The Mystic Zone: Cultivating the Community to Close the Achievement Gap

Vincent Booker | Amanda Cleveland | Katrine Herrick | Wilnelia Rivera | Laura Tolkoff

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# Table of Contents

Abstract 9

**Section 1: Introduction to the Mystic Zone**

- Executive Summary 12
- Chapter 1: Introduction 16

**Section 2: Lineage: Models and Context** 21

- Chapter 2: Historical Review Place-Based Anti-Poverty Initiatives 22
- Chapter 3: Contemporary Models: The Harlem Children’s Zone and Promise Neighborhoods 34

**Section 3: Making Good on the Promise: Developing the Mystic Zone** 45

- Chapter 4: Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone 46
- Chapter 5: Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis, and Community Organizing Protocols 60

**Section 4: Moving Forward** 77

- Chapter 6: Recommendations to the Mystic Zone 78

**Appendix** 87

- Appendix A: Memorandum of Understanding 88
- Appendix B: IRB Approval 97
- Appendix C: Interview Questions 98
- Appendix D: List of Interviewees 100
- Appendix E: Promise Neighborhoods Slides 102
- Appendix F: Mystic Zone Neighborhood Survey 104
- Appendix G: Mystic Roadmap 108

Bibliography 112
Table of Figures

Chapter 4: Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone

Figure 1: Languages Spoken in the Mystic Housing Development 49

Map 1: Percentages of Adults 25 years or older who have at least a high school education. 52

Map 2: Percentage of Households Earning less than $50,000 a year. 53

Map 3: A Map of Assets Currently Involved in the Mystic Zone. 57

Figure 2: An Assets-Based Approach to the Mystic Zone 58-59

Chapter 5: Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis, and Community Organizing Protocols

Figure 3: The Forms of Community Organizing 68

Chapter 6: Recommendations to the Mystic Zone

Table 1: Recommendations for Strategic Planning 82

Table 2: Strategies to Engage Youth 83
The Mystic Zone is an initiative in Somerville, Massachusetts that aims to increase opportunities for the success of children and families by coordinating and streamlining the services available in the Mystic Housing Development. This initiative is inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone in Harlem, New York, a program that provides comprehensive services for children and families. As researchers, we were charged with the task of moving this project from the conceptual phase into the action phase. This report presents a resident survey and community organizing protocols that can be used to identify resident assets and needs as well as to unite residents around the newly forming Mystic Zone. We contextualize the Mystic Zone effort within an ongoing history of place based anti-poverty initiatives in the United States. We conclude that an asset-based community development strategy is a vital component for the eventual success of the Mystic Zone. In addition to utilizing our findings from service provider interviews, we use the framework of asset-based community development and participatory planning to inform our recommendations. For this effort to succeed residents will have to be involved in the process from the beginning, feeling empowered to drive their own successful futures.
Section 1

Introduction to the Mystic Zone
Executive Summary

Within this report we offer insights about how to support children and families through asset-based community development and participatory planning in the Mystic Zone. The results of our research and field work compel a new way of thinking about communities as active participants rather than passive recipients of social interventions. Traditional interventions emphasize the challenges and “deficits” in communities.

We will also review historical and contemporary models of place-based anti-poverty initiatives. When we situate the Mystic Zone within the context of these historical initiatives, we address the following questions:

- In what ways is the Mystic Zone both different from and an outgrowth of prior community development efforts?
- What factors have diluted or undermined place-based anti-poverty initiatives in the past, and how might the Mystic Zone avoid these mistakes?
- How will the Mystic Zone be an adaptation of, rather than an iteration of, the Harlem Children’s Zone and other Zone endeavors?

From this review, we conclude that participatory planning is crucial to building trust and empowering communities.

We refer to collaborative or participatory planning and authentic community participation. We define participatory planning as practices that democratize the strategic and evaluative aspects of planning and development. This
framework emphasizes not only consultation among the community, but also agenda-setting and decision-making from the community—which we refer to as “authentic” community participation. Moreover, we urge an asset-based approach to community development, which draws on the wealth of human, physical and organizational resources in the neighborhood, building the capacity of residents and fostering creative partnerships. An asset-based approach to community development focuses on the ways the Mystic Zone can help community members help themselves. We hope that this theoretical framework will inform the strategic planning process of the Mystic Zone.

Through our research, we identify some of the localized challenges and assets in the Mystic Zone. We have also designed a community organizing protocol, a suggested strategy with which to meaningfully engage residents in the Mystic Zone. A key element of these protocols is a canvassing survey to collect the quantitative and qualitative data necessary to identify community needs, resources and assets.

The report provides four categories of recommendations pertaining to strategic planning, youth development, a canvassing effort, and resident organizing for summer 2010’s Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration. Central to each recommendation are the goals of participatory planning and asset-based community development. The key recommendations are summarized below.

» Create a short-term strategic plan and work plan specifically for community engagement and organizing for the remainder of 2010 and fiscal year 2011.

» Service providers, city officials and residents should develop a mission statement that empowers residents and emphasizes an asset-based community development strategy.

» Service providers, city officials and residents should work together to create realistic goals that are appropriate to the characteristics of the Mystic Zone.

» Decision-making processes and program agendas must be derived from community input and present all actionable alternatives.
» Identify immediate and long-term sources of funding for programs and community leaders.

» Incorporate youth voices in the planning and decision-making processes as they are crucial agents of change with multiple assets.

» Provide programs and opportunities for cultural exchange through performance, music, and multimedia arts.

» Employ youth for canvassing, community organizing, and building an identity for the Mystic Zone.

» The canvassing effort should effectively train volunteers in skills like cultural competency and community organizing.

» The Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration must be viewed as only one piece of a consistent and long-term community engagement plan.

We elaborate on these recommendations throughout this report. We feel that there are many benefits to taking an asset-based community development and participatory approach. Although the ideal outcome may be a consolidated Mystic Zone effort, this approach will result in a healthier and more united community at the Mystic, regardless of the final outcome.
Chapter 1

Introduction

The Mystic Zone project began in the summer of 2009 when Arthur D. Healey School Principal Mike Sabin approached Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone with an idea to pilot a comprehensive reform of education and social services for Somerville at the Mystic Housing Development. After carefully considering this suggestion, the Mayor unveiled a plan to follow through with the Mystic Zone effort. This plan is modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), a 97-block area in Harlem, New York. The HCZ provides children with a “pipeline” of educational and social services from birth through college with the goal of creating an “enriching environment” and a culture of success (Harlem Children’s Zone).

In August 2009, the Mayor convened a retreat to start the planning effort for what is currently called the “Mystic Zone.” Dr. Moncrieff Cochran, a visiting professor at Tufts University’s Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development, facilitated this retreat for residents, staff from the Somerville Public School District and specifically the Arthur D. Healey School. There was broad support at the retreat for pursuing a place-based initiative, but many questions remained regarding how this process would unfold. This meeting resulted in a partnership between the Mayor’s Office, the Healey School, Somerville Public School District, Tufts University, Bunker Hill Community College, and Harvard University.
Our Role in the Mystic Zone

We became involved with the Mystic Zone effort in December 2009 through the practicum component of our graduate studies in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University. We chose to focus on the Mystic Zone because of our common passion for creating stronger communities and better opportunities for children and families. Dr. Cochran, as well as Doctoral candidates in the Eliot-Pearson Department, Emily S. Lin and Abby Copeman, facilitated our work. Between January and late April 2010, we attended several stakeholder and working group meetings; conducted qualitative interviews with interested stakeholders, developed an organizing plan and canvassing survey, and engaged in historical place-based anti-poverty research. Our role in the Mystic Zone effort was to make recommendations to stakeholders that would inform and shape the strategic planning processes based on our research. Our final work products reflect our commitment to community development and a participatory planning process.

Due to the short nature of our project, our involvement in the Mystic Zone was met with reluctance. One of the challenges that we encountered throughout our involvement in the Mystic Zone was initially met with skepticism and distrust. Tufts University has had a tenuous relationship with the Somerville community, characterized by a lack of long-term commitment and resources to the Tufts’ surrounds. As representatives of the university, we were deeply implicated in this tension. We attempted to make clear at the Public Narrative workshops, facilitated by Emily Lin and Marshall Ganz, that we were allied with the service providers and stakeholders. However, it is important to acknowledge the revolving nature of student involvement in the community—especially our own—when planning a long-term project like the Mystic Zone. We cannot overstate the importance of a sustained commitment to the Mystic Zone from Tufts University. We hope that we served as positive ambassadors for this changing nature of Tufts University’s renewed responsibility to the community.
Point of View and Theoretical Framework

Throughout this report, we refer to collaborative or participatory planning and authentic community participation. We define participatory planning as practices that democratize the strategic and evaluative aspects of planning and development. Participatory or collaborative planning has its roots in the civil rights and black power movements of the 1960s and 1970s, respectively (Jennings 2004). This framework emphasizes not only consultation among the community, but also agenda-setting and decision-making from the community—which we refer to as “authentic” community participation.

This theoretical framework supports our research and our work, which we hope will inform the strategic planning process for the Mystic Zone. We sought first to contextualize the Mystic Zone effort within the history of place-based anti-poverty initiatives. What factors have diluted or undermined these efforts, and how might the Mystic Zone avoid these mistakes? How will the Mystic Zone utilize the Harlem Children’s Zone and other Promise Neighborhoods endeavors as models for its own success?

We also sought to provide recommendations to service providers and the City of Somerville that promote participatory planning and community empowerment. In doing so, we asked: How can stakeholders encourage a participatory planning process? How is community development central to the immediate goal of data collection?

We learned that a shared sense of purpose or a shared vision for the Mystic community is key to fostering cooperation amongst the City of Somerville, educational institutions (Somerville Public School District, Tufts, Harvard), and non-profit service providers and that it is also necessary to move the Mystic Zone forward. To this end, we asked several visioning questions to those interviewed in our stakeholder interviews (see page 62). These
interviews identified important concerns and insights that will help identify goals and objectives for the Mystic Zone.

**Report Structure**

The following report will detail our theoretical framework, explicitly defining asset-based community development and participatory planning based initiatives. It will also provide the historical and contemporary contexts for the inception of the Mystic Zone effort. First, we will review the prevailing literature regarding the evolution of place-based initiatives in the history of U.S. social policy. We will then look more specifically at the Harlem Children’s Zone model and other Zone Initiatives that are currently underway. Both the analysis of place-based literature and the study of contemporary models identify key lessons that can be applied to the Mystic Zone effort. We will then look specifically at the Mystic Housing Development, taking an asset-based approach by identifying strengths of the residents and the service providers that can serve to make this project successful. Lastly, we will review the key findings from our stakeholder interviews and present a community organizing plan that emerged from the interviews and our research. In the last section, we set forth a set of recommendations and tools for the future planning and development of the Mystic Zone.
Section 2

Lineage: Models and Context
Chapter 2

Historical Review of Anti-Poverty Place-Based Initiatives

This chapter sets out to situate the Mystic Zone within a long history of place-based anti-poverty initiatives targeted at de-concentrating poverty. The lessons learned from this analysis will inform the current strategic planning process underway in the Mystic Zone. We briefly examine the goals and shortcomings of the following programs: The Settlement House Movement, Urban Renewal, the Model Cities Program, The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Empowerment Zones and Hope VI. Through an examination of these programs, we demonstrate the shortcomings of top-down planning and the problems of treating poverty as a contagion. We also learn that there is great potential to empower disenfranchised communities through participatory and collaborative planning for revitalization. A lack of collaboration may result in displacement and reduce the political and personal agency of impoverished individuals. From the perspective of community development, these programs largely fail to achieve their objects of revitalizing neighborhoods and alleviating poverty, but do imply important lessons for future place-based endeavors.

We contend that the rejection or dilution of community development and participatory planning has further marginalized and stigmatized the urban poor and people of color. The resulting lack of community trust is a barrier to further place-based anti-poverty initiatives. This makes it all the more crucial to involve residents in planning and decision-making early in the Mystic Zone effort. Collaborative planning with all stakeholders is central to creating a legacy of success for the children and families of Somerville.
Chapter 2 | Historical Review of Place-Based Anti-Poverty Initiatives

We define participatory or collaborative planning as the practices that democratize the strategic and evaluative aspects of planning and development. Collaborative or participatory planning builds political power in the community and facilitates agency over its future. The participatory planning framework can have many components and take many forms, including but not limited to: “(1) frequent, open and widely advertised meetings; (2) opportunity for resident feedback regarding proposals; (3) decision-making after consultations with many individuals and organizations working in the community; (4) outreach and distribution of information, and (5) partnership with community organizations…in planning dialogues” (Jennings 2004, 15). This framework emphasizes not only consultation among the community, but also agenda-setting and decision-making from the community—which we refer to as “authentic” community participation. Authentic participation allows communities to gain skills and to see themselves not as “victims incapable of taking charge of their lives” but as effective drivers of change (Kretzman and McKnight 1983, 4).

The Legacy of Weak Political Commitment

With few exceptions, the federal government has never made the elimination of poverty a sustained national priority. As a result, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are full of short-lived programs that do not address structural causes of poverty (O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz; Morris and Williamson 1986; Rich 1993). This cycle of ineffective anti-poverty strategies has left a legacy of displacement, disempowerment, marginalization and mistrust in poor communities of color and working class neighborhoods. More generally, it is also critical to acknowledge the historically “marginal position” of place-based strategies within anti-poverty policies (O’Connor 1999, 80). The current opportunity, presented by the Promise Neighborhood Initiative, increases the importance of learning from the past, so that we can address both structural and individual causes of poverty through creative targeted initiatives like the Mystic Zone.
History of Federal Government and the Poor: Politics, Race, and Ideology

A careful analysis of the relationship between the federal government and the poor demonstrates the key roles that politics, race, and ideology have played in the legacy of federal place-based anti-poverty politics. From the inception of the republic, aid for the poor has largely been treated as private charity rather than public responsibility. At the turn of the 20th century, central city neighborhoods were densely built, over-populated and rife with substandard housing and racial tension. Marginalized inner-city populations like Blacks, Latinos, and foreign-born immigrants were typically invisible to government programs.

While not a federal program, the Settlement House Movement aimed to provide services and physical rehabilitation to the poor, but was limited primarily to white European immigrants and did not address racial inequalities (O’Connor 1999). The ideology driving the movement made the link between place and poverty, and rested on three key principles (O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Tsao 2006). First, anti-poverty interventions should address both individual and structural causes of poverty. Second, the planning of interventions should be a collaborative process amongst all concerned and affected parties. And third, interventions require residential participation. These values of the Settlement House Movement were central to many Progressive Era reforms and would become core values underlying community development principles.

The Settlement House Movement’s ideological framework influenced the federal response to the Great Depression. The New Deal permanently transformed the relationship of the federal government to cities, towns, and people. To address the economic and housing sector collapse, the Roosevelt administration first adopted several policies to promote job creation and reduce unemployment. Secondly, the administration introduced reforms to the lending and finance structures related to home financing, banking, and
construction. Moreover, the New Deal created the first form of federal poverty relief through individual income supports and social services delivery, administered through several federal agencies (Rich 1993; O'Connor 1999).

While the New Deal has been lauded for its robust government leadership in addressing poverty, it also laid the foundation for a fragmented federal welfare state, which has played a major role in the federal government’s failure to adequately address the problems associated with poverty (O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Rich 1993; Morris and Williamson 1986; Friedan and Kaplan 1975). In response to increasing urban problems, city halls moved forward aggressively with urban reforms like poverty alleviation and revitalization. The onset of World War II and its accompanying economic growth presented central cities with the opportunity to push for federal relief through the Urban Renewal (1949-1974) program in the form of slum clearance and the expansion of public housing.

**Urban Renewal**

Urban Renewal promised improved housing and urban aesthetics to poor neighborhoods, and insisted that the program would bring poverty relief. However, in practice, the Urban Renewal program expanded central downtown development and benefitted businesses and suburban workers (Keating and Krumholz 1999; Manning-Thomas 1997; Gornstein 1984; Wilson 1966). This growth produced an inadequate supply of public housing (both in number of units and in quality) and displaced countless minority communities. The limited public housing structures that did exist came to represent the isolated high-rise barracks, the “ghettos of the very poor” (Keating 1999). Urban Renewal or Negro Removal, as it came to be known, was viewed as one of the worst public policy and planning experiments, cementing a negative legacy of disruption and neglect from the federal
government (O’Connor 1999, 95; Wilson 1996; Gans 1996). In the end, the Urban Renewal’s relocation policies resulted in a stratified metropolis that disproportionately benefitted white working and middle-class residents (O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Wilson 1966; Gans 1966; Anderson 1966; Smith 1966).

Model Cities and the Great Society

Due to the economic distress and racial conflict in cities, the 1960s is recognized as one of the most turbulent decades in U.S. history. During this era, segregationist polices came to a peak. In response, the federal government launched the War on Poverty, which included a new policy experiment called the Great Society, a two-fold approach that promoted both physical and social revitalization of poor urban neighborhoods (Keating and Krumholz 1999). Unlike other programs, community development principles shaped the objectives and tools of these Great Society Programs. The Model Cities (1967-1974) program exemplified this new direction in federal place-based anti-poverty initiatives. It sought to direct federal investment that focused on physical revitalization and community action in poor inner city neighborhoods (Frieden and Kaplan 1975; Harr 1975; Gornstein 1984; Keating and Krumholz 1999).

Though this program was short-lived due to the changing political and fiscal climate of the 1970s, many evaluations commend the program for its focus on developing community power and trying to reverse the mistrust aimed at federal interventions. Model Cities provided direct funding to community organizations and included a federal requirement of resident participation that helped to empower communities. Through these provisions Model Cities promoted community development and collaborative planning that resulted in a politically mobilized urban poor. In order to stymie this initiative, local city halls aggressively undermined this participation (Manning-Thomas 1977). Ultimately, Model Cities was plagued by a lack of
political commitment at the federal level and outright discrimination at the local level (Frieden and Kaplan 1975).

Community Development Block Grant and HOPE VI

For the next four decades, the anti-poverty policies that had shaped the War on Poverty and Model Cities came under attack with the rise of New Federalism. This new philosophy called for devolution, which resulted in expanded state and municipal autonomy and simultaneously decreased federal domestic spending (Frieden and Kaplan 1975; O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999). Launched under Richard Nixon (1969-1974), it was expanded greatly under both Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) and George H.W. Bush (1989-1993), and reached its peak under George W. Bush (2000-2008).

The flagship program of the New Federalist agenda, the Community Development Block Grant (1974), combined several categorical grants into one block grant and redirected it to states and municipalities with loose federal regulations on community participation and poverty reduction. CDBG became the centerpiece of the federal government’s community development strategy. By streamlining several programs into one block grant and changing the funding allocation method, funding levels were decreased and diverted from poor neighborhoods to suburban neighborhoods and the business community (Gornstein 1984; Rich 1993; O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999). More importantly, this history reveals the federal government’s systemic and continuous lack of political commitment to community participation and development. Overall, CDBG provides a pipeline of federal funds to cities and towns in the U.S. with very little federal oversight or requirement on how money should be spent. This diminishes the chances for communities and neighborhoods to participate in programs that influence their future.
Thus, New Federalism dismantled the role of the federal government in poor urban neighborhoods (O’Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999). The 1990s brought a decade of unfettered economic growth, an increasingly divided American polis, and increasing urban tension in poor neighborhoods. In this context, the Clinton Administration introduced both the market-driven Empowerment Zone (1992) and New Urbanism-inspired HOPE VI (1992) programs. Through federal block grant allocation, Empowerment Zones and HOPE VI sought to address inner-city economic distress through job training, education, housing, supporting small businesses, and social services (O’Connor 1993; Liebschutz 1995; Busson and Kline 2008; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Bohl 2000, Popkin et. al, 2004). In line with devolution, both programs shifted the power of implementation to the states and cities, which primarily benefited the big-box retail business agenda, middle-income residents, and neglected or displaced current residents.

Although both programs reintroduced elements of resident participation, they did not allow for residents and community members to have power over decision-making. Moreover, the programs lacked political commitment and adequate funding, which has diluted their ability to achieve success (Bohl 2000; Tsao 2000; Busso and Kline 2008; Liebschutz 1995; United States Government Accounting Office 2006). While these programs enjoyed some success, they have also resulted in widespread displacement of the most vulnerable or “hard to house” populations, decreased the stock of affordable public housing, and increased mistrust of government intervention efforts (Busson and Kline 208; Tsao 2000; Cisnerors and Engdahl 2009). Both programs weaken community ties and assets, and do not reduce poverty but merely relocate it. In evaluating these programs, it is unclear whether they have improved the circumstances of community residents, particularly those with the greatest needs.

In 2008, the election of Barack Obama brought with it a significant political shift that represented a gust of hope for many who believe in the power
of anti-poverty programs at the federal level. Unfortunately, the economic crisis and War on Terrorism have decreased the availability of resources for many anti-poverty priorities. Nonetheless, the Obama Administration is attempting to move forward on its domestic agenda, including the Promise Neighborhood Initiative (PNI). Adapted from the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), the PNI has come to symbolize the Obama Administration’s cornerstone anti-poverty program. The Harlem Children’s Zone, founded by Geoffrey Canada, aims to:

» Provide comprehensive services at a neighborhood scale to children and families,

» Create a pipeline of wrap around programs and services that begins in prenatal stages and lasts through college graduation,

» Foster community building between residents, social service agencies, educational institutions, and other stakeholders,

» Include a program evaluation, and

» Prioritize tenets of ‘passion, accountability, leadership, and teamwork’ (Harlem Children’s Zone 2009).

Previous federal education programs have focused on individuals at different stages of development, such as early childhood, high school, or college, which produces individual gains but not structural changes (Morris and Williamson 1986, 160). The PNI follows the long tradition of federal anti-poverty interventions through place-based mechanisms, but also calls for a new environment that focuses on jobs, education, equity and transformative change. Recognizing that poverty is rooted in both structural and individual issues, the PNI addresses the educational achievement gap, family needs, and the challenges of concentrated poverty. Inspired by the HCZ, the PNI seeks to “create opportunity” through a “comprehensive childhood anti-poverty program” that is:

» Results-oriented,

» Funded with a combination of government and private funds,

» Place-based,

» Supporting children and their families through a pipeline of high
quality integrated services,
» Built on public/private partnerships with key organizations,
» Inclusive of community leaders including parents, residents, teachers, business leaders, and other key stakeholders,
» Focused on integrating previously siloed approaches, and
» Anchored by accountable and passionate leadership (HCZ and PolicyLink 2009).

Due to current fiscal constraints, the PNI will only fund 20 Promise Neighborhoods in 2011. For the same reason, opponents have called this effort complex and unrealistic (Weirz and Max 2009; Vasniz 2009; Spector 2009). However, the existence of dozens of efforts similar to the HCZ throughout the country underscores that it is important to learn from the major challenges that have crippled other placed-based anti-poverty efforts. Among these lessons is the need to reverse the legacy of exclusion and distrust through meaningful collaborative planning and community development (Rich 1993; Morris and Williamson 1986; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Crowley 2009; O’Connor 1999; Tsao 2005).

Moving Forward: Major Strategic Planning Implications

The most critical challenge for the Mystic Zone and other Promise Neighborhoods is related to community development and resident participation, which is necessary to transform the lack of political power of people living in poor urban neighborhoods (O’ Connor 1999; Keating and Krumholz 1999; Rich 1993; Chambers 2003; Bobo et al 2001). There is a need for transformative strategies that address the historical exclusion of communities of color and low-income communities from the planning, development, and implementation of anti-poverty intervention efforts (Smith 2002). The history of place-based anti-poverty efforts demonstrates
the overall lack of commitment to community development and collaborative planning. Luckily, the Mystic Zone has a strategic opportunity to make community development principles a core element of their initiative.

Thus, the Mystic Zone planning process must empower residents before it can plan or implement any policy instrument. Resident participation in the development of the Mystic Zone will enhance the long term success of this project. The history of Model Cities, community organizing and community development policies demonstrates the key role resident participation should play in the development of the Mystic Zone. Further, the residents comprise a political constituency that is critical for the long term political support of the program. This process of resident engagement will likely solicit new ideas that are not currently envisioned in the Zone thereby making the plan more responsive to local needs.

Two lessons from the history of place-based anti-poverty programs warrant emphasis. First, it is important that the Mystic Zone not be presented as the answer to poverty reduction. The Mystic Zone alone cannot address all the causes of poverty. In addition, there is the potential for physical displacement due to gentrification if the program proves successful (Fullilove 2001; Smith 2002; Cisneros 2009; Smith 1966). Furthermore, regardless of whether the program succeeds or fails, it must empower residents. Past interventions mostly focused on the limitations and deficits of the community, leading to an even stronger sense of alienation for the poor when promises were left unfulfilled (Crowley 2009). Therefore, it is critical that the planning process increases the agency and sense of control that residents have over their own futures.

Second, the history of federal programs reveals turbulence in funding and tenuous political support. It is critical that a coalition of stakeholders, including residents, engage in advocacy to leverage more resources from private and public (e.g., local, state, and federal) sources. Mayor Curtatone’s support of the Mystic Zone and the PNI created the political space for the
Mystic Zone to emerge. Yet, the political fate of similar efforts, such as the War on Poverty, teaches us the importance of both federal and municipal commitment. Ultimately, the coalition of stakeholders and residents will define the scale and scope of the Mystic Zone and be responsible for carrying out its functions in the long run. Their capacities to anchor the project, cultivate resident participation, provide services, and identify both private and public funding sources will help strengthen (or limit, if not cultivated) its chances of success.

Conclusion

In the midst of an economic crisis and a deteriorating public education system, we can no longer afford to ignore the decades of gross underfunding and neglect of social programs. The review of place-based anti-poverty policies has demonstrated that these initiatives are not comprehensive or lasting solutions. Poverty hurts all Americans. This sense of urgency has influenced President Obama’s creation of the Promise Neighborhood Initiative and Mayor Curtatone’s Mystic Zone initiative. Both the federal and local attempts must work against the status quo to reduce poverty. Unlike previous efforts, the Mystic Zone must bridge the fragmentations between federal, state, and municipal initiatives and work to integrate the voices of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Without them at the table, community mistrust of government interventions will persist. As the Mystic Executive Steering Committee moves forward, it is critical to involve the Mystic Housing development’s residents in order to expand the scale, scope and success of the Mystic Zone.
Chapter 3

Contemporary Models: The Harlem Children’s Zone and Promise Neighborhoods

To contextualize the emerging Mystic Zone effort as a place-based anti-poverty initiative, it is important to examine its most reputable contemporary model, the Harlem Children’s Zone. The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) was founded in 1991 and by 2009 grew to a “97-block area in Central Harlem, New York, that combines reform-minded charter schools with a web of community services created for children from birth to college graduation that are designed to ensure that the social environment outside of school is positive and supportive” (Dobbie and Fryer et al. 2009). This section demonstrates the ways in which the Harlem Children’s Zone promotes community development, but remains a top-down process due to the lack of participatory planning in organizational decision-making. This chapter then summarizes the federal Promise Neighborhood Initiative, which—while premised on the successes of the Harlem Children’s Zone—places greater emphasis on community development and decision-making. We then look at five other Zone initiatives around the country, to situate the Mystic Zone within other potential models and to emphasize the ways in which the Mystic Zone can learn from these efforts.
Chapter 3 | Contemporary Models: The Harlem Children’s Zone and Promise Neighborhoods

The Harlem Children’s Zone and Community Development

The Harlem Children’s Zone is successful, in part, because of years of dedication to community building and engagement. Several community engagement programs were established many years prior to the incorporation of the HCZ when the program’s founder, Geoffrey Canada, was still a program director at the Rheedlen Centers for Children and Families in Harlem. These relationships, cultivated through years of community and relationship building, provided the foundation for key partnerships and for gaining widespread community buy-in to the Children’s Zone concept. Three programs work explicitly to this end: Community Pride, the Community Advisory Board, and the Harlem Peacemakers.

According to the Harlem Children’s Zone website, the Community Pride program “organizes tenant and block associations, helping many hundreds of tenants convert their city-owned buildings into tenant-owned co-ops.” It operates at “three levels of intervention: families, buildings and blocks” to develop a neighborhood that might otherwise be designated as “blighted” and subject to demolition by government authorities (Harlem Children’s Zone). Community Pride works at multiple levels to organize residents around housing, homeownership, and the stability of their neighborhoods. Moreover, it trains and builds residents’ capacities to become homeowners, managers, and to enhance the material wealth of communities and families.

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) oversees the Community Pride program and is comprised of 80 members who were early leaders in the Harlem Children’s Zone project. Additionally, the CAB presents annual awards to recognize outstanding service, leadership, and commitment to the community. This type of recognition is important in keeping community members engaged and invested in the project over time.
The third program working towards community development is the Harlem Peacemakers. The Harlem Peacemakers is “funded in part by Americorps, training young people who are committed to making their neighborhood safe places for children and families” (Harlem Children's Zone). Currently, 150 Peacemakers assist teachers in the HCZ’s Promise Academy charter schools and provide extracurricular help to students. Although the age of the Peacemakers makes them ineligible to receive the full pipeline of services, the HCZ still invests in these youth and young adults in the community. The Peacemakers program builds on the young people’s assets, including their motivation to serve the community, by providing the leadership training and skills to improve their professional development.

This brief overview of Community Pride, the Community Advisory Board, and the Harlem Peacemakers program demonstrates that the Harlem Children's Zone success is largely attributable to years of relationship and community building. It also illustrates how the HCZ works to build community skills and empowerment through homeownership and professional training. But while the HCZ’s programs may enhance the community’s capacity, the structure of the HCZ organization does not. According to Paul Tough’s “Whatever it Takes,” the Harlem Children’s Zone is largely Geoffrey Canada’s Project. It is his passion, charisma, and connections to private financiers that drive the Harlem Children’s Zone. From its inception, the direction of the HCZ was determined by Canada and his philanthropists. Thus, while residents and community members may lead specific programs like the Community Advisory Board, they do not participate in the executive decision-making about the organization and its operations. Hence, we caution against utilizing the Harlem Children’s Zone top-down approach as the sole contemporary model of community development. For other models, we turn to the federal Promise Neighborhoods Initiative and four Zone initiatives that are involved in community development from the ground-up.
The Promise Neighborhoods Initiative: A Renewed Federal Commitment

In 2008, Presidential candidate Barak Obama vowed to “make urban America a priority.” In February 2009, President Obama fulfilled his promise by signing an Executive Order to establish the White House Office of Urban Affairs. According to the Office’s website, the office is founded on an asset-based approach, recognizing that urban communities are “vital engines for economic growth, innovation and opportunity.” It is furthermore committed to “holistic” revitalization and “community development.” In many ways, the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative (PNI) is committed to remedying the displacement and distrust resulting from HOPE VI through community development (Office of Urban Affairs).

The PNI embodies this renewed federal commitment to poor neighborhoods. In December 2009, Congress signed a bill (HR 3288) appropriating $10 million in planning grants for Promise Neighborhoods (United Neighborhood Centers of America). The PNI is premised on the idea that “successful strategies to address concentrated, intergenerational poverty are comprehensive in nature and address the full range of obstacles that stand in the way of poor children” (“Changing the Odds for Urban America” 2008). The PNI is based on the Harlem Children’s Zone’s success in improving the educational outcomes and opportunities for children and families in Harlem. Among the goals for PNI are to:

» Remove barriers to children’s academic successes
» Provide high-quality early childhood education and childcare
» Extend internet to low-income communities
» Promote economic development and economic opportunities through job training programs, job creation, and increasing access to capital for minority-owned small businesses

» Improve transportation access to jobs

» Ensure safe and affordable housing

» Expand the Community Development Block Grant

» Promote community health (“Changing the Odds for Urban America”).

The research center PolicyLink proposes that Promise Neighborhoods should be driven by a results-framework such that each Neighborhood should be evaluated for its capacity to achieve clear outcomes for children and families (2009). PolicyLink identifies four overarching results for Promise Neighborhoods: “children are healthy and prepared for school entry; children and youth are healthy and succeed in school; youth graduate from high school and college; and, families and neighborhoods support the healthy development, academic success, and well-being of their children” (2009, 2). These are important goals that will enhance opportunities for children and families in each neighborhood.

Several communities and cities began adapting the Harlem Children’s Zone model to their own circumstances prior to the establishment of the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative in 2008. We turn now to four of these communities to learn more from the successes and challenges for community development in each community. We look specifically at the mission statements, governance structure, and models of community engagement to address questions prompted by our clients and by the Mystic Executive Steering Committee. It is important to note that the four case studies are not designated Promise Neighborhoods, but are efforts that adapted the Harlem Children’s Zone concept to their cities.
Zone Initiatives: Models for Comparison

In our research we examined four Zone initiatives at the request of our client, to find the ways in which these efforts engage their communities. These neighborhoods are: the Parramore Kidz Zone in Orlando, Florida; Neighborhoods@Work in Los Angeles, California; the Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Homewood Children’s Village in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The depth and quality of information available about these models varies because they are all in varying stages of development. Thus, the scope of this analysis is limited, but still provides insights into the community development efforts from which the Mystic Zone can learn.

Background

The Parramore Kidz Zone is the most established Zone effort. It was founded in 1996 and it encompasses a 1.4 square mile radius, serving 2,666 children (Map of the Zone). Their mission is to “enhance positive youth infrastructure” and “connect neighborhood youth to positive opportunities” as well as lower rates of teenage pregnancy, juvenile crime, and child abuse while also enhancing school performance. Thus far, the PKZ has achieved great results, including higher educational scores and decreased neighborhood crime rates (Health Council of East Florida Inc., 2008).

In 2007, the not-for-profit Los Angeles Urban League created the Neighborhoods@Work program, which was designed as a 5-year public-private comprehensive partnership to address challenges related to education, employment, health, housing, safety, and community outreach and engagement (Neighborhoods@Work, par. 1). It serves approximately 10,000 people in Park Mesa Heights, a 70-block area in South Central Los Angeles.
The Northside Achievement Zone in Minneapolis seeks “to align resources and opportunities...in order to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all children and youth (0-18) to promote educational achievement and life success” (Northside Achievement Zone, par. 1). The NAZ is 255 square blocks, the boundaries of which were determined on the basis of income and crime statistics, among other indicators.

The Homewood Children’s Village, located in the Homewood neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was also created in 2007. Faced with violence, blight, and poor school achievement, a series of providers created a network of 75 programs that provide educational, medical, and social services to both children and adults. This initiative currently covers a 100 block area, reaching 3,000 children (Smydo 2009; Nelson Jones 2009).

**Governance Structure**

Based on the different projects and demographics, it comes as no surprise that no two governance structures are the same. Despite the differences, there were some similarities. For example, both Homewood Children’s Village and the Northside Achievement Zone had a steering committee or management team comprised of many representatives community members (Homewood Steering Committee Members; NAZ Collaborative Model, 2009). Another similarity between structures is seen in breakout committees or working groups. The committees focus on goals such as education and health (NAZ Collaborative Model, 2009; How It Works). There are some key differences in leadership. For example, the point person in NAZ is a specific Coordinator; for Parramore, their point person is the mayor; while Neighborhoods@Work has a board of directors (NAZ Collaborative Model, 2009; How It Works; Board of Directors).

It is evident that no two models are the same and that their governance structures are intricately designed to fit the specific community needs.
Unfortunately while our group was able to find general structural pieces, the important details for the Mystic Zone such as voting structures, non-profit functions, and detailed hierarchies are not publicly available. Hence, we encourage the Mystic Zone to develop relationships with directors and stakeholders of these initiatives. These relationships will be key for giving the Mystic a head-start in terms of addressing potential issues that may arise. If service providers or residents had the same concerns elsewhere it will be valuable to see how those concerns were addressed within each of the governance structures.

Models for Community Engagement

The community engagement throughout these initiatives varied. After three years of project implementation, Neighborhoods@Work realized that the absence of meaningful vehicles for resident participation would undermine its long-term goals. As a result, stakeholders made community engagement central to its operations. In its first year, Neighborhoods@Work reached out to 3,000 homes to share information about resources, programs and services, initiate an organizing drive, and to create a documentation process that would allow them to identify gaps in services (Los Angeles Urban League Neighborhoods@Work: 2008-2009, 2009, 23).

The Northside Achievement Zone began their community outreach through a widespread canvassing effort. They went door-to-door to introduce the project, signed up 100 families, and conducted one-on-one follow-ups. In addition to the door-to-door and personal efforts, they engaged and excited the community through “You’re in the Zone” flyers. Like Northside, Homewood also launched a comprehensive community canvassing effort. This attempt to engage the community, complimented by new technology, a “state of the village address,” and a community garden, have all contributed to a community based initiative (Widows, Perkey, Sheridan, 2009). The Parramore Kidz Zone, while less detailed about their community...
development efforts, does list relationship-building as one of the five elements of their “recipe for success” (Mayor’s Children and Education Initiative, par. 3).

Though not all initiatives engaged residents initially, they all are currently working towards this end. While the tactics might be different, these efforts incorporate creative strategies and center on building meaningful relationships and vehicles over time. It is important to remember that ideas that are successful elsewhere might not be as applicable in the Mystic. This makes it crucial to get input from Mystic residents, in addition to considering these models, when implementing a community organizing plan.

Conclusions

By contextualizing the Mystic Zone within a larger network of Zone initiatives, we conclude that each neighborhood is vastly different from the others and from the Mystic Zone. They vary in size, scope, and neighborhood challenges. They also vary in access to financial resources and the ability to utilize existing resources. These differences reflect the need to create a flexible initiative that is suited to the challenges, assets, and goals of each neighborhood. This is a crucial component to consider when thinking about implementing a best practice from another initiative.

Another theme that emerged from this research was the importance of evaluation. Evaluation served a large part in each Zone to assess its programs, achieve its desired outcomes, and obtain funding. Team Mystic feels strongly that evaluation is critical for a successful initiative. However, first a specified mission, goals, and objectives will need to be determined. Additionally, we stress that other Zone initiatives are a source of knowledge for the Mystic Zone. By forming relationships with key leaders in these initiatives, the Mystic Executive Steering Committee can identify potential solutions to concerns about community development, governance, financial,
This chapter argues that while the HCZ and Zone initiatives are useful models, a strict adaptation of either is not feasible for the Mystic Zone.

In Harlem, Geoffrey Canada’s charismatic top-down approach has been successful in improving educational outcomes and opportunities for residents, but that it is not easily replicated. This top-down approach directly contradicts the goals of community development and participatory planning.

Additionally, it is important to learn from other Zone initiative methods when creating a model that will most effectively facilitate the forthcoming goals of the Mystic Zone.
Section 3

Making Good on the Promise: Developing the Mystic Zone
Chapter 4

Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone

The Mystic Zone should be a resident-driven process that, while acknowledging that there are needs in the community, focuses on the assets that are available within the community to solve these challenges. To promote an asset-based community development project, it is crucial to identify the strengths of the children and families that live in the neighborhood (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). More traditional needs-based social programs typically emphasize deficits, fostering a sense of helplessness in the community. Instead of feeling empowered as drivers of their own future, community members “begin to see themselves as people with special needs that can only be met by outsiders” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 2). By identifying strengths in the neighborhood, the Mystic Zone can empower residents to be involved in planning their future (Kretzmann and McKnight). The Mystic Zone will need to make adjustments to be applicable to the shape and assets of the Mystic neighborhood. We suggest that these adjustments focus on creating a community development effort that truly draws on the assets of the community.

This chapter outlines the physical and demographic shape of the Mystic neighborhood, and gives a brief history of the Mystic Housing Development. It presents the strengths, abilities, and skills that the Mystic Zone residents have to offer in addition to the wealth of services currently available at the Mystic. In order to provide the most accurate picture
Chapter 4 | Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone

of the neighborhood, this chapter also presents the challenges that the neighborhood is facing. These challenges can be used as a lens to identify issues that many residents are concerned about and that have the potential to unite the community.

The Mystic Housing Development

The Mystic Zone encompasses the Mystic View and Mystic River Public Housing Developments, and will attempt to connect, scale-up and streamline services that are currently offered in the Somerville area. The Mystic Housing Development is located in the Winter Hill section of Somerville and includes both a state and a federally-funded housing development. The Mystic River Development is a 240-unit state family housing development and the Mystic View Development is a 215-unit federal family housing development (Somerville Housing Authority). Adjacent to the Mystic Zone is the Arthur D. Healey School, a K-8 school many of the Mystic children attend (Arthur D. Healey School).

The Mystic Housing Development was first erected after World War II as housing for veterans returning from war (Brukilacchio 2010). For decades the residents of the Mystic were predominantly white, but in 1985 a state order mandated racial integration in public housing facilities. Almost immediately, immigrants from diverse backgrounds—particularly Haitians and South East Asians—moved in only to be mistreated and harassed (The Welcome Project). Several community efforts have worked to allay some of the racial and cultural tensions (The Welcome Project).

Resident Assets

The first step in taking an asset-based approach is to “begin with inventory of gifts, skills, and capacities of the community’s residents” (Kretzmann and
McKnight). With the caveat that we were not permitted to speak directly to the residents for political reasons, we learned second-hand about some of the community’s strengths through our discussions with service providers who work with the residents on a daily basis.

One of the Mystic’s greatest strengths is its motivated youth population. Over 50% of the Mystic development is under the age of nineteen, a statistic that supports a comprehensive reform of education and services for children and families like the Mystic Zone (Heebink 2009). In asset-based community development efforts like the Mystic Zone, youth can provide the energy, the multi-generational and linguistic connections, and the personal narratives to unite the community around this common goal to improve their opportunities. One study points out that, “if youth are included in programs to meet needs and empower communities, they can become lifelong participants and take on a sense of ownership in development efforts,” contributing to a culture of success (Brennan et al., 2007, par. 1). Involving youth may have a domino effect. Youth can act as role models for younger children and siblings, engage parents, reach out to their friends and hard-to-reach populations, and break down resistance, thus creating community buy-in to the Mystic Zone (Bobo et al; 2001; Frazier, 2003; Frazier et. al. 2005). Youth can also bring new ideas and perspectives to the table, in addition to the possibility for long-term engagement with the project.

There is evidence that youth are already actively engaged in the community, participating in programs like the Welcome Project’s LIPS (Liaison Interpreter Program of Somerville), which “trains bilingual teens to assist with language interpretation at community events and meetings” (The Welcome Project). This facilitates community inclusiveness and can be used for the canvassing effort and to democratize the strategic planning processes for the Mystic Zone. In addition, there is a group of Mystic residents that currently attend Bunker Hill College, who might be excellent leaders and contributors to the Mystic Zone. They can build on existing
ties to the community and can serve as role models. It was evident at the Canvassing Working Group meeting in early April that there was strong support for involving the community’s youth. Together, this group created a set of “talking points” for service-providers to engage youth.

During a Mystic Youth Group meeting that took place on April 14, 2010, Lisa Brukilacchio of the Cambridge Health Alliance used these talking points to get some feedback and ideas from teens about the Mystic Zone. The youth had some great ideas for how to get people involved in activities, including providing more opportunities for free after school programs and organized sports. They suggested that teachers should take more time to talk to kids individually and outside of the formal classroom if those kids are having trouble, acting as a mentor and champion of their success. They also had ideas for creative names for the initiative that might resonate with youth and encourage them to become involved. When asked if the teens would like to become involved in this effort, they were enthusiastic, which shows that there are youth in the Mystic that are motivated, insightful, and have the energy to propel this effort forward (Brukilacchio 2010).

There are also tremendous benefits that can unfold from having a strong immigrant community and a high level of diversity. Greg Jenkins of the Somerville Arts Council described the immigrant community as both amazing and aspiring (2010). Figure 1 shows the incredible number of languages spoken in the housing development and is indicative of the rich presence of cultural diversity. Moreover, diversity presents an opportunity to celebrate the wealth of cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions through performance, music and multi-media arts.

![Figure 1: Languages Spoken in the Mystic Housing Development](image-url)
Many organizations, including the South End’s own Inquilinos Borinquen en Accion (IBA) have made culture and the arts a centerpiece of multi-generational education and community building programs. The Mystic Zone can build off of the cultural diversity in the community through culturally based programs and community building.

Aside from the diversity that they represent, immigrant communities often have a number of skills and assets that they bring from their own countries. As Graves Lanfer and Taylor point out “different groups of newcomers are always arriving, bringing new habits and perspectives from different parts of the world” (2004, 8). In many cases, immigrants have valuable and prominent jobs in their countries of origin, but are prevented from practicing in the United States because of legal and professional barriers (The Welcome Project). The Welcome Project, a service provider located in the Mystic, runs a Digital Storytelling Project in the summer that teaches kids ages 13-16 from immigrant families to put together their own personal stories. Youth explore their cultural backgrounds and learn about issues in their communities. One of the youth’s videos talked about how his mother loved her job as a nurse in China but she could not work in the United States without going back to medical school, for which she did not have the time or money (The Welcome Project 2008). While this account is only about one immigrant experience, it is likely that her story is not unique. There may be many skills and assets that residents cannot utilize due to legal barriers, but that could easily contribute to a community development effort.

The Mystic is also home to ample infrastructure to support community engagement, including a community garden, basketball courts, playgrounds, the Armory and outdoor green spaces. The community garden showcases many of the residents’ talent for growing vegetables and flowers. In particular it “allows immigrants from agricultural backgrounds to use the skills passed down from their ancestors, to gain access to fresh produce” (Lanfer and Taylor 2004, 6). The garden also serves as a space to bring the
residents of the housing development together. The Mystic Learning Center provides a summer basketball program where kids ages 7-19 play basketball games two nights a week throughout the summer. This program has had a positive impact in the community, by bringing families out to watch their children play and providing a healthy activity for children (The Mystic Learning Center).

Although we were unable to talk directly with residents in order to identify potential leaders, we were able to speak with former resident Florence “Fluffy” Bergmann. She is now the Director of the Mystic Learning Center and would be a tremendous asset to advance the Mystic Zone. Fluffy used to live in the area and already has strong relationships with many of the residents. She is a well-established and trusted figure in the neighborhood and could certainly help to identify specific community assets and leaders.

Needs and Challenges

Emphasizing that starting with the assets of the residents is key to any sort of successful community development effort, we do need to point out that “focusing on the assets of lower income communities does not imply that these communities do not need additional resources from the outside” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 8). In that vein, we will briefly outline some of the challenges that the community is facing in order to give an accurate picture of the neighborhood. We will continue to underscore that many of these challenges will be overcome most successfully if residents are empowered as participants and decision-makers in this process.

Education Level and Indicators

On average, Mystic students are performing below their peers in Somerville. One indicator of this is the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment
System, a Massachusetts state-wide test for proficiency, by academic subject. Looking at the results for Grade 8 from the Spring of 2009, 61% of Healey students were in the warning/failing category in Math, compared to 23% in the state of MA. Additionally, 42% were in the warning/failing category for Science/Technology which is 21 percentage points higher than the state average. Also, 13% of students failed English compared with a 6% failure rate state-wide. In all 3 categories: English, Math, and Science, 0% of Healey students scored in the advanced or above proficiency category, whereas it was 15%, 20%, 4% respectively state-wide. A striking 40% of the students do not have a first language of English and 12% are limited English proficient. Additionally, 27.6% are special education (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). Map 1 also demonstrates that the educational achievement gap extends to high school graduation rates at the Mystic as compared with the rest of Somerville.

Map 1: Percentages of adults 25 years or older who have at least a high school education.
Poverty

According to the 2000 Census, between 60-70% of families in the Mystic are single-parent female-headed households, compared to 20-30% of families in Somerville. Typically, female-headed households have lower incomes than married households. Female-headed households also tend to have more difficulty overcoming poverty (Ozawa et al 2006). Additionally, the average family size in the Mystic area is larger than families in surrounding areas (Heebink 2009).

Map 2 shows the median income per block group in Somerville according to the 2000 Census. Circled below, the block group in which the Mystic Housing Development is located has a median household income of between $24,895 and $48,099. On average, this is lower than the city's median household income of $46,315 (2000 Census). This spatial pattern is
not surprising due to the presence of the public housing units for low-income families. Additional information indicates that upwards of 81% of these families are in financial distress and may suffer from challenges accompanying poverty (2000 Census).

These levels of poverty, compounded by the prominence of female single-headed households in the neighborhood, mean that many families are experiencing financial stress. Families in poverty are “more likely to experience violence, hunger, poor health, stress, and abuse” (Seccombe 2002). Families in poverty also tend to live in places that are less spatially desirable or nearby toxic or environmentally hazardous sites, creating environmental health stressors. For instance, the Mystic neighborhood is located right next to Interstate 93 exposing families to pollution from the constant travel of cars. For children in particular, poverty can mean poorer health with a higher frequency of chronic health problems, as as well as more emotional and behavioral problems (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics). The Mystic Zone aims to improve the individual and structural challenges associated with poverty.

Significant Immigrant Population

As mentioned previously, there is a large immigrant population at the Mystic and accompanying them, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity. Although there are many advantages that result from this diversity, there are also some challenges. The Mystic River Development (state-subsidized) does not require proof of citizenship, so it houses an undocumented immigrant population. This presents a challenge to the Mystic Zone data collection and canvassing process because interviewers will likely face suspicion from the undocumented residents (Hoynes et al 2005). Graves Lanfer and Taylor emphasize this point when they write, “some undocumented immigrants are unwilling to put themselves at risk by attending community meetings where names are typically recorded” (2004,
7). For children who are undocumented, there will be difficulties with getting into college for financial reasons. Additionally, for those who are born in the U.S. but may be the first generation looking into college, there may be some additional information and support needed in order to achieve this goal.

The barriers to higher education facing undocumented immigrants stem from a 1966 federal law that was passed to prohibit illegal immigrants from receiving in-state tuition rates at any public institutions of higher learning. Section 505 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 reinforced these restrictions (FinAid 2010). While some states are attempting to get around these federal laws by not asking these students about their citizenship status, Massachusetts has yet to pass this type of law (FinAid 2010). As Warren Goldstein-Gelb of The Welcome Project points out, it adds some difficulty to adapt a model like the Harlem Children’s Zone that considers college as the ultimate goal when a significant number of children in the neighborhood will not have the money to attend (2010). If the Mystic Zone does proceed, it might be useful to direct some funding toward making it more financially feasible for immigrants to go to college.

**Service Providers as Assets**

To address many of the challenges that the community is facing, a wealth of nonprofit groups and city services work with the Mystic neighborhood. As Kretzmann and McKnight point out, a list of all the formal institutions, including “private businesses; private institutions such as schools, libraries, parks, police and fire stations; non-profit institutions such as hospitals and social service agencies,” in the community is key to building an asset map (1993, 6). Map 3 is the beginning of a Mystic Asset map. It includes the institutions currently involved in some aspect of the Mystic Zone. These institutions should be considered assets that can be built upon to form one consolidated entity that will focus on the Zone effort. One of the goals of the Mystic Zone is to coordinate and scale-up these services so that they are
reaching the widest target population as efficiently as possible. Below is a chart that details these providers and the many services available to those living in the Mystic Area.

Figure 2, seen on page 58, demonstrates that there are ample services in the area. Although one of our objectives in creating this chart was to identify service gaps, the chart suggests that there are already a wide array of services available to children and families. Rather than creating new services, these need to be scaled up and expanded in order to reach the children and families that are currently not being served by these programs. Additional coordination among service providers ensures that each child and family is embedded in a network of support.

It is clear that the Mystic Housing Development already has many valuable assets and services that should be scaled-up and better coordinated into a seamless pipeline for children and families in the neighborhood. In order for the Mystic Zone process to be truly sustainable and successful, the stakeholders will have to take an asset-based approach, which includes empowering residents to participate in the process and guide their own futures.
Map 3: A Map of Organization Assets for the Mystic

Chapter 4 | Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provider</th>
<th>Programs Offered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Welcome Project</strong></td>
<td>-Youth Aspirations Program</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-English Classes</td>
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<td>-Community Garden</td>
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<td><strong>Cambridge Health Alliance</strong></td>
<td>-Trauma Response Network</td>
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<td>-Somerville Pediatrics</td>
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<td>-HIV/HEP C Counseling/Testing</td>
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<td>-Haitian Health Outreach Program</td>
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<td>-Portuguese Speakers Prevention and Education Program</td>
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<td><strong>Parent Child Home Program</strong></td>
<td>-Home-visiting for child literacy and school readiness</td>
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<td><strong>Raising a Reader Massachusetts</strong></td>
<td>-Literacy program (Red Bag)</td>
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<td><strong>Mystic Learning Center</strong></td>
<td>-Summer Basketball Program</td>
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<td>-School Age Child Care Program</td>
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<td>-Teen Choice Club</td>
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<td><strong>Elizabeth Peabody House</strong></td>
<td>-Infant/Toddler Center</td>
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<td>-Food Pantry</td>
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<td>-After School Program</td>
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<td>-Teens in Leadership Training (TILT)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-EPH Somerville Preschool Cooperative (Parent-Teacher)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Summer Enrichment (camp and day program)</td>
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<td><strong>Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS)</strong></td>
<td>-Pre-School</td>
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<td>-Health and Nutrition</td>
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<td>-Early Literacy</td>
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<td>-Early Literacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Family Services (computers, parent support groups, family literacy)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Advocacy Programs for At Risk Immigrant Youth</td>
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<td><strong>Somerville Arts Council</strong></td>
<td>-Window Art Project</td>
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<td>-Art Unions</td>
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<td>-City Hall Exhibits</td>
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<td>-Artbeat (Arts festival in Davis Square)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Art Without Walls (art and nature, creative writing programs, mural projects)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Greater Boston Catholic Charities</strong></td>
<td>-Basic Needs Emergency Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Child Care</td>
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<td><strong>The Center for Teen Empowerment</strong></td>
<td>-Youth Peace Conferences</td>
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<td>-Youth Organizing and Empowerment</td>
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<td><strong>Somerville Mental Health Organization</strong></td>
<td>-Early Head Start</td>
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<td>-Adult Health Promotion</td>
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<td>-Homelessness Prevention</td>
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<td>-Suicide Prevention</td>
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### Chapter 4 | Assets and Challenges of the Mystic Zone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Services</th>
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| **The Family Center** | - Family Therapy Services  
- Transitions  
- Parenting Journey (Education and Support Group)  
- Parenting in America (Haitian and Latino) |
| **Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences** | - English Classes  
- Adult Basic Education  
- Adult Evening School  
- Get your GED or ADP |
| **The Career Place** | - Employment and Career Services  
- Employment Workshop  
- Assistance with entering Training or Education |
| **National Student Partnerships (now LIFT)** | - Job and House Finding Assistance  
- Make Referrals to other Programs |
| **Greater Boston Legal Services** | - Free Legal Advice  
- Free Case Management |
| **Somerville Community Corporation** | - Housing Services  
- Somerville Mediation Program  
- Community Organizing  
- Financial Literacy Programs |
| **Somerville Homelessness Coalition** | - Shelters  
- Food Services  
- Housing Services  
- Family Shelter |
| **Groundwork Somerville** | - Green Jobs  
- Healthy Education |
| **City (Recreation and Youth)** | - Preschool Programs  
- Youth Programs (babysitting, sports, arts) |
| **Boys and Girls Club** | - Character and Leadership, and Education and Career Development Initiatives  
- Arts Programs |
| **Arthur D. Healey School** | - Safe and Drug Free Schools Program  
- CollegeQuest  
- Curricula for Healthy Decisions  
- On Site Counseling  
- Afterschool Program  
- Partner with Somerville Mediation Program |
| **Haitian Coalition of Somerville** | - Health and Obese Education  
- Elder Services  
- Community Events  
- Youth Services  
- Referrals for employment, taxes, immigration, legal services |
| **Wayside Youth and Family Support Network** | - Family Counseling Centers  
- Family Based Services  
- Young Adult Resource Center  
- Community LINKS (prevent homelessness and youth development)  
- Trauma Intervention Services  
- Parent Partnership  
- Family Networks |
Chapter 5

Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis and Community Organizing Protocols

To form a more complete picture of the Mystic Zone, we interviewed several key stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process. This chapter defines the purpose of the interviews, the barriers we faced, and our interview methodology. It then provides a thematic analysis of the interviews, highlighting the most crucial findings for the Zone effort. Finally, this chapter details how these findings are incorporated into our proposed Mystic Zone Neighborhood Survey (Appendix E) and community organizing protocols.

Background

As mentioned earlier, while there is a broad understanding of the types of people living in the Mystic, there is no detailed data on the residents. Without this knowledge, a realistic strategic plan to meet the needs of children and families in the Mystic cannot be developed. Thus, we were charged with the task of planning a canvassing or data collection effort by creating a survey and a community organizing plan. In order to make both the canvassing and organizing plan successful, we recognized the need to learn from those who work directly with the community.
Creating the Interview Process

As described in our introduction, we faced two main barriers when starting our project: an absence of resident involvement and suspicion about the nature of Tufts’ role. We felt strongly that residents were the most important group to interview in order to create a successful canvassing and organizing plan. However, we learned that we would only be able to interview a resident if a service provider specifically encouraged that interview. This does not detract from the input we received, but limits the type of community input we were able to gather.

After recognizing these barriers, we created our list of interviewees. This list came from the Somerville Housing Authority website as well as the Mystic Executive Steering Committee list. According to our client’s suggestions, we took a “spiral-out” approach, targeting the most involved and proximal providers first. We then worked our way to less involved and geographically distant, but still equally important, providers as time permitted. The “spiraling” idea led to prioritized tiers; tier one being the highest priority interviews and tier three being the lowest. In each interview we asked interviewees to identify any other community members that would provide helpful insights. We created a fourth tier with this additional information.

The Interviews

Our two main goals for the interviews were to understand what data was needed to move forward with the overall strategic planning process, and to learn how to successfully organize members of the neighborhood around the Mystic Zone concept. To do this, we developed five categories of information that we wanted to collect: visioning of outcomes, organizational capacity, data collection and canvassing efforts, community development strategies and other. Over the three weeks during which we conducted interviews, we conducted 14 of the desired 26 interviews. While the official
Visioning

The visioning questions were designed to help us understand more about the interviewee, their role in their organization, and their vision for the Mystic Zone. It was crucial to understand their visions early as this would most likely inform the rest of their responses, as well as informing the context for our eventual canvassing process and organizing protocols.

There were several themes that emerged from the interviews around visioning. The first theme is that there is disagreement over what “zone” means for the Mystic. Four interviewees expressed interest in applying the pipeline of services seen in the Harlem Children’s Zone model; another four interviewees focused on the need to fill service gaps, but did not focus on the pipeline concept. An additional two interviewees expressed uncertainty about the Harlem Children’s Zone model’s applicability to the Mystic. In addition to this, one-third of the interviewees expressed a desire to see the “zone” apply to all of Somerville.

Another key theme that emerged identified ideal benchmarks for 2010. Three-quarters of the interviewees that stated desired benchmarks indicated that resident involvement was one of, if not the, accomplishment they wanted to see most by the year’s end. Additionally, half of the interviewees stressed the need for directional items such as a strategic plan, a mission statement, and clearly defined goals. Over half of the interviewees also stated that data collection was important to this planning process.

The themes that emerged from the visioning questions provide crucial insight to the discrepancies in vision for the Mystic Zone. It is crucial to address these discrepancies in defining the parameters of who the Zone
should serve and how to do it. While they may have differed on their ideal visions, most expressed a strong desire to see residents participate in the strategic planning process and the development of a mission statement and goals. It is therefore crucial to develop a framework for meaningful resident engagement and participatory planning.

Organizational Capacity

The organizational capacity questions were designed to gauge institutional commitment to the Zone effort and to identify resources that might further the progress of the Zone endeavor. These questions were also integral to formulating an asset-based approach to strategic planning as they demonstrated the wealth of resources in the neighborhood.

There was one overarching theme found in this section: the organizations are willing to help. All but two of the interviewees answering a question on canvass participation said that they would be willing to assist with the canvassing effort. The two interviewees who said they were unable to assist attributed this to a lack of resources as opposed to a lack of desire. When applying the desire on a larger scale, most said that their organization had an interest in being involved in the Zone effort, but due to the lack of a defined structure they were unsure of what was being asked of their organization and whether they could participate long-term. This reiterates the concerns expressed in the visioning questions, demonstrating the need to clearly define the scope of the Mystic Zone, the outcomes it hopes to achieve, and how that affects service providers long-term.

Data Collection and Canvassing Efforts

The data collection and canvassing effort questions were specifically designed to inform our community organizing protocols. The aim of these
questions was to assess existing data, gaps in data, the data that providers hope to see collected, and alternative models for a canvassing effort. These ideas are incorporated into our community survey organizing protocols.

The interviews yielded a great deal of specific information that informed our survey and organizing protocols. We were able to ascertain creative ideas for approaching data collection to build upon and develop the skills and assets in the neighborhood. Additionally, we compiled a list of 39 questions people would ask the residents to find out information and identify assets. There was a real divide over whether or not the survey should ask quantitative or qualitative questions, which we accounted for in both the survey and the organizing plan. Overall, this category of questions provided our team with a comprehensive list of survey questions as well as a host of creative community development ideas to organize and involve residents.

Community Development

The community development section sought to utilize service providers’ successes and failures in the community to understand how to successfully engage Mystic residents. Our team was able to ascertain a wealth of information on successful community engagement techniques as well as those that seem to have no impact. We utilized these examples in the creation of our survey and organizing plan and hope that these lessons will be further built upon as the Mystic Executive Steering Committee attempts to build support for the Mystic Zone.

Other

The final questions were designed to connect us with key people and leaders to interview or to utilize in our organizing efforts. It was also our hope that
these questions would remind service providers about the community-based assets available to them. These questions were also designed to continue a partnership between service providers and Tufts University, as they will work together in the creation of the canvassing and organizing plans.

The theme of this section echoes the themes that emerged from our organizational capacity questions. Once again, all of the interviewees expressed an interest in working with us in the immediate future by providing feedback on the survey we drafted as a result of the interviews. Additionally, all but three interviewees expressed an interest in participating in a Kick-Off Celebration. The three that hesitated did so because of logistics and resources such as funding or needing organizational approval before making a commitment.

The willingness of many interviewees to participate in the Mystic effort was strongly considered in the design of our community organizing plan. While none of the interviewees provided specific names of residents that they felt would eagerly participate in this process, they did acknowledge that they knew many such candidates. This will be key for the implementation of our community organizing plan.

Conclusions

The information we learned from our interviews helped us to further comprehend people’s current understanding of the Mystic Zone, the organizational and individual assets in the community, and to identify benchmarks for the continued planning of the Mystic Zone effort. We heard an overwhelming need to define the mission, goals, and the scope of the service providers’ role in the effort. In addition, the interviews identified the organizational assets and willingness to support the Mystic Zone effort. We carefully considered all suggestions about community participation, and we incorporated many into our survey and community organizing plans.
Creating the Canvassing Survey and Organizing Protocols

After completing our interviews, we drafted a canvassing survey that could be administered to residents at the Kick-off event and as part of a larger canvassing effort. We considered the following: the client’s goal, the interview responses about data gaps, and the need for data to identify and support community assets. Our draft survey has four sections: General Questions, Service Questions, Asset-Based Questions, and a Neighborhood Assessment. The data that will result from these four sections will provide information about the population and their needs, how community and personal assets can be better utilized, and how residents can be more central to the Mystic Zone planning, implementation, and evaluation effort.

The interviews provided information about challenges encountered in programming for the Mystic, such as the plethora of languages spoken and the tensions between different cultural and racial groups within the housing development. We also learned from previous programs’ successes and failures about the ways in which the Mystic Zone must reach out to the community in order to succeed. Furthermore, we learned about the existing relationships and community assets that can be harnessed and strengthened through a community organizing plan. The interviews greatly informed our community organizing protocols, to which we now turn.

Community Development Protocols: Community Organizing Strategies to Increase Resident Participation

Community organizing is the process by which people sharing a common place come together as a collective to obtain a shared objective. Unlike consensus-based community building, community organizing underscores
that the fundamental dynamics and expressions of power in society are unequal and that creating change necessitates building power in impoverished and disempowered communities (Bobo et al., 2001; Chambers 2003; Fraser et al., 2003; Fraser et al., 2005). In addition, community organizing is comprised of continuous foundation-building strategies and tactics that meet the central goal of community development: to build social, economic, and political infrastructures for a sustainable healthy community (Bobo et al., 2001).

More specifically, community organizing provides a vehicle “for people collectively to defend their local rights and interest, as well as actively improve the quality of community, and insist on democratic participation in programs and policies that influence the community and local affairs” (Reitzes 1987). Moreover, a review of social science research on community organizing, community building, and power (Reitzes 1987; Warren 2001; Chamber 2003; Fraser et al., 2003; Fraser et al., 2005; Jennings 2007) demonstrates that:

» Communities are not autonomous. They exist in a globalized context, which mirrors the macro politics and processes of urban communities;

» Community ties and networks weaken across time;

» It takes time to build a community identity and it must be cultivated continuously; and

» Training community members in the means of communication and processes of empowerment is crucial to place-based efforts.

As the Mystic Executive Steering Committee progresses in its planning process, we believe the likelihood of long term success of the Mystic Zone is highly dependent on the integration of community organizing strategies and tactics into this process. The failure to do so will diminish the chances for long term sustainability and success, which we conclude from the legacy of place-based anti-poverty initiatives in disenfranchised communities. The historical exclusion or lack of meaningful community participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of past place-based anti-poverty
initiatives demonstrates a central failure on behalf of government and the professional community that carries out or supports its mission (Manning-Thomas 1995; Keating and Krumholz 1999). The Mystic Zone can avoid this mistake by establishing a commitment to community organizing that must begin with the canvassing process, which will be launched in the summer of 2010 with a Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration.

Furthermore, this commitment must persist throughout the Mystic Zone initiative because, unlike the singular kickoff event, organizing is a continuous and long term process (Bobo et al. 2001). The Kick-Off Celebration is a key initial way to begin to include Mystic Zone residents and families in the strategic planning process. Figure 3 shows that there are many forms of community organizing that exist, and it is critical that the organizing design reflects the purpose of the overall initiative. In order to capitalize on this opportunity to showcase their commitment to community development principles, the Mystic Executive Steering Committee should include both an education and advocacy organizing component at the Kick-Off Celebration.

Below, we detail a strategic plan for the Kick-Off Celebration and Resident Organizing Drive. We seek to provide a clear path to increase resident involvement in the development and planning of the Mystic Zone. We acknowledge that there are potential barriers such as funding, organizational capacity, fear of raising resident’s expectations, or time limitations that can deter the full scale and scope of this plan. However, these barriers should not prevent community engagement from moving forward.

**Figure 3: The Forms of Community Organizing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accepts Existing Power Relationships</th>
<th>Challenges Existing Power Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Service</td>
<td>Self-Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Direct Action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Bobo et al., 2001
Chapter 5 | Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis, and Community Organizing Protocols

Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration and Resident Organizing Drive

Relationship Building, One Door at a Time

Key Goals for 2010-2011

» Relationship building

» Canvassing to collect data on community residents and services needed

» Initiate an organizing drive that creates vehicles for meaningful and sustainable community participation in the development and planning of the Mystic Zone

» Identify resident and community concerns

» Share information about the Mystic Zone mission statement, vision, and goals with residents

Methodology to Reach Goals

» One-on-one interviews

» Community surveys

» Focus Groups

» Door-to-door canvassing

» Town Hall meetings

» Meetings with potential community partners

» Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration
Phase I: Mobilize the community to empower residents to participate in documentation process

Over the last several months, stakeholders of the Mystic Executive Steering Committee have struggled with the lack of residential participation and input in the planning processes. In order to reconcile this absence, the Mystic Executive Steering Committee must move aggressively to develop a continuous residential organizing drive that structures the pathway for residential involvement. It is important to recognize that the time needed to complete this organizing phase is contingent upon many variables including, but not limited to funding, organizational capacity, and the commitment from the entire Mystic Executive Steering Committee. Moreover, stakeholders should be aware that the initial phase of an organizing drive creates the foundation for future engagement. Therefore, this phase, if done effectively, is a long and continuous process.

» **STEP 1:** The Mystic Executive Steering Committee develops a draft mission statement, vision, and goals of Mystic Zone as part of the broader strategic planning process.

» **STEP 2:** Canvass Working Group (CWG), a breakout committee of from the Mystic Executive Steering Committee, develops strategic plan for celebration and residential organizing drive.

This strategic plan should include:

» **Costs:** Project budget and fundraising plan

» **Anchor Service Providers:** Key service agencies in the Mystic Zone and staffers that can lead the planning and implementation of the Kick-Off Celebration and Resident Organizing Drive

» **Committed Service Providers:** A list of service providers interested in playing a role

» **Asset Map:** Map that visually places all available services, programs, and resources available to community residents
Chapter 5 | Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis, and Community Organizing Protocols

» **Roles and Responsibilities:** CWG should schedule regular and consistent meetings

» **Methodology:** Prioritize community organizing and community engagement activities that will be utilized throughout the resident organizing drive: 1:1s, community surveys, focus groups, door-to-door canvassing, Town Hall meetings, meetings with potential community partners, and Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration

» **Project Benchmarks and Timeline:** Goals for 1:1 with Residents, Recruitment goals for residential leaders to become survey administrators

Core activities for the CWG:

» **Material Development:** Outreach flyers, canvassing scripts, and canvasser trainings

» **Relationship Building:** Service agencies identify potential canvassers within the Mystic Zone (teenagers, parents, teachers, residents, volunteers) necessary to administer door-to-door efforts; 1:1 with residents to build relationships and identify potential survey administrators; Outreach events

» **Community Participation:** Document community knowledge from residents

» **Fundraising:** Explore funding options to provide stipends for canvassers and other related activities related to the celebration and Resident Organizing Drive e.g., Tufts University, Bunker Hill Community College, the City of Somerville, or philanthropic foundations

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**Phase 2: Train Resident and Non-Resident Survey Administrators**

A key part of community organizing and development is capacity-building and leadership development—how will the recruited residents have opportunities to gain responsibility and recruit others (Chamber 2003)? How much creative autonomy will they have in developing desired outcomes and carrying out action steps toward outcomes? This phase seeks to address these critical questions by training residents as survey administrators and
documenting residential feedback on the Mystic Zone mission statement, vision, and goals. It is also important to note that this phase focuses on resident survey administrators, but it does not mean that one-on-one relationship building ends overall. In other words, one-on-one relationship-building tactics should exist as a fundamental community building tactic throughout the development, planning, and documentation of the Zone.

**STEP 1:** Design a three hour training that introduces the Mystic Zone, highlights the critical role of the data collection process, introduces community development principles, and teaches participants how to most effectively administer survey with residents.

The training should include:

- **Visioning:** Discussion on Mystic Zone mission statement, vision, and goals followed by a small-group brainstorm to generate residential input
- **Community Participation:** Document feedback
- **Community Building:** Develop leadership support teams among the survey administrators
- **Survey Administration Training:** Train residents about the survey tool to prepare for the diversity of reading proficiency they will encounter in the Mystic Housing Residence
- **Digital Diaries:** Identify potential resident respondents for digital storytelling
- **Strategic Planning:** Develop post-Mystic Zone Kick-off Celebration plan that includes a process to follow up with identified leaders and concrete action steps
- **Logistics:** Simultaneous translation, translation of materials, training and small group facilitators, digital record training sessions, food, and child care
Phase 3: Mystic Zone Kick-off Celebration & Data Collection Launch

This one day event has two critical objectives: (1) collect missing data on the Mystic Housing residents and (2) launch the formal Residential Organizing Drive. While the celebration offers an informal space to begin the public awareness campaign and collect data, it is also an opportunity to begin the long term process of community building. In preparation for this celebration, the following steps should be considered:

**STEP 1:** Hold a planning meeting with residents and other key stakeholders to discuss plan, goals and roles for the celebration and canvassing effort.

**STEP 2:** Create a common design for t-shirts to provide to all resident survey administrators (ideally through youth-led contest).

**STEP 3:** Create canvass packets for data collection that includes survey, Mystic Zone mission statement, vision, and goals, door hangers and invitation to next Mystic Executive Steering Committee meeting.

The celebration should include:

- **Data Collection:** Resident and non-resident survey administrators conduct one-on-one surveys; Point Person to Collect finished surveys
- **The Welcome Project’s Digital Diaries:** Video cameras for recordings (may need consent agreement)
- **Marketing:** Promotional materials on Mystic Zone’s mission and goals; translation of all materials into appropriate languages
- **Visioning:** Artistic exercises for children such as maps or painting tiles to create a community visioning mosaic
- **Logistics:** Culturally appropriate food, music, booth for filling out surveys, raffles, and games
Phase 4: Evaluation of Mystic Zone Kick-off Celebration & Data Collection

A key component of any organizing drive is a structured follow-up process that ensures continuing efforts after the launch of a campaign. Often organizations invest considerable resources into the beginning stages of an outreach campaign without the infrastructure for long-term community building. The Canvass Working Group of the Mystic Executive Steering Committee will want to make sure that they have the capacity-building efforts to continue with the organizing drive by:

**STEP 1:** Developing a participatory Mystic Executive Steering Committee meeting to increase residential involvement in the upcoming development and planning of the Mystic Zone.

**STEP 2:** Inviting key identified residents into the planning and development of Mystic Executive Steering Committee meeting.

**STEP 3:** Editing The Welcome Project Digital Diaries.

**STEP 4:** Making follow up calls to interested residents to invite to Mystic Zone Steering Committee meeting.

**STEP 5:** Placing confirmation calls to ensure maximum attendance of residents.

The Steering Committee meeting should include:

» **Presentations:** The Welcome Project’s Digital diaries, initial survey results, and documented community knowledge

» **Data Collection:** What is missing? Do we need to administer more surveys? What other vehicles can we use to accurately gather data from residents?
Chapter 5 | Defining a Vision: Interviews, Analysis, and Community Organizing Protocols

» **Strategic Planning:** Share post-Mystic Zone Kick-off Celebration follow up plan and develop next steps to continue residential organizing drive

» **Logistics:** Choose a location in the Mystic Housing Development to hold Mystic Executive Steering Committee meeting, simultaneous translation, and translation of materials, training and small group facilitators, digital record meeting, food, and child care

Community organizing is the set of tools that allow us to identify the “social capital” within urban distressed communities (Bobo et al., 2001), which Jennings defines as “individual, community, or familial networks that reflect substantive degrees of trust between parties, and can be used to build, facilitate, or maintain cooperation for mutually beneficial economic, social, or political objectives” (2007, 87). Moreover, community development theory and practice demonstrates that, through continuous capacity building, impoverished neighborhoods and their residents can build common agendas with a broader stakeholder (e.g., business, elected officials, and social service providers) base to meet their objectives. Yet the commitment to—or lack thereof—community development principles heavily impacts the degree to which residents can play an active and meaningful role in the process. The strategic plan laid out here provides a clear pathway for the Mystic Executive Steering Committee to address the missing role of residents in the development and planning of the Mystic Zone. It is clear that this type of authentic community participation is necessary for the Mystic Zone’s success and as such we recommend that the Mystic Executive Steering Committee implement this resident-oriented plan.
Section 4

Moving Forward
Chapter 7

Recommendations to the Mystic Zone

Utilizing an asset-based framework in the Mystic Zone allows all stakeholders to see that the residents are not dependent recipients of community development efforts, but active participants working to determine their own futures.

Chapter One outlined and defined the principles of participatory planning, asset-based development, and community development. We define participatory planning as practices that democratize the strategic and evaluative aspects of planning and development (Jennings 2004). It builds political power in the community and encourages the community to invest itself in and claim agency over its future (Jennings 2004; Fraser et al 2005; Kretzmann and McKnight 1993). An asset-based approach to community development, moreover, “starts with what is present in the community, the capacities of its residents and workers, the associational and institutional base of the area—not with what is absent or what is problematic, or what the community needs” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 9). In contrast, a deficit model strips communities of their strengths and sense of agency by fostering a sense of dependence, a sense that they are “people with special needs that can only be met by outsiders” (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 2). Utilizing an asset-based framework in the Mystic Zone allows all stakeholders to see that the residents are not dependent recipients of community development efforts, but active participants working to determine their own futures. An asset-based framework will allow for more meaningful collaborative planning, advance community development goals, and enrich the residents of the Mystic Zone.

Chapter Two presents a review of place-based anti-poverty initiatives which demonstrates that top-down planning efforts like Urban Renewal,
the Community Development Block Grant, and Empowerment Zones are unsuccessful in achieving their community development goals. These initiatives were based on a disempowering deficit model and minimal community participation, leaving a legacy that further stigmatized and marginalized already vulnerable communities. From this review, we conclude that the Mystic Zone will greatly benefit from an asset-based model that empowers the community and fosters community development. Moreover, investing in the community ensures that, regardless of political changes, the impacts of the initiative will be long lasting. Adopting an innovative asset-based approach and facilitating authentic participation among the community will set the Mystic Zone apart from past place-based anti-poverty initiatives.

Chapter Three reviews the Harlem Children’s Zone Model (HCZ), the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, and other Zone initiatives around the United States. While the HCZ is a reputable model that has enjoyed great improvements in educational outcomes, it still represents a top-down approach to alleviating poverty. Geoffrey Canada’s expertise and charisma contribute greatly to the HCZ’s success, but this type of leadership is exceptional and makes the model difficult to replicate. Instead, we advocate for an asset-based community development approach, which is both feasible and sustainable. Asset-based community development draws on the wealth of resources in the neighborhood, building the capacity of residents and fostering creative partnerships. We looked to other Zone initiatives to provide examples of this approach. The Mystic Zone will need to draw on the specific programmatic strengths of the Harlem Children’s Zone, but turn to other models and think creatively to implement a structure of governance and organization that embodies asset-based community development.

Chapter Four assesses the challenges and assets of the Mystic Zone. We outline the physical and demographic characteristics of the Mystic Zone pilot area, implicating poverty as the key determinant limiting the success of residents. We do not discount the need to identify community challenges
and gaps in services, but stakeholders must not limit themselves to
data-collection or canvassing that furthers a deficit or needs-based model.
An asset-based model begins with “a clear commitment to discovering a
community’s capacities and assets,” and therefore begs for the quantitative
and qualitative information that can only be gleaned from building strong
relationships with residents and the infrastructure for sustainable resident
participation in the Mystic (Kretzmann and McKnight 1993, 1).

Chapter Five reports our findings from the fourteen interviews conducted
with non-profits and city agencies that serve the Mystic. The interviews
revealed a number of important concerns about the tensions between
community development, which can be a slow process, and the need to
move along a faster timeline. However, we heard general agreement that
residents needed to be involved in the strategic planning and decision-
making processes. Importantly, these interviews revealed a number of key
programs and community assets, including a population of motivated and
outspoken youth. While there remains a large gap in data about the specific
skills and assets among community members, these interviews suggest that
the Mystic has a wealth of resources upon which to draw for engaging the
community, building leaders, and promoting neighborhood revitalization.

Chapter five also includes our community organizing protocols, which
recommend a strategic plan for the Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration and
Resident Organizing Drive. Community organizing underscores that the
fundamental dynamics and expressions of power in society are unequal
and that creating change necessitates building power in impoverished and
disempowered communities (Bobo et al. 2001; Chambers 2003; Fraser et
al. 2003; Fraser et al. 2005). Moreover, community organizing is the set of
practices and processes that allow stakeholders to discover the community’s
assets, skills and capital. The Mystic Zone can avoid the mistakes of
prior place-based anti-poverty initiatives by establishing a commitment to
meaningful resident participation that must begin—but cannot end—at the
Kick-Off Celebration.
Based on this research and our assessments, we make the following recommendations for the strategic planning process, youth development, canvassing, and the Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration. The most important recommendations are highlighted in the narrative, while other suggestions are summarized in tables below.

**Strategic Planning**

We emphasize that asset-based community development be the foundation for all strategic planning. This framework requires a long-term commitment to identifying a community’s assets and skills that may not be apparent from a survey, but are acquired from continuous relationship building. For instance, these relationships might reveal that a Mystic resident was a doctor in his or her country of origin, but because of finances and bureaucratic restrictions, he or she cannot practice in the United States and is instead working as a taxi driver. This resident has tangible skills that can be cultivated and used to improve the neighborhood.

Thus, we recommend that stakeholders first **create a short-term strategic plan and work plan specifically for community engagement and organizing** for the remainder of 2010 and fiscal year 2011. The strategic plan and work plan will work toward building the relationships necessary to identify community assets and leaders consistent with an asset-based community development approach. Upon completion of this initial phase, we **recommend that service providers, city officials and residents develop a mission statement that empowers residents and emphasizes an asset-based community development strategy.** The mission statement must not focus on needs in a way that victimizes individuals or dilutes their agency. It should instead delineate a clear set of goals and outcomes that the Mystic Zone aims to achieve. Third, **service providers, city officials and residents should work together to create realistic goals that are**

“It is by nature a messy process...that doesn’t mean that it is a failure.”
- Moncrieff Coehran, Executive Steering Committee Meeting, 3/31/10
appropriate to the characteristics of the Mystic Zone. The Mystic Zone will need to be an adaptation or hybrid of an asset-based community development organizational structure and of the successful pipeline of programs in the HCZ. Finally, we feel strongly that decisions must be made with the input of all stakeholders in order to reflect community interests. This kind of collaborative process ensures that relationships of power will be more equitable and satisfies that transformative nature of community development.

Table 1: Recommendations for Strategic Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a short-term strategic plan &amp; work plan specifically for community engagement and organizing</td>
<td>Identify community assets and skills; create foundational relationships; invest individuals in Mystic Zone effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers, City officials, and residents should develop a mission statement that empowers residents and emphasizes an asset-based community development strategy</td>
<td>Promote meaningful participation and community empowerment; build a Mystic Zone that is responsive to community desires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service providers, City officials, and residents should work together to create realistic goals for the Mystic</td>
<td>Promote community development model unique to Mystic Zone; promote meaningful participation and community empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine benchmarks of success for 2010 and 2011, and a strategic plan and work plan to achieve them</td>
<td>Provide direction and clear path to achieving outcomes; provide reference for evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify immediate and long-term sources of funding</td>
<td>Provide economic opportunities for residents and youth advancing the Mystic Zone; fund service providers to scale-up their programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions must be made with input of all stakeholders in order to be reflective of community interests</td>
<td>Promote community development, leadership and capacity-building; transform existing relations of power; promote meaningful participation and community empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set specific and consistent meeting times for committee and planning meetings and advertise for them widely</td>
<td>Outreach to residents; promote community involvement and empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Development

The Mystic has a wealth of motivated and talented young people, such as the United Nations Student Advisory Council, the Welcome Project’s LIPS teens, as well as participants in the Boys and Girls Club of Middlesex County (Mystic-Healey Clubhouse). **We urge the Mystic Zone to incorporate youth voices in the planning and decision-making processes** because they are crucial agents of change with multiple assets, such as their fluency in multiple languages. Further, youth are typically a disenfranchised population. It is therefore important for community development to empower underprivileged youth to participate in the Mystic Zone and improve their sense of agency.

Second, **we recommend that the Mystic Zone utilize teens to help develop and maintain a “brand” or identity for the Mystic Zone.** Several non-profit service providers suggested involving teens creatively.

Table 2: Strategies to Engage Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate youth voices in the planning and decision-making processes</td>
<td>Empower young people, build skills; promote community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage youth creatively to create a brand or identity for the Mystic Zone</td>
<td>This can help improve visibility for the Mystic Zone effort; Promotes teen empowerment and creativity; builds multi-media skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harness youth and their skills as ambassadors of change</td>
<td>Utilize youth as connectors; build skills for youth; promote community development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide programs and opportunities for cultural exchange through performance, music, and multimedia arts.</td>
<td>Build on the strength of cultural diversity in the neighborhood; foster greater tolerance and cultural awareness; community building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ youth for canvassing, community organizing, and building an identity for the Mystic</td>
<td>Creates economic opportunities for youth; builds skills; sustains long-term relationships and community organizing efforts; building an identity increases community cohesion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
through a contest to create a logo for the Mystic Zone. Throughout the summer and leading up to the main Kick-Off Celebration, stakeholders, canvassers and youth can wear a T-shirt with the Mystic Zone logo in order build the community’s curiosity and make these stakeholders recognizable ambassadors in the neighborhood.

**Canvassing**

A community development framework emphasizes the ways in which typical planning efforts might be utilized to enhance community skills. We heard from several interviewees that it was important for the canvassing effort to develop skills for canvassing volunteers, particularly for youth. **We suggest that the canvassing effort effectively train volunteers in skills like cultural competency and community organizing, recognizing the value in community development separate from its outcomes.** We further recommend that stakeholders must continue to engage the canvassing volunteers as potential leaders, connectors, and ambassadors in their communities. These are important active participants who can further the long-term goals of the community organizing and development processes. Our canvassing protocols in chapter five and our survey in Appendix E provide more information on this subject.

**Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration and Resident Organizing Drive**

As described in chapter five, community organizing and community development is a long-term process, and cannot be condensed into a singular event like summer 2010’s Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration.
Therefore, we recommend that prior to the event, a follow-up plan must be in place to encourage and structure long-term resident engagement and participation that can be implemented soon after the event occurs. This will facilitate relationships with community members and promote sustained participation.

The surveys administered to Mystic residents at the Kick-Off Celebration should solicit information about the backgrounds, skills and assets of those in attendance. While these surveys were originally envisioned to solely collect data about gaps in social services and community needs, this kind of tool would only entrench Mystic Zone stakeholders in a deficit-based approach. The survey administered to residents should instead embody an asset-based community development approach.

Final Thoughts

Currently, the Mystic Zone is working from a traditional needs-based or deficit framework. While we aim to identify community challenges and needs through canvassing efforts, we urge Mystic Zone stakeholders to shift to an asset-based approach. We strongly believe that the Mystic Zone effort can only be successful if it is centered on an asset-based community development framework. Community development and meaningful community participation cannot be an auxiliary or a secondary aim of the Mystic Zone. Without authentic community and resident participation, prior initiatives have failed to alleviate poverty and its accompanying challenges to children, families, education and health. We can learn from the Harlem Children’s Zone, other Zone initiatives, and literature on asset-based community development to improve the chances of success in the Mystic. It is our hope that the Mystic Zone will make asset-based community development and participatory planning central to its operations. We offer these recommendations with conviction that the Mystic Zone is primed to create a progressive and innovative way to alleviate the impacts of poverty.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 6
AND
THE SOMERVILLE MYSTIC ZONE PROJECT

I. Introduction

Project (i.e., team) number: 6
Project title: Mystic Zone
Client: The Somerville Mystic Zone Project

This Memorandum of Understanding (the “MOU”) summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the “Project”), as agreed to between (i) the UEP graduate students enrolled in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) (the “Course”) offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (“UEP”) who are identified in Paragraph II(1) below (the “Field Projects Team”); (ii) Somerville Mystic Zone Project, further identified in Paragraph II(2) below (the “Client”); and (iii) UEP, as represented by a Tufts faculty member directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2010 semester.

II. Specific Provisions

(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

1. Amanda Cleveland  email address: amanda.cleveland@tufts.edu
2. Katrine Herrick  email address: katrine.herrick@gmail.com
3. Laura Tolkoff  email address: ltolkoff@gmail.com
4. Vincient Booker  email address: vincient.booker@tufts.edu
5. Wilnelia Riviera  email address: wilnelia@n2nma.org
(2) The Client’s contact information is as follows:

Client name: Somerville Mystic Zone Project
Key contact/supervisor: Mon Cochran, Ph.D.
Email address: moncrieff.cochran@tufts.edu
Telephone number: 607-351-8681
Address: 105 College Avenue – Room 104, Medford, MA 02155

(3) The goal/goals of the Project is/are:

- To develop a community documentation process that both includes an organizing and outreach design that can be successfully implemented in the Mystic Housing Development with the object of integrating residents in the Mystic Zone development process.
- To assist our client in the long term project of developing a place based public policy approach that addresses persistent educational achievement gaps by improving a community through a pipeline of educational and wrap around services that begins at pregnancy and continues through college graduation.

(4) The methods and processes through which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve this goal/these goals is/are:

- Interviews of Mystic Housing Development social service agencies and providers.
- Feedback of key social service agencies and providers on community documentation process design.
- Identifying best-practices based on comparative research of other Promise Neighborhoods models in the United States, with a particular emphasis on community participation design.
- Feedback of Steering Committee members.

(5) The work products and deliverables of the Project are (this includes any additional presentations for the client):

- A PowerPoint presentation of successful community development And community participation efforts, to be presented at a Steering Committee meeting.
- A draft of interview questions for service provider interviews.
- Several proposals for the documentation process, to be presented to the Steering Committee.
- Final report will detail:
The Mystic Zone is both new, as well as an outgrowth of prior community development and anti-poverty initiatives;

- A review of the children’s Zone initiatives under way or planned in other locales, including summaries of the scope of the projects, the characteristics of the focal neighborhoods, and the primary community development strategies being utilized or planned.
- An organizing, outreach and community engagement plan for the Mystic Zone, focusing on the perspective of the Mystic residents (both with and without children), Somerville residents living outside the Mystic neighborhood, and human service providers serving Mystic residents or the broader Somerville community;
- Presentation of findings from provider and pilot resident interviews, including copies of draft survey, interview, and focus group protocols; and
- A draft proposal for documentation effort to be carried out in Summer 2010.

(6) The anticipated Project timeline (with dates anticipated for key deliverables) is:

**Due February 9:** A first draft of interview questions for service providers. Send to Emily.
**Due last week of February:** A slideshow presentation detailing successful practices of similar community development projects (as well as details of how they differ from Mystic). This will be presented at a Steering Committee meeting, date TBD. The draft of the slideshow will be emailed to Emily a week in advance of this meeting.
**Due March 1:** Project outline to be handed in to our professors.
**Due March 2 or 9:** Midcourse presentation in class.
**Due March 12:** Interview of Mystic-Serving Agencies should be complete. (This is a target date but can vary based on the late March steering committee meeting and service providers’ availabilities).
**Due March 19:** At least one member of the team should have met with a member of the data working group to assess what additional data should be collected in the documentation process.
**Due Last week of March:** Design proposals for documentation process. This should be emailed to Emily a week in advance. The proposals will be presented at a Steering Committee in late March, date TBD.
**Due April 9:** First draft of final report.
**Due mid April:** A draft of interview and focus group protocols.
**Due April 20, 27 or May 4:** Final presentation for class.
Due May 7: Final report to be handed in to Professors and client.

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Projects Team are (or will be determined as follows):

Mon Cochran is the project’s supervisor and will have the final say. Although he is the lead supervisor the majority of communication between teams will happen between co-supervisor Emily S. Lin (contact for client) and Katrine Herrick (contact for Field Project Team 6).

(8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:

The UEP department has offered up to $100 dollars for project related expenses incurred by Field Project Team 6 such as travel to/from the client. This is to be documented.
III. Additional Representations and Understandings

A. The Field Projects Team is undertaking the Course and the Project for academic credit and therefore compensation (other than reimbursement of Project-related expenses) may not be provided to team members.

B. Because the Course and the Project itself are part of an academic program, it is understood that the final work product and deliverables of the Project (the “Work Product”) – either in whole or in part – may and most likely will be shared with others inside and beyond the Tufts community. This may include, without limitation, the distribution of the Work Product to other students, faculty and staff, release to community groups or public agencies, general publication, and posting on the Web. Tufts University and the Field Projects Team may seek and secure grant funds or similar payment to defray the cost of any such distribution or publication. It is expected that any issues involving Client confidentiality or proprietary information that may arise in connection with a Project will be narrow ones that can be resolved as early in the semester as possible by discussion among the Client, the Field Projects Team and a Tufts instructor directly responsible for the Course (or his or her designee).

C. The client will have open access to all information gathered by Field Projects Team 6. If the final report is utilized, it is to be properly cited. Should the client utilize the data but come to a different conclusion the new conclusions are not to be credited to any Field Projects Team member but will rather become the property of the client themselves.

D. It is understood that this Project may require the approval (either through full review or by exemption) of the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This process is not expected to interfere with timely completion of the project.
IV. Signatures

For Tufts Department of Child Development
By: Emily S. Lin
Date:

Representative of the Field Projects Team
By: Katrine Herrick
Date:

Tufts UEP Faculty Representative
By: Rachel Bratt
Date:
ADDENDUM TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 6
AND
THE SOMERVILLE MYSTIC PROJECT

1. **Addition to section II part 3** – To create a documentation process that will effectively and accurately collect the information necessary for the Steering Committee, service providers, and community to design an effective Children’s Zone.

2. **Addition to section II part 3** – To interview service providers in the documentation process in order to obtain knowledge on how to create a successful documentation process.

3. **Addition to section II part 6** – April 16th – due date for comments and suggested revisions from the client to be sent to Katrine.

4. **Replacing section II part 8 with** – The client is expected to pay the UEP department $100 dollars for project related expenses incurred by Field Project Team 6 such as travel to/from the client and production of the final report. All expenses will be documented by the team and receipts will be presented to the UEP department for reimbursement.

5. **Replacing section III part C with** – The Field Projects team will be conducting interviews and collecting data. Throughout this process it is understood that the team will respect all requests for confidentiality. As such the only information and data that will be shared with client is the data that we are expressly permitted to share. If the final report is utilized, it is to be properly cited. Should the client utilize the data but come to a different conclusion the new conclusions are not to be credited to any Field Projects Team member but will rather become the property of the client themselves.

Signatures

__________________________
For Tufts Department of Child Development
By: Emily S. Lin
Date:

__________________________
Representative of the Field Projects Team
By: Katrine Herrick
Date:

__________________________
Tufts UEP Faculty Representative
By: Rachel Bratt
Date:
FWA00002063

Re: IRB Study # 1002034
Title: Mystic Zone Service Provider Interviews for UEP Field Project
PI: Katrine Herrick
Co-Investigator(s): Vincent Booker
Study Coordinator: Laura Tolkoff
Faculty Advisor: Rachel Bratt
IRB Review Date: 2/17/2010

February 18, 2010

Dear Katrine,

Your Application for Exempt Status for the above referenced study has been reviewed. This study qualifies as exempt from review under the following federal guidelines:

Exempt Category 2 as defined in 45 CFR 46.101 (b). For complete details please visit the United States Department of Health and Human Services Office (DHHS) for Human Research Protections (OHRP) website at:
http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm#48.101

Please know that this exemption does not relieve the investigator of any responsibilities relating to the research subjects; equal care must still be taken to ensure that subjects experience no harm to themselves or to their legitimate interests.

Furthermore research should be conducted in accordance with the ethical principles, (i) Respect for Persons, (ii) Beneficence, and (iii) Justice as outlined in the Belmont Report.

Any changes to the protocol or study materials that might affect the exempt status must be referred to the Office of the IRB for guidance. Depending on the changes, you may be required to apply for either expedited or full review.

If you have any questions, please contact the Office of the IRB at (617) 627-3417.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Wakeford, Ph.D.
IRB Administrator
Appendix C

Interview Questions

Visioning Questions:
» Please describe your role at your organization.
» What is your vision for the future of the Mystic Zone?
» What would you want to see accomplished in the Mystic Zone endeavor during 2010? Can you suggest three benchmarks for success in 2010?

Organizational Capacity Questions:
» Do you feel like your organization has the capacity to help with canvassing efforts? If so, how?
» In what capacity is your organization committed to the strategic planning process? Do you envision your organization working with the Mystic Zone in the long term?
» Have there been similar place-based comprehensive attempts in Somerville like the Mystic Zone in the past? If so, how would you assess these projects?
» Do you think there are opportunities for partnership between organizations? If so, in what way?

Data Collection and Canvassing Efforts:
» What types of information do you think should be collected from families about the Somerville Area and the Mystic Zone sites? What types of information would be useful to the strategic planning and implementation of the Children’s Zone?
» If you were charged with the task of this canvassing process, how would you approach it?

» Do you have data on the children and residents using your services in the Mystic Zone? Would you be willing to share this information with the Mystic Zone Data Collection Team?

» How can the canvassing efforts be more than simply gathering information? What strategies could be used to make data collection the start of community engagement and organizing efforts?

Community Development

» Please share some successes, challenges, and failures in organizing residents of the Mystic Housing Project and/or the Somerville community. What efforts have worked well in organizing communities, which have not?

» As a service provider, do you perceive any possible barriers to entry in the community?

» What do you see as the best physical, institutional, and human resources that can overcome obstacles in the community development effort?

Other:

» Can you identify key leaders in the community?

» If possible, please recommend other organizations, residents, teachers, and community members who are leaders and resources in the Somerville area.

» We would like to build upon the input you provided with us today and make sure that it is appropriately reflected in our final canvassing materials. Would you be interested in meeting with us or in providing feedback to our final canvassing proposal?

» Would you be willing to participate in a Mystic Zone Kick-Off Celebration in the summer of 2010?

» If your answer to question 18 was “yes” would you be willing to recruit community members and residents to the Zone Kick-Off Celebration?
Appendix D

List of Interviewees

We want to extend a special thank you to the interviewees. Your time, enthusiasm and insights were greatly appreciated.

Heloisa Alvarez
Program Coordinator – Greater Boston
Raising a Reader Massachusetts
http://raisingareaderma.org/home.htm

Selvin Chambers
Executive Director
Elizabeth Peabody House
http://www.elizabethpeabodyhouse.org/

Florence “Fluffy” Bergmann
Executive Director
Mystic Learning Center
www.mysticlearningcenter.org

Donna DiFillippo
Executive Director
Raising a Reader Massachusetts

Lisa Brukilacchio
Executive Director
Director of Somerville Community Health Agenda
Cambridge Health Alliance
http://www.challiance.org/

Warren Goldstein-Gelb
Executive Director
The Welcome Project
http://www.welcomeproject.org/
Appendix D  |  List of Interviewees

Stephanie Hirsch
City of Somerville
http://www.somervillema.gov/

Gregory Jenkins
Executive Director
Somerville Arts Council
http://www.somervilleartscouncil.org/

Peter Lenrow
Director
Somerville Mental Health Association
http://www.somervillementalhealth.org/

Lucia McAlpin
Lead Teacher and Center Director
CAAS Head Start
http://caasheadstart.org/

Danny McLaughlin
Program Coordinator
The Center for Teen Empowerment
www.teenempowerment.org/somerville.html

Carol Nolan
Director of Children Services
CAAS Head Start
http://caasheadstart.org/

Sharon Richardson O’Connell
Family Child Care Director
Greater Boston Catholic Charities Family Care
www.ccab.org/family_child_care_west.html

Rachel Szyman
Program Coordinator
Jonathon M. Tisch College, Tufts University

Fernanda Villar
Somerville Coordinator
Parent Child Home Program
http://www.parent-child.org/localsites/ma.html
Overview of Promise Neighborhood Initiatives
Prepared and Researched by: Field Projects Team #6

Case Studies
- Los Angeles Urban League: Neighborhoods @ Work
- Northside Achievement Zone
- Parramore Kidz Zone
- Homewood Neighborhoods

NAZ Governance Structure
Greater Crenshaw Educational Partnership (GCEP) Members

Community Development Strategies
- Goals
- Accomplishments
- Methods

Park Mesa Heights: At a Glance

Overview
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Block</th>
<th>People</th>
<th>Crime Rate</th>
<th>Unemployment Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>259% of LA avg.</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</table>

NAZ Governance Structure

Parramore Kidz Zone

Northern Minneapolis: At a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>NAZ</th>
<th>NEZ</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocks</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>17,600</td>
<td>13,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>7,353</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty Rate</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Study 2: The Northside Achievement Zone

Researched and Prepared by: Wilnelia Riviera

The Northside Achievement Zone

Steering Committee
Managing Team
Coordination Team

Overview

Neighborhoods @ Work Initiative

NAZ HCZ

Year
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAZ</th>
<th>NEZ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocks</td>
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<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>17,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>7,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty Rate</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Rate</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E  | Promise Neighborhoods Slides

Outreach: Family Engagement
- Widespread canvassing
- One-on-one follow-ups
- NAZ Connect
- GIS Mapping
- Empowerment Training
- “You’re in the Zone” flyers

Governance Structure: PKZ

The Homewood Children’s Village

Case Study 3: The Parramore Kidz Zone

<table>
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<th>Overview</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults with less than HS education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zone Resultz
- 47% decline in juvenile arrests since 2006
- Increased 13% in FCAT math
- Increased 5% in reading
- 2,022 children have enrolled in PKZ programs.
- Still expanding

Homewood Governance Structure

Community Development Ideas
- Incorporate current social services
- Incorporate residents
- Utilize teens
- Community gardens
- “State of the Village”

What’s Being Done:
- Surveying Residents
- Using engaging questions
- Physical Survey

Ideas:
- IT systems for collaboration

Parramore: At a Glance

Parramore Kidz Zone

Homewood: At A Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in one school</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Arrest Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researched and Prepared by: Vincent H. Booker

Researched and Prepared by: Amanda Cleveland
Appendix F

Mystic Zone Neighborhood Survey

Introduce yourself.

I am talking with families throughout the neighborhood about the Mystic Zone. The Mystic Zone is a program aimed at working with the vibrant families to make a better neighborhood. This survey is extremely important in the design of this program since it will help us get a better idea of what you have to offer and how you feel the neighborhood could improve.

Would you be willing to answer some brief questions to help us better serve children and families in the Mystic? The answers will remain confidential.

If yes: Thank you.

If no: Are you sure? Your input is extremely important and valuable to us. Is there a better time for you to participate? If still no: Have a great day!

General Questions

1. How many children live in your home?

2. What are their ages?

3. How long has your family lived in this residence (Please circle)?
   0-1 years    2-4 years    More than 4 years

4. How many people are employed in your household?

5. How many hours do they work a week?

6. What languages are spoken in your home?

7. What is your hobby or talent?

8. What do you like to do in your spare time?
Service Questions

9. Where do your children attend school?
   » Child 1 ________________________________
   » Child 2 ________________________________
   » Child 3 ________________________________
   » Child 4 ________________________________

10. While family members are at work, what type of child care does your child/do your children receive (Please circle)?
    » Someone in this house takes care of the child
    » Child attends __________________________
    » Family members take care of the child in their home
    » Local Babysitting or Caregiver
    » Other ________________________________

11. Has your child been for a physical or well-child visit in the last year? Yes  No

12. Has your child been for a routine dental visit in the last year? Yes  No

13. How do you typically hear about services or events in your neighborhood? (Circle all that apply)
    » Flyer
    » From friends or neighbors
    » Through the programs I am involved in
    » Newspaper. Name ______________________

14. What would be the best way to inform you about a new program or service? (Circle all that apply)
    » Flyer
    » Through programs you're involved in
    » Through your child’s school
    » Place of Worship
    » Phone Call (number: ________________________________)
    » Local TV Channel. Which one? ________________________________
    » Electronic Newsletter (email: ________________________________)
    » Newspaper. Which one? ________________________________
Assessment of the Neighborhood

This section is about what this neighborhood is like as a place to bring up your children. Please tell me whether you feel that things like the schools and other services are great, good, OK, not so good, or poor.

School Quality

1  2  3  4  5
Poor                   Great

Safety of Neighborhood

1  2  3  4  5
Poor                   Great

Childcare programs

1  2  3  4  5
Poor                   Great

Afterschool programs

1  2  3  4  5
Poor                   Great

Quality of Parks and Playgrounds

1  2  3  4  5
Poor                   Great

16. What would you like to learn from your neighbors?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

17. What do you love about your neighborhood?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________

18. What do you think could be done to make your neighborhood a better place to live?

_______________________________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________________________
Organizational Assessment

19. Please check all boxes that apply to you or anyone in your home.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider</th>
<th>Never Heard of it</th>
<th>Heard of it</th>
<th>Have Participated</th>
<th>Currently Using</th>
<th>Plan to Participate</th>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Boys and Girls Club</td>
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<td>CAAS Head Start</td>
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<td>The Cambridge Health Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities Family Day Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Peabody House</td>
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<td>The Family Center</td>
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<td>The Haitian Coalition</td>
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<td>Mystic Learning Center</td>
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<td>Mystic Tenants Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent child Home Program</td>
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<td>Raising a Reader</td>
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<td>Somerville Arts Council</td>
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<td>Somerville Mental Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teen Empowerment</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Wayside Youth</td>
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<td>Other:</td>
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20. Can we contact you to be involved later on in this project? (Your survey will still be anonymous)

If yes, what is your contact information? ________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time for participating in this important project for the children and families in the Mystic neighborhood.
Appendix G
Mystic Roadmap

“Where We Were”

After our team drafted the resident survey and community organizing protocols, we were asked to present our proposals at two meetings: the Mystic Executive Steering Committee meeting and the Canvassing Working Group meeting. The Mystic Executive Steering Committee expressed concern about the ambitious timeline for the implementation of the plan. Among service providers, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for commitment to community development evident in our plan. This enthusiasm suggests support for community development as the Mystic Zone effort progresses.

At the Canvass Working Group meeting it became clear that the group is committed to our proposals when the participants began speaking in a way that embodies an asset-based approach. They discussed how to best utilize and coordinate existing community resources to begin implementing the plan this summer, particularly youth assets. The group also expressed their frustrations that the plan existed outside of any meaningful structure for implementation or context since the Mystic Zone still had no defined mission statement or goals. The meeting ended with two “next-steps”: first, to identify resources and context for the plan’s implementation. Second, they sought to use the fruitful discussion about youth resources to create talking points for youth and to solicit their input on Zone names, mission
statements and goals before the upcoming Mission Statement meeting.

“Where We Are”

Prior to the Mission Statement Meeting in mid-April, the working group met with three youth leaders whose insights were invaluable. The Mission Statement meeting was convened in order to create a more definitive mission statement that better reflected the current standing of the Mystic Zone than the one proffered in August 2009. The mission statement proposed by the City of Somerville was met with strong opposition. The focus of the Mission Statement meeting then shifted from establishing the Mission and Goals of the Mystic Zone to a discussion about the governance structure of the Zone. The meeting discussed a proposal to create a Mayor’s Trust Fund, which would enable the Mystic Zone to receive initial funding from the Office of the Mayor. This meeting demonstrated the tensions between the expedited municipal and fiscal timeline with the prolonged process of community development. Another Mission Statement meeting is necessary, but we strongly advocate that this meeting be led and facilitated by a greater coalition of residents and youth from the Mystic. Asset-based community development mandates a transformation of relations of power. In practice, this means that the community will set the agendas at meetings and will propose the mission, goals, objectives, policy and programmatic decisions for the Mystic Zone.

While our organizing plan was under review, the Arthur D. Healey School, a central actor in the Mystic Zone, began a transition that could have potentially disrupted the Mystic Zone effort. It was announced that Mike Sabin, the school’s principal, would be leaving in May 2010. Additionally, the school is considering several structural changes to its educational programs, which will impact many children and families in the Mystic. This announcement spurred a plethora of activity from the Schools Committee, the Resident Working Group and the Canvass Working Group to organize.
parents around these changes. It included outreach to service providers to identify families that attend the Mystic, as well as collaboration with other service providers asking them to call the identified parents and encourage them to attend the school meetings. Due to the timeline of this report, we are unable to ascertain the status of the organizing efforts and its outcomes in organizing families around the Healey School transition. However, we are confident that this engagement process is a positive step to building relationships and towards engaging residents, which will advance the community development efforts of the Mystic Zone.

“Where We Are Headed”

The attempt to organize residents around the Healey School’s transition is a positive step to engage residents as active participants. In order to further build upon this foundation, we suggest that the organizers follow up with residents that they were able to successfully organize, and maintain a list of residents who were interested in attending meetings but were unable to because of various constraints. This list of residents will prove to be a great asset when identifying community leaders in our organizing protocols (see page 69). Additionally, we suggest that the organizers also take time to evaluate the effectiveness of the current organization process. The evaluation will help to further inform the proposed organizing plan. Overall, the current organizing around the Healey School transition presents an opportunity to make the proposed organizing plan a more effective strategy for community development.
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