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Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg's Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment

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Executive Summary

In this paper we examine two Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations (NRCs) in Winnipeg's inner city: the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) and the West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC). We describe the work that these NRCs do, the challenges they face, and the results of their efforts to date.

Our methodology is unique. The core of the paper is based on six lengthy, open-ended and free flowing interviews, each more than two hours in length, conducted between November 2007 and August 2008, involving the three authors. McCracken and Sjoberg are the Executive Directors of the WBDC and the SNA, respectively, and had held these positions for only six months when the interviews began. Thus the paper offers an 'insiders' view of the work of NRCs, and offers an unusual opportunity to follow these EDs as they learned on the job about their neighbourhoods and the roles and challenges of inner-city NRCs.

After briefly describing the inner-city Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods and the political context, we offer some detailed observations on the challenges of managing small, complex, community development organizations in low-income neighbourhoods. We consider the many difficulties associated with managing money, and staff, in organizations that operate on the basis of 'multiple bottom lines' and rely largely on project funding. A result is that NRCs are

organizationally relatively fragile. We consider the challenges associated with managing the political complexity faced by NRCs in low-income neighbourhoods, including complex relations with: 'the community', which is in fact an abstraction that conceals a host of potentially competing interests; various other constituencies, including funders, governments, local businesses and other community-based organizations; and the NRCs' Boards of Directors. We conclude that much of the work done by NRCs is 'political', in the positive but challenging sense of working to bring diverse people and organizations together in pursuit of common goals.

Adding to the political complexity, NRCs must walk a narrow political line with governments and other major funders. Having no independent source of revenue, NRCs are dependent upon funders, especially the state. But they cannot allow themselves to become simply an arm of the state, or of other funders, doing their bidding. They have to carve out, define and defend their own, alternative political space. This is a challenge.

It requires that an NRC develop its own independent source of power, and this can only come from the residents in their neighbourhood. The greater the extent to which the residents feel that they are fully a part of the NRC, and the greater the extent to which the NRC articulates a clear vision that is expressed in its work

and shared by neighbourhood residents, the more likely that the NRC will be able to maintain its independence. This is a complex political task. It speaks to the central importance, for NRCs and other neighbourhood-based community development corporations (CDCs), of building strong and democratic relations with the community.

Despite these many complexities and challenges, SNA and WBDC have many achievements to their credit. They are effective and important vehicles for resident engagement and involvement, with all the multiple benefits, including empowerment that such democratization produces. We find that the community gardens that SNA and WBDC have been involved with have many positive effects; that housing has improved, although displacement of low-income residents is now a concern; that safety and security—while still a problem—have improved; and that other effective programs driven by SNA and WBDC are producing positive outcomes. Residents in Spence and West Broadway themselves believe that their neighbourhoods are improving. We

conclude that SNA and WBDC have been and are highly effective instruments of positive change in their respective inner-city neighbourhoods.

We conclude with several recommendations aimed at building on the strengths of, and responding to the challenges faced by, NRCs as described in the paper. These include: that a long-term financial commitment be made by governments to the NRC model of neighbourhood revitalization; that NRCs' funding be sufficient to provide additional and adequate administrative supports, especially for financial and human resource management; that small, innovative projects that prove successful be moved on to a more permanent funding stream; that methods and funding be developed to improve the capacity of NRCs to work across neighbourhoods; and that methods and funding be developed to enable NRCs to engage with the community in more broadly based, cross-neighbourhood and long-term strategic thinking and planning, without reducing their capacity to facilitate neighbourhood-based organizing and problem solving.

Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations in Winnipeg's Inner City: Practical Activism in a Complex Environment

Introduction

Poverty and related conditions have spread geographically in post-Second World War Winnipeg to neighbourhoods well beyond the North End, where they were originally concentrated earlier in the twentieth century. By the last quarter and especially the last decade of the twentieth century neighbourhoods in the city centre, such as Spence and West Broadway—originally relatively financially secure neighbourhoods well south of the rail yards—were characterized by a high incidence of poverty, deteriorating housing, population decline, and a shift from home ownership to rental. In the mid-late 1990s residents in Spence and West Broadway took action to stem the deterioration of their neighbourhoods, leading to the establishment of neighbourhood-based community development corporations, which in Winnipeg are called neighbourhood renewal corporations (NRCs).

In this paper we examine those NRCs, the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the West Broadway Development Corporation, to determine what they do, what challenges they face, what successes they have had, and what measures might improve their success. We also evaluate the work of Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) and West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC) against some of the more important criticisms of neighbourhood-based community development corporations (CDCs)—especially the view that globalization makes social

reforms such as those pursued by CDCs impossible, and that CDCs are a poor substitute for, and adversely affect, a potentially more valuable community mobilization orientation.

In Winnipeg, NRCs are neighbourhood-based organizations. Their broad purpose is to promote renewal or revitalization in a geographically defined, low-income neighbourhood or neighbourhoods, and to do so by involving neighbourhood residents in ways of the residents' choosing. They are part of the 'social economy'—neither private for-profit, nor public sector organizations (Loxley and Simpson, 2007:6). They are democratic, in that their activities are governed by elected Boards of Directors, all or most of whom are drawn from the neighbourhood(s) in which they work. The work they do varies, depending upon the circumstances of particular neighbourhoods. It may include the promotion of: housing development—often working in a facilitating and coordinating capacity with non-profit housing providers; safety and security—given that these are common concerns in Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods; and greening initiatives, such as promoting community gardens. In some cases additional types of activities are taken on—the promotion of various activities for youth, for example, or the creation of food programs that connect inner-city neighbourhoods with local farms to make good quality food available on a

non-profit and non-food bank basis. What kinds of work a NRC takes on depends in part upon the particular kinds of community-based organizations (CBOs) already working in their neighbourhoods. For example, if activities for youth are already being undertaken by an existing CBO, the NRC would not duplicate that service. In Winnipeg NRCs have become, to some extent, the central, neighbourhood-based, networking and coordinating bodies through which broadly-based neighbourhood renewal efforts are channeled.

There are five NRCs in Winnipeg: the Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA), the West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC), the North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC), which works in eleven North End neighbourhoods, and the newer Central Neighbourhoods Corporation and Daniel McIntyre-St. Matthews Community Association in Winnipeg's Central and West Central areas. There are also NRCs in Brandon, Thompson and Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, with four more considering operations in other Manitoba centres. While there are other community development corporations, the name Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation, as used in Manitoba, designates organizations given core funding through the provincial Neighbourhoods Alive! program.

While we offer some comparison in the analysis that follows with neighbourhood-based community development corporations in the USA, such comparisons need to be treated with some caution. Most—but not all (Melendez and Servan 2007)—CDCs in the USA place a greater emphasis on housing than do Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations. NRCs

do housing work, but also undertake a range of other activities in the neighbourhoods in which they work.

Our focus in this paper is on two of these NRCs, both in Winnipeg, the Spence Neighbourhood Association and the West Broadway Development Corporation, and our purpose is to attempt to develop an 'insider's view' of their work, through the eyes of their Executive Directors.

The paper is based primarily upon a series of five, three-person interviews conducted by Silver with McCracken and Sjoberg from November 2007 to August 2008. McCracken and Sjoberg had taken over as Executive Directors (EDs) of West Broadway Development Corporation (WBDC) and Spence Neighbourhood Association (SNA) respectively, in the Spring of 2007, and this created the unique opportunity to follow them as they learned on the job about their two neighbourhoods and the roles and challenges of inner-city neighbourhood renewal corporations. Most studies of neighbourhood-based community development corporations have been case studies, and have typically included one-off interviews with Executive Directors or other staff. The design of this study includes multiple interviews, over a period of about one year, at a time when the interviewees, McCracken and Sjoberg, were new in their positions. The result was interviews that were conversational, questioning, reflective and very rich in content, as the new EDs talked with each other and with the interviewer about the challenges they were facing and the gains they were making. It is certainly the case that they did not consider the interviews to be a burden or a necessary obligation to be met, but rather as a chance to think out loud, share experi-

ences, raise questions and express frustrations. In these important respects, the interviews were different from the norm. Interviews were relatively open-ended, using a loosely-structured interview guide, allowing the EDs to speak about whatever they considered to be important as they learned from their experience. Some interview sessions had a particular theme, such as safety and security or housing development. These five interviews were supplemented by a sixth, with Garry Loewen, former ED of the North End Community Renewal Corporation. An early draft of the paper, based on the interviews and an analysis of the existing literature on neighbourhood-based community development corporations, was prepared by Silver and circulated to McCracken and Sjöberg for their review. The three authors then met on three more occasions to discuss the draft at length, and to make additions, deletions and modifications based on the discussion. In this manner the paper has been written jointly by the three authors. The project as a whole, including the interview guide, was approved by the University of Winnipeg Senate Ethics Committee.

The Context: West Broadway and Spence Neighbourhoods

In the first half of the twentieth century poverty in Winnipeg was spatially concentrated in the city's North End, and disproportionately affected newly-arrived Eastern European immigrants—most of whom worked in the rail-yards and associated industries, or as shopkeepers or tradespersons near their North End homes. The vast CPR yards split the city in two, the North End being spatially and socially segregated from, and looked down upon by, the more well-to-do

south end of the city (Artibise 1975). In the post-Second World War period suburbanization de-populated the North End, as well as large areas of the city south of the rail yards, including Spence and West Broadway, as many who could afford to do so left for the larger lots and more open spaces of the suburbs, as happened across North America (Jackson 1985). As they left, businesses followed, and the inner city atrophied and spread spatially. Housing prices declined. Many were purchased as revenue properties, allowed to deteriorate, and rented out at relatively low rates. In the early 1960s Aboriginal people began to migrate to Winnipeg in increasingly large numbers, so that Winnipeg now has Canada's largest urban Aboriginal population—63,380 in 2006—a number that represents a sixty-fold increase from the 1082 Aboriginal people identified in Winnipeg in 1961 (Peters 2007). Aboriginal newcomers sought inexpensive housing in those areas being vacated by suburbanization, and as a result came to be spatially concentrated in the North End and broader inner city, including Spence and West Broadway. In the mid-late 1990s, refugees and immigrants, many from war-affected African countries, began to arrive in growing numbers in Winnipeg, many locating in the inner city, and especially in Spence and neighbourhoods immediately north and west of Spence (Maderiaga-Vignudo and Miladinovska-Blazevska 2005).

According to 2006 Census of Canada data, poverty and associated conditions are prevalent in both Spence and West Broadway, as shown in Table One (see next page).

In these two neighbourhoods over the past thirty years population has declined,

the incidence of poverty and unemployment has grown, a shift from home ownership to rental has occurred, and by the early-mid 1990s these were neighbourhoods in trouble. The *Winnipeg Free Press* referred to Langside Street in West Broadway as ‘murders’ half acre’; others called it ‘gangside’ street. Buildings were abandoned; arson and street gang activity became a problem (Burley and Maunder 2008:102-113).

It was at this time, in the mid-late 1990s, that residents in both West Broadway and Spence organized to ‘take back their neighbourhoods’. In West Broadway this process began in 1997. As McCracken described it (Nov. 2, 2007): “people got together and took action”. The result was the creation of a coalition, the West Broadway Alliance, that included many community organizations and individuals, and of which the West Broadway Development Corporation soon became the legal arm. In Spence the process began at about the same time and took a similar form, the Spence Neighbourhood

Association being spun off from the original Spence Neighbourhood Council. Thus SNA and WBDC have been in operation for just over a decade, and the origins of each lies with actions initiated by neighbourhood residents.

The Context: Progressive Political Activism in Winnipeg

Efforts by residents in West Broadway and Spence to organize in defense of their neighbourhoods are part of a long tradition of progressive political activism in Winnipeg. In the early decades of the twentieth century Winnipeg’s North End was home to a myriad of socialist and communist political ideologies and parties (Smith 1990) which, given the refusal of employers to engage in collective bargaining, led to the famous 1919 Winnipeg General Strike. In the wake of 1919, J.S. Woodsworth and other Left leaders were elected to political office, and Woodsworth, one of the Strike leaders, went on to become the first leader of the CCF, fore-runner to today’s NDP. John

Table One: Selected Indicators, Spence and West Broadway Compared to Winnipeg and Winnipeg Inner City, 2006

Indicator	Winnipeg	Inner-city	Spence	West Broadway
Aboriginal Population as % of Total	10.2%	21.0%	30.9%	23.9%
Lone Parent Families (both sexes as % of total families)	19.5%	32.1%	45.3%	45.1%
No certificate, diploma or degree (15 years of age or older)	23.1%	29.9%	36.9%	26.9%
Adult Unemployment Rate	3.9%	6.9%	14.1%	9.9%
Youth (15-24) Unemployment Rate	11.1%	11.9%	19.7%	15.4%
Adult Labour Force Participation	67.7%	64.5%	56.4%	63.6%
Youth (15-24) Labour Force Participation	69.5%	64.1%	54.7%	71.6%
Median Household Income	\$49,790	\$31,773	\$20,379	\$18,524
Incidence of Low Income (private households in 2005, before taxes)	20.2%	39.6%	61.2%	65.1%

Source: Census of Canada, 2006

Queen, also a General Strike leader and a socialist, became Mayor of Winnipeg in the 1930s; Joe Zuken, long-time City Councillor in Winnipeg's North End and member of the Communist Party, ran a strong but ultimately unsuccessful campaign for Mayor in 1979; and Glen Murray was Winnipeg's progressive and gay Mayor from 1998 to 2004.

In addition, there has been in Winnipeg a long history of community-based activism in the North End and broader inner city. Woodsworth, for example, was Superintendent of All Peoples' Mission in the heart of the North End from 1907 to 1913. Lloyd Axworthy, later a federal Liberal cabinet minister, headed up the Institute of Urban Studies in the 1970s at a time when it was actively engaged in inner-city community organizing and advocacy. Greg Selinger, current provincial Minister of Finance, was a community organizer in the Logan neighbourhood at the time of the rail relocation struggle, when the proposed Sherbrook-McGregor overpass would have destroyed a stable inner-city neighbourhood. Sister Geraldine McNamara, a founder of Rossbrook House, was also involved in the struggle against the Sherbrook-McGregor overpass, and in many other inner-city issues. These are only some of the many skilled, energetic and progressive community activists who have worked in various ways in Winnipeg's inner city.

Winnipeg also has an important tradition of feminist activism. As McCracken put it (Nov. 2, 2007): "Winnipeg's got a wonderful history of women leaders". It was at Winnipeg's Walker Theatre that Nellie McClung staged the famous play, *Votes for Men*, in 1914. Ustun Reinart (1990) has described the multi-faceted

roles played by feminists in Winnipeg in the 1960s and 1970s, and many of these women continue to be active in public and community affairs in a wide variety of ways. Women led the struggle for family law reforms in Manitoba in the early 1980s, and Aboriginal women led the related effort in the early 1980s to establish a non-mandated Aboriginal child and family services agency, which became the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. More generally Aboriginal women have played and continue to play a remarkable leadership role in the creation of a distinctly Aboriginal form of community development in Winnipeg's inner city (Silver 2006:Chapter 5).

McCracken and Sjoberg come out of this long tradition of progressive community activism and feminism. Both were members of the United Church in their youth, and recall the experience in terms of values that are consistent with the Social Gospel tradition, which was a powerful strand in the formation of the CCF. Both have been strongly affected by feminism, and by university experiences. Sjoberg is a former President of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association (UWSA), where she acquired a host of practical skills: how to read a budget; how to support staff; how to run meetings that are focused and inclusive; how to be an advocate and spokesperson; how to do coalition work with different kinds of organizations; how to work with a union — "we put together a collective agreement in my second year with the staff" (Nov. 2, 2007). She was instrumental in having the UWSA reach out to the surrounding community where they partnered with the Spence Neighbourhood Association on various projects. McCracken was raised by a single mother and, like Sjoberg, graduated from the

University of Winnipeg. "I discovered Women's Studies there and that...helped me make a lot of sense of my life" (Nov. 2, 2007). She then took a post-graduate degree in Public Administration at Carleton University because, like Sjoberg, "I wanted to be part of the solution" in a practical, hands-on way. She has worked with women's organizations of various kinds in Winnipeg: Sage House, which works with street sex workers; the Immigrant Women's Association; the Women's Enterprise Centre; the Childcare Coalition; the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence. She also worked for a time with the provincial government's Community and Economic Development Committee of Cabinet.

These are young women who are committed to social justice, who want to be and are a part of the process of progressive social change, and who particularly want to do so in a practical, 'hands-on' fashion. They 'stand on the shoulders' of the many progressive community activists and especially feminists who have preceded them, as evidenced by the fact that, as not only women but *young* women, they were hired as Executive Directors of inner-city community development corporations dealing with complex issues and with a wide variety of personalities in inner-city communities.

This would not have happened without the work of feminists who have preceded them. McCracken and Sjoberg see themselves as part of a new generation of women playing leadership roles on social justice issues, and are anxious to benefit from the hard-earned experience and practical knowledge acquired by inner-city leaders, especially women, over the past twenty-five years. In their work they embody many of the various strands of progressive community and political activism that have so defined and enriched life in twentieth-century Winnipeg.

McCracken and Sjoberg's activism is a practical activism, undertaken via leadership roles in small community-based organizations that work with inner-city residents in low-income neighbourhoods. What do these Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations do, and how? What challenges do they face? Are they an effective means of promoting the interests of inner-city residents? What successes, if any, have they had? What measures might improve their success? Our purpose has been to deepen our understanding of these and related issues by means of the views of 'insiders' in the process, as those 'insiders' climb the steep learning curve associated with their leadership positions.

Managing Complex Organizations

An important theme arising from the six interviews is the magnitude and complexity of the *managerial* task of running a NRC. There are various sides to the job. McCracken sees them as: “the management skills of running an organization”; together with a social justice philosophy and commitment; and the “mobilizing and organizing side” (Nov. 2, 2007). But both were adamant in emphasizing that it was the “management skills of running an organization” that absorbed the bulk of their time in their first eighteen months on the job. This is consistent with what has been found in analyses of CDCs in the USA (for example, Nye and Glickman 2000:175).

First and foremost the job of ED is about money—raising it and managing and accounting for its use—and there is never enough money. The provincial government’s Neighbourhoods Alive! program provides core funding to NRCs, and thus more stability than would otherwise be the case, and this was an important factor in attracting McCracken in particular to the job (Nov. 2, 2007). But the bulk of the money needed to support the organization and do its work has to be raised, in a project-by-project fashion. Funders include a bewildering variety of federal, provincial and municipal programs, plus non-profit charitable organizations like United Way of Winnipeg and The Winnipeg Foundation, and more creative sources when and where those can be found. Each has its own qualification criteria and reporting requirements, and most require that evaluations be done at the conclusion of every project funded, and it has been a long-standing concern of inner-city community-based organizations that far too

much of EDs’ time—in some cases 50 percent or more—is taken up with fundraising and related financial responsibilities (Silver 2002). Both Sjoberg and McCracken confirmed that this has been their experience, and that they have had to “learn the funding game”, including “funders’ speak”, and how to “frame the things and package them...in a way that the funder can understand [and]...in a way that meets the needs that you’re trying to serve” (Nov. 2, 2008).

Second, issues related to staff are challenging, largely because of the manner in which NRCs are funded. Project funding produces employment insecurity and instability. Many staff with NRCs are supported by project dollars and so have little if any job security—“job security is zip”, as Sjoberg put it (Nov. 29, 2008). The types of people who choose to work with these organizations are often passionate about their work, and may put in longer hours than they are paid for. Rates of pay are low, benefits are often inadequate, the work is often demanding, and the democratic protections afforded by a union are rare. As Sjoberg put it: “The non-profit sector is really hard on workers, and how does that factor into a larger vision of social justice which we’re all supposedly working towards”? Based on the US experience we might also ask how that factors into organizational stability. Nye and Glickman (2000:176) observed that: “The low salaries and meager benefits that community development corporations are able to offer, coupled with huge workloads, make it difficult to attract and retain qualified staff”. Similarly, Rohe and Bratt (2003:31) found that staffing problems were a major factor in many CDC failures, and that

Funding Arrangements and Report Requirements

Spence Neighbourhood Association

SNA has between 20 and 30 separate funders at any given time, and thus 20-30 separate sources to whom they are accountable, each with their own particular reporting and accounting requirements. Most of these funders require twice per year reporting; some require quarterly reports; one requires monthly reports; four require annual reports. The total is more than 40 reports to funders per year, or almost one per week.

With the exception of two Neighbourhoods Alive! funds — Neighbourhood Development Assistance, which provides core funding, and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, which provides project-based funding — the vast majority of the SNA funders provide less than 10 percent of SNA's total budget; most provide less than 5 percent.

A. Province

Neighbourhood Development Assistance (core funding)	22%	
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	19	
Neighbourhood Housing Assistance	8	
Manitoba Justice (including funding for Lighthouses)	3	
Manitoba Conservation and Urban Green Team	1	
Other provincial Departments	4	57%

B. Non-Government Grants

United Way (core funding for youth programming)	9%	
The Winnipeg Foundation	4	
Housing revenue	4	
Local Investment Toward Employment (LITE)	1	
Other	1	19%

C. City of Winnipeg

Housing fund	7%	
Community Services	3	10%

D. Tri-Level (federal, provincial and civic) Development Agreements

Winnipeg Partnership Agreement	7%	
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E. Government of Canada

National Crime Prevention Centre	7%	
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Total **100%**

SNA also administers flow-through Small Grants Programs: one geared to improving housing stock in the neighbourhood, and one geared to community projects.

Since 2006/07 additional funding agreements have been reached with other governmental programs and departments. This is an ongoing process. Other sources of funding and support can, at various times, include the following: Community Places Manitoba; Community Services Council; Downtown Parent-Child Coalition; Thomas Sill Foundation; Members of the Legislative Assembly; Members of Parliament; the area City Councillor; Manitoba Arts Council; Winnipeg Arts Council; Great-West Life Assurance Company; True Sport; Breakfast for Learning; and others. SNA has also recently engaged in smaller fundraising projects including mail-out donation requests, a fundraising party and a raffle.

“the most common reason offered is lack of resources to recruit and retain experienced personnel”. When one adds to these challenges the fact that the Neechi community economic development principles by which most Winnipeg inner-city CBOs work call for hiring locally (Silver and Loxley 2007:7), which in turn may require on-the-job training and may on occasion lead to the kinds of employment problems that arise from lack of experience, it becomes apparent that the management of staff can become an especially onerous task requiring a combination of hard skills and social justice sensibilities.

Staffing problems are inextricably linked to the problem of project funding, including funding for pilot projects. In those cases when a pilot project works well and proves its worth by meeting community needs and developing staff competencies, it is counter-productive simply to terminate the project when the pilot funding expires. Residents are made cynical by the stop-and-go character of such projects, making their mobilization and involvement more difficult, while attracting, developing and retaining good staff is made especially difficult. Ways need to be found to make more permanent the funding for those pilot projects that prove to be successful.

In addition to these financing and staffing challenges, NRCs operate on the basis of a ‘multiple bottom line’. A private sector corporation has the advantage of being organized to attain a single goal—maximize profits. Various complexities arise in pursuit of that goal, but it is a unitary goal. A NRC, by contrast, should be: attaining the objectives identified by its Board and set out in funding proposals; doing so in a way that maximizes community involvement, and reflects the community’s expressed interests; and

building community capacity, that is, taking the time to ensure that in the process of working toward tangible objectives, the skills and capacities of individuals and the community at large are being developed. If a NRC were *not* to operate in this multiple bottom line fashion, it would become an agency disconnected from, and delivering services from the outside to, the community. And this would not be community development. Thus the multiple bottom line character of the NRCs, like other inner-city community-based organizations, makes it attractive in a social justice sense—as McCracken (Nov. 2, 2007) put it, “I really like the multiple bottom line”—but adds to the managerial complexity. In an environment of constant financial pressure and staffing insecurities, NRCs must get things done, including in areas of considerable complexity such as housing development, and do so in ways that reflect the expressed interests of the community, involve the community, and build community members’ individual and collective capacities. This is a difficult managerial task.

Interestingly, the result is a good deal of creativity—what we would call ‘non-market-induced creativity’. The claim is often made that it is the market, the competitive search for profits, which induces creativity. The market does induce creativity, although it simultaneously promotes destruction—“creative destruction”, as Schumpeter (1975) famously described capitalism—and it fails to meet many real needs, thus creating gaps that require non-market solutions (Silver and Loxley 2007). In the inner city the multiple bottom line and the constant shortage of funding induces a remarkable creativity (Silver 2006:Chapter 5), much of which is aimed at “doing what the private market is not going to do” (McCracken, Nov. 2, 2007).

Funding Arrangements and Reporting Requirements

West Broadway Development Corporation

West Broadway Development Corporation funding arrangements and reporting requirements are similar to those of the SNA. What follows is simply a different way of describing the funding.

WBDC, like the SNA, gets core funding from the Neighbourhoods Alive! Neighbourhood Development Assistance fund. In addition, WBDC delivers the Property Investment Program (PIP) exterior fix-up grant for homeowners and housing providers (\$75,000 in 2008), and the Small Grants program for Community Development (\$50,000 allocated to 24 West Broadway projects in 2008). These government programs 'flow through' WBDC, and count as income, but the money is fully allocated to the community. In addition to these, WBDC currently has 18 different funders for project funding, each of which requires bi-annual or annual reporting.

For the year 2007/08, sources of funding for WBDC were as follows:

A. Income

• Neighbourhoods Alive! Neighbourhood Development Agreement	26%
• Government 'flow-throughs' (property fix-up and CD grants)	21
• Administration fees	5
• Earned income (parking revenue; Good Food Club)	3
• Project funding	45
Total	100%

If one stands back from these managerial complexities, to view the overall tasks that NRCs have been asked to perform, the scale of the challenge becomes still clearer. Over a long period of time skilled people abandoned inner-city neighbourhoods for the suburbs, and businesses and jobs followed. Housing prices declined, attracting low-income people, and creating a spatial concentration of poverty; governments and business responded, for the most part, with disinvestment. Poverty levels soared, employment levels and opportunities declined, generating a host of deep and complex difficulties that are common across North America, and have come to be associated with inner cities. The scale and complexity of the inter-related problems are now remarkable. The scale of the task of addressing these problems far exceeds the capacities of small and under-funded neighbourhood renewal corporations. One would be justified in asking whether NRCs can have any effect whatever in the face of such a challenge.

The argument has been made, more generally, that the powerful forces of globalization now render social reform of any kind next to impossible. As Teeple (1995), for example, has argued, the logic of globalization promotes the inevitable decline of social reform. And at the level of low-income, inner-city neighbourhoods, Nye and Glickman (2000:171) have said about neighbourhood-based CDCs that: "they are trying to deal with systemic, structural problems in the economies of cities in which....most of the long-term economic trends—the decline of manufacturing, changes in international trade, concentration of poverty, and other demographic shifts—are beyond the control of neighbourhood groups. This makes their jobs especially daunting...." Added to this, there are those who ar-

gue (Shragge 1997; Stoecker 1997, for example) that because of their dependence upon government and foundations and other outside funders, who place limits on what they can do, neighbourhood-based CDCs are typically unable to do the kind of community organizing and mobilization that is their only potential source of power. Neighbourhood-based CDCs face many challenges.

We concur with the view that globalization—and particularly the neo-liberal ideology associated with globalization—makes neighbourhood-level social reforms of the kinds pursued by NRCs more difficult than ever. And we certainly agree that community organizing and mobilizing are essential ingredients in the struggle for social reforms in inner-city neighbourhoods. These important considerations notwithstanding we maintain, and will try to show, that NRCs can make very significant gains in low-income inner-city neighbourhoods, and that the two NRCs examined in this paper are very effective in community organizing and mobilizing. Indeed, the latter defines their role. The SNA mission statement, for example, is not to serve the community, but to work *with* the community, in pursuit of goals defined *by* the community. NRCs are effective in these ways, despite what we will describe later as their organizational fragility, and despite the managerial and political complexity of the multi-faceted task they face.

Managing Political Complexity

The task is further magnified by the complex political roles that NRCs must juggle. It is very much the case that the job of Executive Director of a NRC is not only managerial, but also political. By political we mean in a non-partisan and positive sense—politics as the important

art of resolving conflicts and bringing together diverse constituencies in pursuit of tangible goals.

First and foremost, the ED of a NRC, as well as staff and members of the Board, must establish and nurture a strong connection with the neighbourhood community, and ensure that the voices of community members are heard, that the NRC's goals are the goals of the community, and that all community members are encouraged to be and have opportunities to be fully involved. But this is a significant challenge. The tasks of raising and managing and accounting for money, and managing staff, and as will be argued below, dealing with complex issues like housing development, consume most of an ED's time. Both McCracken and Sjoberg observed (Nov. 2, 2007) that finding the time to get out of the office and away from meetings and into the neighbourhood to meet with residents had, in their first six months, proved difficult. Sjoberg, for example, said: "I am disappointed about that, I would have loved to be more connected to the community and know people a lot better", but the steep learning curve and the multiple managerial demands of the job have made that a challenge.

This is a major challenge because the literature on community development corporations is clear in finding that a common problem with neighbourhood-based CDCs is that, because of the managerial demands and the technical character of many of the issues, CDCs gradually become removed from their communities (Marquez 1993, for example). When that happens, CDCs become alien organizations, imposing 'solutions' from the outside, and they fail to build the capacity in the community that is the real source of progressive change. Drawing upon

the US experience, Galster et al (2005:4-5) argue that: "The value of citizen engagement to CDC community revitalization efforts, and the resulting long-term contribution involvement makes to neighbourhoods' capacity to further their own interests, argues strongly for public and private support for, and even insistence on, CDC efforts to organize and promote community activism".

Community activism or citizen engagement is a strength of both SNA and WBDC. To a very considerable extent, there are structures and processes in place that facilitate and promote community engagement. Thus an Annual General Meeting, for example, can bring the community together. Sjoberg (February 8, 2008) described a recent well-attended and lively SNA AGM:

"What was great about it was a lot of volunteers and long-term Board members had an opportunity to talk about their time, either volunteering or [working] here with the organization, and it was really important because people demonstrated their commitment to the community and talked about the ways...they have seen positive impact in the community and positive change, through their volunteer work or their work on the Board".

McCracken (November 29, 2007) described a community meeting to discuss the West Broadway Housing Plan—the meeting was well-attended and positive and had been preceded by McCracken's circulating a draft plan and asking for feedback, and meeting with several key neighbourhood leaders to discuss the Plan. And at both WBDC and SNA there is a multiplicity of ways in which the staff and Board interact with the

community, as described in the accompanying sidebars (pages 15, 16).

These important structures and processes of community engagement notwithstanding, the issue of working with the community is complex. The concept "the community" suggests a homogenous entity. Yet as has been argued elsewhere (Ghorayshi, Graydon and Kliewer 2007), and as McCracken and Sjoberg made very clear, "the community" is an abstraction. What actually exists in the neighbourhood are: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people; housing owners and renters; people with a lot of formal education and people with a little; people who are single unattached individuals and others who are parents, and among parents some who have active parenting partners and some who are lone parents; people who are young and others who are not; people who get along well with others and people who do not. As Sjoberg describes it, in identifying this diversity (November 29, 2007): "That is part of the richness of the area, right". This is a useful way to view it, but it remains the case that many are the divisions within an inner-city neighbourhood. Further, the issues being dealt with "are so visceral for people, like the poverty issues, violence issues...and so people have very strong opinions about how they want to deal with those issues...and often those opinions are diverse, like way at both ends of the spectrum" (Sjoberg, Nov. 2, 2007). These divisions and diverse opinions add to the political challenge of building strong and meaningful relationships between the NRC and "the community".

Simultaneously, the ED and the organization as a whole must develop and maintain positive relationships with a host of other constituencies, adding fur-

Community Engagement in West Broadway

WBDC emerged in the mid-1990s as the result of residents' actions, and the organization continues to involve residents when planning neighbourhood activities. For example, consultations were conducted in 2006 to inform the 2007–2011 community plan, and to guide WBDC's activities. Residents participated in developing the content of the Neighbourhood Housing Plan through surveys and focus groups and a draft was circulated for feedback from the community before it was finalized. Currently WBDC is undertaking a Greenspace Development Plan using a series of community forums to gain input from community members.

WBDC programs are resident-driven. With respect to greening, for example, each community garden has a committee of gardeners that meets regularly to oversee the day-to-day management of the gardens and to organize events and set priorities. The Broadcaster Community Newsletter has a resident content committee that meets before each issue to brainstorm the content for the upcoming issue and oversee the articles that are published. The Good Food Club (GFC) holds regular member meetings with residents at which feedback is gained about the program and members bring forward priorities. The GFC held a PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) to guide the direction of the program. The GFC social enterprise was guided through several meetings at which residents provided input as to what type of social enterprise they wanted to see, and they agreed upon a soup-making business. The business plan for this social enterprise has been developed in a participatory fashion, such that members have had input along the way as to the guiding principles and types of business activities undertaken.

WBDC holds Annual General Meetings at which new Board members, 50 percent of whom must be residents, are elected by residents, and the organization presents to those in attendance on the year's activities. Throughout the year, the WBDC office is open to the community during regular working hours.

ther to the political complexity of the job. These include: funders, whose needs must be met to secure funding, but who cannot be allowed to define the neighbourhood's revitalization goals; government officials, from a wide variety of departments and jurisdictions, who must be worked with to get things done; local businesses, whose support and involvement is a valuable asset; and other CBOs, with whom an effective NRC must collaborate on a regular basis. Positive relations with other CBOs are especially important because a major part of the role of a NRC is to be the catalyst for bringing other CBOs together in pursuit of goals identified by the community. This necessitates positive working relationships, which is, by our definition, a political task.

To these many constituencies we can add the particularly important relations with Boards of Directors. Boards ought to be designed in such a way that they adequately represent these complex inner-city neighbourhoods. This can be done in several ways. In Spence the neighbourhood is divided into eight geographic 'zones', each of which elects a resident Board member, with an additional four Board seats held for Directors who have particular skills. In West Broadway a recent Board amendment requires that at least 50 percent of Board members be residents of the neighbourhood, with the remainder drawn from local CBOs and businesses. At the North End Community Renewal Corporation, which works in eleven North End Winnipeg neighbourhoods, the thirteen-member Board is comprised of twelve elected from particular sectors

Community Engagement in Spence

SNA was formed in the mid-1990s because of residents' actions, and community members continue to participate in many ways, and to interact in daily life with other community members, Board members and staff. SNA offices are open regular hours, and there are many obvious points of contact.

The Five Year Plan, a document that guides SNA's work as an organization, was put together through community consultations. The Five Year Green Plan, that specifically guides the work of the SNA Image Greening Committee, was put together through, and is updated regularly by means of, community consultation. Many community members participate directly on SNA Committees: the Image Greening; Rental; Housing; Safety; Youth; and Community Economic Development Committees. Here community members interact directly with staff doing work in these areas. They plan, make recommendations to the Board, and problem-solve current issues.

Members of the community elect the Board. Eight of the twelve positions must be members of the community, defined as anyone who lives, works, or volunteers in Spence, with a strong emphasis placed on those who live in Spence.

Community members participate in programs and services. There is a strong feedback component to all SNA work: youth in youth programs are encouraged to bring their ideas to the youth committee; housing grant recipients are encouraged to participate on the next year's grants committee; Skills Bank members are encouraged to come to the CED meetings. SNA's approach to safety work is really more like grass-roots community organizing: the work is directed by the people experiencing the problems. SNA depends on this broad contact with members of committees and the Board, and feedback that staff receive, for solid future planning.

The AGM is well-attended and happens every year in January. In addition, there are other regular events that have become or are becoming annual traditions that assist in securing good community feedback, for example the annual Spring Clean-Up, Volunteer Appreciation Events (two in 2008), and the Inner-City Community Garden Tour.

of the community—business (1), resident organizations (3), Aboriginal organization (1), community service organization (1), religious or fraternal organization (1), labour (1), members at large (4)—plus one Board member appointed for particular skills. The manner in which Boards are constituted is important because it is essential that the voices of “the community”, with all its diversity, be heard, and it is important that Boards be seen by the community to be their legitimate representatives. If important parts of the community believe that their voices are not being heard, and their interests are not being pursued, the legitimacy of a NRC and its ability to promote neighbourhood improvements can be eroded.

Once constituted, the job of Board member is a difficult one because, as argued above, the tasks facing NRCs are many and complex. Board members, all of whom are volunteers, must make broad policy decisions; oversee the operations of the NRC; represent their ‘constituents’; and attend and participate in many informational and decision-making meetings. In a ‘stressed’ inner-city neighbourhood it can be difficult to find suitable volunteers for this demanding role. These difficulties notwithstanding, the role of the Board can be crucial to the success of a neighbourhood-based CDC. Nye and Glickman (2000:179) observe that: “Strong CDC Boards composed of active community residents are essential to providing continuity and vision; they help CDCs survive staff turnover and changes in political administrations”.

Further to this, Boards and their various committees can be important vehicles for resident involvement in neighbourhood decision-making. In the case of SNA, for example, in addition to the Board members there are six Board Committees—the Community Economic Development, Youth, Safety, Housing, Image Greening and Rental Committees—each of which has anywhere from five to ten members, not all of whom are Board members. The result is that via the Board and its Committees some 30–40 residents meet monthly to do neighbourhood work, to develop strategies to improve their neighbourhood, to set priorities and make recommendations and decisions. Thus NRC Boards become, among many other things, important means of mobilizing resident engagement in the affairs of their neighbourhoods. The SNA has prepared and distributes a pamphlet describing what is expected of Board members, what supports—childcare, for example—are available, and how to get involved. In this way, Boards become important instances of neighbourhood-level democracy, and are an especially important constituency with which the ED must maintain positive and productive relationships.

Failure to establish and promote such relationships with a Board can create significant problems; strong and active Boards that work well with staff, focus on policy development, understand financial oversight, and reflect the neighbourhoods' interests can add immeasurably to success. Thus Board relations become another crucial element in the complex political role that EDs of NRCs are required to play.

Finally, the EDs must walk a narrow political line with governments and other major funders. NRCs and other CBOs do

not have an independent source of revenue, and are therefore dependent especially on the state but also on their other sources of revenue. But they cannot allow themselves to become simply an arm of the state, or other funders, doing their bidding. They have to carve out, define and defend their own, alternative political space. This is a challenge.

It requires that an NRC develop its own independent source of power, and this can only come from the residents in their neighbourhood. The greater the extent to which the residents feel that they are fully a part of the NRC, and the greater the extent to which the NRC articulates a clear alternative vision that is expressed in its work and shared by neighbourhood residents, the more likely that the NRC will be able to maintain its independence. This is a complex political task, and takes us full circle to the central importance, for NRCs and other neighbourhood-based CDCs, of building strong and democratic relations with the community.

Housing: A Case of Complexity in a Difficult Environment

In the case of both SNA and WBDC, housing development has been their number one priority since inception. This is because: housing improvements are visible, and thus create a sense of progress; better housing improves neighbourhood stability, thus making community engagement more likely; and good quality housing is a basic human need. Spence and West Broadway have been identified by the City of Winnipeg as 'Housing Improvement Zones', and NRCs have been given the mandate of coordinating housing strategies. The NRCs' approach to housing is unique among the non-profit housing provid-

Job Descriptions for SNA and WBDC Executive Directors

Posted in 2007 as an advertisement for the job at one of the two NRCs:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reporting to the Board, the Executive Director is responsible for the day to day operations, human resource and financial management, fundraising, and participatory planning for the association.

Qualifications: bachelor or masters degree or equivalent experience with community development or related focus, inner-city resident or past resident, experience in fundraising, partnership and capacity building and participatory processes, HR and financial management experience, conflict resolution skills, effective oral and written communication, strong computer skills.

The following roles are in the contract for one of the EDs:

The Executive Director is responsible to the Board of Directors for:

- *The overall management and operation of the organization;*
- *Overseeing the day-to-day operations and business;*
- *Organize participatory short and long term planning in collaboration with the Board and community members;*
- *Project management, coordination and implementation;*
- *Supervision of staff;*
- *Fundraising and financial management;*
- *Collecting, sharing and distributing information to the Board and the community;*
- *Represent the organization with community, government and partnership organizations;*
- *Any other relevant tasks as assigned by the Board;*
- *Ensure actions are in accordance with the guiding principles of the organization with a display of courtesy, cooperation, sensitivity and professionalism.*

The responsibilities of the other ED are very similar:

- *Ensures organization is upholding mission and vision, organizes strategic planning and policy development;*
- *Supports Board operations, Board meetings, ensures Board committee meetings are set up and staffed;*
- *Staffs Board committees: Main Board, Executive, Finance, Small Grants, Housing Management, Property Management and Human Resources;*
- *Human Resources: hiring, supervising, evaluating and disciplining staff, ensuring HR files are kept up to date, managing professional development;*
- *Finances: ensures budget is prepared and approved by Board, manages expenditures and revenues;*
- *Funding: ensures funding applications are made and reported on in a timely way, and maintains good relations with funders;*
- *Manages building and office facility;*
- *Creates and maintains links with community and good community relations;*
- *Networks with related organizations;*
- *Manages select number of files.*

ers with whom they work in a coordinating capacity, in that it is rooted in an overall vision for the community—guided by a five-year community plan, of which housing is a central part. In pursuit of this goal, low-priced older homes have been purchased and renovated, improving the quality of the housing stock and the physical appearance of the neighbourhoods; these homes have then been sold to neighbourhood residents or others, improving the incidence of home ownership, and thus neighbourhood stability.

However, the economics and the policy context of housing in Canada make such efforts difficult, and provide an instructive example of how broader social, economic and political forces impinge directly on inner-city neighbourhoods. The for-profit housing developers, who produce the vast majority, 95 percent, of housing in Canada (Hulchanski 2007), concentrate almost exclusively on mass-produced suburban housing, and the construction of, and conversion to, condominiums, creating housing priced well beyond the means of typical inner-city residents, and located elsewhere than inner-city neighbourhoods. The federal government abandoned social housing—non-profit, subsidized housing—in 1993, leaving Canada without a national housing strategy (Hulchanski 2007; Carter and Polevychok 2004; Kent 2002). Small, non-profit housing providers have emerged to work in the housing vacuum in inner-city neighbourhoods (Skelton 1998). There are pockets of federal, provincial and city housing money available to them, but far less than what is needed to meet the considerable housing need. The NRC's role is to act as intermediaries, facilitating and coordinating the production efforts of small non-profit developers who have

no or very little money, and public funders who have less housing money than is needed. This is a challenge.

The complexity is added to by the multiplicity of inner-city housing needs. Many inner-city residents are, for a host of reasons, not in a position to be homeowners. They need good quality, low-income rental housing. The market does not produce new low-income rental housing units (Hulchanski 2007); much of the low-income rental housing available in the inner city is aging and not in good shape; and many landlords are reluctant to make improvements, in part because the housing component of social assistance rates is so low that it does not generate sufficient revenue to warrant expenditures on improvements. With respect to the latter, Sjoberg (March 28, 2008) expressed concern about “Employment and Income Assistance rates being too low for people to be able to afford housing in the neighbourhood, and landlords not being able to charge enough so that they can keep their houses in good repair”(see also Silver 2006a). The result is that very little new low-rental housing is being built, and much of what exists is not being adequately maintained. Yet in West Broadway in 2001 94 percent of households, and in Spence just under 50 percent of households, lived in rental accommodation.

Rooming houses are an important part of the inner-city housing stock, especially because in most inner-city neighbourhoods the largest demographic is single unattached individuals. Often a room in a rooming house is all they can afford. In some cases rooming houses are poorly maintained and provide inadequate and unsafe accommodation (Burley and Maunder 2008; Distasio et al, 2002). In other cases, especially in West

Broadway, they have been converted to single-family dwellings as part of the NRC efforts to renovate older units for homeownership. This produces benefits, but also further reduces the low-rental housing stock, thus displacing large numbers of rooming house tenants (Silver 2006a).

The renovation-to-homeownership strategy that both WBDC and SNA pursued starting a decade ago has run its course. A decade ago, and even five years ago, inner-city housing prices were so low that a house could be purchased by a non-profit provider, renovated using various government funding programs, and then re-sold at the going market price. In addition, there were numerous vacant homes that the City had acquired through tax sale that non-profit housing developers could purchase for \$1, renovate, and re-sell at an affordable price. The economics of doing so made sense for non-profit housing providers. However, housing prices have risen in the inner city, as part of the overall trend of rising prices but also because of the neighbourhood improvements effected by NRC and other CBOs (City of Winnipeg 2007; Silver 2006a), so that non-profit providers can no longer purchase houses in Spence and West Broadway at prices that make financial sense, given the limited subsidy dollars that are available. This has reduced even further the already limited housing options available to small non-profit providers with no money.

As a consequence, the housing work now being done by WBDC and SNA is focused primarily on low-income rental housing, and especially on improvements to existing stock. The SNA, for example, has secured funding to hire a Rental Safety Coordinator, who will work with the tenants in and owners of neighbour-

hood rooming houses to make them safer and more secure for tenants. In an earlier, successful program, SNA conducted safety audits, and then provided safety information and made minor repairs and installations—peepholes in doors, deadbolts—to improve homeowners' security and sense of safety. The staff person doing this work was a woman, which made easier the connections with the relatively high proportion of single mothers in the neighbourhood, and the program had the important added benefit of connecting the SNA with neighbourhood residents in a personal, face-to-face fashion. A program of small housing grants made available to residents to improve lighting or make other minor improvements of their choosing to their homes has been similarly successful.

New housing initiatives are coordinated through Housing Stakeholders' Groups in each neighbourhood. Coordinated by the NRCs, these groups include the various small, non-profit providers, several government funders, and the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI), which is the 'single window' joint government initiative through which most government housing dollars flow. These can be "spirited" meetings (McCracken, March 28, 2008), both because the amount of money available is not sufficient to enable the providers to do all that needs to be done, and also because the NRC, quite appropriately, puts conditions on proposed housing-related projects in an attempt to ensure compliance with the Neighbourhood Housing Plan, and this can add additional complexity to small, non-profit housing providers' plans.

Each neighbourhood prepares a Five-Year Housing Plan, in consultation with the community, and this is an important

exercise in neighbourhood-level democracy, giving residents the opportunity to voice opinions about what they want their neighbourhood to look like. The contradiction—unintended consequences are the norm in neighbourhood-level community development—is that a neighbourhood Housing Plan may raise expectations beyond what limited housing dollars can deliver. A further contradiction is that “the community” is not homogenous, and this creates the kinds of contradictions that lead McCracken (March 28, 2008) to say that it is good:

“That the whole neighbourhood should have a say in how housing is built, but how do you deal with those who say ‘I’m a homeowner, I don’t want a group home next to me’, or ‘why would we help rooming houses’...you know, like that reactionary question, and then how do we mediate all of that, and navigate it so that we support core housing, you know, or the elimination of core housing need”.

The mediation and navigation of these neighbourhood-level, housing-related stresses and complexities are part of the political task that is such a central part of what EDs and other staff of NRCs must do.

The bulk of this neighbourhood-level housing development is managed by a Housing Coordinator. The provincial government’s Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the City of Winnipeg’s Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve combine to fund this position for both SNA and WBDC. The Housing Coordinators perform a variety of tasks. They facilitate and chair the Housing Stakeholders Groups. They oversee the implementation of the neighbourhood

Housing Plans. In each neighbourhood rooming house initiatives are underway, and these are facilitated and coordinated by the Housing Coordinator. Various forms of consultation with the community about housing-related matters are facilitated by the Housing Coordinators, with the assistance when needed of the ED. And in each neighbourhood, the Housing Coordinators do regular walkabouts in the neighbourhood, as the result of which they know the housing stock intimately, and meet many residents. They get to know landlords, and to the extent possible work cooperatively with them in meeting the goals of the Neighbourhood Housing Plan. They monitor compliance with the Vacant and Derelict Buildings By-law, and do advocacy work related to such matters. In addition to these various tasks, the Housing Coordinators are constantly looking for new housing opportunities that would benefit the neighbourhood and its residents, and for the scarce dollars that would make these possible.

The scarcity of housing dollars reflects not only market failure, but also a lack of governmental commitment to social housing. The federal government, which has the greatest resources, abandoned social housing in 1993, and although there are now some federal housing dollars available through various programs, there is no national housing strategy, and the federal government is financing “very little affordable rental and almost no new social housing”, according to the Wellesley Institute’s *National Housing Report Card* (Shapcott 2008:5). This is the core of the funding problem, given that the for-profit market developers do not produce affordable housing, especially rental housing, in the inner city. The province recently introduced a new Home Works program which may prove effec-

tive, but the *National Housing Report Card* gave Manitoba a failing grade for social housing in the 2001–2007 period (Shapcott 2008:8). The City administers the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve, which totals \$1 million per year, allocated to six designated “housing improvement zones”. For West Broadway and Spence, \$30,000 of their allocation under this program supports the Housing Coordinators, \$30,000 goes to small exterior fix-up grants, and the balance, \$85,000—less than half the average cost of one home in Winnipeg—goes to housing projects as decided by each neighbourhood’s Housing Stakeholders Group. The City’s Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve is important, but too small. A City of Winnipeg (2007:1020) report concluded:

“The platform of housing programs that the City has created and funded through the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve has assisted in rebalancing the demand and supply to improve access and affordability to housing in inner-city neighbourhoods. Notwithstanding these considerable progresses, more work remains to be done to address housing and homelessness needs in Winnipeg’s older neighbourhoods”.

Yet when a West Broadway delegation told City Hall in 2008 that the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve should be increased from \$1 million to \$2 million, they were told by the Mayor that they should be grateful that they get the \$1 million (McCracken, March 25, 2008).

The City plays a critical role in the regulation of many neighbourhood-level issues. In the area of housing, the City could improve the impact the NRCs are able to make on neighbourhood hous-

ing by dealing more expeditiously with vacant apartment buildings and absentee landlords—“they need to figure out how to take hold of properties that have been empty for whatever amount of time and commit them to the neighbourhoods for their use” (Sjoberg, March 25, 2008). This is a process underway with the recent development of the Vacant and Derelict Buildings By-Law. For those landlords who might want to make improvements to their buildings, but cannot because rent supplements are too low, and want to tap into government grants, access to funding is too complex:

“Part of the problem for landlords...is that you have to have an expertise in how government works and how funding works, and patience for paperwork and patience to work with other people and organizations, because often the government has conditions that you have to work with these people to make something happen. You have to be able to do all of those things to be able to access those supports that might be there for landlords” (Sjoberg, March 25, 2008).

Too often landlords are either not able or not prepared to put in such effort, or are not prepared to comply with the rent or tenant restrictions, and therefore choose simply not to make repairs, and the quality of low-income rental housing in inner-city neighbourhoods deteriorates further.

And yet, despite these many complexities and problems, and despite the constant shortage of funds, the SNA and WBDC have contributed to significant housing and other improvements in their neighbourhoods. This is consistent with the US experience.

NRCs and Real Neighbourhood Improvements

Housing Values

The existing literature on the US experience strongly supports the view that neighbourhood-based community development corporations—often more exclusively focused on housing than are NRCs—promote positive change, and in many cases significant positive change, in low-income inner-city neighbourhoods (see, among many examples: Galster et al 2005; Nye and Glickman 2000; Walker and Weinheimer 1998). Galster et al (2005:1) provide evidence that CDCs “can indeed spark a chain reaction of investment that leads to dramatic improvements to neighbourhoods”—this is precisely what happened in West Broadway (Silver 2006a)—and argue (Galster et al 2005:3) that the strongest evidence of this is to be found in what happens to housing prices in neighbourhoods in which CDCs have been working. “Sales prices are the recognized proxy measure for many other indicators of neighbourhood quality, such as crime and poverty rates, because these other aspects of neighbourhood are *capitalized* into the value of its properties”. And their study of five low-income US inner-city neighbourhoods in which CDCs have been working found such improvements in each:

“CDC investments in affordable hous-

ing and commercial retail facilities have led to increases in property values—the single best measure of neighbourhood improvement—that are sometimes as great as 69 percent higher than they would have been in the absence of the investment” (Galster et al 2005:1).

Similar, even quantitatively greater, improvements have been made in Spence and West Broadway. A City of Winnipeg report (2007:1033, Table 5), found that while housing prices in Winnipeg as a whole increased by 94 percent from 2000 to July 31, 2007, prices in Spence and West Broadway grew by almost double that—180 percent—as shown in Table Two.

About these price increases in Spence and West Broadway the Winnipeg Realtors Association said the following (City of Winnipeg 2007:1033):

“The dramatic turnaround in MLS housing prices in the designated inner-city neighbourhoods is testimony to the work of the many housing providers working in these communities. This neighbourhood resurgence would not have happened without the coordinated financial support of the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Despite

Table Two: Changes in Average MLS Sale Price For Residential Detached Homes

Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Area	2000	2003	2006	July 31, 2007	% Change From 2000 to 2007
5A (Spence and West Broadway neighbourhoods)	\$28,522	\$37,951	\$68,502	\$80,000	180%
City of Winnipeg	\$93,259	\$113,068	\$158,468	\$180,000	94%

Source: Winnipeg Realtors Association. Annual Averages, 2000, 2003, 2006.

this progress, much work remains to be done and the continued involvement of the WHHI is essential”.

The improvements in Spence and West Broadway, coordinated and stimulated in large part by the work of the SNA and the WBDC, have been capitalized into the price of housing in the two neighbourhoods in the way that Galster et al (2005:1) identify as “the single best measure of neighbourhood improvement”. And housing prices have grown in the two neighbourhoods by 91.5 percent more than in the city as a whole, which is even higher than the 69 percent that Galster et al found in the best case in their US study.

Resident Perceptions

We know that many residents in these two neighbourhoods feel that their neighbourhood is changing for the better. This is the case in West Broadway. The annual *State of the Inner City Report* (CCPA-Mb 2006), based in part on in-depth interviews with fifteen residents, found the situation in West Broadway to be contradictory. Many problems remain: average incomes are low; poverty rates are high; wages and social assistance rates are inadequate; rising rents have displaced many residents; and street gang activity, while reduced, persists. Yet many extolled the virtues of the neighbourhood: “I love West Broadway...everything about the neighbourhood is great”; “If I walk in this neighbourhood it’s vibrant, there’s so much diversity, it’s lively”; “I find the sense of community here very impressive”; “we have events here and it’s amazing how people turn out”; and the residents “just keep fighting back, trying to take back control of their neighbourhood, I mean I’ve seen that over the last ten years”. Residents identified a dozen

community-based organizations, established in the past ten years, that are playing key roles in West Broadway’s revitalization, and many pointed to the importance of housing renovation: “housing has improved dramatically in recent years, which was really bad at one point” (for how bad the housing had become, see also Burley and Maunder 2008:102-113). Although the WBDC was criticized by some for concentrating too much on housing, others identified its central role: “I think the neighbourhood’s improved a lot because of the West Broadway Development Corporation” (CCPA-Mb 2006:6-7).

Residents in Spence express similar views. In the *State of the Inner City Report 2005* (CCPA-Mb 2005), twenty residents, businesspeople and community workers in the neighbourhood were interviewed. The two major themes that emerged were the much greater engagement in the community by residents, and the important role played by emerging community-based organizations, and especially SNA. One long-time community worker said: “there’s been a huge change in Spence when it comes to community organization and community development work and community participation”. Another interviewee added:

“I certainly have observed far more engagement of both residents and those that are actively working and volunteering in the neighbourhood in the decision-making and in knowing one another, and feeling a sense of pride in the neighbourhood and identity in the neighbourhood. Ten years ago my awareness was that if I talked with people about their hopes and dreams it was to leave the neighbourhood. Now it’s to stay and be part of the neighbourhood changes” (CCPA-Mb 2005:8).

McCracken and Sjoberg feel similarly about the gains made in the two neighbourhoods. When asked specifically, “What do you consider to be the achievements of WBDC and SNA over the past ten years”, both referred to housing, but also to the many other activities promoted by their NRCs. In the USA, although housing continues to be the primary activity of most neighbourhood-based CDCs, almost all are engaged in a range of additional activities (Melendez and Servon 2007). The same is the case with NRCs.

McCracken and Sjoberg (June 26, 2008) emphasized the fact that their NRCs have created a mechanism by which residents who choose to do so can get involved, and even play a leadership role, in making decisions about their neighbourhoods’ futures. There is very much a community development approach, with the engagement of residents—however difficult that may often be—at the heart of their philosophical approach, and the NRCs have been an important vehicle for facilitating that kind of involvement.

Community Gardening and Green Space

Community gardening, for example, plays an especially important role in this process, and both emphasized its importance in community-building, and the importance of public space in high rental neighbourhoods.

“The kids in the neighbourhood don’t have backyards to play in because they live in apartment buildings, their apartment buildings may not be safe and...in a neighbourhood that has a history of being pretty run-down they [community gardens] create really beautiful spaces where people

can gather and be safe and interact with one another and, you know, it’s not the hallway where a fight is happening three doors down, it’s a public space where people are walking by...like, they’re places where community care happens and people care for one another, and it’s really obvious, in a place where a lot of people don’t feel cared for” (Sjoberg, June 26, 2008).

Community gardens create public spaces that are beautiful, and peaceful. They create spaces in which people can interact, get to know each other, work together—“places where that community care happens”. McCracken (June 26, 2008) observed that:

“One of the most interesting and astonishing things I’ve seen in this job is the passion that people feel for gardening...there’s some people in this neighbourhood who just plant things wherever they can find a spot, and they get this look in their eye, like, ‘I need to plant this!’, you know”.

This passion for gardening has long been the case in West Broadway (Burley and Maunder 2008:64). There are currently 78 registered gardeners in West Broadway (McCracken, June 26, 2008), and many more that derive pleasure from community gardens. As one elderly West Broadway woman put it:

“I passed out over a hundred tomato plants this spring. We share. Also helping a neighbour out with plants they may want in their yard, it brings people in the community closer together...just in growth of spirit itself, you make good friendships, you share ideas, there is just so many

good things about it. It helps the community to become strong” (CCPA-Mb 2006:10).

Her views express clearly why McCracken and Sjoberg feel so strongly about the importance of community gardening as part of a community-building process that is central to the work of a NRC.

Catalyst and Coordinator

SNA and WBDC also play a key coordinating role with other CBOs, and in some cases—Art City in West Broadway, and Greenheart Co-op Housing and Kikinaw Housing, for example—play an incubating role in their creation. The result of this “connective stuff” is a much more coordinated approach to neighbourhood revitalization, and one could argue that a community-based infrastructure is emerging (Silver 2008). As Sjoberg (June 26, 2008) observed: “The infrastructure that is being created is really good”. This makes possible a flexibility in responding to neighbourhood concerns that is impressive. The SNA, for example, runs two programs for youth, and this work, says Sjoberg (June 26, 2008), is “out of this world”. It creates a safe space for children and youth, and promotes neighbourhood safety, but also creates a “window” into family life in the neighbourhood, and becomes a means—as children usually do—of building connections between families in the neighbourhood. In West Broadway similarly creative and effective youth work is being done, but there it is delivered by the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre, an organization independent of the WBDC but with which the NRC works cooperatively.

Safety and Security

Safety, too, is improving in both neighbourhoods, and this is attributable in large part to the work of the NRCs, both their housing and their community-building work. McCracken (Feb 8, 2008) said that: “I think West Broadway has improved for safety, like people didn’t use to walk at night alone ever, or rarely, and there was a lot of ‘jumpings’ and things like that. There’s still a lot of safety problems, but things are improving” (for the dangerous conditions in previous years see Burley and Maunder 2008, especially pp. 102-113). Sjoberg (February 8, 2008) described several examples of people in the neighbourhood organizing around safety issues. One example was when “Young Street was having a really rough time over the summer time, and the residents there got together and we had a community meeting about it. And from time to time that happens where something specific is happening on the street and...the members on the street are talking to each other, and so they’ll work together”. This suggests the development of the kind of “community efficacy” that Sampson et al (1997) have described as being the key variable in promoting safety in low-income neighbourhoods, and it is the work of NRCs and other CBOs that has contributed greatly to the creation of this greater sense of community and mutual support.

Residents of Spence and West Broadway also feel that their neighbourhoods are becoming more safe, and that this is attributable in large measure to the work of SNA and WBDC. In a study of safety and security in three Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods, many of the fifteen people interviewed in Spence identified the neighbourhood revitalization, driven by

CBOs and especially SNA, as the key to improved feelings of safety:

“You look down, say, Langside Street, I remember two, three years ago and boarded up houses like crazy, you know, and that was scary. Now I think you probably don’t see one boarded up house anymore.... And some of these places have been fixed up and there are families living in there now who seem to care for the property and for the neighbourhood—which is very good. And what we need is more of that, so as one place gets cleaned up then the neighbours around do the same. And it does change the image of the area. But like I said, that is a positive step since three, four, five years ago or so, you know”.

“The community really needs to take back their community, the neighbourhood. And I see that happening. Spence [Neighbourhood Association] is doing a great job. They’re the model now...Spence has done so much great work that people are looking to them for ideas” (Comack and Silver 2006:36).

McCracken and Sjoberg are passionate and persuasive in expressing their opinions that their NRCs make an exceptionally strong contribution to the steadily improving health of their neighbourhoods; many residents hold similar views of the changes in recent years; numerous independent studies have found that while important problems persist, gains are being made (Anderson et al 2004: CCPA-Mb 2005; CCPA-Mb 2006; Silver 2006a); and property values have risen since 2000 at almost double the rate of the city as a whole (City of Winnipeg 2007), suggesting that those who purchase property also believe the neighbourhoods are improving. Spence and West Broadway are still low-income neighbourhoods with a host of complex problems typically associated with inner-city status. But the evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, suggests strongly that significant improvements have been made in these neighbourhoods in the past decade, and that an important part of the explanation is the role played by the NRCs—SNA and WBDC.

The Fragility of Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations

We know from recent studies of the US experience (Rohe and Bratt 2003) that neighbourhood-based community development corporations, despite their many achievements, have a relatively high rate of failure. Given the complexity of the work that NRCs do, and the stressed character of the inner-city neighbourhoods in which they work, it comes as little surprise that, the success of SNA and WBDC notwithstanding, NRCs are organizationally fragile. The experience in the USA may have some applicability.

In the three years prior to their study—the first systematic analysis of CDC failures, downsizing and mergers in the US—Rohe and Bratt (2003:8) identified 46 failed CDCs and 41 that had been forced to downsize by at least 40 percent. They identified both contextual factors—changed housing market conditions, changed funders’ policies, for example—and organizational factors—staffing problems, Board problems, failure to develop community support, for example—as being the main causal factors for failures and forced downsizing. They concluded that such problems are not typically the result of one single causal factor, but rather “what we have seen is that the various factors—which are invariably both contextual and organizational—interact, resulting in serious challenges in organizational viability” (Rohe and Bratt 2003:35). Their US-based study confirms the fragility of neighbourhood-based CDCs, and the complexity of the work they do.

The same organizational fragility prevails in the case of NRCs in Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods. In the case of the West Broadway Development Corpora-

tion, for example, McCracken revealed that, prior to her assuming the role of ED in the Spring of 2007, the situation was worse than most in the community realized. “I don’t think people understood that the doors were almost shut...they almost didn’t exist at all” (November 2, 2007). The first Executive Director, who McCracken believes “did an amazing job”, had been let go under contentious circumstances by an earlier Board; a six-month period followed with no ED; an ED was then hired but only on a .6 time basis; the overall budget had been cut by more than half; the staffing complement had been reduced accordingly; and relations between the WBDC and the community were, not surprisingly, frayed. McCracken argues that a part of the problem, early in WBDC’s existence, was a product of the organization’s success: it raised more project funding than it had the administrative capacity to manage, creating what she describes as a “donut” effect—not enough core administrative capacity to carry out the tasks for which funding had been generated. Nevertheless, much excellent work was done before the organization ran into further difficulties, and the WBDC appears now to be fully back on track. The North End Community Renewal Corporation (NECRC), Winnipeg’s third NRC, had similar albeit less severe difficulties recently, with certain projects not meeting funders’ targets, putting continued funding in jeopardy, the organization’s charitable status being lost for failure to file required documents, and a new ED being hired. This occurred only a few years after a study of NECRC (Colussi et al 2003:20) opened with the sentence: “The steady progress since 1998 of Win-

Winnipeg's North End [Community] Renewal Corporation makes this organization seem like a textbook example of the successful evolution of a community development corporation, or CDC". The rapidity with which the problems occurred is evidence, we maintain, of the organizational fragility that characterizes NRCs. Both WBDC and NECRC appear to be back on a solid footing, but because two of Winnipeg's three NRCs had experienced such difficulties, we considered it important to enquire further into the issue of NRCs' organizational fragility, and why some NRCs experience serious problems.

To pursue this question we arranged a four-person interview with Garry Loewen and the three authors. Loewen is a founding member and first Executive Director of the NECRC, and prior to this and other leadership roles with inner-city CBOs, had a long and high-level managerial experience in the private sector, including serving as Manager of Air Canada's operations at Canada's largest airport. He now works as a consultant, and is on retainer with the provincial government's Neighbourhoods Alive! program to assist in the creation of new NRCs, and to work with existing NRCs when they encounter difficulties. He brings to this work a unique combination of managerial and community-based skills and knowledge. Our four-way conversation was aimed not at learning the specifics related to problems at any particular NRC, but rather at attempting to think analytically about why NRCs in general are as fragile as they appear to be.

Loewen identified the fragility of NRCs as being a function of their complexity, and of their relative lack of financial resources. As argued above, running an

NRC is a managerially and politically complex task. It is made especially so by the often contradictory demands—arising from the very character of NRCs—created by the need for hard managerial skills and the existence of a multiplicity of social goals. The managerial demands and multiple social goals create, Loewen argues, "a cultural mix that you're trying to put into these organizations that typically are not mixed". But the financial resources necessary to support this multi-faceted and complex work are not there. NRCs, Loewen argues, are "totally under-resourced".

Partly as a consequence of their being under-resourced, NRCs rely excessively upon staff, and especially the Executive Director. But the support staff and the management systems that ought to be in place to enable EDs and staff to do this complex work—and that are in place in larger public and private sector organizations—are not there, because NRCs are not sufficiently resourced. Without these kinds of supports and systems—the kind that enable larger and better-resourced organizations to carry on even when, as is inevitable, senior management personnel leave—EDs of NRCs eventually either burn out, or leave for other, better-paid positions outside the inner city, creating constant organizational instability, and reproducing the organizations' fragility. Add to this the low pay and job insecurity facing other NRC staff, with the further organizational instability that is a consequence, and you have, argues Loewen, "a formula for failure".

Not only are NRCs under-resourced; they are also "program heavy". Aside from the very important core funding from Neighbourhoods Alive!, NRCs' other sources of revenue are comprised almost exclusively of project funding—

the money is earmarked for specific projects, or programs. If applying to the Neighbourhoods Alive! Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, NRCs cannot apply for general administrative support, since this funder reasons that the NRCs are already getting administrative support via their core funding. However, the more programs offered by NRCs, the greater is the required amount and cost of administrative support. Other funders and foundations often allow administrative fees to be charged for grants, but the amount is generally 5–10 percent of the grant, which is often not adequate. Those NRC staff who are employed with this project-specific funding are fully occupied delivering the programs. And there is a multiplicity of such programs, in part because of what Loewen describes as “the incredible number of social goals” that NRCs attempt to meet. As a consequence, far from providing support to the ED, a multiplicity of staff delivering a wide range of discrete and individually funded programs adds to the managerial complexity of the job. This was at least a part of the problem that faced WBDC when they ran into difficulties: lots of project money; insufficient administrative staff to manage the organizational whole. For the ED—who is typically doing this work because of a passion for the social goals, as opposed to a desire for a managerial career—the result, Loewen observes, is “like trying to run a highly complex organization with a hand tied behind your back”.

Loewen argues that, complex and under-resourced though they are, the NRCs do remarkably good work—a view that we believe is confirmed by the evidence provided above. But they could achieve more, and their fragility could be reduced, with additional core fund-

ing that would ensure that each NRC has access to the kinds of professional supports and management systems—especially as regards financial and human resource management—that are currently missing, and that are available to organizations of similar complexity in the private and public sectors.

Supports to Build on Strengths

Given what we have argued to be the effectiveness of the NRCs in two Winnipeg inner-city neighbourhoods, despite the complexity and fragility that characterizes their work, it is useful to consider some additional supports that might be put in place to ensure continued success. There are, it is important to note, important supports already in place.

The provincial government’s Neighbourhoods Alive! (NA!) program provides important supports, most notably the core funding for five-year periods that enables NRCs to put in place the administrative structures—limited though they are—that make it possible for them to do their work. The shortage of core funding and over-reliance on project funding is a major problem for neighbourhood-based CDCs, and a significant contributing factor to their organizational fragility, making NA!’s core funding contribution especially important. Also particularly important has been NA! funding for management/technical support in the person of Garry Loewen, who works on retainer thirty days per year providing management advice and support to EDs, as well as Board training when asked for, transition support from one ED to another, and general ‘trouble-shooting’. His role has been particularly important in dealing with some recent and quite significant NRC problems.

Second, there is in Winnipeg a strong CD/CED community, operating particularly in the inner city and put in place piece by piece over the past twenty years, and in a broad and general sense it too, in its totality, provides important supports for NRCs. This CD/CED community includes: an exceptional array of CBOs with a strong core of seasoned and creative leaders, many of whom have been 'raised poor' in Winnipeg's inner city and remain connected with the communities in which they work (Silver 2008; 2006b); some institutional funders—Assiniboine Credit Union, United Way of Winnipeg, The Winnipeg Foundation, for example—which have increasingly adopted a community development approach to their funding practices; four multi-million dollar, tri-level (federal, provincial, civic) urban development agreements over a 25 year period, at least a part of each of which has been invested in the development of an inner-city, CD/CED infrastructure; and the emergence of a common philosophy, often called the Neechi Principles (Silver and Loxley 2007:7), which has a strong CD/CED character and which is used in a principled way by many if not most inner-city CBOs. Loxley (2007: 14-17) has described the range of reasons—the existence of the Neechi Principles; the emergence of exceptionally talented community organizers; strong government support since 1999; the increased funding role in recent years of local charitable foundations; the strong inner-city community/university connections and community-based research; and the strong cultural/political base for progressive community work, among others—that account for the building of such a vibrant CD/CED community over the past quarter-century and especially the past decade. The experience of this emergent com-

munity, and its highly skilled grassroots leaders, is an important support mechanism for NRCs.

Yet the fragility of neighbourhood-based CDCs, and the complexity of the tasks they undertake, is such that additional supports are needed (on the scope and limits of provincial government supports for the social economy more generally, see Loxley and Simpson 2007, especially p.32). McCracken and Sjoberg, for example, asked Loewen to facilitate a support group for them and several other young female EDs of inner-city CBOs because, as McCracken (June 26, 2008) put it, there is "not a lot of training to be an Executive Director of a non-profit". Loewen convened a group of experienced EDs of inner-city CBOs. Several meetings have been held, taking the form of hour-long question and answer periods—about financial management, fund-raising, human resource management, for example—followed by hour-long debriefing sessions. By this means hard-earned practical knowledge and skills are being passed on, support networks are being developed, and a safe space in which to "vent" has been created. This process, says McCracken (July 30, 2008) has been "very, very helpful", and suggests the value of a more fully-developed and on-going senior management support system, one that would outlast Loewen's invaluable commitment to the work, and expand upon his part-time status.

More staff and Board training would also be beneficial. Dollars can be found for this purpose, but the initiative has to come from the NRC, and the ED has to find the instructors and deliver the requisite number of bodies. Again, a more systematic and regularized approach to training and education would be valuable. For example, a standard training package

delivered to all NRC and other CBO Board members would improve Board governance and, in the course of time, would create a large cadre of inner-city residents with a host of practical skills that could be put to many uses.

The basis for ongoing CD/CED education and training for inner-city residents is beginning to emerge in Manitoba, and Winnipeg especially: the CD/CED Training Intermediary, which offers a wide variety of community-based educational opportunities, including support for a two-year Red River College diploma in CD/CED; the University of Winnipeg's new Urban and Inner-City Studies degree, which offers courses consistent with the philosophical approach of many inner-city CBOs and which has developed innovative methods of attracting and supporting inner-city students. But generally, management/organizational education is geared to the for-profit, corporate sector and comes packaged with a strong dose of pro-corporate ideology that is not appropriate for community-based, inner-city work. A space exists for advanced education in management skills for middle- and senior-level staff in non-profit, community-based organizations. As this part of a support network is further developed, and formal educational levels rise, there is likely to be upward pressure on wage levels in the sector. This would be positive, both because it would be consistent with the social justice principles that define the work of the NRCs and other CBOs, and because it would reduce the staff turnover that adds so much to managerial complexity and organizational fragility.

The managerial complexity and organizational fragility makes it apparent to us that it is necessary to put more administrative staff in place in certain cases.

WBDC had problems early in its existence when it raised more project funds than it had the capacity to administer. SNA now has a staff of thirty, and Sjoberg (June 26, 2008) wonders aloud whether the organization's administrative capacity is sufficient to support that many staff and the multiple projects they are delivering:

"The reason we have all these programs happening is because we have core funding, but the reason we can't get another administrative person is because...other funders won't give you administrative money, so we can afford to do a lot of stuff, but we can't afford to do the building blocks of the organization".

This is precisely the concern raised by Loewen (July 30, 2008), whose strongly-held view is that NRCs are seriously under-resourced given the complexity of their work, which then adds to their fragility, which in turn reduces their capacity. He argues that additional supports for NRCs "would start with funding, for sure", and additional funding would be used to add more administrative strength to support the work of EDs, and to create the space in which to engage in the strategic thinking needed to create the "deep and durable changes that programs won't create".

If NRCs are not only to bring about specific positive changes in inner-city neighbourhoods, as they already do, but also to turn these neighbourhoods around in a more holistic fashion, to make them healthy communities in all respects, then a more strategic approach is needed. But a more strategic approach is not possible without the core funding to free up senior management—to create the time that would enable senior management—to

engage, with the community, in strategic thinking.

The “program-heavy” character of NRCs is a problem for several reasons, including that it severely limits the kind of strategic thinking that is necessary if inner-city neighbourhoods are to be more fully turned around. EDs are fully occupied with the multiple demands of their job; staff is fully occupied with delivering their particular programs. The time is simply not available to do the *strategic* thinking, the “big picture” thinking and planning, that would lead to a less piecemeal or “haphazard”, or more coherent or strategic, approach to neighbourhood renewal.

Loewen also observed that the work of NRCs would be improved if, as is the case in Quebec, they and other inner-city CBOs were part of the various government-level economic advisory bodies that currently are comprised almost exclusively of private-sector, for-profit corporations and their organizational representatives. NRCs are now able to gain access to governments only “from the outside”, in their advocacy capacity, and that capacity is relatively weak, in part because they have no independent

source of funding. If we were serious about inner-city revitalization, NRCs would be invited to participate fully at economic policy advisory tables, where their presence would be likely to lead to improved policy and financial support for the work that they do. Their financial dependence weakens them politically, and marginalizes them from economic policy making. But if they were present at economic policy-making tables, contextual and policy support for the work that they do would be likely to improve.

The likelihood of becoming a part of such economic advisory bodies, and more generally of promoting better policy and more appropriate levels and forms of funding, would be improved if the EDs of NRCs were to meet as a group on a regular basis to coordinate their efforts and increase their political clout.

These various additional supports represent the next building blocks in an already well-developed, non-profit, neighbourhood-based community development sector. They seem particularly appropriate given the success achieved to date by NRCs, the complexity of the tasks they undertake, and their organizational fragility.

Conclusions

Despite complex managerial and political challenges and organizational fragility, neighbourhood renewal corporations, or neighbourhood-based CDCs, have played a significant role in promoting and facilitating significant social reforms in two low-income inner-city neighbourhoods in Winnipeg in only a decade. Globalization is often thought to make social reform impossible. This study suggests that the power of human agency—the ability of skilled and dedicated individuals working collectively and using a CD philosophy in pursuit of the public good—can be effective in combating the destructive effects of globalization, at least at the very local level. Difficult though it may be, small spaces of social change can be carved out, even in extremely challenging circumstances.

The social change has included not only improved housing conditions and neighbourhood safety and related benefits, but also significantly increased resident engagement in each of the neighbourhoods. It is the case that it was resident engagement that started both SNA and WBDC. But since being established, SNA and WBDC have each created a multiplicity of further opportunities for resident involvement in important decisions affecting their neighbourhoods' futures. Growing numbers of people have seized one or more of these opportunities, serving as Board members and Board Committee members, participating in the development of neighbourhood Five-Year Plans and Housing Plans, attending and participating in public meetings of various kinds, including AGMs, working together in ad hoc groups responding to immediate neighbourhood problems, be-

coming involved in community gardens, youth programs and a host of other activities. The result of such involvement is the development of a greater number of citizens who are more skilled, more self-confident in their abilities, and more empowered—that is, more capable of being and willing to be the actors rather than the acted upon in their neighbourhoods.

Promoting this kind of community engagement in low-income, severely stressed neighbourhoods is difficult. In the absence of sufficient funding to hire staff with specific responsibility for community organizing, EDs are required to devise explicit strategies for maintaining the face-to-face contact with neighbourhood residents that is a necessary precondition for resident involvement in neighbourhood decision-making. This is a challenge, given the complex demands of their jobs, but finding ways to genuinely engage neighbourhood residents is the *sine qua non* of neighbourhood-based community development.

The claims made by some (Shragge 1997; Stoecker 1997, for example) that the kind of work done by neighbourhood-based CDCs is an impediment to the more oppositional community organizing needed to shift the balance of political power to generate increased public investment in inner-city neighbourhoods, seems to us to be only partly true. It is true that funding sources place complex limits on what all CBOs, including NRCs, can do. Yet to be critical of NRCs for failing to promote a more militant politics of mobilization seems to us to be asking too much of low-income residents of distressed inner-city neighbourhoods. We

maintain, by contrast, that the kind of citizen engagement promoted by the efforts of NRCs is in itself an important achievement, an expression of democracy at the local level, and is the necessary precondition for their involvement, should they choose, in any struggle for broader social change. Further, NRCs regularly engage in collaborative advocacy and participate in broader community coalitions in pursuit of a variety of goals of importance to inner-city neighbourhoods.

There are limits to what can be achieved at a very local level, and those limits have primarily to do with funding. The amount of funding made available to NRCs working in complex inner-city environments falls short of what is needed. The shortage of funding adds to the fragility of these organizations, because the administrative supports and management systems that ought to be in place to enable these organizations to do the many and complex tasks that they undertake, are not there.

Despite these limits, NRCs in Spence and West Broadway have shown, in only a decade, what is possible. Their achievements, given the many limitations upon and complexities of the work that they do, are remarkable. They suggest that much more is possible. Doing more would require more appropriate levels of core funding, which could then be applied to building the administrative supports and management systems that are more adequate to the needs of such complex organizations, and enabling EDs to engage, with others, in the kind of strategic, long-term thinking and planning that is necessary if the work of NRCs is to be, as it could be, more fully transformative.

Recommendations

The argument of this paper is that Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations, despite many difficulties, can be and are very effective in promoting and coordinating inner-city neighbourhood revitalization. To build on the strengths described here, we recommend the following:

- that a long-term financial commitment be made by governments to the Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation model of inner-city neighbourhood revitalization;
- that existing and new NRCs be funded sufficiently to provide additional and adequate administrative supports, especially for financial and human resource management;
- that a commitment be made to finding permanent funding for those small, innovative pilot projects that prove successful;
- that methods and funding be developed to improve the capacity of NRCs to work *across* neighbourhoods;
- and that methods and funding be developed to enable NRCs to engage with the community in more broadly-based, cross-neighbourhood and long-term *strategic* thinking and planning, without reducing their capacity to facilitate neighbourhood-based organizing and problem solving.

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