The Capacity for Community Development
Exploring the Role of the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council
In Neighborhood Revitalization

by

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Abstract
The purpose of my study is to answer the research question “What is the role of a leadership council in community development and neighborhood revitalization?” by examining how the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council corresponds with the relevant topics of existing research: assets, leadership, and organizations. The resulting analysis derived from observation, interviews, and literature review shall do the following three things:

- Affirm what the Council does well through corroborating and exemplifying the best theoretical practices
- Recommend how it could improve by addressing the theoretically indicated shortcomings
- Cull the unique contributions it can make back to the field for future study or implementation elsewhere.

I have found that the Council is a group of committed leaders that comprise an incredible range of skills, knowledge, experience, passion, and social capital. They epitomize the critical traits of community leaders. They advocate strongly for Northeast Central Durham in numerous ways, they have grown through leadership and organizational development, and have formed a variety of beneficial partnerships.

I recommend that the Council undertakes a concrete asset-mapping process, grows in flexibility and adaptability, balances the issues of self-interest, forms a more bilateral leadership structure within their organization, boosts the added-value of membership, strives for consensus, maintains the efficacy of its relationship with the City Council, engages more strongly in outreach and communication, makes sure to use time effectively at meetings, and continues to develop its mission, vision, goals, objectives, and action plans.

I believe the Council offers rich insight into how to create a cadre of leaders broadly representative of individual, organizational, community, and leadership assets, and what roles and tasks are worthwhile for such an organization. It also provides an excellent model of how to develop both leadership and organizational capacity through the Leadership Institutes, which mixed training and engagement. The Council shows that special political access from the City Council Subcommittee is something that could benefit all community organizations. Finally, the Council demonstrates excellent organizational collaboration methods.
Introduction

Accurately and completely defining community development may be an elusive goal, but there are some universal principles. Any definition will likely account for the process of affecting positive change in a specific physical area by engaging citizens, professionals, and governmental actors to address issues like housing quality and affordability, economic opportunity and job creation, crime, infrastructure, education, cultural amenities, information-sharing, politics, and more. The field exists to assuage the problems that arise from cities evolving over time, from shortsighted planning and failed interventions in previous decades, and from broad historical trends of inequality and discrimination.

The intents and purpose of current community development have given rise to several key values. In today’s context, practitioners strive for fairness, equality, accountability, opportunity, choice, participation, mutuality, reciprocity, and continuous learning. Incorporating these fundamental values has instilled a focus primarily upon educating, enabling, and empowering. Such values and approaches are essential to account for the wide-ranging needs of diverse populations in the face of a multitude of obstacles.

With this in mind, strategies for successful community development primarily involve robust citizen engagement, effective leadership, and maximizing the use of everything the community itself has to offer, even if it may seem like it has nothing. Gaining citizen participation, having local legitimacy, and capitalizing on local capabilities are crucial for ensuring that change efforts happen and last because they help residents internalize their ability to find solutions. However, doing so requires strong leadership to organize residents, manage scarce resources, establish partnerships, and inspire others to take action and commit to making a difference. These are the driving forces behind almost all efficacious community development initiatives today.

Northeast Central Durham is in many ways a typical challenged community. The population is composed of predominantly low- and moderate-income minorities. There is a high level of crime, a lack of economic investment and opportunity, and deteriorating physical infrastructure. Yet, it is also a place with many committed individuals and pockets of momentum. Perhaps the most significant is the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council,
which represents an innovative approach towards helping a challenged community. It is an organization which strives to develop community leaders and serves as a connection between the neighborhood and the city; in both its actions and values, it embodies much that a community development entity ought to as outlined above.

I was curious how effective the Council really is in terms of how it operates and what it has achieved. This led me to my research question of “What is the role of a leadership council in community development and neighborhood revitalization?” To gain the insight needed to answer this, I knew I had to examine the intersection of theory and practice. I have always believed in the value of both, because one must act to improve a neighborhood, but likely cannot do so successfully without any critical thought. In the case of this study, there are many oft-prescribed approaches to community development that the Council may already engage in, as well as some from which it could learn. The Council may also do things not covered by theory, revealing the discourse works two ways: the larger body of knowledge can guide a single entity, just as this entity can inform the larger body of knowledge. Thus, I chose to learn about the Council over several months by talking with its members and going to its meetings, while concurrently reading published theory and research.

This paper conveys my findings as follows. I begin with a literature review on the salient topics of current community development theory: asset-mapping, community capital, building community capacity, leadership and leadership development, and organization building and development. I then provide some background and context on Northeast Central Durham, looking at history and current descriptive data. I explain my methodology before delving into an analysis of the Council through the lens of my literature review. Finally, I recapitulate my findings, offer recommendations, and highlight the emerging insights in the paper’s conclusion.
**Literature Review**

The decentralization of decision-making to local officials has come to define community development of the present. A whole host of localized initiatives exist in every municipality throughout the country, and the spectrum of their success spans a broad range. With several decades of this more or less stable forum of community development – in terms of how it is carried out, not necessarily that it always achieves stability – it has been possible for academic study and practical experience to put forward accepted practices and techniques. Additionally, the hyper-localized context makes a thorough understanding of any individual active community development organization like the Leadership Council useful and worthwhile. Every example of good community development offers the possibility for inspiration; cities constantly strive to learn from each other.

Despite its main advantage of allowing the community development practitioners who have the greatest understanding of what a place needs to act effectively, a local focus brings a variety of challenges. Perhaps most acutely, it means local agencies, organizations, and governments have become more responsible to find money. The void left from the diminished federal government role as a source of funding and supervision has been filled through a wide variety of foundations and non-profits. Though the federal CDBG program does still exist and offers many municipalities needed grants, the burden is on local officials to become more adept at getting what they need in the face of increased competition for limited resources. They also must exhibit strong creativity to overcome the lack of clear-cut, singular funding solutions.

Participation is another challenge facing community development efforts. “Public participation...has been institutionalized since the 1960s,” so not having any element of public participation seems unimaginable, yet it is not a given that the participation will be legitimate (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 27). Oftentimes, public officials treat it as a formality and do not facilitate an inclusive process, solicit meaningful opinions, or heed the opinions they do get, therefore providing no power to the people. On the other hand, even when officials value participation and do things the correct way, it still can be difficult to get involvement that fully represents a broad constituency. This may result from a lack of distrust in government, a valid concern after all the years of detrimental projects like Urban Renewal. Or, it may be an issue of
commitment. People have multiple responsibilities and cannot always attend meetings, or they simply may not care about the issue. All of this makes participation a critical concern for community development.

Participation can increase with strong communication outreach. “The aim is to provide for a flow of information between the initiative and a large proportion of community residents” (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001, p. 114). If a community development group or initiative markets itself, it will more likely gain membership. Also, not everyone will want to join a group, but they may still have interest in knowing what goes on and how they can offer support in other ways. Sharing information is paramount; much community development planning has dwindled and faded from a lack of exposure and understanding. On the other hand, those efforts which do make themselves known have experienced considerable benefit through momentum, as investment generally begets further investment. With considerable technological advances, outreach efforts have become easier to do for less cost. However, in low-income communities, people may not be listed in a phone book, and more likely, will not have internet access.

Finally, “race has been an underlying issue throughout the history of community development” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 29). For example, a majority of blighted areas targeted by Urban Renewal were low-income minority communities. The legacy of years of racial discrimination has been a culture of distrust and a lack of opportunities, with many individuals of minority status disadvantaged socially, politically, and economically. Progress has been made, but the race remains a key issue in all community development efforts. Along these lines, gender issues have some precedence in this field as well, based on the history of men’s rights and status long outpacing women’s. These precarious situations highlight the need for inclusive processes and sensitivity to how different groups of people with different backgrounds and different needs can all be satisfied. Good planning supports the diversity of a community and should not elevate a specific group based on race, gender, or any other characteristic.

When I assess the Leadership Council based on the framework of salient theoretical and practical concepts in the analysis chapter, I will give attention to these overarching general challenges of the current state of community development: funding, participation,
communication, and representation of diversity. For the remainder of this section, I will discuss the literature on the current leading topics of community development: asset-mapping and capital, leadership and leadership development, and organizations and organizational development.

Asset-Based Development

One of the latest schools of thought regarding effectual community development techniques to arise from the current local-emphasis context stresses the importance of assets. The seminal work on this topic is *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets* by John Kretzmann and John McKnight. The essence of their argument is that efforts to rebuild troubled communities must reframe their focus from needs and deficiencies to finding the assets, skills, and capacities of individuals, organizations, and institutions instead.

The purpose of this paradigm shift is twofold. First, accentuating the needs of an area becomes more problematic than helpful. Over time, neediness evokes a host of negative images, which are “not regarded as part of the truth; they are regarded as the whole truth” (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993, p. 2). A negative perception can plague a neighborhood for years, if not decades, and deter investment. If a community does attract interest, the emphasis on neediness generally leads to unilateral aid; a neighborhood becomes a passive client that receives multiple services from outsiders. In turn, such practices inculcate a community with complete dependence on those services and a lack of belief they can meet their own needs. For a variety of reasons, the aid can suddenly disappear, leaving residents no better off, or perhaps worse, and usually of the mind that they are “incapable of taking charge of their lives and of their community’s future” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 4).

In practice, asset-based development aims to not only put an end to these shortcomings, but produce many constructive results as well. Community development becomes much more successful when the residents commit to the efforts, and commitment comes easier when residents are aware of what they can personally contribute. The experience is more meaningful because of this investment. It also fosters a spirit of autonomy that equips residents with an
ability to meet both present and future challenges. Kretzmann and McKnight could not have anticipated the current economic situation of early 2009 that has forced profuse budget cuts, yet their touting of asset-mapping and mobilization as a way to avoid the dismal prospects of relying upon outside help has proved quite prescient.

This line of thinking has been bolstered by other works in development scholarship. One example comes from David Ellerman. In his book *Helping People Help Themselves*, borne out of his time at the World Bank where he saw firsthand many failures of “unhelpful help,” he explores what can make development efforts worthwhile and sustainable – an endeavor with a purpose quite similar to writing *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. The following passage is a description of the third of his five proposed steps, “Helping the doer pursue their own ends to best solve the organizational problem:”

The helper is not ‘to teach’ the doer what the helper considers the best solution...The helper is to create a learning solution so that the doer can arrive at what the doer considers to be the best solution to the problem in view of his or her own ends and capabilities...Because the arrived-at solution is the fruits of the doer’s own labor, the doer has a natural ownership of it that leads to much more effective implementation (Ellerman, 2006, pp. 62-63).

If one thinks specifically of helpers as community development planners and doers as community residents, it comes as almost no trouble at all to detect the strong echoes of Kretzmann and McKnight. The first phrase highlights the dependency-inducing and flawed tactic of an outsider focusing on needs. Asset-mapping can stand in for the “learning solution” of the second phrase; the intentions of the process are exactly the same as what Ellerman prescribes. Finally, the third phrase mirrors the motivation behind and an advantage of asset-based development. In other words, asset-mapping for mobilization is a more specific application of Ellerman’s framework for aid.

Kretzmann and McKnight describe the technique of asset-based community development as having three defining characteristics. As is obvious, the first characteristic is that the efforts are indeed “asset-based” and rooted in what the community has, not what it lacks (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 9). The second is that it is “internally focused...to stress the primacy of local definition, investment, creativity, hope, and control” (Kretzmann &
McKnight, 1993, p. 9). This does not rule out external aid. In fact, local assets alone usually are not sufficient for a complete transition. However, the internal assets are crucial and can make the process of obtaining and using external resources much more effective. Thirdly, the technique will be “relationship driven,” meaning that capacity and resources will get utilized through partnerships and interaction on both an intra-categorical level and an inter-categorical level (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 9).

The three categories are individuals, associations, and institutions. The first category is mostly straightforward, but a planner engaged in asset-mapping must be sure to include those individuals who have been marginalized, such as the disabled, the elderly, or youth, which will empower them as part of the development process. Associations are generally less formal, smaller, and more localized than institutions. Examples include a block club or a homeowner’s group. Institutions will more likely draw in people from outside the community, have a larger participant base and rely on paid staff, such as a school, library, or police department. Locally-based private businesses fit this category as well.

Though there are differences between what an organization can offer and what a citizen can offer, the book outlines a process for releasing capacity that can be used at any level that dovetails with the three principles of asset-based development. It always starts with making a thorough resource inventory. This can involve conducting a detailed survey or questionnaire. Next, one can take the inventory of a particular entity and explore the specific ways assets may complement with citizens’ associations and non-profits, publicly funded institutions, the private sector, and local residents and special interest groups to create “strong, concrete, mutually beneficial partnerships” (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, p. 32). The formation of these partnerships will facilitate development and also bridge the community with external actors and resources, further stimulating development. Kretzmann and McKnight devote the bulk of their book to offering numerous examples of this process for each of the three categories.

**Capital**

If one accepts asset-mapping as clearly important to current community development practice and theory, then it follows that understanding assets in more depth would help further
explain community development. Assets often signify or are synonymous with community capital. Scholars and practitioners usually conceptualize capital by breaking it into various categories or classifications. Some examples include human capital, social capital, physical capital, financial or economic capital, and environmental or natural capital. All communities have at least one form of capital to a minor degree at the very minimum, though it may not be clear to members of disadvantaged communities – hence the reason for asset-mapping.

Human capital refers to “labor market skills, leadership skills, general education background, artistic development and appreciation, health, and other skills and experiences” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 81). This form of capital often gets matched with workforce development – how people can use their skills and talents to contribute to making their community better and to support themselves financially. Relevant human capital strategies include preparing the future workforce for a competitive global marketplace, sustaining the workforce by attracting and retaining workers, upgrading the workforce to increase productivity and earning potential, expanding the workforce, and promoting entrepreneurship (Green & Haines, 2002, pp. 94-96).

Social capital comprises the relationships that exist among community members and those with the outside community, as well as the strength of those relationships. This form of capital is most prevalent in the Leadership Council. Networks and ties are indispensible to successful community development for many reasons, not the least of which is that they help “facilitate collective action” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 101). The social capital of an individual can provide him or her a great deal of support, advice, friendship, favors, or connections. Robert Putnam is perhaps the most noteworthy investigator of social capital and he has argued that social capital has steadily decreased because people are less engaged civically for a variety of reasons. However, social capital remains crucial and some considerations for fostering it include developing space that permits social interaction, utilizing technology to tap into the new ways people are connecting and defining community, having diverse leadership, and promoting cultural activities.

The physical capital in a community, or lack of it, is perhaps the most immediately apparent form of capital. Physical capital accounts for roads, buildings, infrastructure, and
other features (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 113). If an area has many homes, buildings, and roads in disrepair, this can discourage residents from maintaining their own properties, or bring down the value of property of which they do take care. A situation of vacant or crumbling physical space can make a place feel unsafe or unwelcoming, and things like dirt roads and a lack of sewer services can make a place feel primitive and backwards. These perceptions may ultimately be false but oftentimes they supersede reality. Conversely, improvements to deficiencies of physical capital could provide the most instant satisfaction and palpable stability.

If physical capital has the most tangibility, then financial or economic capital has the clearest definition as it relates to capital because it refers directly to what capital literally means: wealth. Again, communities in need of revitalization generally lack financial capital, and simply do not have the access to credit that other places do. Residents may not fully understand how the markets work or the options available to them. Lenders may not fully understand the residents and their needs, instead offering products or terms that will do more harm than good, or offering nothing at all. Competition, transaction costs, and regulations all muddle the situation. There are strategies to build the credit market, including creating community development financial institutions, pressuring local credit institutions to serve community, using informal markets, and identifying external sources of credit (Green & Haines, 2002, pp. 152-153).

Environmental or natural capital includes air and water quality, the vegetation and life, and natural resources (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 157). This form of capital may seem less relevant to community development, but it does play a role in the community’s long term viability. Besides the aesthetics of enjoying scenic views, green space, or a waterfront if one exists, the natural capital can help promote a physically healthy community. As sustainability becomes more pressing, preserving environmental capital can not only boost health but create economic opportunity as well. At the very least, many poor areas are subject to natural disasters or have dealt with hazards such as landfills, pollution, vacant land, brownfields, and so forth that ought to be fixed to help the community become more stable and safer to live in.
Connecting Assets & Capital with Leadership & Organizational Development

Considering the aim of this paper to evaluate the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council, an extended discussion on assets and capital may seem somewhat extraneous or irrelevant. This is not the case, however, and examining the work *Building Community Capacity* by Robert Chaskin helps frame the topic by virtue of its incorporation of leadership and organizational development.

Community capacity is tantamount to community assets or capital, but it is useful to look at Chaskin’s distinctive elucidation of the concept in the passage that follows:

Community capacity is the interaction of human capital, organizational resources, and social capital existing within a given community that can be leveraged to solve collective problems and improve or maintain the well-being of that community. It may operate through informal social processes and/or organized efforts by individuals, organizations, and social networks that exist among them and between them and the larger systems of which the community is a part (2001, p. 7).

Much like Kretzmann and McKnight, Chaskin identifies three levels of social agency at which to engage community capacity: individual, organizational, and network. The individual level “concerns human capital and leadership – the skills, knowledge, and resources of individual residents and their participation in community-improving activities” and the capacity of organizational level “is reflected in the ability of such groups to carry out their functions responsively, effectively, and efficiently” (Chaskin et al., 2001, pp. 19-20). The network level incorporates both individuals and organizations and how everything fits together.

It is not enough to simply have the qualities of community capacity; they must constantly be honed and strengthened. To do so, Chaskin identifies four strategies for building community capacity, and they are

- **Leadership development** – centers on the skills, commitment, engagement, and the effectiveness of individuals in the community-building process.
- **Organizational development** – includes the creation of new organizations or the strengthening of existing ones so they do their work better or take on new roles.
- **Community organizing** – targets the associational aspects of community functioning and the mobilization of individual stakeholders for particular collective ends.
Inter-organizational collaboration – builds the organizational infrastructure of community through the development of relationships and collaborative partnerships on the organizational level (2001, p. 25).

The Leadership Council is an organization of leaders and so both of those qualities and the strategies for developing them must be examined.

Leadership – Characteristics

The use of a leadership council to drive community development depends strongly on the characteristics of the leaders on the council. Paul Mattessich and Barbara Monsey studied many community building initiatives in efforts to determine factors critical for success. They found five traits that community building leaders ought to have: understanding the community, sincerity of commitment, a relationship of trust, level of organizing experience, and able to be flexible and adaptable (Mattessich, Monsey, & Roy, 1997, pp. 16-17).

It comes as no surprise that understanding the community makes a leader more effective. Knowledge of the area’s history provides a foundation on which to build, and being savvy about the major issues important to residents makes it easier to gain legitimacy. The culture of a community comprises “the beliefs, norms, and traditions which influence the daily pattern of living and decision making” and indicate clues for establishing a mechanism for change or how leadership actions will be perceived (Mattessich et al., 1997, p. 44). Other components of understanding a community that do the same include awareness of social structures, demographics, and politics.

Individuals seeking to lead community development cannot simply know the community; they must also convey the sincerity of their commitment. Residents do not support those that only seek personal gain or hold an external group’s interests more favorably than those in the community. They will respond to someone “interested in the community’s long-term well-being” that also works to create relationships with members throughout the initiative (Mattessich et al., 1997, p. 45). Honesty must guide all interaction. All of these things help convey the connection a leader has to the community, another requisite trait (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 48).
With both an understanding and a sincere commitment, a leader can gain trust. “Community building often requires risk-taking, arduous task accomplishment, and great patience and endurance over long periods of time” which makes trust absolutely essential (Mattessich et al., 1997, p. 46). It will grow out of a shared vision and shared interests. If for some reason a leader still does not have trust despite a strong understanding of the community and an easily detectable sincerity, he or she will almost certainly gain it by fulfilling promises and achieving results. Alternatively, not following through on commitments can erode a trusting relationship.

The experience of organizing makes it easier to do in the future. Gaining trust and understanding people and their needs requires a lot of time and effort, but the more often one does it, the more natural it becomes to continue. An experienced leader will more easily find the correct balance between idealism and reality. They will have greater skill in motivating others, whether fellow staff members or the community. In a context of scarce resources – namely time and money – and diffuse interests and abilities, they will know how to plan activity to maximize productivity (Mattessich et al., 1997, p. 48). Finally, existing leaders “can lend legitimacy…and a base of influence” and also “may take offense” at being left out (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 50).

Experience becomes problematic if it has made an individual steadfast in his or her ways and not open to any new approaches or changes, because with the various and sundry differences among communities and their residents, flexibility and adaptability are quintessential. Not only may one effort differ from the next, but the pathway of any one initiative hardly ever proceeds in a straightforward manner bereft of unforeseen circumstances. As such, leaders must know when they have to adjust their methods or plans and how. Obtaining input from a wide variety of participants will help bolster adaptability and flexibility as well. This explains a benefit of cultivating new leaders, for though doing so “is generally more costly,” it “[makes] the leadership ranks more numerous and responsive to community priorities” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 51).
The Issue of Self-Interest

Another challenge of leadership concerns the difference between self-interest, selfishness, and selflessness, especially relevant to a council of leaders where many lead other organizations or have been devoted to specific causes for many years. The desirable quality is self-interest that does not become too selfish or selfless. It makes sense why a leader cannot be too selfish; by the very definition, a leader does not exist without followers and there is no question success of a leader depends on having relationships that involve legitimate care for and reciprocity with those followers.

Selflessness, therefore, sounds desirable in light of this consideration, and the flaw of high levels of this characteristic seems counterintuitive. The reason why a leader cannot be too selfless though has several explanations. The first has roots in the approach of famed community organizer Saul Alinsky. He sought “to avoid do-gooder types who wanted to ‘uplift’ the oppressed…[because] such attitude would alienate the ‘have-nots’” (Brown, 2006, p. 192). People are more inclined to trust people that have something personal vested in the work; if one is motivated only to help others, it can be received more poorly, paradoxically enough.

To some extent, this discussion of self-interest versus selflessness both echoes and illuminates why assets and capital are important to doing community development the right way. The very same logic that supports the advantageousness of mapping neighborhood assets for mobilization fostered Alinsky’s belief that purely selfless behavior “would not empower” anyone (Brown, 2006, p. 192). Without a vested interest, a community worker is less likely to truly understand the context and capacity of a neighborhood or the background and potential of a resident, which are the essential components of successful revitalization. A selfless person who seeks only to help could easily violate Michael Brown’s “Iron Rule of Organizing – Never do for people what they can do for themselves” (2006, p. 209). Good intentions, however legitimate, often inhibit any belief in the abilities of those helped. This explains why these people get involved in the first place: they perceive a great need for their skills among the “helpless” masses. As noted in the previous section, any approach tied heavily to deficiency will eventually languish.
Thus, “self-interest” signifies someone interested in helping because of both personal and altruistic benefit. Self-interest can make a leader more transparent. That is to say, a resident knows why the leader wants to help beyond a vague desire to do good things. This helps build trust in turn, especially with self-interest making a leader more motivated to achieve results – since they have a stake in that achievement – which has been noted as a means of gaining acceptance. Also, the pursuit of a general goodness is incredibly nebulous. Specific interests can therefore act as entry points or framing devices to guide efforts in a manageable and effective way.

Leadership – Roles & Tasks

To better understand leaders in community development one must also consider the tasks of leaders in such a setting. This can vary widely, but several roles seem to recur frequently, starting with defining objectives and maintain goals, which helps “motivate group members, provide an impetus to work hard, try again after disappointment, and risk engaging in new activities and unfamiliar roles” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 29). Objectives and goals get examined in more detail in the section on organizations that follows, including the motivation and impetus elements, but the portion about disappointment and risk is more applicable to the category of leadership. Despite careful planning and hard work, revitalization efforts will face countless setbacks, and so a leader’s real focus should not be the impossible pursuit of eliminating them, but rather having the strength to help people weather them and continue persevering. Also, even in a situation with minimal challenges, risk-taking can intimidate many people and a good leader will need to guide them beyond this fear to move forward.

Leaders must act both internally and externally. Internally, they often provide and maintain the structure of a group and facilitate its action and task performance (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 29). This means defining roles, managing membership, resolving conflicts, keeping work moving at a good pace and understanding both people and process. All of these duties reinforce the importance of balancing experience with flexibility. The external duty of a leader is just as critical and involves representing the group to others. A leader can best serve as the
group’s contact point in a milieu of many organizations and individual actors, conveying the
desires, plans, and beliefs of his or her group or constituents.

Leadership Development

In many communities around the country, the leaders are people of talent, interest, and
motivation, but may not fit the conventional image of a leader. This is because many often
perceive leaders to be of great stature and accomplishment and may in turn underestimate the
seemingly regular folks around them. Yet, often these are the people who take responsibility
and get things done for the community. In other words, communities do not need a Martin
Luther King Jr. or a Gandhi, but instead must tap into their talented, interested, and motivated
people. The issue of perception may mean that these individuals do not consider themselves as
leaders, or a lack of formalized duty might mean they could benefit from sharpening and
augmenting their leadership skills. Those in defined leadership roles with years of experience
could benefit as well.

All of these issues make leadership development practical, if not imperative. To build
leadership, both training and engagement strategies can be used, with training “structured to
convey information, build confidence, or cultivate particular skills,” and engagement
“[bringing] people together to learn ‘on the job’ while working on activities that benefit the
community” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 31). Each method has its own advantages and
disadvantages. The more straightforward structure of training can make it more efficient and
easier to implement. Engagement can be better suited to the learning style of adult leaders and
it more directly translates to capacity-building since it involves doing. The ideal approach likely
will mix training with engagement. For instance, a group of leaders who volunteer and come
from a variety of backgrounds may lack certain technical knowledge and hard skills, and will
best grasp them based on their use and understanding their direct applications.

Another consideration for leadership development centers upon “[focusing] either on
strengthening individual leaders or on cultivating leadership cadres” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p.
41). While the individual approach is perhaps more common and has benefits in certain
contexts, the Leadership Council certainly embodies the cadre approach. Challenges include
greater complexity and higher costs of time, energy, and money, but these are offset by pivotal benefits. A group of leaders can offer strong support to each other. Multiple mouths speaking with one voice reinforce the message and help it gain notoriety. Having a body of leaders can encompass greater diversity than a single person, and this in turn helps to reach a diverse range of people, because “a cohort of leaders in varied positions in the same community...has the potential to provide multiple points of leverage from which to work for change” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 44).

Finally, there is the concept of institutionalizing leadership development. With constant changes and an ever-present burden of hard work, leadership has a lot to gain from regularly undergoing development processes. “They [can] avoid burnout...[and] enrich the stream of talent working on the community’s behalf and sustain the legitimacy of their organization or activity” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 54). Also, the regularity of the development, accompanied by fruitful results, can aid in the procurement of funding and boost the willingness of the leaders to participate in what might otherwise be seen as time-consuming or challenging.

Organizations – Characteristics, Roles & Tasks

Parsing the concept of a “leadership council” first reveals the significance of leadership – hence the previous section – and second, the significance of organizations, which will now receive consideration. Organizations can vary quite widely based on a number of criteria such as size, age, mission, culture, stability, political clout, access to resources, sector, constituent base, level of reach, membership, and formality of operations (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 62).

Community-based organizations can also differ on their level of community involvement but such groups commonly carry out several roles regardless. Perhaps the most obvious is providing needed goods and services, which cuts a wide swath through social, physical, and economic concerns. A similar if less tangible endeavor involves providing access to resources and opportunities. This could include information sharing or referral networks. Community groups often foster the development of human capital, though this may not always be an explicit aim and instead result from other achievements (Chaskin et al., 2001, pp. 63-64). Another organizational task is community advocacy, which involves garnering political support
from outside. The organizational level represents an ideal platform for this since it can bring voices together and gain more visibility and clout as an acting body, as opposed to scattered, disparate, or fragmented individuals. Along similar lines, an organization has the ability to leverage resources for its community. These more extrinsic roles couple with the notion of reinforcing community identity and commitment. Promoting a shared sense of history and belonging increases buy-in for the organization’s efforts.

Generally, an organization will discuss and plan the implementation of any of these tasks at regular meetings. The way organizations use their meeting time correlates highly with their level of success. They provide great opportunities for the group to get things done, but running an effective meeting can pose a challenge. Perhaps the most critical aspect is respecting people’s schedules by starting on time and ending on time (Brown, 2006, pp. 228-229). Many community development organizations have volunteer membership, and these people will have any number of other commitments in a given day, like jobs, families, or other activities, and do not appreciate their time being wasted. At the outset of a meeting, it is best to start with a welcome and introductions then review the agenda (Brown, 2006, p. 237). During the meeting, leaders need to strive for widespread participation, focused effort, and reasonable decision-making (Brown, 2006, p. 39). It helps to review accomplishments, evaluate the meeting, and set up the next meeting at the conclusion, and then send out minutes and follow up on action steps shortly after (Brown, 2006, pp. 240-241).

Organizational Development

When planning a new endeavor not possible with the current configurations of organizations, it is not always clear-cut as to whether creating a new organization or adapting an existing one will best achieve the desired results. Existing groups have established relationships that can help their efforts, but in certain situations the ties act more as a hindrance, for instance in the context of mismatched political affiliations. Also, having vested interests increases the risk that changing roles comes more as an imposition rather than internalization, and therefore resulting action may prove less fruitful (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 161).
Creating new organizations has the opposite issues. For them, a lack of connections means they will likely not face barriers when establishing relationships for a new issue, but also that they have no ties in linkages to help them along. They can form around an issue and thus commit to it more easily than changing an existing organization’s mission midstream, but they have no proven record or encounters with success. They may fulfill a unique role, or they could overlap with existing coverage and thus be more redundant than productive. Developing a new organization takes more effort and resources. Also, a new organization may be less grounded and produce lofty or unreasonable goals they simply could not achieve. Yet, every organization has to have a beginning, and diligent effort can ensure that a new group will satisfy an unmet need, propose realistic goals and actions, and eventually thrive.

Comparable to leadership development, organizational development strategies can also prove constructive. “They can help organizations perform their current roles better or more efficiently...they can help organizations take on new functions or play new roles...they can build new community organizations” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 65). A great deal of aid comes in the form of providing technical assistance, as an organization may not have the necessary skills or knowledge it needs for meeting a particular goal. Technical assistance includes helping an organization gain skills in “fund-raising, strategic planning, staff and board development, financial and management systems,” or “providing training, facilitating peer learning, and contributing space, loaned staff, equipment, or other resources” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 67). An organization may have all the skills it needs but lack money. Grants generally fulfill this paucity, though the ease of procuring funding varies, whether based on limited funds available, difficult applications, or finding potential donors. While many foundations or governmental programs have been a boon to community organizations, money can also bring outside agendas or influence that might have adverse effects.

From Visions to Goals: Organizations in Action

It is critical for community organizations to have a vision, mission, strategy, and goals in order to achieve a high level of effectiveness. Visions “allow for an expansive, innovative, and proactive future orientation” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 43). Developing a common view about
where a community should be headed can help get members on the same page and make it easier to conceive plans of action. Visioning efforts generally focus on possibilities, not problems. They do not require detailed analysis of trends or data, but instead emerge from values and expectations of those that are involved in the process (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 46).

Also, a vision can motivate and inspire others to help out and get involved, which will not only build momentum, but counteract the volunteer challenge of community development efforts. “Volunteer challenge” refers to the fact that many people involved with community development work do not get paid for their efforts or engage in it as their profession. They often have other jobs and commitments. It is their deep passion for an area and desire for change that keeps them active. Thus, a powerful vision can keep the fire burning or light one in those who may not have considered helping out, and help ensure that several individuals will always be involved. Many initiatives fail without strong numbers.

A vision statement will generally comprise the community at large, whereas a mission statement clarifies a specific organization’s purpose. Mission statements typically are brief. They should guide all efforts of the organization. Key questions to answer include “What is the real long-range purpose or your group? What are you really trying to accomplish?” (Brown, 2006, p. 71). With the concern of saying what a group will do, most mission statements use a lot of verbs. Also, a group’s guiding principles should shape its mission. If any of these components are not clear to an organization or have not been discussed, they must come together and deliberate to reach a unified statement.

To achieve the vision and mission an organization has developed, it must next generate goals and objectives for greater specificity of strategy. Put another way, goals and objectives are the plan for pursuing a mission and realizing a vision. “Goals identify what you want to accomplish [and] focus on priorities” (Brown, 2006, p. 77). Objectives generally represent steps of achieving goals and provide a way to evaluate progress. Effective objectives are specific and have a component for measurability, often numerical such as a time limit or target quantity of addition or reduction, but possibly qualitative. Whatever their form, measures are critical; they “state the results you are willing to hold yourself accountable for [and] name what it will take to meet goals” (Brown, 2006, p. 78).
The vision, mission, goals, and objectives of an organization help it move forward and choose relevant projects and initiatives. For each project an organization chooses, it ought to develop action plans that indicate “what needs to be done, who can do it, when it will be done, what information is needed, and what resources are necessary to implement the strategy” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 53). All of these components in conjunction with measurable objectives are the basis upon which an organization must monitor and evaluate its progress, processes which often get omitted or do not receive the necessary attention. Monitoring helps guarantee that time and money – precious resources – are being used optimally. It also makes revising plans easier, which is inevitable. Not only does monitoring help the organization share results with its constituents, it can also be very useful to satisfy existing or current supporters, whether a local government or grant-making foundation. The second element, evaluation, “focuses on the specific accomplishments of the process” (Green & Haines, 2002, p. 55). Besides clearly determining if the project was successful, thorough evaluation will help for future efforts because community development is always a learning process with potential for improvement. In both monitoring and evaluation, the organization must establish a baseline starting point and benchmark indicators so as to make comparisons and note progress.

Organizational Collaboration

Organizational collaboration involves the interaction and relationships among multiple organizations. Just as individual benefits can accrue as a network forms and strengthens, an organization can experience similar outcomes. Some organizations literally exist to create these sorts of connections as brokers. Another common avenue of collaboration is to form a coalition. The last is to “foster specific specialized partnerships to accomplish particular ends” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 140). This technique involves more direct connections on a one-to-one basis with a particular organization, and while the organization may form many, the aim is not necessarily for these new ties to join up among themselves. A conceptual model would look more like a center point with radiating spokes than a web. While organizational collaboration usually works in favor of all involved, partnerships can occasionally cause issues of autonomy and efficiency. A power mismatch might result in a big organization taking control from a smaller
organization. Or, two very similar groups seeking agglomerative benefits may find they have too much overlap and tread upon each other’s “organizational turf” (Chaskin et al., 2001, p. 86). Therefore, an organization must thoroughly consider the implications of any potential partnership.
**Background & Context**

A look at the websites of the City of Durham, the Durham Visitors Bureau, and the Durham Chamber of Commerce reveals a volume of information regarding “a city on the move” and a place “where great things happen.” This city of just over 200,000 indeed has a lot going for it. The downtown has experienced resurgence in recent years; the Durham Bulls Athletic Park, the American Tobacco Campus, and the brand new Durham Performing Arts Center represent only some of the most prominent large scale developments. Durham ranks highly when it comes to education levels, quality of life, and job growth. This city has had to work hard to emerge from the lows that resulted from problems that have plagued most of the US cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and South since the middle of the twentieth century: the decline of the manufacturing industry – here most prominently driven by tobacco – racial strife, and the rise of the suburbs. However, a closer look brings some stark disparities into view. Not all parts of Durham have prospered equally and many have remained largely stagnant.

The area designated Northeast Central Durham is one of the most prominent examples of such a situation. Its major challenges include “low income households, gang violence, low quality economic development, lack of jobs, special needs for school children, and a lack of healthcare” (Phillips, 2006, p. 1). However, internal activity as well as some outside investment has given Northeast Central Durham energy to move in a direction of recovery and revitalization. The most notable actor is the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council, an organization comprised of 19 men and women, facilitated by an Executive Director within Durham’s Department of Community Development. The members are different races, ages, and backgrounds, but all are united by their passion for the community and belief they can help make it better.

**Location**

To better understand Northeast Central Durham, it helps to first know its location. The neighborhood comprises 96 blocks with the following boundaries, as indicated by the map below: Geer Street to the North, Miami Boulevard (with some further eastward extension to
include the Wellons Village area) to the East, Hoover Road and the Durham Freeway – Highway 147 to the South, and Mangum Street to the West.

Figure 1: Map of Northeast Central Durham

History

The present state of Northeast Central Durham largely hides the area’s rich history, which dates back to the beginning of the Durham. The neighborhood “began in 1884 when Julian Carr built Durham’s first textile mill and adjacent millworker housing” (Henry, n.p.). While predominately inhabited by African-Americans, Greeks and Jews also lived in Northeast Central Durham. The area boasted a variety of incomes, ranging from low- and middle-income mill workers to the upper-class on Dillard Street’s “Mansion Row” (Henry, n.p.). Over time, schools, churches, businesses, and tight-knight residential communities bustled with activity. Residents still living in Northeast Central Durham proudly speak of these times.
As had happened in many cities across the country, the Urban Renewal program of the mid-twentieth century wreaked havoc on the social, economic, and physical fabric of Northeast Central Durham. The construction of Highway 147 caused a shift that sent most middle- and upper-class whites and blacks to the suburbs, leaving behind mostly poor blacks. In the zeal for redevelopment and downtown expansion, many “streets were rerouted and parking lots built throughout historic NECD,” further carelessly stymieing the community (Henry, n.p.). Crime, blight, and disinvestment became the order of the day, and the neighborhood began its decline.

Census Data

A cursory look at some Census data provides some worthwhile current information, but there are a few key limitations worth mentioning. First, the latest Census is the 2000 Census; current data at this moment in early 2009 will be much closer to next year’s forthcoming 2010 Census than the previous one from nine years ago. Based on the 2000 Census, Northeast Central Durham falls into six census tracts: 8.01, 8.02, 9, 10.01, 10.02, and 11. The second issue emerges here. Northeast Central Durham, like most neighborhoods or regions designated for specific purposes, does not fall neatly into census tracts. Several of these tracts include the correct area, but surpass the boundaries as well. The most unreliable are likely the tracts which contain the downtown and neighborhoods to the west, as these regions are markedly different and they only include a small portion of Northeast Central Durham anyways.

With this in mind, the Census still presents some relevant data to give a clearer picture of Northeast Central Durham and how it compares to the surrounding area. The population of the six tracts that includes NECD is 18,149 people, which was about 8% of Durham County’s 223,314 (Census 2000, SF1, P1). The table below compares the proportion of Whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics of the NECD tracts and Durham County.
Table 1: Proportions of Whites, African Americans & Hispanics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% African-American</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT 8.01</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT 8.02</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT 9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT 10.01</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>76.3</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT 10.02</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT 11</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All NECD Tracts</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham County</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census 2000 SF1 - P3: Race & P4: Hispanic or Latino

This data clearly indicates the prevalence of African-Americans in Northeast Central Durham. They have a higher concentration than Whites usually by four times and are also higher than that of the County, which has a White majority. “Hispanic / Latino” is not a racial classification and thus does not represent a number unique from the other two values within the Census, but this group does have a strong sense of identity that keeps it quite distinct for practical purposes. The data shows that this group has a significant presence in NECD, and much more so than in the county. No other group has experienced such growth in numbers, for as recently as the early 1990s there were hardly any Hispanic / Latinos. Some community development officials credit the influx as an important contributor to keeping NECD stable (Interview 5), or perhaps more accurately, keeping its decline in stasis.

Housing data portrays Northeast Central Durham as an area that again differs from the larger Durham County. First of all, 9.9% of the units are vacant, higher than the 6.7% for the county (Census 2000, SF1, H3). A prevalence of vacant units can foster criminal activity or disinvestment for nearby occupied units. Northeast Central Durham has just about three times more renters than homeowners, at 74.8% and 25.2% respectively, whereas the County has a more equitable split of 45.7% renters and 54.2% homeowners (Census 2000, SF1, H4). People believe that higher homeownership rates signal stability, as renters tend to be more transient and poorer since renting is cheaper than owning. Whether owned or rented, the housing stock in Northeast Central Durham is older and less valuable than that of Durham County. Aside
from the tract which includes the downtown and thus has unrepresentative numbers, the median year built spans from 1951 to 1963, while the County’s year is 1977 (Census 2000, SF3, H35). Rent values range from $352-$429, versus $561, and for owned home values, the range of $51,900-$76,200 does not come that close to $129,000 of the County (Census 2000, SF3, H56 & H76). The dollar values are expressed in 1999 dollars. The older housing stock and lower property values may be problematic. Older homes more likely contain lead-based paint. Lower property values diminish NECD’s contributions to the tax base, which in turn can diminish the city funds invested in the area.

One would expect that high rental rates, low home values, and low rent prices would have a connection to a similarly low level of income. The expectation holds true. In Northeast Central Durham, the median household income of five of six census tracts ranges from $16,633-$28,068, with the County having a median household income of $43,337 (Census 2000, SF3, P53). The poverty level sits at 33.5%, almost three times the 13.4% of the County (Census 2000, SF3, P87).

From this historical perspective and the Census Data, one can see that Northeast Central Durham has numerous challenges: high poverty and low incomes, a lack of quality and affordable housing, a disproportionate share of renters and vacant lots, lower property values, a heavy concentration of minorities, crime, and low levels of economic opportunity.

**Positive Happenings and Forming the Council**

Despite the aforementioned problems, several bright spots punctuate this comparatively bleak outlook. As mentioned before, many people still live in Northeast Central Durham that have been there for decades and care deeply about it. There are a variety of neighborhood and community associations with active membership, such as Uplift East Durham. New residents have been moving in steadily; the Cleveland-Holloway neighborhood is one that has seen an influx. In the past several years, the city government has gained more interest in the area and been a part of recent investment efforts, like the $35 million for the Eastway Village HOPE VI project. Also, the challenges provide opportunities of other sorts. Old East Durham has a program where potential owners can refurbish homes and purchase them in part through their
sweat equity, and lead abatement training can give young adults an opportunity to do work that services their community and provides them with skills and income, to just name two examples.

Thus, the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council acts within an embattled neighborhood, but not one without any forward progress. This progress was in fact the roots of the Council; its members include new homeowners, old-hands of neighborhood associations, and many who work to better the community in their professional life. Meanwhile, the city’s interest led to the creation of staff positions devoted to the neighborhood in the Community Development Department in 2006: Executive Director – Earl Phillips, and Community Relations – Melva Henry. The formation of the Council will be discussed in greater detail in the Analysis chapter.
**Methodology**

This is a qualitative study that intends to answer the research question “What is the role of a leadership council in community development and neighborhood revitalization?” My process for answering this question involved researching primary sources on Northeast Central Durham and the Council, direct observation, and conducting interviews. All of this data was analyzed on the basis of the findings of my literature review on the current accepted topics of community development and neighborhood revitalization: asset-mapping, capital, community capacity, leadership and leadership development, and organizations and organizational development.

I gathered my data on the Leadership Council over a period of several months from October 2008 through April 2009 primarily through first-hand observation. This meant attending and taking notes at a variety of meetings, such as the Leadership Council’s monthly meeting at the Durham Community Development Department, the monthly meetings of the City Council Subcommittee on Northeast Central Durham at the City Council Chambers, regular meetings with Earl Phillips – the Northeast Central Durham Executive Director in the Durham Community Development Department – once every week or two, and any meeting related to Leadership Council projects, such as the Leadership Training Institute or the Capturing the History of NECD Documentary meetings.

I also analyzed a variety of documents on Northeast Central Durham and the Council. Most of these were prepared by Council Community Development staff and included meeting agendas, meeting minutes, activity reports, proposals, and history. Some of these covered meetings I attended, but others took place before my time working with the Council and helped increase my contextual understanding.

Finally, I conducted interviews with as many Council members as I could get to participate, given their time constraints. I contacted each member of the 19 person body through both email and phone calls, and Council Director Earl Phillips made announcements at meetings regarding the study. I spoke with twelve members, not the complete total but at nearly two-thirds, substantial enough for useful, representative information. The survey instrument is included in Appendix 1 of this paper and was designed to gain a greater sense of
members’ perceptions of both the neighborhood and the Council, especially in terms that would relate to my guiding research. For example, I asked them to identify assets of the community. Also, these interviews are cited as numbers to protect the respondents’ confidentiality. The numbers are randomly assigned to keep each member anonymous.

The Council has nineteen members. Thirteen are African-American, three are White, and three are Latino. In percentages, the Council is 15.8% White, 15.8% Latino, and 68.4% African-American, almost perfectly mirroring the values of 15.6%, 20.7%, and 69.3% the racial make-up for the Northeast Central Durham as a whole. For my twelve interviews, I spoke to nine African-Americans, two Whites and one Latino. Of the ten men and nine women, I talked with five and seven, respectively. I did not personally ask anyone for their age, but I did talk to several of the oldest members and several of the youngest. I was told that any discussion of income would be off-limits, but I do not believe there is a wide divergence among members that would have caused me to miss any outliers in this regard. In terms of employment, four work for the city, two are retired, and the rest are spread between the non-profit and private sectors. My respondents covered all four of these categories. Also, I spoke with members that lived in Northeast Central Durham currently, had previously but did no longer, did not but had a history in Durham, and those that did not and were fairly new to the area. Therefore, I believe the survey results of two-thirds of the group represent the whole well enough and accounts for a variety of perspectives to be usable for meaningful analysis.
Analysis

Asset-Based Development

From its inception, the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council has been devoted to combating the widely held negative perceptions among those outside of the community, and sometimes within as well. This puts the asset approach right in line with what the Leadership Council strives to do. It comes as a matter of pride; one council member remarked “Nothing hurts me more than seeing the paper talk down my community” (Interview 2). Turning the tide does not come easily necessarily. After all, Northeast Central Durham does have high incidences of crime and lags behind other areas in terms of income, employment opportunities, and so forth. While such problems exist, they do not tell the whole story, however. The narrative of fear and strife gets embedded in people’s heads, but council members work against that. One member said the following:

I’ve never been afraid to live in my community. I’ve walked the streets when people said you couldn’t. You can make your own community unsafe through fear. You have to stop believing what people tell you. The newspaper perpetrated the idea that Northeast Central Durham was an unsafe place to live. I have called the newspaper so many times about their incorrect information (Interview 3).

The Council therefore has high awareness of the pitfalls of seeing only problems and needs.

One of the special things about the Leadership Council is that it can simultaneously hit on all three of the categorical levels of asset-based development. As a body of individuals, each member brings their own experience, knowledge, and skills to the table. In regard to representing the marginalized, one of the projects for 2009 is to select a student or non-student aged 18 to 30 from the community to be the 20th member of the Council (Phillips, 2009, n.p.). Also, a few members are elderly. Their intimate knowledge of the area’s history is well-respected and they have as much passion about seeing improvement as anyone else. Each member has ties to a variety of associations, through their professional lives and other civic involvement. This ranges from a weekly pinochle club to Habitat for Humanity. In addition to the networks of each member, the Council itself has established relationships with multiple partners. The institutional basis echoes that of associations. Several members in fact work for branches of city government, like Neighborhood Improvement Services and the Police...
Department. One member is an ordained minister and many frequent churches for Sunday service. The Council itself has created institutional ties, the most prominent of which is likely the Durham City Council. Every month, a subcommittee of four of the City Council’s seven members hears about Northeast Central Durham straight from the Leadership Council and its residents. No other geographic area of Durham has such a forum. The chair of the subcommittee, Councilman Farad Ali, occasionally attends Leadership Council meetings and events.

It is evident that asset-based development fits the aims of the Leadership Council. It seeks to highlight and utilize the positive components of the community, counteracting the compulsion to see the negative. The Council has a strong internal focus driven by local hope, rooted in gaining investment locally and planning to maintain local control. The relationships at all three levels are abundant and strong. However, the literal, concrete adoption of an asset-based approach has not happened exactly. Or in other words, the exemplification of Kretzmann and McKnight’s theory has occurred more incidentally than intentionally.

I thought it would be useful to explore the assets of Northeast Central Durham and the Leadership Council more definitively. The Council has a strong tacit knowledge of what the area offers, so I chose to ask them to list some of the assets during my interviews. To map the assets of the Council itself, I asked questions about what each member thought they personally contributed and what they viewed as the collective strengths of the organization. This by no means serves as an exhaustive account. The interview questions have been added in Appendix 1 of this document.
Table 2: Assets of Northeast Central Durham

| Strong Sense of Community | Residents proud to be from NECD  
|                          | High residential involvement, concern & dedication  
|                          | Lots of active community groups |
| Diverse Population       | Racially: African-Americans, Whites & Latinos  
|                          | Mixture of old and new residents |
| Well-located & Convenient| Near to various amenities  
|                          | Five minutes to school or work  
|                          | Easy access to other areas of Durham and the Triangle |
| History                  | Former center of commerce  
|                          | Historic districts  
|                          | Historic structures |
| Natural Resources        | Beautiful oak trees lining the streets |
| Momentum of Change & Growth | People believe NECD can thrive again  
|                          | Fresh and at the forefront of people’s minds  
|                          | More improvement than ever before  
|                          | Lots of ambition |

These are the community assets identified by members of the Leadership Council, and the list covers many affirmative attributes. The Council identified the strong sense of community throughout NECD most primarily, and this characteristic will help incredibly moving forward. As much as the Council does and hopes to do, the success of Northeast Central Durham ultimately lies in its people. An existing body of residents who have pride, motivation, and involvement can accomplish a lot, especially when combined with the existing momentum from actions already underway and the city’s interest. The Council must continue to work to cultivate this critical resource. Doing so will help gain further community participation.

Other noteworthy assets include the area’s diverse population, in regard to both race and residential history. The area has an African-American majority, but Latinos are growing in numbers, and “They work hard and contribute to the economy” (Interview 1). Many community members have lived in the area for over forty years, but the area has attracted many brand new residents also. The mixture of backgrounds and perspectives can lead to a high capacity for problem-solving.

Northeast Central Durham has a rich history, another commonly identified asset. In years previous, the area was a center of commerce and enough residents from that era remain to
continue reminding everyone else that it could once again thrive. Physical history lingers, and though sometimes the decrepitude of old buildings generates negative perceptions, many of the structures could be preserved or re-used.

Additional physical assets include the area’s beautiful oak trees, a form of environmental capital that enhances neighborhoods and recreational space, and Northeast Central Durham’s prime location. One can access things like schools, hospitals, churches, shopping, and libraries in a timely manner, and the area also borders the downtown, where a significant amount of investment has occurred in recent years. Not all development is good development, and expansion outward from the downtown could have detrimental effects on Northeast Central Durham. Alternatively, they could leverage some of this investment in their favor to forward the goal of community improvement if they can come together with a powerful vision and plan. It is an opportunity to get in at the early stages and ensure the neighborhood’s desires, not those of an outsider, are realized.

Kretzmann and McKnight designed the asset-based development process as one which takes an affirmative approach to the current state of a community, but for the sake of understanding the perceptions of the Council, I asked a question about challenges and obstacles in the area. The hope is that what both the community and Council have can address these things.

| Table 3: Challenges for Northeast Central Durham |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Crime | Drug activity  
Prostitution |
| Blight | Abandoned homes  
Absentee landlords & slumlords  
Poor-quality sewer and water |
| Loss of Business Infrastructure | No major bank or credit union  
No major grocery stores  
Few drug stores |
| Negative Perceptions | Citizens feel unwanted and excluded  
Public disinvestment in NECD |
| Economic & Financial Difficulty | Affordable housing shortage  
Unemployment & under-employment  
Lack of opportunities |
| Latino Community | Language Barriers  
Legal Barriers |
If the Leadership Council and the citizens work on an asset-based development strategy, they will address the challenges the Council identified. Though overcoming language barriers and understanding a new culture take time, the value of diversity and the strong sense of community will help the new Latino residents eventually feel comfortable and accepted. The process helps to market all the good attributes of a neighborhood, so the negative perception will diminish. The process also shows each person they can contribute in some way, which can lead to further opportunities down the line. Enhancing and creating skills is one of the main ways to solve economic issues. In the Council’s view, the city has let the area languish in the past and made residents feel disconnected and excluded. Assets and capital will help citizens feel empowered, and as that continues, the city will have to take notice. It seems they currently do have an interest in bringing the area back, so the isolation should disappear.

Therefore, between internalizing their ability to solve problems, gaining confidence in the potential to use their abilities and shifting the external outlook on an area, Northeast Central Durham will find a solution to the issues of crime, blight, absentee landlords, and business infrastructure. Without thorough mapping, it is imprudent to guess the specifics of how this change might look. Yet, I can consider the interview findings to offer an example for illustrative purposes. It was indicated that many old buildings which can be renovated to accommodate new uses exist. Abandoned or deteriorated structures make an area blighted. They also catalyze crime as impenetrable breeding grounds for illegal activity. Taking over and fixing these buildings to host new businesses will diminish these problems while simultaneously fill other needs. As a byproduct, the community will work directly against some absentee and slum landlords and send a powerful message to the others.

In addition to probing Council members’ feelings about the community at large, I also asked them about the assets of the Council, both what they personally offered to it and what assets it had as a collective.
Table 4: Skills, Experience, Knowledge, Traits, and Resources
Members Bring to the Leadership Council

| Community Awareness & Embeddedness | Intimate familiarity with NECD
|                                 | High knowledge of the past
|                                 | Understanding the population and their challenges
|                                 | Part of a lot of activity and highly involved
|                                 | Newness gives fresh look and insight
| Community Care                  | Want the best for the community
|                                 | The power to change things
|                                 | Concern for the community and its issues
| Skills, Knowledge, and Experience | Real estate broker and appraiser
|                                 | Property ownership and rehabilitation
|                                 | Organizational, administrative, and planning skills
|                                 | Low and moderate housing tax credits
|                                 | Sustainable economics
|                                 | Housing, inspections, and community services
|                                 | Government and urban planning
|                                 | Public housing
|                                 | Community organizing
| Social Capital                  | Residential and business communities
|                                 | A voice and spokesperson for people that live in NECD
|                                 | Latino community
|                                 | Advocate for the underdog
|                                 | Connect with all people well
|                                 | Senior citizens

This self-identified catalogue reveals many important elements. First, several Council members are part of the community and therefore understand it well. Some have been there awhile and have a sense of history, and others have recently arrived and bring a fresh perspective. Whether a member lives in the Northeast Central Durham or not, all are concerned about the area and want to see it get better.

Being part of the community and having a desire to improve it give the Council a very solid groundwork, and their skills and experiences build upon this foundation. The careers and interests of Council members include real estate, economic development, organizational and administrative duty, community organizing, housing and inspections, neighborhood services, community organizing, government, and urban planning. This speaks to the broad range of elements in the revitalization process and makes the Council at least competent, if not proficient, in dealing with each of them.
The table also shows the impressive network of relationships the Council has as one organization through each of its members. Some members reported more general characteristics of social capital, such as a gift for connecting with people or acting as a spokesperson for their neighborhood. Others discussed it in more specific terms, for instance, representing the business or residential communities. Important as all of these ties are, it was very encouraging to hear about how the Council represents and interacts with marginalized groups. Again, members addressed this in both general and specific terms. In regard to the former, one member reported a long history of advocating for the underdog and giving a voice to those afraid to speak. More precisely, other members reported ties to the Latino community and the elderly.

On an individual basis, the Council has a strong pool of assets and this holds true when considering it as a single unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>History</th>
<th>Many have been active for many years</th>
<th>Great sense of the good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Professional, educational &amp; social backgrounds</td>
<td>Personal interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>City government</td>
<td>Many other organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Right heart and passion to bring change</td>
<td>No ulterior motives of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common goal of improving NECD</td>
<td>High stakes in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to work and speak for the community</td>
<td>Meeting attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting attendance</td>
<td>Volunteer time without complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength in Numbers</td>
<td>Members</td>
<td>Years spent in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years of involvement</td>
<td>Issues resolved prior to the Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Efforts made to improve NECD</td>
<td>More powerful going to the City Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Knowledge</td>
<td>Counsel and advise residents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Results already achieved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The members perceive the Council as a group to have strengths that aggregate from their own personal contributions, but also several that did not emerge from their self-assessment. Of the former, the richness of history, diversity, and relationships recur once again. Their advantages have already been pretty well-documented, though it is worth highlighting the relationship the Council has with Durham City Council, which provides Northeast Central Durham a unique forum. Also, poor representation of diversity had been listed as a key obstacle of current community development, but the Council clearly can surpass this challenge because of its own diversity.

Another asset previously identified includes the knowledge of the community, described as “having the pulse of the community” (Interview 8). The member meant this in terms of understanding issues and went on to say “People that live there turn to members for counsel and advice. I really trust what [members] have to say and that they are not just speaking for themselves but the people the volunteer to represent” (Interview 8). Also, one member astutely identified that previous instances of success are an asset because they help make future success possible. People respond to results, which gives the Council legitimacy, and it will also grow more confident through achievement.

Members most commonly identified commitment and power in numbers, both of which happened to be unique to the group-level question. The benefits of numbers could only be seen in this context, as it truly represents a resource derived from collectiveness. The sum total of years of experience and involvement provides tremendous strength. Also, having a large body of members that in turn represent an even larger number of residents does give the Leadership Council some major clout as it works to form new partnerships and advocate externally.

Based on the findings from the literature, participation is one of the major challenges in community development, which makes commitment essential for organizational success. According to its members, the Council has this to a great degree. They all have a high stake in Northeast Central Durham, whether they have lived there many years, a few years, or none. The common goal of improving the area unites all of the members, even in the face of their diverse backgrounds and interests. Everyone conveys authenticity.
It may seem basic, but the willingness to work and come to meetings goes a long way in community development, as several members pointed out. First of all, without anyone to do the work, nothing will change. “People can just complain and never show up. We want to show up” (Interview 13). Motivation matters more than skill, because as one member said, “Unless you have put your heart into something, it doesn’t matter how talented you are, if you can’t put your heart into it, you can’t accomplish much” (Interview 6). The final and most critical point is that “This is a non-paying position, [it’s] all volunteer. We give a lot of hours of our time for this community without complaints. If I got paid for every hour I’ve fought, I’d be a rich woman. But we don’t do it for money” (Interview 3). It is clear that commitment plays a huge part in the work of a community development organization, and equally clear that the Council has an abundance of this vital asset.

Connecting Assets & Capital with Leadership & Organizational Development

Chaskin’s conception of community capacity situates the operation of the Leadership Council in conjunction with asset-based development. First, the interaction of human and social capital with organizational resources to solve problems and improve a community describes the Council’s raison d’être. Second, his discussion of operations references how the Council internally brings together a variety of individuals that have their own networks of various connections and also how it externally operates to foster relationships among multiple tiers of agency and in various realms of activity.

The Council works at all three levels of agency. The individual level covers each member of the leadership council on an independent basis. All of them are active in Northeast Central Durham and have reaped the fruits from a wealth of diverse experiences. The organizational level most directly describes the Leadership Council. Finally, the network level governs all of the relationships council members have individually and the ways in which the council as a collective interacts with other organizations and people. This all means that the Leadership Council fits into the scope of community capacity, which has been identified as one of the leading approaches to community development.
The most directly applicable strategies to the work of the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council are leadership and organizational development, the latter of which naturally will involve inter-organization collaboration at least peripherally. One cannot exclusively divorce aspects of community organizing from the analysis, even if they will not be as thoroughly or directly pertinent. Nevertheless, the following sections will emphasize leadership, organizations, and the development strategies of each as they relate to the Leadership Council.

Leadership – Characteristics

Good leaders understand their community. The previous section on assets highlighted the rootedness of the Council members in the community, but a few additional points can support this. Based on my twelve interviews, I found that seven members currently live in Northeast Central Durham and one had previously. Of the other four, they either work in the area or have lived in a nearby part of Durham for many years. The Council reflects the area’s demographics in terms of both race and gender. The grounding and diversity of the Council makes it aware of and fluent in a variety of social settings to allow at least a few members to understand the various concerns of the neighborhood.

The asset-mapping questions made it clear that the Council has sincerity, and coupled with the level of understanding, it follows that they would have the community’s trust. Commitment was a frequently identified strength for the Council and it is truly a foundational quality of all the members. Trust was not something addressed directly very often, but a few statements from the interviews show that it exists. First, one member said “I have good relationships with senior citizens: they see me as sincere; they trust me and have confidence that I will work for them, not take advantage of them” (Interview 2). Another said “I’ve always fought for those afraid to fight for themselves” (Interview 3). Both statements provide some evidence of trusting relationships between the Council members and the community and there are likely many more.

Leaders benefit from experience. The list of community work and organizational affiliations of the Council members where they would have gained community leadership
experience, even if incomplete, is staggering. Both prior to and concurrent with their duties on
the Leadership Council, people served on:

Table 6: Other Civic and Community Activities of Council Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albright Community Association</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Improvement Advisory Council</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham ACORN</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham City-County Planning Commission</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Committee on Affairs of Black People</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham NAACP</td>
<td>Political Director, Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Rescue Mission</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham Voter Coalition</td>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enabling Board for Adopt a Neighborhood for</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development (NECD Initiative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat for Humanity</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New East Durham Organization</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina Epilepsy Foundation</td>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Five Points Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC 1</td>
<td>Co-Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uplift East Durham</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Churches</td>
<td>Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Latino organizations</td>
<td>President, Member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y.E. Smith Neighborhood Association</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The time spent in these groups has given the Council tremendous experiential capacity, through
exposure to new people, advocating around special issues, and achieving goals. They act as
additional forums for gaining leadership skills.

However, too much experience can be detrimental by creating single-mindedness, and
the Council does seem to suffer from copious experience forming stubborn habits and
inflexibility to an extent. When Earl Phillips initiated the Council, his first targets were the most
historically active community members. The individuals with enthusiasm but less experience
got added subsequently, as it took some time for Earl to find them. These new members can see
the inflexibility of the original members. One person said the following: “There was a plan
years before [for NECD] that didn’t yield any fruits. We were always going back to what it
should have been because of the group that has lived here for so long” (Interview 10). The plan
mentioned never even was implemented, pointing to a less productive use of time because of a
fixation on previous times and how things were done before – even if they did not prove successful.

Another member expanded upon this situation:

Sometimes we need to keep moving forward more because we get sidetracked. There is a still mindset – which is improving – where I felt like it was really hard for the established members to open up to other ideas and voices. A lot of it was because of so many defenses being up. Those have been breaking down a lot over the past year. I still think when we bring some people in, like the city, we don’t use their time well to get our message of what we need or get what we can from them. We kind of get really narrowed down and complain about stuff that went bad before. It feels like a waste of times sometimes, we have to get past it and move forward. It doesn’t help to rehash the 1997 or 2001 plans. We can’t be oblivious to the past but things are different now. We can’t always be suspicious of city. Maybe cautious, but not so suspicious. It doesn’t bode well for progress (Interview 13).

The passage offers much insight. It corroborates that some of the experienced members of the Council get hung up on their past actions. This has several effects. It has made newer members feel less like equals and more like outsiders. It distracts meetings and results in unproductive uses of time. Finally, it has hindered partnerships or gaining external aid. The audience the Council members get with staff of multiple city departments or private companies is an incredible asset. Complaining about wrongs of old – occasionally to workers that had no connection to the incidents – squanders that opportunity and makes moving forward successfully more difficult.

The major point is that “things are different now” in terms of the political climate and opportunity for change, and this calls for flexibility on the part of the older members. Part of the reason the Council has a diversity of members’ backgrounds in the community is to address this challenge of obdurateness and capitalize on the new momentum. It would be misleading to ignore that the passage expresses things have improved over time. The person even offered some explanation by saying that the experienced members had more defenses up. After many years of working hard and not getting the results, it comes as no surprise that the older members would mistrust or harbor ill-will towards the city. They cannot be blamed for having
those feelings or be expected to immediately change, but they must eventually understand that “caution, not suspicion” will serve them much better in meeting their goals.

The Issue of Self-Interest

The Leadership Council has the ostensible interest of neighborhood revitalization and improvement, but under this large umbrella, each Council member has certain interests that they gravitate towards more than others. I asked members about these interests in my interview and the findings are below:

| Housing & Neighborhood | Quality affordable housing  
|                         | Residential interests and issues  
|                         | Residential development  
|                         | Increasing homeownerships  
|                         | Homeownership and rental balance  
|                         | Removing absentee and slum landlords  
| Youth                   | Alternatives to avoid gang activity  
|                         | Staying in school and graduating  
|                         | Obtaining employable skills  
| Commercial & Economic   | Business interests and issues  
|                         | Commercial development  
|                         | New bank or shopping center  
|                         | Economic development of Angier-Driver corridor  
|                         | Long-term, sustainable economic development  
| Other                   | Maintaining individuals in the community  
|                         | Providing opportunities for all residents  
|                         | Latino community issues  
|                         | Increasing involvement  
|                         | Information sharing  
|                         | Crime reduction  

This list covers a wide-range of topics that all have equal importance in the grand scheme of community development. These do resemble the background skill assets, which makes sense, because the passion for the specific issues led members to get involved in the community and this involvement made them visible when it came time to form the Council. Since many of these interests are firmly entrenched, members sometimes have difficulty seeing the bigger picture. “Getting them to address issues and needs that confront the overall community and [putting]
their individual concerns to the side [to] work for the good of the whole” is a challenge (Interview 5). Nevertheless, self-interest has value by helping to guide the Council’s priority actions and making members resolutely devoted to their pursuit. In turn, this has and will continue to galvanize residents and allow them to trust the Council as a legitimate representative the community’s best interest. Therefore, the Council must make effort to reap the advantages of self-interest and avoid its downfalls.

Leadership – Roles and Tasks

The Council members do not usually engage in the typical roles and tasks of leaders, so much as their director Earl Phillips does, at least in the context of their organization. Earl has strong relationships with each member. He provides the group with insight and motivation, and he often shares anecdotes, jokes, or inspiring quotes. One document he provided all of the Council members at a meeting was entitled “The Penalty of Leadership.” He intended that it would motivate them in the face of hardship and encourage their continued dedication, a key role of a leader. The text tells how leaders become targets of contemptuous jealousy upon achievement or scornful derision upon failure, but that no matter what these outspoken critics say, their efforts will ultimately be appreciated and recognized, and endure long after their time.

Earl leads both internal and external action of the Council. He is the one that keeps the members on task and sets the agendas to guide meetings. Earl focuses their efforts and coordinates their activity. He has a great deal of experience to draw upon, but he stays open to input and feedback. He indeed demonstrates an incredible understanding of both people and process as Chaskin indicates a leader should. As for the external relationships, Earl seems to perpetually network. For instance, in the process of forming the Council, he met with 147 different leaders as a way to comprehensively understand the context of Northeast Central Durham and what could be done (Interview 5). Every meeting, he presents at least one new initiative and partnership he has begun. Through of all this work, he has come to be the major figurehead for the area. In Durham Mayor William Bell’s 2009 State of the City address, he personally named Earl and listed the numerous activities the Council completed or began.
during 2008. No other community development staff was named. During the interviews, the attitude towards Earl was largely supportive. For instance, one member said “I think Earl as a director is doing a superb job of handling things” (Interview 2).

Thus, Earl’s leadership has been crucial for the Council, but it can be argued that the process of operation seems too one-sided. Meaning, he often gives the Council their marching orders and brings them in on efforts, rather than such efforts starting with the Council. Earl said, “It becomes incumbent on me to recognize [what’s going on] and see what it means for the overall picture,” describing how he sets agendas and indicating the more unilateral structure of Council operations (Interview 5). This can frustrate the members:

Sometimes I’m reluctant to have a real serious discussion about the items on the agenda because by the time I see or hear about them, they are neatly packaged with [outside] representatives in the room and I never really understand if the whole Leadership Council is supportive or not. I just have to assume people are on board with it...A better way to say it is most of the ideas originate from the top and are filtered down as opposed to coming from the bottom and going up” (Interview 12).

Part of the rationale for this approach is that someone has to take on extra work to keep a diverse group of people on the same page, and another factor identified by council members is that the organization is still very young and learning how to work together and operate effectively. Yet, for the Council to maximize its potential, this relationship will have to become more bilateral. Earl sees this in the Council’s future. “I would love to see [it] become a 501c3, an independent entity from the city....able to hire staff and move forward” (Interview 5).

Continuing with this subject, it is also not always easy to tell how much external leadership members engage in as a result of the Council, or rather, what the “value-add” of membership is. Members have certainly kept up with their other civic groups, but they often held these positions prior to joining the Council and already were quite active. In other words, the members do not lack in their involvement, but the direct influence of the Council and how much they act specifically in the capacity of their position remains ambiguous. This is what “value-add” means. One could pose the question, “Which holds more primacy among Leadership Council members: leadership or the council?” My feeling was that the answer
would point more to leadership – what the members had already done, not anything derived from Council affiliation.

I asked members a few questions about what effects they perceive from their inclusion in the Council to explore this issue. Of the twelve participants, six reported that the Council has not influenced or affected their motivation, organization, activity, involvement, and relationships with different stakeholders. They said things like “I already was that level,” and “I’ve always been that way” (Interviews 12 & 3). Of the other six, the most recent one to join the Council said “It was too early to say” but five did report change as follows (Interview 1):

- I’m not really outgoing, it’s given me more confidence to approach certain people to offer information or gather it (Interview 9).
- It’s opened me to be more accepting and sensitive to the needs of others and to be able to listen and to hear their cares and concerns (Interview 6).
- It has boosted my enthusiasm and cluttered my desk (Interview 10).
- It keeps motivation going, it keeps me on point and staying involved. I talk more at work and to more people than I did. It’s good because I think the more positive messages that get out there, the more people will believe it (Interview 13).
- It has because when I’m out in a different setting I’m more focused what I can learn to do in NECD (Interview 4).

All of these represent important personal development, and show that the Council has a positive influence on at least some of its members and imbued some value. Unsurprisingly, most of these respondents had less experience in community leadership than the ones who indicated no changes, though this is not uniform. However, concrete examples of action were sparse. The only evidence was one member discussing “Community clean-ups and knocking on doors...stuff like that, the seeds of community growth” (Interview 13).

Two questions to two-thirds of the Council do not offer absolute evidence about the roles and tasks of members as leaders. Analyzing the role of the director and the effects of membership is not meant to sleight anything the Council does or assert that the body only pays lip-service to being a group full of active leadership. The organization has achieved a great deal in its few years of existence, and while Earl directs things, he has not done it all. Even without feeling significant changes from their membership, the individuals on the Council all participate in endeavors to improve Northeast Central Durham. However, the overall point is they have
perhaps not reached the optimum of operation because of the unilateral structure and the unclear and uneven added value of Council membership. Reaching the optimum is not guaranteed and a far distance remains, yet given the young age of the organization and the progress thus far there is no reason to believe they will not. Leadership development strategies will aid this movement.

Leadership Development

Chakin’s discussion of community leaders being the motivated, interested, and talented people, even if they do not fit the typical dynamic, larger-than-life conception of a leader almost exactly describes the driving principle behind the Leadership Council. As has been well-documented, the group of nineteen individuals comprise its membership do not come from backgrounds of prestige or power, but instead the simple yet potent desire to improve their community. The Council has done great things and has a special group of people making it up. Still, between the burdens of experience and the trials of the neophyte, as well as the need to gain more confidence and knowledge to drive initiatives and recalibrate the internal leadership structure, leadership development has been necessary.

Earl inadvertently took a page straight from Chaskin’s work when he conducted Leadership Training Institutes for the Council members. At both the beginning and end of 2008, members participated in two full days of presentations and activities as a leadership development strategy. The Institutes marked vital growth periods for the Council and several members commented on how helpful and formative they were. I attended the second Institute in December 2008 and documented its major lessons in a report, here found in Appendix 2. The Institutes mixed training with engagement strategies and focused on a cadre of leaders. Also, by having a second Institute in a year’s time frame and using similar funding sources and sponsoring partners, Earl has given attention to making this an institutionalized part of the Council’s yearly activity. It has been documented that making leadership development a regularly, accepted practice will aid the leaders, and the Council is headed in this direction. All of this makes the Council an exemplary model for leadership development.
The theme of the second Institute was the Henry Ford quote, “Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.” The event took place on a Tuesday and Wednesday, and impressively, members were able to take time off of work to attend at least one of the days. Most made it to both. During the session, the Council members heard presentations by City Councilman Farad Ali, former director of the Office of Economic and Workforce Development Alan DeLisle, and Mayor William Bell. Earl also made an introductory speech to accentuate all of the Council’s achievements in 2008 and a concluding speech to rally them for 2009. However, the bulk of the Institute was run by two external facilitators who specialize in consulting community organizations – Bridget Chisholm and Daphne Sloan-Morgan. As experienced outsiders, they were able to frankly address what the Council must do better.

The two major lessons of the Institute were that Northeast Central Durham does not have a master plan and the Council ought to drive the creation of one, and that the Council must always work to achieve majority consensus and speak with a unified voice. The first lesson will be addressed in more detail in the organization chapter, but it is worth mentioning that learning about the details of a master plan and how to make one reflect the training component of leadership development. Of more relevance to the topic of leadership is the second lesson on consensus, particularly in this context of a leadership cadre. Chaskin stressed an advantage of the cadre approach in saying,

> The fact that a diverse group, whose members might be expected to have varying interests and points of view, delivers a common message can give that message greater weight and create a constituency for reforming entrenched practices and norms” (2001, pp. 43-44).

Earl has a deep belief in the power of “unity and speaking with one voice,” and both Bridget and Daphne hammered this point home over the Institute, almost verbatim (Interview 5). During the other speeches and the group activities, they picked up on group dynamics and used them as illustrative examples. For instance, certain individuals would perceptibly tune out or show their frustration when they heard things they did not like. Daphne noticed this and commented, “You don’t always give each other full respect when you’re speaking” (Fabian, 2009, 5). The lack of respect and unity makes the Council less powerful. It keeps the group as a
collection of individuals rather than something greater than the sum of its parts. The Council members did not impart an outward appearance of solidarity either. When given the opportunity to ask questions to Alan DeLisle or the Mayor, members had a broad range of interrogatives that reflected their personal interests more than anything else. They did not truly speak from the perspective of representing something bigger. Daphne said, “Many of your questions validated that were not together in terms of your priorities – which makes it harder for you get taken seriously” (Fabian, 2009, 5).

It is never expected for agreement to come instantly. The facilitators stressed that the group can have its own internal discussion, and that it can take time to deliberate and learn among itself. The Council has to recognize its divergent perspectives and utilize their breadth. The chances of finding the best course of action increase when more options are considered, even if that does mean a longer time to reach the consensus. The lesson concerns the setting: within the walls of the conference room during a meeting, the Council can have an intensive discussion but outside, they must speak as one. Daphne and Bridget reminded the Council that “You are going to feel some pain, [but] you must agree to disagree...Iron sharpens iron” (Fabian, 2009, 6).

In the two day period, the facilitators did notice the Council making progress. Also, it is not as if the members had no idea whatsoever that consensus-building was an issue. They do understand the benefits of diverse opinions. One member said, “We’re a good mix because you don’t always want everything to be seen the same way. New perspective can give beneficial challenges” (Interview 10). Several reported improvement in their interactions over past two years. Things have moved in the proper direction, but the facilitators helped speed them along. Hearing it from someone else can make the message more impactful. Daphne summed up well what the Council must do and why they must do it the following passage:

When we talk about working together, we need to know that we are not always going to agree. We aren’t looking for 100% consensus, but majority consensus...You can express those [individual] opinions but...come to a majority and move on from that point. That will make you successful. If you hang onto anger over your piece not being included, you will not be successful (Fabian, 2009, 5).
All evidence suggests that the Council cannot be faulted for having this problem in the first place by virtue of its composition and size, and more importantly, that the leadership development strategies of the Institute have been internalized guide them well into their future. They must continue to work at this tactic. It will only make them stronger.

Organizations – Characteristics, Roles & Tasks

The organizational roles the Leadership Council carries out are community advocacy, leveraging resources for the community, and reinforcing community identity and commitment. It does not place less emphasis on the roles of providing goods and services or providing access to opportunities because it devalues them; rather, the council simply has a stronger focus on the former roles and in fact, fulfilling them will enable it to better conduct the latter roles.

The most significant forum in which the Council acts as a community advocate is the monthly audience they have with a City Council subcommittee exclusively devoted to Northeast Central Durham. No other geographic area in all of Durham has its own subcommittee. Four of the seven members of City Council serve on this subcommittee: Councilman Farad Ali, Councilman Eugene Brown, Councilman Howard Clement, and Mayor Pro Tem Cora Cole-McFadden. Councilman Ali chairs the subcommittee. At a typical meeting, Earl makes a report on all of the Leadership Council’s actions over the previous month. The subcommittee then comments on this report, showing appreciation, asking questions, or providing suggestions and criticism. Following the main report, reports on housing and neighborhood improvement services, crime and safety, and economics could be made. Sometimes there are none, sometimes all three get covered. Any unique items get reported after this. The meeting generally concludes with exchanges between the Leadership Council members and the subcommittee. Each member that has something to say goes to the microphone, and asks questions or presents some pertinent information.

Leadership Council members know how that having access to a subcommittee provides them with an excellent opportunity to advocate and try to leverage resources. At the March 2009 meeting, they presented a special report item entitled “NECD Leadership Alert: Federal Stimulus Bill Provides Development Opportunities and Bolsters Incentives for Northeast
Central Durham.” The paper listed twenty different critical projects stimulus money could go towards, categorized in four topics: planning, housing, environmental, and economic workforce development (Henry, 2009, n.p.). Almost all of them fit into things already going on in Northeast Central Durham and therefore would not be hard to implement. After Earl read over the list, members came forward to make the case. They called on the City Council member to support them when they went about allocating the stimulus dollars, and fulfill their characterization of Northeast Central Durham as a priority. They asked to have a representative on the taskforce to help Northeast Central Durham get some of that money, if the City Council did not make the choices themselves.

The Leadership Council members exemplified advocacy to its fullest in this instance. They wanted to ensure that Northeast Central Durham would be represented during a decision with major community development implications, and in doing so, create an opportunity to receive money that would enable them to make significant progress on many of their initiatives and goals. This is a good place to stress the financial issues facing the Council. Money was identified as one of the biggest challenges in community development and the Leadership Council certainly feels this. Earl has a mantra: “It’s all about OPM: other people’s money” (Interview 5). The stimulus offers provocative evidence because it literally is an infusion of cash. The Council does not have a steady source of funding. It has done well in obtaining grants from foundations and has a special public-private partnership through the Adopt-a-Neighborhood-for-Development (AND) program, in which Glaxo Smith Kline provided $50,000 for community projects. Nevertheless, their dependence on external funding sources will always keep them on precarious financial grounds. This situation shows how gaining financial capital is one of the major objectives behind advocacy.

In evaluating the effectiveness of the access to city government, the results appear mixed. On the one hand, several members believe that having the subcommittee allows the Leadership Council to connect the people of Northeast Central Durham to the city leaders. One member calls it “excellent,” another said “The council [setting] aside time…that’s a great bridge to local government,” and a third member said “We are on the radar screen…the lines of communication are a lot stronger now than they used to be” (Interviews 8, 11, & 6). From the
other end, the City Council members have generally been effusive in their praise of the work of the Leadership Council. Mayor Pro Tem Cole-McFadden has said “It’s a blessing to have the Leadership Council” and Councilman Ali remarked at the same meeting, “It’s great to see collaboration, hard work, and energy...You make us look good.”

However, some skepticism belies this esteem. Perhaps the most direct source of dissatisfaction has been the City Council members’ attendance at these meetings. In November, only chair Councilman Farad Ali was present and this did not go over well with the Leadership Council. Some members felt angry and took it as a sign that they were less important. At the March meeting, a closed item from the monthly Council work session nearly created a repeat of the same circumstances, and the prospect was not welcome. Ironically, the solution proposed to rectify the poor attendance in November was the cause of it nearly happening again in March. After that November meeting, the Leadership Council accepted moving their subcommittee meeting to the same Thursday as the City Council work session. The problem is that the work session meetings often run over their scheduled three hours and into the time when the Northeast Central Durham subcommittee is supposed to occur at 5:00. Having both meetings the same day increases the likelihood of City Council attendance, but it also jeopardizes the subcommittee because it pushes its start time back when the work sessions run over – as they have in February and March – and may perhaps make the City Council members a bit more restless since they have been in the Council Chambers since 1:00.

It seems that in a truly mutual relationship, the Leadership Council would not have to move its meeting time to a slot when it must face delayed starts and shortened meeting periods in efforts to boost attendance. Attendance should not be an issue, but because it is, it creates the perception that the City Council does not feel Northeast Central Durham is a priority, even if they say otherwise. Regardless of its veracity, the perception of disinterest can still hold sway among the Leadership Council members. Some interview findings lend this possibility credence. A few members point to a lack of money as signs of bad faith: “The City gives more financial incentives to Downtown Durham” reflects this, as does “They are just not willing to put the financial backing towards us, [so] I’m not sure how sincere they are. They’ll find money for whatever else they want to do” (Interviews 3 & 6).
The following passage presents both the challenges and benefits of the subcommittee:

We could do something different with the subcommittee. Maybe it’s just the protocol...[but] it’s not very interactive. Our voice is never really heard. Not that I want to speak necessarily, that environment doesn’t feel very welcoming...[It’s] very protocol driven, go down the agenda, no discussion...[Yet] even if only a portion of what gets put forward moves on, no one else has this subcommittee. It’s a real opportunity, we have to make the most of it” (Interview 13).

This corroborates the sentiment of other Council members, but the particularly relevant point here not yet discussed is how the setting makes some Leadership Council members less comfortable to participate. All subcommittee meetings take place at the Council Chambers in City Hall. There are several rows of theater-like seating for attendants and presenters, and at the front of the room is the U-shaped table of the City Council members. They speak into microphones and always remain seated. For anyone to engage them, he or she must go by themselves and stand before the Council and speak at a podium into a microphone. If Council members do not speak into their microphones, it can be very difficult to hear them in the seating area, which happens with moderate frequency. Altogether, it is not surprising to see why some Leadership Council people would feel off-put and reticent in such a situation.

It was said that the City Council often praises the Leadership Council, but that does not preclude them from calling the members to task every so often. There never is any rancor behind such instances, and the feedback is usually on point. The clearest, recurring example centers upon communication and outreach – a community development challenge as indicated in the literature review. In his monthly report, Earl usually offers a small update about the Northeast Central Durham website. Councilman Ali has taken a particular interest in this, correctly seeing its potential for spreading the word on what the Leadership Council does. In November, he encouraged Earl to have a big launch when the site goes online and update it frequently. The launch did not happen and it does not seem like the site gets updated all that often. In February, he hoped that they would “Make the website as dynamic as Northeast Central Durham, not so didactic.” Anytime Earl brings up a new partnership, the Council members ask how many people know about it and if the item has been posted online or in a
newsletter. While Earl and Melva do these things, the subcommittee members regularly note that they could do more in regard to information-sharing and communication, which is true.

All of this goes to say that the subcommittee is a tremendous resource but both the Leadership Council and the City Council need to continue to strengthen the relationship. Leadership Council members must continue advocating and working hard to ensure that their needs are taken seriously and that they get the support they deserve. At the same time, they must be willing to act on the City Council’s suggestions that will make them a more effective organization.

Before discussing how the Leadership Council embodies the role of reinforcing community identity, I would like to finish the discussion on the communication and outreach issue. Just like the City Council, several Leadership Council members are aware of the deficiency on this pivotal aspect of community development. When I asked if people in the community knew about the Council, two members said that most did, but the rest all said otherwise. They would usually say something along the lines that some residents know, but that more could and must be done. Here is one of the more insightful statements:

I think the level of awareness is low among people...I believe we could do a better job of making information available, that way people who are interested could [learn] and get involved...There’s technology available but most don’t have access... We need to find a way that those people who don’t have access [can] connect with those that are involved” (Interview 11).

This shows that the Council needs to improve its communication and outreach, but speaks to the problem of how to do so. Northeast Central Durham residents sit predominantly on the side of the digital divide that lacks internet access. A webpage will be helpful but not sufficient. Other methods are time-consuming and costly, so the solution is not clear. The ubiquity of the Council has increased over time, but it will have to work hard to fully surpass this barrier. Challenging as it may be, the perseverance will only make the organization and the community stronger.

Finishing the discussion of organizational roles, the most recent and concrete manifestation of the role of reinforcing community identity occurred with the first “Capture the History of Northeast Central Durham” meeting. The goal of this project is to create a
documentary about the community, sharing its history that many people do not know about, promoting identity in a very strong way in the process. Not only will the film show outsiders what Northeast Central Durham is all about, but it will help those that have lived in the community feel more tied as well because the name “Northeast Central Durham” and the boundaries are not natural to those with a history in the area. Residents had a much narrower geographical sense of their community, generally only a few blocks, not 96. “Northeast Central Durham” as an area was created artificially and did not exist as a name anyone knew until a few years ago.

The inaugural meeting truly did foster a shared sense of identity. Four elderly residents who grew up in the community shared a variety of stories. They spoke about the tight-knit social fabric where most adults were role models and the willingness the children never even realized they were poor at the time. There were several humorous anecdotes as well. No matter the story, the community pride each person had quickly bubbled to the surface. As they bring more individuals in to share, this feeling should only grow.

This endeavor is quite unique for not only the Council but any community development entity. The Council will be aided through a partnership with the Duke University Center for Documentary Studies. Actual production will not occur for some time, this meeting was about kicking things off. Perhaps more significantly, it also marked the first instance I experienced where a Council member facilitated the entire meeting. The Leadership Council project chair is member Vivian McCoy, who has lived in Northeast Central Durham for many years and has long been a stalwart for the community. This provides an example of bilateral leadership within the Council and could encourage further types of this activity in the future, which will likely be of great benefit.

In terms of the individual meetings of the Leadership Council, they generally abide by the mandates of research. Most members attend regularly, though perfect attendance is rare with how busy members are. Earl always begins with a welcome and has everyone introduce themselves when guests are present. The major critique concerns one of the most fundamental elements of community organization meetings: using time effectively. One member said,
Sometimes meetings can get drawn out and go off into areas that aren’t significant. I’d rather say, ‘We’re going to have an hour meeting’ – because we are all volunteers and have families, and this is in addition to a normal workday – ‘We’re going to start at this time and end at this time.’ If meetings go on and on, people just have to leave (Interview 6).

Part of the time issue derives from a lack of focus, and over the months I attended meetings, I noticed that the Council has gotten better at staying on task and achieving consensus more quickly during the meeting. The time issue will likely diminish as they continue sharpening these traits, but they will likely always have to remain aware of time constraints to ensure effectiveness. The meetings end with recaps and plans for next time. One last comment concerns the public. I found it quite surprising to know that these meetings are open to the public because basically no one besides members or presenters ever comes. The Council ought to encourage attendance and participation to ensure they have the fullest representation of the community’s best interest.

Organizational Development

The Leadership Council clearly represents forming a new organization, as opposed to expanding or adjusting an existing one. Upon his hire, Earl arrived and learned as much as he could about Northeast Central Durham. He had many years of far-reaching experience as a director, including at Housing Authorities in five major cities, USAID programs, the Peace Corps, and a consulting business. “I came in and recognized the key would be to work closely with the police, other city departments and community leadership” and so the idea for the Leadership Council was born (Interview 5). He made initial contact with members by going to Partners Against Crime (PAC) meetings. PAC groups correspond with the five police districts and give residents the chance to work with city officials and the police department “to find sustainable solutions to community crime problems and quality of life issues” (http://www.durhampolice.com/pac/ n.p.). PACs are perhaps the largest points of entry for interested residents to get more civically involved. Going to those meetings allowed Earl a great way to tap into community leaders of Northeast Central Durham. He continued networking to bring new members into the fold.
Now, the Leadership Council includes nineteen people that come from a variety of backgrounds. Earl learned about the issues in the community and who could address them, whether because they already were active, or because they would bring special skills and knowledge to the table if they became active. Besides that, he constantly went to meetings, presentations, conferences, and other activities that had relevance to the goings on in the area to understand the role the Council must play and its place among many other organizations. In other words, the body formalizes what had already been happening “on-the-ground,” serves as a nexus for the somewhat scattered endeavors taking place, the new endeavors initiated, and the existing and future partnerships, and most importantly, enables community leadership to come together and work for revitalization.

The Leadership Institute was also an example of organizational development. Since the Council is an organization of leaders, total separation between developing leadership and organizational capacities does not exist. Characterizing the Institute’s first lesson of consensus as strictly leadership and its second on the master plan as strictly organizational is artificial and false. However, to make the analysis more concise, these two aspects were distinguished and the following discussion reflects organizational development through the lens of the master plan.

Learning about the master plan was an exercise in the Leadership Council gaining knowledge it did not have to fulfill a new role. It took some time for the members to understand that there was no master plan for Northeast Central Durham, largely because older members who had been involved with several previous plans assumed that those were also master plans when they in fact were not. Once they accepted this, they learned the necessity of having a master plan because “It’s not a matter of if development will happen, but when and how. Working on a plan ensures NECD leadership...can achieve its goals and visions for the area (Fabian, 2009, p. 2).

The Council spent a great deal of time becoming informed about master plans through discussions with Daphne and listening to Alan DeLisle’s testimonial on the Downtown Durham Master Plan. Daphne helped the members internalize the knowledge by creating a list of components derived from their input. She asked what they thought might go into a master plan.
and wrote down the correct items and clarified why other items did not belong. After generating the list, she explained key characteristics of master plans and offered a story about Birmingham, Alabama to make the process and the plan more tangible. Alan’s story achieved the same effect to a greater degree because it concerned something local with which all the Council members were familiar. He told them that the master plan for the downtown did not come from the city, but interested private sector actors. They identified their priorities and implementation strategies. The clarity and comprehensiveness persuaded the city to adopt it, going as far as to implement a penny on the tax rate for a downtown revitalization fund. The Leadership Council members saw exactly what they could do and why it was necessary. They decided that developing a master plan would be a high priority for 2009 and beyond.

From Visions to Goals: Organizations in Action

During the first Leadership Institute, the Council formulated its vision and mission statements. The vision reads, “To establish Northeast Central Durham as a vibrant, diverse, economically sound, and safe community both today and tomorrow,” and the mission “Is to facilitate and promote revitalization of Northeast Central Durham. The Council shall be a catalyst for the development of economic and human capital in our historic community” (Leadership Council, 2008, n.p.). The intentions and ideals behind both statements are laudable. However, both could likely be more effective because the ways in which the Council will achieve either one are vague. A vision and mission must inform of what a group or community wants, but also give some attention to how it will get there and how it will know it has reached that point. One could ask what exactly does a vibrant, diverse, economically sound, and safe community look like? Or, how exactly will the Council facilitate and promote revitalization, and what does being a catalyst for developing capital really mean? The Council has the base it needs, but clearer and expanded statements will be much more useful. They may want to revisit these statements at a point in the near future.

The Council set four goals at the first Leadership Institute and worked on developing one of them at the second Institute. This process to some degree reflects adding objectives and action plans towards achieving a goal. The goal they addressed was “To assist the community
in identifying Northeast Central Durham as a gateway to downtown Durham” (Leadership Council, 2008, n.p.). Daphne facilitated the activity. She took four options for gateways and provided criteria for choosing the best two. She divided the group in half to discuss each gateway and determine two priorities. After that, all of the members worked together and had a vote to decide the two gateways they considered best.

I sat in with one of the groups of seven to listen to their discussion. They decided to take turns going through their pros and cons for each of the four options, with one member guiding the process along. They worked together moderately well. Not all of them were on the same page at first, but having some structure helped. Also, it was evident that prioritizing was difficult for some members. One remarked “I don’t want to drop any of them. There are things common to all of them.” This exercise not only had value for making a goal actionable, but for helping the members understand the limitations and capabilities of the organization as well. As worthwhile as any endeavor might be to helping Northeast Central Durham, the Council simply cannot do everything, like take on all the gateways at once. This delineates the significance of a lucid and substantial vision and mission: they frame the best actions.

After a little while, the group had their two priority gateways and reported to Daphne. At this point, it was revealed that the groups had one in common and one distinct, so they individually explained their reasons for their decision and then voted as a body on what the second priority gateway should be. As the members of both groups shared their rationales, it became apparent that they were thinking in broad terms and considered a lot of factors, like traffic patterns, and what other investment they could build upon. The vote was taken, setting East Main & Alston and Angier & Driver as the priority gateways. Daphne closed the activity stressing the value of priorities, “Everything you do going forward must be done on the basis of these priorities for the gateways. You didn’t lose the other two, [they’re] just second priority” (Fabian, 2009, p. 8).

The Council took steps to make a goal more concrete but they did not do everything that comes with making trenchant objectives and action plans. For one thing, identifying the priority gateways is a step towards achieving the goal of being a gateway, but this is not only the step. The Council did not discuss any way they would measure their progress towards the goal; they
never defined what exactly implementing a gateway would mean in quantitative or qualitative terms. Also, they really did not make the action plan of what will happen and how. No monitoring process began and no baselines and benchmarks were established. The Council moved in the right direction with this priority identification, but if this was the end rather than an early step of the process of achieving the goal, they will have lower chances for success.

Organizational Collaboration

The Leadership Council has shown a high level of organizational collaboration, most often using the specialized partnership strategy. It does engage in some broker and coalition-based collaboration, but these pale in comparison to all the different partners the Council has added. Such an approach sounds more purely utilitarian; an organization only finds the partners it must have to satisfy specific needs. This does make partnerships easier to form, as a very concrete, mutually beneficial result unites the two organizations. Yet, the utility of relationships may not be the motivating factor. Instead, this approach can just be more manageable for an organization like the Leadership Council, which is composed of members that are already involved in multiple organizations. Whatever the exact reasons are, the Council has formed a great number and variety of partnerships in a short time and one of the most fruitful has been its partnerships with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s graduate City and Regional Planning Program. Earl has established a relationship with faculty member Dr. Mai Nguyen. She has offered classes on community development that involve working on projects for Northeast Central Durham, often with Council members. The most current is the spring 2009 Community Development Techniques course. The class involves six groups of students working in six Northeast Central Durham neighborhoods to help create neighborhood plans under the guidance of one or more Leadership Council members. While there have been logistical challenges, the arrangement has provided significant mutual benefit. The students gain a great deal of practical experience and the Council gains the resources and labor of the students as the move towards making their master plan.
The Council has formed relationships with several groups at the forefront of city planning issues. Builders of Hope is an organization focused on affordable housing. They totally rehabilitate structures to make them energy efficient and green, using sweat equity and youth outreach. The East Durham Children’s Zone is based on a very successful early childhood education initiative in Harlem, which also incorporates teaching parenting skills. These organizations with cutting edge, comprehensive approaches to achieving their visions and missions are exactly the kind with which the Council should align. Between Earl’s gifts of networking and all of the social networks of which Council members are a part, the Council will likely continue forming and sharpening these partnerships to aid them in their efforts to revitalize the community.
Conclusion

My study explores the role of the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council in neighborhood revitalization by analyzing how it relates to the keystone topics of current community development theory: assets, leadership, and organizations. This section presents how the Council fits the theory, makes recommendations based on theory to address shortcomings, and highlights ways in which the Council can in turn inform theory.

Assets & Capital

Identifying and mobilizing assets and capital represent a fundamental approach of current community development theory and practice. Not only does this harness positivity, it makes for more lasting neighborhood change since it relies upon the abilities, skills, and experience of the community. These assets exist on three different levels – individual, association, and institution – and come in a variety of forms – human, social, physical, financial, and natural capital.

Though the Leadership Council has not specifically engaged an asset-mapping development strategy, members understand quite well what the community has, what they personally contribute to the Council, and the strengths of the group at large.

- Northeast Central Durham has a strong sense of community, a diverse population, an accessible location, a rich history, natural resources, and positive momentum.
- The members of the Leadership Council are embedded in the community, care strongly about the community, have a variety of useful knowledge, skills, and experience, and high levels of far-reaching social capital.
- The Council itself benefits from the members’ history, diversity, relationships, commitment, and knowledge of the community, its previous success, and its power in numbers.

All of these components can help Northeast Central Durham overcome its problems and mollify barriers to successful community development, especially the challenges of representing diversity and participation. The Council’s size and diversity allow it to have a broad reach and more comprehensive understanding of the community’s needs. Its commitment ensures participation.
Moving forward, it could be useful for the Council to engage in a more directed and extensive approach to asset-mapping, though the tacit knowledge is high, creating a risk of unproductive work. However, the process generally helps facilitate the mobilization of assets. The Council already does work to mobilize assets to some degree, but it could always increase its ability. Potential benefits include:

- Bolstering outreach to community members – even if the Council already understands itself, having this information on assets to share could create a more tangible point of entry for additional residents to get involved, which is certainly a need.
- Leveraging resources – as the Council grows in comprehension of its abilities and the abilities of Northeast Central Durham residents, it will be better equipped to know what it needs from external sources and make the case that it qualifies for those needs. This holds especially true for funding.

What the Council represents to theory at large is a body with an incredible diversity of experience, interest, social capital, and passion for change. Though it likely could still benefit from a few more members, the collective assets and networks of the Leadership Council are extensive. The Council can connect with almost all types of people, associations, and institutions, and deal with any component of revitalization. Other communities seeking to create a similar type of organization should strive to replicate this thoroughness, dedication, and representation of diversity.

**Leadership**

Strong leadership is a must for successful community development. A leader usually has certain characteristics, such as an understanding of the community and willingness to improve it, experience that balances with flexibility, and self-interest that guides action and helps build trust. Leaders will engage in a variety of roles including defining objectives and maintaining goals, maintaining group structure, facilitating action and task performance, and representing constituents externally. Individuals both old and new to leadership roles benefit from leadership development.

The members of the Leadership Council have many important qualities of leaders. They understand the community, sincerely care about it, and have trusting relationships with many
residents. Through their collective years of involvement and participation, they have high levels of experience in leadership roles and therefore know what it takes to achieve their goals. Each member has special areas of self-interest, which have helped them get involved in the community in the first place and drive their actions today. The Leadership Institutes were clear examples of leadership development in practice. These highly formative sessions mixed the training and engagement strategies, which is the most effective mechanism, and focused on the cadre of leaders rather than individuals, which has higher potential since the benefits of a group of leaders outweigh a single leader. Most encouragingly, it looks as if the Institutes will be institutionalized and therefore occur on a regular basis, giving all of the Council members continual leadership development.

However, the Council has shortcomings on the leadership front as well. The following recommendations could help boost the leadership capacity:

- Continue bringing in new leaders that have different perspectives on the community and work to encourage experienced leaders flexibility and open-mindedness.
- Ensure that the self-interest of leaders remains useful and does not compromise the larger aims of the Council. This could be a potential discussion topic at a future Leadership Institute.
- Develop a more bilateral leadership structure. Right now, Earl carries out a disproportionate share of the leadership duties in regard to driving action and tasks. Members should contribute more to the agenda, planning, and implementation. The documentary group is an example to some extent.
- Increase external engagement, or the “value-add” of being on the Council. This could perhaps be done through by using subcommittees with their own meetings and responsibilities, or delegating more tasks to individuals.
- Keep working towards consensus while utilizing divergent viewpoints to the Council’s benefit. The group has made strides on this front, and it must continue to do so.

Chaskin wrote that cadres of leaders “appear to be less common” so the Leadership Council itself is a very insightful look at a newer approach to community development because it brings together a group of leaders to solve neighborhood problems (2001, p. 43). Not to mention that the members embody the desirable qualities of community leaders, much like they bring desirable assets. The Leadership Institutes have been incredibly impactful development strategies and show what concentrated activity and training can do for neighborhood leaders as
a collective. It takes time and money to organize, but the benefits have far outweighed the costs. The Institutes demonstrate how mixing training with engagement helps members internalize the lessons as well as how much they appreciate the opportunity to grow; other organizations should strongly consider conducting similar procedures using them as a model.

**Organizations**

Organizations are key community development actors. Such organizations can provide goods and services, provide access to opportunities, advocate for the community, leverage resources, and reinforce community identity. Many of these roles are planned at regular meetings. Like leaders, organization can experience development, and whether that means starting a new organization or adjusting an existing one to take on new tasks, both will benefit from training and learning. Vision and mission statements define an organization and what it hopes to accomplish. Goals, objectives, and action plans are concrete steps that help an organization achieve its vision and fulfill its mission. Reaching favorable outcomes will likely require an organization to collaborate with other organizations.

The Leadership Council has been an excellent advocate for Northeast Central Durham, especially through their access to city government with their own City Council Subcommittee. They have continuously worked hard to leverage resources with some success. They have worked to reinforce community identity with even greater success because of their pride and effort. The Council was born out of organizational development: Earl Phillips arrived and created a new organization to address the community’s problems. They have continued their development at the Leadership Institute, where members were quite receptive to learning about master plans and why they need one for Northeast Central Durham. Also at the Institute, they began work on fleshing out one of their organizational goals by identifying priority gateways in the neighborhood. The Council is a paragon of organizational collaboration. They have partnered with many different groups – public, private, and non-profit – to accomplish many different tasks, emphatically revealing the benefit of collaboration.

Just the same as for leadership, the Council has some flaws as an organization too. Here are some recommendations for rectifying these deficiencies:
• The Council should revisit its arrangement with the subcommittee to ensure City Council attendance and a meeting time that will not get pushed back. Also, there are times they need to heed the City Council’s input more.
• Communication and outreach need to increase, both to share information with community residents and boost involvement, and also to promote the Council’s actions outwardly, which will in turn help leverage resources.
• Perhaps more modest but nonetheless important, the Council must stick to its regularly scheduled meeting time every month. This will help its busy volunteers avoid burnout and frustration because their time is valuable.
• Revise the vision and mission statements to be more detailed and actionable.
• Establish more intensive objectives and action plans for goals, including timelines, benchmark indicators, baseline comparison, monitoring and evaluation, and qualitative or quantitative measures.

The Council may advocate as strongly as other groups, work as hard to leverage resources, and bolster community identity as thoroughly, but the combination of doing all three makes it a powerful specimen to the field. Though it is only just beginning, the documentary could provide a compelling case study on reinforcing community identity. The Leadership Institute provides a great model for other organizations seeking to enhance their capacity. The City Council Subcommittee is unique to Durham and may be unique on a broader geographic scope. Having political access and dialogue is something with great potential for a community organization, so other groups may want to try and mimic this forum in their cities. Also, the partnerships that have most clearly aided the Leadership Council offered mutual benefit to both parties, exposed the Council to new ideas, and provided exciting opportunities to the community. The overall lesson on the value of intelligent networking and collaboration is something to which other organizations should aspire.
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*List of Interviews*
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Melva Henry – March 9, 2009
Lenora Smith – March 11, 2009
William Brannon – March 16, 2009
Vivian McCoy – March 18, 2009
Rosa Gattas de Mayorga – March 20, 2009
Dawn Hill-Alston – March 22, 2009
Kim Sage – March 23, 2009
Gwyn Silver – March 25, 2009
Reverend Melvin Whitley – March 25, 2009
I. Jarvis Martin – March 26, 2009
Earl Phillips – March 27, 2009
William Thomas – March 27, 2009

*Coded randomly as numbers throughout the paper to protect identity. Each number does always correspond to the same person.*
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Thank you to the entire Leadership Council for allowing me to attend their meetings and for their kind interaction at all times. I admire the passion and commitment of all the members and believe they will continue to do great things for Northeast Central Durham. It was a formative experience to have such exposure. I would like to personally thank all of the members who were gracious enough to let me interview them and gave me much useful information and perspective: Thank you Donald Yarboro, Lenora Smith, William Brannon, Vivian McCoy, Rosa Gattas de Mayorga, Dawn Hill-Alston, Kim Sage, Gwyn Silver, Reverend Melvin Whitley, I. Jarvis Martin, William Thomas.

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Thank you to my family and friends for all of their invaluable support and encouragement.

Finally, I want to close with a more unconventional acknowledgement, but one I feel compelled to make. Thank you to the band Broken Social Scene. As the “soundtrack” to my writing process, their music was an important source of both inspiration and stability.
Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Interview with: ___________________________
Date: ____________

Where do you live? Is that in NECD? How long have you lived there? Have you ever lived in NECD?

What do you do for an occupation? What civic and community activities are you involved in within NECD?

What do you think the greatest strengths and assets of Northeast Central Durham are?

What are the area’s biggest challenges and obstacles?

How did you become aware of the Leadership Council? What made you decide to be a member? How did you get involved?

Would you say that you knew any of the other members of the Leadership Council before you joined? What were these relationships like?

What are your main goals / hopes for the group?

What are your personal areas of interest in regard to the work of the leadership council and neighborhood revitalization? For example, crime reduction, affordable housing, economic development, environmental components, etc…

How would you define the Council’s purpose? (Advocate, Technical, etc…)

Who do your actions target?

What skills, knowledge, or assets do you think you bring to the Council?

What do you think the greatest strengths of the Council are?

What are the Council’s biggest challenges and obstacles?

What do you like most about the Council?

What do you dislike?

What would you change? (To improve positively & To get rid of bothersome things)
Has the Council helped you get more organized, motivated, involved, active, in your neighborhood? In your professional life?

How has it influenced how you relate to and interact with your groups, your neighbors and residents of NECD?

Do you think it serves to connect people of NECD and city officials?

Do you think people know about it?

Any other comments?
Appendix 2: Second Leadership Institute Report

City of Durham

Northeast Central Durham

Second Leadership Institute Report

December 2 & 3, 2008
Golden Belt Complex – 2nd Floor Main Conference Room
Department of Community Development
Durham, North Carolina
North East Central Durham  
2nd Leadership Institute  
December 2 & 3, 2008

Introduction & Major Lessons
For two days in early December, the members of the Northeast Central Durham Leadership Council received important training and insight critical for continuing their great work in 2009. This came through facilitation by Bridget Chisholm and Daphne Sloan-Morgan [See Appendix 1 for Facilitator Biographies and Appendix 2 for a PowerPoint outline of Bridget’s presentation], as well as presentations by Councilman Farad Ali, Economic Development Director Alan DeLisle, Mayor William Bell, and Earl Phillips.

The major lessons that emerged during this time are as follows. The first is a concrete action to focus upon and the second concerns the group dynamics of the Council.

*1. Northeast Central Durham does not have a Master Plan. Such a document was instrumental in the resurgence of Downtown Durham. Working on a Master Plan and its components should drive the Council’s actions during the upcoming year as its number one priority.

*2. As an organization, the most important thing for the Leadership Council to do is work to achieve majority consensus when deliberating within and speak with a unified voice to the outside community at all times to help achieve its vision of success. [See Appendix 3 for the NECD Leadership Council Vision, Mission, & Goals]

A Quick Recap
In Appendix 4 of this report is a document that shows all the great things NECD achieved in 2008, including:
-Identifying key goals during the 1st Leadership Institute in January  
-Establishing numerous partnerships throughout the community  
-Completing several projects of benefit  
-A look at all the funding that came into the area – $26.6 million

*Always celebrate your achievements, no matter how small, because it can give you the energy to keep moving over that next mile.

➔ The purpose of recapping the actions of 2008 was to show all that has been done but that so much more can still be done. All of the Council wants to be part of what is happening in NECD in this pivotal time and not let some outsiders take things in a direction you don’t like. You must look at what you’ve done and where you want to go, because it’s the catbird seat right now. Everyone will get their individual things through the larger efforts done with one voice.
The Master Plan

**Northeast Central Durham does NOT have a Master Plan.**

Why is one necessary?
It’s not a matter of IF development will happen, but WHEN and HOW. Working on a plan ensures NECD leadership is not only a part of the process but can achieve its goals and visions for the area.

Master Plans generally include the following components:
- Economics (includes things like demographics, population, income, job growth, age, trends)
- Transportation
- Finances
- Utilities / Public Services
- Zoning
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Schools
- Environmental
- Recreation / Parks
- Groceries / Shopping
- Arts / Entertainment

Other characteristics of a Master Plan include:
- Starts with present day and goes forward to a specific time
- Each component has a budget
- Priorities will have timelines for action
- Things change, so reviews and updates are critical
- There is a geographical element, but also, the plan itself is a map

NECD Leadership cannot create a Master Plan by itself. Professional help is necessary to make the vision come to life. Whichever firm gets hired will be tasked with summarizing and synthesizing any existing or previous plans of any sort that may involve NECD. None of these are master plans, but may contain relevant information. It is their job to find that. You mustn’t start over completely. History certainly has its place but you can’t be burdened by old plans that may no longer be necessary or relevant.

You do want to get integrated into whatever the city is doing. Define NECD and focus on that, but be aware of the bigger picture. A major draw will be showing new jobs and new businesses.

Once investment starts, and people start seeing it happen, it continues. If you are poised with priorities, city hall can see something to act on and it can help guide the private development, ensuring that it won’t be counter to what you want to see happen.
Terrence – We need to think about what exists, what do we have, what can we maximize? The challenge is there is not enough incentive to create innovative commercial. It’s hard to sustain what we put in. How do we keep them there?

Additional **general key points** about making plans:
- Stay solution driven & outcome focused. Quantify impacts and be anticipatory.
- Know what you are asking for and where you are taking people.
- Understand how you will pay for the plan and the development
- Have strong leadership, and stick to objectives.
- Communication is critical, internally and externally.
- Embed accountability and oversight into the process.

Marion – We could create a subcommittee for oversight.
- People need to understand how plans will impact them and the specific uses of funds.
- **The community is NEVER left out** of this. All of the stakeholders must participate for inclusion and buy-in.

On this last point, Daphne shared a story about Birmingham. There, they came up with a Master Plan through consensus involving many townspeople. It was not an easy process, but upon completion after 2 years, the plan helped the city grow by leaps and bounds. Each component was put into a city department, or if one didn’t exist, a new department was created to govern that particular section of the plan.

**Councilman Farad Ali’s Advice**

BATS → Behavior + Attitude + Technique = Success

First form your Mission / Vision / Goals, THEN you make your strategy

Expressing the **Return on Investment (ROI)** is crucial and you must **leverage** the money you already have into more. You have seen how much has been invested, make that grow.

NECD is a **huge opportunity** for investment and economic development.

Look at what Donald has done with his building. It’s great for the community and the property will surely become more valuable.

**The Story of the Downtown Plan and Lessons for NECD – Alan DeLisle**

- **You need Organizational Capacity**: In the context of downtown, some private sector people who didn’t want to let the downtown go created DDI (Downtown Durham Inc.)
- **It wasn’t driven by the county or city, but the private sector.**

They hired an executive director, then brought the public sector in, got the county and city to be major players. In turn, the city created the Office of Economic and Employment Development. This is internal capacity, someone who looks at these concepts from inside the city, who can represent the taxpayer if needed.
Next, they created a Master Plan for the downtown: They hired a professional firm with a very good reputation. They spent $200, 300k who produced a serious document which was respected by a variety of stakeholders and groups. The city adopted it.

The point to a Master Plan is that it coalesces a common agenda. It identifies priorities. All towns suffer from an overwhelming wish list generally. The key is to identify the most important investments first.

The plan is not about any one person, it’s about what the public and private sector will react to. Will the priorities resonate beyond the people that make/decide them? Does it have a bigger purpose? It’s a way to start to change the way people think about a particular area: here’s what it looks like, but here’s how it ought to look, and we need help getting there.

*If the public sector commits, it can help get the private sector to invest.

Then, a penny on the tax rate went into a special downtown revitalization fund. This generated 1.4 million dollars. The money got invested into key catalytic projects, they send a message to the marketplace. For instance, as soon as ATP got inked, 16 properties were bought. This then brought about some additional public investments.

“I do think a Master Plan would be a good thing for this area. A master Plan means you aren’t reacting, you’ve already established your vision. You have to say this is what I want and go after it. The more unified of a voice with clear priorities, the better.”

Alan’s presentation made fundamental points about what needs to be done to have success. This is a good model for what the Leadership Council can do for NECD. Keep in mind the plan was NOT driven by the city. Also, consider how they made decisions, why, and who made them. Remember to set up the plan for what you want to get accomplished.

Group Dynamics – Achieving Consensus

Daphne’s Lessons

At this point, like it or no, you don’t give always each other full respect when you’re speaking. When you don’t agree, you start talking to your neighbor. That’s what I see. At points of contention, you don’t let them finish. In the future, jot down your points and wait until they are done. It’s the mature and respectful thing to do as adults. It’s not about agreeing, but respecting and allowing them to get it out. Then you vote.

When we talk about working together, we need to know we are not going to always agree. We aren’t looking for 100% consensus, but majority consensus. From this point, we will come up with a majority opinion. I know there are some individual opinions but I also see the desire to get past that and come together. You can express those opinions but we will come to a majority and move on from that point. That will make you successful. If you hang onto anger over your piece not being included, you will not be successful.

Remember the message inspired by Earl’s calendar, which said something like, “We have no control of the past, thus we need not discuss it. We have no control over the future because it is unknown. We only can control today” – If you all learn that, you’ll be so much further ahead.
Many of your questions validated that you were not together in terms of your priorities – which makes it harder for you to get taken seriously – but you won’t be that place again after this Institute. You couldn’t be more strategically placed right now, but you’ll continue to shoot yourself in the foot based if the individual thoughts and questions take importance as priorities. It will never work otherwise.

You have to put aside your individual boxes and come together because you are not the 20 richest people in Durham and don’t have the same capacity. If you don’t, someone else will come in and develop NECD. But, even if you don’t have the deep pockets, you need to walk like them and talk like them.

Digesting all of this information is important, and while challenging, the key is to be aware of when and where you do that: it can’t be in front of the wrong audience. Have your animated, lively discussions together, process everything, then come to a single unified voice.

Informed, impassioned people who have a passion for their communities are unrelentingly powerful regardless of how deep their pockets are. That’s your resource.

You are going to feel some pain. You must agree to disagree, and to work all that out with each other and not in front of the deep pockets, the city government, and so on. Iron sharpens iron. Continue sharpening your organizational capacity. You become the line item when you give them something they can show the rest of them, something they can work with. Remember to ask for what you want and argue it strongly, because that’s what everyone does and it can go in any direction.

Council Input
Earl – The key thing is unity. You have to speak together. It can’t be individuals doing individual things. It will get picked apart

Ivan – We need to have a plan, get focused and make a strategy, and also get people to see what’s going on, create recognition, and build on what’s already happening.

Alvis – Earl and Melva get us to the table, but all of us have to convince them (the city) and make sure it sticks beyond when we remove ourselves.

Gwyn – We could make a PR committee to get our voice out there and among the residents.

Priority Actions for the Future
Planning in Action – Identifying Gateways
With the Master Plan identified as the major priority action for 2009, the Council’s first step was to build upon one of its goals from the January 2008 Institute and spend time during the this Institute to identify 2 priority gateways. Besides developing the goal, this will help connect the investment in NECD with the periphery to build on other action in the city.
Options
-Little Five Points
-East Main Street / Alston
-Angier Avenue / Driver
-Holloway Street

Daphne divided the group in half to have a discussion and then take a vote to determine two priorities based on the following criteria:
-Crime / Safety
-Development (Current and what looks like it will happen)
-Amenities (Current and what you’d like to see that would help people travel down that street)
-Any plans already in progress
-Traffic Patterns

Group 1 – Kim, Alvis, Melva, Jarvis, Terrence, Vivian, Gwyn
Group 2 – Melvin, Eduardo, Marion, Rosa, Dawn, Leonora, William

Group 1 preferred East Main and Holloway, with consensus based mainly on traffic patterns and volume of people

Group 2 picked East Main and Angier. They chose based on what’s going on, what are the potentials, how well development, transportation, and services are placed, and also what’s a win-win to say something was accomplished.

Highlights of why each segment was chosen before a group vote:

For Angier

Dawn – There’s already commercial potential there, the east end connector, they already have accessible traffic patterns. Holloway has too much congestion and is more residential, too many other issues would come into it.

Leonora – I liked the opportunity to influence the off-ramps and assist with community development. There is already stuff happening there as well as the historic aspect (Daphne - Which can be a source of federal funding, that’s important)

Marion – It’s about win-win, Angier is already targeted by the city OEWD office, and there are the historic homes, a brownfield assessment target area, and strong sense of community. That includes a business association, and it was historically viable, and we will have rail a stop

Eduardo – There is a good balance of community & business (Daphne - That relationship will save a lot of time)
William – The Holton school was a plus and so were the other improvements coming in.

Melvin – My reasons were stated as the group reasons, and they are based on what’s going on, what are the potentials, how well development, transportation, and services are placed, and also what’s a win-win to say something was accomplished.

Vivian – I liked the commercialism and Holton school, they have churches, business associations, and also the future railway & new park and ride

For Holloway

Melva – Initially I did Angier because of emotions of what it used to be and the Holton school. But I changed to Holloway because of the traffic pattern and the gateway into Downtown Durham it could be.

Alvis – The transportation patterns are the heaviest traffic of all four. There are also the amenities coming into it. The development is there, the amenities, which give it a more home-y type of environment. Also plans are in progress here too. (Daphne - You do have to think about the implications of beyond the border because that’s what grows an urban environment)

Terrence – I thought crime and safety were big challenges at Angier. Also, I’m not sure about the off-ramps. Holloway is a golden opportunity considering what can come in. There are plans in progress for Holloway too.

Jarvis – I considered the traffic patterns, existing investments, and amenities.

Gwyn – I live near there, there are the new off-ramps and historic houses. Also, Holton Center would not be between the streets if Angier is one instead of Holloway.

The vote gets taken and Angier wins 8 to 4

***Priority Gateways are: East Main / Alston and Angier / Driver

Daphne - You all decided today that the four gateways are still as written, and you ended up voting Main and Angier. I can only pray you don’t go back and start debating this again because it’s over. You didn’t lose Holloway or Little Five Points, it’s just second priority. Everything you do going forward must be done on the basis of these priorities for the two gateways.
Other Considerations for the Immediate Future

Crime
Crime drives people out of an area: the feeling, implied or specific, that a neighborhood is no longer safe. As you are beginning to think about reinvestment, you have to first make the community feel and literally become safe.

On this issue of crime, which afflicts the NECD: You have to be one voice that does not down the area, because if the leadership council does not support NECD, it will be hard to gain further support. You can discuss things privately, in this group, but you need to speak together and see the glass as half full. And you don’t give up on crime while this plan gets made; you have to keep working at that because if you wait, it will never go away. Build on the energy you have. You’ve made a choice to live in the area and to be involved as change agents. This will help to reach others.

Vivian – I know we have problems, but we can’t keep downing NECD. If we don’t talk better, no one will. If we down our community, that means we can’t get anyone to come in. You have to think positive about NECD. This is a good community.
Also, I’d like to thank Captain Andy Miller and his fellow officers for making things so much better.

Dawn – I’ve seen the changes being made. We thought, “If we move there, we knew we’d have to be part of the change.” There are new communities that say we’re here to make NECD better. People want to make gardens, community activities, get to know each other. We have to keep thinking along this way.

William – Nothing hurts me more than seeing the paper talk down my community.

Vacant Lots & Zoning
I would suggest that vacant lots be addressed immediately, they will get bought before the plan is made, and that’s a lot more work if you have to convince new owners. Also, you’ll want to know the zoning here and in the entire area because you’ll want to consider changes for your Master Plan.

Funding and Possible Non-Profit Structure
You are still a volunteer group, that’s not bad. There tends to be little money available to a volunteer group except for through a structured group. You are unlikely to get it independently. Structured groups who are able to receive funding from different sources must be able to report what they receive and what they did with the money, usually done through a formalized method. This is usually an authorized nonprofit, which may or may not be who you want to be.

If you work with other nonprofits, since many of you also are on such organizations, they have to be doing similar work. Your mission and values ought to align.
An existing nonprofit has tax exempt status, 501(c)3. Nonprofit means you have the body, elected officials, the 990, you can receive funds, and you can give deductible certifications.

The Master Plan is the next step, and you won’t be able to do what you hope to do without a legitimate one, but you must decide about becoming a nonprofit or partnering with existing ones.

Some ideas include Golden Leaf, Z. Smith Reynolds (which just gave funding for the newspaper), additional partnerships with UNC programs/departments (journalism, planning, etc)

The New City Manager
The city manager is a different person with a different vision. He’s not into the politics. He hasn’t named his Deputy for Community Building yet, which shows he is taking that very seriously and understands the importance of the position. This could have significant implications for NECD, so it will be good to follow this and establish a good relationship with him.

Closing Remarks – Words of Wisdom and Encouragement
Mayor William Bell
The fact that you take the time for this is something we want to congratulate you upon. We appreciate you taking the interest to move the area forward because it will help the whole city.

Aside from bringing in businesses, I don’t think there’s anything more important than getting neighborhoods together. I’ve said it before, “Strong neighborhoods, strong city.” I think the potential for NECD is unlimited. It has to be done from the ground up, the neighborhoods have to be involved in formulating the plans, and the community has to buy into the goals and vision.

I wanted to thank you and congratulate you. I hope you feel that the city sees this as a priority. You have to be patient, but as long as we make progress and can get the train moving in the right direction, I think that’s a good thing for NECD.

Earl Phillips
When I see all that you’ve done in the past year, I think the sky is the limit but this also makes it clear that a core vision for the future is absolutely necessary. You have to work together and speak with one voice, and you have to continue to sharpen your capacity.

I want to talk about the “Penalties of Leadership,” which is so true. A true leader gets criticized quite often and may never get the credit he or she deserves, but that’s ok. It’s ok because what made the leader great will last long after he or she is gone, and what truly matters is knowing that they did everything because they believed it was right and out of kindness and wanting people to succeed and be better. That makes all the difference in the world.
A Master Plan made so much happen in Atlanta, as I saw when I was there during the Olympics, and it can make so much happen here. Remember, you never know who may see your works and want to help out or give money. As you do good works, good things come to you. We have to continue to do this, to point out the good things each of us are doing. Let’s get behind each of us when each of us does something good.

The community pride that you all have in NECD is second to none. And with big, extraordinary dreams come big, extraordinary problems, and these challenges require big, extraordinary people!