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**STRENGTHS AND CAPACITIES OF NEIGHBORHOOD
ORGANIZATIONS:
CASE STUDY OF SAGINAW, MICHIGAN
URBAN VILLAGES**

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Plan B

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URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM
URBAN AFFAIRS***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary goal of this study was to assess the strengths and capacities of community based organizations (CBOs) in Saginaw, Michigan. The major characteristics of community based organizations, which were identified through literary and professional review, were leadership, organizational, technical development, communication skills, and legal knowledge.

The primary goal of this study was reached through the participation of residents involved in the three planning districts, planning districts 5, 6, and 7. Within these three planning districts were three community based organizations that served as the umbrella organization for smaller organizations such as the Block Watch groups. A ten page survey was mailed out to these community based organization participants.

Some of the more notable findings of this survey as they relate to the above five characteristics include:

- Most respondents feel that their CBOs work very well as a team.
- Some respondents did not fill out the survey because they felt they were not community leaders.
- Some respondents felt diversity in an organization was important so they make it a point to involve a diverse mix of residents.
- Some respondents have formed a neighbor co-op where they barter their skills and services.
- Some respondents felt that it is very important for businesses in the area to be involved in their organization so they invite them personally to meetings.
- Some respondents advertise for organization meetings by sending out postcards.
- Some respondents stated that input is very important, so at meetings, each person is given five minutes to present new ideas or specific concerns.

The survey responses were based on a limited and very small sample size and may not be based on an entire organization. This study found that the CBOs in planning districts 5,6,and 7 demonstrated very different characteristics, that put them in different stages of the capacity building process. Even though all five characteristics were not evident in each of the planning districts, some of the characteristics were evident. This by no means states that these organizations are weak. It is up to the members of that organization to determine their level of success.

Following is a brief sample of survey respondents definition of what they feel a strong and successful community organization is:

- One that gets results and accomplishes its goals.
- One that procures funding.
- One that values communication.
- An organization that is dedicated to teamwork and respects each other.
- People coming together to make positive changes in their communities, not by just talking, but by doing.

In the end, it is the people who bring all five characteristics to an organization and helps it build its capacity and makes it a strong community based organization.

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INTRODUCTION

Community Based Organizations are a growing force in the not for profit sector of our society. Strong CBOs elicit certain characteristics, they have set goals and objectives, active committees and high participation. Most are knowledgeable of resources and funding sources. Strong CBOs become recognized by city planners and local government officials by advocating their concerns on land use, zoning and housing issues.

CBOs have strengths that allow them to obtain funding for projects and complete projects in their quest to obtain a better quality of life for their community. CBOs have also been in the forefront for their efforts in dealing with community and economic development issues in order to promote neighborhood revitalization.

Leadership, organizational, technical development, communication skills and legal knowledge are contributing factors to the success of an organization. Leading scholars and researchers who have studied the capacities of CBOs agree that strong community groups demonstrate certain characteristics that ultimately lead to the success of CBOs. Following is a brief discussion on the findings of leading scholars and researchers about the mechanisms used by successful CBOs in building strengths and capacities.

Leadership Development

The commitment of members is crucial to the success of an organization because most leaders are committed to not only the task at hand, but also to what they are trying to do or improve. "Successful community based development organizations have a committed group of individuals who will work toward achieving the stated mission and generate other committed supporters..."(Jones, 1994, p.1). Commitment involves members following

through on responsibilities. Members who follow through on responsibility are most often labeled the leaders. Leaders also were committed to the projects at hand and following through on them. "Leaders of highly successful organizations constantly saw in the events around them, and in the projects they were already pursuing, the possibilities of additional development...they were conscious of the needs and opportunities for building capabilities of their organizations. They carefully identified capacity-building priorities..." (Blake, Mayer, 1981, p.15). Leaders are more commonly those who follow through on responsibilities, do a lot of work, and always sticks to the issue at hand. "Probably, more organizations fail from lack of follow through than from lack of enthusiasm...(Rubin, pg.59).

Teamwork is another important aspect of leadership development. Leaders can not accomplish tasks alone. Team cohesion is an important part of a successful organization. Problems are solved by those who are able to work together and compromise. "Leadership capacity is affected by the skill with which leaders exploit the resources available to them" (Judd, Parkinson, 1990, p.295). A team effort is used in helping leaders exploit resources. Working together to build the organization as well as the neighborhood are important aspects of success, that leaders and members of CBOs should recognize. "Success in today's organizations will involve leaders and followers in more interactive meetings where the topic of discussion is what goals to seek...how members will work together to achieve these goals..." (Fairholm, 1997, p.166).

Development of a CBOs leaders should be a high goal within the organization. CBOs tackle pressing everyday issues and leaders play a great part in seeing that the issues are solved. Characteristics of leadership include commitment, the ability to follow through on responsibilities, good

communication skills, the ability to achieve goals, and the ability to build teams and networks. “To some degree the leaders of successful community base organizations are charismatic” (Twelvetrees, 1989, p.139).

Organizational Development

For an organization to be successful, it must build its capacity. Capacity building involves leadership development, visioning, a mission, incorporating a hierarchical structure, setting goals and objectives and planning and implementing plans and programs. In order to build a successful organization, the newly formed group must come together to form a vision and mission statement. The group must know what it intends to accomplish by forming this organization.

“Mission provides that sense of purpose. In addition, it can be very helpful...to expand that mission into a “vision of success”. Without a vision of success, organizational members may not know enough about how to fulfill the mission. Mission, in other words, clarifies an organization’s purpose, or why it should be doing what it does; vision clarifies what it should look like and how it should behave as it fulfills its mission” (Bryson, 1988, p.95-96).

Goals and objectives will follow the visioning session. A group must know what end they want to achieve from the efforts that they put forth.

Objectives are necessary because they explain how that group is going to reach that end. “Successful community based development organizations, have a clear mission and defined goals and objectives” (Jones, 1996, p.2).

Once goals and objectives are defined, CBOs can start organizing activities and setting plans in motion. For instance, neighborhood organizations should have their own neighborhood plan of how they want their neighborhood to be. The plan should state, how the quality of life in neighborhoods will be improved and the methods used to reach those goals.

“Neighborhood plans are sets of recommendations about how to improve a given area of a city. They are based on an analysis of a large amount of data collected about that area and generally represent the consensus among those stakeholders...who have participated in drafting the plan...The plan’s recommendations are usually in two forms: written statements about some actions that should be taken and maps of the conditions of the plan is designed to achieve.” (Jones, 1990, p.6).

It is important for CBOs to know how to plan, implement and evaluate programs. CBOs offer many activities and in order for those activities to be a success, they must be well planned, implemented and then evaluated. A CBO who wants to start a summer basketball camp, must think of funding, who their target audience is, and the goal they want to achieve. Members who are able to plan and implement programs are a great attribute to the organization. Members should also know how to evaluate programs in order to decide what went wrong, if anything, and how to improve upon the program for next time. People usually come back if the first program was planned well.

“To increase the chances for project success, members of developmental organizations have to learn project-management skills, planning, funding, implementation, and evaluation...without adequate planning, an organization may end up going off in all directions at once and failing to focus on those problems that can be solved...Botched project implementation can throw off schedules, increase costs, and demoralize participants...Organizations that fail to evaluate their actions can neither correct mistakes nor adapt to changing conditions” (Rubin, 1992, p.388).

Delegating authority can help an organization run much smoother. Effective organizations have a hierarchy of leaders, such as Presidents, Vice-presidents, and committee chairs, that take care of certain things within the organization. This set structure can aid in the recruitment of members

and the frequency of meetings. "Most community organizations must strive to set up an active board...Active board members can help solicit donations of goods and services, they can contribute their professional expertise and experience...A working board can provide the organization with needed skills, resources, and external legitimacy" (Rubin, 1992, p.370).

Most successful organizations involve all members of a community because their views represent a large segment of the community whose opinions must be considered and addressed. A CBO that integrates the efforts of all of its community member's regardless of any shortcomings they may have, usually receives more participation in programs because people feel like they have a stake in what is happening.

"It is essential to recognize the capacities, for example, of those who have been labeled mentally handicapped or disabled...each time a person uses his or her capacity, the community is stronger and the person more powerful...that is why strong communities are basically places where the capacities of local residents are identified, valued and used" (McKnight, 1993, pg.6).

Teamwork also involves using everyone's special gifts and skills in order to accomplish a goal. For example, someone who has artistic skills can create fliers for programs or teach children in the neighborhood how to draw. "Success comes from the combined efforts of many...a clear understanding that success is due to the combined efforts of many individuals with different skills, perspectives, and approaches" (Chenoweth, 1993, p.11).

Finally, the organizational structure of a CBO should not be a dictatorship. If people are going to work together as a team, they must be able to listen to new ideas from members. Varied opinions should be valued in the process of problem-solving. If an organization has hopes of getting the community involved, it needs to be a democratic organization. All residents

need to have a say into what goes on in their neighborhood, otherwise the CBO could take the form of a dictatorship by telling the residents what they want and what they need.

“We expect to feel helpless in an authoritarian regime...democracy involves the informed participation of a large number of people in decisions that affect them...the ideals of a democratic movement must be carried out within community organizations...Successful community organizing gives the widest number of people possible a stake in preserving democracy and should create a stable democratic society, formally and actually open to all” (Rubin, 1992, p.4).

Technical Development

Evolving CBOs should receive technical assistance in order to get them started on the road to success. Technical assistance can come in the form of training sessions on leadership development, how to run effective meetings and planning and implementing programs. Members of CBOs should also attend training sessions or seminars in order to keep on top of the newest laws, issues, or developing technology. “At training sessions, members of the organization learn specific skills that enhance their sense of competence...As members develop these skills and use them to promote collective purposes, the group becomes more successful...” (Rubin, 1992, p.234).

Technical resource persons can also help a CBO to locate funding resources such as grants or loans. In order to keep an organization going, there must be funding and outside sources could be of help in this goal. “Many of the organizations substantially supplement their internal capabilities with technical assistance from beyond the neighborhood” (Mayer, 1984, p.13). Outside sources can proofread proposals for you, share valuable information with you and can provide those connections from

religious, educational, civic and police associations that can be helpful to your organization. "Successful community based development organizations are involved in on-going education and training of staff and volunteers to develop leadership skills" (Jones, 1996,p.2) Technical resource persons can also increase the credibility of neighborhood plans or activities in the eyes of residents and local government officials. "Available resources, both technical assistance and money, are critical to implementation and carry through of a neighborhood plan. Most of the successful neighborhood planning programs are characterized by a long-term partnership between the city and neighborhood organizations..." (Martz, 1995, p.3).

Communication Skills

Effective communication skills can dissolve conflicts and solve problems. Members who utilize their communication skills can induct the services of the police department or other CBOs to help them plan and implement activities.

The police department is one of many vital connections that an organization must have. Vital connection can help in the problem solving efforts as well as identify issues that may have been overlooked. The police can help an organization with crime related and social issues.

It is important to put forth a united effort when tackling issues that affect a community and city. Other organizations may have valuable information that a CBO may not have been aware of. "Community groups should seize opportunities to convey partnerships that develop around one single project into more encompassing and enduring connections...Partnerships can also provide more visibility to neighborhood organizations and their capacities as a whole" (Goins, 1987, p.6). Other CBOs can also bring in their unique perspectives as to how they dealt or are

dealing with a problem in their neighborhood. "Approaches taken by one organizer or group are learned by others, who then go on to add to the body of knowledge and the list of successful strategies...Success stories inspire other organizers to try the same techniques, and organizers spread new ideas when they move from one group to another..." (Rubin, 1992, p.32).

Effective community organizations must involve everyone in the neighborhood, including businesses. Like the connection with the police department, businesses can help in the problem solving techniques and with the economic revitalization of a neighborhood. "Increasingly, community-based developmental organizations are involved in partnerships with government and business to carry out developmental projects. The assumption is that through partnerships community members will have more say over which economic development projects receive government support, and community organizations will receive more funding for projects they want" (Rubin, 1992, p.407).

Meeting or social event advertisements are very important to CBOs. Advertisements are a good way to alert people of things that are happening and of things that are actually being accomplished. "Successful community based development organizations are effectively marketing the organization's goals and achievements" (Jones, 1996, p.3)

How events are advertised can lead to high or low attendance at your programs. The lack of interest in CBOs by residents can come from the way events are advertised. Creative, colorful advertisements and catchy slogans can get people's attention. "Publicity grabs the attention of...the public. Potential members learn about a group and its accomplishments, increasing the chance of their joining, and those already in the group are encouraged by its successes" (Rubin, 1992, p.329).

Legal Knowledge

In order to deal with issues effectively, CBOs must know some of the city's ordinances, laws, or rules and regulations. Having an ignorance of the law can waste valuable time in trying to solve problems or issues.

“Organizers need to be familiar with the rapidly changing policies of states and cities” (Rubin, 1992, p.127). Knowing the law makes it easier to hold local government officials accountable for their actions. “Community organizations can gain power through legal actions, expertise, and the threat of force...” (Rubin, 1992, p.8).

Many of the changes a CBO may want to occur in a neighborhood may be able to be substantiated by the city's Master Plan¹. A master plan is a long range plan used to guide the future growth and development of a city.

“...the plan is an expression of what a community wants. It is a statement of goals, a listing of objectives, and a vision of what might be...the plan serves as a guide to decision making. It provides the means for guiding and influencing the many public and private decisions that create the future city...” (Arnold & al., 1979, p.164). Master plans are not etched in stone, they can be changed in order to change with the times, therefore, if something is not in the Master Plan and you have enough support in your organization, you could petition for an amendment to the Master Plan².

¹“City plans have masqueraded under a variety of names - development plan, urban plan, master plan, general plan, growth management plan, comprehensive plan, policy plan, and many more. These name changes reflect, in part, the evolution of what the plan is supposed to do” (Arnold & et., 1979, p.154).

²The elements of a master plan are: “The current circumstances of the city and why a plan for the city's development is needed; what the city's strategy for future physical development is including; what should be done in the short run, what is will cost, and where the money will come from; and who developed the plan and how it can be changed” (Arnold & et., 1979, p.179).

Neighborhood plans should also be in accordance with the Master Plan in order to be seen as viable by the city. "In most cities, there is a master or comprehensive plan to guide overall development of the city. Neighborhood plans are usually drafted in such a way as to be consistent...with the comprehensive plan..." (Jones, 1990, p.6).

Projects initiated by CBOs could be eligible for government funding such as the CDBG. CBOs can not operate effectively without funding. "Under the grant, cities can spend money on street repairs, sewer construction, housing, urban planning, community services, restoring or maintaining historic buildings or encouraging economic development" (Rubin, 1992, p.124)

CDBGs are not the only type of funding a CBO can receive. The federal, state, and local governments offer grants for CBO projects. Some individuals are opposed to government support, though, "Successful community based development organizations have developed, or secured a regular source of revenue" (Jones, 1996, p.3).

Knowledge of laws most often is the best defense for CBOs taking a stand on land use issues, police enforcement, etc. "Community groups can agitate for new laws or better enforcement of current laws, design new programs, defend programs that have benefited their constituency, or pressure city governments to relocate proposed physical facilities that threaten neighborhoods" (Rubin, 1992, p.141)

PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to assess the strengths and capacities of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) through the contributing factors that help in the success of a CBO. In May of 1995, I began working with Linda F. Jones, Director of Michigan State University's (MSU) Community and Economic Development Program an office of Urban Affairs Programs in Saginaw, Michigan³. The Director obtained a contract from the City of Saginaw for MSU to provide assistance in organizing neighborhood associations and technical assistance through training sessions to CBOs. The objective was to organize 3 district wide neighborhood associations in one year. These groups would be an association of associations since they would include representation by other local organizations. The city of Saginaw was providing financial support to implement the Urban Village Concept, which divides Saginaw into seven planning districts and establish seven new CBOs in each district. These CBOs would take neighborhood concerns to the local government level in an effort to promote neighborhood revitalization. Based on the aforementioned research by leading scholars on the capacities of CBOs and certain characteristics, the Urban Village Concept seemed to be a good testing ground for analyzing the strengths and capacities of neighborhood organizations. Therefore, I initiated a study to investigate the strengths and capacities of neighborhood organizations in Urban Village neighborhoods in Saginaw, Michigan.

³ "In 1970, MSU, Center for Urban Affairs, established the Community and Economic Development Program to assist communities in the development of innovative self-reliant strategies to address the problems affecting them. Other outreach offices were opened in Grand Rapids(1988), in Saginaw(1992) and in Detroit(1995), Michigan"(Jones, 1996, p.1).

URBAN VILLAGE STRUCTURE

In an effort to promote neighborhood revitalization the city community liaison committee, along with city staff, worked together to develop a neighborhood organizational structure, which would functionally convey neighborhood input to city government. The ultimate goal of the committee was to provide a vehicle for neighborhoods to independently address their own needs and concerns.

The Urban Village Program was initiated in 1992 based on the concept established by the City Community Liaison in accordance to the city's Master Plan. The objective of the Urban Villages(UVs), neighborhood organizations included developing their own strategic plans to address local concerns that focused on housing, neighborhood development, economic development and establishing crime watches. The UV structure also recognizes the need for continuing growth and development of community based groups in the City of Saginaw through local on-going technical assistance. The structure identified securing outside technical assistance providers to aid in neighborhood organizing, technical assistance and outreach capacity building for groups.

Prior to the development of this concept there were several neighborhood organizations in the City of Saginaw. These organizations were attempting to identify and respond to community and economic development issues in the neighborhoods, while also enhancing and beautifying their areas. The organizational structure of the UVs is designed to prevent unnecessary duplication, foster sharing of resources and joint ventures.

According to the 1990 census⁴, the City of Saginaw has a total population of 69,512. Out of 69,512 individuals, 32,025 are males and 37,487 are females. The City of Saginaw's racial population is segregated by the Saginaw River. The largest percentage of the minority population resides on the east side of the river while the majority of non-minorities reside on the west side of the river (see map pg.14). Within districts, there are a variety of socioeconomic and demographic differences, however, the 1980⁵ census shows that per capita income is holding at \$8,652.00. Per capita income for Saginaw City is \$2000 less than the per capita income for Saginaw County.

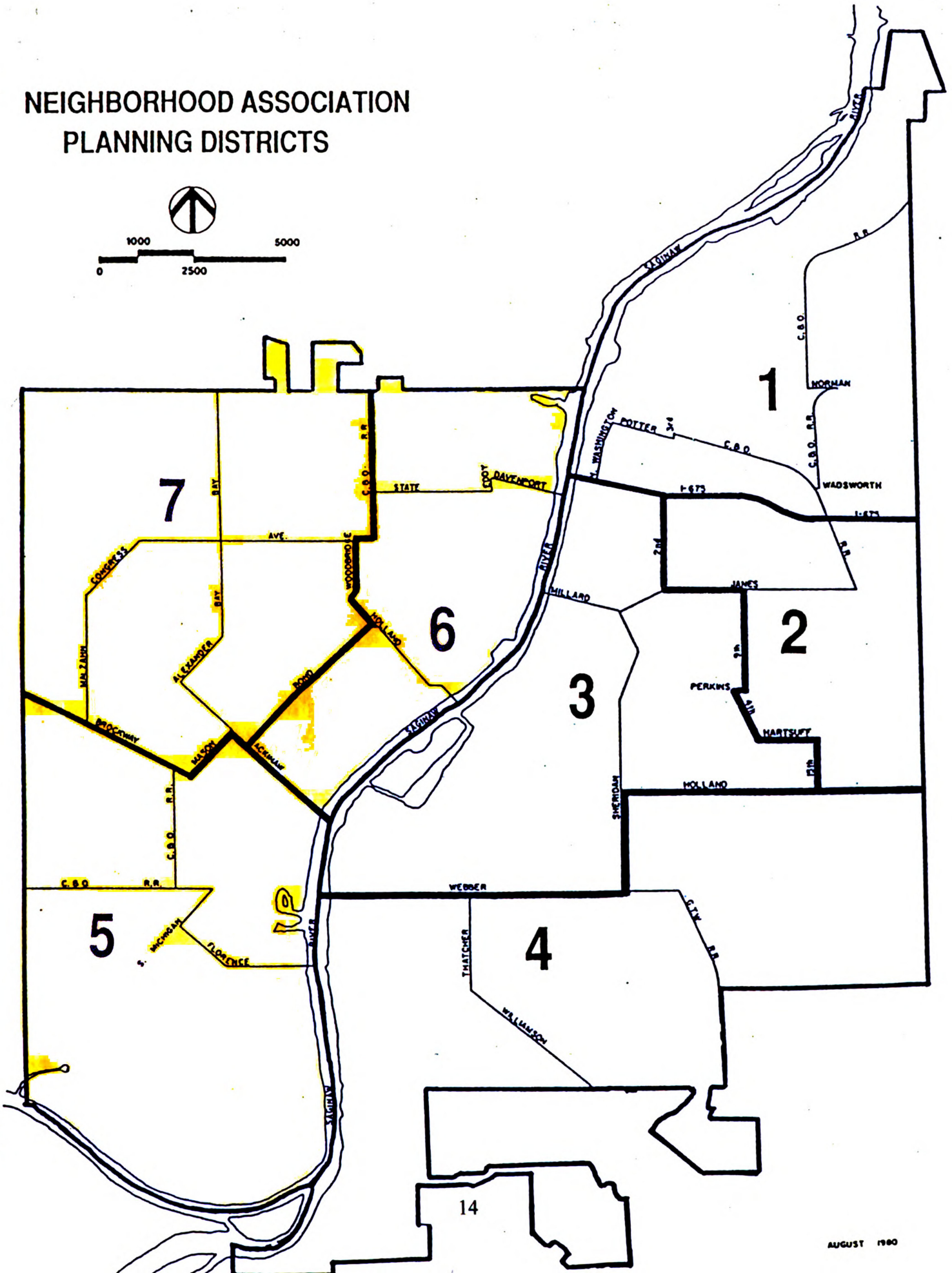
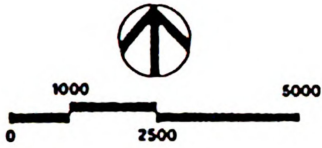
The Urban Village Program recognizes 7 autonomous district wide umbrella community based groups that can aid in improving racial harmony in the city. Under the proposed structure, the consultants are to assist in forming the City-Wide Urban Village Advisory Council. The City-Wide UV Advisory Council (see organizational chart pg.15) is an autonomous organization that brings members from each of the seven planning districts together to brainstorm solutions to neighborhood issues.

The areas of focus for this study (see map pg.14) are planning districts 5, 6, and 7. Within these districts, Michigan State University is playing a key role in furthering the development of UV Neighborhood Associations. MSU is providing organizing assistance, on-going technical assistance and leadership training for the continuing growth and development of community organizations.

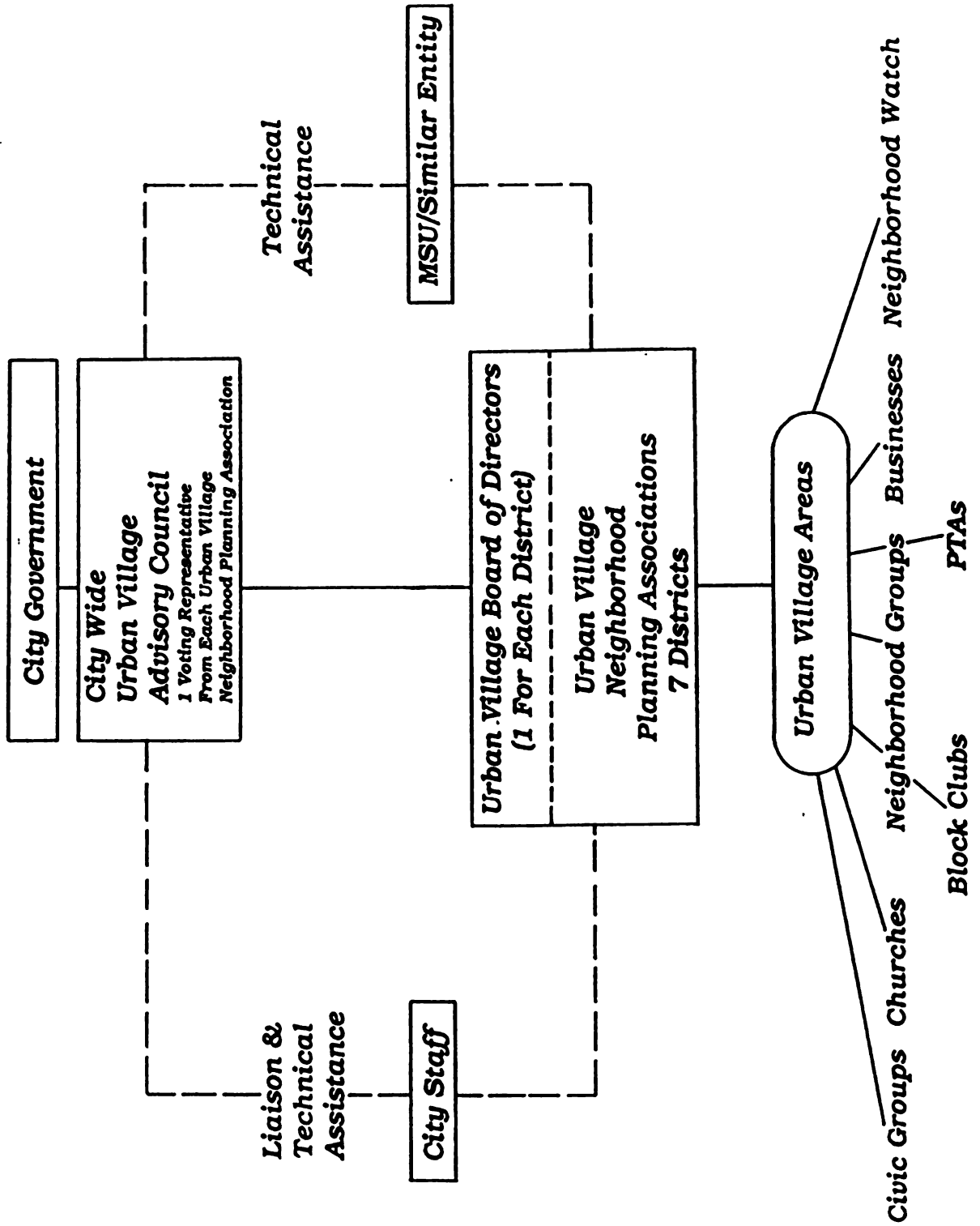
⁴Ethnic breakdown - African American 28,046; American Indian 375; Asian 302; Hispanic 7,304; and White 36,324.

⁵Census data for 1990 was not available

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION PLANNING DISTRICTS



Organization Flow Chart **Urban Village Neighborhood Planning**



Planning District 5 (see census map, pg. 17)

The name for this UV Neighborhood Association was selected from names entered by area elementary school children along with the logo. Neighborhood participants in this area selected the "Southwest Urban Village Melting Pot Neighborhood Association" (SWUVMP)⁶. "In January of 1996, MSU Center for Urban Affairs began to provide direct technical assistance in planning, organizing and building the capacity of members within the organization to take stronger leadership roles within the organization" (Jones, 1996 Status Report, pg.1). Through participation of neighborhood leaders and technical support from MSU, SWUVMP is becoming a strong CBO that is recognized by local government officials. "Of the three areas, the SWUVMP neighborhood association is the most organized, according to Saginaw Police Chief Golden⁷" (Jones, 1996 Status Report, p.2).

Planning District 6 (see census map, pg. 18)

Planning District 6 is comprised of several existing groups that have focused their efforts entirely on their smaller neighborhood areas. Until recently, the UV Program was not desired because residents believed it would distract them from solving their individual neighborhood problems. However, with continued technical support and organizational training from MSU and growing interest by various community leaders, participation is growing. Some residents of district 6 see the City-Wide Advisory Committee as "a very strong and effective tool in dealing with requests, or concerns

⁶The current Chairperson of this district is Robert Andreotti.

⁷Along the lines of collaborative community planning, Saginaw's Police Chief, Mr. Golden and the Saginaw Police Department have established an Area Police Advisory Committee (APAC) that will work with each of the seven UV planning districts, to address police related problems in the district.

Technical Development

In the area of technical development, an overwhelming majority (59%) of the respondents feel that their organization uses outside resources such as technical resource persons from banks, universities or churches for assistance (Q5). Not surprising, 48% do not know if their organization has received sufficient grants to do their work (Q9), while 29% believe they have not received sufficient funding. Thirty-four percent of the respondents agree that their organization encourages them to attend training sessions or seminars (Q25), however, 43% had no opinion and 25% did not think that their organization conducted effective training sessions (Q46). Less than 5 respondents listed training sessions that their organization conducts. The five who did answer listed organizational skills and leadership roles as training sessions that have been offered by their CBO.

Communication Skills

Communication skills are an important aspect of everyday life, so it was excellent to see that 72% of the respondents stated that their CBO distributes a newsletter (Q1). Forty-three percent strongly agreed that they can identify key leaders in their neighborhood (Q12) while 43% agree that their organization shared valuable information with other neighborhood organizations (Q11). Findings in this category suggest that these CBOs and their members have great communication skills. When asked whether their organization communicates with businesses to address issues (Q41), 50% agreed and 32% had no opinion. Communication with businesses was done either through group meetings or businesses organizing business associations. Forty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that they are able to and discuss new ideas (Q42). The new ideas are frequently gathered by letters from members or the distribution of surveys. Findings suggest that events and

with, city council on policies affecting our neighborhoods” (Wolverton, 1997, p.2).

Planning District 7 (see census map, pg.20)

The chairperson⁸ of planning district 7, “The Northwest Neighborhood Association”, believes residents should get together and form organizations, even if there are no apparent problems at this point in their neighborhood. Unfortunately, residents in this area have not been active in organizing efforts because they feel there are not any severe problems which warrant their involvement. The UV concept is being kept alive in this area through neighborhood rally’s and impending door to door organizing.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Strong Community Based Organizations incorporate the following characteristics:

- Leadership Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Technical Skills
- Communication Skills
- Legal Knowledge

Data has shown that strong CBOs are more successful in implementing planned objectives. This study will measure the extent in which these characteristics, leadership development, organizational development, technical development, communication skills and legal knowledge are demonstrated in Saginaw’s UVs based on the views of participating members.

⁸Sister Jan Stoddard

H2: Strong Community Based Organizations have members that possess a strong sense of community.

Professor John Schweitzer of MSU, Urban Affairs Programs and several graduate students conducted a block study on the sense of community in selected Lansing neighborhoods. The long range goals of Schweitzers' survey was to continue the study of ways to strengthen community in neighborhoods. "Preliminary findings indicate that block level sense of community is positively related to voting, recycling, volunteering, and participating in crime watch activities. Blocks with higher levels of sense of community have lower levels of criminal activity"(Schweitzer, 1996, p.36).

Schweitzers research supports the fact that when CBOs are strong their members have a strong sense of community leading them to be more active in community problem solving. Based on the questions asked in Schweitzers survey, I have defined a sense of community as residents that communicate with each other, feel connected to the neighborhood, and participate in neighborhood activities.

METHOD

The identified constructs for the survey questions were based on a literature review on community organizing to determine the characteristics of strong organizations. An organizational assessment survey to measure the strengths and capacities of organizations was developed. Planning district 5, 6, and 7 in the City of Saginaw in which MSU Center for Urban Affairs Saginaw CEDP Office was working, were selected because these areas were contracted to MSU through a grant from the City of Saginaw. The

organizations in this area are in the beginning stages, less than three years old. Each of the organizations are participating in the UV Program.

Once the organizational assessment survey instrument was completed, it was pre-tested in Lansing, Michigan with residents involved in a Lansing Area Neighborhood Organization, the Moores River Drive Neighborhood Organization. The pre-test consisted of an explanation of the purpose of the survey and the method by which this survey would be distributed to Saginaw CBOs. The surveys were completed at the meeting with all general comments and concerns noted. A few minor changes were made to the survey to improve comprehension.

Following the pre-test and changes, the survey was distributed to 189 residents involved with CBOs in Planning Districts 5, 6, and 7. The survey was completed by executive board members of CBOs and community participants of CBOs in order to obtain comments by active members on their views of the strengths and capacities of the organization.

A total of 189 surveys were mailed out in December of 1996 and January of 1997. Surveys that were mailed out were coded in order to receive data on which organizations turned in the surveys. Out of the 189 surveys mailed in a self-addressed envelope, only 22 (10%) respondents completed survey forms. In an effort to increase the 10% response rate, calls were made to residents who were mailed surveys. The responses ranged from, "I didn't receive a survey", to "I don't know where it is, but if I find it, I will fill it out and return it". The results from the survey were based on a very small sample size and may not be based on the entire organization.

INSTRUMENTS

Based on our limited sample size data was obtained from the organizational assessment survey that was distributed through mass mailings. The survey was user friendly so that the volunteer participants could fill out the survey on their own. For most individuals, the survey took no more than 20 minutes, however, more conscientious respondents may take more time and thought in their responses thereby completing it in 45 minutes or more.

In order to assess or measure the respondents sense of community survey questions devised by Dr. John Schweitzer were needed. Ten questions were added onto the organizational assessment survey to assess or measure the respondents sense of community.

FINDINGS

Questions in the survey were acquired from five categories. Those categories were:

- Leadership development
- Organizational development
- Technical development
- Communication skills
- Legal knowledge

The above categories were chosen because the literature reflects that strong organizations reflect these qualities and they are what makes an organization successful and functional. There were 58 questions that addressed the above topics and respondents were given the choice of answering all or some of the questions in the survey.

Planning district 5, "Southwest Saginaw Urban Village Melting Pot," had the highest return rate. Out of the 22 completed surveys, 17 were from

this CBO. Planning district 6 returned 4 completed surveys and planning district 7 returned 1.

H1: Strong Community Based Organizations incorporate the following characteristics:

- Leadership Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Technical Skills
- Communication Skills
- Legal Knowledge

Leadership Development⁹

An overwhelming majority of the respondents had no opinion about their organizations leadership capabilities. Forty-eight percent of the respondents when asked, “do committee members follow through on their responsibilities (Q10),” responded with no opinion. On the other hand, an average of 30% responded they feel that the members of their organization are committed (Q40), as well as they work together as a team. Respondents most often see the commitment of members through the joining of committees and their constant attendance at meetings. Findings also suggest that people see the teamwork of members demonstrated through volunteerism activities and the willingness to work with others in committees (Q43).

Organizational Development

Most of the responses in this category were generally in the affirmative, however, some of the responses stressed the lack of knowledge the members had about their organizations. Eighty-two percent of the respondents felt that their organization had established their goals and

⁹All of the below questions will have a parenthesis with a number on the inside. This means that the statement is referring to, for example(Q40), question 40 of the survey. A copy of the survey can be found in the appendices.

objectives (Q2). Over 50% of the respondents had not seen their organizations organizational chart (Q4), while 46% stated their organization does not have a board of directors (Q3). When asked if they had seen their organizations by-laws or even had by-laws (Q6), 41% responded yes, while 41% also responded that they did not know. Over 40% of the respondents felt that their organization operated by using a democratic process (Q13), however, 48% did not understand the structure of their organization (Q14).

When asked if their organization was achieving the goals and objectives they created (Q15), over 50% agreed, but 38% gave no opinion as to if their organization uses effective strategic planning (Q16) to meet those objectives. Even though an average of 41% responded that their organization has completed and follows its neighborhood plan (Q17), 30% either did not know or had no opinion on whether their organization had a completed neighborhood plan. As to the question of if their organization had a strong functioning executive board (Q20), 24% agreed, but 42% had no opinion. An overwhelming 62% responded they agree that meetings are scheduled at reasonable times (Q27) and 38% responded that meetings are not out of control (Q26). Thirty-four percent agree that attendance at their organizations meetings are sufficient enough to complete the work that needs to be done (Q28) and 34% agree that their members have the skills to plan, implement, and evaluate the work that needs to be done (Q24). Along with this idea of meeting attendance, 35% of the respondents agree that their organization is growing (Q48), however, 30% disagree with this notion. Those who agree their organization is growing see it through the welcoming of new members and increased participation in organizational activities.

Technical Development

In the area of technical development, an overwhelming majority (59%) of the respondents feel that their organization uses outside resources such as technical resource persons from banks, universities or churches for assistance (Q5). Not surprising, 48% do not know if their organization has received sufficient grants to do their work (Q9), while 29% believe they have not received sufficient funding. Thirty-four percent of the respondents agree that their organization encourages them to attend training sessions or seminars (Q25), however, 43% had no opinion and 25% did not think that their organization conducted effective training sessions (Q46). Less than 5 respondents listed training sessions that their organization conducts. The five who did answer listed organizational skills and leadership roles as training sessions that have been offered by their CBO.

Communication Skills

Communication skills are an important aspect of everyday life, so it was excellent to see that 72% of the respondents stated that their CBO distributes a newsletter (Q1). Forty-three percent strongly agreed that they can identify key leaders in their neighborhood (Q12) while 43% agree that their organization shared valuable information with other neighborhood organizations (Q11). Findings in this category suggest that these CBOs and their members have great communication skills. When asked whether their organization communicates with businesses to address issues (Q41), 50% agreed and 32% had no opinion. Communication with businesses was done either through group meetings or businesses organizing business associations. Forty-eight percent of the respondents agreed that they are able to and discuss new ideas (Q42). The new ideas are frequently gathered by letters from members or the distribution of surveys. Findings suggest that events and

meetings are advertised by neighborhood newsletters, fliers, phone calls and newspaper advertisements. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents agreed that their CBO effectively advertises events and meetings (Q44).

Respondents generally agreed (38%) to the statement that their organization involves diverse members of the community in projects and activities (Q49), while 38% also agreed that the special gifts and skills of all members have been identified (Q45). Gifts and skills of members are generally identified through personal interviews of members. Those diverse members who are involved in community projects and activities were identified as senior citizens and youths.

Legal Knowledge

Findings suggest that most of the respondents are not aware of city ordinances or grants that are available to them. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents do not understand the city's zoning ordinances (Q19), while 29% had no opinion. When asked if they understood the city's Master Plan or the City's Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) (Q22:23), over 30% stated they did not, while 38% had no opinion. The respondents did not know much about the city's zoning ordinance, however, 45% agreed to understanding city ordinances in general (Q47). An overwhelming majority of the respondents (72%), strongly agreed that they needed to know more about local, state, and federal grant programs (Q39).

Sense of Community

H2: Strong Community Based Organizations have members that possess a strong sense of community.

Findings suggest that the respondents have a strong sense of community. Over 40% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that people in their neighborhood participate in social activities, trust each other, do things to improve the block, think of themselves as a community, talk to each other about community problems, and people on their block watch out for each other (Q29:38). Ironically, 34% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement of, "a feeling of community spirit exists among the residents in my neighborhood (Q34). Twenty-nine percent agreed and 19% of the respondents had no opinion as to whether community spirit existed among residents.

DISCUSSION

As the findings suggest, each of the three planning districts and CBOs utilize varying aspects of the five characteristics that scholars and researchers believe add to the success of CBOs. This discussion will focus on survey responses as they relate to documentation by scholars and researchers.

Working together to build the organization as well as the neighborhood are important aspects of success that leaders and members of CBOs recognize. "Success in today's organizations will involve leaders and followers in more interactive meetings where the topic of discussion is...how members will work together..." (Fairholm, 1997, p.166). In the area of leadership skills/development, teamwork was cited as an important characteristic to the success of their CBO. Respondents in planning district 6

state that their CBO works very well as a team. They use a telephone network to convey ideas or tell of upcoming events.

Everyone has the potential to be a leader, however, not all of the community leaders who received the survey agreed with that fact. Some of the respondents returned the survey's without completing them because they felt that they were not leaders and only community leaders should fill out the survey. By analyzing the survey and determining this was not the course of action they would like to take, the respondents were utilizing their leadership capabilities. "Research suggest that the successful leader analyzes the issues and tasks at hand, initiates action on them, and remains flexible in the face of different follower responses, providing direction where it seems required and letting the group go once they have set their course" (Williams, 1985, p.103).

"A neighborhood organization should reflect the kinds of residents, businesses, and institutions in the neighborhood. Resident membership should be recruited from throughout the neighborhood, not from just a few areas" (City of Toledo, 1994, p.2). Findings suggest that planning district 6 realize the importance of involving a diverse mix of residents in the organizational development of their CBO. The respondents from planning district 6 stated in the survey that their CBO involves a diverse mix of residents in their activities and capacity building projects of their CBO. Residents range from different age groups, gender, spiritual, and ethnic backgrounds.

Teamwork also plays a huge role in the organizational development of a CBO. Utilizing the skills and assets of every resident is an important step in developing the capacity of an organization. Planning district 6 formed a co-op where they barter their skills and services in an effort to create a

successful CBO and improve their quality of life. "Don't ignore the resources within your neighborhood..." (INRC, 1994, p.25).

CBOs should communicate with outside representatives. Although the core group of participants should involve active neighborhood representatives, outside representative should also be involved because they could share ideas and suggest possible avenues of action. "Outside representatives can include: church leaders/clergy in your neighborhood, business owners in your neighborhood, community development corporations in your neighborhood, other neighborhood groups/associations within your area, and local law enforcement agencies" (INRC, 1994, p.5). Survey respondents from yet again, planning district 6, stated that community police brought them together and got their neighborhood group started. Findings also suggested that planning districts 5 and 6 have incorporated the opinions of businesses in their CBOs. In planning district 5, the respondents stated that they communicate with businesses by involving businesses to participate in all meetings and activities and by designating a member to meet with a business representative. In planning district 6, respondents state that they work closely with the business district on many projects. Their CBO has appointed a liaison to attend business meetings and vice-versa.

Establishing good communication with members of a CBO and outside representatives is absolutely essential to any group. "One of the most effective ways to establish a manageable and affordable network is using...flyers...newspaper announcements...telephone trees...and newsletters" (INRC, 1994, p.28-29). Respondents in planning district 5 suggest that advertisement from their CBO is done in a unique way. Events and meetings are advertised by sending out postcards to neighbors.

Another part to good communication is allowing new ideas to be communicated in meetings. "Most neighborhood organizations conduct monthly meetings. These meetings are extremely important because they are a primary vehicle for communicating information... (City of Toledo, 1994, p.2). The CBOs in planning district 6 realize the importance of meetings being the vehicles for communicating new information and ideas, however respondents wish more of the good ideas were acted upon. Respondents stated that at each meeting, they have a round robin discussion where everyone attending is give 5 minutes to present new ideas or specific concerns. The one respondent in planning district 6 stated that new ideas are gathered at community meetings.

CONCLUSION

H1: Strong Community Based Organizations incorporate the following characteristics:

- Leadership Skills
- Organizational Skills
- Technical Skills
- Communication Skills
- Legal Knowledge

The three planning districts and CBOs selected are at different developmental stages within their organization. The Urban Village concept, which was conceived in 1992, has produced some viable CBOs, with each developing at different levels.

The majority of the survey respondents came from planning district 5. The CBO in this area is concentrating on capacity building, however, it is also tackling organizational development and community issues . The challenge of building and developing a common vision can be seen in planning district 5, through the response by one of the respondents. When

asked what are some of the reasons they think their organization is not successful, this person responded that it is not successful because of a lack of interest by people and because everyone in the neighborhood does not share the same values. If the CBO in planning district 5 had a vision then maybe individuals could be on the same wavelength and share the same values.

“Vision is a mental image or understanding of the past, present, and future of the organization. Vision setting is a capacity to see what others do not see” (Fairholm, 1997, p.140).

Door to door organizing efforts in this area have helped to gain more interest in this CBO. Membership is growing and more neighborhood activities are being implemented. A growing membership is an excellent preview of a successful CBO. “The core resource for a neighborhood organization...is membership. Without membership, an organization’s claim to represent a community can sound hollow, perhaps undermining credibility with public officials” (Thomas, 1986, p.61). The respondents suggest that people and new members are committed and they follow through on their responsibilities. This CBO is working closely with their community police officers, business owners and residents to provide activities for youths and adults, as well as focusing on issues of crime.

The CBOs in district 6 are still warming up to the UV concept. The residents who responded to the survey from this area suggest that their CBO is concentrating on capacity building as well, but that they are also focusing on community issues. The focus on capacity building can be seen in planning district 6 by a residents response. In this area, when asked what are some the reasons they think their organization is not successful, the person responded by stating that they haven’t been able to increase membership substantially.

CBOs in this area are tackling community issues by promoting some of the characteristics that were outlined under hypothesis 1. One of the CBOs in this area was started by their community policing officer. CBOs in this area distribute newsletters, work with businesses and have legal knowledge that is used to keep local government officials accountable to their actions. "Officeholders respect and fear organized citizens. Elected officeholders such as mayors, council members, magistrates, and state legislators set policy for local government and appoint some of the key officials who put public policy into effect. Because the people mobilized by neighborhood organizations are voters, these organizations are listened to by local government" (Cunningham, Kotler, 1983, p.10). One respondent when asked about their knowledge of local laws and ordinances replied they had knowledge, but they wished city employees did as well.

The CBO in planning district 7 seems to be focusing more on capacity building than anything else. As stated earlier, residents in this district do not feel the need to become involved in their CBO because there is no crisis at hand. CBOs are not formed to just handle crisis and as the survey suggest, CBOs provide leadership opportunities and social activities for residents. In fact, the one respondent from this area listed the lack of some of the basic characteristics described for strong organizations as the reasons why they feel their organization was not successful. The respondent noted lack of communication and active participation by members as reasons.

The outcome of the sense of community survey questions were very informative. The CBOs in the planning districts are at the beginning stages of development, with each district growing at different levels.

H2: Strong Community Based Organizations have members that possess a strong sense of community.

The research results reflect that all the CBOs seemed to possess a sense of community. Respondents felt that people on their block and in their neighborhood cared for each other, look out for each other and participated in neighborhood improvement and social activities. "When a neighborhood organization does things that protect family life, encourage friendships and neighboring, and strengthen neighborhood churches, shopping streets, and other institutions, the neighborhood organization is fostering the interrelationships of neighborhood people and strengthening social fabric and sense of community" (Cunningham, Kotler, 1983, p.11).

The CBOs in planning districts 5,6, and 7 demonstrated different characteristics. This does not mean that their members do not possess a strong sense of community because, "The sense of community is the feeling that everyone is tied to everyone else, every action participates in the community, and every person shares the power and love of all" (Baum, 1997, p.266). I recommend that they keep on the paths they have taken because as long as members of a CBO have a sense of community, they can easily tackle any plans or issues.

In the end, it is not up to scholars or researchers to determine the strengths and capacities of CBOs, it is up to the members of that organization to determine their level of success. Respondents gave the following definitions of successful CBOs.

A successful community organization is:

- One that accomplished what it sets out to do and does not become so tied up in red tape that it strangles itself.
- One that gets results and accomplishes its goals.

- People coming together to make positive changes in their communities, not by just talking, but doing.
- One that values communication.
- One that procures funding.
- An organization that entices people to bond together for a better community.
- One that communicates well, follows through, involves many people in planning and has diversified an many activities, consistency.
- One that promotes stable families and an environment that is pleasant to live and one that promotes caring people.
- A group that works and trusts one another for common constructive goals.
- One that sponsors programs directed to their needs, with programs that interest all age groups.
- An organization that is dedicated to teamwork and respects each other.

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APPENDIX

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Date: _____

Interviewee: _____

Name of your neighborhood organization:

Please circle either yes, no, or don't know for questions 1-8.

1. My organization distributes a newsletter. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

2. My organization has established goals and objectives. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

3. My organization has a board of directors. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

4. I have seen my organization's organizational chart. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

5. My organization uses outside resources such as technical resource persons from banks, universities, or churches for assistance. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

6. My organization has by-laws. Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

7. Does your household have a telephone? Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

8. Does your household subscribe to the newspaper? Yes No Don't Know

Comment: _____

Please use the following categories to answer questions 9 - 39

SA- Strongly Agree
SD- Strongly Disagree

A- Agree
NO- No Opinion

D- Disagree

Each of these questions are written as a statement. Please choose the answer that best fits how well each statement describes your organization.

9. My organization has received sufficient grants to do our work. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

10. Committee members in my organization follow through on responsibilities. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

11. My organization shares valuable information with other neighborhood organizations. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

12. I can identify key leaders in my neighborhood or organization that could help in various ways. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

13. My organization operates by using a democratic process. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

14. I understand the structure of my organization. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

SA- Strongly Agree
SD- Strongly Disagree

A- Agree
NO- No Opinion

D- Disagree

15. My organization is achieving the goals and objectives that it created. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

16. My organization uses effective strategic planning. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

17. My organization has completed an effective neighborhood plan. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

18. My organization follows its neighborhood plan. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

19. I understand the city's zoning ordinance. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

20. My organization has a strong functioning executive board. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

21. I understand my organizations by-laws. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

22. I am sufficiently knowledgeable about the city's Master Plan. SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

SA- Strongly Agree	A- Agree	D- Disagree
SD- Strongly Disagree	NO- No Opinion	

23. I understand the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

24. Members of my organization know how to plan, implement, and evaluate programs.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

25. My organization encourages my attending training sessions and or seminars.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

26. Our meetings are usually out of control.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

27. Most meetings that I do attend are scheduled at reasonable times.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

28. Attendance at my organization's meetings is sufficient enough to complete the work that needs to be done.

SA A D SD NO

Comment: _____

29. People in my neighborhood participate in social activities (e.g., pot lucks, group garage sales, etc.)

SA A D SD NO

30. People in this neighborhood don't trust each other.

SA A D SD NO

31. People on my block never do things together to improve the block.

SA A D SD NO

32. People who live in my neighborhood think of themselves as a community.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
33. In my neighborhood people talk to each other about community problems.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
34. A feeling of community spirit exists among the residents in my neighborhood.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
35. People on my block watch out for each other.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
36. People in my neighborhood participate in community improvement activities (e.g., community clean-ups, flower plantings, etc.)	SA	A	D	SD	NO
37. The people in my neighborhood make it a safer place to live.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
38. People in my neighborhood feel isolated from each other.	SA	A	D	SD	NO
39. I need to know more about the following:					
a. local grant programs	SA	A	D	SD	NO
b. state grant programs	SA	A	D	SD	NO
c. federal grant programs	SA	A	D	SD	NO

Comment: _____

Please use the following categories to answer questions 40-49

SA- Strongly Agree	A- Agree	D- Disagree
SD- Strongly Disagree	NO- No Opinion	

Each of these questions is written as a statement. Please choose the answer that best fits how well each statement describes your organization. Below each question, please check all the areas that best fit that statement.

40. Members of my organization are committed to the organization. SA A D SD NO

- I see commitment demonstrated through
 - ☐ attending meetings
 - ☐ completing assignments
 - ☐ joining committees
 - ☐ other comments _____

41. My organization communicates with businesses to address issues. SA A D SD NO

- We communicate with businesses by
 - ☐ group meetings with businesses
 - ☐ surveying businesses
 - ☐ organizing business associations
 - ☐ other comments _____

42. Members of my organization frequently discuss new ideas. SA A D SD NO

- New ideas are gathered by
 - ☐ surveys
 - ☐ letters
 - ☐ suggestion boxes
 - ☐ other comments _____

SA- Strongly Agree
SD- Strongly Disagree

A- Agree
NO- No Opinion

D- Disagree

43. Members of my organization work as a team. SA A D SD NO

- I see teamwork demonstrated through
___ committees
___ volunteerism
___ planning sessions
___ other comments: _____

44. My organization effectively advertises events and meetings. SA A D SD NO

- Events and meetings are advertised by
___ calling members by telephone
___ mailing of fliers
___ advertisement in newspaper
___ neighborhood newsletter
___ radio announcement
___ other comments: _____

45. My organization has identified the skills and special gifts of its members. SA A D SD NO

- Skills and special gifts are identified by
___ assessment surveys
___ personal interviews of members
___ telephone surveys
___ other _____

46. My organization conducts effective training sessions. SA A D SD NO

- We have training sessions on
___ organizing skills
___ leadership roles
___ legal education
___ other comments: _____

SA- Strongly Agree
SD- Strongly Disagree

A- Agree
NO- No Opinion

D- Disagree

47. I understand my cities ordinances. SA A D SD NO

- I understand city ordinances as they relate to
____ housing codes

____ collection and disposal of solid waste

____ parking ordinances

____ other comments: _____

48. Our organization is growing sufficiently. SA A D SD NO

- I see growth demonstrated through

____ new members

____ increased activities

____ increased participation

____ other comments _____

49. My organization involves diverse members of the community in projects and activities. SA A D SD NO

- I see diversity demonstrated through members who are

____ senior citizens

____ youth

____ physically challenged

____ other comments _____

Please check one answer for questions 50--55.

50. How long has your neighborhood organization been in existence.?

____ 1 to 2 yrs. ____ 5 - 6 yrs. ____ 9 - 10 years

____ 3 to 4 yrs. ____ 7 - 8 yrs. ____ other – please specify the number of yrs.

Additional comments: _____

51. What is your age?

____ 18 - 24 yrs. ____ 35 - 44 yrs. ____ 55 - 64 yrs.

____ 25 - 34 yrs. ____ 45 - 54 yrs. ____ over 65

52. What is your gender? ____ male ____ female

53. What race/ethnicity are you?

☐ African-American

☐ Asian-Pacific American

☐ Hispanic

☐ White

☐ Native American

☐ other-please
specify

54. I am a : ☐ executive board member ☐ neighborhood association participant

☐ other-please specify

55. Do you

☐ Own your home

☐ Rent your home

Please answer questions 56-57 as briefly as possible.

56. What is your definition of a successful community organization?

57. If you feel that your organization is not successful, what are some of the reasons that it is not successful.

Below is a list of training sessions we have offered. Would you like to receive training in any?

58. Please check all that apply

☐ grant writing

☐ time management

☐ meeting planning

☐ meeting delegation

☐ fundraising

☐ developing an accounting and bookkeeping system

☐ management decision making

☐ other interests:

If you indicated in question 58 that you would like to receive training in any of these areas please provide your name, address and phone number on the next page so that we may contact you to advise you of upcoming classes.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

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