

Report of The Roundtable on Neighborhoods in America

A Resource for a Diverse and Inclusive America

January 8, 1993
Little Rock, Arkansas

"Revitalize America Through Community Development: Put neighborhoods at the center of our efforts to revitalize America by coordinating existing housing, education, employment training, health-care, drug treatment and crime prevention programs."

(Putting People First, pp 113,114)

This report and the Roundtable on Neighborhoods in America
are both dedicated to the memory of
Monsignor Geno Baroni,
Founder of The National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs.

Submitted

To:

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INTRODUCTION

On January 8, 1993 a **Roundtable on Neighborhoods in America** was sponsored by the Clinton Transition Team. The Roundtable was chaired by Christopher Hyland, Deputy Political Director of the Clinton Transition Team.

Leaders from community and neighborhood based organizations, historic preservation and community arts advocates were convened to share the lessons they have learned through their efforts.

This report represents the recommendations of the roundtable participants to the new Clinton administration by defining goals and strategies that encourage the efforts of locally based initiatives to revitalize and rebuild our nations communities.

SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

PRESIDENT CLINTON SHOULD:

- I. Articulate a Vision of America as Community, and recognize the urgent need to come together to rebuild our communities where they are threatened: in the inner city neighborhoods, poor rural communities, the barrio, reservations, public housing projects, and ethnic and minority neighborhoods.
- II. Adopt a comprehensive community - based strategy to revitalize America from the bottom up.
- III. Recognize the key role of community based organizations in carrying out that strategy.

RECOMMENDATION I

President Clinton Should:

Articulate a Vision of America
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poor rural communities,
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INTRODUCTION

President-elect Clinton has built a powerful consensus around the concepts of Change and Inclusion.

The issues of neighborhoods and community revitalization have surfaced in the roundtables held on Economic Issues, Homelessness and Affordable Housing, and Meeting the Social and Health Care needs of the Whole Nation. With the new administration comes the opportunity to carry through on President Clinton's theme of Putting People First.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

1. In the **Inaugural Address**, the President can begin to articulate a clear, positive vision for America's urban and poor rural communities. Elements to include:
 - A recognition of the key role that Community plays in the quality of life and prosperity of our diverse and richly textured nation.
 - A recognition of the successes that community based efforts have had in solving problems and creating community.
 - A recognition of the role that community based organizations need to play in fulfilling the Promise of the our nation.
 - A recognition of the critical role that the arts and historic preservation play by preserving the best of the past and enhancing the quality of life of the present of every community in America.
2. Within the first 100 days, the President should **convene a Working Group on Neighborhood and Community Renewal**, whose assignment will be to develop recommendations for action in three areas:
 - ♦ Executive action or regulatory changes that could quickly improve the efficiency of existing programs;
 - ♦ During the first year, legislative changes needed to make existing programs meet community revitalization and preservation goals within a year; and
 - ♦ By the end of the first year, new initiatives that could practically be undertaken to meet the needs of communities in a more efficient, cost effective, empowering way.
3. The **White House and the new administration** will need to be staffed to meet the challenge of a comprehensive, serious attack on community issues. The administration needs to build into the structure of government a specific responsibility for neighborhood and community revitalization in four key areas:
 - ♦ The White House Office of Public Liaison;
 - ♦ The president's domestic policy staff;
 - ♦ A cabinet agency at the assistant secretary level, as in the Carter Administration the Assistant Secretary for Neighborhoods in HUD;

- ♦ A standing interagency Task Force including at least HUD, Labor, Commerce (EDA), JJS, Education, Justice (Community Crime Prevention), Transportation, the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and ACTION.
4. Administration staff working with the President's Working Group on Neighborhood and Community Renewal, should **sponsor a series of regional meetings** that will convene front line practitioners with city and state government allies, and experts in the field, as well as the philanthropic and private sector partners critical to solving community problems. They will:
 - ♦ Inform the work of the Task Forces, and
 - ♦ Feed into regional strategies to inform a national White House Conference at the end of the Working Group's tenure.
 - ♦ Build an Agenda for the Year 2000 for neighborhood and community renewal.
 5. **Coordinate timelines** for applying to programs that are connected, including HHS & HUD
 6. **Simplify reporting and administration** across the board

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATION I

- Recognize that **poverty is not acceptable** and that we will mobilize as a nation to make it possible for everyone to earn a decent living.
- **Convene leaders in philanthropy and the private sector** to identify ways in which they can expand their role in and increase their contribution to community efforts that address poverty, community development and, neighborhood revitalization.
- **Recognize the role that churches play** in keeping communities whole. This should include a public event like a tour or site visit, perhaps including a review of government programs to identify and eliminate unnecessary barriers to local church involvement in government programs to support healthy communities. Use local congregations as centers of peace - support this role through conflict resolution training, community courts, etc.
- **Support/create a new attitude of government**, bringing out the creativity and commitment of those with years of public service, looking towards an attitude

that is oriented to getting results rather than meeting the needs of the bureaucracy. This could include in service training that involves community residents, recognition for good work, etc.

- Find a way to **signal the new commitment** to creating a neighborhood competent government. This could mean a simple announcement that the Clinton Administration views community based organizations as the best means for community survival and renewal, held in a place where exemplary work is going on.
- **Recognize that community groups have been a valuable tool for economic empowerment**, through jobs created directly in community owned business ventures and through jobs created indirectly by private ventures who, because of the groups' efforts, locate and stay in troubled areas.
- **Set a tone of respect and consideration for the opinion of the intended beneficiaries of existing - and proposed - programs.** This is done through support for Citizen monitoring, convening work groups that include community people and others, listening and responding to consumer complaints, and creating and supporting a system of continuous quality control and program improvement.
- **Recognize and affirm the right of people not only to organize and petition government, but to be heard and taken seriously.** This is accomplished by guaranteeing access to decision making, requiring adequate notice of preliminary steps, supporting the costs of specialized research so that citizen advocates can be well prepared advocates, and building an infrastructure of training, research and networks.
- **Signal through appointments, particularly at the HUD Regional Director Level, the recognition of the key role of community based organizations.**
- **Any new programs need to be developed with the close involvement of the people who will implement them, and those who are to benefit from them.** Native, tribal, community and neighborhood leaders need to be involved in developing and carrying out the policies and programs that affect them.

RECOMMENDATION II PRESIDENT CLINTON SHOULD:

Adopt a comprehensive community -based
strategy
to revitalize America
from the bottom up.

INTRODUCTION

People live in communities: strong communities are those where problems can be dealt with TOGETHER, where there are institutions and structures that help us take care of ourselves and each other. **Community based organizations are a tool for dealing with whatever threat a community might face:** racial tension, social disfunction, drugs, crime, family disintegration, inadequate housing, joblessness, and inadequate education. All of these issues and more have been addressed by community based groups, neighbors organized to help neighbors.

Longer term solutions will require new initiatives and major changes in existing programs. These should be guided by the general principles enumerated by the 1978 White House Commission on Neighborhoods report, echoed at the 1993 Neighborhood Roundtable: **Governance, Capacity and Equity.**

Communities exercise **governance**, through traditional politics, community institutions like the churches and civic and social groups and, in many cases community based advocacy and development organizations. It is these grassroots institutions, closest to people, responsive and responding to their will, their desires, their needs, that can best unlock the potential in each person, and put to common use the assets that exist in the neediest of areas.

Many troubled communities, however, lack the **capacity** to effectively participate in governance. By building upon existing assets within a community, government can improve the community's capacity for self-help.

When communities organize and assemble the tools they need they can define and achieve equity on their own terms.

A comprehensive community based strategy would include program and policy initiatives that address:

- A. Revitalizing and strengthening the housing assets of our communities
- B. Creating and preserving jobs in our neighborhoods
- C. Investing in our youth
- D. Community planning for the future
- E. Promoting community through historic preservation and the arts

STRATEGY A.
REVITALIZING AND STRENGTHENING HOUSING
AS A COMMUNITY ASSET

- Make HUD regulations and definitions more flexible to accommodate local realities, eg. rural areas, reuse of common local housing stock, including, "shotgun" houses, bungalows, adobe
- Expand and increase funding for Section 8
- Improve regulations on mortgage revenue bonds to remove disincentives to city vs. suburban style development this would include: income levels, price floors/ceilings, etc
- Keep/report statistics on housing rehab starts and inner city demolitions and abandonments as well as new housing starts
- Remove disincentive to donate appreciated property in the 1986 tax act
- Rebuild Farmers' Home Administration Housing Production Programs - too much red tape, designed to fail
- Improve family farm programs including credit, appeals, etc.
- Connect FEMA and Historic preservation
- Increase HOME to \$2 Billion
- Market Section 8 and other programs in languages appropriate to communities.
- Increase rent subsidy to meet increasing cost of providing housing
- Improve Low Income Tax Credit by linking it with credit enhancement, services, counseling, etc. to make it more accessible to the poor
- Extend CRA requirements to apply to private lending institutions and mortgage investment firms.

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Build on/expand community owned credit unions as a tool for home ownership and housing rehabilitation.
- Establish CRA type requirements for Insurance companies in the investment of their resources and in the writing of their policies

- Create a Federal Tax exemption for people who stay in troubled or older neighborhoods
- Use Community Reinvestment Act ratings to guide investment/deposits of government resources in banks
- Encourage economic progress by creating a rent ceiling for public housing
- Provide incentives for people to relocate into our cities' older neighborhoods.

STRATEGY B
CREATING AND PRESERVING JOBS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

- Tie together job creation with infrastructure investments
- Stop moving post offices and other government buildings out of downtowns neighborhood business districts, and small rural communities.
- Expand such programs as Main Street USA.

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Support community based efforts to build on existing manufacturing strengths within their communities by supporting the creation of flexible manufacturing networks.
- Enhance private community capital formation through community development banks.
- Build on/expand community owned credit unions as a tool for small business finance.
- Community economic development tax credit patterned on the low income housing tax credit to attract private investment into job creating efforts sponsored by community based organizations
- Promote the preservation of small business districts and develop programs to prevent the proliferation of suburban malls that destroy neighborhood and small town business districts.
- Expand the definition of infrastructure to include museums, community centers and other community facilities

STRATEGY C INVESTING IN OUR YOUTH

- Enforce Child Support as a means of increasing opportunities for women and children.
- Fund universal access to Head Start Programs.

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Special initiative focused on rescuing our young African-American men.
- Promote equitable funding of education with less reliance on local property taxes.
- National Youth initiative built on respect and self help principles.
- Develop "Cultural Passport Voucher" Program to introduce sixth to ninth graders to museums, historic sites and the arts.
- Forgiveness of college loans for service with community based organizations.
- Implement the recently enacted National YouthBuild Act HR 501.

STRATEGY D COMMUNITY PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Transportation projects need to first DO NO HARM in terms of community destruction and encouraging people and business to leave the city, then need to contribute to community strategy - make public transportation serve the poor by getting them to where the jobs are
- Implement Council on Environmental Quality study on cost/impact of suburban sprawl.
- Improve local rights to say 'no' to toxic waste facilities

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- We need to document and share the successes of cbo's over the last twenty years
- Create incentives for comprehensive, community based planning that involves a partnership between community based organizations, government and private sector - 'neighborhood budget'
- Add government resources to community renewal efforts by partnering with community organizations and locating government facilities and, utilizing the services of community organizations and the businesses located in those communities.
- Distribute government surplus kitchen and other supplies from downsizing the military for churches and other community based social service efforts
- Create "Special Character Districts", like Hist Districts's, to build on a sense of place for a community and coordinate resources to make these happen

STRATEGY E
PROMOTING COMMUNITY THROUGH HISTORIC
PRESERVATION AND THE ARTS

- Restore Historic Preservation Tax Credit to pre-1986
- Increase funding for Historic Preservation Fund and through State offices
- Promote programs like "Artists in Public Places" in schools, parks, youth and community organizations.
- Promote heritage corridors to unite urban, suburban and rural communities.
- Remove passive loss and income caps from historic preservation tax credit.
- Tie together Arts Endowment public art funding with landscape design and community planning.
- Expand Main Street program of National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- Spend ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act) to create jobs and provide job opportunities and rebuild the historic transportation facilities.

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Encourage institutions of the arts like museums, theaters to partner with community organizations
- Reinstate the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities Livable Cities Programs that link the arts and the humanities with community revitalization efforts.
- Create 'Special Character Districts', like Hist Districts's, to build on a sense of place for a community and coordinate resources to make these happen.
- Extend Historic Preservation Tax Credit to homeowners.
- Federal Government should match state money for historic preservation projects.
- National Endowment for the Arts /National Endowment for the Humanities should create special programs to build racial and cultural unity and tolerance.
- Coordinate the Arts and Humanities endowments work with HUD to help communities.

- Promote and reward creative collaborations among architects, planners and builders to facilitate quality building in our communities.
- Encourage public art by requiring a "1% for Arts".

RECOMMENDATION III

PRESIDENT CLINTON SHOULD:

RECOGNIZE THE KEY ROLE OF COMMUNITY
BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN CARRYING OUT
THAT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood and community based organizations are taking on the toughest problems in the toughest areas of urban and rural America. They have survived and triumphed in spite of years of neglect and the systematic withdrawal of public resources. Public policy that empowers neighborhoods and strengthens their ability to develop community based solutions will result in healthy communities in urban and poor rural areas.

Neighborhood and community based organizations are the best and most cost-effective instrument to re-empower cities and poor rural communities. The Clinton Administration has the opportunity to use this national resource to rebuild America.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Put more teeth in the Community Reinvestment Act
 - Give grassroots groups/consumers a role in evaluating CRA performance of banks.
 - Add gender bias to CRA reviews
 - Improve Community Reinvestment Act enforcement - fill vacancies in Office of Thrift Supervision, FDIC, etc., replace Director of Federal Housing Finance Board

- Reinstate strong citizen participation requirements in federal programs critical to community renewal.
- Provide longer term CDBG commitments to cities, allowing for longer term operating support and project commitments.
- More money for CDBG.
- Recognize the key role of community based organizations in carrying out that strategy.
- Make the inventory of property held by RTC, Farmers' Home, FHA and HUD available community based organization for the development of affordable housing.
- Increase the HOME set-aside for Community Based Development Corporation sponsored housing development projects to 25% from current 15%
- Enforce Fair Housing and civil rights laws.
- Allow funding of community groups from Community Development Block Grant funds without regard to the regulation limiting cities to a spending cap off 15% for administration and planning.
- Set-aside for community based development activities in CDBG.
- Enforce regulations on proper use of money to cities.
- Insure that capacity building efforts are available in the language of the community and in a way that connects with the culture of the community

NEW IDEAS PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

- Support local, regional and national initiatives to train leadership and build organizational capacity at the community level.
- Programs that are created to address problems such as unemployment, lack of affordable housing, crime and drugs, poor quality of public education , and deteriorating infrastructure should include special set-asides for community based initiatives aimed toward solving these problems in poor communities.
- Set-aside 5% of any new community programs for capacity building & citizen monitoring
- Employment in Community Based Organizations should qualify as Community

service jobs for the purpose of repayment of student loans (college tuition), and include a set-aside and funding for part of cost of hiring

- Encourage linkages between major institutions and the community that surround them
- Provide research and demonstration to CBO's to decide what initiatives to use to address community problems
- Support/pass National Neighborhood Partnership Act
- Creating a National Endowment for Neighborhoods that would provide a national pool of funding for long term operating support for community organizations.
- Support the Native American Housing Commission's proposal to create a network of community development banks in native communities
- Allow the repayment of delinquent government loans through community service to community organizations.

APPENDIX 1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ROUNDTABLE ON AMERICA'S NEIGHBORHOODS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Priority Recommendations and Implementation Steps

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RECOMMENDATION III

PRESIDENT CLINTON SHOULD:

RECOGNIZE THE KEY ROLE OF COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN CARRYING OUT THAT STRATEGY

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

- Put more teeth in the Community Reinvestment Act
 - Give grassroots groups/consumers a role in evaluating CRA performance of banks.
 - Add gender bias to CRA reviews.
 - Improve Community Reinvestment Act enforcement - fill vacancies in Office of Thrift Supervision, FDIC, etc., replace Director of Federal Housing Finance Board
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- Set-aside 5% of any new community programs for capacity building & citizen monitoring

APPENDIX 2 -
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE ROUNDTABLE
FOR AMERICA'S NEIGHBORHOODS

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