



Improved local-federal relationships are helping Memphis, one of the Strong Cities, Strong Communities pilot cities, realize its development goals and work toward greater regional resilience.

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Growing Toward the Future: Building Capacity for Local Economic Development

In May 2011, record rainfall and snowmelt caused the Mississippi River to reach its highest flood stage since 1937 in Memphis, Tennessee. In the aftermath of the devastating flood, when the city of Memphis was in the process of redeveloping blighted neighborhoods, city officials encountered what many local governments would say is an all-too-familiar experience. The city's mayor, A.C. Wharton, Jr., describes the difficulties involved in

securing federal assistance after the disaster:

First I would have to get with FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency]. If I wanted to use Section 8 vouchers, I'd have to go to HUD. If I wanted to get unemployed people back to work, I'd have to go to [the Department of] Labor. If I wanted to make the homes energy efficient, I'd have to go to DOE

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Message from the Assistant Secretary

I'm pleased to present the fourth issue of *Evidence Matters*, which addresses one of the most critical questions our economy faces at the beginning of the 21st century: the strength and resilience of America's urban places.

We live in an increasingly urban age. More people worldwide live in urban places today than at any other time in human existence, and the United States is no different. Our metropolitan regions are where 85 percent of jobs are located and more than 8 in 10 residents live. These regions produce more than 80 percent of the nation's patents and exports and generate 90 cents out of every dollar America produces. Strong regions are the core of a dynamic, vibrant American economy — and the building blocks of strong regions are strong cities.

Today, urban resilience is on the minds of many in the wake of the Great Recession, as the economy recovers. Las Vegas, Atlanta, and other cities have been hit hard by the economic crisis, and their near- and perhaps long-term prospects will depend on their resilience in the face of these serious challenges.

But the resilience of our urban places has shaped the nature of American economic success for decades. As our economy has evolved, these places have had to evolve with it. Many have succeeded, often driven by local leaders who, with creative thinking and new partners, have adapted quickly to challenges. In Charlotte, North Carolina, regional leaders worked across sectors to transform a city battered by a declining textile industry into a hub of banking and finance. In Allentown, Pennsylvania, strategic alliances between civic and nonprofit groups helped that city withstand the decline of the steel industry. In both cases, highlighted in this issue of *Evidence Matters*, communities showed not only the ability to recognize the challenges they faced but also the capacity to respond and lay the foundation for long-term success.

Others have found success and resilience harder to achieve. Some places, such as Detroit, have struggled for years, enduring severe population loss, long-term economic decline, and other challenges. For many of these chronically distressed regions, one key barrier to resilience has been public institutions that have proven unable to leverage existing critical, unique assets — from talented political leadership to anchor institutions such as universities, hospitals, and foundations — to design and implement a response to overcome or reverse these trends. With better use of available resources, resilience becomes more achievable.

That's why earlier this year, the Obama administration announced the Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) pilot initiative in seven distressed cities — Detroit, New Orleans, Memphis, Fresno, Chester (Pennsylvania), and the northeast Ohio cities of Cleveland and Youngstown. Bringing together 14 federal agencies as well as philanthropic and private-sector partners, SC2 will help these communities strengthen the capacity of their local institutions and use existing resources to drive regional economic growth.

The initiative accomplishes these goals in three ways. First, federal agencies such as HUD will help city governments build capacity directly, lending experienced staff to work with city leaders as well as “deepen the bench” of local governments through a fellowship placement program. Second, we are assisting communities that are not pilot cities but share many of their challenges by creating a new National Resource Network, which can help localities with basic operational issues such as deficits and poor bond ratings. Third, SC2 includes an “X-prize”-style competition — the Economic Planning Challenge — that will award funding to six cities and regions so they can hold competitions that challenge multidisciplinary teams of experts to develop and implement a comprehensive economic strategy for their region.

SC2 represents one pillar of the Obama administration's urban economic policy. That policy also includes investing in innovation and in people's skills through the Recovery Act as well as stabilizing and reinvigorating neighborhoods through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and the interagency Choice Neighborhoods initiative. It includes aligning the federal approach with local rules of the road through our Partnership for Sustainable Communities, so our regions' housing and transportation investments are responsive to the needs of their local communities and broader economies.

Central to the success of all this work is our ability to support local leadership and institutions. Building a better understanding for cities across the country of what works, what doesn't, and what an effective 21st century federal partner looks like is what the SC2 pilot is all about. The stakes are high for our communities, our cities, our regions, and our economy. The lessons drawn from the SC2 experience will be invaluable for long-term success. This initiative is yet another instance where we will find that evidence matters.

— Raphael Bostic, *Assistant Secretary for Policy Development and Research*



Editor's Note

Every day it seems there is a new system ranking cities and regions in the United States and around the world on measures such as quality of life, economic conditions, access to opportunity, and myriad other factors. A region may top one list but appear in the middle of the pack on another the very next day, whereas some metropolitan areas have been stuck at the bottom of such lists for years. Whether or not you agree with them, these lists spark conversations about the ingredients for successful urban life. And having the right mix of ingredients — from visionary public and private leadership to strong community connections — is never more important than when a region faces challenges that affect its quality of life and economy, as all do at some point in their histories.

In this issue, we investigate the factors that make regions more resilient in the face of stresses, whether they are long-term industrial declines or unforeseeable shocks such as natural disasters.

Many local governments faced years of tightening budgets even before the economic crisis; the growing proportion of residents in need of financial support over the past few years, coupled with declining tax revenues, have further exacerbated city government fiscal difficulties. The articles in this issue examine strategies for growing local capacity, forming resilience-building partnerships, and addressing the changing demographics of poverty.

The lead story, “Growing Toward the Future: Building Capacity for Local Economic Development,” details how local capacity, leadership, and community connections can help regions avoid or recover from stresses and explores how the Obama administration’s Strong Cities, Strong Communities pilot initiative is helping to grow capacity in some of America’s hardest-hit areas. “Conceptualizing and Measuring Resilience” delves into the evolution of research into regional resilience and considers several recent efforts to more completely understand what factors affect resilience. Finally, our practice-focused article, “Meeting the Challenges of Suburban Poverty,” discusses how the growth of poverty in suburban areas has strained local governments and foundations, and how cross-sector partnerships in Chicago’s South Suburbs and in Chester, Pennsylvania have filled in gaps to support vulnerable residents.

I hope you find this issue of *Evidence Matters* thought-provoking and valuable. Our upcoming issues will focus on the role of data and research in ending homelessness and on the ways art can improve America’s communities. As always, we welcome your feedback at www.huduser.org/forums.

— Erika C. Poethig, *Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Development*

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[the Department of Energy]. If I wanted to use individuals with criminal records, I’d have to go to [the Department of] Justice.

But today, Wharton describes close and productive working relationships between federal and local officials who are getting things done much more quickly, from sharing information about the city’s post-flood infrastructure to the e-approval process for certifying women- and minority-owned small businesses. Mayor Wharton says that the federal officials working in Memphis are “close enough to see what we’re doing, but they are not so close that they don’t give us some slack and become a part of the problem.”¹

The improvements in local-federal relationships described by the mayor are possible in part because Memphis is one of seven pilot cities in the Obama

administration’s Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) initiative. The SC2 initiative is a pilot program designed to help localities realize their own development goals, build assets, strengthen regional economies, and work toward more resilient regions. By providing the pilot cities with the opportunity to take full advantage of connections with and among 14 federal agencies while building on existing local coalitions that have been working to solve local problems for years, SC2 aims to change the relationship between federal and local government.

Wharton says that the new federal support has already been critical in several key economic development initiatives, including the sale of a steamship from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Maritime Administration to bring needed dollars and jobs to

the Mississippi riverfront. With federal help, Mayor Wharton says, the city was able to “cut through a lot of red tape” and expedite the project. Wharton expects the SC2 initiative to help the city of Memphis make more flexible use of the federal dollars that are currently available, streamline connections through federal departments, and get things done more quickly.²

The improving nature of this local-federal relationship developing on the ground in Memphis is one objective of the SC2 program. With budgets strained and the economy struggling, metropolitan regions are confronting the challenges of poverty, job and population loss, and rising foreclosures with smaller budgets and fewer resources. Distressed cities and older suburbs are suffering from years of disinvestment in their neighborhoods and the depletion

Highlights

- Resilience is the capacity of a region to respond effectively to a shock, such as the effects of realigning or declining industries, a national economic recession, or a natural disaster.
- Strong local government leadership, cross-sector partnerships, and inclusive community participation are critical to increasing regional capacity.
- The federal Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative promotes resilience by helping localities build capacity and maximize the effectiveness of federal funds.

of their property tax bases, which have weakened their organizational and civic capacities.³ Responding effectively to these challenges, whether brought on by a sudden natural disaster or the long-term decline of an industry, is a question of resilience.

As applied to metropolitan regions, resilience is the capacity to respond effectively to a shock, such as the effects of realigning or declining industries, a national economic recession, or a natural disaster. The University at Buffalo's Kathryn Foster says that resilience encompasses attributes that shape a locality's ability to both withstand and respond to shock. In particular, Foster defines regional resilience as "the ability of a region to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disturbance."⁴

What Makes a Region or Locale Resilient?

No magic bullet exists to insulate regions from major disturbances, changes, or shocks, or to help them quickly recover. Metropolitan regions vary in their ability to resist or handle a crisis depending on the nature and severity of the misfortune; they can be strong in one aspect of resilience but not in another. Having the capacity to be resilient varies even within regions. For example, Todd Swanstrom, a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, found uneven responses to the foreclosure crisis within a particular metropolitan area, where some suburbs hit especially hard had no organizational infrastructure to immediately help mitigate the crisis.⁵

The factors that make a region or locality able to withstand or survive a stressful phenomenon are complex and interrelated. Foster's Resilience Capacity Index, developed to help metropolitan areas assess their own resilience, incorporates 12 indicators of capacity that focus on the qualities of a region's economy, its social and demographic makeup, and its community connectivity.⁶ This index is detailed in this issue's Research Spotlight (page 11).

Two qualities not reflected in this index, however, are leadership and governance. These factors are difficult to measure, and the data that do exist are not always applicable to all metropolitan areas, but they are critical nonetheless. If a region's leadership is lacking or divided, or if the governance systems are disconnected or obstructionist, Foster finds that little progress can be made.⁷

When it comes to being able to weather shocks caused by change or misfortune,



Regional stresses affect all who have a stake in a healthy, sustainable community.

context is important. In studying economic resilience of communities, a group of researchers led by Edward Hill at Cleveland State University identified key factors in how a community bounces back from economic shock as well as how long it takes: economic structure, industrial concentration, human capital, flexibility of the labor market, and income disparity.⁸ According to George Washington University's Hal Wolman, who worked with Hill's group on the study, whether a metropolitan area avoided economic shock or emerged resiliently depended on "the industry structure of the region and decisions made by individual firms about their own operations, which affected whether those firms would be successful and continue employing people."⁹ Some characteristics that make regions more resistant to economic downturns, for example, also make them less able to recover quickly.¹⁰

Regional stresses affect all who have a stake in a healthy, sustainable community and require a coordinated effort to resist and respond. Swanstrom emphasizes the importance of having all three sectors — public, private, and nonprofit — engaged and collaborating within and across sectors. Local, state, and federal governments provide infrastructure and policy; nonprofits facilitate collaboration and contribute creative solutions from a diverse set of stakeholders; and the private sector offers quick market responses, technologies, and consumer choices. By maintaining each sector's own attributes and strengths while working together across sectors and within regions, these collaborations effectively secure needed resources and organizational changes.¹¹ To illustrate the importance of maintaining working connections between the sectors, Swanstrom notes that a diverse, collaborative nonprofit sector can be the source of innovations that make win-win solutions to community problems possible. Competition and self-interest might crowd out this potential if nonprofits were to incorporate market features.¹²

The Role of Leadership and Governance

For there to be a collaborative and regionwide response to a threat, the area's leadership must mobilize individuals and groups to come together, plan and make decisions, and carry out agreed-on strategies.¹³ Regions whose leaders adopt more creative responses, promote the diversification of their economies, and respond quickly are more likely to adapt well to regional change.¹⁴

Hill et al.'s case study of Charlotte, North Carolina's response to an economic threat precipitated by the collapse of a major industry shows how this regional adaptation can unfold. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg metropolitan area faced a classic economic shock in the 1980s, when the textile industry — a

major job creator — was in decline. At about the same time, leaders in the region's banking industry had begun exploring ways to expand banking practices by forming multiple branches throughout the state, merging banks and branches, and eventually expanding beyond state lines. The legislatures in four states, anticipating future economic opportunities, passed reciprocal branch banking bills and formed a southeastern market for the industry. This early banking experience of the region's financial institutions left the Charlotte region well positioned when the U.S. Supreme Court declared interstate banking constitutional in 1985. The decision represented an opportunity for Charlotte's financial sector to expand and seek depositors nationwide.

With this growth, the financial industry's leaders saw a need for downtown revitalization that would help recruit financial talent. Along with regional energy company Duke Power, financial leaders worked out a public-private strategy in which the city agreed to provide improved crime protection and infrastructure such as parks and street lighting, while the private sector would help develop businesses, housing, services, and amenities in the downtown area. Civic groups and other public-private partnerships collaborated on economic development initiatives, helped establish university doctoral programs, implemented a welfare-to-work program, and jointly planned and worked to make Charlotte a desirable place to live. Although the banking industry was initially able to import a

Strong Cities, Strong Communities: A Capacity-Building Partnership

The Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative, a partnership among the White House and 14 federal agencies, seeks to strengthen capacity and spark economic growth in local communities while ensuring that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently. The initiative consists of four components.

Community Solutions Teams. These teams consist of federal employees from several different agencies who work directly with city leadership in the SC2 pilot cities of Chester, Pennsylvania; Detroit, Michigan; Fresno, California; Memphis, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; and the Northeast Ohio cities Cleveland and Youngstown. Community Solutions Teams are assisting cities with issues mayors have identified as vital to their economic development strategies, including efforts to build on local assets, strengthen regional economies, develop transportation infrastructure, improve job-training programs, and support community revitalization.

SC2 Fellowship Program. An effort that will deploy early- to mid-career professionals to the seven SC2 pilot cities to work in the offices of the mayor and local government. HUD developed the fellowship program and funded it with a donation from the Rockefeller Foundation. In December, after an open competition, HUD announced a partnership with the German Marshall Fund of the United States, which will act as the third-party administrator of the program. The first class of Fellows is expected to launch in the summer of 2012.

SC2 Economic Planning Challenge. In addition to the seven pilot locations, SC2 includes an Economic Planning Challenge designed to help additional cities develop economic blueprints. Through this national grant competition, cities will adopt and implement innovative economic development strategies to support comprehensive city and regional planning efforts. Six cities will be competitively selected to receive grants of approximately \$1 million that they will use to administer a competition, in which they will challenge multidisciplinary teams of experts to develop comprehensive economic and land use proposals for their cities. The challenge will be overseen by the Economic Development Administration, which will help cities administer the competition.

The National Resource Network. A new concept developed by HUD with the White House and other agency partners, the National Resource Network provides economically distressed local governments with an on-call group of experts to help solve problems and maximize resources. The Network will extend SC2's reach beyond the pilot cities, providing the services of experts to eligible cities, towns, and counties that might not otherwise have access to these professionals. Rather than providing assistance organized by federal programs, the Network will develop and manage a diverse team of expert technical consultants who tailor services to local needs. In particular, the Network can help with basic operational issues such as deficits, lack of staff capacity, and poor bond ratings.



UNC Charlotte, Wade Bruton, Photographer

To attract and maintain a highly educated workforce in Charlotte, North Carolina, public and higher education programs were enhanced to sustain the new banking industry in the long term. (Photo shows the University of North Carolina's Atkins Library.)

highly educated workforce, public and higher education programs were enhanced to sustain the new industry in the long term. Charlotte would go on to become a hub of banking and finance that employed 35,000 people in commercial banking-related firms in 2005, up from 9,000 in 1980. In the Charlotte region, says Hill, “the state plowed the field, and prepared it for an important entrepreneur [the banking and finance leadership] to come in to effectively change the economy. Being ready, being responsive, and having your fundamentals right is what government can do.”¹⁵

Hill saw little evidence that traditional strategies such as tax subsidies, promoting an area’s strengths, or even job training programs had any short-term impact on a region’s resilience. Government policy, too, played no significant role in the short term. What government *could* do, however, was support residents and constituents with services and programs.¹⁶ Government can also support regions as they develop important traits for resilience, such as

Community participation and collaboration that is broad and inclusive is crucial for building regional capacity.

the ability to cooperate to reach common goals and to recognize challenges when they occur.

Also critical are leaders’ ability to understand the nature of the problem, to promote experimentation, to be open to new ideas, and to be willing to cooperate and coordinate with other jurisdictions when appropriate — that is, a willingness to govern regionally. Leaders must also think in the long term, often a difficult undertaking for government leaders because long-term goals rarely align with the short-term nature of political office. The problems and needed changes may present obstacles so significant in scale that they are impervious to a short timeframe.¹⁷

Building on Community Ties

Community participation and collaboration that is broad and inclusive, researchers report, is crucial for building regional capacity and results in governance suited to the preferences of a locale. Regions that have developed their economies in a collaborative way find that the deliberative process is effective in establishing and maintaining consensus and understanding of decisions. The process can thus result in greater transparency in governance as well as in innovation and growth in civic capacity and resilience.¹⁸

The importance of the configuration of this collaborative process is no more apparent than in the case of two Rust Belt cities struggling to recover from the long-term stress of manufacturing decline, as chronicled in Sean Safford’s *Why the Garden Club Couldn’t Save Youngstown*. Safford, a fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, studied civic organizations in Allentown, Pennsylvania and Youngstown, Ohio that engaged in community

problem solving in the 1970s and 1980s to address their communities’ economic decline. Safford found through rigorous comparative analysis that the effectiveness of these organizations’ efforts varied depending on the broader networks in which they were embedded.¹⁹ In Youngstown, which was less successful than Allentown at pulling out of economic decline, members of civic organizations such as the Red Cross or the Garden Club were unable to successfully work together for change because they were already well connected to one another in other social, civic, or economic roles (such as through clubs, churches, boards of directors, country clubs, or parent-teacher associations). Their close-knit, exclusive interactions tended to preserve the status quo and prevent the innovation that springs from exposure to new ideas and people with pertinent knowledge and competencies.

Safford found that insular, noninclusive connections, or ties, between actors in Youngstown “may have done more harm than good by strengthening the ability of a small group of actors to assert narrow interests over those of the community more broadly. Moreover, these ties ultimately proved extremely brittle, leaving the community without strong leadership when it was absolutely necessary to have it.” Such social connections left the actors inflexible and unable to adapt sufficiently when change was needed. In Allentown, by contrast, the “civic ties among elites connected actors who were not otherwise connected,” thus bridging the civic and economic communities more effectively and mobilizing needed external resources.²⁰

The importance of looser, bridging ties is documented most famously by sociologist Mark Granovetter and in the

literature on social capital and network analysis.²¹ Strong ties tend to bind people to smaller, less diverse, or closed groups, whether kin or interest groups, but weak ties allow for more bridging of boundaries and offer more networking opportunities, thereby expanding the information, ideas, and influence available for problem solving. As Christakis and Fowler put it, “There is a trade-off between building stable relationships with a certain group of partners and being willing to leave those relationships when changes in the market cause them to lose viability. It is important to have a mix of strong and weak ties, and hitting the sweet spot is key.”²²

Margaret Weir et al. confirm the importance of the configuration and mix of connections in their study of transportation policy in Los Angeles and Chicago. In both regions, new actors and regional networks emerged that were dedicated to changing policymaking in transportation. In Los Angeles, however, the “network that emerged died out after a decade of activism.” In Chicago, by contrast, the network grew stronger and expanded, and community voices were supplemented with “power brokers,” including government officials and key stakeholders in the business community.²³

These connections empowered Chicago’s regional network to effect the changes in state laws needed to support their regional goals. In Los Angeles, the network “linked a group of mostly weak actors. The activities and development of the Los Angeles network show that establishing only broad horizontal ties among groups that lack vertical power provides a weak foundation for building regional capacity.”²⁴

The foreclosure crisis also offers a lesson in the importance of effective collaboration and communication of stakeholders horizontally and vertically — not just within, but also between local, regional, state, and federal sectors — to build the capacity to effectively respond to a shock. Based on a series of case studies in St. Louis, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta, Riverside-San Bernadino, and the East Bay, Swanstrom finds three forms of effective collaboration for metropolitan regions suffering from the foreclosure crisis. The first is cross-sector horizontal collaboration between real estate professionals, nonprofit organizations, and community development corporations. These groups can be the source of information on the ground. Cross-governmental collaboration is also necessary, especially to address the lack

of capacity of small suburban governments. Finally, “cross-functional” collaboration is needed because healthy neighborhoods are about not just housing but also strong schools, transit, police, and parks.²⁵

St. Louis, for example, has an initiative that combines these types of collaboration. Twenty-four inner-ring suburban communities located near the Normandy School District in St. Louis County are working together in a comprehensive effort to address the foreclosure crisis in their region.²⁶ Some of these communities, Swanstrom says, “barely have a police force, let alone a housing planner.” Yet their collaborative work in “24:1,” as the partnership is called, allows them greater access to resources and comprehensive supports.²⁷ “You have to address the needs of the communities themselves as they understand it,” Swanstrom says, “and reward collaboration. We need to empower organizations within communities and give them the tools they need to be able to do this work.”²⁸ The partnership’s early work includes the construction of a new grocery store, college saving accounts for students, and support for prekindergarten programs.²⁹

Crisis as Opportunity: Cities Rebound

An effective mix of public-private connections and a massive influx of external resources helped New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region rebound from a string of devastating natural and manmade disasters: the 2005 hurricanes, the 2007 recession, and the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill. By 2009, a total of \$142.6 billion in federal funds and tax relief had been authorized for the region, along with another \$36 billion in discretionary dollars aimed at promoting long-term recovery. In *Resilience and Opportunity: Lessons from the Gulf Coast After Katrina and Rita*, editors Amy Liu et al. see a new model emerging with support from a diverse set of key players within and beyond the immediate region. They are forming innovative civic and cross-sector partnerships to solve problems as a community. These efforts “are critical signs of resilience and



Committee for a Better New Orleans and the New Orleans Citizen Participation Project

The New Orleans Citizen Participation Project provides the opportunity for neighborhoods to help shape city government decisions, priorities, and solutions to common problems.



The Musicians' Village in the Upper Ninth Ward of New Orleans is part of the post-Katrina rebuilding effort that provides homes for musicians and other low-income families who were displaced by the disaster, while preserving the local culture.

adaptation,” note Liu et al. “[C]itizens are highly engaged in civic issues and have become very knowledgeable of public issues, actively shaping public decisions.”³⁰ Coalitions and “neighborhood organizations have formed and nonprofit developers have created new capacity to rebuild their own communities in ways that are more equitable and opportunity-rich.”³¹

Liu et al. assess the ability of New Orleans to build a stronger and more prosperous region after Hurricane Katrina, taking care not to return to the status quo even in the face of ongoing crises. In particular, the book discusses research that focuses on the area’s resilience as a “function of the extent to which leaders intentionally strengthen economic characteristics and civic capacities (including by retooling policies) that help a community rebound and become less vulnerable to future crises.”³² For example, New Orleans has adopted a citywide master plan that lays out a community participation process promoting livability, economic opportunity, and ways to “live with water.” The city government features a new Office of Inspector General to promote

greater integrity and reduce waste.³³ In addition, early successes include a revised evacuation plan; new charter schools; a regionwide system of community health clinics serving vulnerable populations (including low-income, minority, and uninsured patients); and criminal justice reforms that will improve fairness, accountability, and public safety outcomes.³⁴

Timely and accessible demographics, economics, and housing data support these reform efforts and help leaders, citizens, and nonprofit organizations make effective decisions.³⁵ The Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (GNOCDC), in partnership with the Brookings Institution, is now publishing a series of reports that measures the region’s progress on prosperity indicators. The indicators in GNOCDC’s reports are updated regularly to help shape policy decisions.³⁶

National-local partnerships have helped make these reforms possible, with leadership from all levels of philanthropy, the private sector, and government. Although significant challenges remain, the economy is shifting to a better path

despite significant shocks from Katrina, the recession, and the Gulf oil spill. The New Orleans metropolitan area has seen improvement in the average wage, increasing 14 percent from 2004 to 2006. Although growth stalled after the recession, average wages in the city (\$45,492 in 2009) are now close to the national average (\$45,831 in 2009). There are signs that the regional economy is diversifying, with new growth in knowledge-based sectors such as higher education, legal services, and insurance agencies; regional export jobs in these sectors grew by 59 percent between 1980 and 2010. Overall job loss in the New Orleans metropolitan area between 2008 and 2010 was 1.2 percent, less than the national rate of 5.1 percent. And new business startups are above the national average.³⁷

Although the region’s recovery and rebuilding efforts have surpassed their predisaster status, there is still much left to do. In addition to the federal authorizations made to promote long-term recovery after the storm in the areas of improved infrastructure, non-emergency housing, and levee repairs, New Orleans and the Gulf region will

continue to receive in-depth federal support. New Orleans was recently chosen as a pilot city in the SC2 initiative, in large part because of its ongoing efforts to develop and implement comprehensive, inclusive economic and community development plans. These plans acknowledge the interrelated nature of the city's problems, ranging from violence and poor educational outcomes to the importance of access to mental and behavioral health care. "The city's forward-thinking approach to how it uses its resources to improve the lives of residents really embodies the essence of what Strong Cities, Strong Communities is designed to do — that's one of the main reasons why they have been such a good fit for the initiative," observes New Orleans SC2 Team Lead R. Erich Caulfield.

National Support Can Help Strengthen Local Capacity

Although the federal government can have a positive role in strengthening local capacity, a federal presence has often posed problems for localities. The

Grand Forks region, which spans two different states, illustrates the potential problems federal assistance can create. In 1997, a disastrous flood destroyed 83 percent of homes and 62 percent of commercial entities in Grand Forks, North Dakota, as well as all but eight residences in East Grand Forks, Minnesota. The two communities are divided by the Red River, which is also the state line. The 1997 flood followed a number of economic and industry shocks, mostly triggered by military and state government decisions. During the flood recovery, "the two cities were served by different FEMA and Economic Development Administration field offices, and Grand Forks was a CDBG [Community Development Block Grant] entitlement city while East Grand Forks received its CDBG funds through the state. This meant that as [the two cities rebuilt], they had different directions and restrictions from their federal partners. [According to one of Hill's local interviewees,] 'You could do things in Minnesota that you couldn't do in North Dakota, and vice

versa, which pulled us apart instead of putting us together.'"³⁸

The SC2 initiative aims to change this siloed approach to federal assistance, with the goal of improving the way federal government does business: cutting through red tape and rationalizing the federal bureaucracy to help deal with the overlapping maze of agencies, regulations, and program requirements that are sometimes confusing and inhibit resilience to future shocks.

A second objective of SC2 is to provide assistance and support by working with local communities to find ground-up rather than top-down solutions while providing on-the-ground technical assistance and planning resources tailored to local governments' needs. Given the challenges surrounding the federal budget, the initiative emphasizes helping localities use the federal funds they already receive more efficiently and effectively, as Mayor Wharton reports is happening in Memphis.

Finally, SC2 will foster collaboration by developing critical partnerships with key local and regional stakeholders that encompass not only municipal and state governments but also new cross-sector and cross-functional partnerships with the business community; nonprofits; anchor institutions; faith-based institutions; and other public, private, and philanthropic leaders. Going back to Grand Forks, Hill et al. document that, as a result of an iterative process of collaborations triggered by a long run of disasters, relationships improved between the two local governments and with the federal government, which was responsible for new investment in the region.³⁹

The SC2 initiative's rationale is based on the lessons learned from a growing body of research as well the successes and failures of local communities and regions as they strive to be healthy, sustainable places in which to live. Local options are often limited, and no single



FEMA/Michael Rieger

The devastation to the Grand Forks, North Dakota/East Grand Forks, Minnesota region after the Red River flooding in 1997 ultimately led to improved local-federal government relationships.

effort can solve the web of problems that confront America's regions, but SC2 focuses on what localities can do to realize their own development goals and work toward greater regional resilience. By building on existing horizontal coalitions that have been tackling local problems for years and helping SC2 cities take advantage of vertical connections with federal agencies, as well as horizontal connections between federal agencies, stakeholders can focus their efforts on building local capacity and promoting resilience. Investing in local capacity is an investment in stronger cities and regions. Localities that can develop strong local leadership, cultivate social capital in the form of effective public-private partnerships, and spur governments to invest in the fundamentals of

economic well-being, all with support from national actors, will be better able to meet the challenges that lie ahead.⁴⁰

Conclusion

Local communities face numerous challenges to their welfare in the short term and to their resilience in the long term. Resilient localities must be able to mobilize applicable skills, competencies, and resources to mitigate the effect of — and successfully manage — crises when they occur. Each region has unique strengths and weaknesses, varying in its capacity to weather challenges. Yet, the research discussed above suggests that certain elements are key to strengthening a locality's resilience regardless of the nature of the crisis and the attributes of the locale.

The problems communities experience today are generally not confined to political boundaries but instead are regional in nature and demand regional solutions. Stakeholders from all levels and sectors of a region have unique and valuable ideas, technologies, and resources with which to develop and implement plans and strategies for building and sustaining healthy, economically viable places to live. Effective collaboration and partnerships within and across all regional actors are therefore crucial. Strengthening local capacity and resilience is a matter of broad inclusion, insightful leadership and governance, strong civic capacities, and national support collaboratively tailored to meet local objectives. **EM**

¹ Interview with A.C. Wharton, October 2011.

² Ibid.

³ Interview with Todd Swanstrom, September 2011.

⁴ "Resilience Capacity Index." Building Resilient Regions (brr.berkeley.edu/rci/). Accessed 7 October 2011; Kathryn A. Foster and William R. Barnes. Forthcoming. "Reframing Regional Governance for Research and Practice," *Urban Affairs Review*; Kathryn A. Foster. Forthcoming. "In Search of Regional Resilience," in Nancy Pindus, Margaret Weir, Howard Wial, and Harold Wolman, eds., *Building Regional Resilience: Urban and Regional Policy and Its Effects*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

⁵ Todd Swanstrom, Karen Chapple, and Dan Immergluck. 2009. "Regional Resilience in the Face of Foreclosures: Evidence from Six Metropolitan Areas," MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions at the University of California, Berkeley.

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⁷ Interview with Kathryn A. Foster, September 2011.

⁸ Edward Hill, Travis St. Clair, Howard Wial, Harold Wolman, Patricia Atkins, Pamela Blumenthal, Sarah Ficene, and Alec Friedhoff. 2011. "Economic Shocks and Regional Economic Resilience," MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions at the University of California, Berkeley.

⁹ Interview with Hal Wolman, September 2011.

¹⁰ Hill et al., 14–8, 60–7.

¹¹ Todd Swanstrom. 2008. "Regional Resilience: A Critical Examination of the Ecological Framework," MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions at the University of California, Berkeley, 20–2.

¹² Ibid.

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¹⁴ Building Resilient Regions. University of California, Berkeley (brr.berkeley.edu). Accessed 14 November 2011.

¹⁵ Hill et al.; Interview with Edward Hill, September 2011.

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¹⁷ Interview with Foster; Foster and Barnes.

¹⁸ John Accordino and Fabrizio Fasul. 2011. "from lone rangers to Collaborative Communities," *Economic Development Journal* 10:1, 5–13; Judith Innes and Jane Rongerude. 2005. "Collaborative Regional Initiatives: Civic Entrepreneurs Work to Fill the Governance Gap," James Irvine Foundation.

¹⁹ Sean Safford. 2004. "Why the Garden Club Couldn't Save Youngstown: Civic Infrastructure and Mobilization in Economic Crises," Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 4, 23, 27; Susan Christopherson and Jennifer Clark. 2007. "Power in Firm Networks," *Regional Studies*, 41:9, 1223–36.

²⁰ Safford, 23–7.

²¹ Mark Granovetter. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology*, 78:6, 1360–80. For more on social capital and network analysis, see Robert D. Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Klaus Nielsen. Forthcoming. *Social Capital, Trust and Institutions*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar; Nan Lin, Karen Cook, and Ronald Burt, eds. 2001. *Social Capital: Theory and Research*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

²² Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler. 2010. *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*. New York: Little, Brown, 161–2.

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²⁴ Weir et al., 480, 485.

²⁵ Swanstrom. Forthcoming. "Resilience in the Face of Foreclosures: How National Actors Shape Local Responses," 44–5, unpublished draft provided by author.

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²⁷ Interview with Swanstrom.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "The 24:1 Initiative Community Plan: Strong Communities, Strong Families, Successful Children." Beyond Housing, 2–3, 6, 24–30. Accessed 9 October 2011; "24:1 Initiative Frequently Asked Questions." Accessed 9 October 2011.

³⁰ Amy Liu, Roland V. Anglin, Richard M. Mizelle, Jr., and Allison Plyer, eds. 2011. *Resilience and Opportunity: Lessons from the U.S. Gulf Coast after Katrina and Rita*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 4, 9.

³¹ Building Resilient Regions, Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. 2011. "New book on a resilient New Orleans six years after Katrina." Interview with Amy Liu and Kathryn Foster, (brr.berkeley.edu/2011/09/new-book-on-a-resilient-new-orleans-six-years-after-katrina).

³² Liu et al., 2.

³³ In Liu et al., Robert A. Collins, "No More 'Planning by Surprise': Post-Katrina Land Use Planning in New Orleans," ch. 11; David A. Marcello, "Systemic Ethics Reform in Katrina's Aftermath," ch. 6.

³⁴ In Liu et al., John L. Renne, "Evacuation Planning for Vulnerable Populations: Lessons from the New Orleans City Assisted Evacuation Plan," ch. 8; Andre Perry and Michael Schwam-Baird, "School by School: The Transformation of New Orleans Public Education," ch. 3; Karen DeSalvo, "Delivering High-Quality, Accessible Health Care: The Rise of Community Centers," ch. 4; and Nadiene Van Dyke, Jon Wool, and Luceia LeDoux, "Criminal Justice Reforms," ch. 5.

³⁵ In Liu et al., Frederick Weil, "Rise of Community Organizations, Citizen Engagement, and New Institutions," ch. 14.

³⁶ Nonprofit Knowledge Works. Greater New Orleans Community Data Center (www.gnocdc.org). Accessed 14 November 2011.

³⁷ Ibid., 2011. Alison Plyer and Elaine Ortiz. 2011. "New Orleans Index at Six Executive Summary," 2.

³⁸ Hill et al., 43.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ White House. "Obama Administration Launches Strong Cities, Strong Communities to Support Local Development," press release, 11 July 2011.

Conceptualizing and Measuring Resilience

Resilience has become a ubiquitous concept among both academics and practitioners of urban and regional studies. Yet for all its potential as a framework for examining how communities can protect against and respond to adversity, resilience risks becoming another economic development buzzword if not employed in a meaningful way. This article examines how the concept has been applied to cities and regions, and what approaches researchers are taking to measuring regional resilience.

The Emerging Framework

The term “resilience” was first used in physics and mathematics to describe a material’s ability to regain equilibrium following displacement.¹ In the 1970s, C.S. Holling applied the resilience metaphor to ecological systems and their capacity to adapt to adverse conditions, which often entails multiple “new normal” points of stability rather

Highlights

- Approaches to measuring regional resilience depend on the type of stress affecting the area as well as the research focus (economic development, social connectedness, etc.).
- Research finds that regions with greater industrial diversity are more likely to be resistant to shocks and that a history of collaboration across sectors bolsters resilience.
- The Resilience Capacity Index systematically compares resilience across U.S. regions using 12 indicators to measure regional economic, sociodemographic, and community connectivity capacities.

than a return to the previous, single equilibrium.² The concept has been advanced and expanded by many researchers, who have drawn from both the narrower and broader visions of resilience to model conditions in disciplines ranging from economics and psychology to sociology and urban planning. Because regions are complex systems of overlapping economies and social and political networks, it is unsurprising that resilience has become a key framework for analyzing regional capacity.

Although resilience is widely used as a framework, researchers have criticized its use as “fuzzy” and trendy.³ The sheer scale and breadth of research on resilience makes it a rapidly evolving topic. Swanstrom finds, for example,

that “the number of references to the term ‘resilience’ as a topic in the *Social Science Citation Index*...increased by more than 400 percent” from 1997 to 2007.⁴ As research proliferates, so do definitions. Norris et al. list more than 20 representative definitions of “resilience” — each of which shares features yet is distinct — that focus primarily on community resilience to disasters.⁵

For resilience to be a helpful metric for community leaders, it needs consistent definitions that maintain the interdisciplinary nature of the concept. As Christopherson et al. explain, “an interdisciplinary discussion helps clarify the assumptions underlying different perspectives on regional change and how to measure it.”⁶

Perspectives on Resilience Analysis

When the resilience framework is applied to cities and regions, a fundamental issue is the type of stress or disturbance affecting the area. Some stresses take the form of acute shocks, often natural or manmade disasters. In other cases, regions face chronic, long-term strains, such as the decades of declining employment and population afflicting many older American industrial areas. The measures and frames for evaluating resilience vary depending on the type of stress.⁷ And because the capacities needed to respond to each form of stress can differ, regions may be more resilient to one type of disturbance than another.



FEMA/Steven Zurwalt

Regions face numerous challenges, including natural disasters, and researchers studying resilience are exploring the factors that will enable regions to better withstand or adapt to shocks. (Photo shows widespread damage caused by a tornado in Joplin, Missouri.)

The variations in types of stress as well as the array of lenses through which a researcher might consider regional resilience result in studies that employ a spectrum of approaches. Many use a form of equilibrium analysis drawn from the physics and engineering perspective, concentrating on a region's or community's capacity to "bounce back" or return to normal. Pendall et al. note that this framework "tends to dominate in the fields of psychology and disaster studies, both of which seek to understand why people, infrastructure and places recover from disturbances or intense stress." Metrics such as growth in population, income, and economic product and declines in poverty and unemployment rates are often used to measure a region's return to equilibrium.⁸

Because of the complexity of regions, which are composed of many interacting governments, economies, and networks, using a single equilibrium as a baseline can sometimes be limiting or unrealistic. The "multiple equilibrium" model of resilience posits that system stress may permanently alter what could be considered "normal" regional conditions and that numerous possible new growth paths emerge following the disturbance. If dominant social and political institutions hinder restructuring and

adaptation, a region may become locked in to a suboptimal equilibrium. Still, Pendall et al. believe that "the multiple-equilibrium perspective on regional resilience is arguably an optimistic one," because it presumes that "reinvention is possible given the right mixture of foresight, hard work, endowment and compromise."⁹

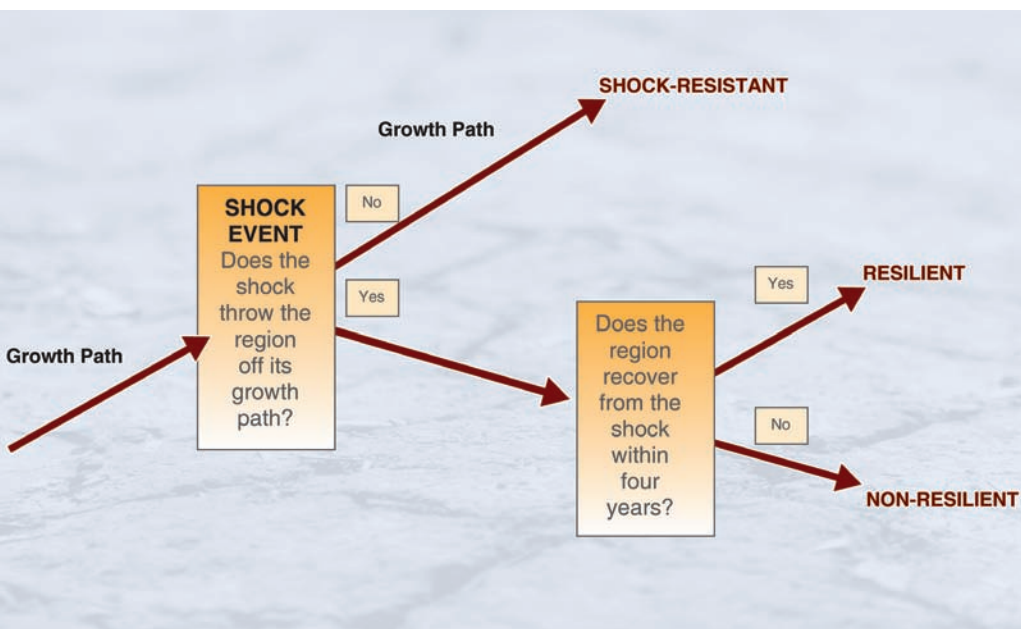
At the broader end of resilience studies, some research emphasizes the need for an evolutionary or complex adaptive systems framework that shows how resilience levels continually change as regional systems, and their many subsystems, evolve. For example, because a region's needs may shift depending on whether it is in a period of growth, stability, or reorganization, a high level of connectedness between key actors may be steadying in one context but stifling in another.¹⁰ Using the evolutionary framework, Norris et al. define resilience as "a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory and adaptation after a disturbance."¹¹ Models based on this vision of resilience consistently emphasize that resilience is a *process* rather than an *outcome*. The evolutionary framework perhaps better reflects the complexity of regions, but it is less amenable to measurement than equilibrium models.

Measures of Regional Resilience in Community and Economic Development

Because of the breadth of frameworks and research fields applying them, a targeted approach that measures resilience will enable a fuller understanding of how regions can better position themselves to withstand shocks and recover more effectively.

Also mentioned in this issue's lead article, Hill et al.'s "Economic Shocks and Regional Economic Resilience" comprehensively evaluates regional resilience through a combination of quantitative analysis and qualitative case studies. Using employment and gross metropolitan product (GMP) data from 1978 through 2007, the study classifies shocks as either national economic downturns, national industry shocks to key regional industries, or local industry shocks. The researchers' use of employment and GMP to measure resistance and resilience focuses on a region's productivity — only one aspect of a region's health, albeit an important one. In an equilibrium-style model, regions (defined as metropolitan areas) are placed in three categories based on how they respond to shocks: shock-resistant regions avoid significant declines in growth rates, resilient regions return to prior growth rates within four years, and the remaining regions are not resilient. Regions were less likely to be resistant to national economic downturns and national industry shocks than to local industry shocks, and affected regions (those not shock resistant) were less likely to be resilient to national economic downturns than industry shocks.¹²

To evaluate what factors made some regions more or less shock resistant or resilient, Hill et al. drew from regional economic development literature and tested a wide set of measures, including variables representing industrial diversification, employment by industry, prior growth rates, labor force skills, demographic characteristics, area population distribution, income inequality, state right-to-work status, and region of



A graphic depiction of Hill's concept of resilience. Source: Edward Hill, Travis St. Clair, Howard Wial, Harold Wolman, Patricia Atkins, Pamela Blumenthal, Sarah Ficencic, and Alec Friedhoff. 2011. "Economic Shocks and Regional Economic Resilience." Macarthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions at the University of California, Berkeley, 3.

the country. Among many results, the researchers find that:

- regions with greater industrial diversity are less likely to experience shocks and more likely to be shock resistant,
- regions with a high percentage of employment in manufacturing are more susceptible to shocks but also more resilient in terms of employment due to demand cycles. By contrast, regions with a high concentration of employment in health care and social assistance tend to be more shock resistant but less resilient,
- regions in right-to-work states are less likely to experience downturns in GMP and appear to be more resilient, and

believed that such activities were key to resilience. Finally, the researchers find little evidence that regional policymakers had spent substantial time in taking precautions against shocks and note that some of the regions that would have benefited most from advance planning “may be ones in which regional actors are least equipped to carry it out effectively,” because they do not perceive the need, are unable to develop plans to sufficiently restructure the regional economy, or lack the social organization within the business and government communities.¹⁴

“Economic Shocks and Regional Economic Resilience” captures the complexity of regional economic resilience. Other research applies the resilience framework to more specific types of

Places where horizontal, cross-sector ties were supported by vertical ties in the form of state and federal policies performed better.

- income inequality increases the likelihood of employment downturns and reduces regional employment resilience but increases regional GMP resilience.¹³

To complement the quantitative analysis, Hill et al. performed case studies in six regions, each of which had experienced different types of shocks and levels of resilience: Detroit, Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio; Charlotte, North Carolina; Grand Forks, North Dakota; Seattle, Washington; and Hartford, Connecticut. Conclusions about what made regions more or less resilient vary by region, but common themes emerge. In terms of employment, resilience was closely linked not only to national and local industry conditions discussed above but also to “the strategic decisions of individual firms and their leaders, as well as decisions by entrepreneurs in the area...” Regional shocks tended to prompt new partnerships to promote regional economic growth, but no one interviewed

shocks and responses. For example, “Regional Resilience in the Face of Foreclosures,” by Swanstrom et al. examines regional resilience by looking at metropolitan areas’ responses to the foreclosure crisis, both prevention and recovery, using six paired cases based on strength of the local housing market. Focusing more on institutional processes than economic measures, they define resilience as a region’s ability to devise and implement a response, which involves effective governance and organizational relationships. The authors draw primarily from a multiple-equilibrium model in examining the region’s capacity to stabilize neighborhoods and minimize involuntary displacement, even when the region cannot “bounce back” to the status quo.¹⁵

Cleveland, the Inland Empire, and Chicago were more resilient to the foreclosure crisis than their paired cities, St. Louis, the East Bay, and Atlanta, respectively. Factors contributing to

this greater resilience include higher levels of public attention to the issue, in the forms of press coverage and widely available data, which the authors believe reflected better-organized housing nonprofits and political leadership. Moreover, metropolitan areas “with a history of collaboration between housing nonprofits and the public sector were able to generate more resources to address foreclosures than metropolitan areas that had not established relations of trust over time.” Community Development Block Grant program entitlement status also played a role; entitlement communities typically had more capacity to respond to the crisis than did nonentitlement areas. The most significant finding, as discussed at length in our lead article, was that places where horizontal, cross-sector ties were supported by vertical ties in the form of state and federal policies performed better than places without such vertical connections.¹⁶

“Vulnerable People, Precarious Housing, and Regional Resilience,” by Pendall et al. recognizes that a region’s resilience depends in part on the resilience of its residents and their communities.¹⁷ A resilient region, the authors explain, is one that can identify and anticipate shocks, avoid them when possible, and mitigate the effects when avoidance is not possible. The study looks at how individual vulnerability is linked to precarious housing conditions and can affect resilience. The authors posit that various traits can be considered “vulnerabilities” that can hinder life opportunities: being a member of a minority race or ethnicity, elderly, a recent immigrant, an adult without a high school diploma, a post-1990 veteran, or a minor; having a disability; and living below the poverty line or in a single-parent household. People with multiple vulnerabilities are less likely to both be resistant to shocks and be resilient — that is, to recover when they experience shocks. Likewise, people in precarious living situations, such as those experiencing high cost burdens, overcrowding, or renter occupancy

as well as those living in old buildings, multifamily housing,¹⁸ and trailers or mobile homes, are less likely to be resistant or resilient.¹⁹

Many conditions likely to cause individual vulnerability correlate with housing conditions that are considered precarious — income levels are most closely linked, but minorities and immigrants are also substantially more likely than others to live in precarious conditions. The authors recommend that regions undertake efforts to address these conditions: “[R]egions that anticipate the many challenges of protecting and improving this housing stock will do much to guard against stresses that will affect our most vulnerable residents and thereby exhibit greater resilience.”²⁰

Measures of resilience often include general productivity measures, such as educational attainment or age of the region’s workforce, but also rely on measures of agglomeration: specifically, the number and type of industries located in a region. For this reason, the agglomeration literature provides useful insight into the resilience of a region. For example, Hollar shows that an industrially strong central city is relatively more important to regional growth than a vibrant economy in the surrounding suburbs.²¹ More generally, regions that remain internally fragmented and

competitive — for example, localities competing for the relocation of jobs within the area — will be more adversely affected by negative shocks than regions that are less internally competitive.

The Resilience Capacity Index

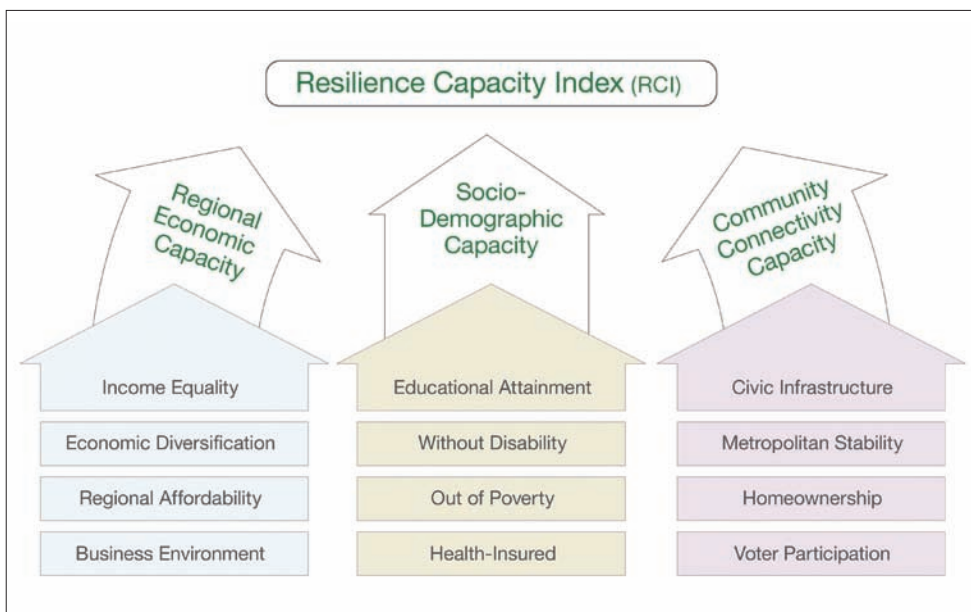
To better tease out differences in local conditions and response, many studies on regional resilience to date have focused on a small set of metropolitan areas. One attempt to more systematically compare resilience across U.S. regions is the Resilience Capacity Index (RCI), a project spearheaded by University at Buffalo Regional Institute senior fellow Kathryn Foster. As mentioned in *Growing Toward the Future: Building Capacity for Local Economic Development*, the RCI ranked 361 metro areas using 12 indicators in 3 capacity categories: regional economic, sociodemographic, and community connectivity.²² Two other key categories — environment and infrastructure, and governance and leadership — are not included because of the difficulty in obtaining comparable data sets for the former and quantifying the latter.²³

Because not all regions face similar shocks in similar timeframes, the RCI frames resilience as a capacity to confront future unknown challenges. It serves as “a generalized index of the

kind of factors that have been hypothesized to matter for responding well to a crisis.”²⁴ The RCI standardizes and combines very different types of indicators by reporting all values as z-scores (which show how many standard deviations above or below the average an indicator performs), and then averaging the 12 z-scores to create a composite value. To make higher indicator scores consistently correspond to more resilient outcomes, the RCI inverts some values: hence “out of poverty” and “without disability.”²⁵

The RCI proves somewhat surprising; the five metropolitan areas it ranks as most resilient are Rochester, Minnesota; Bismarck, North Dakota; Twin Cities Metropolitan area; Barnstable Town, Massachusetts; and Dubuque, Iowa. Foster notes that Midwest and Northeast metropolitan areas tend to rank highly because “slower growth regions actually have more capacity to withstand the shock. It’s counter-intuitive, but they tend to be stable. They’re often more affordable. There are higher rates of homeownership and they tend to have greater income equality.”²⁶ The 5 regions with the lowest RCI rankings are in Texas and California, and the other 35 regions with the lowest rankings are also in the South and West. The rankings could vary using different indicators or data from a different time period, suggesting a role for future research in exploring some of these measurement issues. The RCI’s developers stress that, although some regions are better poised to recover from stress than others according to the index, any number of factors might cause an area to under- or overperform.²⁷

The degree to which regions embrace the RCI remains to be seen, but the index points toward a future for resilience studies in which regions can better compare themselves to similar areas and craft policies that draw from the best practices of their peers. The RCI also may be useful as researchers continue to explore what factors enable regions to better respond or withstand stresses



Graphic design by Beuving Creative, Inc.

The Resilience Capacity Index was developed by Kathryn A. Foster, University at Buffalo Regional Institute, with support from the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions.

Table 1. U.S. Regions With Highest and Lowest RCI Scores

Top 5 RCI Regions	RCI Score	Bottom 5 RCI Regions	RCI Score
Rochester, MN	1.23	Hanford, CA	-1.39
Bismarck, ND	1.18	El Centro, CA	-1.41
Twin Cities Metro Area	1.09	Merced, CA	-1.41
Barnstable Town, MA	1.07	McAllen, TX	-1.43
Dubuque, IA	0.99	College Station, TX	-1.66

to their economies, their communities, and their residents.

Ongoing Challenges

As the field of regional resilience research develops, research efforts will continue to confront several critical issues inherent to long-term studies of large, complex systems. Most evident and important, perhaps, is the need to set appropriate timeframes and geographic boundaries. Since slow-burn stresses may take decades to be fully felt, researchers must carefully consider whether a region has had enough time to prove resilient or not — especially since regions can be affected by overlapping combinations of jolts and longer-term challenges.²⁸ Likewise, regions combine numerous political, economic, and social systems at many different levels. As Katz recently

noted, for instance, “the Chicago metropolis alone crosses 14 counties in three states and is chopped up into 347 municipalities, 365 school districts, and 137 library districts.”²⁹ The difficulty of defining a region’s borders requires researchers to be mindful of what is being omitted.

A close look at the RCI reveals additional challenges faced in measuring regions’ resiliency. The economy, governance, and organizational structure of a small metropolitan area like Barnstable Town is very different from those of a large metropolitan area like Rochester. It seems counterintuitive that a region experiencing strong economic growth, and the resources such growth generates, would be less resilient than a slow-growth one. For example, greater affordability, which is

used as an indicator of resilience, may reflect a region’s inability to attract in-migration, keeping housing prices low and encouraging homeownership. As research into regional resilience continues, researchers will need to develop a strong theoretical model to address these challenges.

Regional resilience studies also face the challenges common to other social science research. Studies looking across many regions often must rely on national data sources, which can be old or insufficiently detailed because local data may not be comparable.³⁰ Meanwhile, studies that focus on a small number of cases may offer clearer details on the local mechanisms of resilience at the expense of broader applicability.

Regions face numerous challenges of varied types; increasing their resilience may enable them to better withstand or adapt to the shocks and disturbances they will inevitably experience. Research plays an important role in better understanding how regions can increase their resistance and improve their resilience, but such research must be sensitive to selecting the appropriate framework for the situation. **EM**

¹ Fran H. Norris, Susan P. Stevens, Betty Pfefferbaum, Karen F. Wyche, and Rose L. Pfefferbaum. 2008. “Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities, and Strategy for Disaster Readiness,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 41:1–2, 127.

² Todd Swanstrom. 2008. “Regional Resilience: A Critical Examination of the Ecological Framework,” 4.

³ Susan Christopherson, Jonathan Michie, and Peter Tyler. 2010. “Regional resilience: theoretical and empirical perspectives,” *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3:1, 4.

⁴ Swanstrom, 3.

⁵ Norris et al., 129. While many researchers examine communities’ resilience to disasters, it is important to note that disasters often bring additional resources to the impacted jurisdictions, which can be a critical component in recovery and future growth.

⁶ Christopherson et al., 4.

⁷ Rolf Pendall, Kathryn A. Foster, and Margaret Cowell. 2009. “Resilience and regions: building understanding of the metaphor,” *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3:1, 10–11.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2–3.

⁹ Pendall et al., 5–6. “Lock-in often is a consequence or manifestation of path dependence.... As one technological or political regime comes to the forefront, human systems of all sorts begin to take shape that reflect and respond to that dominant regime. Soon a complex social, physical, economic and cultural infrastructure develops that makes

it seem logical, and perhaps even natural, to continue on the development path of that regime.”

¹⁰ Swanstrom, 8–9.

¹¹ Norris et al., 130.

¹² Hill et al., 8–10.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12–8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62–3, 66.

¹⁵ Todd Swanstrom, Karen Chapple, and Dan Immergluck. 2009. “Regional Resilience in the Face of Foreclosures: Evidence from Six Metropolitan Areas,” 3–4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46–8.

¹⁷ Rolf Pendall, Brett Theodos, and Kaitlin Franks. 2011. “Vulnerable People, Precarious Housing, and Regional Resilience: An Exploratory Analysis,” MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Building Resilient Regions at the University of California, Berkeley, 3–6.

¹⁸ Pendall et al. (6) explain their rationale for including multifamily housing as a separate criterion from renter occupancy as follows: “While much of the vulnerability of multi-family housing is a direct consequence of its rental tenure, combinations of structure type and tenure may also combine in complex ways to condition the vulnerability of units. Rented single-family homes and two- to four-unit multiples may be quite vulnerable to degradation because their landlords lack experience and capital.... Large rental complexes, by contrast, are often professionally managed and command higher rents than small multiples, possibly reducing their precariousness compared with smaller structures during downturns but more likely to experience rent increases during upswings.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15–6.

²¹ Michael K. Hollar. 2011. “Central Cities and Suburbs: Economic Rivals or Allies?” *Journal of Regional Science* 51:2, 231–52.

²² “Sources and Notes.” Building Resilient Regions Network (brr.berkeley.edu/rci/site/sources). Accessed 14 November 2011.

²³ Christina Hernandez Sherwood. 2011. “Ranking the ‘resilience’ of hundreds of U.S. cities.” Smart Planet (www.smartplanet.com/blog/pure-genius/ranking-the-8216resilience-of-hundreds-of-us-cities/6778). Accessed 14 November 2011.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ “Sources and Notes.”

²⁶ Sherwood.

²⁷ For an effort to measure disaster resilience that indexes similar indicators applied to counties in the Southeast, see Susan L. Cutter, Christopher G. Burton, and Christopher T. Emrich. 2010. “Disaster Resilience Indicators for Benchmarking Baseline Conditions,” *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 7(1), Article 51.

²⁸ Pendall et al. 2009, 10.

²⁹ Bruce Katz. 2011. “Why the U.S. Government Should Embrace Smart Cities.” The Brookings Institution (www.brookings.edu/opinions/2011/0726_cities_katz.aspx). Accessed 14 November 2011.

³⁰ See, for example, Cutter, et al., 17.

In Practice

Meeting the Challenges of Suburban Poverty

Poverty in the United States has long been concentrated in inner cities, particularly since the mid-twentieth century expansion of suburbia. Until 2000, most of the metropolitan poor lived in cities; as a result, the infrastructure to provide social services to the poor is more established in central city neighborhoods. Over the past decade, however, poverty grew almost five times faster in the suburbs than in urban areas. Although cities still contend with higher poverty rates — twice those of the suburbs, on average — in absolute numbers poor people in the suburbs now outnumber their urban counterparts by 1.5 million.¹

The first decade of the twenty-first century also saw substantial growth of extreme-poverty neighborhoods in suburban areas. This increase is seen in newer suburbs as well as in older inner-ring suburbs that developed during the housing boom after World War II and have since been subject to the long-term effects of deindustrialization, demographic shifts, and high poverty levels.² Like their urban counterparts, suburban communities have to provide the fundamentals that counter poverty — safety net services, affordable housing, and strategies for economic development that create jobs.

The rise in suburban poverty has resulted in an overwhelming increase in demand for social services. In 2010, Scott Allard and Benjamin Roth found that 73 percent of the suburban nonprofits surveyed in 3 major metropolitan areas reported seeing more first-time users of safety-net programs than in the previous year. A large number of nonprofits saw an increase in requests

Highlights

- Poverty in the suburbs expanded rapidly in the past decade, but most providers of social safety-net services remain concentrated in central cities.
- In Chicago's south suburbs, a community foundation forged new partnerships to craft a regional response to the foreclosure crisis.
- In Chester, Pennsylvania, cross-sector collaboration has been key to revitalization efforts.

for help with food needs (78.4%), utility bills (64.9%), and mortgage or rent payments (57.3%). Eighty percent of nonprofits saw an increase in clients evicted from their homes as a result of foreclosure.³

Many suburban communities, especially those that are older and suffering from disinvestment, likely lack the capacity to keep up with the increasing demand for social services. Even before the economic downturn of the past few years, services in high-poverty suburbs lagged behind those in cities. Allard observed that between 1990 and 2000, suburbs with significant increases in poverty rates had far fewer service providers than did central city areas facing similar growth in poverty rates.⁴ The suburban providers are also scattered over large areas and are not easily accessible by public transportation. In addition, individuals in need of assistance,

particularly first-time clients, may not be aware of available services.

A Regional Approach

Although philanthropic support has been particularly valuable for filling the gaps in services to the poor and increasing service providers' capacity to provide a social safety net, most philanthropic efforts have been concentrated in cities. Sarah Reckhow and Margaret Weir note that high-poverty suburbs receive fewer grant dollars per poor person than do central cities and suburbs with lower poverty levels.⁵ Unlike dense central cities, which typically fall under the jurisdiction of a single local government, suburban areas commonly consist of many jurisdictions that provide varying levels of social services. These smaller governmental entities may lack the resources to support their nonprofit service providers as well as the capacity to compete for federal



Food pantries in suburban areas are facing large increases in demand for assistance.

funds. Suburban governments can find it difficult to coordinate programs and services across jurisdictions, leading to redundancy as already stretched municipalities attempt to recreate similar services.⁶

As nonprofits, philanthropies, and local governments face the dual challenges of growing need and limited resources, these groups are using regional and cross-sector collaborations to meet this rising demand. Reckhow and Weir identify four strategies that philanthropies typically invoke to meet the challenges of suburban poverty: support existing regional organizations, create new regional organizations, foster regional collaborations and networks, and establish new suburban community foundations.⁷ The diverse and flexible role philanthropies play in supporting and facilitating these partnerships makes them particularly important. Philanthropies with a large regional network can galvanize action and, in some cases, directly support the program costs of the response. Allard and Roth underscore this point by describing the regional influence of locally based community foundations, which “have significant convening power and are able to bring together a diverse group of community leaders.”⁸ Allard and Roth also observe that sharing resources by forming partnerships with other social service providers allows suburban nonprofits to improve service delivery and the local economy. Edward W. Hill and others point to the important role of public-private partnerships in promoting economic development efforts that expand the tax base and increase employment opportunities in declining communities.⁹

The following examples illustrate some of these strategies in action in two regions with severely distressed suburbs: the Chicago and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Local governments, nonprofits, philanthropic foundations, and businesses in these areas are adopting regionwide responses and forging cross-sector collaborations to address



Residents of the Village of Olympia Fields, a south suburb of Chicago, participate in an interactive workshop organized as part of Homes for a Changing Region, an initiative led by the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.

the foreclosure crisis, the affordable housing needs of the low-income population, and general economic redevelopment.

A Community Foundation as Catalyst

In the Chicago metropolitan region, a community foundation has served as a catalyst for a concerted response to the growth of suburban poverty and the recent economic downturn. The most visible sign of the economic strain experienced in the Chicago suburbs is continued, alarming growth in foreclosure filings. By 2010, foreclosure filings, at more than 37 per 1,000 mortgaged properties, surpassed the national average of 22 per 1,000 mortgaged properties. Foreclosure filings were also rising faster in the suburbs than in the city; that same year, South Cook County had more than 50 filings per 1,000 mortgaged properties.¹⁰

The geographic concentration of foreclosures leads to serious long-term problems. Concentrations of foreclosures negatively affect a neighborhood’s property values, and vacant or blighted houses lead to neighborhood disinvestment and increased vulnerability to crime. As families abandon their

homes, local jurisdictions are faced with the repercussions; housing vacancies and blight strain municipal resources and destabilize local economies.¹¹ In Cook County, foreclosures caused housing values to decline by an estimated \$13 billion, and municipalities stood to lose as much as \$34,000 per foreclosure because of maintenance costs and loss of tax revenue.¹²

The foreclosure crisis in this region came at the end of a decade that saw a significant rise in suburban poverty rates. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of poor people in Cook County, which includes Chicago, increased by 7.4 percent. Although the city’s numbers remained basically flat, some suburbs saw their low-income populations increase by more than 50 percent.¹³ Population gains, in tandem with accelerated poverty rates, greatly intensified the demand for a housing and economic overhaul, but the area lacked a mechanism for coordinating the effort. “Unlike a major city like Chicago, where the entire department of housing has expertise, suburban communities sometimes have a part-time mayor, a part-time city council, and a small staff,” says Ngoan Le, vice president of program at the Chicago Community

Trust, a regional community foundation. “The capacity to address the foreclosure crisis is limited.”¹⁴

The Trust, with its in-depth knowledge of the region, close community ties, and significant financial resources, was well positioned to coordinate a regional response to the foreclosure crisis. In 2008, the Trust collaborated with the nonprofit Neighborhood Housing Services of Chicago and the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago to form the

initiating an “unprecedented partnership of governmental, nonprofit, and private sector organizations.”¹⁶ The Regional Preservation Initiative is a coalition of more than 100 individuals at 70 organizations that deal with foreclosures. These stakeholders convene to share information and strategies for assisting homeowners. The individual organizations (some of which receive funding from the Trust) manage initiatives consistent with the Regional Preservation Initiative’s objectives, in

interjurisdictional collaboration among the area’s suburbs.²⁰ The southern suburbs, the areas of Illinois hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis, cover a large area with 42 municipalities. The foreclosure crisis triggered a significant decline in property values in this area, with some municipalities seeing drops of up to 30 percent in the past year. In a 2008 effort spearheaded by the intergovernmental agency South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (“Mayors and Managers Association”), many of the suburbs decided that, with their small staffs and limited resources, few of them could compete for — or effectively invest — federal funding on their own.

“It’s kind of counterintuitive as an elected official to put time into proposals you may not get dollars out of this time,” says Robin Snyderman, vice president of community development for the Metropolitan Planning Council, a lead Regional Preservation Initiative partner that, along with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, worked with the municipalities to build consensus for collaboration.²¹ Later, 19 suburbs from the Mayors and Managers Association formed the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (“Collaborative”) to apply for federal funds as a group instead of competing with one another for resources.

The Trust provided funding for the Collaborative to hire a housing director to apply for grants and work on behalf of the member suburbs. Eleven Southland communities were awarded \$8.9 million in Neighborhood Stabilization Program funds.²² Awards ranged from \$80,000 to \$1.7 million per community and funded the rehabilitation and redevelopment of foreclosed properties.²³

The relationships that have resulted from collaboration, facilitated by the Trust and other groups, paved the way for additional collective efforts. Members of the Collaborative are combining redevelopment efforts around existing

19 South Chicago suburbs formed a Collaborative to apply for federal funds as a group instead of competing with one another for resources.

Regional Home Ownership Preservation Initiative (“Regional Preservation Initiative”).

The Regional Preservation Initiative’s key concerns are counseling and legal aid, refinancing and financial products, foreclosed and vacant property, and related research. The initiative is a regional extension of the city of Chicago’s Home Ownership Preservation Initiative (“Preservation Initiative”), which has assisted troubled urban borrowers since 2003. Michael Berry of the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago explained that the Preservation Initiative “offered many valuable lessons and best practices, but...was not able to fully address what had become a broad-based, metropolitan problem requiring cross-jurisdictional cooperation.”¹⁵

The Regional Preservation Initiative’s priorities were aligned with those of the Making Homes Affordable program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, two federal responses to the housing and economic crisis. Seeing an opportunity to leverage more resources and partners to resolve foreclosure issues, the Regional Preservation Initiative set out to maximize the resources provided by these programs,

partnership with dozens of other participating community groups, nonprofits, and businesses.¹⁷

The Trust fills funding gaps where needed and helps facilitate collaboration. To fight the foreclosure crisis on multiple fronts, the Trust contributes to a county fund that sends outreach workers door to door to encourage distressed homeowners to participate in the foreclosure mediation program.¹⁸ The Trust also underwrites research on program outcomes, and other partners in the Regional Preservation Initiative provide counseling and legal assistance to distressed homeowners.¹⁹ The Trust not only financially assists nonprofits battling the foreclosure crisis on the ground but also has matched private contributions for direct services to those affected by foreclosures. The Trust helped call attention to and coordinate regional responses to the housing crisis and develop regional plans for economic development in an effort to promote job creation and more directly counter the effects of suburban poverty.

Because individual local governments have only a limited ability to forestall the effects of poverty triggered by the foreclosure crisis, the Trust initiated an

rail lines to connect housing to mass transit and jobs. The Southland communities obtained a grant to implement an initiative called Green TIME Zone, which promotes job creation to circumvent suburban poverty. The first phase of the initiative will prepare 60 acres of land for redevelopment, creating 720 new or rehabilitated energy-efficient units of workforce housing over 5 years. The communities are also standardizing ordinances to make it easier for developers to operate in the region.²⁴ The Trust's early support of the Collaborative helped build the capacity to execute these ambitious redevelopment plans. And "without the Regional Preservation Initiative, we're not sure that the south suburbs would have been able to leverage as much federal, state, or philanthropic support to develop a coordinated plan," says Le.²⁵

Cross-Sector Partnerships

While the older suburbs of Chicago are using regional, interjurisdictional solutions to address growing poverty levels, Chester, Pennsylvania seeks strategies that will work for a small, distressed city of 33,972. Chester is located in a region with a relatively strong economy.²⁶ The city is challenged to capitalize on the potential of its local advantages,

recent economic development projects, and institutional assets to address the difficulties facing the city and its residents. Its efforts illustrate the role that public-private, cross-sector partnerships can play in revitalizing older, distressed inner-ring suburbs through job creation and mixed-income housing development.

Located approximately 13 miles southwest of Philadelphia along the Delaware River, Chester was one of Philadelphia's first suburbs. In the 1950s Chester began losing its once thriving shipbuilding and automobile manufacturing industries. This economic shock triggered a downward spiral of long-term population decline, disinvestment, concentrated poverty, and a decreasing tax base, which together compromised the city's ability to combat any one of these issues.²⁷ Today, Chester struggles with a poverty rate of 36 percent, nearly 3 times the national rate, exacerbated by an unemployment rate that has nearly tripled between 1970 (5.2%) and 2008–2010 (15.1%).²⁸ The severe nature of Chester's economic distress was a major reason it was chosen as one of the Obama administration's Strong Cities, Strong Communities initiative pilot cities — the only noncentral city selected.

Contrasting demographic and socio-economic trends in Philadelphia from 1970 to 2000, Nancey Green Leigh and Sugie Lee found that inner-ring suburbs in the Philadelphia metropolitan region were at the wrong end of a widening gap in economic prosperity. Income disparities stemmed from gentrification of the downtown and inner-city area and the economic and residential growth of outer-ring suburbs. At the same time, the inner suburbs experienced stagnating and declining population growth, deteriorating housing, and a rising proportion of minority and low-income households.²⁹ Chester's experience was consistent with the Leigh and Lee study: a 40 percent population loss occurred between 1970 and 2010; most of the housing stock began to deteriorate, as 65 percent of total housing units were constructed before the 1950s; and the city's minority population grew from 68 percent in 1990 to 84 percent in 2009.³⁰

By 1995, Chester's future seemed grim. Having been identified by the state as a distressed municipality, Chester's public schools were in receivership, its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program funds were impounded for five years, its redevelopment agency had been dissolved, and



Before and after photos of the Wellington Heights development in Chester, Pennsylvania illustrate improvements in a distressed neighborhood that now offers affordable homes for first-time buyers.



The city of Chester worked with the nonprofit Boys and Girls Club to open a new recreation center to expand opportunities for young people.

its public housing management was troubled.³¹ The city responded by creating a quasigovernmental agency, the Chester Economic Development Authority (“Authority”), to administer economic development, housing, and community development services. This action retained valuable leadership, secured effective management, and created some protection from politics while still being under city control.³² This restructuring appears to have paid off; Chester has attracted \$1.64 billion in public and private investment in the past 15 years, with the Authority playing an important role in the community’s redevelopment.³³

Cross-sector partnerships between the local government, local anchor institutions, nonprofits, and other businesses have been key to Chester’s revitalization efforts. Two HOPE VI projects that were initiated in 1996 mark the turning point in the city’s efforts to address long-term community decline. HOPE VI brought investment, public-private partnerships, mixed-income housing, and neighborhood improvement. The city took advantage of the momentum and the change in public perception caused by the housing projects to combat disinvestment.³⁴

Today, the Authority is working to stabilize the population by advancing homeownership for low- and middle-income residents while redeveloping blighted neighborhoods. In addition to renovating the older housing stock, the Authority uses HOME Investment Partnerships program (HOME) funding to subsidize new developments to meet the existing demands of potential first-time homebuyers. But because of the city’s depressed housing market, the cost of building a new home is substantially higher than its sales price.³⁵ “We make up the difference in price so [homebuyers] can build equity and break the cycle of poverty,” said Lisa Gaffney, housing director for the Authority.³⁶

CDBG entitlement grants and HOME funds allow the city to plan for the long term and attract other sources of funding. Wellington Heights, a multiphase housing development that began 10 years ago, provides an example of how the city improved the quality of public housing stock while creating new opportunities for potential homebuyers. Wellington Heights replaced 122 parcels in a distressed neighborhood with 92 new affordable houses for first-time homebuyers. CDBG funds totaling

\$1.4 million over the first few years leveraged additional funding for later phases from state and local governments, philanthropic organizations, and the private sector.³⁷

Public and Nonprofit Sector Collaboration

The Authority also collaborates with the Chester Community Improvement Project (“Improvement Project”), a nonprofit community-based organization that leveraged HOME funds with philanthropic dollars to revitalize a neighborhood on the east side of Chester. The neighborhood — reborn as the East Gateway Triangle — had been in decline since the mid-1990s.³⁸ In 2005, the Improvement Project received an \$89,500 planning grant from the Wachovia Foundation to develop a comprehensive revitalization plan for the neighborhood. The Improvement Project gathered residents, community groups, and local businesses to work on the plan, and a 5-year, \$750,000 grant from the foundation followed in 2007.³⁹

With housing as the platform, the Improvement Project provides low-income residents with access to needed services — from mortgage counseling to adult education programs — previously unavailable in east-side neighborhoods. Grants from a group of philanthropic organizations added services that could improve poor residents’ economic well-being.⁴⁰ To complement the new services with neighborhood improvements, the Authority funds the Improvement Project with HOME money to buy groups of houses in particularly distressed blocks, gut-reno-vate them, and sell them to low-income, first-time homebuyers. Since 2000, five such properties in East Gateway Triangle have been renovated and sold, and four more are currently in progress.⁴¹

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Why Anchor Institutions Matter

Over the past 20 years, anchor institutions have become increasingly involved in strengthening and rebuilding communities and addressing local problems such as poverty, crime, neighborhood renewal, housing and commercial development, and education.¹ Often referred to as “eds and meds,” most anchor institutions are colleges, universities, and hospitals. These prominent organizations attract and spend substantial amounts of money, draw and support large numbers of employees, sustain special expertise and knowledge bases, and own significant amounts of land, all of which anchor them to their



Bon Secours Community Works

Clean & Green, an on-the-job training landscaping program supported by Bon Secours Community Works and its community partners, transforms vacant lots into well-maintained green spaces in Baltimore neighborhoods.

communities. Portland State University in Oregon and Bon Secours Hospital in Baltimore (through Bon Secours Community Works) are two examples of anchor institutions that have spearheaded positive community change efforts after a period of neighborhood decline.

Within its community, Portland State has facilitated neighborhood revitalization, economic development, local capacity building, educational and scholarly engagement, and regional partnerships since the early 1990s.² The university has supported 600 local businesses with its Business Outreach Program, collaborated to form an official tutoring program with 60 area public schools, and established a service component and a senior capstone project within its curriculum to foster connections between its students and the surrounding community.³ The university has worked jointly with the city and regional partners to leverage the resources needed to plan and execute long-term economic development plans consistent with community goals. These partnerships have helped renew the neighborhood and businesses around the university, promoted affordable housing

and public/private mixed-use development, and are responsible for a streetcar system that links the university to surrounding communities.

Bon Secours Community Works has focused on neighborhood revitalization within its Baltimore community for more than a decade, partnering with residents and other local organizations to focus on housing, asset development, social services, job training, and blight. To date, “Operation ReachOut Southwest” has added more than 100 units of multifamily rental housing, two senior housing projects, and a financial services center to the community. The initiative has leveraged funds from a number of sources to offer home improvement loans to more than 60 homeowners. The group’s efforts in the neighborhood also include maintaining more than 400 vacant properties totaling more than 450,000 square feet and holding monthly meetings with community leaders to serve as a forum for local issues.⁴

As in these examples, anchor institutions add value and bring stability to their communities in innumerable ways. As good neighbors and citizens, anchor institutions can stimulate local economies and apply unique resources and competencies to improving the health, resilience, and long-term sustainability of their neighborhoods and regions. At the same time, anchor institutions maximize their own strengths, resources, and opportunities, making community involvement a win-win investment.⁵

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Partnering With Anchor Institutions

Many older suburbs are home to post-secondary schools and medical facilities, institutions that are deeply rooted in the community and major employers of skilled, knowledgeable workers. Finding themselves surrounded by blight and deterioration, many such “anchor institutions” invest in revitalizing their neighborhoods.⁴² The city of Chester partners with two such anchor institutions in the community, Crozer-Chester Medical Center and Widener University, through the Institute for Economic Development (“Institute”), a corporate-driven nonprofit. Since 2010 some of the Institute businesses, including Widener and Crozer-Chester, have helped their employees purchase homes through the Walk to

Work Program. Homebuyers receive \$5,000 from their employers and are eligible for an additional \$10,000 from the city for downpayment and closing costs; workers who remain with their employers for 5 years keep the money.⁴³ “Having employees [live] locally makes them more reliable because they don’t have long distances to travel,” says David Sciocchetti, executive director of the Authority. “Conversely, it supports the city by having people with good jobs buying homes in neighborhoods.” Over the past 18 months, workers have purchased 17 homes through the program.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The ongoing economic crisis is expected to increase suburban poverty in U.S. metropolitan areas as resources

grow more scarce.⁴⁵ With fewer service providers available, nonprofits and philanthropies are struggling to adapt, and many suburban municipalities lack the capacity to implement solutions. Stakeholders are seeking and testing strategies to address the demand for safety net services in the suburbs and to connect low-income suburban populations to services, jobs, and housing opportunities. Regional and cross-sector collaboration is a strategy being tested widely on the ground — as in the Chicago suburbs and in Chester, Pennsylvania — that has the potential to address the challenges of a changing geography of poverty. As this type of experience in collective problem solving accrues, communities build more capacity to weather these stresses. **EM**

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⁶ Allard and Roth, 7–8.

⁷ Reckhow and Weir, 14–5.

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⁹ Edward W. Hill, Kathryn W. Hexter, Brian A. Mikelbank, Benjamin Y. Clark, and Charles Post. 2011. “Revitalizing Distressed Older Suburbs,” *What Works Collaborative*, 21.

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²² Interview with Ed Paesel, executive director of the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative, October 2011; interview with Janice Morrissey, director of housing initiatives for the Collaborative, October 2011.

²³ Internal document provided by the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative.

²⁴ Internal PowerPoint slides provided by the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative.

²⁵ Interview with Ngoan Le.

²⁶ Hill et al.

²⁷ Correspondence with Lisa Gaffney, October 2011; Interview with Lisa Gaffney, October 2011.

²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. 2008–2010 American Community Survey, 3-Year Estimates; HUD USER. State of the Cities Data Systems Census Data, 1970.

²⁹ Nancy Green Leigh and Sugie Lee. 2005. “Philadelphia’s Space In Between: Inner-Ring Suburb Evolution,” *Opolis: An International Journal of Suburban and Metropolitan Studies*, 1:1, 13–32.

³⁰ Kathryn W. Hexter. 2011. “Revitalizing Older Suburbs: Public Policy Options for America’s Older Low-Capacity Suburbs,” presented at the Suburbs and the 2010 Census Conference, George Mason University; U.S. Census Bureau. State and County QuickFacts, Chester City, Pennsylvania; U.S. Census Bureau. 1990 Decennial Census, Summary Files 1,3.

³¹ Abt Associates. 2003. “Exploring the Impacts of the HOPE VI Program on Surrounding Neighborhoods,” 14. A public housing authority with a Public Housing Management Assessment Program score of less than 60 percent has problems in major areas of management operations and is designated as troubled; Chester’s score was 35.

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³³ City of Chester, Pennsylvania (www.chestercity.com). Accessed 25 October 2011.

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⁴⁴ Interview with Sciocchetti.

⁴⁵ Kneebone et al, 19.

Additional Resources

- *Out of Reach: Place, Poverty, and the New American Welfare State* (2009), by Scott W. Allard, explores the American welfare system and the accessibility of services to poor populations, offering policy recommendations. yalepress.yale.edu.
- “Anchor Institutions Toolkit: A guide for neighborhood revitalization” (2008), prepared by the Netter Center for Community Partners, offers a series of useful tools for anchor institutions to strengthen their local communities based on the University of Pennsylvania’s work with local West Philadelphia stakeholders. www.upenn.edu.
- “On the Brink of New Promise: The Future of U.S. Community Foundations” (2005), by Lucy Bernholz, Katherine Fulton, and Gabriel Kasper, discusses the future of community philanthropy-related foundations and organizations, offering advice for overcoming impending difficulties. www.blueprintrd.com.
- “Immigration and Poverty in America’s Suburbs” (2011), by Roberto Suro, Jill H. Wilson, and Audrey Singer, examines the suburbanization of poverty and immigration among some of the nation’s largest metropolitan areas. www.brookings.edu.
- “Hollow State Politics: Bureaucratic Autonomy and Social Welfare Policy” (2010), by Sara Reckhow, explores how Michigan’s Department of Human Services is spearheading efforts to combat poverty in the state, comparing the program to those in Ohio and Illinois. collinsinstitute.fsu.edu.
- *The Enduring Challenge of Concentrated Poverty in America: Case Studies from Communities Across the U.S.* (2008), edited by David Erickson et al., advances the understanding of concentrated poverty in the United States through case studies of 16 communities and their local stakeholders. www.frbsf.org.
- “A Lost Decade: Neighborhood Poverty and the Urban Crisis of the 2000s” (2011), by Rolf Pendall et al., analyzes neighborhoods with concentrated poverty in all 366 U.S. metropolitan statistical areas, tracking demographic changes — including age, race, and poverty status — between 1970 and 2005–2009. www.jointcenter.org.
- “Responding to Manufacturing Job Loss: What Can Economic Development Policy Do?” (2011), by Patricia Atkins et al., catalogues a 30-year decline in manufacturing employment within eight metropolitan areas, examining recovery strategies for each local economy. www.brookings.edu.
- “The Calculus of Coalitions: Cities, Suburbs, and the Metropolitan Agenda” (2005), by Margaret Weir, Harold Wolman, and Todd Swanstrom, studies the declining influence of central cities in state-level legislation and the role of city-suburban legislative coalitions. sociology.berkeley.edu.
- “The resilient regional labour market? The US case” (2010), by Karen Chapple and T. William Lester, showcases a variety of solutions that regions use to adapt to changing regional labor markets, including attracting immigrants, maintaining the manufacturing industry, and cultivating a technological economy. cjres.oxfordjournals.org.
- “Facing the Urban Challenge: The Federal Government and America’s Older Distressed Cities” (2010), by Alan Mallach, reviews the problems of distressed cities and the federal government’s role in developing solutions to address the problem, such as shrinking cities, strategic planning, the reutilization of urban land, a focus on affordable housing, and better coordination of federal resources. www.brookings.edu.
- “Town-Gown Collaboration in Land Use and Development” (2009), by Yesim Sungu-Eryilmaz, reviews conflicting university land use and development interests and activities, featuring the more successful approaches. www.lincolninst.edu.
- The Network on Building Resilient Regions (BRR), affiliated with the Institute of Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, is comprised of experts who investigate factors related to building and sustaining strong metro regions. brr.berkeley.edu.

For additional resources archive, go to www.huduser.org/portal/periodicals/em/additional_resources_2012.html.

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