A Thesis

entitled

Community Schools: Catalyst for Comprehensive Neighborhood-Based Initiatives?

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts Degree in Geography and Planning

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An Abstract of
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For over 100 years neighborhood-based initiatives have been enacted as a means to alleviate conditions associated with spatially concentrated poverty. And yet, these sociospatial strategies have shown limited success. The scope of this research attends to the range of initiatives encompassing schools and neighborhood centers and correlations to the contemporary community school reform movement. This point of reference is utilized to weigh the means to which community schools may stimulate broader neighborhood-based improvements. School-centered community revitalization rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within. This research travels the recent academic reform of an inner-city public school in Toledo, Ohio. This course of inquiry draws from current literature and case study findings as a means of charting corridors to advance neighborhood-based revitalization efforts. This research also furthers the understanding of the broader issue of neighborhood-based initiatives.
I dedicated this to Christopher Michael and Jena Marie.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ iii

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................... v

Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................... vi

List of Figures ........................................................................................................................... viii

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Overview ......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Problem Statement ........................................................................................................ 3
   1.3 Objectives ...................................................................................................................... 3
   1.4 Methods ........................................................................................................................ 5
   1.5 Limitations .................................................................................................................... 10

2 Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 12
   2.1 Introduction ................................................................................................................... 12
   2.2 Neighborhood-Based Initiatives ................................................................................. 14
   2.3 Contemporary Advances ............................................................................................... 33
   2.4 Community Schools ..................................................................................................... 38
   2.5 School-Centered Community Revitalization ............................................................... 45

3 Case Study.............................................................................................................................. 54
   3.1 Robinson Middle School ............................................................................................... 54
   3.2 The Robinson Community Hub .................................................................................. 57
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1</td>
<td>Location Map</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-1</td>
<td>Robinson Middle School</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-2</td>
<td>Scott Learning Community</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-3</td>
<td>Robinson Area Map</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>Robinson District Map</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-1</td>
<td>Toledo CDC Service Area Map</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Overview

For over 100 years neighborhood-based initiatives have been enacted as a means to alleviate conditions associated with spatially concentrated poverty. The long course of neighborhood-based initiatives struggled to resolve poverty-related difficulties along the spatial dimensions of neighborhoods’ economic, physical, and social fabrics. Although numerous sociospatial strategies have been enacted over time little progress has been achieved. This research considers the range of initiatives utilizing schools or neighborhood centers as an approach to alleviate the hardships of poverty. This point of reference is utilized to weigh the means to which contemporary community schools may stimulate broader neighborhood-based improvements. School-centered community revitalization rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within.

Multifaceted neighborhood-based initiatives fluctuated from settlements, school social centers, neighborhood councils, public housing, community action agencies, and
community development corporations. The scope of this research does not detail each of these movements, but attends to the scope of initiatives encompassing schools and neighborhood centers. Although placed-based initiatives have often “provided the most holistic, if not always coherent, approaches to problem solving” and are distinct in their understanding how economic, social, and political concerns are interconnected, every innovative approach “has had to cope with a larger legacy of unfinished tasks and unfulfilled promises from the prior ones” (Halpern, 1995). Overall the historical perspective illustrates place-based methods without input or a voice from within the confines of experience.

Without the ability to address their own concerns, problems and solutions to poverty related issues often went beyond notice. The failure of efforts initiated from outside of the bounds of neighborhoods underscores the need for a legitimate communal voice. Place-based initiatives that have not included a choice-based or grassroots component have not stood the test of time. Besides, holistic neighborhood redevelopment and community capacity building does not take place when community residents are marginalized and rendered voiceless. Detached contemplations produce disjointed programs to deal with the wide-ranging interconnecting difficulties inner-urban neighborhoods face. Without the opportunity to be heard, along with a disjointed delivery of services from an assortment of isolated agencies, comprehensive revitalization eluded best efforts.

Lessons provide a basis of reflection and the need for departure from the piecemeal-silo approach of the past to an overarching across-the-board line of attack. This research travels the recent academic reform of an inner-city public school in Toledo, Ohio (figure
1-1). The transition to a school-as-community-hub establishment at Robinson Elementary is the subject of this inquiry. This research utilizes a school-centered community revitalization approach to investigate the hypothesis that school reform can anchor and serve as a catalyst for broader neighborhood-based initiatives. This course of inquiry draws from current literature and case study findings as a means of charting corridors to advance neighborhood-based revitalization efforts. This research also furthers the understanding of the broader issue of neighborhood-based initiatives.

1.2 Problem Statement

Few studies explore school-centered community development initiatives. A school-centered community development framework maintains academic reform can be a point of entry that opens to broader community renewal. This context is utilized to explore how this strategy may be leveraged with the recent rise of Robinson Community School in Toledo, Ohio. A case study assesses impacts the community school has upon the community and community member perceptions of the quality of life in area neighborhoods. It is a question of how this recent academic restructuring can be utilized to affect broader levels of renewal in the local district.

1.3 Objectives

A number of neighborhood-based initiatives utilized schools and community centers over time to alleviate effects of poverty. This thesis examines impacts associated with the Robinson community Hub and residents’ perceptions of area neighborhoods. Insights of area residents are brought forward to consider the quality of life of district
neighborhoods. This paper looks to the community hub school to answer the following questions: How does the community school impact the district? What is the extent of this impact? To what degree does this empower the community? And finally, what are the prospects of utilizing the community hub to affect broader neighborhood-based initiatives?

Several aspects are explored to address these research questions. Specifically, this examination is structured upon the following trajectories:

1. portraying schools and community centers within the historical context of neighborhood-based initiatives to address poverty in the United States,
2. illustrating the neighborhood-centered community revitalization approach,
3. assessing community hub impacts on the community,
4. considering perceptions community members hold for their neighborhoods and,
5. providing findings and recommendations centered on utilizing the Robinson Community Hub as a catalyst to drive broader neighborhood-base initiatives.

The principal purpose is to address the impact school reform has on the district and to draw from current literature and case study findings to chart opportunities to advance neighborhood-focused community development efforts in district neighborhoods. Findings and recommendations center on utilizing the community school as a point of entry opening to broader community renewal.

1.4 Methods

Robinson School is the subject of this inquiry and is considered within the analytical framework set forth. The goal of the study is to explore the proposition that school reform can anchor broader community renewal. Methods utilize a school-centered community development approach that rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development. School-centered community development utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within.
An initial process of information gathering is conducted to capture district and community school information. This is met through informal discussions, meetings, and communications with the Hub Director, the Community Partnership Specialist with the United Way of Greater Toledo, area neighborhood-based organizations, nonprofits agencies, governmental bureaus, along with a collection of relevant materials to provide insight into this academic restructuring. In addition, the literature review explores historical footings of neighborhood-based revitalization initiatives along the corridor of how schools and community centers were utilized as a means to resolve issues surrounding the spatial concentration of poverty. Ensuing reviews examine contemporary neighborhood-based approaches, the current community school movement, and the school-centered community revitalization approach. A journal is also kept as a point for reference.

The long history of neighborhood-based initiatives references numerous agendas that employ schools or community centers to effect broader neighborhood improvements. Neighborhood-based revitalization initiatives were utilized as a means to resolve issues surrounding the spatial concentration of poverty. The literature gives a historical footing, along with contemporary performances of community development, community schools and school-centered community revitalization initiatives to illustrate a community development approach that rests upon participatory development approach. This course of inquiry draws from current literature and case study findings as a means to investigate pathways to advance broader neighborhood-based revitalization efforts in the Robinson School district.
A case study is utilized as an exploratory analysis tool, and a survey and focus groups are devised to capture perceptions from community members and hub personnel (see appendix for a list of questions). This inquiry investigates the phenomenon of the recent transition to a community hub within real-life contexts. The case study looks intensely at a small participant pool to draw conclusions within the specific contexts brought forth. This structure illuminates particular experiences rather than generalizing the current community school movement.

One of the advantages of this approach is the close collaboration effected. This empowers contributors to have a platform to tell their stories. Opinions and points of view from participants give voice to area residents to address their concerns. To gain insight into the culture at Robinson, many issues are brought to light such as information on active parent associations and the current level of parental and community involvement. Narratives impart place-based experience and outlooks. This awareness helps to construct events and proceedings at the Robinson Community Hub. Local experience and perceptions ground issues relating to housing quality and affordability, the physical environment of neighborhoods, the quality of life in neighborhoods, crime and safety, the impact of the community hub, along with the level of community participation.

Two focus groups are formulated to gain first-hand experience and points of view. The hub committee group entails community school professionals and the community member focus group consists of area residents. Perspectives from hub personnel and community residents reveal viewpoints of professionals providing services and those whom the services are designed to assist. Data from focus groups and the survey help to
answer research questions essential to this investigation. Members of the focus groups, along with time and date of meetings are based on the endorsements of the hub director.

After testing focus group and survey questions with the hub director in December of 2013, focus groups were scheduled to meet. The first assembly was planned to gather on Tuesday February 25, 2014 and the following on Thursday February 27th. Both were slated to meet at 4:00 p.m. at Robinson Elementary. Primary data is organized to bring out community members insights and aspirations.

Focus group questions are open-ended and devised with a predetermined order but some degree of flexibility is retained with regard to the position and timing of questions based upon the interaction with informants. This semi-structured design enables an open and direct dialogue through an organized order of questions, while still preserving some degree of elasticity. Primary and secondary questions are formulated to acquire a comprehension of the impacts experienced with the advent of repositioning Robinson School as a community-hub-school. The community member focus group is circumscribed by residents’ concerns, experiences and perceptions of their neighborhoods along with hopes for the future.

Conversely, the hub committee focus group is formulated to assess the assets and strengths present in the community, and the degree to which the community hub facilitates assets and strengths and to investigate the challenges the community faces and how these challenges may be met. Requests are oriented to capture residents’ perceptions of the quality of neighborhoods and consider the degree to which the community hub has impacted the broader district. The level of community hub involvement is also explored together with residents’ suggestions and potentials envisioned to improve the quality of
life of area neighborhoods. Both focus groups allow for any topics to be added or expanded upon. The focus groups will provide synergy arising from informal group dynamics, while the questionnaire is more cut and dry.

Generally, the survey is formulated with close-ended questions constricted by a series of responses to gain knowledge from residents’ perspectives of the assets and challenges of area neighborhoods. Some questions enable broader response in addition to an open-ended question at the end that allows participants to add or expand on any topic of their choice. The questionnaire is structured by an opportunistic purposive sampling perspective. This instrument explores a number of relevant themes relating to everyday living in area neighborhoods including: housing quality and affordability, the physical environment of neighborhoods, the quality of life in neighborhoods, crime and safety, the impact of the community hub, and the level of community participation.

In summary, this project location-specific organizational structure depicts the model of community schools and neighborhood centers within the historical context of neighborhood-based revitalization initiatives, displays a number of contemporary approaches, investigates the modern community school movement, and summarizes neighborhood-based community-based initiatives. It also examines the impact the Robinson Community School has upon the broader community and charts opportunities for neighborhood improvement. Findings and recommendations center on employing the community hub as a catalyst that opens to comprehensive neighborhood-centered community development strategies. By drawing from present literature and case study findings, this research attends to opportunities to advance broader neighborhood-based initiatives leveraged on the recent school reform at Robinson Elementary.
1.5 Limitations

There are some limitations associated with this research. This study is an exploratory descriptive analysis only. Since the community hub is still in its developing stage, there is limited data available for the Robinson Community Hub. The recent academic restructuring leaves a void in quantitative data. There were also challenges and difficulties with the field work to secure a random sample as a consequence of constricted points of entry to formulate focus group attendees and secure survey participants.

Outreach efforts for participants were also limited to active members of the community hub for both focus groups and the survey. This reduces the reach into the broader community and may have left out a manifold of community voices to address their perspectives and concerns. Also as a participant observer in the community member focus group there may be a degree of observation influence, which could have caused some perspectives to be withheld. In addition, the survey has a few questions that appear to be vague or redundant to some respondents. More time would also be necessary to address the range of trajectories this course of investigation opened up.

Finally, the hub committee focus group meeting was canceled via email notification from the hub director less than an hour before the scheduled meeting. Additional efforts to reschedule it failed. The hub committee focus group was developed to assess the assets and strengths present in the community and the degree to which the hub builds upon community assets and strengths. Questions were formulated to determine the degree to which the community hub is proficient at garnering resources to address community challenges. This focus group was framed to investigate community
challenges and how challenges could be met. Notwithstanding constraints, this research brings a number of findings and recommendations to light.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

For over a century neighborhood-based initiatives to alleviate conditions associated with spatially concentrated poverty have made little progress in diminishing poverty and its related effects. This research considers the range of initiatives utilizing schools or neighborhood centers as an approach to alleviate the hardships of the poverty. This point of reference is utilized to weigh the means to which community schools can be leveraged to drive broader community improvements. School-centered community development rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within.

Comprehensive neighborhood-based community development is an inclusive approach that supports all sectors of the neighborhood – social, educational, economic, physical, and cultural (Kubisch, 1996). Inner-city neighborhood development traditionally concentrates on boundaries constricted by high levels of poverty and disinvestment to target low-income individuals and families in addition to addressing market failures that isolate people from the economic growth of the mainstream (Berube,
Although multiple agendas have been erected over time, the historical account is marked by a number of fundamentally flawed agendas and performances that deflated revitalization efforts. This left considerable resources and capacities to lie dormant.

Poverty-related issues and circumstances are linked and intersect on multiple levels. Top-down renditions construct detached silos to treat interrelating poverty concerns as independent variables. The reciprocal influence between families, schools, and neighborhoods calls for a broader and inclusive focus when considering solutions to poverty. Recent efforts have widened the focus of schools to be more receptive by structuring schools-as-centers of community and as vehicles to facilitate broader community improvements.

Schools have a profound impact on the social, economic, and physical character of neighborhoods. Characteristically schools reflect and mirror the socioeconomic landscape of neighborhoods. The quality of schools correlates with the quality of neighborhoods on a number of levels (Khadduri et al., 2007). Schools have long been central to the neighborhoods in which they are positioned and have a strong relationship with neighborhoods as area infrastructure. The extent of influence schools have on neighborhoods spans the range from property values to economic vibrancy (LISC, 2012). Good schools attract families to their districts and augment property values. In contrast, poorly performing schools can increase the cycle of disinvestment and lead to population loss.

The mission of schools is to give pupils educational groundings to lead and live fruitful lives. This mission often meets frustration and encumbrance in inner-city neighborhoods. Studies show that family, school, and neighborhoods have a strong
influence on student performance (Khadduri et al., 2007). By recognizing the influence of families, schools, and communities have on children’s learning and development, community schools work to integrate efforts on a comprehensive basis. Community schools integrated outlook considers both academic and non-academic barriers to learning. This approach shares similarities with Progressive Era settlements that emerged in the late 1800s.

2.2 Neighborhood-Based Initiatives

Neighborhood-based initiatives arising in the late nineteenth century were in response to the mounting manifestation of industrial capitalism and the resulting spatial clustering of poverty-stricken immigrants. As urban populations swelled, communities became encumbered and burdened with overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Underpinning the onslaught and alienating effects of poverty permeating inner-city neighborhoods was widespread unemployment, inadequate wages, dangerous employment conditions, and chronic job insecurity. As difficulties intensified, a social reform movement emerged to produce community organizing and community advocacy.

The Progressive Movement called attention to the plight of the down-trodden and provided the first institutional response to the needs of inner-city immigrant neighborhoods (Halpern, 1995). Settlements promoted principles forward-thinking for their time and offered health and social services to the poor. Reformers of the late 1800s moved beyond the simple charity model and utilized the settlement to serve as both a practical and theoretical framework to learn about the life of the poor. It was also thought to be a platform on which inner-city residents could be educated to advance
themselves both socially and economically. In addition, settlements were designed to bridge class and ethnic divides (Chen, 2013). Since the Progressive Era the role of neighborhood-based initiatives has been an essential path to alleviating poverty and an avenue of social reform.

Influenced by the founders and staff of London's Toynbee Hall, who maintain students and affluent people ‘settle’ in poverty-stricken neighborhoods to provide services to improve the quality of life and evaluate prevailing conditions as a means to advance social reform, Jane Addams established the Hull House Settlement in Chicago in 1889 (United Neighborhood Houses, 2014). Subsequently, settlements were formed in dispersed poor neighborhoods to assist with the everyday difficulties accompanying poverty. By 1910 there were more than 400 settlement homes opened to the poor (Alliance for Children and Families, 2014). As the movement scaled, Addams and other pioneers founded the U.S Settlement House Movement in 1911 bringing health and educational opportunities to working immigrant neighborhoods. By 1913, the movement expanded to 32 states (Husock, 1992). Addams also proposed that communities should commission schools as settlements.

Progressive Era reformers upheld novel ideals at the turn of the century maintaining society was a social organism and poverty must be treated systematically to eliminate both symptoms and causes (Scheuer, 1985). Accordingly, the Progressive Movement increasingly advocated for legislative reforms for child labor, women's suffrage, healthcare reform, and immigration policy (Addams, 1912). For example, the Hull House conducted a detailed analysis of the Near West Side community empowering residents to challenge the establishment. This led residents to have a greater say in the
purpose and implementation of programs designed to improve opportunities for the largely immigrant population (Chicago Historical Society, 2014). As poverty increased, settlements became overburdened to meet a growing need.

Originally situated in homes, it was soon appreciated how abundant and dispersed public schools were. Schools came to serve the role of centers of inner-city neighborhood activities along with settlements. The pivotal locations of schools served to fill the void, and complemented settlements as the focus of neighborhood initiatives. As opposed to the spatially scattered settlements along disbanded expanses of the urban landscape, schools function centrally at the neighborhood level. Integrated services to address poverty were staged in neighborhood schools in addition to other outreach efforts such as home visits. Neighborhood sanitary conditions were also documented and public education programs advanced.

Numerous programs were enacted to assist the poor such as day care, afterschool programs for children and adults, sports, hobbies, healthcare, assistance in securing employment, legal aid, in addition to providing food, fuel, and clothing to the urban poor (Halpern, 1995). The decentralizing or co-locating of services localizes resources in a neighborhood center. Collocating services at the neighborhood scale by utilizing schools capitalizes on the physical space and affords broader access to residents. Community centers bring people and underutilized talents together.

An early effort to use schools as a base for social reform occurred in 1897 in Manhattan’s ethnically diverse working-class neighborhoods of the Lower East Side. Under the leadership of Charles Sprague Smith, the People’s Institute of New York formed to support a number of political and cultural activities for immigrants (Halpern,
1995). In order to deal with the everyday needs of the urban poor, and to provide a vehicle to integrate immigrants into American society, centers taught specific skills, and offered a wide range of supportive services and recreational activities. In 1911 the “Social Center” was established and subsequently neighborhood residents elected an assembly of contemporaries to form the “Neighborhood Group” to govern the center’s activities. But over time the institute’s leadership and school officials successfully prevented the center from engaging in social action (ibid). Despite this setback neighborhood-based initiatives moved forward.

Inspired by Addams’ campaign on poverty, John Dewey became a steadfast advocate for school reform. He maintained that “the significant thing was to make the school … a centre of full and adequate social service [and] to bring it into the current of social life” (Dryfoos, 2008). Addams envisioned public schools as functioning as microcosms of democratic society (Engel, 2000). He preserved that public schools were the “best vehicles for problem-solving, imbuing neighborhoods with participatory democracy, and transforming them into socially functional places based on principles of reciprocity and social justice” (Taylor and McGlynn, 2008). By the early twentieth century, many cities recognized the usefulness of schools as social centers, and a number of states enacted legislation opening schools for a multitude of uses such as art galleries, movie theaters, and local health offices (Campbell-Allen, 2009).

In his 1902 address delivered before the National Council of Education in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Dewey appealed to transform schools to operate as a center of life for all ages and classes (Dewey, 1902). His address outlined his intentions to employ public schools under the settlement model to help the underprivileged. Dewey’s believed
that schools were a place where ideas and beliefs could emerge and bring people together by “doing away with the barriers of caste or class or race or type of experience that keep people from real communion with each other” (Engel, 2000). In addition, he maintained that there was a vast amount of unutilized talent left dormant and sought to ground education in place. Today’s community schools trace the trajectory laid out in the early twentieth century when “John Dewey brought the school into community and Jane Addams brought the community into school” (Dryfoos, 2002).

As spatial clustering of poor immigrant families intensified after the turn of the century, children were concentrated within the confines of depressed socioeconomic stations at increasing rates (Campbell-Allen et al., 2009). While speaking of the distressed and deplorable existence of students in the city slums, Chicago’s organizing secretary of the Board of Charities Robert Hunter declared: “The time has come for a new conception of the responsibilities of the school. If the school does not assume the responsibility for bringing up children, how shall the work be done?” (Williams-Boyd, 2010). Over time Hunter came into contact with Jane Addams and eventually became a Hull House resident (Simkin, 2013).

Reformist continued to advocate for schools to serve as social centers and supported school-based services such as lunches and child welfare services for truant and delinquent youth. Humanitarians believed teachers were overburdened and maintain students would perform better if non-educational services were provided in schools. Reformers brought community-based social services to schools to serve both the child and the family as a single unit. By 1913, 71 cities in 21 states had schools functioning as social centers and by 1914, 17 states enacted legislation sanctioning the wider use of school facilities
(Benson et al., 2009). The social center movement led to the standard features in schools we know today such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, showers, libraries, restrooms, and medical offices (Halpern, 1995).

Progressives viewed the neighborhood organically, as a complex whole and as referent for governance and the delivery of services (Halpern, 1995). Poor academic performance was considered to be rooted in school practices, as well as conditions of the home and neighborhood. In response, attempts were made to increase parental involvement and to advance a curriculum based upon the needs of the community. Schools soon came to provide visiting teachers to conduct home visits as a means of addressing sanitary and public education concerns. Visiting teachers also strove to bridge the gap between immigrants’ homes and school by serving as advocates assisting immigrants to become assimilated into the mainstream culture (Williams-Boyd, 2010). They also sought to increase parental involvement and provide advice on curriculum based on their insights of the situation within neighborhoods. Similarly, they interpreted and shared information on poverty and its effects.

Be that as it may, local school boards soon came to be under the control of socially conservative men with close ties to religious establishments and the business community (Halpern, 1995). Consequentially, visiting teachers, like the Progressive movement, proved to be too independent and neighborhood-minded under school systems fast becoming entrenched in bureaucratic control (ibid). Despite the early concerted efforts of settlements and school social centers, the transformation envisioned did not come to pass. Although settlement leaders viewed the settlement as a potential hub and nerve center of neighborhoods, they isolated it from other neighborhood-based associations that provided
a degree of social structure and support, such as churches, indigenous trade associations, and trade unions (ibid). This standpoint afforded little voice to the residents of inner-city neighborhoods. Similarly, settlements were considered to be neutral organizations and typically refrained from political action because leaders were uncomfortable with any potential conflict arising from politically empowered inner-city residents. Consequently, there was little effort to link local organizing efforts to the larger political constituency (ibid).

Settlements proved to be problematic along numerous fronts. Because staff members were oriented to respond to the interests of the neighborhood, including the business community, local government officials and residents, it proved difficult to serve as advocates for the poor (Stagner and Duran, 1997). Neighborhood-based service providers also held a position of mistrust towards the poor and felt that they lack the knowledge and ability to meet their own needs, let alone define them. In this light inner-city residents experienced a message of distrust and were regarded to be incapable to characterize or address their situation. Reformers remained firm in the belief that they knew what was best for immigrant families.

This position upheld that poor inner-city residents were “deficient in their knowledge of proper health care for their children, of the civic and moral values of their newly adopted country and even unaware of how to rear their children” (Williams-Boyd, 2010). Some Progressives believed poor families preferred the filthy conditions of overcrowded neighborhoods without any recreational amenities such as parks and playgrounds. For example, after settlement staff raised dilapidated tenements at the Northwestern University Settlement, they were stunned by the overwhelming display of attachment
dislocated families exhibited (Halpern, 1995). Progressive Era slum clearing displaced thousands of families and furthered overcrowding in poor urban communities. The divide between neighborhood residents and those who joined their ranks in settlements was rapidly widening. Settlement boards became increasingly unaware of problems or perceptions from the direct experience of the poor.

As World War One loomed large, the settlement house influence peaked and support for social change waned. Neighborhood-based initiatives lost momentum and focus, and were reoriented to support war mobilization efforts. Congress also enacted laws drastically restricting immigration (Wade, 2004). In addition, post-war hysteria and intolerance about the spread of Bolshevism severely restrained reformers and their efforts (Halpern, 1995). In the realm of rising industrial capitalism and the emerging professionalism movement, area medical and social services agencies often viewed what was taking place as state sponsored competition. The fears of creeping socialism caused reformers to be accused of radicalism or sedition (ibid). This furthered the detachment between inner-city neighborhoods and social service providers.

As the new realm of professionalism gained traction, specialists sought to analyze poverty by concentrating on poverty related issues along the lines of individual or family adjustment. The fragmentation of poverty related issues led to the classification of specific problems such as infant mortality, juvenile delinquency, and single motherhood. The focus changed from the broad scope of shared experiences to requiring specialized training and knowledge to comprehend the range of variables underwriting conditions of poverty. This juxtaposition equates to ‘cases’ which abandoned the neighborhood locus of addressing concerns of poverty and was narrowed to individuals and small groups as
the basis of problem solving. Techniques and methods replaced the instinctual relationship fostered by early reformers (Halpern, 1995). Growing professionalism drove detached education, health, and recreation silos that lost touch with the neighborhoods in which they were originally rooted.

After the war, the 1920s found unbridled faith and confidence in capitalism. This conviction assured society’s difficulties would fade away in a wash of prosperity and technological progress. This led schools to incorporate additional services for students such as guidance counselors, social workers and psychologists, but their primary thrust and focus centered on middle-class families who sought assurance that their children would get ahead and move on to college (Dryfoos, 1995). But everyone did not benefit from the rapid economic growth of the 1920s and by 1929 two percent of the population held two-thirds of the country’s savings (Halpern, 1995). A resonance of ethic normalcy pervaded social institutions in the conservative decade of the 1920s leading school social centers to abandon their reform agendas to become community recreation centers (Benson et al., 2009). As a result, millions of poor children and adults were left to navigate through an increasingly complicated economic and societal landscape.

By the mid-1920s, there was a growing degree of concern about the expanding social distance between professionals and poor inner-city neighborhoods. This divide arose as specialized fields of social work shifted their focus of services to poor families from an outlook of comprehensive support, to the treatment of the specific problems (Stagner and Duran, 1997). This constricted the availability of resources and left schools to deal with the human costs following a decade of unparalleled prosperity. For instance, teachers in Detroit collected shoes for students, and New York teachers donated funds to feed
malnourished pupils (Halpern, 1995). Nevertheless, schools soon came to closely parallel the increasingly dominant culture of corporate capitalism.

Professionalism was soon joined in concert with ideals of centralization and bureaucratization to become the overriding forces for organization in education, healthcare, and social services. Centralized control of schools led to the standardization of curriculum requiring specialized knowledge and skills. This widened the chasm between schools and the neighborhood through “the divorce of school from the community and the subordination of parents to the professionals” (Halpern, 1995). What had commenced in the last decade of the nineteenth century as a compassionate response to the detrimental effects of industrial capitalism came to reflect capitalism’s principles and methods. As a result, social workers were spatially isolated from inner-city neighborhoods and lost the feel of how to assist the poor in the context of their lives. This resulted in less access to services.

For instance, the Hiram House Settlement was established in 1896 as Ohio's first settlement house and sought to address the needs of immigrant and poverty by administering a wide range of services (Hiram House Camp, 2014). Hiram House has provided enriching outdoor experiences and educational programs for thousands of Ohio children for over 100 years. In the mid-1920s the Hiram House Settlement linked up with schools to recreate the visiting teacher role, and provided small clubs, home visits and counseling to inner-city poor. But the role of administrative centralization replaced locally shaped programs rooted in place with “outposts of specialized bureaucracies” (Halpern, 1995). Isolated stations come to offer services in adult education, physical and mental hygiene, and recreation.
In the wake of the Great Depression, urban areas exhibited escalating rates of concentrated poverty. As rising unemployment intensified less attention is afforded to marginalized groups stationed both economically and geographically. The New Deal aggressively expanded the role of the state to provide basic provisions to the poor and stability for working-class families. This brought advocates of the Progressive Era into the ranks of government, and settlements soon became augmented by a new degree of order and method.

This convergence furthered to detach the official workforce by transitioning away from the residency principle that formed the mainstay of the Progressive Movement (Chen, 2013). Problems of the physical and social environment of inner-city neighborhoods came to be addressed by the expert knowledge of architects, urban planners, and sociologists (Halpern, 1995). The following decades saw sporadic reinventions of local initiatives that returned professionals into the neighborhoods. But in light of the growing social welfare system cumulating along an ever-widening expanse of bureaucracies, and the fragmentary approach of clinical social work, basic casework carried out in inner-city neighborhoods contracted significantly.

For a time there were discussions of situating a social service department in schools within poor neighborhoods, but schools came to be perceived as less rooted in neighborhoods than settlements. Even though schools were centrally located within communities they came to be operated in isolation (Berg et al., 2006). The increasing centralization of school governance impeded movement to utilize schools as vehicles of social reform. Despite the emergence of such overriding forces, the ideal of spatially-linked and decentralized hubs of community activity of the Progressive Era continued
overtime with mixed results. There were a number of efforts to return human services to
its neighborhood-based roots in the first half of the twentieth century, but it is not until
the 1930s that approaches rooted in Addams’s settlement house and Dewey’s school as
social center were revived (Benson et al., 2009).

Second generation community schools originated from the “lighted schoolhouse” in
Flint, Michigan in the, where the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation developed programs
to serve children and working-class parents (Children’s Aid Society, 2011). The
objective was to “make schools the social, educational and recreational anchor of
communities” (Benson et al., 2009). Their Community Education program drew interest
from around the country and eventually hundreds flocked to Flint to train in their
innovative philosophy and methods. By the late 1950s an estimated 10,000 attended
Mott sponsored workshops (University of Tennessee, 2013). Many principles enacted by
the Community Education crusade are still in use today.

Correspondingly, the Chicago Area Project was the first systematic challenge to the
psychological explanations of juvenile delinquency. It was founded in 1934 on the
concept that every neighborhood has the leaders it needs to solve its own problems
(Schlossman and Sedlak, 1983). The project revived the Progressive outlook that the best
line of attack to attend to poverty was through strengthening local democracy. This
project expected residents to assist and eventually take on key leadership roles (Halpern,
1995). This objective was met with community building by way of recruiting community
members to play an active role in solving local problems, and community organizing
committees composed of residents were formed in neighborhoods with high delinquency
rates (Wolcott and Schlossman, 2014). The program revolved around residents being
empowered through the development of community organizations acting in accord (Chicago Area Project, 2014). This form of grassroots community organizing set out to prevent delinquency by drawing on local residents' active participation in community self-renewal. Nevertheless, the movement was met with great resistance, and by the mid-1930s community organizing became to be largely suppressed by social welfare programs.

In the 1940s united charities buildings, neighborhood councils, and area projects became sites for integrated services to address the spatial concentrations of poverty (Williams-Boyd, 2010). But in conjunction with the mechanization of southern agriculture and mining, millions were displaced from their livelihoods (Medoff and Sklar, 1999). Subsequently, inner-urban areas saw a rapid increase of African Americans, along with growing racial conflict and overcrowding. Generally settlements refused to serve African Americans, and homegrown settlements formed by community residents were often prohibited from admission to local and national federation of settlements (Halpern, 1995).

This outlook did not recognize settlements originating organically, such as by black churches or other ethnic groups. Similarly, staff members, now with degrees in social work, shunned group work in favor of casework and refrained from helping individuals adapt to exasperating circumstances. By the end of Second World War the majority of staff members refused to reside within settlements (Wade, 2004). This period saw the community school movement expand sporadically, especially under the light of the Charles Mott Foundation, which centered on bringing recreation, and school-linked health and social services into schools (Campbell-Allen et al., 2009). But as local
governments gained more discretion on how to implement funding, subsidies became to be largely devoted to economic development as opposed to targeting poor neighborhoods (Mossberger, 2010). Effectively poor communities were left to fend for themselves, and it wasn’t until the 1960s that Progressive Era themes of focusing efforts at the level of the neighborhood were recaptured and renewed.

Frustrated by the unresponsiveness of schools, social welfare agencies, and municipal governments to support the growing numbers of minorities flowing into urban areas, the Gray Areas project funded by the Ford Foundation provided innovations in response to the dysfunctional effects of bureaucracy (Halpern, 1995). The focus of concern was the ‘gray areas’ of decline amid renovated downtowns and developing suburban communities (Mossberger, 2010). In opposition to the federal urban renewal programs, the Gray Areas project focused on the needs of the poor. In 1961 the foundation selected six cities for a pilot program maintaining that gangs and youth crime resulted from unequal opportunity structures in poor communities (ibid). Their mission was to evoke institutional reform and improve the coordination of services.

But without a clear conceptualization of residents’ purpose of participation, it remained unresponsive to individual improvement, leadership development, and community organization. Additionally, some schools and existing social service providers viewed program priorities as being imposed from the outside and efforts as a collection of disconnected programs without meaningful integration (Halpern, 1995). Besides, the Grays Area program did not encourage locally rooted strategies, and services were often incoherent and at cross-purposes. Although local initiatives were rejuvenated, they prove to be less promising than their counterparts at the turn of the century.
More than any other social phenomenon the Civil Rights Movement was the most influential mobilizer of services and support for the poor (Williams-Boyd, 2010). As the movement gained currency, the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty initiated a vast array of social welfare programs with government social workers working in neighborhood centers and remaining settlements (Wade, 2004). The War on Poverty renewed and recaptured numerous Progressive Era themes and programs. This refreshed outlook was based upon the objectives of enhancing neighborhood employment opportunities, and preparing poor children and adults to take advantage of emerging opportunities (Stagner and Duran, 1997). Likewise, programs sought to enlist the poor in community action (Chen, 2013).

Great Society initiatives opened to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 increasing the federal government’s role in education and education programming for the neediest students (Campbell-Allen et al., 2009). Also, the 1960s Head Start Initiative rekindled an emphasis on family involvement in children’s education (Williams-Boyd, 2010). As the power shifted from local government to federal control, commitments and strategies arrived in every state and community. But while attempting to balance service provisions serious questions were raised concerning the top-down model of the professional delivery of services (Williams-Boyd, 2010). Although the funded responses to poverty were abundant, they were conceived on assumptions of outside consultants and the federal government. Moreover, the inner-city neighborhoods of the 1960s were further depleted both economically and institutionally than immigrant neighborhoods at the turn of the century (Halpern, 1995).
Amid the specialization of funding and services there was a return to a concerted emphasis on the concept of the whole family, but by the early 1960s ghettos were no longer just weigh stations leading to a better life, they became a “new poorhouse” lacking in economic opportunity or any degree of communal social control (Halpern, 1995). The social and geographical isolation of spatially concentrated poverty provided fertile ground for the rise of gangs to function as a social organization providing economic opportunities, in addition to security and financial services. For instance, the Hubbard Woods School in Winnetka, Illinois joined together resources with other organizations, but it proved to be not enough to compete with gangs as a base of community social organization (ibid). Despite this extent of inertia, the 1970s saw an increase of schools-as-community centers offering a range of public and private services.

Selected inner-city schools opened up to the community with a number of recreational and social services for youth, in addition to health care and adult education. This new generation of school community centers was distinct in the fact that activities and services were overseen by community-based organizations. For example, the Martin Luther King Middle School in Atlanta was designed and built to play a broad community role (Halpern, 1995). Correspondingly, federal legislation including the Community Schools Act of 1978 paved the way for state governments to focus legislative efforts on the creation of community schools (Campbell-Allen, 2009). The principles and approaches of neighborhood-based services made some headway from the specialized categorical methodologies that came to dominate services afforded the poor. For instance, a number of states employed local networks of neighborhood-based service providers with legislation requiring proximal access to services, in addition to fostering
self-help and mutual assistance (Halpern, 1995). But as federal policy expanded, the advent of urban renewal and highway construction devastated numerous settlement neighborhoods (Wade, 2004).

Following the decline of federal welfare spending of the 1970s, neighborhood centers often merged to increase their efficiency, and by the early 1980s there was a return to state and local government control (Wade, 2004). This shifted the focus to an intensification of school requirements as opposed to the restructuring of provisions (Williams-Boyd, 2010). For instance, in the course of the 1980s and early 1990s, Chicago implemented numerous reform strategies to stimulate decentralize management and empowered local communities and schools to further their decision making capacities as a method of increasing student performance (Chrzanowski et al., 2011). Although there were some academic gains, strides were not enough to overcome barriers to learning. Non-academic impediments to learning varying from housing instability and security to health care and nutrition were not attended to.

Although the 1980s is often seen as the decade of interagency collaboration, at its close service delivery became progressively fragmented, compartmentalized, and uncoordinated (Williams-Boyd, 2010). Additionally, the Reagan administration maintained that federal aid for high-poverty areas interfered with market forces and place-based assistance was detrimental to national economic growth. This led the federal government to endorse the adoption of tax incentives at the state level causing programs to primarily focus on economic development in lieu of social policy (Mossberger, 2010). While the 1960s searched for one overall solution, the 1990s saw a number of programs and interventions and linked-services initiatives increased rapidly.
This outlook is community-based and supports families with de-categorized funding and the co-locating of services. This fundamental shift affords a diverse continuum of connection, services, engagement, and academics rooted in place. Programs in schools included college extension classes, social clubs and literary offerings, ethnic festivals, art exhibits, recreational activities, visiting nurses, and legal services, in addition to labor union activities, public forums, social science research, and advocacy for social change (Benson et al., 2009). This response is a wellness continuum where education, health, mental health, and social problems are treated in accord. The holistic outlook was part of the first generation community schools Jane Addams advocated for (Children’s Aid Society, 2011).

In 1996, the Chicago Public Schools Community School Initiative commenced with three schools and came to offer more than 400 programs and partnered with at least 25 community or city organizations (Bireda, 2009). This alternate academic approach grew to more than 150 community schools. By the middle of the decade hundreds of federal and state-level reform programs dotted the socioeconomic landscape (Williams-Boyd, 2010). Alongside this transformation there was an increasing reliance on intermediary institutions to draw together and deploy the critical mass of resources considered necessary to bring about neighborhood revitalization (Halpern, 1995). Foundations and nonprofits came to play a greater role.

The community-based group Enterprise Foundation founded by James and Patty Rouse in 1982 emerged as a leader. Their mission centers on ensuring low-income people have the opportunity for affordable housing. James Rouse was a member of President Eisenhower's Task Force on Housing in 1953 and on President Reagan's Task
Force on Private Sector Initiatives in 1982 (Enterprise Community Partners, 2014 a). In 1987, he served as the chairman of the National Housing Task Force, which made proposals to Congress in March of 1988 for a new housing program (ibid). This report formed the basis for housing legislation signed into law by President Bush in November 1990, and Rouse was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Clinton in September 1995 (ibid). According to their website, Enterprise works with community-based nonprofit organizations and has raised and invested nearly $14 billion to help build or preserve some 300,000 affordable rentals and for sale homes, in addition to creating more than half a million jobs nationwide (Enterprise Community Partners, 2014 b). At present Enterprise is championing school-centered community revitalization to rejuvenate inner-city neighborhoods.

Since the early 1900s educators explored various ways to bring an assortment of opportunities into public schools and orient them as centers of communities. Although Dewey's model of the school as a "centre of social service" has varied during the 20th century, it increased with a wave of community schools in the early 1990s (Dryfoos, 2008). This generation of community schools matured with the rapid rise of the full-service community school model emphasizing a full range of onsite services (University of Tennessee, 2013). While investments in educational services for at risk children may yield some benefits, if they are not matched with complementary investments in housing, health, nutrition, recreation, family stability, and community development, services invariably fall short in closing the achievement gap (McGaughy, 2000). One has to look beyond improving academic performance to affect solutions to the entrenched problems
of poverty-stricken communities. Contemporary measures set out to engage and empower inner-city communities.

2.3 Contemporary Advances

Empowering residents to take on stronger leadership roles in community development facilitates continued ownership of the change process. This significantly transforms the way in which social institutions work with resident leadership (Mills, 2005). This comes to fruition by supporting and enabling community members to take the lead in community revitalization. Community building and interpersonal activities provide residents with new tools to alter the host of difficulties facing their community. This results in emerging self-confidence and self-efficacy to face and solve bigger issues. For instance, the Health Realization Community Empowerment Project has made significant impacts on the quality of life at Coliseum Gardens in Oakwood California in merely twelve months, and results indicate that continued empowerment “has the potential to stimulate and support deep positive changes in both Coliseum Gardens and its surrounding social environment” (ibid).

When community members are empowered they can realize and articulate long-term strategies for community revitalization and development. This adds a high degree of vibrancy to problem solving. Institutions entrenched within their box of thinking may adopt policies and approaches intended as beneficial but shown to be detrimental. Out-of-the-box clarifications can facilitate effective determinations. At Coliseum Gardens, community members were empowered to recommend new kinds of partnerships, strategies, and collaborative efforts that led to a mutual understanding of working with
the community rather than on the community (Mills, 2005). This outlook identifies needs and formulates agendas to develop and implement community revitalization. Effective organization can impart community revitalization strategies.

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative is an example of a severely impoverished neighborhood, which changed their course though effective organizing that supported grassroots neighborhood leadership to successfully secure public-private partnerships to provide a platform for community development (Medoff and Sklar, 1999). This initiative formed in 1984 was purposely devised to build cohesion and trust among diverse community members (ibid). To implement their resident-driven plans, they partnered with nonprofit organizations, along with community development corporations, businesses, and religious institutions in the neighborhood. Engaging and empowering community residents can open a course of effective neighborhood-based strategies.

As opposed to the long account of paternalistic community development (CD) policies imposed from above and afar, resident-driven organization forms initiatives rooted in the community’s requests. “Grassroots organizing, or political CD, is a key, though often ignored, activating ingredient for any CD program’s chances of stopping and reversing the process of neighborhood decline” (Perkins et al., 2004). Besides, paternalistic programs have the propensity to inadvertently reinforce dependency (Eisen, 1994). Likewise, detached contemplation strategies by way of top-down engagement relinquish the benefit of direct experience.

The Hester Street Collaborative (HSC) in New York City maintains that engaged residents are among a community’s greatest assets (HSC, 2013). Creating vibrant neighborhoods through the process of empowerment grants community members a voice
and delivers a sense of ownership. This transparent participatory process ensures residents play an active role in shaping the built environment and gives rise to a lasting sense of community pride. Work with local residents and youth revolves around transforming “neglected public spaces into parks, schools, and capitalizes on local knowledge and resources, gives stakeholders a hands-on role, and encourages affordable housing developments through a participatory design and advocacy process that produces meaningful, long-term community stewardship” (HSC, 2013). Anne Frederick, the head of HSC maintains, “The people who live, play, and work in a place know it best and stand to be affected by changes to their physical environment” (Chong, 2013).

She goes on to state, “Urban design flanked with a transparent, participatory process ensures that design reflects local wishes and needs” (Chong, 2013). For example, after analyzing for common themes and elements, community hopes and aspirations were conveyed into the design of a new playground. The most popular and well used design features were the result of youth participation and their recommendations (HSC, 2013). Elementary school students were also engaged and empowered to help design and build their school’s outdoor classroom. This involvement gives them the opportunity to learn that “their own creativity and efforts can directly improve their neighborhood, and the next generation of students benefit from what they leave behind” (Chong, 2013). This builds on assets in the community.

By determining what’s present in a community and by formulating an internally focused and relationship driven agenda, new avenues of opportunity open up. For example, the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University has been researching issues surrounding the school-community intersection since the
early 1990s, and provides strategies to revive and mobilize resources already present (Chrzanowski et al., 2011). They maintain “no plan, solution or organization from outside the community can duplicate what is already there.” Although some resources from outside the community may be needed, lasting solutions are effected from within. Utilizing the assets, capacities and abilities within communities can form “new structures of opportunities” and asset-based community development “acknowledges and embraces particularly the strong neighborhood-rooted traditions of community organizing, community development and neighborhood planning” (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1996). By bringing together disjointed voices within the community a united front to problem solving is liberated.

Although each individual may make contributions, relationship building connects discrete and disconnected elements as the “heart and soul of community building” (Chrzanowski et al., 2011). Connecting individuals who share common interests and goals through associations can build long lasting relationships. Institutional support of individuals serves as incubators to cultivate community leadership and positive community narratives opens a rich fabric to liberate the community potential. Together these elements can serve as a foundation upon which the community can build an asset-based, internally-focused, and relationship-driven focus for community development (ibid).

A participatory approach helps to organize neighborhoods as a means to resolve community concerns. This process can mature from small-scale efforts to comprehensive development strategies. For instance, current work at the Lucas County Land Bank in Toledo, Ohio demonstrates the impact of their initiatives of removing blighted and
abandoned homes. This is accomplished by empowering community residents to identify blight in their own neighborhoods. Through an inventory process, the Land Bank assembles vacant land holdings and lets the community decide how it will be utilized. To illustrate the choice-based adapted reuse of properties repurposed from parks and gardens, to a goat and cheese farm, Cindy Geronimo, Vice President and Director of Community Engagement, proclaims, “Each neighborhood has its own flavor” (Hub Director’s Meeting, 2013).

The City of Toledo is also required to have and implement a Citizen Participation Plan for HUD-funded programs as a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development entitlement recipient. This sets forth policies and procedures for citizen involvement in developments and the Department of Neighborhoods acts as the agent for the City of Toledo to implement all aspects of the Citizen Participation Plan (City of Toledo, 2011). According to their Citizen Participation Plan: “Citizen participation is an integral part of the overall planning, evaluation, assessment and implementation process” and the purpose of the plan is to provide citizen with the necessary “information and mechanisms to allow them to fully participate” (ibid). This recognizes the importance of citizen participation and provides an opportunity of involvement in development initiatives.

Participatory development based on an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within (Eby et al., 2012). The iterative process of drawing out community needs, hopes, and aspirations can test conceptions arising from participants against a broad range of criteria, and enables collaboration between
stakeholders and urban designers in “creating inspiring, relevant, and achievable visions” (Brown, 2009). By opening an avenue of participation community members can address concerns with developments that affect them directly. This empowers residents to “conceive, and even implement, complex, radically alternative socio-spatial strategies” (de Souza, 2006). Comprehensive choice-based proposals are achieved through the medium of design to reflect and preserve the objectives of community members it serves.

Participatory development has taken a variety of forms since it emerged in the 1970s in response to the failings of policies delivered from the outside. In this setting participatory development was introduced as an important part of the "basic needs approach" to development initiatives (Cornwall, 2002). Although participatory development matured during this period, community advocacy organizing has its roots in the social reform movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in association with poor and immigrant neighborhoods (Peterman, 2000). The ability of local groups to build agency and mobilize social capital to enhance community development can be leveraged to become a “community-wide project” (Newman, 2008). The path to economic opportunity and community development commences with broad participation by all segments of the community (McGaughy, 2000). Community schools acknowledge the objective of involving and sanctioning residents to guide area-wide agendas.

2.4 Community Schools

Today’s community schools are rooted in the general conceptions and social innovations established by Jane Addams (Benson et al., 2009). The contemporary community school
educational reform movement, deeply rooted in the past, starts with an integrated outlook that looks to both academic and non-academic barriers to learning. This is organized around three common goals: academics, health and well-being, families and neighborhoods (Children’s Aid Society, 2013). Rather than having multiple agencies providing discrete services in an isolated piecemeal fashion, school-linked services addresses interdependent social, emotional, economic, and educational concerns (Williams-Boyd, 2010).

Community school’s central mission of improving academic achievement is flanked by the vocation to building community capacity through strengthening the social and civic fabric of the community. Schools are intimately linked with communities as part of neighborhoods physical and cultural fabric, and increasingly are embarking on wide-ranging local strategies to address the disadvantaged (Dyson and Raffo, 2007). From a single community school setting in 1935 in Flint, Michigan, the contemporary community school movement has resulted in tens of thousands of schools throughout North America and other parts of the world (Edwards and Brown, 1996). Increasingly this undertaking is seeing nonprofits fill the void vacated by various levels of government.

For instance, in response to the landscape of fragmented social services, the Beacons Initiative set out to unite services to address the host of individual problems associated with poverty in a single setting (Stagner and Duran, 1997). Founded in 1991, this initiative transformed schools into community centers to provide activities for children and families by bringing a range of programs into schools. Programs oriented to youth include, Academic Enhancement, Life Skills, Career Awareness and School to Work
Transition, Civic Engagement and Community Building, Recreation Health and Fitness, and Culture and Art, and for adults programs are designed to offer the opportunity to enhance skills, promote social interaction, build community engagement, and provide physical activity (New York City Department of Youth & Community Development, 2014). Beacons are cast in the same light as Mott’s “lighted schoolhouse” and serve as school-based community centers that eventually located in all five New York City boroughs, in addition to San Francisco, Minnesota, Savannah, and Philadelphia (Stagner and Duran, 1997).

In the early 1990s the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) community school model was fashioned on the foundation of intense engagement with parents and the community (The Children’s Aid Society, 2011). CAS is New York’s oldest and largest youth-serving organization and partnered with the New York Department of Education to develop a comprehensive response to the needs of the poverty-stricken neighborhood in Washington Heights by offering a full-array of supports and services, along with a host of learning opportunities (Quinn, 2005). By recognizing the influence of families, schools, and communities have on children’s learning and development, CAS community schools work to integrate efforts on a comprehensive basis. This flexible model is developed on a solid research basis and includes studies on child and adolescent development, parental involvement, out-of-school-time experiences, and impact on low income children (ibid). In addition, research supported after-school programs are offered to elementary-age children, along with community-based development programs for teenagers, and programs offering dependable adult guidance and support. This inclusive framework provides strong core instructional programming and enrichment activities to expand
student learning opportunities, and a full range of health and mental health services. Community schools are a proven method based on an integrated focus model, which expands student learning, increases parental involvement, affords higher graduation rates, and provides a gateway for stronger families and wholesome communities.

For example, the Intermediate School 218 in New York under the guidance of the CAS model opens at 7:00 a.m. for breakfast and provides sport activities in addition to classes in dance and band (Dryfoos, 1996). The span of opportunities range throughout the day and the school stays open to the community until 10 p.m., in addition to being open on weekends and throughout the summer (ibid). This approach improves academic achievement, increases parental involvement and community support, and serves as a source of community pride (Peebles-Wilkins, 2004). CAS brings the settlement house into the school with a high degree of sensitivity to the culture of the local community (Dryfoos, 2005).

Renovating schools into multifunctional resource centers breaks from the tradition model of a self-enclosed building and provides a platform to build social capital by bringing the community voice into the discussion of education. This comes with a firm belief that an active constituency will ensure quality education (Tagle, 2005). Nevertheless, overall educators have treated parents and the community as bystanders as opposed to partners (Weiss et al., 2010). Parental involvement is a critical factor to ensure school success. This can change the atmosphere of “client communities” to one where parents serve as partners to produce solutions (Dupper and Poertner, 1997). Parental involvement also increases the sense of security for students, teachers, and faculty. According to the Children’s Aid Society, “the community school movement puts
schools in the center of civic life and helps provide a place for community members to come together and address issues of concern” (2013). This paves the way for schools and the community to be engaged in problem solving.

Community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the schools and other community resources, and have an integrated focus on academics, services, support and opportunities. This model arrives on the heels of a disempowering and fragmented social services landscape. The coordination of services is at the heart of the community school model. This departs from the bureaucratic and categorical entanglements that overshadow the social welfare system. By having schools oriented towards the community there are compounding benefits such as better use of schools, added security, community pride, and better rapport between students and the neighborhood (Axelroth, 2009).

By the mid-1990s, some 500 school-based health and social services programs became operational (Benson et al., 2009). Concurrently, a number of non-profit organizations come into the political arena in support of full-service school model. This includes the Children’s Aid Society, the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS), Communities in Schools, Schools of the 21st Century, and the National Community Education Association. Together they work with other agencies and state governments to bring more services in the schools, and increase legislative backing to transform public schools into community hubs (Berg et al., 2006). In 1997, CCS organized a coalition that originated as a small assembly of advocates to blossom to over 150 local, state, and national organizations to mobilize the “resources and capacity of multiple sectors and institutions to create a unified movement for community schools” (University of
Community schools connect a compound of divisions and builds capacity as a means of constructing comprehensive community development approaches. This latest generation of community schools links educational, physical, economic, cultural and social strategies comprehensibly. This transforms schools into neighborhood hubs that benefit students, their families, and the surrounding community. In addition, the academic focus takes in the broad obstacles to learning both in and outside of the classroom. Non-academic barriers to learning include the concentration of poverty and housing instability underwritten by high mobility rates. Other issues revolve around neighborhood security, teacher retention, health care, nutrition, and access to counseling (Chung, 2002). By holistically addressing barriers to learning at the Community Links High School in Chicago, they have maintained a 99% graduation rate and an 85% college-going rate since its first graduating class in 2006 (Coalition for Community Schools, 2010). The interaction of community resources and the school served as their right of way.

Despite the advances in community schools, under both Presidents Obama and George W. Bush, the Education Department has largely circumvented addressing the socioeconomic challenges impacting schools (Noguera, 2010). In its place they’ve advocated for reforms for performance pay, raising academic standards, and creating charter schools. Although there has been limited movement at the federal level to advance the community school movement, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan helped to implement the Chicago Community Schools Initiative and is an advocate for making schools centers of communities with extended hours and services (ibid). A
growing number of community schools are bridging the gap between the provision of services and improved academics (Bireda, 2009).

There has been some incremental movement to advance community schools at the federal level. The Fund for the Improvement of Education (FIE) supports nationally significant programs to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education to help children academically (U.S. Department of Education, 2014 a). Additionally, the Full-Service Community Schools program, funded under FIE, encourages the coordination of academic, social, and health services at schools such as “job training and career counseling services; nutrition services and physical activities; primary health and dental care; activities that improve access to and use of social service programs and programs that promote family financial stability; mental health services; and adult education, including instruction of adults in English as a second language” (ibid).

In addition, the Promise Neighborhoods initiative constructs a continuum of cradle-to-career solutions for educational programs, and family and community supports by “integrating programs and breaking down agency “silos” so that solutions are implemented effectively and efficiently across agencies” (U.S. Department of Education, 2014 b). Community schools can play a leading role in closing the achievement gap by attending to barriers to learning. This academic reform movement has led to comprehensive strategies opening to sustainable neighborhood regeneration. Although support from the federal government is limited, there is wide backing at different levels.
2.5 School-Centered Community Revitalization

Avenues of comprehensive neighborhood revitalization acknowledge schools as being inseparably intertwined with the community. This position suggests that in due course schools may have no other choice than to take the lead and become builders of community (Edwards and Brown, 1996). Although there are a number of educational reform efforts intended to increase student achievement, such as charter schools, school vouchers, magnet schools, and alternative schools, to some extent they decouple schools from neighborhoods through open enrollment zones (Khadduri et al., 2008 a). The community school model specifically focuses on the development of the community as a whole. Similarly, school-centered community revitalization (SCCR) utilizes school reform as a motivating force for initiating and sustaining broad community change (Fenwick, 2006). “This new kind of partnership, in which both the school and the community contribute directly to the strengthening and development of each other, can provide a firm foundation for both educational renewal and community regeneration” (Chrzanowski et al., 2011). By 2008, school-centered community revitalization came to be utilized in over twenty communities to spur broader developments (Khadduri et al., 2008 b).

For example, the Sandtown-Winchester development in Baltimore, Maryland Enterprise Community Partners is leading neighborhood-based initiatives to include a wide range of social supports for children and their families (Khadduri et al., 2007). Strengthening schools is the first priority in this effort. In addition to sponsoring curricular reform and professional development in schools, initiatives provide a home-
based early childhood education program, summer school, health and mental health clinics, and mentoring. Resulting academic improvements as illustrated by test scores show a dramatic difference. The percentage of first graders meeting state standards for reading vaulted from 15 percent in 1998 to 64 percent in 2003 at one school and from 19 percent in 1998 to 78 percent in 2003 in the second school (ibid).

To test the hypothesis that school reform can anchor and serve as a catalyst for broader neighborhood-based initiatives, the Mechanicsville Community Learning Collaborative (MCLC) was founded in 2001 to “catalyze a chain reaction” of school and neighborhood improvements (Fenwick, 2006). This education initiative sponsored by Enterprise Atlanta in the Mechanicsville community in Atlanta, Georgia is a school-anchored community development program funded by the Annenberg Foundation’s Community Learning Collaborative Program. Their focus is to systematic transform the lives of children who attend Dunbar Elementary School and serve as a point of leverage for broader community change. Goals are based on encouraging local collaboration, increasing student achievement, improving educational quality, and effecting neighborhood revitalization (ibid). Annenberg Foundation’s vision to revitalize and strengthen urban communities opens through an approach to improve academic achievement and community capacity building by enhancing the social and civic fabric of the community.

Their line of attack mandates a healthy school and community is to be achieved with existing residents by way of an enhanced asset-based tactic that mobilizes and builds capacity through relationship building (Fenwick, 2006). MCLC began with the goals of improving students’ academic achievement, building community capacity and supporting
the revitalization of the community’s infrastructure. Shadowing the Enterprise Education Initiative reform in Baltimore, they incorporated after-school and summer enrichment programs, purchased books for the school library, and opened a technology center for parents and students (Khadduri et al., 2007). MCLC also engages in a numerous efforts to increase parental involvement and skill building by sponsoring family game nights, along with a summer parent academy that operates in conjunction with the summer school program (ibid). This organizational focus advances leadership training and workforce development, builds capacity for community-based organizations, and increases neighborhood involvement in community planning activities.

A local community development corporation received a loan from Enterprise to develop an additional 64 homes on a site adjacent to Dunbar School. This site became part of the MCLC revitalization plan after Dunbar students identified it as blight and a place where “ghosts and bad men lived” (Khadduri et al., 2007). MCLC illustrates the collective work of sustaining authentic community engagement. This course arrives through coordinating area organizations to facilitate relationships to capture multiple funding streams. Through collaboration and integration, leadership training and technical assistance to residents, and the facilitation of community forums that connect residents with existing neighborhood organizations, programs and plans achieved a “holistic approach to school improvement, neighborhood revitalization, and community capacity building” (ibid).

This approach was also employed in New Orleans following the onslaught of Hurricane Katrina. Restructured school systems serve as places where public and community-based organizations can come together as “partners with the schools to
ensure that students, families, and community members are safe, supported, and
connected” (Binger et al., 2008). This sea change opens the community school approach
to include needed resources and services to address the physical, social, and emotional
needs of students. Moreover, educational, social, cultural, economic services, and
organizational programs and facilities, were planned to be accommodated in central
locations to assure equitable access by all community members. By positioning schools
as responsive to area residents it served as leverage for broader initiatives at the
neighborhood level, such as community health, centers, libraries, mixed income, housing,
and public transportation (ibid). The approach in New Orleans positions schools as
pivotal to rebuilding plans and creates central places that advance student achievement
and neighborhood redevelopment. This vehicle renews a sense of community and
consents to a strong community voice in the design and construction of new facilities.
This moves beyond the organization of individual school sites as centers of community to
a “systemic process of urban planning and integration of community resources” (ibid).

Out of the concern of providing current technological innovations for students at
Revere Elementary School in Chicago Lands’ End founder Gary Comer facilitated a
partnership with the Comer Science and Education Foundation. Academic reform
doubled student proficiency in four years, and what started off as a relatively minor
concern ripened into broad community initiatives within Revere’s enrollment district
(Khadduri et al., 2007). Newly furnished computer labs were coupled with increased
parental and community involvement through a series of opportunities including, job
training, GED and computer courses, a resident-led block watch, and home improvement
assistance (ibid). In addition, a full-time community organizer was hired and served to
help bring the community’s voices together, along with a social worker, resource coordinator and an Alumni Association coordinator (ibid).

A mixed-income development with 90 new homes and a youth center was advanced through a number of programs including housing counseling and resident leadership training (Binger et al., 2008). Projects included the redevelopment of the commercial business district, a home improvement program for existing homeowners, and new quality affordable homes featuring Energy-Star appliances and environmentally conscious construction materials (CSEF, 2014). Revere Way illustrates neighborhood revitalization centering on educational innovation that opened to housing and economic development. In the simplest terms, SCCR integrates school reform strategies with and supported by neighborhood improvement strategies. The movement from a single school to an expanded focus at the level of the entire neighborhood came from the hands of resident-led associations. The importance of recreation and community centers cannot be overstated in this regard as they enhance the perception of the quality of life and spur resident involvement. Through developing bonds a strong sense of community belonging was established to open a strong voice in decision making.

Although school improvement is core to the SCCR approach, it is flanked with advancements in housing, health, and the economy. According to Jill Khadduri of Abt Associates, “In the simplest terms, school-centered community revitalization means a school reform strategy that is integrated with and supported by a neighborhood improvement strategy” and a number of healthy neighborhood indicators mark this transition, such as residential stability, housing quality, crime and juvenile delinquency, and the willingness and ability to organize (2007). Khadduri maintains, “School reform
is a motivating force for initiating and sustaining community change.” Through community leadership training and community capacity building the boundaries between academic reform and neighborhood improvement become increasingly blurred. SCCR anchors neighborhood revitalization and community capacity building alongside school reform.

School-centered community revitalization explores the use of public schools as an instrument opening to community and economic development (Chung, 2005). Utilizing public schools as a community development tool can be a point of entry to place endeavors into a broader comprehensive community development framework that addresses the multiple needs of a neighborhood (Chung, 2002). For instance, CAS fosters economic development by employing community residents, supporting community businesses, partnering with financial institutions, and offering entrepreneurial classes for parents and the community at large (Quinn, 2005). Essential and enduring neighborhood change requires all actors to move beyond their traditional roles. The ability to reexamine how actors interact with one another, including residents and private and public sectors can effect deep change at the district level.

SCCR pivots on a school revitalization agenda along with an effective collection of resources directed at strengthening the social and economic fabric of the community. The core elements of school-centered community revitalization address school improvement, housing, high-quality childcare and early childhood development programs, affordable health services, and workforce and economic development programs (Khadduri et al., 2007). After school programming and increased parental involvement establishes an asset-centered relationship towards neighborhood
improvements. In addition, parenting and early childcare education programs provide childhood education and engage preschool parents through offering parental training opportunities. Besides, engaging parents in the early stage of preschool activities makes it more likely for parents to stay involved with their children’s education over time (Khadduri et al., 2008 a).

SCCR is a place-based strategy that attempts to effect deep changes through a holistic method connecting schools and neighborhoods. Community capacity building assists in bringing educators, city planners, and real estate developers together for the common good (Khadduri et al., 2007). Whether initial advances set out to improve the quality of affordable housing stock or economic development, it is by way of choice-based initiatives versus a strictly placed-based outlook. School-centered community revitalization is premised on an external sponsor making a long-term commitment to the school and the neighborhood of at least ten to fifteen years (Khadduri et al., 2008 a). The sponsor is the keeper of the vision for school and community improvements.

Ideally, the sponsor’s role and importance diminish over time as community groups become more active. One of the sponsor’s principle objectives is to build the capacity of community members to become active participants. The sponsor must speak the language of school reform as well as the language of community development. One approach utilizes a board of neighborhood residents, church leaders, redevelopment investors, the school principal, and the hub director to act as a liaison for broader development (Khadduri et al., 2008 a). Moreover, there are a number of neighborhood revitalization strategies that directly support student achievement.
Housing development and services that reduce student mobility provides stability for students and encourages better academic performance (Khadduri et al., 2008b). Student mobility is a significant factor associated with poor academic performance (Rothstein, 2009). Academic improvement skirted with programs to reduce mobility rates by increasing neighborhood stability is more sustainable over time. As well, anti-crime initiatives, and eliminating blighted and abandoned homes and reinvigorating vacant lots can result from community organizing and resident leadership. Underutilized land or property can be slated for adaptive reuse, and housing rehabilitation and homeownership programs can draw on available housing subsidies programs, down payment assistance, rent vouchers, and home improvement assistance. This initial movement can support wider advances. Improving school-to-work transitions through community economic development can be established with better access to educational and vocational opportunities.

Organizations created to support and coordinate activities can lead to programs designed to increase employment opportunities through workforce and economic development tactics that attract new businesses to the area. This forms the intersection of community building, school reform, and neighborhood regeneration (Fenwick, 2006). Schools have a profound impact on the social, economic, and physical character of neighborhoods as major place-based infrastructure and an integral part of the community fabric. Activities opening to interpersonal relationships provide residents with new tools to deal with difficulties facing the community. Emerging self-confidence empowers self-efficacy and drives community problem solving. Utilizing the development of school facilities is a strong strategy and entry point to broader community development.
School-centered community development links school improvement with clear goals that relate to the goals of the neighborhood. This comes about through a process of neighborhood goal setting that involve the community’s physical, social, and economic well-being. Increasing parental and communal involvement, along with regular communication and coordination between the school and key neighborhood institutions is the starting point. This expanded effort supports the human, social, and economic underpinnings of neighborhoods and communities, and can drive broader neighborhood-based initiatives. Education reform can serve as a foundation for lasting community revitalization.

Place-based problem solving can come to fruition with a school-center community revitalization approach. School-centered community development rests upon a participatory development approach funded on an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within. This model complements the recent community school reform at Robinson School. It is a matter of engaging and empowering area residents to take control of their neighborhoods and their future. The Robinson Community Hub can anchor broader community development. At this phase it is in the hands of the hub leadership to moor confidence and hopefulness by engaging and empowering the development of area leadership.
Chapter 3

Case Study

3.1 Robinson Middle School

Robinson was originally constructed as a middle school and is located at 1075 Horace Avenue in Toledo, Ohio (figure 3-1). A groundbreaking ceremony was held on April 24, 2005 and dedication ceremony on January 25, 2007. The approximate construction cost was $11.1 Million, and the 96,444 square feet of floor space was designed to serve 684 students in grades 6-8 (Toledo Public Schools, 2013). Robinson is populated overwhelmingly by low-income and minority students. African Americans comprise 93.3 percent of the student population (Robinson Elementary School: Students, 2014). District neighborhoods are traditionally areas of historically unbroken concentrated poverty.

Area poverty rates for the Robison and adjacent Pickett districts range from 38 to 63 percent (Miller and Schmoll, 2012). Both districts are situated in southern extent of the Toledo Public Schools Scott Learning Community (figure 3-2). Poverty can severely hamper children’s mental and social development, and there is a high correlation between
socioeconomic status and academic performance. For example, Robinson’s performance index for the 2010-2011 school year was 63.8 (of 120) and during the same time period 95.60 percent of the students were economically disadvantaged (Ohio Department of Education, School Year 2010-2011). Comparatively, Elmhurst Elementary students maintained a 97.50 performance index with a total of 38.90 percent of economically disadvantaged students. Elmhurst Elementary is located in a more affluent region of Toledo.

At the aggregate level, high poverty school districts tend to employ educators that are not appropriately qualified. On average, high poverty schools have teachers that are less experienced and more likely to teach outside the area of expertise (Jerold, 2001). Crime is also widely prevalent in the inner-urban neighborhoods of Toledo. Overall, the crime
rate in Toledo is nearly three times the state average according to the U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Reporting. Studies show that there is a strong correlation between witnessing crimes and student behavioral problems as well as low academic performance (Bowen and Van Dorn, 2002). Research also illustrates high crime neighborhoods yield significantly lower math and reading achievement (Milam et al., 2010).

Despite the capital investment for a new school, Robinson rated last in the district for the 2010-2011 school year and ranked in the bottom 5 percent of schools statewide based on state standardized tests (Rosenkrans, 2011). The State of Ohio placed Robinson in academic emergency, which is equivalent to a grade of F. Robinson Middle School was
an unqualified fiasco and failure. So what did Toledo Public Schools (TPS) do in light of this catastrophe? They removed the entire staff, overhauled the establishment to be reopened as a K-8 school, and hired a new staff, not by the district as has been the standard practice, but by the school itself with new hires required to have at least five years of experience with TPS (ibid). In short order Robinson was slated to become a school-as-community-hub establishment.

3.2 The Robinson Community Hub

On May 10, 2011 Toledo Public Schools and United Way of Greater Toledo announced a new community-based initiative. This enterprise repositions a number of area schools to become schools-as-community-hubs. According to the press release, “Schools as Community Hubs is a fresh approach to organizing and offering community resources to students, parents and area residents. The initiative’s integrated focus on academics, service, support and opportunities is geared toward improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities” (United Way, 2011). It also stipulates that United Way of Greater Toledo is to oversee this transformation and is to work with lead nonprofit organizations to coordinate, facilitate, staff, and administer core program elements. The central components of this academic reform movement include parent involvement, after-school and summer enrichment programs, increased access to social services, adult education, and community and economic development opportunities.

This initiative is grounded in supporting students in tandem with bringing services directly to the neighborhood to help bring the community together. Community hub schools were also planned for Scott High School, and Leverette and Pickett elementary
schools (United Way, 2011). Lutheran Social Services of Northwestern Ohio is the lead partner for the Scott Community Hub, the YMCS/JCC of Greater Toledo serves as the principle partner for Leverette, and the University of Toledo, College of Health and Human Science under the direction of Dr. Tavis Glassman is leading the way for both the Robinson and Pickett Hubs (United Way, 2014). According to Dr. Glassman a fifth hub is being planned for Reynolds Elementary (Glassman, 2014).

Robinson was slated to transform its academic outlook to become a school-as-hub institution. Schools as community hubs are grounded on a national researched-based community school model, which holds the promise for improved academic outcomes, together with significant impacts on families and communities (United Way, 2014). There is substantial evidence that illustrates community schools have lasting impacts. This transition came, in part, from the federally funded Race to the Top program, which requires the implementation of performance-based measures to be utilized as a component of teacher and administrative assessments, and is said to be designed to turn around some of the lowest-achieving schools. This program is funded by the Education Recovery Act as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 announced by President Barack Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on July 24, 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2014 c). This platform is to help close the achievement gap for at-risk students living in poverty. The 2009 federal stimulus program presented billions of dollars to provide funding to high-poverty schools identified as the lowest-achieving five percent of states. Federal grant money was provided to Robinson to fund a six-week summer camp, an extra school week, a parent coordinator, along with additional staff, training for teachers, and new technology
(Rosenkrans, 2011). Robinson was awarded approximately $1.5 million in federal stimulus funding.

Robinson Elementary serves as a pilot school for the district under the performance pay model developed by the Ohio Department of Education (Rosenkrans, 2011). Furthermore, Ohio House Bill 364 expands new start-up community schools and includes any school district that is part of the Lucas County Pilot Study Area (Toledo is the county seat), and H.B. 3 redefines “challenged school districts” to include school districts that are part of the Lucas County Pilot Study Area (Ohio Department of Education, 2014). It also changed the role of the State Board of Education from a backer of community schools to the authorizer of community school sponsors.

The effect of this legislation is to place more latitude on the role of sponsors and their ability to sanction community schools. Additionally, H.B. 530 requires community schools, to have breakfast and lunch programs and offer federal food-service programs during summer intervention services and programs pursuant to the National School Lunch Act (ibid). According to the Robinson Hub Director Marcus Goodwin, 100 percent of Robinson pupils qualify to receive federal food subsidies (Hub Director Interview, 2013). Hub directors are the full-time lead staff person responsible for coordinating and facilitating the wide-ranging process. Robinson also has a Hub Team that acts as an advisory board to the school and is composed of the principal, teachers, parents, volunteers, and hub partners.

Toledo community hub schools are designed to serve as centers of neighborhoods, and offer a range of wrap-around services to students, parents, and residents at large. Programs are structured to provide out-of-school activities and enrichment, parent
involvement, medical and dental services, mental health services, social services, adult
education, and community and economic development (United Way, 2011). These
tactics are intended to connect residents, students, and their families to resources and
services. In addition, there is a degree of community decision making in determining hub
partnerships and services offered, which include activities before and after school,
tutoring and mentoring, medical, dental, physical and mental health services, college-
prep, GED, and adult education, free tax preparation, budgeting and saving classes, and
employment and housing resources (Robinson Hub Education, 2014). Multiple services
are accessible to everyone in the neighborhood through a blend of funding streams.

According to Angeline Lee, Community Partnership Specialist with the United Way
of Greater Toledo, “These partnerships extend across organizational systems with a
committed shared goal of strengthening our city’s students, schools, families, and
neighborhoods” (Hub Directors | Education, 2013). She goes on to state that community
hubs minimize the fragmented approach of service providers by creating a
comprehensive method of service delivery, and she looks for positive changes in student
achievement, along with their families, and the overall well-being of the neighborhoods
being served. Together with TPS, the United Way of Greater Toledo and the University
of Toledo, the collaborative also includes the Toledo Federation of Teachers and the
Toledo Association of Administrative Personnel. Hub neighborhoods represent a five zip
code area in the urban core with a population of approximately 81,000 residents with at
risk low academic achievement, poor health care, poverty and crime (United Way, 2014).
The goal at hand is to “make schools such as Robinson centers of their communities
instead of havens from them” (Rosenkrans, 2011). The Robinson Community Hub


serves as an anchor of community for a number of central Toledo neighborhoods (figure 3-3).

The Robinson Community School is structured in accordance with the flexible CAS model, which has an integrated focus on academics, services, supports, and opportunities in place to improve student achievement, create stronger families, and build a healthier community. Robinson’s major focus areas include parent engagement, student achievement, community engagement programs, and teacher incentives (United Way, 2014). According to material obtained from Goodwin, parent engagement is at the forefront of their efforts and a number of programs are in place to realize this goal (Hub Director Interview, 2013). The Make It/Take It Night, in addition to the Family Game Night promotes parental participation. Additional activities are sponsored to promote parental and community involvement. In addition, parents were enlisted to serve on the Community Hub Site Based Leadership Team and staff opportunities for collaboration and planning of parent and community engagement activities. There is also an active PTO consisting of parents, caregivers, teachers and administrative personnel, and a Parent Power Hour furthers parental participation.

The Parent Power Hour at Robinson Elementary invites parents into the school every month where they shadow their children for part of the morning and then meet together as a group. This is one of the initiatives the school is taking in its effort to elevate student performance (Rosenkrans, 2011). The new principal, Anthony Bronaugh brought the "power hour" concept from Sherman Elementary, where he previously served as principal, since, as he maintains, on the whole schools that serve high-poverty communities parent engagement is minimal and parent-teacher organizations are
essentially nonexistent (ibid). Furthermore, mental health services are provided by Harbor Behavioral Healthcare, financial coaching is offered by the Financial Stability Collaborative, and adult educational programs through Penta offer Adult Basic & Literacy Education and GED Prep. Mentoring programs are provided through Young Men and Women of Excellence, and the House of Emmanuel, and Robinson’s Health & Fitness docket provides Sumba on Monday and Wednesday evenings. The Keeping it Together agenda focuses on the family and provides marriage, relationships, parenting, and workplace skills training. The hub also offers legal services.

Community engagement complements active parental involvement. The hub team identified community organizations and community members to participate on the community engagement committee. The hub also sponsored a small business expo, which aligns with their Community Engagement Priority Adult Education program.
Community engagement partners include Promedica, Toledo Area Ministries, Toledo Development Corporation, and the Toledo Police Department. Assets Toledo also established programs and services that provide adult education and training opportunities, promote community safety through seminars and workshops to foster community awareness and safety, and established programs and services that promote mental health and healthy living.

After hub members conducted focus groups, community safety was found to be the highest ranking concern among those in participation (Hub Director Interview, 2013). Information collected specifies that this led to the establishment of three community block watch configurations and a partnership with the Toledo Area Block Watch organization as a means of improving the quality of life in neighborhoods in the Robison School district (figure 3-4). Following a needs assessment for the community a number of areas of focal points are revealed including: community safety, adult education, mental health, transportation, school based health services, primary medical care, mental and behavioral healthcare, dental and oral healthcare, substance abuse counseling, case management, and nutrition education. Materials provided maintain that first year goals and expectations were exceeded in student support, an active PTO, and the organization of the largest community event ever held for Global Youth Service Day where a record number of volunteers turned out.

The Robinson Community Hub is oriented as an anchor of community and offers extended hours and services. This combines core instructional programming, and educational and cultural enrichment programs measured to reduce barriers to learning. Information further preserves all community stakeholders are to be engaged in
consequential, stable positions, partnership development, and serve under a standard of shared leadership (Robinson Community Hub, 2014). Partnerships entail educators, parents, funders, service providers, policy makers, and the community at large. The transition to a community hub school provides the district with the opportunity to advance choice-based development initiatives.

### 3.3 Community Member Survey

A survey was obtained from thirty-five community residents involved with school activities at Robinson Elementary. Questionnaires were collected from participants of the community member focus group, and from community members attending a Family Movie Night and Parent Power Hours. Data is organized under a school-based
community development approach that rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and effected from within. Results display a range of information and perceptions of area neighborhoods including:

- Quality of Life
- Physical Environment
- Homeownership Rate
- Housing Affordability
- Crime and Safety
- Level of Participation
- Community Hub Impact
- Interests in Additional Activities

The survey was designed to underscore perceptions and outlooks relative to this investigation. Primary data is organized to bring out community members insights and aspirations. Community perceptions help to construct events and proceedings at Robinson Community School. Local experience and perceptions ground issues relating to housing quality and affordability, the physical environment of neighborhoods, the quality of life in neighborhoods, crime and safety, the impact of the community hub, and the level of community participation. Highlights of responses include high rental and low homeownership rates, a vast majority who consider neighborhoods to be very safe or relatively safe, a preponderance of community impacts, a wide perception that the quality of life in area neighborhoods has not improved over the last five years, and less than one-third which consider the quality of life of district neighborhoods to be good. Other relative findings take into account the lack of youth opportunities on Saturdays and the call for additional activities.
Specifically, this instrument illustrates that 77.14% of residents rent their homes and 79.14% consider their dwellings to be affordable whether they rent or are homeowners. Participants hold a higher rate for the condition of their own homes as opposed to the overall condition of area housing. In the first case 48.57% uphold a good or excellent rating and 51.43% feel their homes are in average condition. Area housing overall ranked lower with 25.71% as good or excellent and 74.29% as poor or average (60.00% average/14.29% poor). Three of four (75.75%) describe the physical environment of neighborhoods as poor or average and two-thirds consider the quality of life of their neighborhoods to be poor or average (68.57%). Perception of whether the quality of life has improved or declined over the last five years is marked by 40.00% who feel it declined and 36.67% who consider it has remained the same. Three out of four deem the quality of life has not improved over the course of the last five years. A large majority regards neighborhoods to be very safe or relatively safe (90.63%), and 75.00% perceive the community hub has impacted them and their families.

Responses for questions ten and eleven, formulated to illustrate participation in programs and activities, in addition to school or community organizations, appear to be vague or redundant to some respondents. Nevertheless, a number of responses illustrate active participation in a number of programs and activities. As to interest in other organizations, contributors express interest in low income housing, single and mingle night, and basketball. Correspondingly, there are some comments when asked if there is anything they would like to add or expand on. These include: “more community activities; excited to learn about Robison Jr.; more one on one academic involvement,
more sports (basketball) etc., youth needs more sports; and to open up to youth on Saturday.”

In conclusion, most residents rent their homes and overall participants find housing to be affordable. All feel their homes to be at least average, but ranking diverged to some degree of significance when asked to rate the overall condition of area housing. Three out of four view the overall condition of housing to be poor or average. This correlates with the same percentage of participants who rate the physical condition of area neighborhoods as poor or average. Also, over two-thirds describe the quality of life in their neighborhoods as poor or average. Over three-quarters of contributors also indicate the quality of life has not improved over the last five years, and nine-of-ten feel safe or relative safe in their neighborhoods. There is a broad accord that the hub has made an impact on area residents. Finally, a number of participants express interest in other activities and programs.

3.4 Community Member Focus Group

A focus group consisting of four area residents active in school activities was conducted on February 25, 2014 to assess perspectives of life in area neighborhoods and to gauge the impact the community hub has had upon the community. This forum also sought participant input as to what needs to be done to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Data is organized under a school-based community development outlook that rests upon a participatory development approach funded by an asset-based and capacity building framework for community development that utilizes resident-led
initiatives and decision making that is context-based and effected from within. A number of concerns were addressed by the assembly including:

- Area Housing
- Sense of Community
- Community Participation
- Economic Development and Jobs
- Crime and Safety
- Community Outreach
- Transportation and Access
- Hub Impact on the Community

Data is displayed to bring in community members perceptions and objectives. The focus group is utilized to emphasize common perceptions and outlooks relative to this investigation. Community perceptions help to understand events and proceedings surrounding the community hub. Local experience and perceptions ground issues relating to the positive impact of the community hub, the extent of abandoned area housing, a lack of homeownership opportunities, an overall feeling of improvements in crime and safety, a diminished extent of the feeling of community in district neighborhoods, the lack of youth opportunities on Saturdays, the need for economic development, the deficiency of transportation and access to area marketplaces, and calls to further community outreach and organization. The following details some of the particulars:

Speaking to the quality of life in area neighborhoods overall the response is “pretty good.” After further discussion there is a consensus that this is founded on “typical city living” or “basic city living” and that some things need to be improved on. Abandoned homes and buildings top their concerns, and with the record-setting extreme winter one member said that the extent of pot holes in city streets is a major difficulty. In addition,
the sense of community of area neighborhoods depends on what neighborhood and what block.

One participant gave the example of retired people on Winthrop Street who own their homes and were unable to move anywhere else. She maintains they take pride in their houses because they are homeowners. Another participant states that some people “grew up on the street” and retain a sense of unity, but it depends on what block. Further it is stipulated that it is not the whole neighborhood, but certain parts of neighborhood blocks that hold a sense of community. Participants are in agreement that hub activities and organizations are in place to supplement the quality of life and there is an accord that area housing needs improvement.

The issue of crime and safety is met with a resounding “crime is prevalent everywhere.” One member spoke candidly about her family being without a car for three months. In years past her children were not permitted to venture out alone to catch the bus in the morning because of the extent of area crime. But without an automobile, the children had to go out in the early morning hours at Bancroft Street and Detroit Avenue to the bus stop. The respondent was at work and feared for her children’s safety, since this was the first time they had to navigate this track. “I was more nervous for them.” Further, she maintains her teenage daughter and preteen son were very uneasy prior to the event. Afterwards, the children reported their journey to tell her that some people said something to them while waiting for their bus. She maintains that they were “probably drunk or something” and since “nobody did anything to them or harassed them” it “speaks highly of what people might think of the neighborhood.” Furthermore, she asserts “one would think that a teenager out there when it’s dark at 5:30-5:40 in the
morning that it would be more dangerous.” Although it was a shock to the children to have to go out in the dark that early morning, “it speaks highly of the neighborhood.” Since that early morning she maintains it “feels okay now because we’re safe.”

Another participant offers her judgment that crime and safety has improved in the area. She maintains that the “new cameras help with that.” Her anecdote equates the cameras with less gun shots around her apartment. Thirty additional Skycop surveillance cameras have been added recently in phase two of this surveillance operation throughout Toledo (Skycop Cameras Toledo, 2014). When completed there will be a total of 150 cameras throughout the city. There are a number of cameras in close proximity to Robinson Elementary.

She continues to state that she hasn’t heard as many gunshots recently, but used to “hear gunshots all the time.” It is said that cameras “help to slow stuff down” and that over time she hasn’t heard the extent of gunshots as in the past. She goes on to declare that she used to hear gun fire 360º around her building and that she could “point out where someone has died.” Finally, she upholds that there are fewer gunshots because the “cameras make people scared to commit crimes.” Everyone agrees that the issue of crime and safety has shown a level of improvement.

Responding to the impact the community hub has upon the community, one focus group member believes it is a good addition to what TPS started by transforming Robinson into a K-8 school, and that the hub concept just came around. It is furthered detailed that prior to the community school transition use was limited to parents and voters. The group feels the hub is good for community and that it reaches out to the community and gives other people reason to come to the school. The conversion to the
community hub opens the school to the community. Another member attests the recent pageant held at the school reached into the broader community and various programs opens it up to area neighborhoods. Another contributor declares that there are a number of different programs beyond sports that encourage supplementary community involvement.

As to the group’s involvement with the school, they are all active in the PTO, the Parent Power Hour and other parent engagement activities. One member specifies that they are all very active and involved and that it is “like Cheers and everybody knows their names.” As to what types of organizations they like to see, a group member asserts that last school year the Boys and Girls Club was open Monday through Friday, but closed on Saturday. She would like to see the club open from Tuesday to Saturday to have somewhere for children to go to on Saturday to get a meal. Further she asserts, “I don’t know what the reason for the Boys and Girls Club to close.” Another member chimes in and states that the kids need somewhere to be active under adult supervision and not in the streets and getting into trouble.

In terms of what needs to be done to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods, one participant articulates that getting the word out that “stuff is offered” will improve residents’ quality of life. Still another declares that once people know that the hub is open to the community they would understand “that you’re not alone and that you’re not the only one that feels the same way about things in life.” Additionally, it is specified that knowing somebody from the outside cares, “like the mayor’s office” would help the hub and the community. “That goes a long way – to show he cares” and that “when people of a higher standing come, people are drawn to it.” As example, it is
pointed out: “Our superintendent (TPS) comes to a lot of stuff here. It draws the community here.” This is brought forward concerning outreach efforts in getting the word out about the community hub, “People see that someone of a higher standing, like the superintendent from a higher office draws in more people.”

Further it is proclaimed that “a lot are left out” and a lot of people don’t know about GED classes unless they have kids. Another member adds “a lot don’t know” about programs like Zumba. Another expresses that she “knew a couple of people that need GEDs” but were unaware of offerings at the school. Still another declares that others may like to attend computer classes and finally proclaims that “maybe awareness will grow.” They all feel compelled about getting the word out into the broader community as a means to improve the quality of life of area neighborhoods.

Vacant homes are another issue of contention addressed by the group concerning the quality of life. One participant states, “Jack Ford (former mayor) said we shouldn’t tear down houses” that can be utilized. The examples brought forth are homes on Albion Street that were raised were people could have lived in. Another specifies that abandoned houses need to torn down or serve as living quarters. This is qualified with an illustration of an elderly lady that kept her home beautiful but after she moved it was a matter of a couple of days that it was stripped clean. “Get someone in before they’re tore-up,” because in short order everything was taken including the kitchen cabinets. As a follow up, the Lucas County Land Bank’s Inventory Program that identifies abandoned and blighted homes is mentioned to the group. Although they are unaware of this program they show interest in finding out more.
When asked if there is anything they want to add or expand upon, one member is adamant in declaring income is a major factor. She goes on to say, “I believe we need to get this taken care of first before we can move on to the next step. Why is the house vacant? Why are so many houses abandoned?” These questions are linked to the lack of financial stability. “Either lost a job or made mistakes,” is equated with why people had to move out. “All these abandoned homes!” She goes on to state that she couldn’t find a stable, secure job to move into a home. It is contended that they needed financial stability so that residents could inhabit vacated homes that could be utilized. It is also asserted that recently constructed Habitat for Humanity homes on Oakwood Avenue were boarded up. “I would love to get into one of these houses, but I can’t get Section 8, can’t seem to find a stable secure job in order to move into one of these houses.” Limited economic opportunities are associated with the vast extent of uninhabited dwellings.

The theme of economic development is expanded upon by another member who maintains that at one time there used to be factories at end of the street where one could walk to work and go home for lunch. “So many things have moved out of the neighborhood so it’s hard to have something to hold on to. Say we have this and that’s what can keep our neighborhood viable.” Factories and places of employment embedded within neighborhoods were at one time the heart of lively viable communities. They were not simply a place in which to work, they functioned at the center of social life.

She goes on to say that at one time this kept neighborhoods sustainable but everything has moved out of the area. For instance, the new Save-a-Lot in Swayne Field Shopping Center use to be a Kroger Supermarket and that at one time there were businesses all along there. Kroger is a large union-based company and provided an extent of higher
wage jobs. She also asserts, “I definitely understand in order for business to come they have to see that there’s people there that’s educated and can do the jobs. There has to be a commitment from people that can make the change, like organizations that can make the change for the people in the neighborhood to be able to commit as well. You can’t pull up your bootstraps if don’t have any straps in it.” Education, community organization, and jobs are needed to keep area neighborhoods vibrant.

Transportation and access to shopping is also something lacking according to the focus group. For instance, it is mentioned that if someone wanted to buy in bulk at Sam’s Club they would be unable without an automobile. “Who can get there? There’s nothing close!” It is maintained that Costco and Westgate Shopping Center are closest, but access is limited without an automobile. Shopping at the Glendale Shopping Center is also offered with the caveat of its distance from the neighborhood. “Bus stop only goes so far” and it takes “too much time.” Further it is stated, “You have to walk too far. There’s nothing here.” Overall it is agreed that there is a lack of adequate transportation and access to retail shopping. It is further stipulated that things were getting better with the new Dollar General and Rite Aid which recently opened in the area, and that they are closer, and it is convenient to pick up prescriptions. Another member mentions the Family Dollar store, but that they needed bigger stores for people to work. The lack of jobs is equated with the lack of economic vibrancy in the community.

In summary, abandoned homes and buildings tops the focus group concerns. They also indicate that the sense of community is somewhat constrained, but has been enhanced by the recent advent of the Robinson Community Hub. On the whole, the gathering maintains there is a relative feeling of safety and that there has been a recent
improvement in area crime. Participants feel that the hub impact is positive, but that outreach has been limited. They also note a void in programming for children on Saturdays.

To improve the quality of life they assert that further outreach is needed, and the magnitude of vacant homes should be addressed. The assembly adds that limited economic opportunities led to the vast extent of uninhabited homes in the area, and that economic development flanked with education and further organization could help to improve this situation. Finally, it is declared that area transportation and local shopping is limited. Amenities outside the immediate area are hard to navigate and supplementary local marketplaces are needed to provide ease of access and employment opportunities.
Chapter 4

Discussion

For over 100 years neighborhood-based initiatives have been enacted as a means to alleviate conditions associated with spatially concentrated poverty. Although numerous sociospatial strategies have been enacted over time, little progress has been achieved. As problems became increasingly entrenched, President Johnson declared the War on Poverty 50 years ago, and yet we still see fifteen percent of Americans living in poverty, and more than one out of five of our nation’s children experiencing poverty on a daily basis (Reich, 2014). Worse yet, we are the only rich nation in the world that has lower per-pupil expenditures in poor school districts than we have in wealthy school districts (ibid). An African Proverb upholds “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” By the same token, “If the school does not assume the responsibility for bringing up children, how shall the work be done?”

It is not so much a question of whether place-based interventions make sense; it is more a discussion about the civic will and social priorities to which one ascribes to. Comprehensive initiatives vary to a considerable degree in structure and strategy, but address similar aspects of community life. Common elements include advancing economic opportunities along with the physical development of infrastructure, including
housing, transportation, public amenities and services. Safety and security, in addition to well-functioning institutions and services, including schools and social and health services are also among the essentials. Notwithstanding past mistakes, neighborhood-based initiatives can be utilized as a vehicle for renewing a sense of community and basis for organizing.

Solutions to concentrated extreme poverty and inequity have routinely involved a place-based lens for interventions that address poverty’s complex and entrenched problems. Nonetheless, the long history of neighborhood-based initiatives characteristically identified needs from a point of view outside the circumstances of poverty. On the whole, neighborhood-based initiatives were marked by the exclusionary ethos of formulating schemes outside the bounds of experience. Outsiders had faith in the knowledge that they knew best. This level of detached contemplation delivered top-down engagement strategies without the benefit of the experience of those living in the throes of poverty.

Contemporary philosophy and methods have made great strides in addressing the shortcomings of the past through an inclusionary philosophy opening to comprehensive choice-based neighborhood revitalization strategies. Correspondingly, vigorous neighborhood revitalization and community capacity is not sustainable when residents are marginalized and rendered voiceless. Empowering residents opens to social networks which can lead to economic viability and physical infrastructure improvements. This restructuring gives rise to organic solutions that directly affects communities as opposed to the rendition of top-down decision making.
Conventional wisdom decrees school reform is to be championed by educators, and community capacity building and neighborhood revitalization are the responsibility of civic leaders and real estate developers. This division detaches interconnecting elements. This is even more critical today in light of the recent intensification of socioeconomic inequalities. In the wake of the recent recession many cities show increasingly high rates of concentrated poverty. Moreover, many of the older, northern, Rust Belt cities, where community development originated, display some of the highest poverty rates and highest levels of disinvestment in the nation (Berube, 2012). It is time to move beyond convention and erase the boundaries between school and neighborhood improvement.

Past efforts to revitalize inner-city communities often fell short because they provided direct services to individuals without attending to improving the economic vitality of the community (Adler, 1997). Continuing to focus all efforts at the symptoms of poverty misses the mark. What is needed is a new focus that attends to both social and economic problems. This suggests that community school educators should take an active role in improving the social and economic base of communities as a means of addressing the root cause of poverty and barriers to learning. Neighborhood revitalization may depend less on the model put in place as opposed to developing the capacity of neighborhood residents and institutions to define and affect responses to local needs. “Unless local capacity is strong, programs of social services, housing, crime reduction, etc. will achieve only a fraction of their potential” (Kubisch, 1996). Today there is significantly sufficient knowledge concerning the value of community participation, capacity building and collaboration, and past outlooks involving coordination and resident participation have
been joined in concert with concepts of social capital, asset-based planning, and public-private partnerships (Mossberger, 2010).

It is not as if the same old solutions have simply been repackaged over time, current neighborhood initiatives represent more than a recycling of old ideas. School-centered community revitalization incorporates lessons learned along the course of past endeavors. The core elements address school improvement, housing, high-quality childcare and early childhood development programs, affordable health services, and workforce and economic development programs. This positions schools as central to community redevelopment initiatives. This also recognizes that good schools are an essential ingredient for the prosperity of neighborhoods over the long run. School-centered community revitalization upholds that “a neighborhood revitalization strategy that includes a school improvement component will be more successful and more sustainable than a strategy that only focuses on the neighborhood” (Chung, 2002). Improving academic performance is an important structure for leveraging and supporting neighborhood investments and assets. Similarly, the community school strategy for organizing resources transforms schools into hubs that benefit students, families, and the community.

Community schools are a set of placed-based strategies that organize resources in a common location with the purpose of building social capital to strengthen the community’s ability to resolve difficulties. The community schools sponsor is the keeper of the vision for school and community improvements. One of the sponsor’s principle objectives is to build the capacity of community members to become active participants. This positions schools central to civic life and provides a place for community members
to come together to discuss common interests and address issues of concern.

Encouraging local collaboration leads to community capacity building to bring in educators, city planners, and real estate developers for broader neighborhood initiatives. The recent emergence of schools-as-community-centers has the pronounced propensity to insight broader revitalization.

Schools are intimately linked with communities as place-base institutions and are a part of neighborhoods’ physical fabric. Schools that are responsive to the neighborhood in which they are situated have more of a tendency to improve academic achievement and build community capacity. Besides, schools have the responsibility to respond to their community’s needs and requests. Good schools and good neighborhoods go together, and when schools are oriented to the community they encourage residents to assume responsibility and ownership for the health and welfare of their communities.

Characteristically, schools reflect and mirror the socioeconomic landscape of neighborhoods. They also have a profound impact on the social, economic, and physical character of neighborhoods, and the quality of a neighborhood school correlates with the quality of the neighborhood on a number of levels.

The mission of schools is to give pupils educational foundations that lead to the ability to live a successful life. This mission is often frustrated in inner-city neighborhoods, and studies show that family, school, and neighborhoods have a strong influence on student performance. Dewey maintained that schools ought to be a “means for bringing people and their ideas and beliefs together,” but education has become disconnected from the daily concerns of life (Dewey, 1902). Schools should not operate
at a level of detachment to the communities in which they are situated. Schools ought to be more than just a silo of in-house academics.

The Dewey Principle maintains that active learning leads students to be actively involved in solving complex neighborhood and societal issues (Taylor and McGlynn, 2009). The goal is to create opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to make neighborhoods a better place to live. Moreover, the connection of classroom lessons to the community revolves on the ability to work with neighbors and stakeholders to build a better community and is based on a pedagogical model that develops critical thinking leading to authentic learning (ibid). Strengthening school-community links opens to improved educational performance and community initiatives. Project-based or service learning in neighborhoods “serves as a laboratory for studying the environment, history, and sociology” and provides the opportunity to acquire collaboration skills (Dryfoos, 2005).

It is not as if communities are simply locales that can be employed to educate, for they serve as primary educators offering opportunities for students to develop their fullest potential (Mathews, 2013). Project-based learning builds relationships that generate interaction between schools and local communities, and enhance the sense of community. By utilizing real world examples drawn from the community, schools can strengthen their curriculum through a format of integrated learning. Community context adds to educational outcomes and involves students in the community. This builds knowledge and confidence, and provides a basis for active citizenship. Moreover, students that have a strong sense of community are more likely to be academically motivated and are less
likely to be involved with a number of at-risk activities including drug use and violence (Schaps, 2003).

The Strengthening Links between Schools and Communities Program calls for up to twenty percent of curriculum to be based on community contact (Cavaye, 2013). This incorporates broader community issues into school-life and the curriculum. One approach utilizes guest teachers from the community to come into the classroom to impart their place-based knowledge. Another avenue involves students in form of a community clean-a-thon where students eliminate debris and analyze patterns of dumping and litter with GIS mapping geocoded for further analysis. This gets students out of the classroom and into the community while imparting valuable skills. A number of evaluations find public engagement activities and efforts to extend service-learning opportunities and community problem solving brings new energy to communities (Berg et al., 2006). Place-based curriculum links placed-based problem solving and active community engagement.

Community engagement and empowerment are the essential elements of any self-sustaining community. Likewise, participation by marginalized populations has the propensity to transform urban environments and establishes critical connections between power and spatiality (Torre, 1996). This builds on community strengths and assets by engaging and empowering choice-based solutions to surface. Equally, all stakeholders must be included to assess community needs and manage community assets. This engagement strategy for development often revolves around a resource collaborative and advisory council as a forum for service providers, community leaders, and area residents (Khadduri et al., 2007). Participatory development ensures broad and diverse
involvement to devise and implement approaches to community improvement, and cultivates collective ownership and a connected wisdom to address challenges.

The focal points of community in place-based interventions are ideal sites for collaboration. Community schools are deep-rooted focal points of communities and provide community-oriented space. They are places to meet, form trust, and establish associations and homegrown neighborhood organizations. This opens a political dimension, which has a higher probability to forward sustainable neighborhood-based initiatives. A sociospatial strategy in which networks and relationships are woven is a way to produce exchange and use of information to enhance resources. By responding to the recommendations of residents, a common community identity can be rooted in place and residents are empowered to determine neighborhood-based initiatives.

The organic growth of bottom-up initiatives develops a sturdier community-backed structure for development projects and programs. Bringing this dimension to the forefront through a participatory approach does not necessarily abate the ‘top’, but rather the role of the ‘top’ is attuned to playing a supporting role. An inclusive approach forms open-ended coalitions aimed specifically at addressing both individual and collective sources of marginalization and inequality around a shared spatial consciousness (Soja, 2000). This line of attack upholds a bottom-up or ‘trickle up design’, which involves extensive discussions, conversations, and decision-making with the community while capitalizing on indigenous expertise and increasing social cohesion and social capital (Pagon, 2006). Utilizing a bottom-up approach ensures the local area plan is created and owned by the community. This approach has a higher probability of continued involvement as opposed to the rendition of top-down detached contemplations.
Community reflection is used to articulate communal hopes and helps to negotiate external stakeholders to form strategic partnerships oriented towards community transformation. Social organization can be defined as the extent of local friendship ties, the degree of social cohesion, and the level of resident participation (Khadduri et al., 2007). It is the extent to which residents maintain social control of their neighborhood and realize common goals. A community’s social assets can better the “health, safety, education, economic well-being, political participation, and quality of life of residents in poor communities” (Warren et al., 2001). Social capital fosters a rich social fabric in addition to a strong community voice (Brown, 1996) and can be cultivated through neighborhood networks (Putnam, 1995). The resource stock of social capital can be thought of as the extent of neighborhood organizations and their linkages with other organizations (Morenoff et al., 2001). This creates community vibrancy with a solid base of community resources and opens to economic stability. “In the most ideal scenario, public process participants become the champions of the urban change through the long road of planning, the struggles of implementation, and the daunting challenge of ongoing governance” (Ford et al., 2013).

Place-based problem solving can come to fruition with a school-centered community development approach. This model complements the community school reform at Robinson Elementary. It is a matter of engaging and empowering area residents to take control of their neighborhoods and their future. The Robinson Community Hub can serve as an anchor for broader community development. Robinson has the propensity to catalyze the capacity for community regeneration through a school-centered community development approach that supports wide-ranging choice-based strategies.
As the Robinson Community School moves forward, there are a number of approaches that can continue a course of strong academic achievement and community-led initiatives. While no easy answers to these issues exist, the Robinson Community Hub can serve as a foundation for community decision making. This requires all actors to move beyond traditional roles. It also requires the ability to speak the language of school reform as well as the language of community development. Although there are a number of paths to open to district improvements, flexibility must supplant any rigidity which may arise in development formulations. Proposals and tactics should remain malleable as new needs and outlooks come into view. The hub leadership should remain receptive to evolving needs and outlooks to create a community of opportunity.

So, how does the Robinson Community School impact the district? Overwhelmingly, it positively impacts the district. This is a change from the extent of inertia that was previously in place. What is the extent of this impact? While it there is some degree of coverage, outreach efforts can be broadened. The community school significantly increases community involvement. Overall an advance on participation is demonstrated, but a collaborative framework with Robinson and a number of area stakeholders can provide a sturdier platform. To what degree does this empower the community? Informal discussions and information gathering techniques with area neighborhood-based organizations reveal perceptions of have not having a voice in collaboration with Robinson to address community concerns. There is a long road ahead to reach the needed level of empowerment to advance comprehensive neighborhood-based initiatives. Further organization is needed to advance choice-based resolutions. Stakeholders must be enabled to take the reins to drive community solutions.
And finally, what are the prospects of utilizing the community hub to affect broader neighborhood-based initiatives? There are a number of opportunities to implement this standard, which include: broader outreach and engagement, furthering organizing and empowerment, community-linked curriculums, a community development organizer, a community development committee, improving the housing stock and advancing homeownership opportunities, and increasing the economic vitality of the district. The following sections cast light on corridors to utilize the Robinson Community Hub as a catalyst to drive broader area developments.
Chapter 5

Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Overview

Findings demonstrate community narratives of promise and challenge. Narratives impart place-based experience and outlooks. Both survey and focus group data capture similar renditions. Overall perception on crime and safety consents to recent improvements or the feeling of relative safety. Seemingly this is upheld as a means of downplaying any fear in the community associated with crime. A positive chronicle of community hub impact is also expressed. Positive community narratives open a rich fabric of potential. Counter accounts are also important to illustrate community life in district neighborhoods, and to construct events and proceedings at the Robinson Community Hub.

A consensus on the negative issues associated with the extent of abandoned houses and lack of homeownership opportunities is at the forefront of the findings of the community member focus group. Correspondingly, survey data shows approximately three-quarters of participants consider overall area housing to be poor or average, and that the quality of life in district neighborhoods has not improved over the course of the last
five years. Two-thirds perceive the quality of life in area neighborhoods to be poor or average. Focus group concerns also register an outlook of needed jobs and limited access to area marketplaces and restricted transportation. A diminished extent of the feeling of community in district neighborhoods and a need for economic development is also indicated. The myth of rugged individualism, where one can pull oneself up is undergirded by the notion of a level playing field. Calls to further community outreach and organization also goes out as a means of improving the quality of life in area neighborhoods. Further, there is an appeal to area leadership to help to advance a platform for community renewal. Both survey and focus group chronicles are explicit in calling out interest in other programs and activities, and informing on the absence of youth programming on Saturdays. Education, community organization and jobs are needed to keep area neighborhoods vibrant.

While there are no easy answers to resolve issues related to the spatial concentration of poverty, there are a number of outlooks that can significantly challenge the status quo. A place-specific movement can be achieved by responding to community priorities and opportunities to produce concrete and visible results that can serve as a basis for long-term change. This involves expanding networks and developing new constituencies, capacities, and leaders. By building the organizational infrastructure of the community and brokering its needs, untapped resources and opportunities can surface to contribute to the overall momentum of initiatives and build a foundation for sustainable transformation. It is possible and is within the community’s control to open a systemic process of urban planning and neighborhood renewal.
Many area neighborhoods are in vulnerable states and are undergoing deteriorating physical conditions and falling property values. The impacts on neighborhood quality and livability are also evident and characterized by abandoned homes, waning standards of maintenance, and diminishing homeownership rates. Yet, area neighborhoods can become places with revitalized commercial corridors, affordable housing, jobs for the unemployed and underemployed, and activities to drive additional investments increasing economic opportunity. Transforming neighborhoods into places where residents communicate and socialize results in a feeling of pride unleashing positive narratives centered on excellent housing choices, transportation access, quality public services, local shopping, opportunities for economic investment, and safe environments for children and families. Such neighborhoods provide reasons for existing residents to remain and can attract new residents. The following recommendations are framed to open this course of action.

5.2 Community Outreach and Engagement

There has been a marked increase in community involvement at Robinson Elementary. At an informal information gathering meeting with Angeline Lee, she stated that in the recent past twelve parents representing 300 students turned up to attend a parent-teacher conference at Robinson Elementary School (Lee, 2013). Upon transitioning to a community hub she said there were “lines out the door.” This increase is connected with the community resources the community school offers. Community building by way of recruiting area residents to play an active role in solving local problems has changed the previous course.
Seventy-five percent of survey respondents report that the community hub has impacted them and/or their family. Notwithstanding gains made and a broad upswing in community participation, data reveals some community members to be left out. To sustain authentic community engagement all stakeholders must be included to assess community needs and manage community assets. This ought to include other area neighborhood-based organizations that may not have a collaborative platform with the community hub at present. There appears to be a level of disconnectedness that needs to be addressed.

The Children’s Aid Society avows, “The community school movement puts schools in the center of civic life and helps provide a place for community members to come together and address issues of concern.” This opens a course for schools and the community to be engaged in problem solving. Community schools are deep-rooted focal points of communities and focuses on increasing resident involvement. One of the sponsor’s main objectives is to build the capacity of community members to become active community participants. Further outreach efforts will be able to deepen the reach into the community.

“a lot are left out...a lot don't know...maybe awareness will grow”

− Community Member Focus Group

In an increasingly digital era traditional forms of outreach such as public meetings may fall short of providing diverse support for the long-term buy-in of planning and design strategies. Common outreach mechanisms such as community task forces,
workshops and public meetings are limited in their reach and leave vast amounts of citizens without a voice to address matters which affect them directly. To sustain authentic community engagement one must move beyond convention. Pursuing novel methods of engagement can leverage more of a sustained interest and provide a path opening to invested outcomes. Contemporary approaches turn drab informational sessions into fun, entertaining community events that create a venue for celebration, which reinvigorates the planning process.

On-the-ground tactics move the conversation from conference rooms to places of liveliness and congregation already existing within the community. By going to where the people are, the process engages people on their own turf. Outreach efforts can be supplemented by going to community gatherings and events. This approach helps to dispel traditional hierarchies and enables an open dialogue. In addition, online outreach forums utilize websites, blogs, and social media can engage a broader audience. These mediums tap into existing online social networks to bring together many users including the younger demographic to engage on their own terms and timeframe.

Commonly understood forms of visual and verbal language like comic books, guidebooks, and newsletters also help to illuminate planning narratives and extend engagement. To capture wide input storytelling activities, neighborhood gatherings, and community-wide forums can be utilized in addition to newsletters to connect with area residents and organizations. Newsletters should be produced by community members. Utilizing hub computers can facilitate this activity. The broader community can incorporate information into visualizing alternatives. By identifying common values, themes can be incorporated into a neighborhood development plan and into all future
planning and development decisions. By engaging the community and bringing in new voices, the mission of identifying and describing what is most essential can be brought to light.

During the community member focus group on February 25, 2014 the topic of blighted homes was frequently brought to light. While attending the Hub Director’s meeting on December 5, 2013 at Scott High School, the current work of the Lucas County Land Bank of removing or redeveloping abandoned homes was discussed. This program empowers community residents to identify blight in their own neighborhoods through an inventory process and authorizes the community to decide what the adapted reuse of properties will be. This information was not conveyed to the community as discovered by the community member focus group. Although this program is slated for the later spring months this year, circulating this information can provide a positive narrative and spur further community involvement. Conveying information is critical to engaging community members. It also provides a degree of hope and can provide a feeling of community control.

The community sponsor and their agents must consistently speak the language of school reform and community development. Engagement strategies for choice-based community development initiatives should revolve around a resource collaborative and advisory council of service providers, residents, business and civic leaders, educators and municipal officials to guide the process. This will assure that the Robinson Community Hub is not isolated from other assemblies that offer some semblance of social structure. Engagement activities authorize local residents to take control of community renewal.
5.3 Community Organizing and Empowerment

Every neighborhood has the leaders it needs to solve community challenges. Leaders can be brought to the surface by increasing resident involvement in community planning activities. This can lead to neighborhood goal setting that involves the community’s physical, social, and economic well-being. Increased parental and communal involvement, along with regular communication and coordination between the school and key neighborhood institutions can open a path of further empowerment. Community building and interpersonal activities can provide residents with new tools of change and enable community members to take the lead in community initiatives. Community building and interpersonal activities provide residents with new tools to modify circumstances facing the community.

This results in emerging self-confidence and self-efficacy to face and solve bigger issues. A process of neighborhood goal setting that involves the community’s physical, social, and economic well-being provides a platform for place-based problem solving. This also helps to weave positive community narratives that open a rich fabric to realize the community’s potential. Together these elements serve as a strong foundation upon which the community can build an asset-based, internally-focused, and relationship-driven focus for community development. By responding to recommendations of area residents, a common community identity can be rooted in place, and community members will be better suited to determine the hopes for their community.

Likewise, creating vibrant neighborhoods through the process of empowerment grants community members a strong voice in community problem solving and delivers a sense
of ownership to the process. Community reflection is used to articulate communal hopes and helps to negotiate external stakeholders to form strategic partnerships oriented towards community transformation. By increasing community involvement, outreach and networking, as well as capacity building, communities can transition outlooks from needs to assets and from services to empowerment (Diers, 2010). Empowering residents to take a stronger leadership role in community development facilitates residents’ sustained ownership of the community change process, and can significantly change how developers and social institutions work with resident leadership in supporting and enabling them to take the lead in community revitalization.

Community organizing committees composed of residents can open community development activities to be brought forward from relationships that politically enable residents. This advance centers on being facilitated through the development of neighborhood associations that act in accord and encourage unobstructed empowerment. This is an essential element for any self-sustaining community and can transform urban environments by engaging and empowering choice-based solutions to arise. Dynamic neighborhood revitalization and community capacity building is sustained by granting a voice to residents and a capacity building framework for community development. This should be by way of resident-led initiatives and decision making that is context-based and affected from within.

Empowering citizens facilitates social networks to form an open a course of economic viability and physical improvements. Excluding the community voice from decision making prohibits broad and diverse participation and precludes choice-based solutions to surface. For example, while attending an informal informational meeting with the hub
director he revealed the plan for a new outdoor classroom. The initial response is to ask if students or the community had a hand in the design process. They had not. Participatory development empowers the general public and it is never too soon to begin the process. As cited earlier, the Hester Street Collaborative emboldened young participants by involving them early on in the planning process to help design and build their school’s outdoor classroom. Their involvement was not only an opportunity to learn, but consented to their creativity to directly improve their neighborhood. This represents a missed opportunity to utilize the community hub as a catalyst to drive broader community development by excluding community members to employ their imaginations and creativeness.

“I don’t know what the reason for the Boys and Girls Club to close.”

− Community Member Focus Group

This research also shows the concern of not having youth-oriented programming on Saturdays. According to the “Schools as Community Hubs Lead Partner Narrative Report” dated July 25, 2013 and submitted to the University of Toledo, College of Health and Human Science, parents upheld the need for a program on Saturdays to replace the absence of Boys and Girls Club. Previously this organization was open from Tuesday through Saturday but altered their hours of operation to Monday through Friday. The report states that after parents brought this to the attention of the hub leadership it led to the establishment of the Satur-DAY Camp program slated to be open on Saturdays beginning in August of 2013. Further, it specifies that this was a major success which
empowers parents by recognizing the need they recognized. Granting that the Saturday Camp program may have come to fruition in the past, its absence runs in the opposite direction of empowerment.

This current gap in programming is addressed in primary data secured through the community member focus group and the community member survey. Empowerment was abated by removing a program that addresses community concerns. This dissuades and inhibits enablement. A possible solution is to have the YMCA/JCC conduct a Saturday program. Their current involvement with the Leverette Community Hub provides school-age care and evening meals. Community empowerment and participation are the essential elements of any self-sustaining community.

“There has to be a commitment from people that can make the change, like organizations that can make the change for the people in the neighborhood to be able to commit as well.”

− Community Member Focus Group

Granting further empowerment to the community also involves wide-ranging networking with area organizations to bring active community-based associations into the fold. Although hub information collected preserves that all community stakeholders are to be engaged in consequential, stable positions, partnership development, and serve under the standard of shared leadership, there are a number of district organizations that may not have a platform to provide their experience and suggestions in collaboration with Robinson. To create the critical mass necessary to underpin responsive political action
area organizations should be brought together to ensure local organizing efforts are linked to the larger political constituency. A number of organizations could be united to advance a comprehensive community development platform. Robinson can serve as an anchor of community by bringing together the range of neighborhood associations to form a united front for district improvements.

A number of neighborhood-based organizations were identified during this investigation. Many of these establishments are deeply rooted in the district and are active in advancing area improvements. Some expressed the view of have not having a voice in association with Robinson to address community concerns. The resource stock of social capital is the extent of neighborhood organizations and their linkages with other organizations. The Robinson Community Hub is a focal point of community and should support wide-ranging organizing. The goal is to encourage local collaboration. Further outreach efforts should identify supplementary assemblies. The following is a list of concerns encountered over the course of this research:

- Padua Center
- Elks Lodge 626
- Mott Branch Library
- Frederick Douglass Center
- Toledo NAACP
- St. Martin de Porres
- Soul City Boxing and Wrestling Gym
- London Square Area Neighborhood Club

Community schools are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources, and need to connect multiple sectors and build local capacity as a means of constructing comprehensive approaches. Advancing organizational collaborations will aid in building a framework of collective capacity for social action.
Community building can surface by way of recruiting the community at large to play an active role in solving local problems and community committees composed of community organizations acting in accord. Community schools are the potential hub and nerve center of neighborhood and cannot isolate themselves from other assemblies that provide a semblance of social structure and support. Empowerment presents a platform on which a cohesive advance for community problem solving can be supported.

5.4 Community-Linked Curriculums

A curriculum based upon the needs of the community should be at the forefront of Robinson’s educational outlook. There are a number of avenues to advance education in the community. The goal is to expand learning opportunities and create the occasions for students and the community to apply their knowledge and skills to make neighborhoods a better place to live. Robinson’s focus on academic achievement is commendable and should be continued and further developed.

The garden project at Robinson is an example of the school-community connection. As part of the school's "Project Based Learning Mondays," this after-school program focuses on hands-on science lessons. Children learn the way in which worms affect soil fertility and genetics from incorporating hybrid plants. This captures children’s imaginations and connects a level of fascination of how small seeds lead to food. This program frames learning as fun and reaches out into area neighborhoods. This strengthens the curriculum through a format of integrated learning.

A pedagogical model that develops critical thinking can strengthen school-community links to improve educational performance and community revitalization.
This avenue furthers the linkage between Robinson and the community. The Dewey Principle maintains that active learning opens students to be actively immersed in resolving multifaceted neighborhood and societal issues. Dewey also maintained that public schools are the best vehicles for problem-solving. This stance creates opportunities for the community to apply its knowledge and skills to make district neighborhoods better places to live.

“I definitely understand in order for business to come they have to see that there’s people there that’s educated and can do the jobs.”

— Community Member Focus Group

This outlook centers on the ability to work with neighbors and stakeholders to build a better community. Strengthening school-community links improves educational performance and builds relationships that generate interaction between schools and communities to enhance a sense of community to open broader restoration efforts. Community context adds to educational outcomes and involves students in the community. This builds community knowledge and confidence, gets students out of the classroom and into the community while imparting valuable skills, and provides a basis for active citizenship. Students that have a strong sense of community are more likely to be academically motivated, and extended service-learning opportunities advances community problem solving, which brings new energy to communities to inspire choice-based solutions.
School-to-work programs, job training and workshops connect classroom lessons to the community. Programs can be offered to enhance skills, promote social interaction, build community engagement, and provide physical activity. Leadership training and workforce development, in addition to capacity building for community-based organizations, and increasing resident involvement in community planning activities also opens to choice-based initiative. Programs should offer training for resume building, filling out job applications, and interview techniques. Furthermore, entrepreneurial classes, workforce development, computer labs and other workshops add to the mix. A parent academy should also be offered in conjunction with regular summer programming.

Another corridor is to provide high-quality childcare and early childhood development programs along with parenting and early childcare education programs that provide childhood education and engage preschool parents through parental training opportunities. This should be a home-based early childhood education and parenting education programs that engages preschool parents in the early stage of preschool with activities. This also makes it more likely for parents to stay involved with their children’s education. High-quality childcare also affords parents the opportunity to partake in job-training or entrepreneurial classes.

The community hub should also establish enduring relationships with multiple higher educational institutions and various departments to foster collaborations and cooperative missions. For instance, the University of Toledo’s Department of Geography and Planning can be utilized for a long-term community asset mapping agenda that reaches out into the community to enlist participation. Asset-based community development utilizes the assets, capacities and abilities within communities and embraces a strong
neighborhood-rooted tradition through community organizing and neighborhood planning. Additionally, utilizing guest teachers from the community to impart their place-based knowledge spurs curriculum and community involvement. This obscures divisions that may exist between Robinson Elementary and the district it serves. Above and beyond, leadership training and development dockets are considered necessary to advance community-led agendas.

5.5 Community Development Organizer

A full-time member of staff that speaks the language of community development can help to bring together disjointed voices. An organizer can utilize the recent development of an active community hub to advance neighborhood-based initiatives. The organizer can also expand and progress purposeful relationships with supplementary organizations and establishments. It is vital the Robinson Community Hub continue to build partnerships with organizations to secure additional capital, resources, and expertise necessary to open paths of local development.

As previously noted, the Revere Elementary School in Chicago hired a full-time community organizer to help bring the community’s voices together, in addition to a social worker, resource coordinator and an Alumni Association coordinator. The community development organizer could conceivably be utilized for all area hubs. This recommendation comes into view as critical and imperative to advance comprehensive initiatives. Short of the capital outlay required to employ a permanent staff member, an internship could be brokered through a number of higher education institutions. For example, the University Of Toledo Department Of Political Science and Public
Administration or the College of Business and Innovation could be utilized to retain an intern on a short term basis to investigate and bridge opportunities to propel broader relationships and advance community-level development. This path comes as a secondary way forward.

Capacity building for community-based organizations increases resident involvement in community planning activities to provide effective strategies for reviving and mobilizing resources already present. This connects individuals through associations and builds long lasting relationships to serve as incubators to cultivate community leadership. Building an asset-based, internally-focused, and relationship-driven focus for community development mobilizes and builds capacity within the community and can connect external resources. Employing a community development organizer can unite divided fronts and advance relationships with organizations including:

- Toledo CDC
- Lucas County
- City of Toledo
- Development Practitioners
- Local Businesses
- Corporate Sponsors
- Foundations and Nonprofits
- Neighborhood-Based Organizations

The Children’s Aid Society model is formed from the foundation of intense engagement with parents and the community. Encouraging local collaboration can create a united front for community building by way of recruiting community members and organizations to play an active role in solving local problems. Coordinating area organizations can facilitate relationships and capture multiple funding streams. Through collaboration and integration, leadership training and technical assistance to residents,
and the facilitation of community forums that connect residents with existing
neighborhood organizations, endeavors can be placed into a broader comprehensive
community development framework.

The organizer can also close gaps that may exist with a variety of entities. For one,
despite perceptions of improving crime and safety conditions, an informal discussion
with a member of a local neighborhood-based organization revealed a prior relationship
with the Toledo Police Department was structured with a direct path for area concerns to
be channeled to a specific officer stationed at the former Swayne Field Center police
substation. This was a direct community contact. This direct link with area
neighborhoods was abandoned to forces of centralization with further encumbrances of
bureaucracy. Perhaps this direct link can be reestablished.

“What’s a Robinson Community Hub?”

− Department of Neighborhoods

There also appears to be a gulf between the community hubs and the City of Toledo
that may be able to be bridged. Seeking first-hand information, the City of Toledo
Department of Neighborhoods appeared as an appropriate route to inquire about
opportunities available to advance Robinson district neighborhoods. On the morning of
March 25, 2014, I spoke briefly with the director. After explaining this research he
asked: “What’s a Robinson Community Hub?” Upon further explanation, he maintained
that he has someone waiting for him and asked for an email to schedule a later
appointment. Granted he is a political appointee new to the scene following the
installation of a new mayor earlier this year, community hubs are a significant factor affecting Toledo neighborhoods.

By the same token, after transcribing concerns and suggestions from the community member focus group, an email was penned to the mayor regarding the comment that knowing somebody from the outside cares, “like the mayor’s office” would help the hub and the community. This email went without reply. Subsequent outreach efforts to gain first-hand information from numerous governmental bureaus and other organizations yielded similar results. Bureaucratic inertia seems to account for this to some degree. This refers to a position in which bureaucratic principles and operations of an institution become so complex and time-consuming that it prevents the efficient operation of core activities. A community development organizer can help to fill in the gaps.

5.6 Community Development Committee

Data reveals seventy-five percent of area residents perceive the physical environment in their neighborhoods as poor or average. Similarly, two-thirds sense the quality of life in their neighborhoods as poor or average. Further, three-of-four maintain the neighborhood quality of life has not improved over the last five years. A community development committee group should be assembled in a timely manner with hub and resident leadership to address issues concerning advancing community-led neighborhood-based initiatives.

This should be assembled as soon as practical as a means of determining appropriate measures to encourage and provoke inclusive neighborhood redevelopment approaches. Committee members ought to address findings and recommendation herein, and
questions formulated for the hub committee focus group may utilized as a point of commencement (see appendix C). It is recommended that further consideration be given to other neighborhood-based organizations to be a part of this forum to give voice to their suggestions and concerns.

When community members are empowered they can realize and articulate long-term strategies for community revitalization and development. Community members can recommend an assortment of partnerships, strategies, and collaborative efforts create an environment of working with the community rather than on the community. This outlook can identify needs and formulate agendas to develop and implement community revitalization. This establishes an asset-centered relationship to assess community needs and manage community assets with the goal of petitioning neighborhood improvements.

School and community improvements can be achieved with existing residents through an enhanced asset-based tactic that mobilizes and builds capacity, recommends new kinds of partnerships, strategies, and collaborative efforts that lead to a mutual understanding of working with the community rather than on the community. This outlook identifies needs and formulates agendas to develop and implement community initiatives. This can serve as a foundation upon which the community can build an asset-based, internally-focused, and relationship-driven focus for community development. A community development committee of area residents, neighborhood-based organizations, church leaders, redevelopment investors, and school and hub personnel can act as a liaison for broader development.
5.7 District Housing and Homeownership

Area housing, the extent of abandoned area housing, and a lack of homeownership opportunities were recurring themes with the community member focus group. The community member survey also illustrates that nearly three-quarters of respondents perceive the overall condition of area housing as poor or average. Additionally, three-out-of-four participants indicated that the quality of life in their neighborhoods has not improved over the last five years. Further, results display that 77.14% of residents rent their homes. While investments in educational services for at risk children may yield some benefits, they should be matched with complementary investments in housing and community development. Non-academic barriers to learning include the concentration of poverty and housing instability.

“Why is the house vacant? Why are so many houses abandoned?”

− Community Member Focus Group

Housing counseling and resident leadership training can be employed to reduce student mobility. Underutilized land or property can be slated for adaptive reuse, and housing rehabilitation and homeownership programs can draw on available housing subsidies programs such as, down payment assistance, rent vouchers, and home improvement assistance. The Lucas County Land Bank’s Inventory Program can facilitate significant movement along this direction. Additionally, their Side Lot and Residential Rehab Programs can aid in improving the quality of life in area neighborhoods (Lucas County Land Bank, 2014).
Another avenue along this corridor is to advance a partnership with the Toledo Community Development Corporation (Toledo CDC). According to their 2012-2015 Strategic Plan: “Toledo CDC is highly collaborative, aligning with nonprofits, governmental agencies and private investors, while insuring residents remain at the center of neighborhood decision-making” (Toledo CDC, 2012). It also states that the Toledo CDC offers homebuyer education and assistance programs and creates affordable housing to provide a sustainable, diverse community. Additionally, Toledo CDC builds and renovates homes as well as rental units within their service area (figure 5-1). All housing units are developed for low income families at or below 60% area medium income. Additionally, housing units utilize housing tax credits and asset management is provided. Various attempts to contact this organization failed.

Additional leverage can by advanced by utilizing the City of Toledo Department of Neighborhood’s programs such as the Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program, the Rental Rehabilitation Program, and the Lead Based Paint Hazard Control Program. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program has grant funds available to acquire vacant and foreclosed properties for rehabilitation and subsequent sale to qualified homebuyers. Prospective homeowners are required to attend and complete an eight-hour homeownership training session organized by a qualified HUD approved counseling agencies. The Neighborhood Stabilization Program also helps to stem foreclosures and declining property values. Stabilizing neighborhoods helps to alleviate the impediments to learning associated with housing instability and insecurity.

The Lucas Metropolitan Housing Authority is the largest developer of homes for sale by means of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (LMHA, 2014). They also provide
a lease purchase option in some cases. In addition, the Northwest Ohio Development Agency is a community-based nonprofit organization that offers a number of programs that assist families obtain or maintain their homes (NODA, 2014). For instance, a number of non-traditional loans are offered that conventional leaders are not able to present. They also offer some limited grants to help with down payment and closing costs. Their partnership with Toledo Fair Housing Center also assists in refinancing.

Housing Services of Toledo also offers a number of programs from housing and credit counseling, foreclosure prevention and weatherization, to loans and homes for lease with an option to purchase (NeighborWorks, 2014). Further, Enterprise Community Partners offers a limited number of grants to help community-based
organizations expand or improve revitalization efforts (Enterprise Community Partners, 2014 c). For example, they have low income housing grants for financing and development, and affordable housing grants earmarked for pre-development and design. Enterprise’s Pre-Development Design Grant provides funding for design exploration during the early stages of affordable housing development. This can carry the project from inception to the beginning of schematic design, and enables development teams to define project goals, identify challenges and explore multiple design solutions.

5.8 District Economic Viability

Limited economic opportunity is associated with the vast extent of uninhabited dwellings in primary data. Additionally, data reveals perceptions of poor physical environment, low quality of life in area neighborhoods, a diminished extent of the feeling of community in district neighborhoods, the need for economic development, and the lack of transportation and access to area marketplaces are attributed to truncated economic viability. Educators should take on an active role in improving the economic base of communities as a means of addressing the root cause of poverty and non-academic barriers to learning. Improving school-to-work transitions through community economic development can be advanced with better access to educational and vocational opportunities. Economic development can be stimulated by local community hubs employing community residents, supporting community businesses, partnering with area financial institutions, and offering entrepreneurial classes for parents and community residents. In addition, enhancing community employability leads to better socioeconomic standings and strengthens the community’s economic viability. A number of avenues can
be followed along this path including school-to-work programs, job training, and resume, job applications and interview workshops.

“You can’t pull up your bootstraps if don’t have any straps in it.”

− Community Member Focus Group

Programs designed to increase employment opportunities through workforce and economic development tactics can attract new businesses to the area. Moreover, a development board made up of district residents and area organizations ought to be put into place to address broader developments. Such a board should consist of neighborhood residents, religious leaders, neighborhood organizations, redevelopment practitioners, and school and hub officials. This working group can identify untapped potential and resources within and outside of area neighborhoods and capitalize on local knowledge and resources. This gives stakeholders a hands-on role, and encourages developments through a participatory design and advocacy process. This is an effective strategy for reviving and mobilizing resources already present and identifying outside resources.

In Northwest Ohio, the Economic and Community Development Institute (ECDI) offers microlending up to $150,000 to small businesses that may not qualify for funding from banks and traditional sources. Anneliese Grytafey, manager of ECDI’s Toledo office, maintains, “Our goal is to create access to small business capital and provide tools for asset building to create jobs and invigorate our neighborhoods” (Ramsey, 2013). EDCI’s micro-business lending provides small business loans as well as technical
assistance throughout the life of the loan. Loans may be used for business expenses such as working capital, startup operating costs and the purchase of equipment, inventory and supplies. Correspondingly, the Toledo Lucas County Port Authority offers a HUD 108 Loan Guarantee Program that is a special loan guarantee program for commercial and industrial projects that create jobs in Toledo’s low and moderate income census tracts (Department of Neighborhoods, 2014). Loan applicants are required to meet both the Toledo Lucas County Port Authority and Housing and Urban Development project funding guidelines.

The Toledo CDC Business Incubator also provides training and funding for existing businesses and new startups (Toledo CDC, 2012). Additional leverage may be retained by utilizing the Lucas County Land Bank’s commercial redevelopment outlook. While the Land Bank mainly devotes resources to residential property, they’ve partnered with a variety of organizations throughout Lucas County to acquire and return commercial properties to productive use (Lucas County Land Bank, 2014). This aids local communities in redeveloping blighted commercial areas neighborhoods by acquiring and reviving commercial properties for productive use.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

This study considers school-centered community development approaches to investigate the hypothesis that school reform can anchor and serve as a catalyst for broader neighborhood-based initiatives. This research takes into account the range of initiatives utilizing schools or neighborhood centers as an approach to alleviate the hardships of the poverty. This point of reference is utilized to weigh the means to which community schools can be leveraged to insight broader community improvements. Notwithstanding constraints, this research brings a number of findings and recommendations to light.

For over a century neighborhood-based initiatives utilized to alleviate conditions associated with spatially concentrated poverty. Although numerous sociospatial strategies have been enacted over time, progress has remained insignificant. The scope of this research attends to the range of initiatives encompassing schools and neighborhood centers, and how they correlate with the current community school reform movement, along with the propensity to leverage this academic restructuring into broader neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Community schools can have a positive impact on bringing recovery and renewal endeavors to fruition by facilitating asset-centered relationships. A school-centered
community development approach can advance academic restructuring to serve as a catalyst that consents to broader community renewal. Advancing engagement and outreach efforts, furthering empowerment and organizing, community-linked curriculums, a community development organizer and committee, improving the housing stock and advancing homeownership, along with increasing the economic vitality of the district are corridors to utilize the community hub as a catalyst to drive broader neighborhood improvements.

Few studies explore school-centered community development initiatives. There is a need to advance research around school-focused initiatives. Exploratory analyses should be furthered, and as applicable data becomes obtainable quantitative studies should be pursued to advance the understanding of this local academic restructuring and its propensity to stimulate broader community renewal. Moreover, the recent advance of community schools in Toledo should be considered at the urban scale of analysis. School-centered community development is grounded in a spatial strategy that accords solutions to the concentration of poverty in inner-city neighborhoods. Additional studies will also further understanding of the broader issue of neighborhood-based initiatives.

This research uncovers a number of approaches to utilize the Robinson Community Hub as a catalyst effecting broader revitalization initiatives to address the social, economic, and physical needs of area neighborhoods. Robinson can avert prior paths that made it more of a haven from community to become a true center of community. In this early stage the Robinson Hub should engender a community congregation to convey diverse choice-based alternatives. There are a number of channels to employ the Robinson Community Hub as a catalyst to drive district improvements. This spatial
configuration can be utilized to boost the civic morale and channel a host of community concerns. The hub is not simply a physical space, but a place where common bonds of affinity can be strengthened to forge wider alliances. It is a place to affect change.


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Appendix A

Community Member Survey Questions

1. Do you rent or own your home?
   - Rent
   - Own

2. Is it affordable?
   - Yes
   - No

3. What condition is it in?
   - Poor
   - Average
   - Good
   - Excellent

4. What is the overall condition of area housing?
   - Poor
   - Average
   - Good
   - Excellent

5. How would you describe the physical environment of your neighborhood?
6. What is the quality of life in your neighborhood?
   - Poor
   - Average
   - Good
   - Excellent

7. Has the neighborhood quality of life improved or declined over the last five years?
   - Improved
   - Decline
   - Same

8. How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?
   - Very safe
   - Relatively safe
   - Very unsafe

9. Has the Robinson Community Hub impacted you and/or your family?
   - Yes
   - No

10. Do you participate in any programs or activities at Robinson?
    - Services
      List here:
    - Recreational activities
      List here:
    - Community involvement
      List here:
11. Are you involved with any school or community organizations?
   ○ Yes
   List here:
   ○ No

12. Are there any organizations you would be interested in?
   ○ Yes
   List here:
   ○ No

13. Is there anything you would like to add or expand on?
Appendix B

Community Member Focus Group Questions

1. How would you describe the quality of life in your neighborhood?
   a. Physical environment?
   b. Sense of community?
   c. Activities/Organizations?
   d. Housing
   e. Crime and safety?

2. How has the community hub at Robinson impacted the community?
   a. Services and/or other opportunities?
   b. Community involvement?

3. Are you actively involved in any school or community organizations?
   a. Types?

4. What types of organizations you would like to see in the community?
   a. To provide sense of community?
5. What needs to be done to improve the quality of life of your neighborhood?
   
   a. What area improvements would you like to see in the near future?

6. Is there anything you would like to add or expand on?
Appendix C

Hub Committee Focus Group Questions

1. What assets and strengths are present in the community?

2. To what degree does the community hub build upon community assets and strengths?

3. What challenges does the community face?

4. How can these challenges be met?

5. To what degree is the community hub proficient at garnering resources to address community challenges?

6. How has the community hub empowered area residents?

7. What types of community development initiatives would you like to see advanced over the next five to ten years?

8. Is there anything you would like to add or expand on?