



# **RESTORING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES:**

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## **Applying Lessons from Comprehensive Community Change Initiatives to Rebuilding Neighborhoods in New Orleans**

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# History of Comprehensive Community-Based Interventions

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- 1960s**                      **War on Poverty, Gray Areas, Earliest CDCs**  
(Place-based, comprehensive, local empowerment)
- 1970s -**                      **Trend toward more categorical approaches**  
**1980s**                      (Advances in know-how around jobs, housing, etc.)
- 1990s -**                      **Renewed interest in comprehensive approaches**  
**2000s**                      **that offer lessons for New Orleans (CCIs)**



# Goals of CCIs

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- Social: Improvements in child and family outcomes
- Physical: Improvements in housing and environment
- Economic: Economic development and poverty reduction
- Civic/quality of life: Empowered community and social capital

# Guiding Principles:

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- **Comprehensiveness** – To address multiple disadvantages simultaneously  
Synergy: whole is more than sum of parts
- **Community Building** - Participatory, building capacity, creating connections among people and organizations, empowerment



# CCIs Bring Together the Best of What's Been Learned

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- Bridge the two sides of the anti-poverty and community development field: The “people” versus “place” divide



## **“People” focused interventions**

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- Clear and bounded activities
- Narrower programmatic work
- Defined implementation strategies
- Circumscribed target population
- Pre-set outcomes
- Limited time frame
- Evaluable using traditional methods
- Replicability



## “Place” focused interventions

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- Broad target population
- Adaptive and flexible intervention
- Comprehensive range of work
- Participatory and collaborative
- Emphasis on civic/political empowerment
- Longer-term outcomes
- Complicated to evaluate
- Tailored to specific circumstances; harder to replicate



# Some Examples:

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- **Foundation driven:** MacArthur in Chicago; Casey in 10 cities; Jacobs in one neighborhood of San Diego
- **City led:** Communities of Opportunity in San Francisco; Empowerment Zones
- **Organization led:** Service organizations (settlement houses, Harlem Children's Zone); comprehensive CDCs such as Bethel New Life, Marshall Heights, New Community Corporation
- **Community led:** Lawrence Community Works

# Example: Harlem Children's Zone

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***100 blocks of central Harlem, New York City since 1997:***

- Baby College: Skills for 60 new parents each semester
- Harlem Gems: Pre-K for 40 children each year
- Peacemakers: After-school and enrichment programs at 5 neighborhood schools
- Career Readiness: Employment training and counseling and college preparation for 250 students annually



## Example: Harlem Children's Zone

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- **Community Pride:** 260 tenant-owned apartments
- **Family Support:** Crisis services to 150 families
- **Asthma Initiative:** Rates 5 times national average, provide comprehensive response to all HCZ children
- **Charter Schools:** For elementary and middle school students

# CCIs: A new way of doing business for neighborhoods

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- Residents: Not clients  
but agents of change
- Funders: Not check writers,  
but co-designers and participants
- Technical Assistants: Not one-off experts  
but capacity builders/coaches
- Evaluators: Not only tracking ultimate outcomes  
but understanding community building
- Staff: Not social workers,  
but organizers, multi-taskers, politicians
- Private sector: Not profiteers  
but co-investors in the community



## CCIs: A new way of doing business for neighborhoods

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- Stretches stakeholders beyond their traditional comfort zones
- No “right” way – depends on community context

BUT...

- There are predictable dilemmas that will be encountered and must be dealt with



# **Creative Tensions – a result of this new way of doing business:**

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- **The Process/Product Tension**
- **The Comprehensive/Targeted Tension**
- **The Long-Term/Short-Term Tension**
- **The Inside/Outside Tension**
- **The Race-Neutral/Race-Centric Tension**



## ***The Process/Product Tension***

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The success of community interventions depends on the sustained inclusion, participation and investment of a broad cross-section of stakeholders.



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Vs

People get frustrated by excessive talk, meetings, committees, plans and outreach and drop out if they don't see action, product or outcomes.



## ***The Process/Product Tension***

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### ***The challenge to New Orleans:***

How can community revitalization gain and keep maximum stakeholder engagement and commitment while also being efficient in moving to outcomes?



## ***Lessons for New Orleans about the Process/Product Tension***

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- Not everyone has to be involved all the time
- Some strategies require less engagement than others (e.g., employment vs safety)
- Collaboration among organizations takes a lot of time and should be strategic

# Example

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- Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the South Bronx
  - Highly inclusive community planning process
  - Implementation by five CDCs



## ***The Comprehensive/Targeted Tension***

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The problems we are dealing with have multiple, inter-related causes, requiring comprehensive approaches that are incredibly challenging to implement.



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Vs

More targeted programs easier to implement, have outcomes that are easier to grasp, and success is easier to demonstrate.



# ***The Comprehensive/Targeted Tension***

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## ***The challenge for New Orleans:***

How to keep the ambitious and comprehensive approach to the work solutions without getting overwhelmed?



## ***Lessons for New Orleans about Comprehensiveness***

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- It is possible to drown under the weight of comprehensiveness
- It should be a **lens**, not a requirement; look for and capitalize on connections at all times
- Some choose a strategic driver

# Example

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- The Harlem Children's Zone
  - Strategic driver is child wellbeing but that has led them to asthma, home ownership, and charter school construction



## ***The Long-Term/Short-Term Tension***

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We recognize that the problems of poverty, poor education, low employment, and racism have deep roots, and it will take a long time for any community intervention to make significant progress on them.

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Vs

New Orleans residents want to see some change as soon as possible, both because each life is precious, and because it is important to demonstrate change is possible.



## ***The Long-Term/Short-Term Tension***

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### ***The challenge for New Orleans:***

How to simultaneously tackle the entrenched structural and institutional problems in our community systems while also making early progress that keeps all stakeholders on board?



## *Lessons for New Orleans about Long-Term/ Short-Term Tension*

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- Look for quick wins that are visible – paint the lobby, clean up the block, inoculate the kids.
- Be opportunistic.
- Don't let the best be the enemy of the good.
- BUT keep your eye on the prize at all times and don't get distracted.



# Example

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- The Skillman Foundation program in Detroit
  - Long-term revitalization agenda
  - Action grants or seed grants



## ***The Inside/Outside Tension***

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Stakeholders in the neighborhoods, schools, and businesses sectors must lead and “own” the work of a revitalization effort.



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Vs

The systemic nature of these problems require that interventions must ensure adequate political support, technical assistance and additional resources from the outside – the larger region, the states, and from national entities.



## ***The Inside/Outside Tension***

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### ***The challenge for New Orleans:***

How to strategically include people, institutions and other resources that are beyond the community to help move everyone toward the goals, without losing local ownership, knowledge and commitment?

How do to align insiders and outsiders for maximum impact?



## ***Lessons for New Orleans about the Inside/Outside Tension***

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- CCIs tipped the balance too far in the direction of intra-community work
- CCIs under-attended to the kinds of capacities that are needed to take on a comprehensive community change agenda



# Example

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- New Communities Program in Chicago
  - Participatory local neighborhood plans
  - Strong neighborhood lead organizations
  - LISC Chicago providing cross-site leadership and support
  - MacArthur Foundation funding and brokering with public and private sectors
  - City government partnerships



## ***The Race-Neutral/Race-Centric Tension***

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Vs.

If we do not recognize and take race into account - specifically, the racial features of our history, public policies, and institutional practices - we risk coming up with partial or inadequate solutions and neglecting the specific circumstances of people of color.



## ***The Race-Neutral/Race-Centric Tension***

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### ***The challenge for New Orleans:***

How can our work both address the racialized causes of the problems we are working on, and the specific needs of people of color, while also keeping ALL constituencies on board and promoting universal policies and practices that will lift ALL boats?



# ***Lessons for New Orleans about the Race-neutral/Race-centric tension***

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- If you don't keep a priority on reducing racial inequalities front and center at all times, forces that work to maintain standard ways of doing business will take over.
- Aiming to reduce racial inequalities can help improve the system for everyone.
- Keep the focus on the institutional and structural causes of racial inequalities, and not on the personal.

# Example

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- ERASE Racism Long Island
  - Concerned with Fair Housing for all residents on Long Island
  - Used racially disaggregated data, coalition building, media education, and civil rights legal strategies for a new fair housing law



# **The five tensions are inevitable but manageable and critical to success**

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# There is no blueprint for restoring vibrant communities in New Orleans

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But there are lessons about:

- what capacities are needed
- what principles should guide the work
- what tensions need to be managed
- who to involve and how
- what are reasonable expectation



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**Best wishes  
for success in New Orleans.**

**We look forward to learning from  
you.**