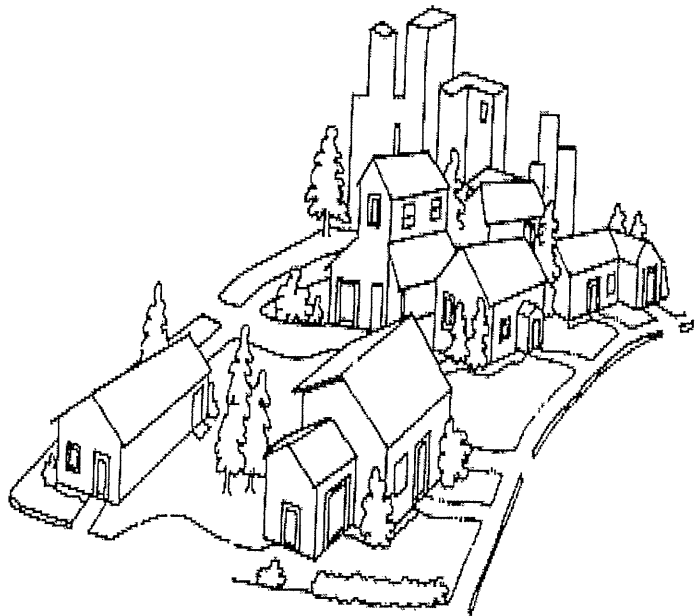


Housing and Neighborhoods: Tools for Change

**Report Number 21
2000**

Onondaga
**Citizens
League**



Housing and Neighborhoods:
Tools for Change

**2000 Study Report
Onondaga Citizens League**

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Preface

For over 20 years, the Onondaga Citizens League has represented an outstanding example of citizen participation in public affairs in Central New York. Founded in 1977 and incorporated in 1979, OCL is an independent not-for-profit organization that encourages citizen education and involvement in public issues. The OCL's annual study on a topic of community-wide relevance culminates in a report designed to help citizens comprehend the issue and its implications, and give decision-makers recommendations for action.

This year's study, OCL's twenty-first, very ambitiously attempted to review various approaches to creating and sustaining housing and healthy neighborhoods in Syracuse. Through a series of presentations and panel discussions with local practitioners and guest speakers, the study covered a wide range of issues and programs, both past and present. The participation and dedication of all those involved in the study is a testament to their commitment to our community.

Special thanks are extended to the individual and corporate members who support the work of the League through their membership dues and donations, and to Syracuse University Continuing Education, which provides substantial administrative assistance to the Citizens League and the study.

Sandra Barrett
Executive Vice President

Acknowledgements

The co-chairs of the Study Committee would like to acknowledge the contributions of committee members Mary Burdick, Paul Driscoll, Carol Dwyer, Karen Kitney, John Murray, Larry Rutledge, and Peg Stroman. Each of them provided an extraordinary amount of input into the planning, development, and implementation of this study.

Without the help of Sandra Barrett and Regina Farsaci of University College, the study would not have been possible. We are also appreciative of Kim Collins for her writing and understanding of the subject matter.

The members of the Study Committee were deeply saddened by the unexpected death of a dedicated public servant, George Napolitano, Director of the City of Syracuse Division of Code Enforcement. We wish to acknowledge his participation in the study sessions and his valuable contributions to our understanding of code enforcement issues.

Russ Andrews

Jack McCrea

Joanne Reddick

Weekly Topics and Speakers

- March 23 **Role of Non-Profit Housing Corporations**
Jim Dessauer, Eastside Neighbors in Partnership
Tom Francis, Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation
Daniel Lang, Northeast Hawley Development Association
Marcia McGill, Housing Visions
Kerry Quaglia, Home Headquarters
- March 30 **Private Development in Syracuse**
Albert Adams, Jr., Signature Crest Builders
Steven Buechner, Riemann Buechner Partnership
Beverly Fair, M&T Bank
Don Radke, FM Realty Group
- April 6 **Code Enforcement, Public Plans, Programs, and Policies**
Steve DeRegis, Syracuse Common Council
Marcia Harrington, Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today
George Napolitano, City of Syracuse Division of Code Enforcement
- April 19 **Smart Living Downtown**
Linda Clark, Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation
Bob Doucette, Armory Development and Management
Elizabeth Kamell, Syracuse University School of Architecture
Paula Kluth, Syracuse University School of Education
Joe Russo, Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation
- April 20 **What Works in Community Development**
Rafael Cestero, The Enterprise Foundation
Eric Hangen, Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation
David Michel, Community Preservation Corporation
- April 27 **Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative**
Walter Dixie, Jubilee Homes
Eric Mower, Eric Mower & Associates
Vito Sciscioli, City of Syracuse Department of Community Development
Fanny Villarreal de Canavan, Spanish Action League of Onondaga County
- May 4 **Neighborhood Planning**
Paul Driscoll, City of Syracuse Division of Neighborhood Planning
Bob Haley, FOCUS Greater Syracuse
Peg Stroman, City of Syracuse Division of Neighborhood Planning
- May 11 **Neighborhood Schools**
Judy Brooks, Syracuse City School District
Stephen Jones, Syracuse City School District
Kate McKenna, Syracuse Teachers Association
Jan Lydell, CONTACT

May 18

Impact of Federal Policies

Nancy Kronen, Syracuse Weed and Seed

John Rennie Short, Syracuse University Department of Geography

May 22-23

Community Leadership Conference at Minnowbrook

Overview

Michael Freedman, Syracuse University Department of Anthropology

How Healthy Are Our Neighborhoods and City?

Kerry Quaglia, Home Headquarters, Inc.

Elements of an Outstanding Living Environment

Bob Haley, Ashley-McGraw Architects

The Challenges of Working for Change in Syracuse

Amatullah Yamini, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development

Building Codes: Past, Present, and Future

Nick Alteri, City of Syracuse Department of Code Enforcement

Model Programs to Increase Home Ownership and Rehabilitation

Greg Mansfield, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center

Richard Thornburgh, Syracuse University Environmental Finance Center

Community Courts

Charlie Collins, Greater James Street Business Association

Judge Brian DeJoseph, Syracuse City Court

Nick DeMartino, Onondaga County District Attorney's Office

Robin Potter, Neighborhood Watch

Bridget Regan, Community Courts Project, NYC

Visioning: Urban Citywide Design for Syracuse

Doug Sutherland, Franklin Properties

Panel Report--Solutions

Rev. Bill Coop, South Presbyterian Church

Ed Kochian, Onondaga County Office of the County Executive

Kerry Quaglia, Home Headquarters, Inc.

Amatullah Yamini, US Department of Housing and Urban Development

June 1

Historic Preservation and Housing

Christine Capella-Peters, New York State Office of Historic Preservation

Sam Gruber, Preservation Association of Central New York

Bob Haley, Ashley-McGraw Architects

Michael Tomlan, Cornell University Historic Preservation Planning Program

June 8

Neighborhood Advocacy

Twiggy Billue, Eastside Neighbors in Partnership

Rev. Bill Coop, South Presbyterian Church

Harry Lewis, Southeast University Neighborhood Association

Rich Puchalski, Syracuse United Neighbors

Housing & Neighborhoods: Tools for Change

Executive Summary

During the past several years, housing conditions and the housing market have been a preeminent concern in Syracuse. A great deal of effort and resources have been aimed at rehabilitating housing, promoting home ownership, addressing the problem of abandoned property, and generally improving housing options. The Onondaga Citizens League conducted a study of housing - the linchpin of healthy neighborhoods - to complement other efforts currently underway.

This study, "Housing & Neighborhoods: Tools for Change" is intended to review various approaches to housing revitalization and stabilization in Syracuse neighborhoods and recommend actions for improvement. In defining parameters for the study, the study committee asked three questions:

1. What housing-related tools are available, or being developed, to promote neighborhood revitalization?
2. Of the tools available, do any actually exacerbate the problem of housing market decline and poor neighborhood conditions?
3. Are additional strategies needed for healthy housing and neighborhoods, and, if so, what are they?

Twelve panel sessions addressed specific topics relating to healthy neighborhoods. From those sessions and presentations at the annual OCL Community Leadership Conference, as well as a review of other reports and studies, an abundance of information and opinions was gathered and considered in developing this report.

Although the primary focus of our study, housing is only a part of what keeps a neighborhood healthy. Economic activity, public services, physical design, and residents are equally significant. Throughout the OCL sessions, panelists offered similar perspectives on what constitutes a healthy neighborhood. A common theme among the presentations concerned the role of design and the involvement of residents in establishing and maintaining a healthy neighborhood. Clearly, it takes more than good housing for a neighborhood to be healthy and vibrant. The panelists offered another point time and again: *Visionary leadership and planning are essential ingredients to the sustainability of healthy neighborhoods.*

Finding #1

The disproportionate number of abandoned, dilapidated, and unsafe housing units in Syracuse is a critical, longstanding, and worsening problem. Concern over housing conditions and neighborhood viability has spurred numerous plans, programs, and incentives to address particular populations, targeted areas, or specific problems.

Recommendations

- ***Coordinate the efforts of the numerous public and private not-for-profit groups.***
There are numerous initiatives underway in Syracuse to address issues pertaining to housing and neighborhood revitalization. Within each initiative is strong leadership from individuals representing the citizen, government, business, academic, or nonprofit sectors of the community. The leadership from each group should collaborate more closely and fully engage citizens at the grass roots level.
- ***The Common Council, with the cooperation of the Mayor, city planning agencies and citizen groups should develop a Master Plan for city neighborhoods.*** Without a long-term vision for the city, approaches to housing problems will continue to be piecemeal, reactive, and even counterproductive. The vision should address housing, design issues, zoning to regulate development, and public infrastructure. A coordinated plan is the best way to ensure progress and accountability.
- ***The City should develop a specific, coordinated plan for downtown as a residential neighborhood.***
A vibrant downtown neighborhood can be a drawing card for the entire region. Downtown Syracuse has the potential to be a strong and attractive urban neighborhood. The City should encourage downtown market-rate housing through zoning changes, swift implementation of building code changes, a streamlined permit review process, a public improvement plan that recognizes downtown residential, and a coordinated marketing strategy.

Finding # 2

Public policies of the past hurt neighborhood housing and promoted neighborhood decline. Suburbanization, urban sprawl, and economic and racial isolation are outcomes of federal highway construction, mortgage insurance programs and lending practices, and urban renewal policies of past. Public policy changes are now needed to correct the detrimental consequences of past policy-making decisions.

Recommendations

- ***Adopt land use plans and regulations that promote investment in existing communities and minimize resource-wasteful development of green spaces.*** The City of Syracuse, as well as towns and villages in the county, should adopt guidelines for cost-effective, sustainable development practices, as outlined in the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency's 2010 Development Guide. Development decisions should be directed by long-term vision and recognition that the total community has an interest in the health and prosperity of the entire area.
- ***Expedite changes in building codes.*** The city needs to revise building codes that unnecessarily add cost to rehabilitation of existing structures. Current building codes, which are unrealistically strict and inflexible, stifle redevelopment of older and historic structures in urban areas. The consequence has been continued deterioration of property, disincentive to invest in particular neighborhood areas, and shifting of investment and growth to new, suburban development.

Finding # 3

Holistic approaches are necessary to create and sustain healthy neighborhoods.

Healthy neighborhoods evolve when the needs of residents are met. This requires attention to all facets of neighborhood life, including living accommodations, availability of services, cleanliness, and safety and security. Housing is just one element of a variety of economic, physical, and social factors that contribute to the character and vitality of a neighborhood and the quality of life of neighborhood residents. *Inattention to quality of life issues undermines neighborhood health.*

Recommendations

- ***Clean up city neighborhoods, including streets, sidewalks, and public spaces.*** Time and again image is cited as a problem for Syracuse. Litter and unkempt structures are not the only problems. Public infrastructure, such as streetlights and pavement, contribute to the aesthetic qualities of neighborhoods. Neighborhood parks and the facades of public buildings speak to the pride of a community and should be maintained. Enforcement of statutes pertaining to cleanliness should be applied to property owners who fail to keep their property clean. Campaigns promoting a cleaner Syracuse should be supported by the city and neighborhood organizations, with ongoing efforts to develop public awareness.
- ***Establish a community court in Syracuse as part of City Court to deal with quality of life offenses.*** Quality of life crimes - such as prostitution, minor drug possession, loud music, loitering, and trash littering streets, sidewalks and yards - affect the feel, image, and value of neighborhoods. The creation of a community court to handle these offenses would contribute in several ways to improving the health of neighborhoods. First, offenders are provided the opportunity to redress their wrongdoing in the neighborhood and to rehabilitate their behaviors. Second, cases can be processed with greater speed. Third, repeat offenders can be quickly identified, enabling judges to determine appropriate sanctions using neighborhood input in some instances.
- ***Allocate more resources and more responsibility to the City's code enforcement division to enforce regulations.*** Enforcement of statutes should be applied to property owners and residents who fail to maintain their structures and surrounding property. Even small infractions, such as broken windows and cars parked on lawns, if left unattended can signal a lack of community concern and lead to further neighborhood deterioration. The current code enforcement process requires reconfiguration to encourage a more aggressive and engaged approach to these quality of life issues. Housing code infractions could also be processed through a community court.
- ***Reestablish neighborhood elementary schools.*** Schools can serve as anchors of neighborhood communities, serving the needs of all residents. Services or programs promoting literacy, nutrition, eldercare, after-school tutoring, artistic activities, adult education, community building, alcohol and drug abuse prevention, and much more can be included in a manner that addresses identified needs and concerns of a given neighborhood at the present time. Such services are often not accessed by families due to transportation and time difficulties. Neighborhood schools can serve as a focal point for neighborhood identity and cohesion.

Finding # 4

Socio-economic diversity is a critical element to creating and sustaining healthy neighborhoods. Eligibility criteria for most existing housing programs are targeted at low- to moderate-income families, but middle-income individuals and families may also need economic assistance or incentives to purchase, rehabilitate, or maintain housing in the city.

Recommendations

- *Provide neighborhood revitalization incentives to attract and retain middle-income residents.* Providing incentives such as tax credits or financial assistance with down payment or closing costs to middle income people would enhance the stability and diversity of the neighborhoods. Build on existing programs, or adopt models used in other cities, for instance:
 - the city should use private funding to supplement public funds and extend incentives to middle-income populations;
 - traditional and nontraditional mortgage lenders should establish an equity assurance program for certain areas, guaranteeing buyers maintenance of their property value;
 - employers, unions and other organizations should establish assistance and incentives for employees, such as Syracuse University's guaranteed loan program, providing employees mortgage guarantees in targeted neighborhoods;
 - the city and county should offer tax or financing incentives to homeowners who rehabilitate historic properties according to preservation guidelines;
 - the city and county should phase-in increases in assessment due to rehabilitation on all needy properties throughout the city.

Conclusion

It is an exciting time in Syracuse to study these issues. The current efforts directed toward housing and neighborhood revitalization are monumental. Collectively, they are symbolic of the deep concern about the future of Syracuse neighborhoods and the commitment to finding sustainable solutions. What this report offers readers is an understanding of the underpinnings of the current state of neighborhoods in Syracuse and recommendations to produce healthy change. There is no single tool to improve the health of housing and neighborhoods in Syracuse. The continued implementation of existing programs and the creation of new tools will be important. What may ultimately be the most important aspect of developing healthy neighborhoods is the continuation of the collaborative activity among neighborhood residents and associations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, local schools, and private businesses.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS: TOOLS FOR CHANGE

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I. Introduction

A. Methodology

This year's study, "*Housing & Neighborhoods: Tools for Change*" is the product of the Onondaga Citizens League (OCL), an independent, nonprofit citizens group that studies issues facing Central New York and offers recommendations for resolving identified problems. Membership in the Citizens League is open to any citizen, business or organization in Central New York. Since its inception over twenty years ago, the OCL has annually examined a major issue through a series of presentations and panel discussions featuring local experts, community leaders, and guest speakers. A list of previous studies is attached at the end of this report.

The 2000 study involved twelve panel sessions, held from March through early June, addressing specific topics relating to housing and neighborhoods. All members of OCL, as well as members of local community groups, local government and elected officials and the media, were invited to the study sessions. In addition, the community at-large was made aware of the sessions through press releases to local media.

The OCL sponsored ten panel sessions at Drumlins, a meeting facility owned and operated by Syracuse University. Several of those discussions involved presentations at the University's Thursday Morning Roundtable, followed by a panel discussion. This format broadened the audience for the sessions, including broadcast of the TMR session on local public radio. Two additional panel sessions dealing specifically with downtown neighborhood revitalization were held in City Hall Commons in downtown Syracuse. The annual Community Leadership Conference, which took place in May at the University's Minnowbrook Conference Center in Blue Mountain Lake, was also part of the study. OCL members, as well as other community activists, business people, and government representatives took part in the conference.

From those sessions, as well as a review of other reports and studies, an abundance of information and opinions was gathered and considered in developing this report.

B. Report Structure

The bulk of the information presented in this report represents the knowledge and opinions of the many presenters and panelists who participated in the study, as well as the perspectives of the many citizens who took active part in the study sessions. The study committee developed the findings and recommendations based on the information drawn from the study sessions and from recent local reports on Syracuse neighborhoods. A listing of the presenters and panelists is presented in the beginning of this report.

In the following section of the report we present some background information on the current housing market, including a historical perspective on the decline of urban neighborhoods. We then look at some of the many private sector and public-private partnership housing and neighborhood initiatives underway in Syracuse, and consider the major public sector policies and programs in this area. We present some models of housing and neighborhood improvement strategies from other cities, and, finally, present the findings and recommendations drawn from our research.

C. Overview

Never before in the history of Syracuse have neighborhood residents, local government representatives and agencies, nonprofit organizations, and federal representatives put forth such an enormous - and collective - effort to address housing-related issues. As industry left Syracuse over the course of the past two decades, so did populations that resided in housing throughout the city. The presence of abandoned, dilapidated, or poorly maintained housing is of immense concern to city residents and government agencies. Homeownership and owner-occupied housing is at an all-time low. The OCL recognized the magnitude of the housing problems in Syracuse and decided to study the tools available, or needed, to maintain and produce healthy *neighborhoods*, a key to successful housing strategies.

In the early discussions about the study, the OCL put forth three central questions for the study to address:

- What housing-related tools are available, or are being developed, to promote neighborhood revitalization?
- Of the tools available, do any actually exacerbate the problem of housing market decline and poor neighborhood conditions?
- Are additional strategies needed for healthy housing and neighborhoods, and, if so, what are they?

It is an exciting time in Syracuse to study these issues. The current efforts directed toward housing and neighborhood revitalization are monumental. Collectively, they are symbolic of the deep concern about the future of Syracuse neighborhoods and the commitment to finding sustainable solutions. What this report offers readers is an understanding of the underpinnings of the current state of neighborhoods in Syracuse and recommendations to produce healthy change. There is no single tool to improve the health of neighborhoods in Syracuse. The continued implementation of existing programs and the creation of new tools will be important. What may ultimately be the most important aspect of developing healthy housing and neighborhoods is the continuation of the collaborative activity among neighborhood residents and associations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions, local schools, and private businesses.

Although the primary focus of our study, housing is only a part of what keeps a neighborhood healthy. Economic activity, public services, planning, physical design, and residents are equally significant. Throughout the OCL sessions, panelists offered similar perspectives on what constitutes a healthy neighborhood. A common theme among the presentations concerned the role of design and the involvement of residents in establishing and maintaining a healthy neighborhood. Clearly, it takes more than good housing for a neighborhood to be healthy and vibrant. The panelists offered another point time and again: *Visionary leadership and planning are essential ingredients to the sustainability of healthy neighborhoods.*

II. Housing Conditions in Syracuse

Several facts related to housing in Syracuse contribute to an understanding of the conditions of the neighborhoods:

- ❑ Over half of all housing in Syracuse was built prior to 1940.
- ❑ There are over 1,200 vacant or abandoned houses.
- ❑ The national rate for owner-occupied homes is 67%. In Syracuse, only 47% of housing are owner-occupied. Less than 20% of the homes in the inner-city section of Syracuse are owner-occupied.
- ❑ In 1990 Syracuse had 71,502 housing units, but only 65,046 households. Based on those figures, 9.2% of the housing units are vacant. It could be as high as 16% now.
- ❑ Approximately 30% of the occupied housing in Syracuse is in substandard condition. Over 66% of substandard housing is rental units.
- ❑ Over 56.4% of the households in Syracuse earn 80% or less of the Metropolitan Statistical Area median income of \$44,500.
- ❑ Among city residents, 22.7% are living below the federal poverty level.

In the context of neighborhoods in Syracuse, each of these facts is a variable in the aesthetic and livability qualities of a given neighborhood. Neighborhoods in Syracuse with high rates of owner-occupied housing are reported to have the least amount of vacancy, structural deterioration, and crime while the reverse is true for neighborhoods with low rates of owner-occupied housing.

In the seven areas of the city designated as distressed, transitional, or revitalization areas, 49% of the housing stock is multi-family units. It has been speculated that since the national trend for home purchasing is single-family homes, the multi-family homes are a serious problem in the Syracuse housing market. The *Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative Housing Market Study*, prepared by the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation in May 2000, stated that "...multifamily properties may play a significant role in the city's housing market decline, especially in the revitalization area". The frequency of substandard conditions in such areas often inhibits purchasing or occupancy opportunities for many multi-family homes on the market. The vacancy rate of multi-family houses is up to twice the rate of single-family housing. Vacant property can quickly become a haven for activities such as drug use and loitering which promotes neighborhood decline.

The costs of rehabilitation, issues of historic preservation, and a surplus of housing also contribute to the general conditions of housing in Syracuse. The City and nonprofit housing agencies continuously grapple with questions concerning whether to rehabilitate housing with values appraised at less than the costs of rehabilitation.

There are also statutes concerning property deemed to have historic value. There are numerous instances in which historic preservation statutes or interests conflict with interest in rehabilitating or outright demolishing property. The aggregate of these concerns influences the health of a neighborhood. The visibility of the conditions of the neighborhoods has impact on the pride of the community.

A. Historical Perspective on Neighborhood Decline

America is a place of “edge cities”, with most investment taking place on the outside, or edge, of the city’s core. The face of American cities could be compared to a doughnut with the center hollow from the lack of investment and the loss of vitality, and the “ring” represented by “sprawl”, with strip malls and vehicles serving as icons of American urbanism. It is important to take a historical look at the effect of federal policies on cities and neighborhoods in order to comprehend the blight many urban neighborhoods, such as those in Syracuse, suffer from today.

The New Deal ushered in a new era in American urban history in the 1930’s. The Federal Housing Administration, established in 1934, insured low-interest, long-term loans, stabilizing the savings and loan industry and proving a boon to middle-income suburban development. (Later, federal Veterans Administration-backed loans also provided indirect subsidies to large numbers of homebuyers). Under the government program, a housing classification system mapped and color-coded city neighborhoods. The federal government would not provide a mortgage guarantee for homes located in areas that were coded red, a practice later known as “redlining”. In Syracuse, half of the neighborhoods were redlined.

In 1937 Congress created the United States Housing Authority, providing financing and operating aid to local housing authorities to construct public housing. The Housing Act of 1949 included a public housing component intended to eradicate what had become known as the urban slums; however, many criticized the new large, high-rise projects that tended to become centers of crime and social problems.

The 1949 Housing Act also encouraged urban renewal by municipal authorities. The federal government absorbed two-thirds of the costs of demolition, and two-thirds of the difference between the cost of purchase and the sales price of the cleared land to the developer. In many cases, however, renewal seemed to result in more vacant lots than new development.

The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act compounded the problems of American cities. Highways that linked the cities encouraged interstate commerce but also facilitated auto travel over public transit and encouraged already growing suburbanization and reliance on the automobile. With the federal government absorbing 90% of the costs, I-81 was built in Syracuse. It surgically removed the heart of the city. Later, urban renewal led to the demolition of lower income housing in the core of the city and the construction of high-density housing.

As the plight of the cities continued to be recognized as a crisis, the federal response included many more initiatives designed to benefit city neighborhoods:

- The Housing and Urban Development Act of 1965 authorized money for new public housing and created a cabinet level Department of HUD.
- The Model Cities and Community Action Programs of 1964-65, were designed to involve residents in making and implementing policy (a move strongly resented by many local officials);
- The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 involved banks in local investments;
- The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination in housing that extended to the real estate industry, lenders, and advertisers; and
- The Financial Services Act of 1999 strengthened the notion that banks should be more responsive to community needs and should feel obligated to the locations they serve.

The current efforts to influence private investment back into the city are laudable, but it is difficult to undo the affects of the past. Recent history in Syracuse provides evidence of change in terms of public interest in neighborhood revitalization and government commitment to support it. The creation of formal and informal neighborhood organizations has proliferated in the past decade, resulting in positive activities geared towards strengthening relationships among residents, preserving historic buildings, improving aesthetic conditions, and participating in planning conducted by the City. At the same time, the City has sponsored the development of Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT) through the Division of Neighborhood Planning as a method to engage citizens in neighborhood planning processes undertaken by government. Within the various neighborhood organizations, strong leadership has emerged on the part of the residents. Individual neighborhood advocates and advocacy organizations ensure that residents have a voice in decisions that could affect them.

B. The Market Place

For more than a decade, residents, personnel, and elected officials of the city have recognized the toll that age, economic loss, and outmigration have taken on the overall value of property in Syracuse. Deterioration and declining property values did not occur overnight, but many longtime city residents believe the effect has been the most dramatic in more recent time.

While there are collaborative efforts, there are also competing interests among government agencies. Economic development professionals may believe that demolishing an old building to erect a chain drug store will promote economic activity beneficial to the community. Neighborhood planning professionals and historic preservationists may believe rehabilitating the building for multi-use purposes to preserve the historic character of a neighborhood community is more beneficial to the community. There are competing interests among residents as well. One resident of an old neighborhood may consider the chain drug store a significant

and wanted convenience while another may balk at the sight of a company logo raised to the sky.

Regardless of the perspective one has about methods to improve the health of Syracuse neighborhoods, the actual market conditions, structural qualities, and various historical attributes of a neighborhood must be considered. There are hard choices to make on the part of City planners, private developers, nonprofit agencies, neighborhood associations, and individual homeowners. There is a plethora of neighborhoods rich in old structures with the capacity to be beautifully restored but which prospective homeowners would not be able to afford. The modern building codes in some instances contribute to the expense of restoration or rehabilitation. Houses that are fully rehabilitated may not be able to retain value at the same rate as a new house built in the suburbs. The conveniences and sense of community of a neighborhood will be important to sustaining it into the long term. Proximity to schools and the work place are also important factors in healthy neighborhoods. Market factors cannot be ignored in neighborhood revitalization strategies.

Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative Housing Market Study

In the summer of 1999 the *Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative* (SNI) was established as a collaborative effort between the City of Syracuse, nonprofit organizations, and private sector leaders. The SNI became the first formal activity supported by federal funding awarded to Syracuse through the work of Congressman James Walsh to address the distressed housing and neighborhood conditions of Syracuse. Among the nonprofit organizations of the SNI is the *Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation* (NRC), a congressionally chartered nonprofit entity that provides a broad range of technical assistance to its affiliate organizations, which are dedicated to promoting homeownership and community revitalization. The NRC was charged by SNI with conducting a study of the housing market in the Syracuse community to “identify the challenges and opportunities that distressed neighborhoods face in today’s housing market, and to suggest a course of action that makes sense given current housing market conditions.”

The *SNI Housing Market Study* was prepared using data obtained from a variety of secondary data sources and primary data gleaned from interviews with local informants. Additionally, the co-authors of the study, Eric Hagen and Eileen Flannigan, facilitated a survey of over 6,000 residents of seven central city neighborhoods designated as “revitalization areas” by the City of Syracuse. The SNI Housing Market Study identified four chief challenges faced by distressed neighborhoods in Syracuse as **suburbanization, low homeownership rates, obsolete housing stock, and neighborhood marketing weaknesses**. The study added insight to public discussions of housing issues in Syracuse.

Suburbanization. In 1950 when the population of Syracuse was at its peak, it comprised roughly 65% of the population of Onondaga County. By 1990, the City of Syracuse comprised 35% of the county population. As the population of Syracuse was declining, Onondaga County not only gained residents, its geographic landmass of developed area increased by 72%. Between 1970 and 1990 the landmass of developed areas grew from 80 square miles to 137.6 square miles. The *SNI Housing*

Market Study points out that only 10 cities nationwide lost population at a faster rate than Syracuse.

The study suggests that redirecting regional growth back to Syracuse will be critical to its future. Suburban development has been economically and socially costly to inner cities throughout the country. It has taken years for metropolitan areas to recognize the far-reaching effects of sprawl and it will take years for any new “smart growth” initiatives to be realized. In Syracuse, suburban development has substantially taken away from its tax base as the tax base of Onondaga County has steadily increased. According to the *SNI Housing Market Study*, the City and County representatives should have in depth discussions to explore methods to strengthen regional collaboration and planning.

Low homeownership rates. The neighborhoods designated as revitalization areas had a homeownership rate of only 27% in 1990, compared to 40% in Syracuse proper and 64% nationwide. The nationwide rate is now at 67%. There has been extensive research on the sociological and economic impact of homeownership, or the lack of, in neighborhoods. Neighborhoods with high rates of owner-occupancy can typically be deemed as healthier than neighborhoods with high rates of renters.

The *SNI Housing Market Study* suggests that the low homeownership rates of Syracuse could be reversed. The lending rates for home purchases and home improvements in the census tracts of the revitalization neighborhoods of Syracuse are lower than all other areas of the city. The soft real estate market discourages many people from applying for home purchase or improvement loans for fear of no financial return later. There are also credit problems for many prospective homebuyers. The loan denial rate of the neighborhoods in the revitalization areas in 1998 was 21%, although some neighborhoods had denial rates above 30%. Other areas of Syracuse had a denial rate of 15%. Loans are denied due to poor credit or excess debt to income ratios. The study noted that poor credit is not isolated to the revitalization areas. About 40% of all households in Onondaga County can be characterized as high-risk borrowers.

Obsolete housing stock. Of the housing stock in the revitalization areas, 49% is two or three-family structures. The national trend for home buyers is single-family homes. The multi-family structures in Syracuse are more likely to be abandoned, tax delinquent, or in poor condition than single-family homes. Multi-family houses are difficult to market and sell at very low prices. The conversion of multi-family units to single-family homes, the demolition of dilapidated property, and responsible property management by landlords are cited in the SNI study as approaches to this challenge.

All demolition activity must be strategically planned and carried out—removing blight is as important as creating attractive places to live. Demolition of property, particularly multi-family structures in poor condition, may help a neighborhood. Unless there is a land use plan in place, however, vacant land can very easily become a dumping ground for litter and other forms of new blight. Addressing the problem of dilapidated multi-family structures in a manner that will produce real improvements requires forethought. Demolition should not be pursued in a reactive manner nor should it be considered the “best” solution.

Neighborhood marketing weaknesses. NRC research into neighborhood marketing strengths and weaknesses revealed that there are three primary issues that contribute significantly to the marketing weaknesses of neighborhoods: crime, schools, and aesthetics. This corresponds with the concerns expressed by community leaders and neighborhood residents who are currently grappling with the affect they believe such issues are having on property value in Syracuse neighborhoods.

Crime: Most of the concern over crime in the revitalization area neighborhoods involves quality of life crimes such as prostitution, disorderly conduct, and minor possession of drugs. While there are currently some excellent efforts underway to reduce the volume and presence of such crimes, none have the capacity to be far-reaching at this juncture in time. One effort, *Weed and Seed*, is financially supported by the United States Department of Justice. Its primary mission is to “weed” neighborhoods of old problems and “seed” neighborhoods with positive events. It takes a holistic approach by not only having perpetrators of quality of life crimes arrested, but also taking steps to provide the perpetrator opportunities to discontinue whatever activities s/he is participating in that are burdensome to the neighborhood. The Syracuse *Weed and Seed* is focused in designated areas of the City to maximize its resources effectively. It plans to expand as resources become available. There has also been a movement towards the creation of a community court in Syracuse that will specifically address quality of life crimes.

Schools: Quality schools are important to neighborhoods and are significant to where families choose to live. An interesting revelation of the survey of residents in the revitalization neighborhoods is that most are generally satisfied with the quality of schools in Syracuse. By the 8th grade, only 19% of students attending schools within the Syracuse City School District are meeting or exceeding grade-level standards in English and Math. In the wealthier Fayetteville-Manlius School District, 81% of students in the 8th grade meet or exceed the standards. The statewide rate is 38%. Although residents express satisfaction with the schools, the data pertaining to student achievement rates is published on a regular basis and may have a strong influence on a family’s decision to not purchase a home in Syracuse.

Aesthetics: The poor aesthetic conditions of many neighborhoods in Syracuse have drawn the ire of residents for quite some time. Real estate agents are quick to affirm the affect the conditions have on perceptions of Syracuse. The City’s Department of Code Enforcement has the authority to issue citations to homeowners who do not remove rubbish from their yards. Realistically there are too few code enforcement officers to regularly police neighborhoods for violations of litter ordinances. The campaign has raised awareness and has brought praise from Syracuse residents concerned about the effect of aesthetic qualities on their property value. In the spring of 2000, City Councilman Steve De Regis initiated a campaign to promote neighborhood cleanliness.

The *SNI Housing Market Study* identified three chief areas of opportunity available to distressed neighborhoods of Syracuse as the first-time homebuyer market, marketing the positive qualities current residents feel about the neighborhoods, and marketing the strong community life residents of the areas enjoy. The latter two opportunities were determined from interviews taken of residents in the revitalization areas. Realtors, developers, City representatives, nonprofit organizations, and residents alike have felt challenged to develop methods to take advantage of the opportunities.

First-time homebuyers. The promotion of homeownership has been a focus of several Syracuse nonprofit organizations for a number of years. Most of the funding used to support homeownership programs originates from federal sources with strict guidelines that limit most efforts to low-income individuals. Although it is in the public interest to support the ability of low-income people to purchase homes, there is concern that the programs should also target those in the middle-income range to diversify neighborhoods and enhance the capacity for long-term stability. This is particularly true for programs providing down payment and closing cost assistance. Federal policies on housing and neighborhood revitalization are seen by many as an impediment to attracting middle-income homeowners to revitalization neighborhoods. The problems associated with poverty may not change and the income demographics of the areas may not allow the private sector to feel confident about establishing businesses and services in the area. Nonetheless, homeownership has been shown to promote stability regardless of income statistics of a given neighborhood.

The *SNI Housing Market Study* revealed that there are currently 5,000 renter households in Syracuse, all of which could potentially purchase homes. The study states, "Of 186 metropolitan areas nationwide, Syracuse has the 49th most affordable housing stock and the 9th most affordable housing stock in the northeast. Simply put, affordability is not a significant obstacle to boosting homeownership rates". There was no distinction made between the affordability of the structure itself and the affordability of rehabilitating the structure if necessary. Most professionals involved in the housing issue in Syracuse cite rehabilitation needs as one impediment to selling homes in Syracuse. As with the homeownership programs, home improvement programs are also targeted at the low-income population, and unless a prospective buyer is able to afford the costs of rehabilitation and have confidence that the work will contribute to the equity of the home, s/he may choose not to buy. There are, however, financing programs available to investors seeking to rehabilitate property for rental purposes.

Marketing strengths. The survey of 6,000 residents of the revitalization areas of Syracuse revealed that "...the majority of residents would recommend their neighborhood to others as a good place to live". The study cited the convenience of close proximity to work and downtown as a major marketing strength of revitalization neighborhoods. While this point appears to be supported by residents who have spoken at various community forums, the convenience of *services* such as grocery stores is frequently mentioned as a shortcoming to life in the revitalization areas. For many prospective homebuyers, the convenience of services is more important. Certainly, initiatives to continue the success of Armory Square and make the downtown area of Syracuse more attractive may eventually attract services that meet the needs of residents who live close by.

Strong community life. Residents of the revitalization areas value their neighbors and the relationships they have with them. Most residents are also active within the community. However, the survey responses indicated that most residents did not believe that neighbors would work together to solve problems. The study suggested that, "...further community building work is necessary before the strong community life in these neighborhoods can be employed to improve other aspects of the neighborhood". There is clear consensus on this point within the community and

efforts from all sectors are underway to strengthen the neighborhood communities of the revitalization areas.

Aside from presenting the challenges and opportunities of revitalization area neighborhoods, the *SNI Housing Market Study* raises several key issues that should be considered in looking at the Syracuse housing market today and determining how to shape it into healthier neighborhoods for tomorrow. Attention should be paid to urban design and investments should be focused. Revitalization activities are not effective when done in a patchwork fashion. Planning the design and targeting the investments will promote continuity within neighborhoods. Strategies to address quality of life issues and to develop human service components of neighborhoods are also critical to sustainable revitalization efforts. The study emphasized the importance of partnerships to each aspect of neighborhood revitalization. The co-authors of the study were aware of the current commitment to partnerships among residents, the City government, private enterprise, and nonprofit organizations. They promote that partnerships not only be established, but actively used.

The final recommendations put forth at the conclusion of the SNI Housing Market study were:

1. Seek to enhance neighborhood market competitiveness.
2. Market neighborhoods to attract and retain residents.
3. Promote homeownership and work to reduce the predominance of rental housing, especially in revitalization area neighborhoods.
4. Use housing demolition strategically, with careful programming of post-demolition uses.
5. Make focused, sustained investments (“think small in a big way”).
6. Redirect regional growth back to the urban core.
7. Use the power of partnerships.

C. Historic Preservation

Syracuse is a 150-year-old city partially characterized by old buildings, which are vestiges of a more prosperous time when the Erie Canal produced a rich history of interstate commerce activity. Many of the older neighborhoods, particularly some of those on the Northside, still visually reflect a previous era. One can drive through the neighborhoods of Syracuse today and get a sense of the past. In some areas, commercial signs still hang on vacant buildings that once housed a bakery, pub, or clothing and alterations shop. Many Syracusans are committed to preserve sound, older structures and rebuild communities using history as a foundation.

Historic preservation sometimes conflicts with some revitalization strategies. Depending on one’s perspective and preferences, older properties that are vacant and hazardous can be demolished or restored and rehabilitated. Structural restoration can be quite complex. If the costs of restoring a building exceed projected worth, the

incentive to demolish may overcome the desire to preserve a functional architectural artifact.

At the same time, a restored building need not produce earnings to have value. There are economic advantages of historic preservation. Various studies have shown that property values in neighborhoods designated as historic remain stable. Although neighborhoods cannot be compared by city, records of the past thirty years indicate that property values in historic districts do well when the economy is flourishing and do better than others when the economy is down.

There are different experiences in different Syracuse neighborhoods. The roughly 290 houses of the Sedgewick neighborhood of Syracuse have an almost one hundred percent owner-occupancy rate. On the other hand, the Hawley-Green neighborhood, is partially dilapidated and is mixed with tenements. The maintenance of street lights is poor and the appearance and quality of life in the area is far worse than the Sedgewick neighborhood. Why is this so? In the Sedgewick neighborhood there are local zoning ordinances pertaining to historic preservation. There is an enforcement of standards and a review of the quality of work. There is a burden on the individual homeowners but the outcome of the collective is good and improves the overall value of property. The private investment of homeowners is protected, so they invest more.

Tax incentives could be used as incentives for homeowners in historic neighborhoods. Currently, there is a tax credit only for income-producing commercial property of historic value. For several years, historic property owners have been seeking a tax credit. President Clinton vetoed it last year but there is hope that it can be shown as a cost-effective means to rebuild neighborhoods. There is a real need for a tax credit for owner-occupants of historic property.

Institutional Support of Historic Preservation

The *Urban Design Center* is a two-year old entity that recently received funding to assist the City with projects. The Center will provide input in the design of all aspects of the project. Planning is a process with an ongoing evolution of various dynamics adapting to changing economic, social, and cultural conditions. The *Landmark Preservation Board* in Syracuse has a small part in checking historic properties for value. The style of a building determines whether it can be listed as a historic property, with changes recommended based on the interpretation of the style. There are about 500 buildings on the historic property list in Syracuse.

In addition to the work of the *Landmark Preservation Board*, which is essentially a watchdog for *listed* historic property, the City Planning Commission and departments of Economic Development and Code Enforcement each have a role in historic preservation. The owner of a building can request demolition and the Planning Commission can approve it. The Department of Community and Economic Development can support a new retail chain erecting a building because it will promote economic activity. The Department of Code Enforcement may identify numerous violations in a building that ultimately influence the owner's decision to attempt rehabilitation or seek demolition. The three agencies can work counter to the goal of the *Landmark Preservation Board* to preserve property.

There is a need for strong neighborhood policies in which planning incorporates the neighborhood character and considers the life cycle of the buildings, old and new. The impact of new buildings and their commercial purposes on neighborhood vitality should be considered. At the present time in Syracuse, this is not happening.

II. The Tools for Change

For many years, the City has allocated monetary and staff resources to address housing and neighborhood revitalization in Syracuse. Neighborhood-based and nonprofit organizations have responded by developing new strategies to combat deterioration and plan for the future. Although there are indicators of successful strategies, it is too soon to determine the long-term outcomes of the efforts to date. Many efforts are still in stages of infancy and it will be several years before the outcomes are realized. Nonetheless, the generation of new activities and the abundance of attention directed at housing and neighborhood revitalization is remarkable.

The *Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative*, the *Enterprise Foundation*, the *Community Preservation Corporation*, and the *Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation* are entities with a primary focus on investment strategies and related activities. Ideally, investments are strategically made in the rehabilitation or development of property with long-term vision guiding the decisions and activities of each investment. The outcome of the investment activities will be sustainable—and healthy—neighborhood communities. There are other nonprofit organizations with interests in targeted investment strategies, but which work more directly with consumers who will or can benefit from targeted investment in a community. These organizations often have similar goals and approaches and work in a cooperative manner to achieve long-term results. All are vital tools within the toolbox as they have continuous contact with the pulse of the community.

Aside from the newer initiatives underway, various programs to promote neighborhood improvements and revitalization have long been in place. In many instances these programs are based on successful outcomes elsewhere and have been developed into tools to use in Syracuse. This section will provide information and insight on the various initiatives, or tools, discussed at the OCL panel sessions.

A. Public-Private Partnerships

Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative

Congressman James Walsh had obtained funding for Syracuse for the purpose of housing and neighborhood revitalization. He considered the development of strong partnerships imperative to the success of the federal government's investment. The Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative (SNI) is described as a collaborative effort between the City of Syracuse, residents, local and national nonprofit organizations, and private businesses.

There will be a total of \$15 million directed towards the SNI in two different phases. The first phase, currently in progress, will receive \$5 million. A portion of this funding will be used for housing rehabilitation and demolition, which averages \$12,000-\$15,000 per property. There are over 1,000 vacant properties in Syracuse. The intent of all rehabilitation and demolition is to effect lasting and tangible improvements. Physical infrastructure, such as pavement and curbs, is equally important to substantively improving blighted areas.

There are four primary goals of the SNI:

1. Position neighborhoods to successfully compete for investment.
2. Improve the quality of life in Syracuse neighborhoods.
3. Strengthen the community.
4. Help neighborhood residents to build assets.

These are broad goals, each containing relative subsets of other goals. Within the broad goals of the SNI is the creation of a revolving loan fund to provide low interest mortgages and assistance with home repairs not approved under federal guidelines for existing programs. A revolving loan fund will enable a broader range of individuals to obtain mortgages and home repairs. Presumably this could include homeowners in the lower-middle-income economic categories.

The private sector will be instrumental in developing the revolving loan fund and other goals of the SNI. A priority is to raise \$3 million from the private sector to begin the activities. Some initiatives will go beyond \$3 million. For example, mortgage guarantees have value beyond time. Aside from the flexibility of private funds, contributions will indicate commitment. The ability of the SNI to demonstrate the commitment of the private sector to its goals is powerful in the long term as new concepts emerge. In the short term, commitment of such magnitude will be invaluable to garnering the trust of the public.

The fundamental challenge to Syracuse neighborhoods is to ensure there is good reason to invest as opposed to addressing needs through public funding alone. The loss of equity in investments is very problematic for Syracuse neighborhoods. People are unable to sell their property for what they put into it. Through the SNI, the focus will be on demand and what factors are impeding investment. Neighborhood problems have to be addressed holistically. The presence of crime, school issues, and poor aesthetic conditions all encourage low rates of investment. It will be critical to look at all problems within neighborhoods at the same time. The SNI will not be addressing social problems, but it will be integrating social service programs into its planning and implementation processes. Programs such as *Weed and Seed* will be able to work with the SNI to accomplish this.

Nonprofit agencies believe that the SNI will provide an excellent avenue for them to explore concepts and determine which might be viable. If successful, the SNI will provide neighborhood residents tremendous insight into the mechanisms of government funding, the benefits of private sector support, and the need for citizen participation in neighborhood planning and development.

Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today (TNT)

Neighborhood associations in Syracuse have historically captured the attention of city leaders and in many instances achieved getting needs met and, at the very least, their voices heard. The City's Department of Community and Economic Development, Neighborhood Planning Division researched the implementation of "neighborhood planning councils" in other cities and believed it would work in

Syracuse. The year 2000 marks the beginning of the third year that *Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today* (TNT) has operated in Syracuse.

The goal of TNT is to get as much participation as possible from anyone with a stake in the neighborhood. It is essential to the long-term success of TNT that schools, the Common Council, and directors of city departments be involved as partners. TNT was established by dividing Syracuse neighborhoods into eight distinct sectors, with planning as the focus activity. Each sector has a set of goals that have been categorized (i.e., beautification, economic development, etc.) and prioritized.

Philosophically, TNT is not unlike many nonprofit organizations dedicated to neighborhood revitalization. It believes that change must occur on a block-by-block basis. All sectors discuss neighborhood issues and concerns in a comprehensive manner, but building code violations and youth are the primary issues of discussions at many of the meetings. Residents who participate in TNT use the monthly meetings and other forums as a venue to share mutual observations and information in the neighborhoods. There is often a sense of frustration regarding the lack of any mechanism to rectify certain problems in a more immediate time frame. However, the frustration has served as a unifying force in many instances. This is particularly true now as homeowners have recognized the significance of disinvestment in their neighborhoods compounded by the presence of vacant buildings or lots, littered property, and quality of life crimes. All of these kinds of problems have compelled participation in TNT.

Redevelopment of the former Ward Bakery site is an excellent concrete example of success under the TNT program. The residents developed and conducted a survey regarding reuse of the site and discovered that most respondents favored a playground for small children. Next, the residents engaged students from the Syracuse University School of Architecture to work with the community in the development of design options. The actual work was bid out to a local firm and work on the playground completed. The process took three years, even with funding available, but the important point is that residents endured the process, learned from it, and reached consensus on an important decision—a decision made by the neighborhood community for the neighborhood.

Downtown Syracuse is a neighborhood of about 1,500 residents, although many people do not think of downtown as a neighborhood. The residents are interested in bringing back basic amenities such as grocery stores, but understand that community-building necessitates smaller scaled activities first. The Downtown TNT sector chose to survey the condition and number of downtown parking lots and rank them based on several categories with plans to address the most problematic lots. Another current downtown sector interest includes appealing to the *Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative* (SNI) funding for housing projects. Recent activities have included the creation of pamphlets and a website. A highlight of the downtown sector was working with the Department of Public Works to have a pedestrian underpass behind the MOST improved.

Other TNT successes include Lakefront area residents working with the city government to shut down Club Atlantis. Residents near the Carousel Center were worried about truck control around and successfully petitioned the city to close down their street. Residents of Eastwood successfully worked to get the Common Council

to pass a moratorium on development. Most neighborhood advocacy groups and neighborhood associations have embraced TNT and consider it complementary to their work in addition to being a resource for the communities they serve.

Other than coalescing residents within neighborhoods, and neighborhoods within the city, TNT localizes issues of concern. The Syracuse Division of Neighborhood Planning has the ability to produce data relating to population demographics and other statistics, indicators, and trends occurring in distinct neighborhood areas or census tracts. Such information is useful to residents and City staff is validating concerns and developing methods to tackle the issues. In this regard, the role of the City is to provide technical support to the TNT sectors that will allow citizen leaders to disseminate the information and motivate constructive and collective action when appropriate. The big issue that transcends all sectors and neighborhoods is “look” or “curb appeal,” as well as code enforcement. TNT is currently considering the practicality of designating block captains who would work with the City and have responsibility for monitoring a small area around where they live for the purpose of beautifying their blocks.

Whatever growth pains TNT has experienced, it has managed to successfully engage residents, local businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Some of these entities, such as Home Headquarters, Inc., can serve as vital links to facilitating collaborative activities aimed directly at neighborhood revitalization. The pain in the growth can be attributed in part to the processes involved in learning on the part of City personnel and residents alike, processes of teambuilding, compromise and consensus, and processes of establishing mutual trust. There is broad support by residents for TNT and in 1999 it was officially recognized as a part of the city charter, with citizen involvement included in the budgetary process.

Weed and Seed

In 1980, crime was out of control in Washington, DC. Additional arrests did not and do not make crime go away. Issues such as literacy and social service needs of those perpetrating and victimized by crime also need to be addressed. The *United States Department of Justice* (DoJ) initiated a program to revitalize neighborhoods using holistic strategies to address problems related to criminal behaviors. In 1996 Syracuse was the first city to receive funding for a concept developed by the DoJ, *Weed and Seed*.

Weed and Seed has four key components to its overall strategy:

- law enforcement;
- community policy used as a problem solving model;
- prevention, intervention, and treatment to address the broader picture of human needs and use neighborhood-based approaches by looking at assets and challenges; and
- neighborhood restoration involving infrastructure.

The four components bring everything together. *Weed and Seed* is proactive rather than reactive. It succeeds under the notion that communities take a step back and look at their assets. A portion of the Northside is designated as a *Weed and Seed*

area. It was a joint effort between the United States Attorney's Office and the Syracuse Office of the Mayor. Both went into the community and met with everyone willing to come to the table, setting aside any past differences. This included private sector business people.

Weed and Seed has developed initiatives around themes, such as housing. Bridges have been built between residents and businesses. Bringing youth groups together has started youth development initiatives. An example is *Prevention Through the Arts*. Such things operate on limited funds but provide a lot to a community.

Weed and Seed also has a coordination strategy. It is not about money but about people working together with everyone putting the pieces of the puzzle together. It makes sense to people. It is not political and has succeeded in bringing people to the table. This year *Weed and Seed* was integrated into *Home Headquarters, Inc.* for the purpose of coordinating neighborhood revitalization efforts. This move has enhanced the partnerships the program has with other community stakeholders (individuals and organizations) by fostering collaborative planning and implementation between connected issues.

In February, the Near Westside received *Weed and Seed* designation status. It's very competitive because the national interest is strong and the capacity for this type of program in the DoJ is low. Syracuse is a nationally recognized model and has received national accolades.

B. Targeted Investment

Investment, and the lack of, was mentioned as a chief concern by many of the panelists who spoke to OCL, regardless of the topic area of the session. "Targeted investment" refers to investments made in specific areas at specific times in anticipation of certain long-term outcomes. Investment is a substantive tool in waging the war against neighborhood blight or decline. It demonstrates to others that an area has value. A single carefully planned investment in an area known for its flaws can spawn additional investment that, over time, can transform a neighborhood from a haven of property neglect and criminal activity to a mecca of housing and economic activity attractive to a diverse range of people.

Improving Syracuse neighborhoods and property values through targeted investment activity necessarily requires diligent strategic planning and an enormous commitment of time on the part of all stakeholders (government, nonprofit agencies, private businesses and residents). Ideally, targeted investment strategies put forth a vision for an entire area and implement plans on a block-by-block basis. In Syracuse and all other communities, an inherent concern is whether there is a preference to target investment towards neighborhoods already in decline, or neighborhoods on the verge of decline. Additionally, investors have two primary considerations. First, what will be the return on the investment, and, second, to what have the outcomes and sustainability of the investment been reliably predicted? The amount of return influences the comfort level of individuals and corporations investing in property.

A recently publicized example of a prospective targeted investment activity is the concept of converting the Salina Street portion of the Northside into a "Little Italy". The premise of the concept is to highlight the ethnic history of the area to develop

housing and commercial property. In this instance, not only does the concept address general problems of blight, there are factors of historic preservation and social diversity.

Although there are several private and nonprofit entities attempting to attract investment to Syracuse neighborhoods, two nonprofit organizations are strongly involved in targeted investment activities. The *Enterprise Foundation* and the *Community Preservation Corporation* have long histories of success in the arena of targeted investment. Both organizations regularly collaborate with government, private enterprise, and other nonprofit organizations and are able to present models of their successes.

The Enterprise Foundation

The *Enterprise Foundation* was established in 1982 by an urban developer, James Rouse, and his wife Patty, with the mission to see that every American has access to fit and affordable housing. In 1981, Rouse met some nuns and residents in Washington, DC, who were interested in revitalizing a vacant building that was located across from the nunnery. They wanted the building to be a neighborhood asset. Rouse knew that the provision of resources and technical assistance would make a difference in the presence of the building in the neighborhood. This single effort was the impetus for the creation of the *Enterprise Foundation*.

The *Enterprise Foundation* works primarily with cities and nonprofits in a consulting capacity, developing partnerships with residents, financial institutions, funding agencies, community-based organizations, and private businesses to rebuild and revitalize areas one block at a time. It has provided assistance with over 100,000 units of housing. Improved housing contributes to improved aesthetic qualities of an area and ultimately sparks interest in economic development. This cycle of performance and accomplishment inspires the revitalization of whole areas over time.

In 1986 a number of partners came to the *Enterprise Foundation* expressing the belief that cities in Upstate New York could benefit from its work. The *Enterprise Foundation* conducted focus groups with nonprofit organizations, officials, and residents to learn of gaps in services. The outcome was a focus on capacity building and technical assistance, grants for project development, and the support infrastructure necessary for the nonprofits to become sustainable businesses. Another outcome was the development of a revolving loan fund for low interest, short term financing to nonprofit organization for specific projects. The *Enterprise Foundation* facilitated the ability of the nonprofit organizations to have capital on the front end to develop assets. To date, the *Enterprise Foundation* has spent about \$342 million on fifteen projects in Upstate New York.

Through the *Enterprise Social Investment Corporation*, which makes equity investments in family projects, the Foundation is working with twenty organizations in New York. This has resulted in assistance to 635 housing units, which represents about \$15 million in investments. Most of the work of the *Enterprise Foundation* is concentrated on focused activities and sustained investments. The Foundation will focus most of its attention in Rochester and Syracuse over the next 3-5 years.

In Syracuse, the *Enterprise Foundation* has been working with a number of organizations, including Syracuse Model Neighborhood Housing, which the Foundation assisted in the acquisition of properties from private landlords. The properties are now transitioning from blight to affordable housing. The *Enterprise Foundation* is also working with the *Syracuse Neighborhood Initiative* (SNI) by providing assistance in leveraging private funds to complement the federal resources. This kind of assistance will enable the goals of the SNI to move forward.

The *Enterprise Foundation* has learned many lessons over the years. Success in community development works where there are strong public-private partnerships. This is obvious wherever there is sustained revitalization. The partnerships are what have made the difference here, in NYC, and in Cleveland. Private investments on top of what the public has done leads to success.

The *Enterprise Foundation* has found housing to be a platform that gives people a safe place and from that place, people can do other things. The *Enterprise Foundation* is now active in economic development through an initiative called the Community Employment Alliance, which is an attempt to promote dialogue between employers and residents. The Enterprise Childcare Program attempts to bring quality childcare to low-income people to ensure a sustainable investment leading to jobs. Housing is not the only answer. There are other things involved in healthy and viable communities, but housing provides a base.

Land trusts are vehicles to revitalization by allowing community organizations to maintain control and ownership of the land. The buyer owns his/her home. Land trusts limit speculation and gentrification and have been used in a lot of places. Where they have been the most successful is in locations where there has been speculation and gentrification.

With regard to neighborhoods on the verge of real problems, should cities initiate revitalization efforts in the most devastated areas or those that are on the verge of serious disinvestment? If it is transitional and has the ability to go one way or the other, efforts must occur building by building and the investment has to be sustained. The reason the *Enterprise Foundation* works with community-based nonprofits is to retain community control over property and absentee landlords who do not behave responsibly.

Leadership is an important element to all neighborhood revitalization efforts. Leadership within the community-based organizations is as important as political leadership. In Syracuse, Congressman Walsh has provided a strong burst of leadership with respect to the infusion of federal funding. The funding has enabled other leaders to move the SNI forward. This is particularly true for the nonprofit leaders in the City. Change will occur, but it will have to take place in steps, with community support and sound targeted investment.

The Community Preservation Corporation

In 1972, the New York Clearing House Association prepared an analysis of two neighborhood communities in New York City that were suffering from severe housing deterioration and abandonment. The report recommended the “creation of a permanently staffed entity, with sufficient management skills and financial resources, dedicated to improving specific neighborhoods”. In response to the analysis, the Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) was established in 1974 in NYC and has since expanded throughout New York State and New Jersey with the mission to provide loans for affordable housing and financing for rental housing. The banking community in New York State is its primary source of funding.

CPC loans are generated by the private sector. The advantage for investor owners is long term, fixed rate loans. In 1995, CPC closed on 54 loans on 1,500 units to a total of \$27.8 million. In Syracuse, there has been a total of \$8.5 million in financing of 39 loans for 520 units. The bulk of the business in Syracuse is dedicated to small buildings. Rental housing stock is usually one to four units in Syracuse.

A hallmark of CPC’s success is its philosophy of partnership. For example, it has a partnership with *Home Headquarters, Inc.* in which CPC provides financing for rental units in buildings Home Headquarters has financed the rehabilitation of. Another partnership is with *Empire Housing Corporation* in which CPC provides construction loans. The focus of CPC is rental property, but occasionally it finances new construction projects.

CPC is eligible for the U.S. Treasury Department’s Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund. This allows the CPC to take the initiative to encourage investment in distressed neighborhoods in Syracuse. The CPC has been administering a program using CDFI funds to make 0% or deferred loans for investments in distressed areas. As of January, they have made 21 loans in the target area, ten of the loans with CDFI funds. \$314,400 is now committed, which represents a 14 to 1 leverage ratio.

In addition to the priority of providing financing for housing in distressed areas, CPC has been engaged in using mortgage insurance as a tool to attract investment to distressed neighborhoods. According to the CPC 1999 Annual Report, “The initial success of CPC’s investments and the introduction of a new mortgage insurance program...led to a historic agreement with the Police Pension Fund and the New York City Employees Retirement system. The funds agreed to provide forward-committed, permanent take-outs for CPC construction loans, essentially freeing up significant monies for reinvestment.”

Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation

The *Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation* (NRC) is a national community development intermediary that receives annual appropriations from Congress. The NRC, as it operates today, provides technical assistance, funding, and partial support for a nationwide network of NRC affiliates. There are over 200 affiliates today that have collectively leveraged \$1 billion in investments across the country. The NRC provides technical assistance in a variety of areas—real estate financing, business and community revitalization plans, lending, and marketing. The NRC also makes grants to affiliates for new projects. There are three network affiliates in Syracuse: *Home Headquarters, Inc.*, *Syracuse Model Neighborhood Corporation*, and *Syracuse Housing Services*.

Like the *Enterprise Foundation*, NRC is dedicated to the principles that partnerships are powerful, nonprofits are needed and investments should be focused.

C. Nonprofit Agencies

Northeast Hawley Development Association

The *Northeast Hawley Development Association* (NEDHA) was created to provide quality housing in the Hawley neighborhood of Syracuse. NEDHA goals include rebuilding the City of Syracuse through providing quality housing. It is less expensive to build new houses in many cases than to rehabilitate existing structures. NEDHA seeks to produce low-maintenance housing that adapts to the historic qualities of neighborhoods and will attract committed homeowners. It is sometimes difficult to find buyers who are not overqualified to receive grants towards the purchase, and not underqualified to be eligible for loans. In fact, this is one of the biggest challenges to NEDHA.

Housing Visions

Housing Visions was formed in 1990 to provide affordable housing in the near Northside and the greater Genesee neighborhood communities. The niche of *Housing Visions* has been the rehabilitation and management of rental units. Most of the apartments it manages are three- and four-bedroom units. It is difficult to balance the leveraging necessary to keep apartments affordable. As a nonprofit, *Housing Visions* is always uncertain about its funding. It has enjoyed federal tax credit allocations, which are distributed to the states. The tax credit funding has to be reapplied for on an annual basis and it is difficult to know with certainty if the funds will be renewed.

To date *Housing Visions* has renovated 109 units, and prepared families for eventual homeownership. While renovation may be costly, *Housing Visions* feels the need for affordable property warrants the cost.

Home Headquarters, Inc.

Home Headquarters, Inc. (HHQ) is a private, not-for-profit organization that was established in June 1996 with the mission to provide comprehensive services to improve the quality of housing and neighborhoods in the City of Syracuse through homeownership and home improvements for low and moderate-income people. HHQ is a one-stop shop for home ownership. HHQ is a chartered member of the *Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation* (NRC) and a *NeighborWorks®* affiliate.

The primary products offered by HHQ are:

- Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program
- Home Improvement Loan Program
- Distressed Property Program
- Rental Rehabilitation Program
- Opportunity Headquarters (an apprenticeship program)
- Syracuse Homeowner Assistance Repair Program (SHARP)

In addition to these products, HHQ offers home ownership and credit counseling services to prospective or current homeowners. Homeowners who participate in the Down Payment and Closing Cost Assistance Program are required to complete a ten-hour accredited homebuyers education course provided by HHQ.

The role of HHQ and other nonprofits is to do things that no other entity can. But they need private sector partners. Realtors, bankers, and other private partners view nonprofit organizations as competition. It is incumbent on the nonprofits to respect this view and avoid giving banks bad loans or non-commissioned work to realtors. Nonprofits must be willing to provide support to homeowners throughout the process—before and after they get into the house. This includes post-purchase counseling. Over half of new homebuyers return during the first year to obtain home improvement assistance. Nonprofits also need to collaborate and cooperate. HHQ plans to open in the future a one-stop-shop to coordinate all nonprofit housing services available in Syracuse. At this time, HHQ frequently has an administrative role in disbursing funds to other nonprofit housing organizations. These partnerships have worked well and should be continued.

Credit barriers are a significant impediment to homeownership in Syracuse. HHQ is often considered the lender of last resort because by and large, many of its customers do not qualify for conventional methods of lending at a bank. Nonetheless, HHQ has assisted 550 homeowners with an average income of \$17,000. The average loan is \$11,000 for repairs. If a family can be kept in a home for \$11,000, vacancy is prevented. Otherwise, vandalism and the inability to get owner occupants back into the neighborhood and paying property tax will emerge. HHQ provides up to \$3000 in assistance with down payment and closing costs. The average family income of HHQ customers to the program is \$24,000. The average home cost is \$50,000. The program has generated \$1.2 million in commissions for realtors in Syracuse.

It is important for the issue of consumer credit to be considered in revitalization efforts. Government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector can develop and promote products and services that can only have impact if there are customers who qualify. It is not just bad credit that is problematic, it is also debt-to-income ratios. This is not as significant of a problem in comparable cities throughout the country, but for some reason it is in Syracuse. This is a grave concern to HHQ, particularly as so many resources and opportunities are available to improve distressed neighborhoods.

Syracuse Model Housing Corporation

Syracuse Model Housing Corporation (SMHC) was conceived in the early '70s when a large number of abandoned properties became apparent. The premise was that abandonment occurred due to the condition of the housing. SMHC purchased and repaired the properties, but selling them was difficult due to the market conditions. SMHC has purchased 300 properties and has sold 127. The remaining properties have been converted to rental units. The positive aspect of this is that at least the rental units have provided housing for large, low-income families.

In 1984, to fill vacant lots, SMHC built and sold single family homes. A \$20,000 subsidy was needed for the banks to be able to provide loans for houses that averaged in value at \$70,000. Of those who purchased homes, 95% came from the same zip code area.

Forty-nine of the buildings purchased by SMHC were owned by "slumlords". Repairs could only be made with funding that was attached to low-income owner occupancy over the next thirty years. It is dangerous to think that a nonprofit can revitalize on the backs of the poor.

Eastside Neighbors in Partnership

At the core of Eastside Neighbors in Partnership (ENIP) is a neighborhood association that decided to do housing. It has deep roots in the community and has renovated about fifty housing units. ENIP is also creating a land trust by which it will own land for housing. The goal is to have mixed income housing that will be a part of the Mutual Housing Corporation. ENIP previously tried a housing cooperative but the legal complexities were too severe. The Mutual Housing Corporation will have a board consisting of homeowners. ENIP is positioned to do 10-20 units per year, which is small compared to the need.

ENIP is a comprehensive community-based development organization with another goal to address the whole range of underlying conditions responsible for the deterioration of neighborhoods. As part of the comprehensiveness, ENIP is attempting to collaborate with private sector entities, nonprofit organizations, and others to create affirmative projects. Among the projects is the rehabilitation of an old Jewish war veterans building and converting it into the *Eastside Neighborhood*

Arts, Culture, and Technology Center (ENACT). The building was designated historic as a result of the energy of a coalition of groups. Altered Space and other historic preservation groups saved it. ENACT will be a place where people can come to produce and display arts, including video and audio projects. ENIP can raise funds necessary for the activities. A teen center will also be there. Five units of housing are planned for low-income artists. It places housing in the context of community

D. The Private Sector

During the past decade, private housing developers and realtors have witnessed significant declines in the housing market of Syracuse. As middle income home buyers have selected newly built homes in the suburbs of Syracuse, much of the housing stock of Syracuse has deteriorated. Neighborhoods have become distressed from age and have experienced outmigration due to the loss of industry. Such factors dramatically affect the ability to sell homes to people with stable economic resources. Many homeowners in Syracuse have opted to convert their homes into rental units. In neighborhoods where rental property exceeds owner-occupied property, it is particularly difficult to sell homes at a fair market rate. Given the proliferation of political, governmental, nonprofit, and general community activity in the housing arena, private firms have expressed concern about the effect of the activities on the private market. This section will provide insight into the concerns of private developers and realtors about neighborhoods in Syracuse.

Signatures Homes

Signature Homes has built over 500 homes in CNY over the past 20 years, but only two of those homes were built in Syracuse. There are common themes to requests for home building—most are built for families looking for good school districts, conveniences in services, and accessibility to jobs. Individually or combined, each of these factors can be considered problematic in Syracuse.

Developers and members of the Home Builders Association would love to build in Syracuse and make a profit at the same time. Roughly thirty building permits were issued in Syracuse to build houses last year, with 90% issued to nonprofit housing agencies. There are no incentives to develop or build in Syracuse if one is profit-motivated. The private sector would like to be a part of the revitalization efforts in Syracuse, but City policies make it very difficult to do so.

Lincoln Hill Associates

Lincoln Hill Associates is a 20-year-old housing development corporation. It has built 80 homes in Syracuse, all market-rate, unsubsidized, privately financed projects. Which generate nearly a half million dollars annually in local taxes.

Among the projects undertaken by the developers was the Lincoln Hill project, on a former city school site. Lincoln Hill built 19 patio and townhouses, which originally

sold for \$95,000. The sales prices dropped as the market softened, but are now on the rise. Another project, Bishop Hill Estates, included a combination of new construction and historic preservation on an underutilized James Street site. The nine homes of another James Street project originally sold for \$125,000, but now go for \$140,000.

There is a market for upscale housing in Syracuse, as evidenced by the Sedgewick area. Sedgewick homeowners are not afraid to invest in their property because they do not worry about how others will take care of their property or preserve their homes. In other neighborhoods, houses lose historical character through poor maintenance and inappropriate renovations investment.

Comstock Commons, on the site of a former city nursery, began in 1989 and is now two thirds complete. Three-quarters of the people in the 25 Comstock Commons homes are not from Syracuse, but they came because they were seeking certain services. This illustrates that there is room in the city for niche projects.

Stronger visionary planning needs to take place on the part of the City of Syracuse. Many communities in the United States have a “Parade of Homes”, which takes a section of a city and builds homes in the \$50-\$90,000 range. It has been very successful in Rochester. For every subsidized unit in Syracuse, a market rate home must be built. How many dollars do subsidized homes contribute to the tax base for delivery of public services?

Building permit costs have doubled because the Syracuse Common Councilors use the fees to balance the budget. Developers see the fees as an impediment. The City should consider no permit fees, graduated tax rates for new homebuyers, and other subsidies to homebuyers and developers.

FM Realty

The TNT process should be used in addressing housing and neighborhood revitalization needs in Syracuse. There are reasons people do not want to live in Syracuse—the schools chief among the reasons. There need to be programs created in neighborhoods to attract people in the 28-34 age range.

There is a market in Syracuse. During 1991 through 1997 Syracuse suffered the worst housing recession since statistics have been tabulated. The average property lost at least 10% of its value, but there is a new market today. FM Realty recently listed one house at \$89,000 which sold in eight days; one listed at \$105,000 sold in three weeks; and one listed at \$72,000 sold in three days. Properties sell if they are perceived as valuable. Niche projects are linked to perceived value. For example, there is a move to get the Strathmore area designated as a locally protected site.

We need to think outside of the box, combine efforts of visioning, decide who we are and what we want to be. While programs and projects such as TNT and Focus Greater Syracuse say some things about what residents want, the City has no marketing plan in place to respond to those things. That needs to change.

M & T Bank

For the past seven years, Beverly Fair of the mortgage department of M & T Bank has worked with low- to moderate-income individuals preparing to purchase a home. From all perspectives, education needs to be a big part of improving or rebuilding neighborhoods. Banks believe it is critical and products are not beneficial without education. Bank products include incentives for closing costs and affordability ranges.

The banks would like to see greater collaboration among banks, realtors, builders, the City, and the community in general, with communication between the entities recognized as vital. If these groups are not working hand-in-hand, the neighborhoods do not benefit. The education from financial institutions to buyers is needed more. There needs to be more post-purchase counseling. The City already supports pre-purchase counseling programs. Banks also need to be educated about what can be done, what can be learned to build up the community. The tools are here to make things work and banks want to be active partners for that reason.

E. Neighborhood Activism and Advocacy

Through an array of public forums and studies, homeowners in the revitalization neighborhoods of Syracuse have expressed concern over declining property values that have occurred as a result of abandoned or dilapidated property, quality of life crimes, and “dirtiness”. In most neighborhoods where these concerns are present, there has been a moderate level of success in community organizing to face political and social challenges. Behind the facade of the obvious unkempt structures are neighborhood communities rich with human diversity and a will to effect change.

In some neighborhoods, organizations were created over twenty years ago in an attempt to maintain the character of a neighborhood or in response to threats to neighborhood stability. With a minimum of cash resources, most of these organizations rely almost exclusively on the commitment of residents to perform tasks whether it is answering a telephone or distributing notices about an issue or event. Several organizations have emerged as formal entities with enough resources to support staff members and office space. Regardless if it is a formalized nonprofit or a block group, these groups can and do make a difference in the outcome of decisions affecting them.

As neighborhood revitalization processes continue in Syracuse, the participation of these groups is paramount to the long term success of every project. Although it was not feasible to conduct panel sessions at which all of them could provide input, OCL study sessions provided a snapshot of some of the groups working on behalf of Syracuse neighborhoods. In addition to organizations established within neighborhoods, residents have been also been engaged in City-supported initiatives, primarily *Tomorrow's Neighborhoods Today* (TNT), which will be highlighted in a later section. Regardless of the forum, residents are indeed concerned and involved in bringing health and vitality back to their neighborhoods.

Syracuse United Neighbors

Syracuse United Neighbors (SUN) is a nonprofit community organization that represents the south, southwest, and near westside neighborhoods of Syracuse. Formed twenty-three years ago, it is membership-based and has roughly 900 dues-paying members. SUN has four meetings per month at which residents prioritize the importance of issues affecting the neighborhoods and develop strategies to rectify those that are most pressing. Vandalism, loitering, drug houses, and loud cars are among the most annoying problems. All contribute to the difficulty in attracting new homeowners to the area. Of the 686 properties scheduled to be auctioned in August, 274 (almost 40%) were in neighborhoods served by SUN. The Executive Director of SUN, Rich Puchalski, cites this figure as evidence of the pervasiveness of problems within the neighborhoods. Regardless, SUN members are committed to rebuilding their community.

SUN members often feel slighted by City Hall. Regardless what government funding is awarded to Syracuse, the perception of residents in SUN neighborhoods is that they rarely receive any of the benefits. As a result they have adopted a somewhat confrontational style with City agencies and officials to generate attention to their concerns. Recently, SUN met with the fire chief of Syracuse to complain about 300 tires in the backyard of a house on Coolidge Avenue. The Syracuse Department of Code Enforcement was not responsive to a letter about the tires and eventually the fire chief “shook up City Hall” to finally have the tires removed from the property. In partnership with South Presbyterian Church, SUN met with Syracuse Chief of Police John Falge last year to discuss various issues in the neighborhoods. It is hopeful that more dialogue will take place, but, by and large, SUN does not believe it will feel satisfied that proper attention is paid to their neighborhoods. Thus, they are committed to “do whatever is necessary to get results”.

South Presbyterian Church

Seven years ago, the South Presbyterian Church located at Colvin and Salina Streets became a vehicle to mobilize the community around issues of importance, including housing and neighborhood life. The problems faced by SUN members mirrored the problems faced by members or supporters of the Church, many of them also members of SUN. In addition to establishing its own mission of community building activities, the Church opened its doors as a space for community groups to gather. The Church defined the geographic area that would be its mission ground and committed itself to using the skills, interests, and background of Church members to motivate the direction of its mission. The pastor of the Church, Bill Coop, believes that the key to advocacy is putting people together. Through his leadership the Church has been involved in activities such as computer classes for neighborhood residents, the provision of food and clothing, and participation at neighborhood events. It is apparent that these are efforts intended to address connected problems and seek a means to resolving the problems as parts of a whole as opposed to dealing with them one part at a time.

Aside from fulfilling its mission to rebuild the community it serves, the South Presbyterian Church is committed to working with other organizations and groups.

The overarching philosophy of the Church is that need drives the mission of the Church, the number of people involved is not important, and duplication of effort is not an issue because when there is a human need it is rare that there is enough response to meet it.

Southeast University Neighborhood Association

The Southeast University Neighborhood Association (SEUNA) was established 27 years ago with the mission to promote and preserve a pleasant neighborhood environment, ensure a residential quality of the neighborhood area near Syracuse University, and induce citizens to take an active interest. SEUNA has membership dues of \$6 per year or \$10 for two years. Since its inception, the only additional funding it has received came from the Central New York Community Foundation to publish an informational booklet.

SEUNA members keep abreast of quality of life issues generally, but most of their battles have involved commercial interests in or near their neighborhoods. This includes property owners who rent to the student population. Absentee landlords are considered a substantial problem in the area and SEUNA monitors and reports statutory infractions of housing on a regular basis. Among the successes SEUNA has enjoyed is joining others to halt the burning of infectious waste at Oakwood Cemetery. On another occasion, they prevented Wegman's from building on the Hookway Tract in order to preserve green space. SEUNA is currently awaiting a decision from the Federal Communications Commission on the ability of radio station WAER to increase its wattage to 50,000 watts. The station already causes static electrical interference in SEUNA neighborhoods and residents fear that increased wattage will make it worse.

SEUNA has not always been successful in its endeavors. Members sought to have the Carrier Dome built at Skytop to prevent the noise and traffic of events from disrupting the peace of the neighborhood. Nonetheless, their concerns were noted and the university has included SEUNA in its own efforts in the area. This includes efforts to police neighborhoods known for student drinking and rowdy behavior. SEUNA is currently observing the discussions about establishing a community court in Syracuse and will get involved in any other issue of concern to their area. As SEUNA leader Harry Lewis has said, "Most residents view the Southeast University neighborhood as one heck of a place to live and consider the battles worth the while".

Eastside Neighbors in Partnership (ENIP)

Eastside Neighbors in Partnership (ENIP) is a registered nonprofit organization dedicated to providing comprehensive community services in the eastside neighborhood area. It receives funding from a variety of sources including federal Community Development Block Grants. Many people in Syracuse know ENIP primarily for its work directly related to housing. Among the other services it provides is community organizing and leadership development for neighborhood residents. This work falls under the Eastside Action Coalition, which operates out of the ENIP offices.

The empowerment of neighborhood residents is the clear theme of ENIP's work. In the almost thirteen years that it has existed, it has created numerous task forces to pursue activities related to particular issues of the neighborhoods it serves.

Mobilizing the collective is viewed by ENIP as a way to enable the predominantly lower income residents to speak for themselves rather than expecting others to speak for them. It is a way to foster confidence in residents so that they can "sit at the table with the bigwigs" and have a voice in decisions affecting the neighborhood. At the helm of this work for ENIP is Twiggy Billue who espouses that investing in and training leaders works by helping organizations of people to obtain organized money. ENIP believes that participation does not require government dollars. It believes that people have a job to agitate one another in order to act on passions and to develop leaders to speak on behalf of the neighborhood. ENIP has realized many successes from its work in leadership development. Ultimately, it considers the purpose of advocacy is to increase human development to empower people to do good things, to make change, to reclaim what belongs to them, and to work collectively.

The hard work and initiative of neighborhood organizations and residents has reaped a number of rewards for individual neighborhoods and the City of Syracuse itself. Significant leadership has emerged to represent neighborhoods at City Hall and other venues. It is arguable that if not for the coalescing of the residents over time, Syracuse would not be so focused on neighborhood revitalization now. Elected leaders such as Congressman Walsh and others have witnessed the work of residents and neighborhood-based organizations and have mandated that they be involved in initiatives supported by federal funding. It is understandable that many residents of the revitalization neighborhoods feel frustrated at times. However, in a recent publication listing neighborhood and tenant associations in Syracuse, there were 58 identified with addresses and phone numbers. There are more at the grass roots level. If ever there was a city of citizens ably working together to improve their neighborhoods, Syracuse is it.

III. Public Sector Policies and Initiatives

There are four major prongs to the role of the public sector in neighborhood revitalization:

- The provision of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and other funds to support the work of nonprofit agencies and programs directed at disadvantaged population groups;
- Spearheading and supporting technical assistance and other programs, such as housing or crime prevention strategies, that can be adapted to meet local needs,
- Regulatory or statutory; such as health department codes, building codes, and local ordinances pertaining to zoning or certain human behaviors, and
- Establishing public policy that affects neighborhoods, such as eligibility criteria for federally supported assistance programs, designs of transportation or public transit systems, and requirements of public schools.

A. Community Development Block Grants

The City of Syracuse directs much of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds it receives from the federal government to the nonprofit program, which enables them to conduct such business as promoting homeownership and housing rehabilitation. CDBG funds begin as a tool of the public sector in fact, but are utilized by the nonprofit sector. At the federal level, the United States Department of Justice and Department of Housing and Urban Development offers support to communities to develop programs and concepts at the local level to promote neighborhood revitalization through approaches that extend beyond the issue of housing, and reach into areas of human services. At the state and local level of government, there are various initiatives pertaining to housing, small business development, and human services that are intended to have impact on improving neighborhood health.

It can be argued that the public sector does contribute to neighborhood revitalization efforts. However, many would argue that the policies enabling or supporting the content of the public sector's toolbox are in many instances seriously flawed. At various OCL panel sessions, presenters offered criticism of the constraints placed on CDBG funds to direct assistance to predominantly low-income individuals. The criticism is steeped in the belief that the prospect of improving the health of a neighborhood can significantly increase if there were more incentives to attract middle-income individuals and households. The federal statutes guiding CDBG and most other funds inhibit the ability of nonprofit organizations to work with middle-income individuals who may well be open to moving into distressed neighborhoods.

The sequence of outcomes and consequences to federal policies took place over decades. Although many of the programs supported by the federal government should be applauded, there are questions about whether policies in place actually undermine some of the intentions of the programs.

B. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

In 1999 the *United States Department of Housing and Urban Development* (HUD) opened a storefront on Jefferson Street in downtown Syracuse for the purpose of promoting home ownership and community revitalization. The hallmark of its work is the *Community Partnership Program*, which has two missions: restore the public trust, and empower people and communities. The staff of the storefront are “community builders”. The community builder role has a six-point strategy, which includes promoting jobs, economic opportunities, and empowering people and communities. Community builders build partnerships within the communities they serve. In Syracuse, this includes partnerships with Home Headquarters, universities, schools, faith-based organizations, and community organizing networks. Uniting the church community has been one of the most difficult tasks.

HUD provides many grants, including those for revitalizing severely distressed housing and Section 8 certificates and vouchers which should be helping people move off of public assistance. Other HUD programs include the Public Housing Drug Elimination Program, Economic Development Program, and Operation Safe House which supports the Officer and Teacher Next Door programs. HUD also supports Section 202/811 for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and the FHA Multifamily Housing program which supports the Lead Paint Hazard Reduction Program. The HUD Office of Community Planning and Development funds brownfields projects, provides assistance with homelessness, and supports Youthbuild, which gives youth the opportunity to partner with universities and learn trade skills—half of their time in the program is spent in the classroom. The HUD Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity also has an educational and outreach initiative.

Community Development Corporations (CDC) also receive assistance from Community Builders. CDCs are about job and business creation, producing affordable housing, and institutional development to educate families and individuals.

C. Syracuse Department of Code Enforcement

Syracuse Department of Code Enforcement deals with both new and existing structures with varying degrees of success. Building code enforcement is frequently regarded as the solution to problematic structures within neighborhoods. Or, insufficient building code enforcement is regarded as the cause of problematic structures that blight neighborhoods. Code enforcement departments and staff members get caught in the middle of complicated issues for which the issuance of a citation is not a cure.

At one time, there was a lot of federal funding available for homeowners to perform repairs. Those funds are no longer available in the same way. People are older and poorer now and often cannot afford to improve or repair their homes. So, they often walk away from their property, leaving it to become a

problem for the neighborhood. Also, in Syracuse, there are numerous absentee property owners who are known for not maintaining their property.

The Department of Code Enforcement is comprised of about 50 staff members, 11 of whom are inspectors. For comparison, Buffalo has 70 inspectors and Rochester has about 40 inspectors. Syracuse could use more and it is hopeful that some of the federal funding recently awarded to Syracuse will provide for that. The County did provide one inspector for the Syracuse Department of Code Enforcement, specifically for rental apartment properties that receive specific subsidies.

Inspectors see tenants move from place to place, damaging property. However, rarely is a tenant held responsible for a code violation — it is typically the property owner. Codes works with the Department of Social Services in a program to train people how to take care of property. Of 300 inspections, 25 revealed serious damage to property resulting from tenant behavior. Of the 25, three quarters of them did damage far beyond normal wear and tear. These tenants go through the training program. If they continue to damage property, they can possibly lose some of their subsistence income.

Some property owners are not familiar with the process of owning property. They buy real estate for investment purposes. The Department of Code Enforcement participates in a landlord training program with Home Headquarters, Inc. It is always well attended and includes presentations by the police and codes inspectors.

The Department of Code Enforcement receives cases in a variety of ways, primarily through permits and complaints:

Complaints: Last year the department received about 10,000 complaints, with each inspector handling roughly 400 cases. The inspector inspects, provides a letter allowing the owner 15 days to correct the problem, or take an option to sign an agreement to make the correction at a later time. If there is no response to the letter, the department has a two-step procedure. First they attempt to find the owner, often with 30-40 days passing before it is realized s/he cannot be located. Second, they refer the case to the legal department. At that point, a \$10 per day fine accumulates. It takes the legal department about two months to file the necessary paperwork. It is also at this point that the case is completely out of the hands of the Department of Code Enforcement. This is more efficient than in the past and there is a person hired specifically to collect judgments. The department once had a half-time lawyer doing the work, but funding prohibits the ability to do that now.

Permits: The Department of Code Enforcement has raised fees for building permits, to rates in line with cities of comparable size and demographics. Permit fees bring in \$1.6-\$1.8 million per year, making it a self-sufficient entity. Some of the revenues from fees go towards demolition. The department also initiated fines under the Bernardi administration. There has always been a provision for fining, but it was never implemented until the Bernardi administration. Out of 10,000 cases, the department ends up getting about 90% compliance. About 1,000 go to the legal department which is often able to get a “Confession of

Judgment” to get compliance. This allows problems to be resolved without actually going to court. The property owner agrees to correct the problem(s).

Building Code Reform: Code reform began several years ago in response to complaints from builders who said that building in bordering states was less costly. A state panel was formed of code administrators, developers, and architects.

The New York State Building Code Council (17 political appointments) voted to bring in the international building code but it will be revised for New York. The first step was to set up a committee for each of six divisions of code. Each committee now meets weekly, with oversight provided by the New York Department of State. It is still meeting and ironing out the “New York-isms”.

Last year New York put \$1.5 million in the budget to get codes into effect. This year \$3 million was allocated to be disbursed to municipalities for the purpose of training code inspectors. The prerequisite of the new codes is that it can’t be adopted until all inspectors are trained. The trainers recently trained themselves and will train others in July. The Governor’s Office of Regulatory Reform (GORR) hopes to have the code online by 2002. Most codes are devoted to new construction, and there is interest in adding rehabilitation codes to it. There is an effort to combine several other codes into one. New York may pick up the New Jersey code for rehabilitation. Special inspectors are called for in the new code to serve as liaisons between the city and the developer.

D. Neighborhood Schools

Last year the *Syracuse City School District* hired a new superintendent, Dr. Stephen Jones. Jones, who once worked at the Kennedy Foundation, was influenced by Sargent Schriver who believed that the heart of the community is church and school. If both are kept viable, the community will be solid. Politically right but educationally unsound decisions, such as those relating to desegregation efforts, have contributed to the demise of the neighborhood schools. In Syracuse, less than fifty percent of children attend school in their neighborhood, weakening the role of schools as community anchor.

One of the biggest laments of public school teachers has been the inability to connect with parents. Parents live across town and the school is not always accessible. The ability to connect is important. Neighborhood schools provide the opportunity for connections to grow, including connections with business. Connections also enable schools to have better hours for education-related services and for a sense of community to develop. Transit is a big issue. Can kids get to school safely? And, not go through bad areas, terrible traffic intersections, and perhaps get bussed regardless of the 1.5-mile distance criteria? There is a cost but the costs of safety and connectedness are intangible.

Equity and excellence are inextricably tied and one can’t exist without the other. The Syracuse School District needs to engage in dialogue with parents, assuring them that their kids will get an excellent education, no matter which school they attend. The community can expect quality programs in all Syracuse schools, so that kids are not forced to go across town to attend school.

In 1987 the Dr. King School endeavored to become a community school through the support of a grant to New York State. There were over 500 students of which 283 were bussed in each day. A program had to be developed to attract families to stay. Parents were interviewed and asked questions such as, "...if money was not the object, what would you like to see?" The program began at 7:00 in the morning and ended as late as midnight. There was a neighborhood advisory group of clergy, probation officers—members of whatever agencies families of the school were involved in. All were brought to the table on a quarterly basis. There was a latch key program, an early morning program, and a third shift program. The school brought services in to meet the needs of the family and has spent the last nine years continually submitting grant proposals to sustain the programs. There is also a clinic in the building. Institutionalizing the programs makes the district a bit nervous in terms of State funding being used to support them. It was difficult getting parents from the immediate community to participate but this became less of a challenge due to the willingness of staff members to go out into the community.

The idea behind the community school movement is growing around the country. The seeds have been planted and the concept broadened. It integrates the delivery of education with the delivery of social services. It is tied to the education reform movement. The Carnegie Corporation's "Nation at Risk" was the impetus for the movement. Raising standards, site-based management, accountability, and testing tools were all called for. What is missing is that it is not addressing the things that prevent kids from learning in the first place. Why can't we keep school buildings open later for after school, but also for community agencies to deploy employees? The Salvation Army is now providing case managers in seven schools for pregnancy prevention. The "Primary Mental Health Project" is in seven schools. It brings resources of the United Way and the County Mental Health Department to the table. Turf issues are not all that important. After school programs have a 90% rate in Syracuse.

The main purpose of community schools is academic enhancement—an hour or so of after school tutoring should be provided. There are mixed feelings about returning to community schools due to the housing market. The need of the school, the need of the child and the need of the neighborhood all need to be balanced. Parents should never be expected to experiment with their children. Schools need to be developed with particular focus areas and options available to parents. Although it cannot be said that every school is equal at this point, a goal of magnet schools is to allow choices. There are variations to neighborhood schools and community schools. Schools that are a focal point of community, where families know one another, are important.

In integrating schools, race is not as big a variable as socio-economic status because the latter promotes a greater disconnect. Parents leave schools due to socio-economic reasons. Race and residency is not an issue. Prior attempts with residency requirements of school employees made it difficult to have a sufficient pool of qualified personnel. There were lags in finding a sufficient number of people for different units of the schools, including areas such as food service. Parents want kids in schools where they feel a sense of sameness. Educational standards are also at issue. Parents buy houses on city lines so that they can live in the same neighborhood but have a choice about schools. Parents move

children out of neighborhood schools and put them into schools they feel good about.

E. Community Courts

The *Center for Court Innovations* functions as an independent arm of the New York State court system. It is where the community court concept first evolved. In 1993, New York established its first community court in New York City. The mission of the Midtown Manhattan Community Court is to hold people accountable for their actions and tie consequences to the actions. The primary focus of the Court is quality of life crimes that chip away at neighborhoods and nurture future problems.

Community courts are public-private partnerships. They are deeply rooted in gaining and maintaining public trust and confidence. There are eleven cities in the United States with community courts—Atlanta, Hartford, Austin, Memphis, West Palm Beach are among the cities. All were communities in crisis with criminal justice systems unable to effectively handle quality of life crimes. Higher instances of violent crime in the 80's and 90's consumed the majority of resources, causing lesser crimes to be ignored.

Community courts are not just to solve crimes or impose punishment. Some also do code enforcement, such as in the Frazier Community of Memphis. Most of the code enforcement matters before the court involve rental property. The Memphis court claims that the work of the court has resulted in the cleaning up of fifteen properties, which is considered significant due to the previously large number of vacant lots. During the '90's in Hartford there were problems with gangs and organized drug sales. Now all low-level crimes are processed through a community court system. All community courts are different because all communities are different. What works well for one community may not work well for another.

There are two key components to community courts: problem solving and prevention in a proactive and rehabilitative manner. Noise is a significant problem in New York City. The Midtown Community Court serves 140,000 residents but 1 million people are there during each workday. Residents complain about noise, but often the police cannot do anything. A "Noise Awareness Day" was held and resulted in interest in changing noise codes in NYC. In Manhattan, the judges are not rotated. All records are computerized. There is a 70% compliance rate with community service orders issued to defendants.

An effective community court applies five main principles:

- Bring the court back to the community. There are two courts in Portland, Oregon, one strategically located in a neighborhood in the city, and a third scheduled to open downtown to deal primarily with homelessness issues. The court locations in the community give residents a sense of security, help police process cases quicker, and

provide police officers status reports on their arrests that end up in court.

- Provide meaningful punishment for misdemeanor crime. Community courts have developed intermediate sanctions such as community service that are closely supervised. Seventy-five percent of defendants arrested for low-level crimes are drug addicted and most are unemployed. Judges look at requiring accountability but also how to help people and provide a benefit to citizens.
- Restore justice to the community. There is no such thing as a victimless crime. West Palm Beach requires community service to be performed within the community where the crime occurred.
- Involve communities in the courts. Prior to the 1960's New York City had local neighborhood level courts. The courts now want the citizens to be involved in the planning processes of the community court. There is a community advisory board in New York City, which includes police captains and residents. The advisory board issues report card to the court. This increases the level of accountability of the courts which are willing to be evaluated by citizens.
- Provide mediation and neutrality. Courthouses are being opened up for meetings concerned with community issues and in some respects operate almost like community centers.

Community courts are a gateway to treatment. In New York City there is a social service counselor in the building and what is referred to as the Alternative Sanctions Floor for short-term drug treatment. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are also held there. Community courts are not touchy-feely. The courts attempt to hold defendants accountable, provide help when there is a need, and pay back communities.

Financing community courts varies. They generally operate through a combination of state and city funding sources. Foundations now only provide seed funding. It takes about \$1.2 million per year to operate the court in New York City. Some cities have community policing integrated into community courts with prevention and enforcement actions taken. In New York City, the community court evolved from the community policing program.

The City of Syracuse is currently exploring the prospect of establishing a community court to address quality of life crimes. In Syracuse, all of the pieces for such an initiative are here, but need to be coordinated. The drug court has been in place for several years and is generally perceived as successful. The time between arrest and disposition is critical—getting people at the time of arrest is more beneficial. A community court will likely enable a more expedient disposition system.

A community court is only part of the solution for quality of life crimes in Syracuse. We must be realistic in addressing problems. While observing the community court operating in Hartford, Connecticut, Nick DeMartino of the

Syracuse District Attorney's Office and Judge Brian DeJoseph learned that the social service component was larger than Hartford had originally anticipated. The human service needs of defendants were significant. Courts are successful because they are tailored around the problems of the community the courts serve. This must be a consideration as the community court concept is discussed in Syracuse. The City of Syracuse is assessing the impact of quality of life problems and has obtained a \$60,000 grant to put an implementation process into place. Other grants are also being applied for.

The *Greater James Street Business Association* has been supportive of community courts for some time. The organization formed several years ago as a result of shootings at a daycare center. It worked with police and others to get a handle on crime problems of the area. As a result, the occupancy rate went from 60% to 90% but then nickel-dime crimes and quality of life problems that affected employees and how they felt working there began to surface. These problems led to support for a community court.

There are a lot of linkages between quality of life crimes and social and economic problems. The Youthbuild program supported by HUD, the Neighborhood Watch chapters, and other programs should be partners in the effort to establish a community court in Syracuse. A bridge between the family court in Syracuse could be built to the community court. The City will be the architect of the court and can include whatever it wants.

Most quality of life crimes such as littering, open container, prostitution, noise, loitering, and loud music are defined now by city ordinances. Many of the ordinances will have to be revised. Building and housing codes may be included in the Syracuse community court. While there is support for establishing a community court in Syracuse, it will take time to fully assess the pervasiveness of quality of life crimes, the extent to which the court can contribute to neighborhood revitalization efforts, and what sources of funding can support it. It is hopeful that a community court in Syracuse will prove to be an innovative model that will contribute to improving the health of neighborhoods.

IV. Successful Revitalization Strategies

In cities throughout the country there have been numerous revitalization strategies employed to create and sustain healthy neighborhoods. The models reviewed for this study were targeting lowering the costs of homeownership. A diminished cost to the private buyer increases consumption and generates a preference for home ownership and a long-term interest in maintaining property. The public benefits when the owner is the occupant. Several of the models described below have been considered for replication in Syracuse, either in part or in whole. Additionally, there are several programs operating in Syracuse already using some of the same methods.

- In Holyoke, Massachusetts, CDBG funds were used to construct new housing at a cost of \$60,000 per unit. Rehabilitation was funded and land ownership was retained through the Holyoke Community Land Trust for 99 years to ensure affordability upon resale of the housing.
- In Rochester, New York, there are funding sources that enable owner-occupants to purchase homes at a twenty-three percent discount. HUD is selling more homes and realtors are working with the city to increase home ownership in designated areas.
- In Jacksonville, Florida, “Head Start to Home Ownership Program” has provided financial assistance to low to moderate income individuals through down payment loans equal to five percent of the purchase price, closing costs, and/or a reduction in principal. The loans are forgiven if the homeowner remains for five years.
- In Cleveland, Ohio, the “Homeward Program” supports the Cleveland Housing Network in the acquisition of houses in selected neighborhoods and rehabilitates them to meet code. The down payment is set around three percent and participating banks provide loans one to two percent below market rate.
- Also in Cleveland, the “Afford-A-Home Program” provides first time homeowners loans below market rate interest; interest-free second mortgages with deferred payments; and minimal down payments, repair, and closing costs.
- In San Bernardino, California, the “Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resale Program” provides loan guarantees for financing sought by contractors to perform rehabilitation and acquire property; down payment and closing cost assistance; and comprehensive home buyer seminars.
- In Joplin, Missouri, there is a “Single Family Residential Grant Program” that grants up to \$15,000 to homeowners to correct code violations. Inspectors videotape the pre and post rehabilitation

efforts. Joplin applies sixteen percent of its CDBG funds to rehabilitation and assists thirty homeowners per year.

- In North Little Rock, Arkansas, the city formed three CDCs, providing fifty percent of the funding to CDCs in the Enterprise Community. Among the programs is the Homeownership and Rehabilitation Program. There is also a neighborhood safety initiative underway, community policing substations, and increased code patrols. Subsidies and low interest loans are provided to police officers who buy homes in the area.
- Atlanta, Georgia boasts the Land Bank Authority” which is an interlocal nonprofit authority that takes title to vacant or abandoned property and processes it into productive residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Delinquent taxes are waived. Over 237 parcels have been processed in two years. Fifty percent of the funding for the program is through CDBG funds.
- In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the “Philadelphia 500 Initiative”, with a goal to attract 500 first-time homebuyers annually, expanded housing counseling services which included trained counselors reviewing purchase agreements and providing assistance with negotiations, mortgage products, and financing. It also provides \$1,000 settlement assistance grants.
- The Comprehensive Community Initiative is a model currently being used in certain cities, similar to TNT. It involves comprehensive urban revitalization, is centered on citizen participation, and collaborates with government agencies. It is financed by CDBG funds, private foundations, and other sources. The CCI avoids piecemeal solutions, addresses a multitude of needs of the residents, develops community action plans, and significantly transforms neighborhoods. It has been difficult to implement and the impact will occur over time so the success is difficult to measure. An example of a CCI is the Sandtown-Winchester Project in Baltimore, Maryland. Problems of unemployment, vacant and substandard housing, and illegal dumping are being addressed. The community priorities are housing, job training and creation. It is an integrated program in which residents received construction training while building housing in the community. Over 1600 homes have been renovated or built with 250 residents employed on the project. Violent crime is down twenty percent since 1992.
- Another example of a CCI, conceptually similar to TNT, is in Atlanta. The goals are to empower citizens to identify problems and develop solutions and foster collaboration among agencies, service providers and others. There is a five-year budget of \$32 million, all from banks, corporations and foundations.

The public sector has a responsibility to support, facilitate, and sustain neighborhood revitalization efforts. The common theme of the revitalization models was partnerships between the public and private sectors. The government alone cannot make sound policies, devise tools for change, enforce laws, and correct its own errors. Various panelists and audience members of the OCL sessions commented on the investment the government is now making towards neighborhood revitalization efforts that are necessary in part because of past and current government policies.

OCL STUDY LIST

Onondaga Citizens League Studies 1979 – 2000

- 1979 Equality and Fairness in Property Assessment
- 1980 Young People in Trouble: Can Our Services be Organized and Delivered More Effectively?
- 1981 The County Legislature: Its Function, Size, and Structure
- 1982 Declining School Enrollments: Opportunities for Cooperative Adaptations
- 1983 Onondaga County Public Works Infrastructure: Status, Funding, and Responsibilities
- 1984 Police Services in Onondaga County: A Review and Recommendations
- 1985 The City and County Charters: Time for Revision?
- 1987 Blueprints for the Future: Recommendations for the Year 2000
- 1988 The Role of the Food Industry in the Economy of Onondaga County
- 1989 Poverty and its Social Costs: Are There Long-term Solutions?
- 1990 Syracuse Area Workforce of the Future: How Do We Prepare
- 1991 Schools that Work: Models in Education that can be used in Onondaga County
- 1992 Town and Village Governments: Opportunities for Cost-effective Changes
- 1993 The Criminal Justice System in Onondaga County: How Well is it Working?
- 1994 The Delivery of Human Services: Opportunities for Improvement
- 1995 Reinvesting in the Community: Opportunities for Economic Development
- 1996 Building a Non-Violent Community: Successful Strategies for Youth
- 1997 Security Check: Public Perceptions of Safety and Security
- 1998 Onondaga County School Systems Challenges, Goals, and Visions for the Future
- 1999 Economic Development: Models for Success
- 2000 Housing and Neighborhoods: Tools for Change