

PROJECT RIGHT

Boston, MA

Center for Urban Development Studies

Graduate School of Design

Harvard University

Center for Urban Development Studies, Harvard Graduate School of Design

This case study material is provided as background material for *the Seminar on Strategic Planning for Urban Revitalization and Local Development*, Oct. 30 to Nov. 3, 2000, Pretoria South Africa.

PROJECT RIGHT

Background

The Grove Hall area of the Roxbury and North Dorchester neighborhoods, in the city of Boston, is a unique paradox of resources and divergent contrasts. While there is a multitude of public and private resources, there are numerous boarded-up buildings and vacant lots. A revitalized business district has stubbornly rebuilt its commercial activity during the past two decades, while the surrounding residential community weathered the impact of “redlining” and secondary mortgage “scams.” Major insurance companies avoid issuing policies for area homeowners, while charging exorbitant rates for automobile coverage. There is a diverse mixture of housing, ranging from triple-deckers, apartment buildings and subsidized units, **but many private homeowners are “building” rich and “cash” poor.** The area’s residents are predominantly lower-income and African American.

Grove Hall has seen the flight of major commercial institutions (supermarkets, banks, etc...), yet in an adjacent area there is a shopping mall. Grove Hall is home to several major non-profit community institutions, but many of them are weathering extended transitional periods of management changes and financial difficulties. While there are many schools in the neighborhood, there is a glaring lack of after-school programs and weekend facilities for area youth. Many active resident associations, crime watch block groups and other community groups organize and take responsibility for their surrounding areas, but the prevailing public view is that Grove Hall is overrun by gang violence and drug trafficking.

In 1991, eight groups within Grove Hall (neighborhood-based resident associations, churches, and service organizations) came together to form a collaborative group to address the issue of youth on youth violence within the Grove Hall neighborhood of Roxbury and North Dorchester. Project R.I.G.H.T., Inc. (PRI) was established to increase the capacity of neighborhood resident groups and other organizations in an effort to prevent crime and violence within the Grove Hall community. Since PRI’s inception, the collaborative’s organizational mission has been to strengthen and coordinate existing services and programs for the community through the grass-roots organizing of neighborhood residents.

At present, there are well over thirty organizations represented in the collaborative. PRI places a priority on increasing the number of residents involved in the neighborhood block associations, crime watches, block watches and tenant associations within its target area.

Project R.I.G.H.T.,Inc.Goals

PRI's goals are to:

1. Assist resident leadership to organize their neighbors to prevent all forms of violence from occurring within the Greater Grove Hall.
2. To develop new street associations and strengthen existing member organizations
3. To institute formal communication, networking, and joint project activity between members.
4. To maintain the cultural and ethnic diversity within its coalition.
5. To effectively manage and evaluate the work of PRI in a manner accountable to the community,
6. To raise funds to provide administration and program support to members.

Organizational Accountability

Representatives from the PRI's member organizations meet monthly through a "PRI Full Membership" meeting to update the membership on community-wide issues and current campaigns. Each member organization is required to have a spokesperson and an alternate for their representation to PRI. PRI's membership is directed by a Board of Directors of fourteen members (President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and ten at-large members there are presently ten sitting board members). The board meets monthly to review the status of the ongoing work, direct the staff, analyze issues and neighborhood concerns, develop plans and campaigns, assess the collaborations that PRI are involved in, and monitor PRI's financial/fiscal records.

Accomplishments

PRI's anti-crime/public safety work, as well as their organizational and community development activities facilitates the participation of resident associations and community-based organizations in the development and implementation of comprehensive public safety campaigns to reduce crime (and the fear of crime), thereby improving the economic base and the quality of life in Roxbury and North Dorchester (Greater Grove Hall). Some key accomplishments:

- Played a role in the overall reduction of juvenile crime within the Greater Grove Hall Community
- Through a number of partnerships, helped to build 25 new houses on vacant lots.
- Improved resident communications with local elected and appointed city and state officials so that residents are empowered to address their concerns and issues proactively.
- Coordinated over 150 neighborhood association/block watch meetings.
- Continued a resident initiated multi-year public safety plan that addresses "five quality of life issues"; 1) violence against seniors 55 years of age or above, 2) prostitution/Johns, 3) domestic violence 4) sale of alcoholic beverages to minors and

Center for Urban Development Studies, Harvard Graduate School of Design

This case study material is provided as background material for *the Seminar on Strategic Planning for Urban Revitalization and Local Development*, Oct. 30 to Nov. 3, 2000, Pretoria South Africa.

underage public drinking, and 5) motor vehicle traffic violations/speeding on residential streets.

- The closure of eight designated "hot spots" (drug, prostitution, gang locations) with the assistance of neighborhood associations and the Boston Police Department-Area B-2.
- Increasing resident involvement in neighborhood associations, block watches, crime watches and tenant based organizations. Provided "one on one" technical assistance to one hundred and fifty residents in resolving their public safety issues.
- Once again, re-designated the SEED Administering Agency for the Grove Hall Safe Neighborhood Initiative and administered a mini-grants program (\$40k to \$50k a year) for prevention and intervention services to the families within Grove Hall.
- Participated as the Greater Grove Hall representative body (Neighborhood Governance Board) and contracted agent to work on the SafeFutures Initiative, a City of Boston/U.S. Department of Justice/Office of Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention initiative, which provides resources for youth gang prevention, intervention, and family strengthening services within Grove Hall, Dorchester, and Mattapan.
- Conducted successful "Summer of Safety" campaigns culminating with five major neighborhood/community events that are initiated by the neighborhood associations.
- The creation of the Inner City Organizers, a youth leadership development training program that graduated to work with other organizations on youth and environmental issues.

Other Initiatives

PRI also supports the organizing efforts of neighborhood residents who are advocating on public safety and other issues affecting seniors and youth. These residents are addressing the critical lack of services and resources available to Grove Hall elders and youth, while developing action plans to resolve these issues.

PRI also assists residents and community-based organizations with monitoring media coverage in Roxbury and North Dorchester. Inaccurate media coverage about Roxbury/North Dorchester only makes it more difficult to organize residents to address public safety issues, while affecting the overall economic vitality of the area.

PRI has provided a support network for resident based groups, service providers, churches and the merchants organizations, with assistance in advocacy, leadership development, organizing, media, fundraising, research, data processing, publishing, and evaluation.

PRI, in conjunction with area law enforcement, city, state, and federal partners have worked on numerous issues that have engaged and strengthened resident involvement and pro-active advocacy work among PRI's member organizations. This work has not only strengthened the community but has also provided a great amount of stability for residents and businesses.

□

Organizational Campaigns and Goals

In the next two years PRI will focus on the continued development of organizing campaigns that mobilize residents around the following issues:

- The development of a community youth center and football field in Grove Hall and the expansion of the Jeremiah E. Burke High School
- Traffic safety campaign and traffic study
- Senior advocacy (information/referral services, preventing senior scams, and a proposed drop-in center)

Academic/Institutional Relationships

PRI currently maintains relationships and affiliations with Northeastern University School of Law's Culture and Difference Community Lawyering Program that provides a professor and fifteen law students to research and provide legal recommendations. Boston College Media Research Action Project is providing media technical assistance and training to residents, member organizations, and PRI staff.