



Case Study

Stop the Violence SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA

Institute for Community Peace
National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention

Introduction

The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention (NFCVP) is a partnership among public and private grantmakers, experts in violence prevention and related disciplines, and community collaborations. Established by grantmakers in 1994 in response to increasing violence across the country, NFCVP promotes a safe, healthy, and peaceful nation by mobilizing community resources and leadership. We support strategies that emphasize resident engagement and community empowerment and address the range of factors that undermine safety.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of our work, as it enables groups to respond comprehensively to the complex web of individual, social, economic, political and environmental factors that give rise to violence. We believe the best violence prevention collaborations engage members across disciplines and sectors and include those most directly affected by violence. When done well collaboration can decrease isolation, foster mutual trust and goodwill and give birth to collective efficacy, all essential elements of building safe, healthy and peaceful communities.

NFCVP's work has been informed by community collaboratives across the country with whom we have partnered since 1995 to address a cross-section of violence problems ranging from youth and generalized community violence to violence in the media and in the home. Our approach recognizes that the best solutions to violence rest in the hands of a community well prepared to define, develop and enact them. We provide our local partners with operational, technical and evaluation support tailored to their needs and that assists them in developing the competencies needed to implement their own solutions. Through our partnerships with these community groups NFCVP has been able to cull lessons learned and identify promising practices in community-based violence prevention.

The following case study illustrates the development of a community-based collaboration to prevent violence. It explores the collaborative process, the implementation of a collective vision and the lessons learned as residents struggle through the difficult processes of collaboration and violence prevention. It is followed by a series of discussion questions that highlight the salient issues in collaborations that prevent violence. It concludes with a vignette and theory of change for the collaborative. We hope that these additions will compliment the narrative of the case study and serve as a model for developing comprehensive, community-based violence prevention.



If you would like further information on the NFCVP, or copies of case studies on other local violence prevention collaboratives, please contact us at:

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Effective June 2003, the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention changed its name to the **Institute for Community Peace**, a national resource center on violence prevention and peace promotion.

Stop the Violence Spartanburg, South Carolina

Pathways to Community Solidarity

Since 1995, Stop the Violence (STV), has worked to prevent violence by building community and empowering neighborhood residents in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

STV is a collaboration among public and private sector administrators, community-based service providers, funders and representatives of communities across Spartanburg County. Formed by the Spartanburg County Consensus Project (a local think tank and advocacy group created to address issues of social, economic and environmental inequities), STV embodies a response to long-standing, systemic violence problems and a horrific violent incident in Spartanburg City. This case study describes the origins of STV and the evolution of its unique approach to community-based violence prevention. It highlights the four years STV spent working in the Una and Northside communities.

Preliminary evaluation has yielded some promising results. Since STV began its work in 1995, violence has dropped dramatically in the Una and Northside communities due to increases in community solidarity and levels of emotional attachment. Emotional attachment examines the extent to which community resi-

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dents like their community, feel good about it and feel connected to their neighbors and the community at large. Shaw and McKay (1972) found that neighborhoods with

residents who share similar values and have strong ties to the community are relatively free from crime and violence. Solidarity leads to the creation of strong networks of informal and formal social control, Sampson and Earls (1997). Informal social control originates from the feelings of trust and togetherness associated with high levels of emotional attachment.

In Spartanburg, levels of emotional attachment were among the lowest in the state when efforts began and rose to the levels found in 60 other neighborhoods throughout the state by 2000, according to its evaluators at Clemson University.

Emergence of a Citizens' Movement

On March 10, 1994, Ernest Rice, a well-respected and well-known community leader in Spartanburg, had finished coaching a group of teenage boys in an evening basketball game when gunfire sprayed across the parking lot of First Baptist church in Spartanburg, a sanctuary for many of the city's movers and shakers. The 41-year-old African American died instantly as his young assailants drove their van into the darkness.

The killing of Ernest Rice and its occurrence at a prestigious white church in the heart of downtown Spartanburg shocked and grieved its residents and galvanized the city across race and class lines. "In all different sectors and realities, this shooting violated the comfort zone," recalled Curt McPhail, STV's project director, who was in college at the time of the shooting. "Community leaders hoped to turn the sense of violation and outrage into positive action." Sparked by this random act of violence in the heart of the city, Stop the Violence (STV) was born.

Stop the Violence Solutions

The STV collaborative assists residents in developing solutions to neighborhood problems to

- Mobilize power and resources to respond to neighborhood infrastructure problems;
- Organize and train residents to engage in violence prevention planning, implementation, and advocacy;
- Leverage resources to help residents accomplish their plans; and
- Transfer relationships from STV to neighborhood associations. (The independent associations maintain their connection to STV as collaborative partners.)



The Spartanburg County Consensus Project sponsored a series of community meetings. After several meetings, STV was conceived as community collaboration stressing the active and meaningful involvement of those most directly affected by violence and the importance of working on the root causes of crime and violence. Law enforcement was seen as a primary partner in moving communities from paralytic fear of crime to prevention of violence and STV hoped to expand and build upon relationships developed in the city's existing community policing program.

Led by prominent ministers from the black and white communities, STV reached out to the entire city through a series of monthly meetings. These were often "high profile events involving more than a hundred people – from social service agencies to law enforcement officials to volunteers," recalls Charles Tulloh, former chairman of the STV Board of Directors. Each session

"Who is not here today
who should be to create
the best solution?"

closed with the question, 'Who is not here today who should be to create the best solution?' By the summer after the shooting, STV's volunteer membership had grown from 32 to more than 250, and its focus had evolved into Action Teams assigned to delve more deeply into specific issues.

From Philosophy to Action

A \$75,000 planning grant from the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention (NFCVP), now the Institute for Community Peace, enabled STV to shore up its membership and sharpen its vision for action. Its roster included an impressive list of collaborative partners, ranging from the Spartanburg County Community

and Economic Development Department and the Sheriff's Office and Department of Public Safety to Habitat for Humanity and many other community-based and government organizations. The NFCVP planning process also made community leaders realize that their original vision of a countywide effort was unmanageable. As a result, they decided that a neighborhood by neighborhood approach would prove to be the most effective and have the broadest reach.

The Planning Team adopted a set of 'Golden Rules' for its work including the adages, 'Honor the culture of the community' and 'Don't give out the fish, but teach the art of fishing.' The rules emphasized the need to capitalize on positive social values within the community as well as its underutilized human capital. After acting as an energizer and catalyst in building neighborhood organizational leadership and infrastructure, STV's goal was to foster neighborhood independence, capture and incorporate lessons learned, then move on to the next neighborhood armed with a better blueprint for the complex task of community building. "Our goal from the beginning was to create a sustainable and transferable model for community building," McPhail said of STV's work.

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For its first efforts STV chose neighborhoods that had high crime rates, community policing initiatives already in place, adequate meeting facilities and likely local partners, such as churches, businesses, schools and social services agencies. Una in Spartanburg County and Northside/Cleveland Park in the city, seemed perfect choices for STV's initial efforts at implementing its model for work.

STV began to build relationships with residents in each community individually and within small group settings. These were followed by a series of larger meetings to inform people about STV and get additional input. "Once we felt most people understood what our mission was," says Laura Bauknight, STV's first project director, "we asked the residents what they felt were the greatest challenges for the community."

Spartanburg County's Community Need

Spartanburg County, South Carolina, lies on the Piedmont Plateau of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Located off of Interstate 85 in the northwest corner of the state, the county spans 831 square miles and includes more than a dozen metropolitan areas. Over the last two decades the regional economy was transformed from its strong agricultural base to one that supports tourism and manufacturing. This transformation created a surge in new jobs, raised wages, and improved the economic stability of the region. Concurrent with its economic rise, Spartanburg experienced a demographic explosion, with its population increasing more than 44 percent over the past thirty years, from 170,000 in 1970 to more than 250,000 in 2000. However, the economic revival was not felt equally by all sectors of the county's population.

Urban flight has depleted many neighborhoods of much needed human and financial resources, leaving poor and working class communities in the city and inner county ring bereft of basic support services and infrastructure support. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics for the mid-1990's, Spartanburg County's rate of crimes against persons (murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault) was almost 50 percent above the national average, making the county one of the most violent jurisdictions in the country. All of this led to the social isolation of many poor communities from the county's social and economic mainstream, resulting in citizen apathy, loss of political base and a myriad of social, economic and environmental problems.

The Spartanburg Consensus Project (SCCP), composed of local civic leaders, was funded and developed by the Spartanburg County Community Foundation to bring discussion of a solution to these issues in the public forum. In 1994, SCCP mobilized the community on behalf of violence prevention in the wake of the Ernest Rice killing, the incident that rocked the city.

Raising Una: Awakening a Lost Spirit

Una

First settled in the late 1800's, Una was known for its 'live-and-let-live' attitude and its residents who, though poor, were independent and proud. In the 1960's, as its population aged and textile jobs grew scarce, the community became more transient. Mobile home parks began to proliferate. Poorly constructed units were crowded onto small sites, and absentee landlords paid scarce attention to maintenance or tenant selection. The neighborhood lacked basic public amenities such as indoor plumbing, gas, sidewalks and streetlights. Before long, Una, an unincorporated settlement with no government of its own and no zoning regulations, had a large stock of low rent, month-to-month substandard housing that attracted prostitutes and drug dealers and often erupted in violence. Law and code enforcement ranged from lax to nonexistent and the long-term residents of Una were left to fend for themselves.

Una, covering a one square mile span in Spartanburg County, was home to approximately 1,100 residents, many of whom lived in mobile homes. Racially mixed, the population was 62 percent white, 23 percent black and 10 percent Latino residents (1990 Census data). Nearly half of Una's residents were illiterate and 22 percent of Una's families had incomes below the poverty level. The community included 560 residences, a post office, two eateries, 11 churches and a few small industries, most notably, textiles.

Honoring the Culture of the Community

Lieutenant Ron Gahagan of the Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office remembered Simon and Garfunkel lyrics when he described Una as it was then. "It was 'a place where ragged people go.'" Una had become dangerous and Gahagan recalled its lowest ebb, "when drug dealers were literally stopping cars to ply their trade, and a buyer was shot one day in the middle of the afternoon."

Donald Rollins, widely known as the unofficial mayor of Una and a resident since 1954, cited his own personal low point -- the day he had to wait behind cars lined up to buy drugs at a trailer park before he could turn into his own driveway. Rollins, a retired Navy man who raised seven children in Una reflects, "Things got so bad, I couldn't go to sleep unless I heard gunfire. Some nights, I felt I was back in Vietnam."

Una residents were skeptical of STV's efforts. Decades of political and social neglect had taken a toll. "They assumed we would be out in a matter of months," Says Curt McPhail. It took him almost two years – first as an STV volunteer community organizer, then on staff – to "gain residents' trust, because they had been burned so much." Ron Gahagan echoed the sentiment. "The biggest hurdle in addressing Una's violence was building the belief that anything positive could happen there. Residents had been told for 40 years that they had no say. Eventually they realized that they had two choices – live like hostages or work to change things."

"Things got so bad, I couldn't go to sleep unless I heard gunfire. Some nights, I felt I was back in Vietnam."
Donald Rollins, Una resident

Creating Hope

Early STV initiatives (led primarily by STV staff) targeted highly visible problems and fostered a closer connection between the community policing program and neighborhood residents. One accomplishment brought about by the collaboratives partners was the county's designation of Una as a pilot project for comprehensive enforcement of the housing and litter codes. As a result, instead of enforcing codes only when complaints were made, weekly inspections meant that virtually every property in Una was checked for violations. Accumulations of trash, abandoned vehicles, cast-off furniture and broken appliances began to disappear from yards and streets. Residents and community policing patrols made their presence known as well, challenging existing drug and prostitution markets and other neighborhood hotspots vulnerable to crime and violence.

A second STV initiative targeted mobile home parks. When a 15-unit property that had become a hangout for drug dealers changed hands, the new owner welcomed the collaborative's involvement in renovating the homes, beautifying the property and screening tenant applications. The much improved park was renamed New Hope Village by enthusiastic residents of Una. Other targets for cleanups included owner-occupied houses, mobile homes, the post office and an old dilapidated church. STV arranged for trucks and dumpsters to be supplied at no cost and for county landfill fees to be waived.

STV made a visible impact. It's leaders were pleased with the progress, and Una residents recognized that beyond cleaning up they had begun to forge valuable relationships with each other, the Spartanburg County government, the Sheriff's Office and a host of other organizations that could help bring about positive change. In 1995, there had been more than 300 service calls to 911 from New Hope Village; two years later, there were ten. "It's a safer community now, and we can quantify it," says Gahagan. He attributed such progress to changes in Una's environment and community spirit. "These days we get more complaints about moped traffic than prostitution. If you improve the quality of life, you'll have an impact on crime." McPhail added, "Una's rebuilding is underway; the siege mentality that existed has now cracked."

In spite of these successes, STV learned that it had strayed from its own philosophy. Although the effects of the changes were rippling through the community, STV had yet to help the community become empowered in its own right. STV's golden rule 'Don't give out the fish, but teach the art of fishing' still had to be incorporated into the efforts.

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The Art of Fishing

At Una's subsequent meetings with STV, McPhail underscored the need for resident engagement and community empowerment. Residents agreed that their ownership of activities was essential for long-term sustainability. In a brainstorming exercise, they identified three immediate environmental concerns, sidewalks and streetlights, natural gas service and property rehabilitation. They formed working subcommittees to attend to the issues. The Street and Sidewalk Action Team lobbied the county government for improvements. The Natural Gas Action Team convinced the local provider to run gas lines to Una. Residents concerned about property rehabilitation contacted the Spartanburg Economic Development Department and learned of Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) entitlement funds that could be used for housing rehabilitation and replacement. They eventually received a \$350,000 commitment for housing and sidewalk construction.

Una residents had taken the first steps to shape and guide their community into the future. Not only were they holding their county representatives and local

enterprises accountable, they were taking collective action as a community to solve common problems. In November 1997, residents went further by beginning a campaign to address longstanding problems associated with local prostitution activities. Residents worked to raise awareness, buying billboard space, writing and distributing press releases, recruiting more community members and planning events. About 70 people, representing one fifth of Una's families joined a street march chanting "We're taking Una back!" Equally important, more than a dozen residents regularly attended court proceedings until finally, in June 1998, the community's most notorious brothel was closed and the proprietors evicted.

Collective Efficacy Realized

Encouraged by these successes, Una residents made an important move. Mindful that STV would not always be there to provide assistance, residents decided to form the United Neighborhood Association (U.N.A.). "The [anti-prostitution] campaign really galvanized the folks in the neighborhood, and they saw they had power when they came together," recalls McPhail.

U.N.A.'s mission was to "help foster and promote a cleaner, safer, civic-conscious community through action." Membership was open to all residents, property owners, business owners and organizations interested in the community.

The new organization's first project in June 1998 was a high profile victory. The project began when the owner of New Hope Village approached U.N.A. about illegal activity occurring in some condemned units. The Association voted to help the owner tear down and dispose of the units if proceeds from materials sold as scrap were donated to U.N.A. Dubbed the 'Una Renaissance Project,' the deconstruction of the units was completed at a neighborhood fish fry attended by more than 60 people. Valuable media coverage was provided by a local TV crew and newspaper, which placed the story on its front page. As an added bonus, U.N.A. netted a profit of \$556. Most importantly, the event connected U.N.A. with the county Environmental Services Department and Sheriff's Office, the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, STV volunteers, and a local grading contractor. Not only did the agencies join the collaboration, they were able to contribute valuable resources to make the project a success.

U.N.A. implemented other activities such as the creative 'Flowers for Trash' Program, where one day was set aside for residents to bring their trash to a

central location in Una. In exchange, they received flower seeds. Long-time resident, Norma Lawter, created the idea. U.N.A. negotiated to have dumpsters provided free of charge and landfill fees waived for the day. When the day was over, more than 250 tires and countless loads of trash had made it out of Una. U.N.A.'s brilliant first days looked promising.

Forging Social Change

The euphoria of the early successes proved to be an inspiration to community members as they turned their agenda toward confronting the systems that contributed to the poor standard of living and the crime and violence in their community. U.N.A.'s fought for repeal of the grandfather clause in the building codes governing mobile homes which mandated strict health and building standards for new trailer park communities, but not for existing ones. They won a huge victory in 2000 and it represented months of hard work and detailed organization by Una residents and STV staff. It created a countywide venue for cleaning up older trailers previously protected by the clause.

"We went through the whole community and had every lot, building and trailer identified as owned, rented or vacant," remembered Rollins. "We went before the County council twice and showed them pictures of trailers with no insulation, (next to yards filled with) trash and abandoned cars."

Association members met with Spartanburg County officials from several departments to determine code changes that would improve living conditions. They made presentations to illustrate the gravity of the problem and how the county could strengthen ordinances that regulate mobile home parks and units and enforce existing codes. They made known their desire to provide input on planning issues that would impact Una. The community effort showed that U.N.A. had the strength and organization to mount a public campaign and the patience and persistence to engage in the struggle with government entities that systematic change requires. The repeal of the grandfather clause and improved general code enforcement were vital steps in convincing the county to provide essential services and support to the community. Now a community scarred by unlivable housing conditions in its midst had the tools to clean itself up.

U.N.A.'s emphasis on housing caused Spartanburg County officials to think about these and related issues. "Until a year ago, we had no policy on housing or neighborhood revitalization," said Elena Rush

of the Spartanburg County Community Economic Development Department. Rush worked closely with communities that needed housing revitalization. Press coverage of deplorable housing conditions in Una was spurred by the work of Rush's office, Una residents and STV. As a result, the Spartanburg County Council made neighborhood revitalization one of its top priorities. Task forces were organized to ensure that a fractured group of county officials worked together on enforcement, compliance and disposal issues. Since 1999, seven homes were renovated and two homes were reconstructed through grants from Rush's office.

The Demise of Community Policing

But life and work continued to be uneven for U.N.A. An unexpected problem was the sudden reduction in community policing during the summer of 1998 after STV began to pull back from its strong involvement in the neighborhood's activities. The reduction of community policing was seen as a serious step backward for the community and U.N.A. "Everything was fine," Rollins said of the community policing effort in Una. "People got to know the officers and told them about drug deals. Then, BAM! The Sheriff decided he wanted to set a different way."

U.N.A. fought hard to maintain the police presence which served not only to prevent crime but also to unite the community. Rollins doggedly pursued the Sheriff to come speak to the neighborhood, and U.N.A. eventually won the return of policing, but not at its former strength. "I don't know that the Sheriff was committed long term," McPhail said. "There seems to be some conflict between traditional policing and community policing within the department. As of now, there isn't a true community police officer in Spartanburg County." Many in the community remained frustrated with the unresponsiveness of the Sheriff's Department, and efforts to reinstate community policing continued.



Swimming Upstream

Despite solid successes in early 1999, the remainder of the year was tumultuous for U.N.A. as the organization struggled with leadership and membership issues. Early achievements became distant memories as optimism was replaced by frustration at slow progress over hard to reach goals. Leadership conflicts fractured the organization, leaving it without a clear sense of direction and a declining membership, including the resignation of county officials. U.N.A.'s unstable leadership concerned STV as it considered the organization's transition from a targeted community to a collaborative partner. Although STV instituted training programs for U.N.A. leaders on facilitation, brainstorming and effective meeting facilitation, it became clear that U.N.A. was experiencing growing pains. "We tried to bring things back on track and we thought they were. But they weren't," McPhail said. "We stood by and offered support, but it was hard to watch."

Further complicating the situation was ever-decreasing attendance at neighborhood meetings due to the lack of a common meeting space. U.N.A. meetings were typically rotated among neighborhood churches, but that proved to be unworkable. "If we met at this church, only certain members would come, but if we went to that church, certain others would come. People thought we were showing favoritism," said Rollins. "I hate to say it, but there's some jealousy between the churches here."

A solution to this problem came in September 2000, when U.N.A. leased a headquarters building. Residents came in large numbers to "Community Impact Day," an event held to celebrate the new building, located in the center of the neighborhood. "I've always said we needed a community center – I called it a communications center – to give people a place to go for help," said Wes Cook, a longtime activist and leader who has lived in the community for 17 years. Long a goal for neighborhood activists, the building represented not only a dream realized, but also stood as a tangible symbol of a new start. The building served as a gathering place for meetings and a location for long awaited programs. Community leaders were interested in providing programs for the elderly and youth, and outreach to the growing Latino population in Una.

The new headquarters did not eliminate the frustration many felt at slow progress. As 33-year Una resident Mattie Griffin articulates, "I think U.N.A. has been very effective. We got housing remodeled, street signs put up, trailers destroyed. But some people

want immediate results, and it takes time." Still, having tasted the results of their hard work and advocacy, Una residents remained determined and committed to making and sustaining change. As Rollins puts it, "I didn't serve my country for 20 years to see people

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Mattie Griffin, Una resident

live in conditions like these. It will get easier. The more people you get involved, the more you can do and the better it will be. I want an Una where you can walk down the street with no fear."

On the Verge of Partnership

U.N.A. faced the challenge of moving into the future as a STV collaborative partner. The progress the association made in Una was substantial and encouraged all of the stakeholders. Since U.N.A.'s formation, the community was cleaner, safer and more livable. Important projects had begun in housing, street lighting, roads and highways. U.N.A. members realized that progress in improving the infrastructure is slow, full of obstacles and often frustrating. However, they made the commitment to work for change in this tough area. Past successes have demonstrated the value of diversified collaborative partnerships, and U.N.A. believes that collaborative action will ultimately lead to success. "Empowerment comes from trying and experiencing successful results," says McPhail. "The residents of Una and members of U.N.A. have sampled this empowerment and want more. They've learned that when they participate, they can make a difference."

U.N.A. is embarking on several exciting new initiatives, including the establishment of a Leadership through Innovative Neighborhood Connection (LINC) Center funded by a grant from the Department of Justice through STV. The center will provide a central location for community meetings and activities and will disseminate services and information within the community. The grant will also cover the cost of a part-time director to run the center. Other LINC Center initiatives under development will include programs for the elderly, youth and outreach to the Latino community.



Despite the difficulties, U.N.A.'s leaders believed they were ready to move toward collaborative partner status with the STV. They needed to obtain a 501(c)(3) designation for U.N.A., part of the process to allow the organization to write its own grants and another step toward independence for the community. They developed a flatter management structure, and began fundraising to pay for the building lease beyond the grant dollars allotted, a debt Rollins and Cook took upon themselves for one year.

"Empowerment comes from trying and experiencing successful results. The residents of Una and members of U.N.A. have sampled this empowerment and want more. They've learned that when they participate, they can make a difference." Curt McPhail, STV Project Director

The role of STV in U.N.A. has been to set the stage – helping the community believe it itself and find leaders for its future. Former STV chairperson, Charlie Tulloh, says, "I hope U.N.A. will lead to a

confederation of like-minded groups, with us serving them, and them serving each other." He speaks of the need for STV to develop an exit strategy for Una for a time when the organization will provide only occasional support. Says McPhail, "This will be a first for STV and a challenge. We'll involve residents in every aspect, including special training and long-term guidance to make sure U.N.A. has the necessary resources to remain a strong, viable neighborhood force."

Uniting a Divided Community Reclaiming Northside

The community defined by STV as Northside is actually three distinct neighborhoods. Cleveland Park, which consists of five streets of mostly single-family homes, is a relatively stable, racially diverse neighborhood, with about one-third of the housing owner-occupied. Nearby Northside Housing is a public development of 168 apartments operated by the Spartanburg Housing Authority (SHA). Howard Street, a main thoroughfare, separates Northside Housing from the third neighborhood, Oakview Apartments, a complex with 106 Section 8 Units subsidized by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Both housing developments have very transient, low income residents, many of whom are single parent heads of households who rely on public assistance for support.

The population of the three-community area is 66 percent black and 34 percent white, with one-third of the families living below the poverty level. Unemployment had been a longstanding problem in Northside/Cleveland Park, especially among community youth, as 88 percent of young people aged 16-19 not enrolled in school are reported as currently unemployed. The area is resource poor containing only a city park, the elementary school and a single social service agency. Aside from a funeral home and convenience store, there are no private enterprises offering services or employment in the neighborhood, and few exist nearby.

Developing a Unified Neighborhood Vision

“Community building is about being ready when things are going to happen,” said McPhail, sharing a hard-earned lesson from his work at STV, “LINC started in Una but took off in Northside/Cleveland Park.” McPhail referred to the LINC (Leadership for Innovative Neighborhood Connections) Center up and functioning in shared space at Northside/Cleveland Park’s new elementary school with a part-time director hired directly from the community. The LINC Center offered the community programs such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Neighborhood Watch and literacy programming, and serves as a resource center for information and as a community meeting place.

The Northside/Cleveland Park LINC Center – a project whose every aspect from site selection to hiring de-

cisions was spearheaded by community residents – is tangible evidence of progress in a community STV was about to give up on, but decided to give one last shot. An early frustration, Northside/Cleveland Park taught STV that patience and persistence pay off. The seminal challenge for STV in Northside was to bring together under one umbrella association, three neighborhoods that regarded one another with suspicion and fear.

Charlie Tulloh, former chairman of STV’s board of directors, and other STV members recognized the inherent challenges they would face in Northside that were different from their experience in Una. Joyce Lipscomb, STV board member and operations analyst at the city’s Public Safety Department, notes, “In Una, you got a sense of people pulling together. It wasn’t like that in the Northside. There were three distinct enclaves, with no unifying force.”

STV hoped to create that force by helping residents of the three neighborhoods overcome the suspiciousness and misperceptions that characterized their feelings toward one another. People in Cleveland Park expressed fear of going to the Northside Housing development for activities or meetings because of that community’s problems with drugs and crime. Northside Housing residents believed the area’s drug activity and violence came from Oakview Apartments. Oakview tenants believed the criminal element resided mostly in the Northside complex. “The separation was so bad that Cleveland Park had its own association and residents of the other areas couldn’t come to their meetings,” said Sheila Dogan, Northside/Cleveland Park’s community development specialist. These beliefs kept interaction between the three communities limited – a perfect set-up for stereotypes and fear to flourish.



Taking Baby Steps

The difficulties in Northside were evident early in the planning phase in 1998, when attendance at meetings averaged a scant dozen residents. STV staff met with little success in trying to re-energize a dormant Northside Housing tenant organization and going door-to-door in the Oakview Apartments to generate interest and recruit participants.

Initially, STV focused on youth programming, as this was indicated as a need in community meetings hosted by STV. Thomas Simuel, STV's first community development specialist in Northside/Cleveland Park, began by offering various activities designed to build the self-esteem of youth and direct their energies in positive ways. There were Aikido classes, fishing trips, kick-ball games, ceramics workshops, reading clubs, swimming classes and conflict resolution sessions. Field trips took young people to cultural and sporting events. The activities were well received by the area's youth, but unsuccessful in attracting adult attention.

Reflection and Redirection

The lack of adult involvement in youth activities made STV realize that the community's interests were not being tapped. In May 1997, following a consultation with the NFCVP technical assistance (TA) provider, STV renewed its focus on local capacity-building and long-term empowerment in Northside. It was so difficult to generate interest and find a core of leaders in Northside that NFCVP TA provider, Gillian Kaye, cautioned STV to "find those leaders – people who have followers – and find them soon." STV staff met with the managers of both housing developments who helped identify potential leaders. These residents, all women, were invited to a dinner meeting at a restaurant, with transportation provided. Only a few attended, but their enthusiasm was encouraging. They brought more tenants to the next meeting, and soon, meetings evolved into adult resident-led cooking classes attended by about twenty young people. But resident turnover took its toll on the energy and constancy of the group. For two years, concrete progress toward resident initiative and long-term commitment at both Northside and Oakview remained elusive.

More importantly, a collaborative structure had not been built. Laura Bauknight, former STV project director, believed there were inherent problems in STV's approach. "Our activities met recreational and individual developmental needs, but they did not address

structural, systemic change – and they did not require substantial contributions from collaborative partners." Potential partner organizations were seldom represented at Northside meetings or events. Strong relationships with the City of Spartanburg and its Public Safety Department did not develop, and those with the housing authority became strained. Local churches proved unresponsive to invitations to become involved, and support from social service agencies and schools was negligible.

Early failures to organize the housing developments were discouraging, leading Bauknight to muse, "We should remain open to activities that residents might want to actually initiate and sustain, but with limited resources, we cannot and should not take on the responsibility for organizing in the developments. "

In 1998, with a new board of directors and a new community development specialist, STV began to take a fresh look at the Northside community, using a series of 'key leader interviews' to identify resources and issues. Charlie Tulloh suggested that STV treat Northside as three individual neighborhoods, and work separately in each, feeling that, "Once we have developed people's confidence maybe there will be a glimmer of hope for community-wide action."

The strategy with the most potential, they decided, was to focus on providing assistance to the area's lone civic group, the Cleveland Park Area Neighborhood Association, and to continue to foster inclusion of Northside and Oakview residents in the Association's activities. It came as a small success when the Association agreed to include the Northside Community Events Planning Team in their group, and the city agreed to include residents from the two housing complexes in a leadership development program previously targeted only for Cleveland Park.

"Our activities met recreational and individual developmental needs, but they did not address structural, systemic change – and they did not require substantial contributions from collaborative partners." Laura Bauknight, former STV project director

Energizing the Effort

By knocking on doors and engaging residents one-on-one, Shiela Dogan, community development specialist, succeeded in uncovering community concerns and in earning residents' trust. Dogan's success was a testament to the importance of hiring a person who could really connect with the people. "A lot of people are afraid of things they don't know," said Dogan

Within two months, the neighborhood had come together to plan a United Neighborhood Celebration. With 700 in attendance and 1000 donated hotdogs, the celebration started with a peace walk and continued with games, clowns, information dissemination and an open microphone available for anyone to speak. Neighbor met neighbor, residents aired their feelings in the public forum and community activists came away with a feel for neighborhood concerns, which included community policing, safety for children, neighborhood beautification and housing revitalization.

Concerns and Responses

The need for strong community policing was high on residents' list of concerns. "When we have the neighborhood association, public safety and STV working together, things go beautifully," said Bill McKinney, a leader in the Northside/Cleveland Park Neighborhood Association. Shaken after he was held up at gunpoint one Saturday morning on his front walk, McKinney's involvement with the neighborhood association began when then-community policewoman Sheila Brewster "got me by the nape of the neck and dragged me over to the first meeting," McKinney remembered.

The success of community policing depends on who fills the job, the time they devote and the area they cover, according to McKinney. Brewster was widely regarded as an effective police officer, but her tenure

was short-lived. Nevertheless, crime statistics decreased, and it became possible to drive down the main thoroughfare between the two apartment complexes without being approached about drugs, a marked improvement from earlier years. McKinney, despite his brush with a gun-toting criminal, generally feels safe in his neighborhood.

Caring for Kids

"It's a safe place to live, but the children are not supervised or disciplined," said Irene Sims of her neighborhood. A 28-year resident of the Northside apartment complex, Sims raised two daughters as a single parent and is heavily involved with children in her community. In response to residents' concerns about supporting neighborhood children academically and keeping them safe, STV originally opened the Homework Club that Sims supervised in an apartment next door to her home. STV was able to leverage a donation of computers to the Homework Club, an activity repeated in the nearby Oakview development.

"I had to be Mom, Dad, doctor, nurse, philosopher. I respect them. I wish I could give them more, but I just give them a hug and tell them not to misbehave," said Sims, whose concern for children is a magnet – the neighborhood children flock to her.

The homework center, now run out of the LINC Center, also is used for 'Around the World Wednesday' a program that simulates world travel by exposing young people to the culture, climate and food of other countries. Through this program, Northside youth have 'traveled' to Ghana, Zimbabwe, France, Japan and Mexico.

While Northside seemed to galvanize around STV's activities, it was hard to keep Oakview active in neighborhood efforts. Many believe that it is because of the large population of very young mothers residing in the development who are overwhelmed with the responsibility of a young family, work, school or all three. Because of the transient nature of the lives of these young mothers, both apartment complexes experience high turnover, estimated by Dogan to be as high as 50 percent every six months.

"I have to look at long-timers. They have no plans to leave and they're concerned about smaller children and a healthy community and safety. They come together because there is safety in numbers," said Dogan.



Budding Entrepreneurs

STV's core member in the Oakview complex is Shirley Miller, a 10-year resident who lives there with two daughters and a 3-year old grandson. She passes out flyers and tried to get others interested in community work. Nevertheless, she is sometimes the sole Oakview resident at neighborhood association meetings.

But Miller isn't afraid to cross the street, and her boldness has brought her to a venture that could turn a new skill into a moneymaking enterprise. The crafts class at Northside started as flower-arranging class, held in the homework center next to Sims' apartment every Monday evening. Popular from the start, the class soon organized several sales of its creations and made some money for supplies. "Now it looks entrepreneurial," said Dogan. Sims, who has been shy of the spotlight, now teaches the class and has taken a "Start Your Own Business Class" and the small core of women is learning about the budgets and business accounting.

A Community's Respite

Thanks in part to STV's involvement with the community, the city developed revitalization plans for Northside/Cleveland Park. Phase one included demolition of four substandard housing units, the relocation of two homeowner and rental tenants, and the acquisition and assembly of 19 individual pieces of property. Eighteen new homes will be built, at a cost of \$72,000 per home. Plans also included the renovation of the historic Fremont School and redevelopment of the surrounding property to include more than 40 low and moderate-income rental apartments and a community center. Over the past five years in Northside/Cleveland Park, the city provided more than 40 newly constructed units and funded housing rehabilitation for three existing homeowners.

Cleveland Park, after a long wait, is seeing its park renovated with more than \$6 million in public and private funds. A Spartanburg landmark since the 1920's situated at one entranceway to the city, the park, noted for its miniature train and track, had fallen into disrepair and become a haven for prostitution and drugs. Plans to restore it to a passive recreation facility include the development of an event center, a train depot and railroad, an island and pavilion in the middle of the 3.5 acre lake, scattered picnic areas, playground equipment and extensive landscaping planting.

The push to raise the final \$1 million in private funds has created a grass roots fund-raising effort in Cleveland Park. More than 20 residents have joined to create fund-raising projects, including forging a deal with a grocery store chain for donations linked to use of the store's bonus card, and a community yard sale that raised \$600 for the effort. But the group's most powerful tool might be cashing in on Cleveland Park memories. Now in the process of collecting memories from the community about special times spent in Cleveland Park, the neighborhood group has contracted with a publisher to print a 108-page book of Cleveland Park memories. Proceeds from the sale of the book will support the renovation project.

Future Directions for Northside/Cleveland Park

Although Northside/Cleveland Park made some substantial progress and has experienced some successful results, its work is still in a nascent stage despite its five-year involvement. Before it can assume the role of collaborative partner, Northside/Cleveland Park must transcend serious structural hurdles. The most serious impediments are high resident turnover, lack of community leadership, stratification between three distinct residential enclaves, and inadequate participation by collaborative members.

STV must address the question of community stratification either by addressing each of the enclaves on an individual basis or by intensifying efforts to identify common ground that will bring them together. Although some individual leaders have emerged, they are scarce. More community residents need to be engaged not only in leadership roles, but also as involved citizens. Collaborative partners need to be engaged in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. Only by overcoming these barriers can the entire Northside community achieve substantial and tangible results.

After that, the Northside community could identify its needs and goals, and develop strategies and implement them. When they achieve this stage, STV and other collaborative partners will be able to assist resident's progress in the important work of community building. STV helped Northside/Cleveland Park set the stage for community building. The LINC Center, homework clubs, craft classes and other initiatives give future leaders a foundation upon which to build.

Challenges for the Transferable Model

STV witnessed first hand the power of community building and organizing residents to collectively solve their community problems. From the cold night in January 1998 when more than 75 Una residents took to the streets chanting, "We are taking Una back!" to the sweltering Neighborhood Celebration, STV learned that this power not only transforms communities, but also lays the foundation for sustainability over time.

As STV expands its efforts by adopting other communities and furthering its role as a capacity building organization in Spartanburg County, it will continue to seek the answers to community problems within the community. "We do know that if an association fails, that's okay. But it's not okay if you set them up to fail," said McPhail. "Our job is to be sure we've done everything we can."

Stop the Violence Spartanburg, South Carolina

The mission of the Stop the Violence Collaboration is to prevent violence by strengthening families and communities through a systems approach that includes community development and revitalization.

Development. The Spartanburg Stop the Violence Collaboration (STV) was created in 1995 following the shooting death of Reverend Ernest Rice, a prominent African-American community activist. In a community that has long suffered the effects of racial discrimination and segregation, the violent death of this popular activist served as a catalyst for action. Residents, both black and white, appealed to the Spartanburg County Consensus Project, which decided to create STV as a potential solution to problems of violence in the community.

With funding from the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention, STV developed a neighborhood focus and selected Una and the Northside, areas plagued by poverty and crime, as target neighborhoods. Comprised of prominent local leaders, representatives from local government agencies, full-time staff, and concerned residents, STV attempts to reduce crime and promote peace by empowering these neighborhoods. Designed to be an inclusive organization, the 23-member Board of Directors includes representatives from Una and the Northside, local business and government, and the larger Spartanburg community. The organizational membership cuts across class and racial categories that have long divided the Spartanburg community.

Strategies and Activities. Focused on ways to organize the community in targeted neighborhoods and

foster collective efficacy, STV's activities ranged from housing rehabilitation and community organizing to leadership training and youth programs. STV organized residents to repair dilapidated houses and convince local government to enforce housing codes. The collaborative rallied residents to launch an anti-prostitution campaign and lobby the local police to implement community-policing practices. STV implemented skill-building classes and homework clubs for the neighborhood's youth, and helped residents establish neighborhood associations that increase the community's collective voice and promote resident interactions. These associations, in turn, successfully lobbied local agencies to change their policies and 'business as usual' practices. The residents, with STV's guidance, have established community centers that offer residents a place to meet, computer facilities, and computer and job training.

Based on resident input, discussions with the board, and evaluation results, STV's goals for the year 2000 are:

- Further develop the capacity of the Northside;
- Make United Neighborhood Association (U.N.A.) an independent collaborative partner;
- Select and begin to plan activities for a third community; and
- Transfer STV's knowledge of community building and violence prevention work to a larger audience.

Future Directions. Evaluation data showed that community pride increased in both neighborhoods, and residents are more engaged in civic activities than they were in 1996. The resident's expectations of their community have been raised. Most importantly, violent crime has decreased significantly since STV began working in the neighborhoods. Armed with the lessons they learned over the past four years, STV is currently selecting a third neighborhood in which to work.

Community Building Tips

- Neighborhood solutions often lie with its problems, and frequently spring from the residents themselves. STV's challenge has been to nurture those germinating ideas and gently guide them toward fruition.
- Activities that bring communities together in pride and accomplishment are the ones that work to build a better place to live. Whether it is community cleanups or flower arranging, the activity binds people together. "You find something that works, and even though it looks like it's people caring about their yards (in the case of Flower Power), it spills over into other things," said Janie Summers, STV board president.
- Create clean, well-maintained neighborhoods with affordable, livable housing and adequate infrastructure. STV understood this as a foundation block in building communities. Sheila Dogan, community development specialist, put it best; "A well-maintained community is a safe community."
- Persistence and creativity come to the forefront again and again when trying to engage residents who have different skill sets and levels of interest and experience. "You just keep figuring ways to come up with new ideas so that maybe something will strike their fancy," Mattie Griffin, Una resident, said of continued efforts to get residents of Una involved in U.N.A. "You ask them to help in a specific activity, or to write a check, or to attend a fish fry."
- The art of community building lies in knowing when to wait and when to leap in and surf the wave. STV has learned patience as well, riding the wave of change as it ebbs and flows. Respect for the fluid dynamics of a community is a hard-earned skill, particularly from the once-removed perspective of those charged with empowerment. "Sometimes, we have to change the way we do things, it doesn't mean we have to give up," said Summers. "There are detours or enroute experiences that will seemingly take us back, but I believe [that ultimately] they will take us where we need to go."

Collaboration Lessons

- **Acknowledge the time and resource limitations that can be spent in partner communities.** Two of the top priorities for future choices are the willingness of the residents themselves to pursue organized change and their interest in the application process.
- **Identify a pre-existing viable leadership base and the presence of long-term residents.** Organizing leaders that community residents already trust moves the process of change forward. Long-term residents are vested in the need for change and can clearly see the benefits of activism. Be attentive to the consistent need for available meeting space.
- **Focus on the potential for short-term successes to keep the momentum alive while pursuing long term goals.** People like to see positive results from their efforts. It is easier to keep the long-term goal in view if there are celebrations of success along the way.
- **Look for organizational infrastructure and resources to call on for help in community building.** STV found that the County Council and the Spartanburg County Community Economic Development Department had already shown such an interest.
- **Delineate criteria for withdrawing from a community.** STV set benchmarks to measure its success in a community and timelines for its involvement. Its initial involvement will be for one year, which may be extended at the community's request. After two years, STV will withdraw to collaborative partner status.
- **Create benchmarks for success.** The community building effort may accomplish many short and long term goals, but it is important to track the success with realistic benchmarks. Include involvement of residents in city/county council meetings; knowledge of community resources for problem solving; establishment of regular community meetings; evidence of successful fundraising; and a perception of a decrease in violence.

Theory of Change

Stop the Violence – Spartanburg, South Carolina

Mission

To prevent violence by strengthening and empowering families, communities, and neighborhoods and encouraging community pride and involvement through education, community development, and revitalization.

Collaborative

Stop the Violence Collaboration (STV)

Focus on target neighborhoods

Action Teams

- Community Building
- Youth Development

Goals

Northside

Offer safe and healthy youth development and leadership activities

Empower community residents and further develop the neighborhood's capacity

Strengthen parenting skills

Una

Improve housing

Empower community residents and further develop the neighborhood's capacity

Develop Una as a model community

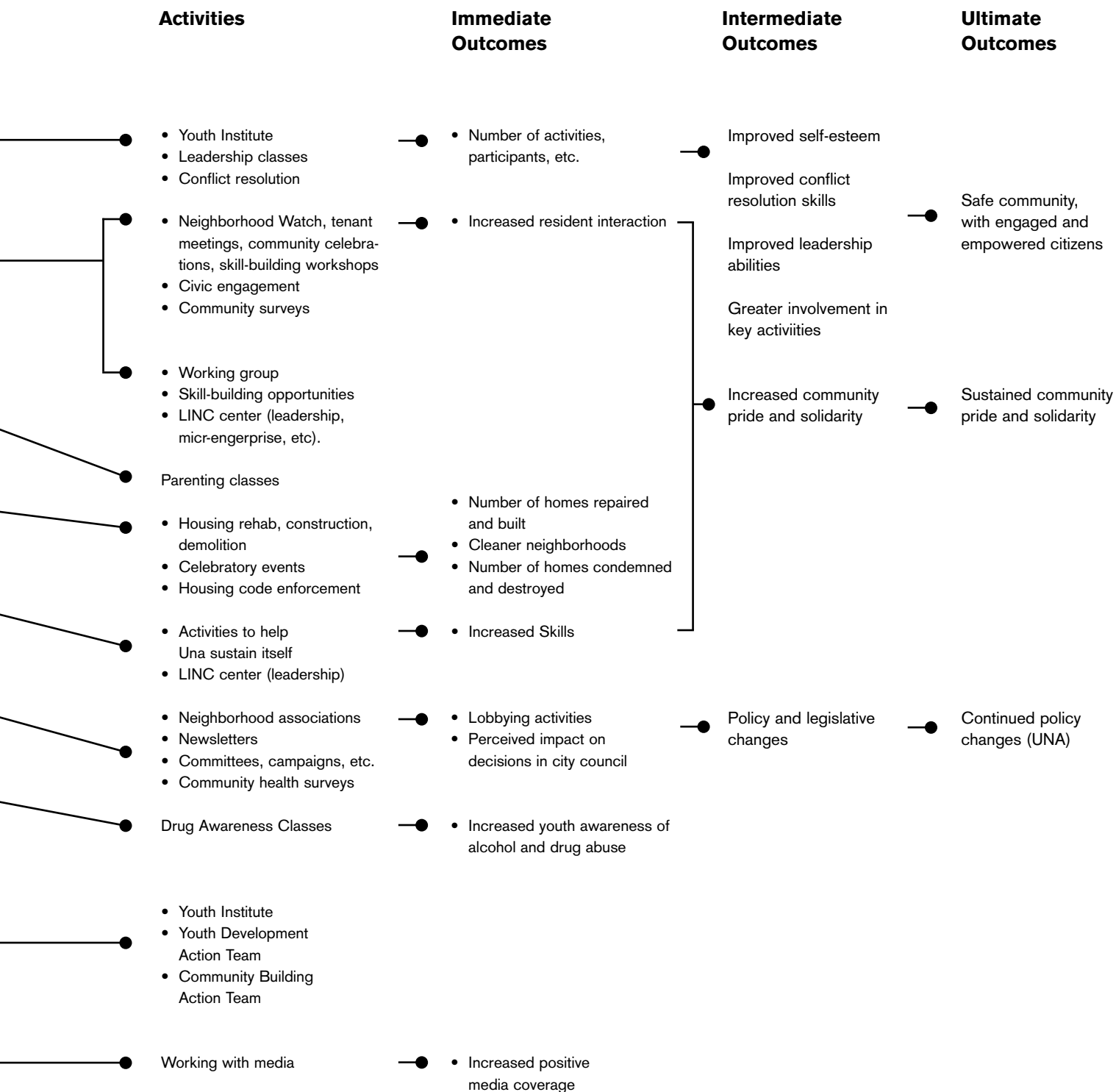
Provide drug prevention education

Expand Services to Other Communities

Select and begin to engage citizens and build capacity with a third neighborhood

Overall

Transfer knowledge/skills to a larger audience



Case Study Discussion Questions:

Our experience in community based approaches to violence and the body of literature on collaboration have helped us to identify the key components of successful collaboration which are illustrated in this case study. The following questions have been provided to assist you in using the case study as a tool to examine your own practices. The questions should help you to identify and examine the critical aspects of collaborative practices to prevent violence. Placed within your own community context, we hope they can further your work in community based violence prevention.

1. Nature of Violence

What violence problem brought this collaboration together? What methods did members of the collaborative use to deepen their understanding of the issues underlying this violence problem? How did they use this deeper understanding to build their collaborative? How did this help them to focus on prevention and not just crime reduction? What methods did your collaborative use to determine the violence problems in your community? Do you feel as if you have a holistic understanding of the nature of violence in your community?

2. Community Readiness

What was the broader community context when the collaborative formed? Were there social, political or economic conditions that may have contributed to the violence in the community? If so, what were they? How did the collaborative incorporate the knowledge of this context within their work? What is the relevant context in your community? How is your violence prevention effort addressing it?

3. Membership

How did the collaborative select its members? Why were these members chosen? What relationship did they have to the violence problem, the factors underlying it or the community context? What was asked of the members? What stakeholders should be part of your effort to prevent violence? How will you choose them? Given your greater understanding of how collaborative members should be chosen and utilized, would you change your current collaborative structure?

4. Governance

How was the collaborative organized and governed? How did the members make decisions? Do you know how they communicated with one another? Can you identify what the collaborative's leadership was like? Can you identify the various roles and responsibilities that various members had in the collaborative? How is this similar to or different from your work?

5. Transition

Was there evidence that the membership changed and shifted over time? What is your sense of how long members stayed involved and why? What was the effect of shifting membership on the collaborative? Was it able to sustain progress despite the shift? If so, how did it do so? How do you handle shifts in membership? What types of transition strategies do you use to ensure the forward progress of your work?

6. Vision and Strategy

How did the collaborative determine its vision and strategies? Where did they focus their work—on the individual, family, community, or system level? Do the strategies make sense given the communities' targeted violence issue? How did they involve those most directly affected by the violence in determining their strategies? Did this help them in targeting prevention or were their strategies primarily intervention focused? Did it matter in terms of their ability to effect change? How were your strategies determined? Do you feel that the strategies selected will truly lead to prevention of violence?

7. Conflict Management

Conflict is fairly inevitable in any collaborative process. Did evidence of conflict emerge from the case study? If so, what was it? How did the collaborative handle the conflict—did it seem haphazard or was there a system in place to resolve difficulties? How does conflict arise in your collaborative? Are there certain issues designed to trigger conflict? Do you have a system in place for resolving them?

8. Collaborative Challenges

What challenges did the collaborative face? Did these challenges seem to evolve from the issue of violence prevention or from the process of collaboration? How did the collaborative handle these challenges? What do you do when challenges arise in your community—is there anything you could put in place now to avoid some of the challenges the community faced in the case study?

9. Evaluation

Did the collaborative use evaluation to improve its work? Did evaluation bring about any changes to the philosophies, mission or strategies of the collaborative? What evidence of success was identified in the case study? How was this used to promote and/or improve upon the mission of the collaborative? What evaluation process does your organization use to determine what it can improve upon? Is this similar to success stories in your own community? What lessons can you take from this study back to your own community?

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