an appropriate approach for clinical programs. Some argue, for example, that a therapist's authority and recognized expertise are necessary aspects of clinical services. Others respond that self- and group-help are both community-building techniques and effective clinical cools. In addition to philosophical differences, there are difficulties implementing a community-building approach in clinical programs.

In CSA, for example, staff feet they must move slowly and carefully in developing a sense of the larger settlement within the program. Staff try, for example, to use neutral activities, such as gardening, to help empower participants while de-emphasizing, sexual assault as the reason they are at the settlement. It is often hard, however, to entice those participants who feel shamed and stigmatized into settlement activities.

Logistical issues also increase the difficulty of integrating community building into CSA. Settlement programs generally focus on the

neighborhood; CSA, however, serves the entire Bronx. Participants therefore are scattered throughout the borough and tend to be less connected to the settlement. Staff are trying to create satellite programs in other areas and institutions in order to increase program accessibility. For example, CSA staff run "Good Touch" workshops in schools, although children still have to come to the settlement to participate in counseling. The settlement is also hoping to implement (contingent on funding) a plan to identify areas in the Bronx where large groups of CSA participants reside. Once these areas are identified, Kingsbridge Heights will arrange with nearby settlement houses, many of which have already agreed, to host CSA counseling sessions. In what Shayne calls the 'pony express' model, Kingsbridge Heights counselors will run these sessions and then work with local staff to engage participants in other programs at the local site.

Changing Staff Attitudes

Changing staff attitudes has been a long-term process where 'progress is slow and small.' Many staff have found the recent emphasis on community building difficult to accommodate. While some workers immediately embraced the new philosophy, others are taking a wait- and-see stance or resisting the change outright. In addition, some sense a mood of "unease' throughout the settlement; staff worry that the changes mean their jobs will entail more work or, worse, may simply disappear. The greatest conflicts, however, seem to revolve around core tenets of the community-building approach, such as the new partnership dynamic between staff and program participants as well as the demand for increased staff involvement in neighborhood events and issues.

Moreover, several staff argue that a perceived contradiction in the settlement's approach to community building contributes to staff resistance. Here, the imposition of community building from the top is seen as problematic. For example, although differences of opinion about community building may be acknowledged and understood, they are neither encouraged nor rewarded. Indeed, staff know that advancement depends largely on an acceptance of the approach and wholehearted participation in neighborhood activities. According to one worker, staff must feel empowered before they can effectively empower program participants, yet some feel they have not been included in the policy-making process. Several staff, in fact, have left the settlement since the start of the community-building emphasis, apparently because they did not want to adopt the approach.

In response, other staff argue that organizational restructuring demands strong leadership, even while top down changes may seem contradictory within a community-building context. Moreover, given the current political and funding climate, a bottom-up approach takes too long; one simply 'need[s] to move faster.' Settlement leadership believe that as staff experience the community-building process, there will be a genuine adoption of the approach, and assert that all program directors have 'bought in' to the idea. Others claim that the settlement has made progress in implementation. There is, for example, a growing willingness among staff to send participants to PAC meetings and to ask for volunteers. There is also, according to some, growing communication, support, and interdependence among staff members, who are increasingly taking part in settlement-wide activities.

There seem to be changes in staff interactions with the community as well; for example, staff are attending more neighborhood events, and getting to know people other than the participants in their particular programs. Although staff are aware that they are evaluated, at least in part, according to their community-building efforts, a growing number want to include community involvement in their jobs.

Changing Community Attitudes

According to settlement leadership, most community members have difficulty claiming ownership of and responsibility for their neighborhood. 'People are not used to having this kind of power... [They] are not in the habit of having any say over anything any more.' In response, staff work to foster among residents a sense of connection to the settlement and the community, and a belief that they can legitimately raise concerns and exercise some authority. The PAC has played an important role here, helping residents gain access to settlement administrators

and providing a forum where people can express "their fears" and feel that someone is "listening." Residents have also exhibited a new collective activism, for example, in advocating against budget cuts. Overall, however, resident perceptions seem to change very slowly and only with great effort.

FUTURE PLANS FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING

Overall, staff see much more work ahead before community-building efforts have a real impact in Kingsbridge Heights. According to one staff member, the effect so far is mainly 'limited to [Program Advisory Committee] members and the people whose lives they have touched." Despite the difficulties, the center aims to deepen and broaden community-building efforts. For example, settlement administrators want to engage staff in a process of self-evaluation and reflectiveness in the hopes of sharpening their grasp of the approach.

In addition, several staff promote longer-term, albeit more vaguely defined, goals, aiming for “real” settlement-wide incorporation of community-building values and philosophy. Staff tend to see the program directors' endorsement as "key' for getting all staff members 'gung ho about working with the community.' This integration of community building across programs may entail meetings with program directors for feedback on the process; a settlement-wide community-building retreat; ongoing assessment of program models against community-building standards; and, within programs, the creation of resident committees similar to the center-wide PAC. Throughout, staff anticipate a longer transition period for clinical programs.

Staff also recognize that community members must play a greater role in the work of the settlement, especially in identifying and meeting neighborhood needs. PAC members may be pivotal here, becoming more active liaisons between the community and the settlement, and perhaps even meeting with the settlement's board of directors. In addition, the center and community might begin joint work around specific issues, such as 'how to deal with kids when they are not in a program.' Some staff also want to extend settlement efforts beyond currently mandated populations and include the public schools, for example, in defining the target "community."

Looking ahead, staff say they have "no idea how [community building] will go." One certain challenge will be to continue meeting contractual commitments, such as serving art-risk families through the Parent and Child Counseling program, while expanding the settlements involvement in the community. There is growing staff consensus, however, that the settlement is on the right path, with positive changes already accomplished. As one person says, if a meeting were called today, 100-200 people would show up, and this is a mark of progress.

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS AND COMMUNITY- BUILDING THEMES

Community building at Kingsbridge Heights is a highly articulated and deliberate undertaking. Staff have tried first co understand the meaning of community building in terms of the settlement, and then to devise concrete ways to embed the ethic in the settlement's internal organization, in the structure and dynamics of service delivery, and in interactions with the broader community.
In considering the settlement's community-building effort, some themes emerge, include the following:

Community building is rooted in self-conscious reflection: An explicit, forcefully articulated philosophy underpins Kingsbridge Heights - community-building activities. Moreover, ongoing reflection on the notion of community building is critical in reinforcing staff commitment both to each other and to implementing the sometimes difficult approach. As one worker says, community-building ideas may have always existed at the settlement, but recent efforts to recognize and celebrate them have created a unifying framework within which people can work together effectively. In this view, it is best that those who disagree with the approach have left the settlement. "You need like-minded people for this vision, to make it happen."

Community building takes 'impassioned leadership': Staff generally agree that strong leadership is essential to the process of

conceptualizing and implementing a community-building approach. Several staff point out the critical importance of administrative support, influence, passion, and experience in bringing staff along in the process; still others specifically mention Shayne for his ability to juggle the demands of building community while also managing settlement and community needs. Some add that any resistance to the idea among staff, board members, or the community will lead to 'a big struggle." Leaders must recognize the difficulty of building community in a hostile environment and have 'the gumption' to undertake the challenge.

Community building is a demanding process: Staff see community building not as an end in itself, but as a process that requires fundamental changes in attitude, great effort, and a long-term perspective. Moreover, the work entails risks for an organization, its staff, and the, community. For example, the process demands an ongoing and self-reflective assessment of settlement values, goals, and operations. It also requires flexibility and a willingness to deal with whatever 'forces come bubbling up.' Perhaps most difficult, at the core of community building is the notion of a process without a predetermined end. Staff cannot predict where the process is heading, but argue that it "is a plus' as long as people are empowered and taking care of themselves. Such a belief demands a willingness to follow the process even when, as one person asks, 'Who knows what will happen when people wake up?'

Kingsbridge Heights staff are increasingly committed to working with each other and the community: Across the board, when asked why community building works at Kingsbridge Heights, people cite the quality of the staff as a crucial factor. There seems to be a powerful combination of experience in and growing dedication to the approach among staff members as well as a developing network of mutual support. As a staff member explains, community building depends upon people who hold that "the way to improve all of our lives is to work together.' Increasingly this belief extends to the larger community as well, and staff are becoming involved with community members in a variety of ways.

Kinqsbridge Heights residents are responding to the call for community building: Settlement staff recognize that residents must be equal players in community-building efforts; one staff member asserts that community building depends on a community that cares about its families and wants to move forward. The settlement supports civic activism in the neighborhood, providing arenas through which residents can become involved. In response, parents, for example, have joined rallies and letter-writing campaigns to preserve government funding, and volunteered at the settlement to maintain and improve its programs.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT

Restoration of the Sara Delano Roosevelt Park

University Settlement, located in the Lower Fast Side of Manhattan, has a long history in community advocacy and the creation of open space for its neighborhood. In 1993, the settlement demonstrated these commitments when it joined other community groups to restore Sara Delano Roosevelt Park and reclaim it for the community. This joint effort has had promising results: the park now hosts a basketball league, flourishing neighborhood gardens, and the recreational and leisure activities of children, teenagers, and adults. One major sign of success is the large-scale capital renovation in progress at the park's northern end, where the city is rebuilding one quadrant as part of a master plan for the park. According to University staff, the community's constant lobbying of local politicians made the park a priority and helped secure a place in the city’s fiscal year 1995 capital budget. The construction has come to represent the community’s ability both to work with its elected officials and to secure
highly competitive municipal resources. Moreover, although there is still considerable work ahead, the park belongs to the community once again, symbolizing what the community can accomplish through the cooperative work and focused effort of local organizations and residents.

The Roosevelt Park project grew out of community concern and activism. The settlement itself neither identified the cause nor built the spirit. Rather, in

this instance of community building, the settlement house has provided leadership where it could and when appropriate, but it has also supported the lead of other organizations, namely the Roosevelt Park Community Coalition (RPCC). The case study looks at how the settlement has managed this delicate and often complicated balance in the ongoing negotiation of leadership, responsibility, and authority. The study also shows the settlement carving out a role for itself alongside other organizations and pursuing an agenda to Meet its own interests as well as those of other community groups.

BACKGROUND

Roosevelt Park has long been a community resource for recreation and relaxation, serving Generations of Lower East Side residents. By the early 1990s, however, drug dealers, prostitutes, and criminals had claimed the park, and neighborhood residents felt increasingly uncomfortable and unsafe there. In some ways, the geography of the park facilitated its takeover. Roosevelt Park is situated on a narrow, 8-acre piece of land that runs 7 blocks long, from its northern end at Houston Street south to Canal Street, and 1 block wide, from Forsyth Street to Chrystie Street. The park crosses several sections of the Lower East Side community, providing access to many different populations, but also undercutting a sense of ownership and responsibility for the entire park among any of its constituencies. Moreover, the park is trisected by major vehicular transverses at Delancey and Grand streets and by pedestrian transverses at Stanton, Rivington, Hester, and Broome streets. These crossways contribute to the division of the park into territories, each informally "claimed' by particular community groups.

Overall, the population of people who use Roosevelt Park reflects the-ethnic diversity of the Lower East Side. The neighborhood is primarily Latino, with people from many different Latin American countries, and Asian, mainly Chinese immigrants. African Americans, whites, and Bengalis also reside in the area; the once-dominant Jewish community still exists, but is declining. Latino and Asian residents are the primary users of Roosevelt Park, bringing a wide variety of languages and cultures to the park. Each group has its own informally designated area of the park and times of day for its activities there. In addition, artists living in the immediate area, local businesses, and residents of nearby single-room-occupancy hotels all contribute to the mix of activities and interests that converge in the area. Like the park, University Settlement is a community institution with a long history. Founded in 1886, the agency was the first social settlement established in the United States and the second in the world. Cutting across the many ethnic groups in the community, University Settlement serves nearly 10,000 people annually from more than 40 countries. Although this settlement community is ethnically diverse, it is less so socio-economically; the majority of participants are working poor, with a significant number of families receiving welfare assistance. The settlement provides a wide range of activities and services for Lower East Side children, adults, families, and seniors. These include such programs as child care, after- school and summer camp programs, and life skills, college guidance, and employment counseling services; mental health counseling, including intensive case management for children; and outreach to homeless, runaway, and at- risk teenagers. Other programs include entitlement, homelessness prevention, and referral services; family literacy classes; and programs for seniors, including hot meals, escort services, counseling, legal advice, and recreational, cultural, and social activities. Settlement programs have always used Roosevelt Park as a neighborhood resource, but until recently the agency had no organized involvement in or responsibility for the facility. However, as drug dealers and other criminal elements took over the park, the settlement, in collaboration with other local groups, helped lead efforts to reclaim the park for the use of the community.

THE ROOSEVELT PARK RESTORATION PROJECT

Genesis of the Project

In summer 1992, a group of Lower East Side residents became outraged by the proliferation of drug dealers and prostitutes in the section of the park between Rivington and Stanton streets. A community member, knowing that University

Settlement took its youth groups to the park, contacted Michael Zisser, executive director of the agency, to discuss how to make the park safer and cleaner. In the course of the discussion, the resident suggested a meeting of all concerned agencies and organizations in the neighborhood. During the fall, there were two such meetings at the settlement, including residents, representatives from the New York City Parks Department, the Parks Council, the Golden Age Center, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, the Lower East Side Consortium, the Roosevelt Park Community Coalition, a local city council member, and the New York City Police Department. Although these gatherings saw an outpouring of concerns and needs from community residents, they were not effective forums for devising solutions. According to a community participant, there was too much blaming and not enough constructive action.

As a result, Zisser suggested that concern for the park be channeled through the Roosevelt Park Community Coalition (RPCC), of which University was a founding member. Neighborhood residents had created RPCC about 20 years earlier in an effort to improve the park. Over the years, the coalition has had varying levels of strength and impact, until finally, by the early 1990s, the park was in poor condition and overrun in places with drug dealers. Still, RPCC represented the best potential for effective, local, collaborative action.

About the same time, staff of the University Settlement arts program considered launching a dance festival in the park. They convened a group of dancers, RPCC members, residents parks and police department' officials, and representatives from the local council member's office to discuss the possibility. The group realized, however, that the idea was premature; no neighborhood organizational structure existed to manage such an event, and people simply did not socialize in the park. These conclusions reinforced and expanded concerns about the park. Drawing on the growing focus on the park, the restoration and anti-drug effort emerged as a full-scale campaign. And eventually, the festival itself became a means for generating interest in and improving the park, rather than simply an end in itself. In addition, the larger, if unspoken, project agenda included developing the community infrastructure through the engagement of local groups and residents; supporting and strengthening RPCC; and fostering such park activities as the dance festival.

As the park project moved from planning to action, participants began to question whether RPCC had the capacity to be the sole lead. People recognized, for example, that publicity and fundraising were crucial for project success, but these activities were, at the time, beyond the scope of RPCC capabilities. Increasingly, RPCC members began to see University Settlement-with its strength, long history, connections, and perceived neutrality within a highly politicized community-as the best agent to advocate and raise money for the park. The settlement, therefore, took a leadership role in the project. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, which has an interest in the park because it is named after Franklin Roosevelt's mother, joined University Settlement in seeking funding.

Proposals were submitted to approximately 20 foundations for support for a community organizer who would: 1) strengthen the organizational capacity and effectiveness of the RPCC, and 2) prod responsible agencies, such as the parks department, to make improvements in the park. From the beginning, then, the project explicitly created an intrinsic link between restoration of the park and development of the coalition. According to plans, University Settlement would hire, supervise, and provide office space for the community organizer, although the organizer would report to both the settlement and RPCC. When this support was no longer needed, the settlement would resume its role as a regular RPCC member.

University Settlement succeeded in securing a grant from the New York Foundation, which was interested in the park project, and not in the settlement itself. The foundation, known for funding small organizations involved in advocacy and community building, deemed the settlement eligible for the grant because its work would catalyze grass- roots activity. According to settlement staff, when the grant appeared likely,

Zisser approached the RPCC chair to discuss the grant's focus on strengthening the coalition, and not simply improving the park. Together, they agreed on the mission of the project and RPCC's role as the designated umbrella organization. In the end, the New York Foundation, the Roosevelt Institute, and University Settlement provided joint funding for the full park project. In fail 1993, RPCC joined the settlement, with assistance from the Roosevelt Institute, in hiring a Community organizer who began work in October, 1993. There is an interesting wrinkle here. Representatives from the settlement and RPCC each claim that the other organization held primary supervisory authority for the organizer. These divergent views symbolize an ambiguous partnership between the two groups which, at least in its early days, was not always clearly defined.

The Early Years

Through the efforts of the community organizer from Fall 1993 to Spring 1994, there was, according to University staff, significant progress in the project, including heightened community involvement and a new sense of ownership of the park. The community organizer initiated regular community meetings that generally attracted 30-40 people. Moreover, the organizer seemed effective in engaging various groups with an interest in the park, including gardening groups, volunteer groups, and the Parks Council. In addition, by 'constantly barraging' parks department personnel, park maintenance improved.

Then, in the spring and summer of 1994, some dangerous incidents in the park aroused new safety concerns. A group of children from the settlement day care program were threatened in the park, and some well-known muggings of neighborhood residents and other acts of intimidation occurred. The community organizer herself was physically attacked in the park; many perceive this incident as a direct response to her effectiveness in driving drug dealers and other criminals out of the park. As a result of these events, the community organizer was badly frightened and resigned, and some University staff experienced new concerns about using the park for settlement activities. But the incidents also generated significant publicity for the project and strengthened the resolve of residents to take back their park. According to settlement staff, the spring and summer months marked a key period of growth and renewed energy for the Roosevelt Park cause. The settlement arranged for increased police protection, and encouraged its own staff as well as other community programs to continue using the park. In the end, the incidents of crime and intimidation sharpened the focus of the park campaign and intensified efforts to succeed.

Two measures carried the project through the busy summer months. First, the settlement hired two full-time interns to help staff the RPCC and cover some of the duties of the now-vacant community organizer position. The New York Foundation funded one of these internships, while a private individual, recognizing the greater safety of having two workers in the park, funded the other. Second and more important in the long run, RPCC stepped up to a new level of responsibility, supervising the many summer park volunteers and managing the arts festival (an expansion of the original dance festival idea). According to settlement staff, RPCC provided overall coordination for the festival, with each RPCC member organizing some component of the event. University Settlement, for example, oversaw the entertainment. Participating groups included the Chinese American Planning Council, the Fifth Police Precinct, Pueblo Nuevo, the Manhattan Office of Public Affairs, the Chinatown YMCA, Foundation House, Immigration Social Services, the Lower East Side Local Enforcement Unit, a local credit union, the New York City Fire Department, New York Society for the Deaf, Village Center for Care, The Chinese Progressive Association, Realize Theater, Inc., Creative Time, and Grand Street Settlement. The festival was a great success and marked the first time the park was filled, end to end, with people from the community.

Autumn 1994-Winter 1995: A Changing Role for University Settlement

At this point, the structure of the Roosevelt Park project changed. In the fall, University applied for and received a second grant from the New York Foundation to continue the project. Around the same time, RPCC members decided it was time for the coalition to take charge of the project, and asked the settlement to resume its position as a regular coalition member organization. Settlement

leadership was, apparently, somewhat hesitant since RPCC was not yet perceived as a solid, fully functional organization. Eventually, however, University agreed to continue as fiscal agent for the project while reducing its supervisory role. The settlement provided some specific support to RPCC during the transition period. For example, it arranged, through its relationships with the Community Development Agency and the New York Foundation, for technical assistance to support the coalition in its assumption of greater responsibility. University also assisted in the hiring process for a new community organizer. Overall, however, the settlement supplied largely behind-the-scenes and financial support. As in the previous year, New York Foundation funded half of the project's annual expenses (about $50,000) and the remaining half was provided by the settlement directly or by supporters it secured.

Settlement staff say there was no internal battle over relinquishing its leadership while continuing to assume financial responsibilities for the park project. Indeed, from a policy perspective, the settlement board wanted the agency to step back from its hands-on involvement in the project and return to its historical community-organizing role. Board and administration members see the settlement's investment in the development of RPCC as part of its efforts to strengthen the community infrastructure. The settlement's role both in developing the social fabric of the community and advocating for open space in the neighborhood fall, of course, within the settlements Traditional mission as well as its contemporary community- building interests.

In February 1995, a new community organizer joined the project. According to University staff, the new organizer sees the RPCC, not the settlement, as his primary client. Moreover, his work focuses primarily on guiding the development of RPCC into a viable, self-sustaining organization, and not on incremental improvements to the park. In a move that symbolizes this focus, the organizer relocated his main office from the settlement to a building in Roosevelt Park. He now maintains a settlement office for after-hours work only. If the RPCC fails to develop organizationally within the next year, University staff state that some other entity will have to assume the caretaking role for the park.

University's current involvement in Roosevelt Park centers largely on encouraging community use of the park and increasing its attractiveness. The use of the park reveals how community-building themes, often presented in abstract terms, must play out in everyday activities and perspectives. For example, settlement staff believe that the agency must help neighborhood children, adults, and families feel comfortable in their own park. Whenever possible, therefore, staff organize activities in the park,
especially for the youth programs. In addition, the agency literacy program runs a gardening project in the park for its adult students, all of whom are immigrants. Staff believe that such a project will help dispel feelings of alienation and build a sense of responsibility for and connection to the community.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

University staff, RPCC members, and neighborhood residents have varied opinions about the place of the Roosevelt Park initiative in the community. Some assert that residents are pleased to begin using the park, feeling that "it's about time;" further, the park draws users from across the broad diversity of the neighborhood. In addition, new community leaders have emerged through the project, and neighborhood groups have started to come together. On the other hand, a staff person points out that the diversity seen among park users is not true of the RPCC membership; not all segments of the community have become involved in the work of reclaiming and maintaining the park. Another staff member suggests that "there is no community-wide consensus about the value of the work going on in the park.' Still others comment on the friction among certain groups over the work. University staff have tried to foster a sense of responsibility for the park among their constituents, but the response seems mixed. One staff person argues, in fact, that the park is nor necessarily an effective cool for community building; although residents may use the park, they do not work in it and tend not to take ownership for it. Indeed, while there are differing perceptions about the meaning and success of the effort, everyone seems to agree

that it has been hard to engage all sectors of the neighborhood in the cause.

Settlement house staff and RPCC members point out several obstacles to greater participation by some segments of the area. Local businesses, for example, are an important potential addition to the project, but difficult to engage. One RPCC member explains that the park is a dead zone for business and Orchard Street, the commercial focus of the neighborhood, is some distance away. Furthermore, most local businesses are not retailers, but rather wholesale distributors and manufacturers who do not depend on pedestrian traffic for sales; therefore they tend to have little interest in the quality of life in the neighborhood.

Linguistic and cultural factors also create barriers to participation, especially among Asian and Latino residents. For example, immigrants who come from countries without grassroots governance structures may be hesitant to assume control over and responsibility for a public resource. One staff member also states that both RPCC and settlement leadership is primarily white, middle class, and educated; with little ethnic representation in the governance of the project, immigrants in the neighborhood may continue to feel like outsiders. This has, in face, discouraged certain local institutions, such as the alternative public high school and the Evangelical Church, from becoming involved in the project. Links with the Mexican Basketball League, Chinese YMCA, and other ethnic groups, however, may eventually lead to greater involvement of minority residents in the RPCC. In addition to working on greater representation, the community organizer is aiming to build community-wide ownership of and support for the park, especially among the groups that are still skeptical and detached.

UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT AND THE ROOSEVELT PARK COMMUNITY COALITION

The relationship between University Settlement and RPCC is, of course, an essential element of the Roosevelt Park story. The ongoing negotiations between the groups demonstrate the many benefits, as well as the tensions and complications, of collaborative work. Such negotiations may be especially demanding when large, established organizations work with smaller, more loosely structured, and less powerful grassroots groups. Here, the willingness and ability of the settlement to place RPCC's aims and needs, as well as its own, within a community-building perspective has been critically important. Such willingness goes to the core of both the meaning of community building as well as the difficulty of the community-building enterprise.

Historically, RPCC and University Settlement have had a very limited relationship. As mentioned above, the settlement was a founding member of the coalition, but there was no working partnership or shared agenda between the two groups. Michael Zisser began to change this with his vision that all community members focus unified efforts and resources on improving the quality of neighborhood life, including restoration of the park.

The park initiative provided a common area of interest where University and RPCC each gained from its involvement, and the community as a whole gained from
the collaborative effort. The park project, as one neighborhood resident notes, 'came straight from the heart of the settlement,' unlike most other programs that are mandated by funders. Moreover, the settlement's role in the park effort has helped strengthen its relations with the community. RPCC has, overall, welcomed the settlement's active engagement; and without question, the agency's involvement boosted the standing of the initiative, enabling it to operate on a city-wide level with access to the power, expertise, and funding needed to make real change. In addition, the settlement has backed the move of RPCC to lead the project, reinforcing the coalition's independence, viability, and effectiveness. According to RPCC members, the push from University has helped the coalition attain relative stability, make noticeable progress in the park effort, and draw attention and support both within the neighborhood as well as within the city-wide arena.

At the same time, as in any negotiated relationship, there have been differences of opinion between University and RPCC, as well as instances of more pointed conflict over authority in

the park initiative and decision-making prerogatives. Somewhat ironically, it is RPCC's growing success that, in part, allows for the emergence of such tensions. Moreover, views on the future relationship of the settlement, RPCC, and the park initiative are framed with- in a complex mix of Factors, including the acknowledged importance of the settlement, the development-to-date of RPCC, a growing sense of independence among coalition members, and differing ideas on some specific issues. Thus, some contend that RPCC needs the continued support of the settlement until the coalition is more fully developed. This means University will continue ongoing involvement in the initiative, in part as a source of office space and funding. Settlement staff endorse such a view, stating that the agency is prepared to do anything it can to help RPCC reach its full potential. One neighborhood resident comments that, in this relationship, where 'a big guy [is] going out of his way to help a small guy' become inde pendent, there has always been the reassurance that University will 'not cut the umbilical cord until [RPCC is] ready.' Others feel, however, that the settlement is too powerful, asserting that they do "not want to always be going too Big Daddy.' Moreover, while the transfer of leadership for the park project from University to RPCC has largely gone smoothly, it has at times created a 'rug of war' between the two organizations.

RPCC members and University staff report conflicts over specific issues and turf battles between the two groups. At times, such conflicts have provided the arena for each organization to define more clearly its relationship to the park project as well as to its partner. The conflicts have also provided avenues for RPCC to assert, its independence and prerogatives, thereby furthering its own development. A major example here revolves around the supervision of the community organizer. Although it was unclear which group had primary responsibility to supervise the first community organizer, RPCC seized the hiring of the second organizer as an opportunity to assert leadership over the project and address the perceived threat of a settlement take over. In a "memorandum of understanding" to University, RPCC declared its intention to take a stronger role in the hiring process as well as supervisory authority for the position. RPCC also met with representatives from the parks department and the Bowery Residents Committee, which uses a building located in the park, in order to secure office space in the park for the organizer. According to RPCC members, University was amenable to this new arrangement and quite generous with a computer, furniture, and office supplies. At the same time, the settlement made it clear that assumption of control entails responsibility for future funding of the position.

RPCC and University Settlement continue to work together even as their roles shift and change. RPCC members want to remain partners with the settlement in the park project, but with a line clearly drawn between the two organizations and with the coalition retaining leadership responsibility. Within this framework, the settlement acts as RPCC member and as fiscal agent for the funding it secures. Such a role suits settlement administrators and board members, who see the park project as a means to enhance relationships with the community, help build the institutional infrastructure, and foster local capacity. Through these intersecting perspectives, the settlement and RPCC seem to have found a way to work toward their shared vision for the community while also satisfying the institutional demands of each organization.

DISTINGUISHING FACTORS AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING THEMES

The case study of the Roosevelt Park restoration project contains a number of community-building themes, including the following:

A grassroots project carries a base of support. By the time the Roosevelt Park project was launched in earnest, neighborhood residents had been musing for years over the problems in the park and had, it seems, reached a boding point. Although the initial group that approached and joined University in this cause was a small segment of the community, it had both the resolve and the authority as community stakeholders to make it happen.

Drawing on organizational assets: RPCC had in place the organizational structure and governance

mechanism to be the grassroots vehicle to support the project. University brought expertise, resources, visibility, and connections in the funding, media, and political arenas to the project. The collaboration between RPCC and University allowed the park project to profit from dual status as a grassroots and a professional campaign.

It may be appropriate for a settlement to facilitate, rather than lead, a community-building project: University Settlement was neither the initiator nor always the prime mover in the Roosevelt Park project. Rather, the agency lent its substantial support to the project, leading the way when appropriate, but also fostering the development of RPCC as an independent community-organizing body and advocate for the park. Negotiating leadership and working collaboratively are difficult and often charged processes that can lead to power struggles, confusion over authority and responsibility, and uncertainty about one's role, especially as conditions change over time. A community-building partnership requires that all players are sensitive to these dynamics, especially when one entity is stronger and necessary plays a leading role. As the project progressed, the settlement leadership and board have been able to place the project within their larger aim to strengthen the organizational infrastructure of the community. Within this context, the gradual ceding of control of the park project to RPCC actually means growing success in nurturing a local organization and in helping to build community.

A project may serve many purposes: The Roosevelt Park project is, of course, important as a means for reclaiming a valuable neighborhood resource. At the same time, the project serves other significant purposes, including the development of local institutional capacity and the reinforcement of the settlement's relationship with the community. Within the settlement itself, the park serves several purposes; it is a means to engage program participants as well as staff in larger community concerns. In addition, some staff feel that the project has wider ramifications because it has inspired similar efforts in other neighborhood parks and “conveyed the message that public parks are ours.”

A settlement house has a crucial role in bolstering the institutional base of its community: Building community can entail strengthening a community’s institutional infrastructure. In the case of the Roosevelt Park project, University grasped the need for a grassroots organization to take the lead, in part to meet the requirements of the New York Foundation. The settlement also saw an opportunity to bring the project and RPCC together, in the process furthering both the project itself and the coalition. In fortifying RPCC, the settlement has helped build a local base for advocacy and action in the Lower East Side community.

Collaborative work includes the ability to disagree: In carrying out the project, there have been disagreements over particular activities and plans, such as the supervision of the community organizer. The willingness and ability of University and RPCC to allow for and resolve conflict have permitted the ongoing work of the partnership and kept the initiative alive. Each organization has been able to make compromises in certain areas and relinquish control in others, in part because each has a vital stake in the project's success.

Special funding ensured the commitment of substantial time and effort to the project. Financial support from the New York Foundation, the Roosevelt Institute, University Settlement, and several other community funders has played a pivotal role in the project. This funding provided support for a full-time community organizer interns, and special events. The availability of dedicated staff means that work in the park has proceeded in a timely fashion and has not depended on time volunteered by staff of involved organizations. In addition, the fact that work is ongoing acts as an impetus for partners to resolve their differences and get on with the business at hand.

Individuals involved in the Roosevelt Park project bring personal commitment and vision: The RPICC members, active neighborhood residents, and the administration and staff of University Settlement took on challenges, political and financial obstacles, and inevitable frustrations in order to bring the park project to fruition. Many of these individuals perceive a larger community- building

mission in the park restoration. They define their work not only in terms of cleaning up garbage and planting flowers, but also as creating a neighborhood resource and a neutral gathering place for residents. Even settlement staff who are not active in the restoration work understand that the project marks a step in furthering collaborative work in the neighborhood; this ethic runs throughout the work of the settlement and RPCC, and is especially apparent and important in their leaders.

III. CONCLUSION

Settlement house community-building efforts have much in common. While exhibiting a broad range of interests and approaches, they are all complex undertakings, involving settlement house administrators and staff, program participants, neighborhood residents and institutions, and at times other organizations, foundations, or municipal agencies. Perhaps more to the point, these efforts not only bring together a wide range of actors, but often entail shifts in individual perspectives and transformations in roles, relationships, and self-perceptions. Such change is meant to occur not only among community members, but also among settlement administrators and staff, and in the relationship between the settlement and its community. Moreover, despite differences among the individual agencies and their communities, the projects and programs presented here take place within similar institutional frameworks, are rooted in a common history, and motivated by shared values, aims, and outlooks. It is worthwhile, then, to look beyond the local details and patterns of the various case studies, and attempt to grasp cross-cutting themes and issues that consider more generally the structure and dynamics of community building as it is undertaken by settlement houses. Such themes can provide handles for thinking about and clarifying the notion of community building, and conceptual tools to help translate the notion into action, within settlements as well as in other agencies and organizations.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING THEMES

Community Building Provides an Overarching Framework for Action

As the case studies indicate, settlement houses typically provide a rich array of programs and activities, serving a cross section of population groups, from young children to senior citizens. This range of services and participants is one of the great strengths of settlement houses. At the same time, however, such variety carries with it a potential for divisions within a settlement, with staff working to meet the demands of their particular programs and program participants. Moreover, external dynamics, such as categorical funding or professional specialization, may reinforce these divisions. When this occurs, settlements may seem to be comprised of perhaps loosely connected but essentially independent programs.

In such a situation, a community-building framework can contribute to the integration of settlement house efforts, infusing a coherence to planning, decision making, and implementation across services, activities, and events. It can enhance and help highlight the links among programs as well as the connection between Z programs and the larger settlement. Such a framework is neither defined by nor limited to particular substantive ends; rather, it promotes a way of thinking about and carrying out action, providing an overarching impetus, rationale, and guiding standard for decision making and implementation.

Based on the case studies, such a framework can operate along several, often-coinciding, parameters, including the following:

- *Making short-term decisions within a long-term perspective:* Short-term decision making and planning are done within the context of long-term community-building goals. In this way, for example, the day-to-day operations of the Program Advisory Committee in Kingsbridge Heights build toward greater independence of the committee and the development of local leadership and community capacity. Or, the development of the Goddard Riverside

Family Council both encourages immediate advocacy around ongoing budget cuts, and, at the same time, builds toward longer-term development among neighborhood residents of the notion of civic rights and responsibilities.

- *Meeting both programmatic and community-building goals:* These case studies provide examples of how settlements make implementation decisions that meet both programmatic and community- building goals. Thus, University Settlements work on the Roosevelt Park project helps develop the institutional infrastructure of the Lower East Side community. Or the smooth functioning of Mosholu's baseball league provides an arena for greater interaction of residents across racial, ethnic, and class lines, thereby strengthening the social fabric of the community.

- *Serving individual and communities simultaneously:* When settlement administrators and staff explicitly make the link between individual well-being and community well-being, they can make decisions that serve both ends. Programmatically, such linkage may be implicit, as in, for example, the structures of the baseball league that foster individual involvement as well as social interaction. Or programs may explicitly aim to develop residents' consciousness of the linkage, as in, for example, the Family Council's emphasis on civic mindedness.

- *Linking settlement programs to each other and to the agency as a whole:* Such linkage is a clearly articulaced aim at Kingsbridge Heights, where administrators use a variety of means, including centralization of the budget and joint work across programs, to encourage staff to see themselves as part of the settlement team. Goddard Riverside also consciously works at developing staff communications across programs, using, in part, settlement-wide efforts such as voter registration, to pull staff together. Following a somewhat different tack, University Settlement has drawn different settlement programs, including youth, adult literacy, and arts programs, into a common community effort.

- *Linking the settlement and the community: Such* linkage may occur in many different ways, including: strategic outreach, such as Mosholu's recruitment effort; the development of new connecting mechanisms, such as Kingsbridge Heights's Program Advisory Committee; or the development of institutional ties, such as University Settlement's relationship with other local organizations. In community-building efforts, the process of creating linkages often includes development of new roles for staff, program participants, and neighborhood residents, as in the Family Council at Goddard Riverside.

Community Building Requires a Conscious Consideration of Ends, Means, and Long-Term Aims

The case studies present examples of the deliberate joining of community-building perspectives with programmatic decision making. Intrinsic to a community- building approach is a conscious regard for program needs, community-building values, and ways to bring the two together. Through such consideration, settlements can make and refine strategic decisions that, for example, meet short-term needs within long-term perspectives, or provide individual services while strengthening the community's social fabric.

In addition, the ability to articulate how and why community-building values intersect with programming is critical, in part because community building means the informed participation of all relevant groups. Such articulation can serve various purposes: clarification of the role of the settlement; provision of a settlement-wide context for the day-to-day work of staff; inclusion of staff in the work of defining and developing their own roles; demystification of the decision-making process;

and empowerment of staff, participants, and others to participate in program development. In the case studies, settlement administrators play pivotal roles in articulating their vision and providing leadership for community-building efforts.

Inclusive Services and Activities Are Important Vehicles for Community Building

In the case studies, community building largely occurs through everyday, inclusive activities that draw participants from across the neighborhood. These activities may be one-day events, seasonal activities, or ongoing efforts. They may be part of the settlement's program docket or revolve around a community-wide undertaking. One of the unifying themes throughout these ventures, however, is the way they build on local resources, and meet shared interests and needs across the community, drawing in participants from a wide range of neighborhood groups.

Settlement Houses Are Well Positioned for Community Building

The case studies point to a number of characteristics that make settlements well positioned to take on community-building efforts. These include the following:

- A settlement's many services and activities offer neighborhood residents many entry points into the settlement and into community-building efforts.
- The breadth of settlement offerings attract participants ranging from young children to senior citizens, encompassing a mix across racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, or other categorical boundaries, including newly-arrived immigrants. This means that the settlement has a broad-based constituency with which to develop community- building efforts.
- The settlement's emphasis on inclusive programming to meet widely shared interests and needs helps make the settlement a crossroads for the various groups in a neighborhood, what one executive director calls being the 'living room' of the neighborhood. In a corollary way, a settlement fosters its role as 'neutral turf' for all members of the community, working to create an environment where all residents feel welcome.
- The settlement is generally a well-established organization in the neighborhood, with a long history of commitment to and service for residents, a sense of stability and continuity, and connections with other institutions and networks, both locally and beyond, including non-profit organizations, public and private agencies, politicians, and religious groups.

These characteristics seem to afford settlements the capability, authority, and legitimacy to perform several critical community-building tasks, including the following:

- *The creation official arenas:* Part of the community-building work in each of these case studies has been the development of arenas of social interaction for program participants, staff, and neighborhood residents. These arenas take many forms. At times, they are specific events, such as The Trading Post in Kingsbridge Heights or the arts festival in Roosevelt Park; or they are part of ongoing activities, such as the Mosholu baseball league. Organized groups or forums may comprise such arenas, such as Goddard Riverside's Family Council, Kingsbridge Heights's Program Advisory Committee, or the Roosevelt Park project supported by University Settlement. Social arenas may also revolve around specific places, such as, increasingly, Roosevelt Park. One of the key attributes of all these social spaces, whether they are events, organized groups, or places, is that they provide important neutral meeting grounds where people from across the neighborhood can come together voluntarily, through mutual interest, and interact naturally.
- *The effort to heighten civic sensibilities:* The case studies provide instances of settlement efforts to heighten civic

sensibilities. These efforts, again, cover a range of emphases, such as engaging program participants to support the settlement through, for example, volunteer work, membership on resident boards, or attendance at activities; encouraging neighborhood residents co learn about and work on community issues, such as budget cuts or the reclaiming of a neighborhood resource; facilitating interaction among neighborhood groups; and providing voter registration and education opportunities. Overall, such efforts highlight the link between individual well-being and the commonweal, and aim to foster the sense that individuals have the right, responsibility, and capability, especially when working together, to influence the circumstances of their daily lives.

Community Building is a Process

The case studies also demonstrate that community building is at times a difficult and frustrating process that requires time and effort. Many of the challenges of translating a community-building perspective into action lie in the necessity of settlements to walk fine lines, balancing a variety of roles, needs, and expectations. Some of the dilemmas faced by settlement houses include the following:

- Providing leadership and authority, while fostering meaningful participation of staff, program participants, and community stakeholders;
- Assuming responsibility in the community as an established institution, while supporting the development of fledgling organizations;
- Aiming to support community good, while remaining responsive to culturally and economically diverse constituent groups;
- Maintaining the quality and focus of settlement programs, while at the same time expanding the involvement of staff in settlement-wide concerns and endeavors;
- Accommodating the needs of therapeutic services within an inclusive community-building perspective;
- Striking a balance between overt advocacy and the need to work within existing political structures, a sometimes difficult point to achieve especially in the current context of shifting political and economic priorities; and
- juggling the development of community-building ideas among settlement staff, program participants, and within the larger community.

The case studies suggest not only the range and variety of community-building projects, but the complexity, demands, and difficulties of the community-building process. As these cases derail, community building must in part be underpinned by often hard-won articulated frameworks, ongoing reflection, a willingness to change, and strategic decision making. The process may entail disagreements, frustration, and even conflict. There are, of course, great rewards as well. Perhaps most important, the cases show throughout that effective community building, must play out in everyday activities, perspectives, and interactions. It is here that one sees the critical role of *the* embeddedness of settlement houses in the daily routines of individuals and their families, and in the structure and dynamics of their neighborhoods.