

**The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative
Boston, Ma.**

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Municipalities worldwide have successfully engaged community groups in structured partnerships based on joint definitions of needs and opportunities. Local initiatives programs support and encourage civic leadership and all of them involve a program of shared financial commitments that leverage public and private resources.

In the case of Boston, the city and its development agencies created an array of programs to address the needs of the city's distressed neighborhoods and utilized collaborative approaches that build upon the economic, social, and physical assets in a community. Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (NPI) is an example of a model program that worked actively with neighborhood residents and community organizations to develop coordinated plans for neighborhood preservation and housing improvements.

The NPI ended in 1996 and evolved into Boston's Main Street Program, another partnership program that focuses on the revitalization of business districts in 19 neighborhoods. In Main Streets, the city provides seed funding for a coordinator who works with a board representing local businesses and NGOs in the neighborhood.

The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative

In the 1980s, DND redefined its role from a capital planning agency to a community development agency managing a number of diverse programs. The DND's goal was to strategically invest resources to build up the strength and vitality of neighborhoods and work directly with community-based organizations to coordinate and implement public improvements, housing, open space, and youth social programs.

The Neighborhood Partnership Initiative grew out of a review of existing programs working at the neighborhood level that were not having their desired impact and the realization that DND needed to develop a more focused strategy for allocating scarce public resources.

Learning from Experience

Having recently failed in a project development of the area known as Codman Square, authorities decided to take a closer look at the health of the square. Although millions of dollars had already been spent, several parties such as city departments, churches, crime watch people, etc. came together to reassess the needs of the area. The result was an identification of specific projects that were marked as a priority.

- Capital improvements
- A health center
- A bank project, and
- Green/ open spaces

Using a variety of funding resources, these projects were packaged as a program and, as a result, the Codman Square project became the prototype upon which other partnerships were modeled. The program slowly scaled up, moving from smaller pilot projects in neighborhoods selected by

the DND to a demand-led program where neighborhoods had to meet certain criteria to become eligible.

From 1990 to 1996, the Boston Neighborhood Partnership Initiative successfully implemented 14 partnership agreements that brought funding and staff from different city agencies together with partners at the neighborhood level to make visible and lasting improvements to key blocks and streets.

- 14 Neighborhood Partnership Agreements were developed:
 - Six residential neighborhoods;
 - Four commercial districts;
 - Four mixed residential and commercial districts.
- Municipal Role
 - Appoint a team to function as catalysts and facilitators,
 - Provide logistical support to the Partnership Committee
 - Disseminate information about available programs;
 - Develop partnership agreements.
- Neighborhood Based Partnership Committee Role
 - Neighborhood Associations;
 - Community Development Corporations;
 - Community and Health Centers;
 - Social Service Organizations;
 - City Agencies;
 - Board of Trade and Merchants within the Neighborhood Business District

Types of Programs

The NPI created an opportunity to coordinate and match city initiatives and community priorities. City initiatives were represented by the choice of programs that neighborhoods could select from. The types of projects undertaken by the NPI included:

1. Housing Programs:
 - ☐ Housing preservation
 - City building dispossession and rehabilitation
 - Distressed private and bank-owned buildings
 - ☐ Housing construction
 - ☐ Homeowner Rehabilitation
 - Home works
 - Senior home repair
 - Home emergency repair
2. Land Management Programs:
 - ☐ Interim improvements program
 - ☐ Vacant land disposition
 - ☐ Demolition
 - ☐ Boarding

3. Open Space Programs:
 - ☐ Tot lots
 - ☐ Community gardens
 - ☐ Abutter lots
4. Commercial Development Programs
 - ☐ Neighborhood enterprise program
 - ☐ Technical assistance and surveys
 - ☐ Real estate loans
 - ☐ Marketing and recruitment business
5. Youth and Public Safety

Funding Sources

The NPI structure allowed the city to leverage resources from different public programs as well as private sources. In the typical partnership program, the leveraging of resources and how they contributed to the implementation of the agreements were the following:

- Central Government
 - The Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), were the primary funding source for capital funds. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocates funds to states and entitlement cities based on a predetermined formula.
- Municipal Government
 - Consolidated funding from different sources to fund the Neighborhood Partnership Initiative.
 - Used Municipal Assets (Building and Vacant Land)
- Neighborhood Partnership Committee.
 - Assisted in directing resources toward needs and priorities identified in the Neighborhood Partnership agreement.
 - Individual committee members, for example, a community-based non-profit developer received pre-development, construction and permanent financing.
 - Other Sources (National non-for-profit housing and neighborhood revitalization organizations)

Process

The program was based on the creation of a neighborhood partnership committee comprised of neighborhood associations, Community Development Corporations, churches, city agencies, NGOs, the board of trade for the Neighborhood Business District, merchants, the area police department, the local health center, the local community center, and other groups. City staff, acting as both catalysts and facilitators, provided logistical support to disseminate information about available programs and develop partnership agreements.

Each partnership committee was supported by a Neighborhood Planner, who as a representative of the City, acted as a facilitator and coordinator. Together with the DND staff from the city, neighborhood groups worked in close cooperation over a six-month period to define a vision for

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neighborhood development and the physical boundaries of the partnership, to assess and prioritize the critical needs of the neighborhood, and to develop projects to address priority needs.

At the end of the six months, a partnership agreement in effect for two to three years was signed by all the participating organizations. It incorporated a set of shared redevelopment objectives, a revitalization strategy, and coordinated implementation plans clearly spelling out the responsibilities and commitments made by all parties involved.

The partner organizations in turn worked with other partners to implement individual projects, which in turn leveraged additional funds and resources. Additional city staff were assigned to the program to develop and implement the partnership agreement based on the needs identified by the partners. The staff assigned to a particular neighborhood met regularly with the Neighborhood Planner who had the overall responsibility of bringing the Partnership Agreement to fruition. Additionally, Program Staff met with related sub-committees of the Partnership.

Roles of Partners

Through the process of developing the Neighborhood Partnership Agreement, the NPI provided clarity for city agencies and neighborhood group that helped them to identify their most important investment priorities. The NPI also helped to build the capacity of neighborhood-based organizations to undertake projects and for more established organizations a series of projects for which they could seek funding from other sources. Although each agreement was different, the general set of activities between the city and the neighborhood organizations are outlined below.

Housing

- 1) *Neighborhood-based Associations*: Identified and acquired sites in the area and developed them through community development corporations (CDCs). CDCs often packaged housing projects and were able to draw upon public and private sector funds.
- 2) *City departments*: Assisted neighborhood associations with acquiring sites, providing infrastructure improvements for new developments, funding for demolition or environmental improvements and assisted with permits and approvals.

Vacant Land Management:

- 1) *Neighborhood-based associations*: Identified vacant and neglected parcels in the area. Also identified illegal dumping activities on area properties and organized clean-up sessions and community awareness around vacant parcels.
- 2) *Public facilities department*: Identified which abandoned parcels belonged to the city and assisted in the clean-up of vacant parcels and city owned parcels.
- 3) *Police department*: Responded to neighborhood reports and prohibited dumping on vacant parcels.

Open Space Enhancement:

- 1) *Neighborhood-based Associations*: Explored open/green space options and a communal green space plan for the area. To implement them they helped educate residents on caring for open spaces and in some cases, signed maintenance agreements with the city.
- 2) *City Departments*: Identified and freed up control of abutting green space property areas and assisted communities in developing a community open/green space plan. To implement the

plans, they assisted residents in acquiring land for green spaces by transferring their use and funding their maintenance.

Economic Community Development:

- 1) *Neighborhood-based Associations:* Organized existing community businesses and formalized their needs. Would report on business services needed and desired in the area. Fostered support for existing and new area businesses.
- 2) *City Departments:* Assisted Neighborhood Associations in revitalization schemes. Identified funding sources from city, state, and national grants and helped the neighborhood reach compliance for these funds. To implement revitalization in commercial zones, they provided funding opportunities for physical improvements and staff to assist the Neighborhood Associations' efforts to promote area businesses. They implemented proposals from Neighborhood Associations.

Case Study The Saint Vincent's Neighborhood Partnership Initiative, South Boston.

ELEMENTS OF THE ST. VINCENT'S PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

HOUSING:

- ◆ Redevelopment of the Boston Beer Company Building for elderly housing
- ◆ Explore alternatives in the West Second Street corridor
- ◆ Assist with the redevelopment of the former Taylor's Market Building (363 West Broadway)
- ◆ Advertise city-owned vacant land for proposals for affordable housing

VACANT LAND MANAGEMENT

- ◆ Prioritize land that needs improvement
- ◆ Clean and maintain City-owned vacant land in the Partnership area
- ◆ Improve the conditions of privately-owned land in the Partnership area

OPEN-SPACE AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

- ◆ Organize 1-2 community clean-ups per year
- ◆ Offer City-owned land as abutter lots to interested homeowners
- ◆ Monitor the Public Works Department and assess new requests

REVITALIZATION OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

- ◆ Fund and develop a plan to rejuvenate the East and West Broadway business district
 - ◆ Provide technical assistance to local businesses
 - ◆ Assist the South Boston Chamber of Commerce with recruiting businesses
- Coordinate with PWD to improve the cleanliness of the business district

Partners

Public Facilities Department and representatives of the Saint Vincent's Neighborhood Association, South Boston Community Housing Corporation, South Boston Board of Trade, Boston Police Department (Area C-6), South Boston Health Center, Condon Community Center.

Time Period

2 years. From May 18,1995 until May 18, 1997.

Boundaries

West First Street to the North, Silver Street to the South, A Street to the West, and Dorchester Street to the East.

Background

The partnership area was requested by the community-based organizations including the Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC) and the Neighborhood Association. After the first meetings the local CDC identified the following projects as its priorities:

- The need for dedicated affordable housing for seniors.
- Assisting with the redevelopment of the former Taylor's Market Building (363 West Broadway)
- Constructing Monsignor Lyons, phase II (housing project)

The Neighborhood Association and the Boston Redevelopment Authority's (BRA) wanted to create an IPOD area (Interim Planning Overlay District) and introduce new zoning. The Police Department wanted more crime control programs and the local Health Center wanted to be relocated to two new sites.

All of these projects were completed including the rezoning which became a model for other areas in Boston. The planning with the city and the neighborhood organizations succeeded in removing impediments to redevelopment and created an atmosphere of renewed optimism and trust between city officials and residents. . The program managed to consolidate scattered efforts, efficient program scarce resources and leverage other services and capital funds.

The money for these projects came from a variety of sources such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the City of Boston, the State of Massachusetts, Federal Home Loan Bank and private lenders. In the course of engaging in the planning process, the City allocated budget funds for portions of projects including \$300,000 for Taylor's Market; \$500,000 for 65 units of affordable senior housing; and \$8 million to relocate the Health Center. The City of Boston also dedicated some of its Capital Improvement money and several Capital Planning people joined the discussion table

Total Resource Allocation

Health Center	\$8 million -Primarily City Funds
Taylor's Market	\$ 0.9 million -Mixed Sources (City, State, Private Lenders)
Senior Housing	\$ 5.5 million-Federal Housing Funds
Street, sidewalks	\$ 70 thousand- City Funds
Storefront restoration, and street trees, landscaping	.3 million-Mixed including city and central govt. funds.

Elements of a Neighborhood Partnership Agreement

1. Introduction

This agreement is made under the Local Partnership Program (LPP) with the city and the partnership committee representing the community of _____. The agreement defines roles and responsibilities of the parties and an implementation schedule. The parties agree to a joint plan of action in the Partnership Area (see map) during the next ____ year (s). This agreement is in effect from _____ to _____.

The LPP agreement is based on cooperation and mutual interests that combine the ideas, enthusiasm, participation and resources of local partners with the resources and assistance of the City to achieve the greatest possible success in addressing neighborhood needs.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the agreement is to implement a project(s) to _____ which represents a shared vision of the needs and priorities among the community and the City.

3. Participation

The (name of area) Partnership includes representatives of local communities actively involved in improving the living conditions in the area. The Steering Committee includes representatives of the neighborhood that have been actively involved in solving neighborhood problems.

The agreement can be amended to include other area representatives.

4. Coordination and Accountability

A working team from the city made up of representatives of departments and other organizational units of the city authorities will cooperate with the steering committee. (Can be specific regarding a person, position or department depending on the nature of the intervention). It is important to list at least one key contact that will work with the steering committee.

There will be (weekly, monthly, quarterly etc) meetings of the Steering Committee (and/or sub-committees). Meetings will be jointly chaired by the City Representative and the Chair of the Steering Committee).

5. Boundaries

Show the area of focus and or actual boundaries of the project (s) on a map.

6. Neighborhood Action Agreement Goals

List out the key goals of the LPP for the neighborhood.

7. Action Agreement (by goal)

- The city commits to (list key actions)
 - Assist in the transfer of land to _____.
 - Provide Assistance to the Steering Committee to _____
 - Providing funding for _____

- The Partnership Steering Committee commits to:
 - Developing an implementation plan for the project
 - Maintaining the steering committee for the project;
 - Preparing financial statements;
 - Managing and assigning responsibilities for implementing the project among members of the Steering Committee
 - Raising funds and/or in-kind contributions for _____

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Steering Committee and the LPP representatives will choose key aspects of the project (quantitative and qualitative) to monitor the progress of the projects and establish a plan for monitoring and evaluation. Changes can be made to the agreement if the LPP representatives and the sub-committee come to an agreement.

9. Ending the Agreement

In case of a disagreement, LPP representatives or the Steering Committee shall make every effort to resolve their disagreement. If such efforts have not succeeded, the party that wishes to end the Agreement will send a 30-day notice to the other party regarding their intent to withdraw from the agreement. If no resolution can be worked out within 30 days from the date of the notice is received, the party sending the notice may stop its activities.