

**WHY STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS MATTER:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE**

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**Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>THE RENEWED INTEREST IN NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHY AND WHY NOW?</b>	<b>1</b>
Concern about the impacts of concentrated poverty in urban neighbourhoods	3
The growing significance of cities and urban areas	4
The discovery of social capital as a building block for social cohesion	6
<b>STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY MATTER</b>	<b>8</b>
What is a neighbourhood?	8
A neighbourhood is like an onion	9
The contribution of social capital to building strong neighbourhoods	10
The dimensions of a strong neighbourhood	14
Enabling characteristics or conditions	15
Why do neighbourhoods matter and to whom do they matter the most?	17
A review of 'neighbourhood effects' research	18
Limitations of neighbourhood effects research	20
<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICIES AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMS : THREE EXAMPLES</b>	<b>22</b>
GREAT BRITAIN: The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	22
The New Deal for Communities National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal	22
UNITED STATES: American Neighbourhood Policies	25
Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Program (EZ/EC)	26
Three categories of US urban policies	26
CANADA: Winnipeg Development Agreement (WDA)	29
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>33</b>

## A. THE RENEWED INTEREST IN NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHY AND WHY NOW?

*“Why worry about poor neighbourhoods? ... We are concerned about the profound human cost of poverty on individuals and families who struggle not only to survive, but to participate fully as citizens... Neighbourhood poverty has a devastating human cost and also damages the economic and social vitality of an entire region, affecting the quality of life for everyone in Toronto.”* - United Way and CCSD, 2004

*“The social and economic future of countries is increasingly being determined in their urban areas. Globally, the process of decentralization is shifting power and resources to cities and their citizens. . . Two alternative scenarios are emerging: one of cities characterized by increasing poverty, social exclusion and decline; the other of inclusive cities characterized by equitable and sustainable growth.”* - Cities Alliance, 2000<sup>1</sup>

The revival of interest in neighbourhoods is part of an overall re-assertion that ‘place matters’, not only to the well-being of individuals but also to the health and prosperity of the broader community.

The interest in neighbourhoods is not new. In Canada, a ‘rediscovery’ of the neighbourhood took place in the 1970s when urban planners came to accept that the *social dimensions* of neighbourhood life, such as mutual support and participation in neighbourhood events, were as important as the physical. The neighbourhood became recognized as a significant locus of social experience and sense of place. Social planning became as legitimate as physical planning (Novick, 1979).

Toronto has been the site of important work on neighborhood stress and revitalization. In 1979, the Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto released the ground-breaking report, *Metro’s Suburbs in Transition*, which showed that poverty, isolation, and distress existed in Metro’s suburbs and not just in the inner city as had been assumed. The report laid out a framework and policy agenda for change that called on the Metro Toronto government to assume responsibility for the social development needs of new suburban communities (Novick, 1979). *Neighbourhoods Under Stress*, the 1983 follow-up report of the Joint Task Force on Neighborhood Support Services, resulted

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<sup>1</sup> Launched by the World Bank and UN Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat).

in a new core funding program<sup>2</sup> for neighbourhood agencies, jointly sponsored by the Metro government, the provincial government, and United Way of Greater Toronto.

Much of the pioneering work on neighborhoods took place in the United States during the 1960s as products of the federal government's War on Poverty. In addition to a proliferation of community-based anti-poverty projects, American efforts produced valuable research on the effects of neighbourhoods on individuals and families. After a 20-year gap in federal urban revitalization policy, the interest in neighbourhoods and urban policy was revived through President Clinton's introduction of the Empowerment Zone and Enterprise Communities Program in 1993 (Gittell et al, 1998).

In Great Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair established the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in 2001 to find solutions to the problems of the most deprived communities in England. Neighbourhood-based initiatives complement national strategies such as income and employment policies to address social exclusion. The National Strategy on Neighbourhood Renewal's vision is that "no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. People on low incomes should not have to suffer conditions that are failing and so different from what the rest of the population receives" (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001:9). Scotland and Wales are developing their own neighborhood renewal strategies.

In the European Union, a commitment to social cohesion led to the creation of large-scale urban development initiatives during the 1990s to direct resources to the most disadvantaged areas (Bradford, 2004). URBAN, one of four such initiatives, was established in 118 European cities to tackle social exclusion and promote active local participation (Commission of the European Communities, 2004).

Canada can also boast of successful neighbourhood revitalization initiatives to promote economic progress and social equity. Toronto and other Canadian cities benefited from the development of mixed-income, mixed use housing during the 1970s and 1980s. Toronto's "European-style" St. Lawrence housing project and Vancouver's False Creek involved all three levels of government and the private sector in reclaiming industrial land to build mixed income housing. Unfortunately, senior levels of government have been withdrawing from social housing programs, leaving a "vacuum unfilled by the private sector" (Donald and Morrow, 2003:21).

Despite historical and political differences, the reasons for the 'neighbourhood renaissance' are very similar across countries. However, it

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<sup>2</sup> The Community Support Services Program (CNSPP) was eliminated as part of the funding cuts made by the Ontario provincial government early in 1996.

should first be noted that there is considerable overlap in the use of terms such as 'neighbourhood', 'community', 'local', 'area', 'place' and even 'city' or 'region'. What this paper calls a renewed interest in 'neighbourhoods' is really a renewed interest in 'place' more generally and the role of spatially-based policies and programs. The precise scale and dimensions of that 'place' are not always well-defined.<sup>3</sup>

The major reasons for the new focus on neighbourhoods are:

- Concern about growing neighbourhood concentrations of poverty and disadvantage and their effects on individuals and the broader community
- Increasing recognition that cities and urban regions are socially, environmentally, and economically critical to the well-being of individuals, regions and countries
- The 'discovery' of social capital and its potential as a building block for social cohesion and to finding local solutions to problems

### **Concern about the impacts of concentrated poverty in urban neighbourhoods**

The United Way report, *Poverty by Postal Code* (United Way of Greater Toronto and CCSD, 2004), documents a situation that exists in many other cities and countries: growing concentrations of high poverty levels and deprivation among certain urban neighbourhoods. The report defined 'high poverty' as having twice the national average. Children and youth, lone mothers, recent immigrants and elderly people are typically over-represented in these neighbourhoods. In addition to concerns about the day-to-day hardship experienced by people, concentrated poverty exacerbates the problems individuals face as a result of being poor. This process is distinct from earlier American notions of the 'culture of poverty' which suggests deficiencies residing in the individual, rather than in the environment.

Concentrated poverty has a 'multiplying effect', particularly when there are clusters of high poverty neighbourhoods beside each other. This means that the social environment multiplies the constraints on progress for individuals already experiencing difficulty (Beauvais and Jenson, 2003; Bradford, 2002). High concentration poverty neighbourhoods are also presumed to lead to social and economic polarization, divisions among people along racial and other lines, and a threat to community and national social cohesion. It is

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<sup>3</sup> In the UK, for example, the term 'area-based initiative' (ABI) is used to describe targeted projects that focus attention and resources on a specific place.

feared that concentrated poverty will lead to increased crime, racial tensions, 'anti-social behaviour', and health problems among individuals living in these neighbourhoods. The effects on children's development and future life prospects are particularly worrying.

Recent British research reveals, not surprisingly, that people living in the most deprived areas report the highest level of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhoods. Major concerns revolved around the prevalence and fear of crime which has a major bearing on people's quality of life. Crime was found to be unequally distributed, with many crimes (e.g. domestic violence, higher rates of victimization) disproportionately affecting people living in deprived areas (Paxton and Dixon, 2004). (The research on 'neighbourhood effects' on individuals will be explored later.)

### **The growing significance of cities and urban areas**

There is wide agreement that cities are becoming more important to social and economic well-being. This is because:

- Cities are doing more than ever before. They have been forced to assume greater responsibilities because of demographic changes, the effects of globalization, and downloading by senior levels of government without a corresponding increase in funding. Growing poverty and social disparities are placing financial and other pressures on cities to spend more on services, such as social housing, transportation and policing (Slack, Bourne and Gertler, 2003; Clutterbuck and Novick, 2003; Vranken, DeDecker, Van Nieuwenhuyze, 2002; Bradford, 2002).
- Economic prosperity and social well-being are increasingly inter-related. Cities and urban regions now play a vital role as engines of national economic prosperity and centres of innovation, creativity and high value-added production. Because cities compete with each other around the world to attract business and skilled labour, they have to provide the social and physical infrastructure to attract people (Florida, 2003; Slack, Bourne and Gertler, 2003; Donald, 2001). Michael Porter explains that urban poverty is not just an equity issue focusing on the poor; it is also an economic issue. "And", he argues, "it's not just an economic issue for the people living in the inner city, it's an economic issue for all of us" (Habiby, 2004:7).
- Cities are "social centres of national life" where people from all backgrounds want to live and raise families, not merely "hubs for markets" (Novick, 1997). Novick argues that public services, such as transit and schools, must not become residual services for 'them', but must remain essential public goods for all of us. "Canadian cities are

very much for 'us'", he says. "The vitality of cities in Canada has become a recognized national asset" (Novick, 1997:1).

Despite the fact that Canada is a relative newcomer to the urban focus, four frameworks or discourses have evolved: economic clusters; social inclusion; community economic development (CED); and environmental sustainability (Bradford, 2002). While all contribute to healthy, vibrant cities and other larger public policy goals, they differ in a number of significant ways, beginning with their vision; the focus of interest (i.e. the 'spatial scale'); their policy and investment priorities; and possible problem areas. Table 1 below compares the frameworks along these dimensions.

**Table 1: New Localism Frameworks**

	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Social Inclusion</b>	<b>CED</b>	<b>Environmental</b>
<b>Vision</b>	Entrepreneurial city and learning region	Inclusive neighbourhoods and diverse city	Self-reliant communities and equitable city	Healthy city and sustainable region
<b>Spatial focus</b>	Region	Neighbourhood	Community	Bio-region
<b>Policy and investment priorities</b>	Knowledge infrastructure and urban lifestyle amenities  Institutional support for inter-firm networks and venture capital	Socially-mixed, affordable housing, anti-poverty measures, access to community services  Institutional support for cultural diversity, services for immigrants and urban Aboriginals	Investments in job creation, labour market training, and affordable housing  Institutional support for alternative economic strategy, the third sector	Ecological restructuring of the urban form, through public transit, higher density development  Institutional support for sustainability indicators in land use development
<b>Possible problem areas and stress points</b>	Social polarization if opportunities are limited to highly skilled workers  Strategy may apply only to "high tech" areas	Limited resources available to community organizations  May be resistance to socially mixed housing  Cross-cultural misunderstandings.	Limited resources available to community organizations  Globalization not hospitable to alternative economic projects  Labour market deregulation limits success	Municipal fiscal pressures create incentives for urban sprawl  Deteriorating infrastructure for water, air quality, waste disposal  Obstacles to planning at this level

Adapted from Bradford, 2002:46-47

Only two of the frameworks, social inclusion and CED, focus on the neighbourhood or community level. The other two operate at a broader, regional level. Nevertheless, there are three themes that cut across the discourses: i) the importance of locally sensitive approaches to urban problems and opportunities; ii) the importance of collaborative governance mechanisms; and iii) the need for “enabling contexts structured by upper level governments” to ensure ‘enduring’ local solutions to social and economic challenges (Bradford, 2002: 48).

The thread that connects Bradford’s four frameworks and that runs through the above themes is *social capital*. Both the ‘new regionalists’ (focusing on economic clusters or environmental sustainability) and the ‘new community builders’ (promoting social inclusion or community economic development) see social capital as key to their goals.<sup>4</sup>

*“The new regionalists, after all, argue that internationalization has helped regions emerge as the key level of economic activity, partly because it is at this level that actors can constitute effective social capital (that is, the sense of regional community) and a set of industrial clusters. The new community builders likewise stress social capital, noting that the first step to neighbourhood development is often rebuilding the basic community fabric and recognizing that neighbourhoods should be seen as part of a regional whole in a deeply globalized economy”* (Pastor et al, 2000; as quoted in Bradford, 2002:48)

### **The discovery of social capital as a building block for social cohesion**

Robert Putnam’s study of the dynamics of mutual trust in an Italian village led to the discovery and application of the notion of social capital throughout the western world. He popularized the concept with the publication of *Bowling Alone* in 2000 which showed that trust and civic engagement were declining in America. Putnam defines social capital as those “features of social organizations that facilitate co-ordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 1993:95, as quoted in Bridge, 2002:18).

As a concept, social capital is particularly suited to neighbourhood revitalization. Social capital puts a strong emphasis on the resources that can be mobilized via the strength of the relationships that exist in communities

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<sup>4</sup> Social capital has become the basis for social inclusion and community development initiatives in Canada. For example, the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) has developed a *Closing the Distance* initiative that builds on both social capital and social and economic inclusion principles. ([www.closingthedistance.org](http://www.closingthedistance.org)).

(Bridge, 2002). The presence of social capital can, therefore, help to guide policy and program investments. For example, investment in local areas is more likely to be successful in communities with robust social capital (Forrest, 2003).

A concern with social cohesion is fuelling the interest in social capital in Canada, as well as in Europe and the United States. The dimensions of social capital include collective norms and values, trust, belonging, and supporting networks and reciprocity - all of which make the promotion and enhancement of social capital at the neighbourhood and community level critical to building social cohesion at a national level.

Commenting on a recent Statistics Canada survey, Roberts (2004) observed that, even though over 90 percent of Canadians reported that they were either very or somewhat happy (a state closely linked to a sense of belonging to a community and feeling trust in others),

*“Statscan figures need to be watched closely.. A 3- or 4-point rise in social isolation, alienation or rage creates an unmanageable increase in crime, suicide, vagrancy, substance abuse and mental breakdown” (Roberts, 2004:1).*

Survey results on attitudes toward local communities and institutions, especially in the four large urban areas where half of Canadians live are particularly worrisome:

- There’s a low sense of trust in others to do the right thing, with only 33% thinking that a stranger would return a lost wallet to someone
- Only 25% of long-time residents, mostly homeowners, know many or most of their neighbours.
- Fewer than 20% of residents have a very strong sense of belonging to the local community, and
- Only 15% of Torontonians feel a very strong connection to the city, while 47% feel somewhat strongly connected.

Roberts voices a concern shared by others: *“Given that large cities such as Toronto and its region expect to double their population within their present land base over the next 20 year...that’s a lot of people living in a small area with little sense of being in it together” (Roberts, 2004:2).*

The link between social capital, strong neighbourhoods and social cohesion will be explored in the next section.

## B. STRONG NEIGHBOURHOODS: WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY THEY MATTER

### What is a neighbourhood?

A neighbourhood may be defined as having several thousand residents covering an area that people can walk across. The scale of a neighbourhood typically focuses on a primary school catchment area (Power and Wilson, 2000; Novick, 1979).

Speaking at a conference in Toronto in 1924, Clarence A. Perry of the American Russell Sage Foundation proposed that the elementary school should be at the civic centre of the neighbourhood district because:

*“Since the public school, more nearly than any other local institution, touches all families within its sphere of service, it is a common denominator of neighbourhood life and seems therefore the best available basis for determining the size of the local community unit (Perry, 1924, as quoted in Novick, 1979:47).*

In terms of scale or size of neighbourhood, Perry proposed half a mile since this is “the maximum distance children should have to travel in order to attend elementary school” according to educational specialists (Novick, 1979: 416). This is still considered reasonable and desirable 80 years later.

Scale is important when considering what a neighbourhood is, but it is not the only consideration. From a review of the literature, we can find four overlapping approaches to defining neighbourhood.

1. By its functions - Neighbourhood is seen as a site for the routines of everyday life (e.g. shopping); the provision of community support services and institutional resources (e.g. schools, libraries, parent drop-ins); informal surveillance (‘the eyes of the street’, such as block parents); and social control (e.g. over the neighbourhood children and youth to make sure they do not misbehave, but this could include the support of other people’s children).
2. By fixed boundaries - Defining neighbourhood via fixed boundaries, such as postal codes or census tracts, is a proxy most often used for research purposes to draw a line around neighbourhoods. The City of Toronto defines ‘neighbourhood’ for administrative and funding purposes as consisting of several census tracts, between 7,000 and 10,000 people. One of the limitations of the fixed boundaries approach is that it may not capture ‘natural neighbourhoods’, nor people’s perceived neighbourhoods.

3. The degree of homogeneity - Homogeneity can result by choice (people choosing to live with others who share important values, cultural backgrounds, language, etc.) or necessity (e.g. where affordable housing can be found). People with similar values and lifestyles often aggregate to the same geographical locales.<sup>5</sup>
4. People's lived experiences - Neighbourhoods do not necessarily have objective features that are experienced or defined the same way by all residents. Neighbourhoods have social and symbolic, as well as physical boundaries. They can, therefore, be defined subjectively from within by the people who live there. For many people, neighbourhoods are a source of their identities and sense of pride. American research shows that more educated residents are likely to say that their neighbourhood is larger than other residents. Conversely, neighbourhoods are perceived as smaller if they have a higher proportion of low income residents and 'minority language' speakers. Residents who interact more with their neighbours also have a different view of their neighbourhood than those who are more isolated. (Interestingly, this study also found that "a surprising number of routine activities take place close to home", with the workplace being the furthest from home" (Sastry et al, 2002).

Initiatives funded under Britain's local neighbourhood renewal strategies use various definitions of neighbourhood, depending on what makes sense to local conditions. Local perceptions of neighbourhoods "may be defined by natural dividing lines such as roads or rivers, changes in housing design or nature or the sense of community generated around centres such as schools" (NRU, 2001:13). 'Bespoke neighbourhoods' is the term used to describe the definition of neighbourhood that emerges when people are asked to draw a line around what they consider to be their neighbourhood. This may or may not overlap with geographical boundaries.

It is obvious that there is no single definition of neighbourhood, that a neighbourhood is fluid and may be different at different times depending on the situation, the people asked, and the policy or research rationale.

### **A neighbourhood is like an onion**

*"Neighbourhoods often have sharp boundaries, either physical or atmospheric, but the layers of neighbourhood life are like an onion with a tight core and a loose outer skin". (Power and Wilson, 2000:1)*

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<sup>5</sup> It should be acknowledged that it is also sometimes argued that homogeneity is a characteristic of a 'community', not a 'neighbourhood'. Given the inter-changeability of these terms throughout much of this paper, this was not considered an important distinction here.

To capture the complexity and inter-relationships between different aspects of 'neighbourhood', some writers compare a neighbourhood to an *onion* as a way of understanding the roles neighbourhood plays in people's lives. Power and Wilson (2000) and Lupton (2003) use the onion analogy to describe the levels at which 'neighbourhood' exists. When their different levels are combined, one ends up with four somewhat distinct layers of neighbourhood:<sup>6</sup>

1. **The home area** for social interaction and making connections with others. This includes the home and immediate surroundings. This can also be the level for "demonstrating and reflecting one's values" (Lupton, 2003).
2. **The locality** for schools, shops and parks. This level denotes status (Lupton) and reflects the *social composition* of the neighbourhood (Power and Wilson, 2000).
3. **The neighbourhood environment.** A neighbourhood's reputation, its physical appearance and 'feel', the social norms that exist are all part of the neighbourhood environment which Power and Wilson define as giving "an intangible but powerful signal of who we are and how we should behave, and ... offer[ing] a sense of familiarity and security to the people who live there" (Power and Wilson, 2000:1).
4. **The wider urban district or region.** This is the level of neighbourhood that exists for job opportunities, "the wider landscape of social and economic opportunities" (Lupton, 2003:5).

Power and Wilson maintain that neighbourhoods give people a sense of familiarity and security which break down when all the three layers - home, services environment - are significantly "disrupted" (Power and Wilson, 2001:2). What Lupton draws from the analogy is that different boundaries make sense to meet different needs. When people are asked what their neighbourhood is, they may refer to any or all of the aspects or levels above: their local school, the atmosphere of the city centre, the feel of the neighbourhood environment, or the job opportunities that exist close by.

### **The contribution of social capital to building strong neighbourhoods**

The 'discovery' of social capital has been significant for neighbourhood studies and neighbourhood revitalization initiatives. Not only has it helped to re-focus attention and efforts onto the positive aspects of neighbourhoods - even those with high levels of poverty - it is also being used to guide decisions about investments and interventions in communities. It is assumed that investment in local areas is more likely to be successful in communities

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<sup>6</sup> Their first two levels are very similar; their third is different, but compatible.

with robust, 'value-added' social capital (Forrest, 2003). Despite having been described as "an analytical sack of potatoes", social capital is influential and widely accepted as useful, in large part because it is seen as being *as important to economic development as economic capital* is (Kearns, 2004:4). Social capital refers to

*"...those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems. Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, sports clubs, and cooperatives, are an essential form of social capital, and the denser these networks, the more likely that members of a community will cooperate for mutual benefit".* (Sirianni and Friedland, undated)

The dimensions of social capital can include: empowerment (people feeling listened to); participation (people taking part); associational activity and common purpose (people cooperating with each other); collective norms and values (people sharing common values and norms of behaviour); and trust (people feeling that they can trust their neighbours and organizations in their community) (Forrest, 2003).

Social capital is premised on the notion that social networks have value. Social capital is the collective value of all social networks (who people know) and the "inclinations" that arise from these networks to do things for each other (norms of reciprocity). Examples of social capital 'in action' include:

- A group of neighbours informally keeping an eye on one another's homes
- A tightly-knit group of Hassidic Jews trading diamonds without having to test each gem for purity
- E-mail exchanges among members of a cancer support group (Putnam, 2000:20).

John McKnight, of the US Asset-Based Community Development Institute, recommends re-building communities 'from the inside out', maintaining that low-income neighbourhoods are rich in social capital. He argues that "everything you need is inside" because low-income neighbourhoods have many more local associations than in some more affluent areas and newer sub-divisions (Benns, 2003).

Research on social capital has shown that people with rich social connections are more likely to have housing, jobs, good health and life satisfaction. However, the benefit derived from social capital depends on the *type* of social capital and the socio-economic position of people. "For the poor, social capital is not just about how many people you know and how close you feel to them, but where they are located socio-economically" (Warren et

al, 1999:1). Close ties are the best sources of emotional support [bonding], while 'weaker' ties among acquaintances may be the best source of social leverage opportunities" [bridging or linking].

Distinctions are frequently drawn between three<sup>7</sup> different kinds of social capital: *bonding*, *bridging*, and *linking*.

- *Bonding social capital* is essential for 'getting by'. It exists in horizontal relationships/networks between family members, close friends, ethnic groups (Wiles, 2004). Bonding strategies build trust and cooperation among individuals and within communities (Social Planning Networks of Ontario (SPNO), 2002).
- *Bridging social capital* is essential for 'getting ahead'. It is also a horizontal link, but it exists across ethnic groups or with work associates and employers (Wiles, 2004). From a community development perspective, bridging strategies "break down barriers across groups and communities and enable collaborative action on shared objectives" (SPNO, 2002:3).
- *Linking social capital* (also known as 'scaling up') provides a vertical link between social classes or to the wider world (Wiles, 2004). Scaling-up strategies connect communities in collective action for social change and development at the policy and/or systems levels (SPNO, 2002:3).

Bonding emerges from more homogeneous, 'inward looking' groups, whereas bridging and linking capital require broader linkages and networks. Despite the importance of bonding social capital, the worry exists that, unless bridging social capital is promoted and nurtured, bonding capital may 'depreciate' and other negative consequences may result:

*"If small groups of citizens... only relate to others of like experience and mind in confined geographical spaces, collective-action dilemmas will loom large. Trust will not extend to others; indeed, mistrust may fester. Norms will not be agreed upon; indeed difference may be entrenched. And networks will be truncated; ghettos will be left to their own devices" (Wilson, 2001:3).*

It is probably significant that the above commentator was writing about the city of Belfast and is, therefore, particularly concerned about addressing divisions among people. Bridging capital is, however, also seen as extremely important by Putnam himself who argued that people need to connect to

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<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the distinction is only between bonding and bridging.

those unlike themselves. In relationships between heterogeneous citizens, “trust becomes a real gain, undermining suspicions of ‘the other’” (Putnam, 2000, quoted in Wilson, 2001:3). A similar perspective is voiced by Bridge (2002) who argues that policy interventions should focus primarily on weak ‘instrumental’ or practical ties both within and outside of the neighbourhood.

*Seeking to enhance the ‘porosity’ rather than ‘solidarity’ of neighbourhoods is especially important given contemporary technical developments in communication and knowledge acquisition. Neighbourhood networks should be considered at the city-wide scale when analyzing neighbourhoods that are seen as socially excluded” (Bridge, 2002:25-26). Emphasis added.*

While concerns such as those expressed above are valid and relevant to discussions about building strong neighbourhoods, several points need to be emphasized:

- Bonding and bridging/linking social capital are not mutually exclusive; all are important. Particularly in neighbourhoods where people are socially isolated and networks are weak, supporting bonding social capital needs to be a major focus.
- Homogeneity need not be a barrier to opportunity and building bridging or linking capital as Toronto has learned from ethnic communities that have successfully used their intra-group connections to advance their social and economic positions.
- Conceptualizing neighbourhoods as having layers of interactions similar to the layers of an onion can be useful to understanding how social capital works. Bonding capital is developed in the inner layer(s), but one probably needs to look to the outer layers - the city or wider urban district - for bridging or linking capital to be built. It should be emphasized, however, that neighbourhood organizations play an important bridge between residents and policy-makers, regardless of level. The work of CUSP (Communities Undertaking Social Policy), an initiative of St. Christopher House in Toronto, offers a good example of this linking role.
- Bridging social capital may be absent or under-developed, not because people are ‘inward looking’ or ‘sectarian’; it may not exist because the opportunities may not be there or people may not be able to avail themselves of it. Kearns (2004) observes that social capital is a ‘club good’, rather than a ‘public good’. It can, therefore, exacerbate existing inequalities. In other

words, advantaged individuals and groups are more likely to have and to be able to use social capital.

- Finally - and particularly germane for multi-ethnic cities like Toronto - despite the importance of shared values and norms, there are “limits to how far cohesion rooted in common values can become the basis of living with difference in neighbourhoods” (Kearns, 2004:29). Addressing the British government’s pre-occupation with ‘social mix’, Ash Amin argues that “mixed ethnic neighbourhoods are communities without community” (Amin, quoted in Kearns, 2004:16). Both writers agree it may be possible to construct tolerant and inclusive communities without common values.

*“The prescription that community cohesion should entail a unified, shared sense of place, a set of common values and a reduction in segregation of residence and institutions between ethnic groups may not necessarily be essential...”* (Kearns, 2004:29).

### **The dimensions of a strong neighbourhood**

There is wide agreement on what a strong neighbourhood is and what conditions need to exist to make it so, although there is no single list of dimensions or defining characteristics. From a review of the literature, three inter-connected kinds of defining characteristics emerge: those related to social relationships (e.g. community involvement, mutual responsibility); those related to ‘place’ (e.g. active street life); and those related to both (e.g. safety). Using these as a foundation, this paper defines strong neighbourhoods as:

1. **Inclusive**<sup>8</sup> - This includes active community involvement; democratic processes; strong sense of belonging; a welcoming community; respect for diversity; tolerance of differences.
2. **Vibrant** - This includes an active street life (e.g. cafes, shops and services); opportunities for community interaction (e.g. street festivals); a strong sense of ‘place identity’ and pride.
3. **Cohesive** - This includes a sense of mutual responsibility and strong bonds of reciprocity (e.g. neighbours looking out for each other’s

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<sup>8</sup> Inclusive Cities Canada identifies five dimensions of an ‘inclusive city or community’: institutional commitment to diversity; opportunities for human development; quality of civic engagement; cohesiveness of living conditions; and adequacy of community support services. Some but not all of these apply at a neighbourhood level. See [www.inclusivecities.ca](http://www.inclusivecities.ca).

children); trust (e.g. not having to worry about locking doors); negotiated solutions to conflicts.

4. **Safe** - This includes both subjective feelings of safety (people feeling they can go anywhere, feeling comfortable in public), as well as objective measures of safety (e.g. freedom from crime, absence of pollutants and contaminants, safe buildings).

### **Creating the conditions for strong neighbourhoods**

What are the conditions or enabling factors that help to bring about neighbourhoods that are inclusive, cohesive, vibrant and safe? Outlined below are both social and physical *enablers* that are recognized as being important:

*Strong social infrastructure and services* - No matter how important social capital is, it cannot replace social infrastructure. In fact, strong social infrastructure is needed to build and support social capital and thereby strong neighbourhoods. Community services, such as libraries, schools, and recreation programs are key contributors to inclusion and cohesion. Equally important, neighbourhood or community organizations play a critical role in building linkages among people and groups, supporting community capacity building, and giving voice to vulnerable groups.

*Shared public spaces*, such as parks and public markets, contribute to physical and social proximity and social interactions among individuals and diverse groups. Public spaces that are accessible to all contribute to a sense of tolerance, awareness and mutual respect.

*Heterogeneity/socially mixed neighbourhoods* - Mixed income and other social mixes (e.g. by family type, ethnic group, generational group) increase social diversity which is generally considered to be positive and strengthening to a neighbourhood. The presence of middle class residents (i.e. 'the sharp elbows of the middle class') results in increased levels of high quality services and public goods that benefit everyone. Canadian research supporting these contentions include:

- Research by Doug Willms that concludes: "heterogeneity [he calls it social inclusion] may be the way to avoid negative neighbourhood effects" (Willms, 2002, as quoted in Beauvais and Jenson, 2003:19).
- A recent study on health status that found that "... in neighbourhoods with a large proportion of affluent families and well-educated individuals, self-reported health status was higher among low-income persons than was the case for their counterparts in less affluent neighbourhoods" (Statistics Canada, 2004:1).

*Physical attractiveness* - People should want to be there, feel comfortable, and proud of their neighbourhood. In the British literature, physical attractiveness is also seen to be important because of its impact on population mix. Physical characteristics either attract or repel middle class residents, which then leads to the acquisition of other characteristics, such as services, reputations, social order (Lupton, 2003).

*Open boundaries (porosity)* - This means that people can move in and out freely; that the neighbourhood is open to outsiders; that it does not feel closed or exclusive; and that people have contact with others outside of their neighbourhoods. In Toronto, probably most neighbourhoods are 'open' in this sense, even those with high degrees of homogeneity. Neighbourhoods in Canadian cities tend not to be marked by the high levels of segregation (i.e. closed boundaries) that characterize American, British and, increasingly, European cities.

*Walkability and mobility* - Having amenities and services within a ten-minute walk, children being able to walk to school, people not having to use their cars are all identified as having important social and economic benefits (Litman, 2004). People walking around promotes interactions among people and prevents isolation. However, if parks, stores, schools are not within walking distance, then, at a minimum, mobility and easy access must be ensured through a good and affordable transportation system. It is recognized that most newer sub-divisions and suburban neighbourhoods are not walkable because nothing is close enough to walk to. To turn such geographic areas into "strong neighbourhoods" (or, for that matter, into "neighbourhoods" at all) requires strong community infrastructure and neighbourhood programs to facilitate the mutual support, community interactions and contact that neighbourhoods where people walk provide.

*Density* - According to Jane Jacobs (2004), high density (as opposed to overcrowding) increases connections and interactions between people, reduces isolation, and increases safety. Density includes local businesses, gathering places and walking patterns. Research by Eric Klinenberg (2002) into the 1995 heat wave that killed thousands of elderly people in Chicago supports the contention that density matters. Klinenberg wondered what accounted for the vastly different incidences of elderly people dying in two neighbouring communities. He concluded that high population density accounted for the low death rate in the one neighbourhood. A high density neighbourhood "with its busy streets, heavy commercial activity, residential concentration, and relatively low crime rate promotes social contact, collective life, and public engagement in general and provides particular benefits for the elderly, who are more likely to leave home when they are drawn out by nearby amenities" (Klinenberg: 2002:91).

## Why do neighbourhoods matter and to whom do they matter the most?

Neighbourhoods matter because they are microcosms of the larger community. As Putnam (1993) observed, "the neighbourhood matters because what happens in the neighbourhood influences our public and societal disposition" (quoted in Bridge, 2002). Not only are neighbourhoods the heart of a city, but the fortunes of cities and neighbourhoods are "locked together" (Dublin City Development Board, 2002).

The argument is sometimes heard that, with more people working outside their neighbourhoods, having greater mobility and access to technology, particularly the internet, people's important networks have been 'liberated' from neighbourhoods and that they now lie elsewhere. Arguing that neighbourhoods have become less important ignores two important facts:

First, it has always been the case that the neighbourhood matters more for some people than for others, most often people with limited incomes, limited mobility, those who spend more time in their neighbourhoods, and those who rely on their neighbourhood as a source of social networking and use services close to where they live.

The importance of neighbourhood also varies with life cycle stages. Clearly, neighborhood matters more for elderly people and parents, particularly women with young children, and others for whom mobility is an issue (e.g. some people with disabilities). Income and employment status are also important. People on low incomes, unemployed people, and many recent immigrants look to their neighbourhoods to meet both practical and emotional needs.

Second, while neighbourhoods are important for everyone, different elements of neighbourhoods may be important to people for different reasons. Using the local park as an illustration:

*...The same setting can mean many things to people. For those whose work life is harried, the local park might be seen as a place for specialized leisure or as a retreat in which to get away from people and experience the serenity of open space. To an elderly person who has been home alone much of the day, the local park may be an important setting in which to observe and experience some form of social contact. The mother of a young child requires a setting which is within reasonable accessibility from home, if there is not care available. Thus, the local park is expected to respond to a range of related social and physical needs (Novick, 1979:30).*

## A review of 'neighbourhood effects' research

There is substantial research on whether neighbourhoods are important to the well-being of individuals. The research, mostly American until recently, is based on the assumption that there are independent neighbourhood effects or processes that "...have a negative effect on people's life chances over and above any negative effects which are the result of individual or household inequalities such as education, age, or ethnicity" (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001: 5).

Research on neighbourhood effects in Canada shows that neighbourhoods DO have an impact on outcomes such as health, educational attainment, employment success, school readiness, but that the effects are "relatively small" compared to the effects of other 'risk factors' (e.g. low income, inequality). According to a 2004 review by Statistics Canada, the findings from a recent study of neighbourhood effects in Montreal<sup>9</sup> are consistent with other Canadian studies:

*"This study is one of the few studies to examine the effects of neighbourhoods on health in Canada. Many studies have shown that neighbourhoods affect health in the United States and the United Kingdom. But the few Canadian studies conducted to date suggest that neighbourhood effects in Canada are much smaller, possibly as a result of policies and programs that aim to reduce economic and health disparities." (Statistics Canada, 2004:1) Emphasis added.*

In a comprehensive review of the literature, Beauvais and Jenson (2003) summarize the ways in which researchers explain how neighbourhoods affect the well-being of children: i) the social organization approach highlights how adults in a neighbourhood influence young people who are not their own children; ii) the institutional approach focuses on institutions and resources, such as schools, policing or recreation programs that influence children; iii) the epidemic approach assumes that peer influences can spread problem behaviours; and iv) the stress approach concentrates on how physical toxins and social and psychological conditions, such as community violence, harm children.

Beauvais and Jenson draw the following lessons that are relevant and instructive for our purposes:

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<sup>9</sup> The study is called "Neighbourhood influences on health in Montreal, Canada" by Nancy Ross, S. Tremblay, and K. Graham.

- Studies demonstrate that there ARE neighbourhood impacts even though individual factors are very important as well (some would argue, more important).
- Neighbourhoods affect individuals in different ways at different life stages. For example, neighbourhood effects are weakest for young children, but more important for their parents.
- All socially similar neighbourhoods are not the same in terms of their capacity to shape the lives of their residents since people create their neighbourhoods to some extent (e.g. mixed income neighbourhoods may mediate some of the effects of poverty on children and families).
- Neighbourhoods do not *determine* developmental outcomes. There will always be children in both poor and affluent neighbourhoods who experience poor developmental outcomes (Beauvais and Jenson, 2003:19).

Beauvais and Jenson derived these lessons from research studies such as those summarized below on the link between socio-economic status and child outcomes. The findings are significant but show that the evidence for the existence of independent neighbourhood effects is mixed:

- Neighbourhood effects can be powerful, particularly the effects resulting from the presence of affluent neighbours. The conclusion is that low income children growing up in affluent neighbourhoods appear to do better than children from similar families in low income neighbourhoods (Brooks-Gunn et al, 1993).
- Neighbourhood income effects are smaller than the effects of family income, maternal education or maternal marital status, although a neighbourhood effect is present (Klebanov et al, 1998).
- It is the distribution of resources, and not simply the presence, that will produce differential impacts. “When neighbours set social standards for one another or create institutions that serve an entire neighbourhood, affluent neighbours are likely to be an advantage. When neighbours compete with one another for a scarce resource, social as social standing, high school grades, or jobs for teens, having affluent neighbours is likely to be a disadvantage” (Jencks and Mayer, 1990).
- American studies of neighbourhood effects in the Moving to Opportunity projects have concluded that “few effects on employment rates have been found but that some outcomes for children have improved”.

- The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood in which low income youth grew up had little impact on whether they succeeded in the labour market when they grew up, according to a 2002 Statistics Canada study.

Similarly interesting but mixed results can be found from a review of additional literature. For example:

- Canadian research by Clyde Hertzman found that it was better to be poor in a middle class neighbourhood than in a poor neighbourhood, reinforcing the American findings that the presence of affluent families in a neighbourhood can help to 'pull up' children in low income families. He calls Vancouver "a showpiece for urban forms that support early child development". Important initiatives in two neighbourhoods demonstrate that mixed income neighbourhoods result in developmental benefits for all children. Ironically, child care is least available in the working class neighbourhoods of the east side "where child care centres and programs would likely have the greatest developmental benefits" (Hertzman and Kohen, 2003:3).
- Neighbourhoods influence the school readiness of children. Support provided by neighbours and the sense of community felt within the neighbourhood (indicators of cohesive neighbourhoods) contribute to children's competence and well-being. Consistent with earlier findings, the neighbourhood effects are stronger at older ages, since "family characteristics reduce the effects of neighbourhoods for toddlers" (Social Development Canada, 1999).
- A 2004 British study on local neighbourhood and mental health concluded: "What appears to be important for levels of mental health are the characteristics of individuals and their households, NOT place" (Propper et al, 2004).
- A 2004 Swedish study focused on whether ethnically segregated neighbourhoods had an effect on educational attainment. It found that there was a significant, albeit small, effect from growing up in a segregated neighbourhood, particularly on the probability of attaining a comprehensive education, and achieving the highest academic level (Nordin, 2004).

### **Limitations of neighbourhood effects research**

While there is agreement that neighbourhoods have an impact, the research and theories of neighbourhood effects are both controversial and incomplete. This is because:

- Cause and effect are not clearly understood or demonstrated. There is no consensus about which characteristics affect which outcomes and which individuals or households might be most affected. Certain factors, such as income or socio-economic status (SES) stand out as being particularly significant. But, even here, it is difficult to separate neighbourhood factors from other factors such as family influences, particularly in the case of children (Beauvais and Jenson, 2003; Pebley and Sastry, 2003, Lupton, 2003).
- The neighborhood effects research is not based on well-developed theories (Klebanov, 1998; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001); and the conceptualization of neighbourhood is very weak and under-developed in most quantitative research because it does not take qualitative studies of neighbourhood dynamics into account. Lupton (2003) argues that quantitative studies of neighbourhoods are, in some ways, a “backward step, defining neighbourhoods as poor or non-poor, with fixed boundaries, and with similar impacts for individuals regardless of who they are and how they are connected” (p. 14).
- Neighbourhoods and neighbourhood effects cannot be studied in isolation. Neighbourhoods not only have an effect on each other, but people see themselves in relation to others both within and outside of their neighbourhoods. “Residential identities are embedded in a strongly comparative psychological landscape” (Lupton, 2003).

In conclusion, the importance of neighbourhood effects research should be neither exaggerated nor discounted. Knowing whether there are neighbourhood effects and how they operate may not be as important as we think since there are, arguably, other reasons for focusing on neighbourhoods or area-based initiatives more generally. According to Lupton (2003), these include: ensuring a fairer distribution of resources; piloting new approaches to service delivery or community development; having a greater impact by focusing activity; increasing people’s confidence and capacity to participate in the community; and promoting social cohesion and ‘bottom up’ approaches to neighbourhood revitalization. Some of these are the rationales behind current neighbourhood initiatives in Canada and other countries.

## C. NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICIES AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAMS: THREE EXAMPLES

This section will review national neighbourhood policies and programs from Great Britain and the United States, and one Canadian community investment program. The primary focus of the review is to look lessons that have been or are still being learned.

### 1. GREAT BRITAIN: The National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal

Area-based policy has been widely used by both Conservative and Labour governments in Great Britain. Neighbourhood programs or area-based initiatives (ABIs), as they are called, date back to the late 1960s. Competition and 'challenge' funding was the norm under the Conservative governments in the 1980s and early 1990s. Under the new Labour government, elected in 1997, the emphasis shifted back to need, with funding targeted to areas of highest need (Tunstall and Lupton, 2003).

Previous initiatives had only limited success in stopping neighbourhood decline. According to the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) attached to the Prime Minister's office, the major reasons for past failures are:

- Too much reliance on short-term regeneration initiatives in only a few areas, rather than a comprehensive, sustained response through 'mainstream' programs in hundreds of neighbourhoods. Mainstream programs are core public services, such as health, education, etc. Poor neighbourhoods typically have poor public and other services because: insufficient funding of programs; national targets that focused on averages, thereby concealing wide variations; and not enough attention paid to 'what works' and to building on good practices.
- Too little investment in people-based strategies that expand opportunities (e.g. in terms of jobs, education) and too much emphasis on physical renewal (e.g. housing stock).
- Poor links with other neighbourhoods and other areas, resulting in greater detachment and isolation of poor communities and inability to harness the support that neighbourhoods give each other.
- Too little effort to build local capacity and to engage local communities which includes both geographic communities and 'communities of interest' (i.e. faith communities, black and ethnic communities) (SEU, 1998 and 2001; Cemlyn et al, 2002).
- Finally, as the government itself recognized, the underlying structural causes of poverty have to be tackled. Local, neighbourhood initiatives

cannot by themselves address problems of poverty and inequality caused by national and international policies.

### The New Deal for Communities

Tony Blair's government introduced the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Initiative in 1998. The NDC is being piloted in 39 communities of about 2000 to 3000 deprived neighbourhoods. It emphasizes "the role that community residents can play by placing them at the heart of decision-making" (Committee of Public Accounts, 2004). This seems to be an area of particular success for the NDC.

*The residents' central role - in many cases as majority board members - was breeding a new kind of responsibility. Many had become inspired by their real influence over decisions and budgets. By insisting on deep community consultation and a solid delivery plan..., the scheme concentrates mind. . . At its best, the NDC is a catalyst. It can get mainstream [core public] services delivered in much more appropriate and effective ways. (Dwelly, 2001)*

The government sees the NDC as an important 'pathfinder program' for neighbourhood regeneration from which it has learned important early lessons: that partnerships of boards with a majority of community representatives DO work, but that communities and key public agencies must both be involved; true community involvement takes time; and programs to bring about change require people with strong management skills (SEU, 2001).

A recent progress report by the UK House of Commons' Committee of Public Accounts discovered the NDC's areas of vulnerability. A major one relates to the fact that:

*". . .Area based initiatives such as the NDC favour particular communities over others. This approach risks creating resentment from neighbouring communities who may feel they are missing out". (UK House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2004:7). (Emphasis added)*

The report had the following significant conclusions and recommendations:

- The government should review "the wider impact on social cohesion of targeted and piloted approaches to neighbourhood renewal". The fact that the NDC is being piloted in only a few communities has raised concerns about 'post code politics' and has created resentment in those communities that do not benefit from the initiative which will ultimately

lead to divisiveness. It was recommended that evaluations of neighbourhood based programs should take into account their impact on neighbouring communities.

- The role of local authorities needs to be clarified. Distrust between some local boards and local authorities has prevented progress and would be remedied by greater clarity regarding the extent of the local authority's responsibility (e.g. with respect to financial control);
- More active steps need to be taken to strengthen business activity and employment opportunities in order to increase wealth in local communities. Skill shortages could be identified and training targeted to meet those needs.
- Regional government offices need to satisfy themselves that New Deal money should not be spent to substitute for local authority spending. (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, June 2004).

### **National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR)**

In 2001, the government announced its National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR), the centre piece of its social agenda. It was heralded as a major departure from previous neighbourhood initiatives because it was a coordinated program at the national and local levels, with substantial funds committed to meet 10 to 20-year targets. The NSNR places less emphasis on area-based initiatives; instead, it focuses on the 'mainstreaming' of funding and partners over the long term (Lupton, 2003).

*"This Strategy represents a huge change in the pace and scale of the Government's attack on deprivation. It combines action and resources to tackle individual problems such as unemployment, crime and poor services, as well as new mechanisms to empower residents, and join up action ... It offers a major shift in approach, away from regeneration programmes shoring up poor public services in only a few areas, towards ensuring high quality public services in all neighbourhoods". (SEU, 2001:31). Emphasis added.*

The strategy has three elements:

- New policies, funding and targets to tackle problems such as unemployment, crime and poor services. These include federal government measures such as: new tax and benefit measures "to make work pay"; creating Action Teams for Jobs in high unemployment areas; child care; business start-up funds; the establishment of a new National

Drug Treatment Agency; and other significant programs in the areas of education and skills, health, and housing and physical environment.

- Effective ‘drivers of change’ at the local and community levels. These include: Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) of local authorities in education, health and policing; neighbourhood management; funds to support community groups and local entrepreneurs. The LSPs, in place for the poorest 88 Local Authorities, bring together all major service providers, private sector, voluntary and community organizations and residents.
- National leadership and support. This includes the establishment of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) to spearhead the strategy and to work with regional Neighbourhood Renewal Teams, who will liaise with the Local Strategic Partnerships. The NRU administers the new funds including New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, Neighbourhood Management, Community Chests, and Community Empowerment Funds (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001).

## **2. THE UNITED STATES: American Neighbourhood Policies, with the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Program (EZ/EC) as an example**

American neighbourhood policies have not generally served as models for other countries. American urban strategies have had contradictory goals and they have not been linked to a coordinated structural strategy to address poverty and deprivation (Bradford, 2004; Dreier, Mollenkopf, Swanstrom, 2000). Some now believe that the urban policies of the 1990s are moving US urban policies in a new and improved direction. Research by Jargowsky (2003) showing that concentrated poverty has decreased in the US is cited as evidence that former President Clinton’s urban policies have had an impact. However, it can also be argued that the improvement in the economy is responsible for declining urban poverty. Regardless of the reason, Bradford (2004) argues that the following lessons can be learned from the American experiences:

- The Clinton approach (described later) recognized that it was important to coordinate general policies not focused on place (‘aspatial’) and spatially-targeted approaches, declaring that neither was sufficient by itself. Thus new targeted neighbourhood policies, such as the EZ/EC, were introduced in tandem with income security policies, such as Earned Income Tax Credit and the minimum wage, and more ‘community friendly’ transportation policies.

- 'Top down', professionally-dominated policies that focused on the deficiencies of communities were replaced by policies that promoted community-based development and local coordination. This approach stressed the assets of people and the capacity of communities. The resulting Comprehensive Community Initiatives (CCIs) brought together "once divergent streams of community activists" into projects that cut across sectors, made connections between social, economic and environmental concerns, and attracted business interests.
- The federal government, through a revitalized Housing and Urban Development (HUD) department, provided significant assistance to cities through various programs and means, such as community development block grants, new transportation legislation, and a Cabinet-level Community Empowerment Board.

Federal initiatives have played a critical role as "both a catalyst and a context for many local innovations" (Bradford, 2002:8).

### **Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities Program (EZ/EC)**

The EZ/EC Program was introduced in 1993 as part of President Clinton's 'community empowerment' agenda with its 4 guiding principles: 1) linking families to work, 2) leveraging private investment in communities, 3) locally driven, and 4) affirming traditional values such as hard work and self-reliance (US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 1995). The EZ/EC program aims to stimulate business investment and provide support services in distressed areas (i.e. high poverty areas). It recognizes that enhancing economic development requires collaborative community efforts to build social capital in order to bring about lasting revitalization. The initiative began in six cities<sup>10</sup>, providing benefits such as tax breaks, grants and a variety of other financing tools (Berger, 1994).

The EZ/EC agenda has been described as "a combination of the best thinking of the anti-poverty programs of the 1960s with the results of the 1980s community development efforts (Gittell et al, 1998:53). The results have been mixed to date and include: too few opportunities for locally-based businesses; the 'area' nature of zones fails to address poverty - the actual problem (McCarthy, 1998); the program is a 'band-aid' that misses 90 percent of the communities that need support (Cowden, 1995); lower level of citizen participation than expected; however, good results in community organizing (Gittell et al, 2001); community development goals are important but most EZ sites are viewing non-profit organizations as service deliverers rather than as capacity-building investments (HUD Interim Assessment, 2001).

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<sup>10</sup> Atlanta, Baltimore, Camden, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia.

### Three categories of US urban policies

Bruce Katz (2004) of the US Brookings Institution has developed three categories of American urban policies based on their distinct strategies: neighbourhood improvement; expanding opportunity; and neighbourhood transformation. Like Bradford and others, Katz believes that the US is moving in the right direction, although he is less impressed with the EZ/EC program. Below is a brief description of Katz's categories.

#### *Improving the neighbourhood*

A *place-based* strategy to promote revitalization by improving the physical stock and commercial quality of the community. This strategy takes the socio-economic composition of a neighbourhood as a given and offers neighbourhood institutions a central role in planning and implementation. The EZ/EC program is an example of this strategy. Unlike urban renewal, neighbourhood improvement distrusts central planning in favour of community planning. It focuses inwardly on the 'hidden assets', social capital, and even market potential of neighbourhoods, not outwardly on the greater metropolis.

Katz's concerns include: neighbourhood improvement strategies often confuse neighbourhood revitalization with poverty alleviation; it is not enough to assess whether the neighbourhood has improved; evaluations must also focus on how neighbourhood improvement affects broader goals such as school poverty, school participation; and neighbourhoods must offer not only affordable housing, but also good schools, proximity to quality jobs, and quality services (i.e. "what most middle-class consumers seek in their housing") (Katz, 2004: 12).

#### *Expanding opportunity*

A *people-based* strategy that focuses on providing residents of distressed neighbourhoods with greater access to decent jobs and good schools in the greater metropolitan area. The primary goal is to improve 'family outcomes' either by re-locating people to neighbourhoods with lower poverty levels where greater opportunities exist or by linking them to job or educational opportunities in their home communities. The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) program is an example. Of all the programs, housing vouchers had the best results and were most sustainable. Voucher recipients who chose to re-locate to middle class neighbourhoods improved family health (e.g. fewer asthma attacks); were more likely to enroll in college and/or have jobs; children less likely to drop out of school; and parents less likely to be on welfare.

#### *Transforming the neighbourhood*

With both *people- and place-based* dimensions, this is the most recent (emerging in the 1990s) and most ambitious strategy. It focuses on creating economically integrated, mixed income communities that are attractive to a broad range of households. Katz calls these 'neighbourhoods of choice' where low income people can start and then stay when their incomes rise, and higher income people can move. Katz argues that this approach requires a market-driven notion of neighbourhood change, rather than a 'community control' vision which (according to Katz) maintains the status quo (Katz, 2004:18). The best example of this approach is HOPE VI, a 10-year \$5-billion program to demolish the worst public housing developments and replace them with less dense housing that is integrated into the community.

Katz's vision of neighbourhoods of 'choice and connection' requiring both 'people' and 'place' strategies is based on five central principles:

- Neighbourhood policies must be situated within a metropolitan context since this is the 'geography of opportunity' where one finds labour markets, business networks, housing markets. The administrative boundary of a neighbourhood is too limited. "Practitioners need to treat the borders of neighbourhoods as porous boundaries rather than fixed barriers" (Katz, 2004:18).
- Broader national, state, and local policies need to align with the goals of neighbourhood policy; otherwise, neighbourhood efforts are doomed to failure. Three sets of policy reforms are necessary at these other levels: i) fixing the basics - good schools, safe streets, competitive services; ii) adopting *smart growth* policies to balance reinvestments in cities and older suburbs; and iii) connecting low income people to job opportunities.
- Neighbourhood policy needs to 'embrace' economic and demographic diversity in both cities and suburbs. This includes supporting income mixing in housing and establishing cities as 'immigrant gateways'. Immigration should be viewed as a necessity, not a luxury, for the future social, fiscal and economic health of cities.
- Ensure a mix of private- and community-sector action in both cities and suburbs. Non-profit community organizations cannot accomplish the restructuring [of housing] by themselves. Neighbourhood policy needs to engage the private sector 'early and often' in setting local priorities and rebuilding local markets.
- Implement neighbourhood policy in an integrated, accountable and sustainable fashion. This involves integration partnerships at the local level; performance accountability mechanisms; sustainable, dependable and predictable regenerations policies.

Finally, central government must be prepared to devolve more power to local government to encourage local solutions, experimentation and innovation.

### 3. CANADA: Winnipeg Development Agreement (WDA)

In 2001, Winnipeg completed a unique 20-year experience with tri-level funding for inner city revitalization<sup>11</sup>. People living in Winnipeg's inner city experience high unemployment; high poverty, particularly among Aboriginal people and lone mothers. Winnipeg has been the 'child poverty capital' of Canada seven times in the last 15 years (Silver, 2002).

The WDA focused on Aboriginal conditions but, apart from agreement on that, the three funding partners (the city, the province and the federal government) had relative autonomy in program or project development. Each funding partner contributed \$25 million a year to priorities of their choosing which levered significant additional funds from the private sector. The city of Winnipeg's priorities included: employment equity, heritage buildings, neighbourhood investments, and riverbank development. The Province of Manitoba channeled funds into: urban safety, neighbourhood infrastructure and housing, labour force training, and housing. The federal focus was: an Aboriginal Centre, housing, labour force training, information technology, and tourism/heritage. The over-riding lesson, according to a consultant studying tri-partite agreements, is the need for public consultation at every stage of the process- front-end, during program development, and during program implementation, using a variety of techniques ("use any technique that works") (Kalcsics, 2004).

A 2002 study commissioned by a coalition of inner-city community groups argued for a renewed tri-level development agreement. *Building on Our Strengths* (Silver, 2002) found that improvements were being made, particularly in the areas of increased safety and increased community pride. The study stressed that the improvements occurred in those parts of the inner city where community organizations emerged "from the bottom up" and were rooted in the community and where the funding was adequate. There was less or no improvement where these conditions did not exist. This finding

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<sup>11</sup> The partnerships were:

- Winnipeg Core Area Initiative (CAI) Agreement, 1981 - with Canada, Manitoba and Winnipeg as equal partners. The initiative concentrated on physical deterioration and poverty, geographically focused on Winnipeg's downtown and inner city neighbourhoods
- Winnipeg Core Area Initiative (Core II) Agreement, 1986 - The 3 levels of government were equal partners and the initiative continued the focus on inner city and downtown,
- Winnipeg Development Agreement - 1995 - 2001 - This was a city-wide, rather than a targeted, initiative that focused on economic development with a specific focus on Aboriginal conditions. The goals were: create safe and productive environments; provide skills, work experience and education; help to create jobs.

echoed the message heard at the 1990 hearings of the Community Inquiry Into Inner City Revitalization, which observed: "If public sector intervention is to be preventive rather than remedial in nature, resources should be allocated to community and self-help, grassroots project/groups that foster local ownership and responsibility" (Inner City Inquiry, May 9, 1990, as quoted in Silver, 2002:14).

The report calls for a new tri-level agreement, but recommends changes, including: less bureaucracy; a program/funding agreement operated by the community where all the money was channeled into the community (rather than "fancy metal and glass buildings on Portage Avenue"); funding priorities set by the residents themselves; use of a community economic development model (hire locally, produce and invest to meet local needs). Having a job was seen as what makes the single most important difference in people's lives, thus the importance of the 'hire locally' maxim.

Finally, it should be acknowledged that the initiatives and neighbourhood policies explored above, while significant, are not the only ones from which lessons can be drawn. Although outside the scope of this report, useful and important studies and evaluations are also emerging from other Canadian initiatives such as: the Vancouver Agreement; the federal government's Community Action Program for Children (CAPC) and its predecessor program, Better Beginnings, Better Futures; the Vibrant Communities initiative; the Closing the Distance Initiative, to name a few; in addition to initiatives from continental Europe, particularly from France, the Netherlands, and Germany.

## D. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Like many other good ideas and important concepts, the focus on building strong neighbourhoods can lead in a number of different directions. For example, it can take poverty and inequality as 'givens' and concentrate on how to improve the lives of people in their neighbourhoods through services that mediate the worst effects of poverty. Another approach is to use the neighbourhood or community as the locus of poverty alleviation efforts because 'traditional' approaches are judged to have failed.

A third direction is to align and coordinate the goals of strengthening neighbourhoods with a broader, structural strategy to address poverty and inequality.

From the literature on neighbourhoods and assessments of existing initiatives, the following themes and lessons have emerged to support and guide this third direction:

- To have a significant impact, both *people* and *place*-based approaches are needed. General policies not focused on place (e.g. national income and employment policies) need to be coordinated with programs and policies focusing on place. Neighbourhood-based initiatives should complement, not replace or displace, structural measures such as income and employment policies.
- For some purposes, the most appropriate 'place' focus is the neighbourhood; for many others, it is the city, the metropolitan region or broader.
- Policies that focus on the deficiencies of neighbourhoods do not work as well as community-based approaches that stress the assets and strengths (social capital) of neighbourhoods. It is therefore important to invest in community organizations as capacity-builders, not only as service deliverers.
- Building strong neighbourhoods that promote and enhance social inclusion, cohesion, vibrancy and safety requires a strong social infrastructure, including strong public services and, where appropriate, private sector partnerships. Neighbourhoods can become important sites for i) piloting new approaches to service delivery and community capacity-building, especially for children and families, and vulnerable populations; and ii) supporting the capacities of existing services to better meet the needs of all people.
- One of the most important potential roles of neighbourhood-based initiatives is to nurture and promote the involvement, empowerment

and civic engagement of local residents, particularly those people for whom these opportunities do not presently exist in other areas. Experience has shown that true community involvement takes time, draws on people rooted in their communities, and requires adequate funding.

In conclusion, the lessons learned from other jurisdictions are instructive and useful. However, we should approach them with caution. First, the policies and approaches of other jurisdictions can never be imported *as is*; second, while there are similarities between Canada and other jurisdictions (e.g. with respect to concerns about concentrated poverty in neighbourhoods), the situations are also very different in many respects, as the research on neighbourhood effects, for example, is showing; and finally, it is becoming increasingly clear that there are important areas related to cohesion and support for diversity where Canada (and Toronto in particular) can serve as a model for other countries and cities. This is not to suggest that we ignore real areas of weakness and needed change or that we should rest on our laurels and become complacent, but we do need to recognize and acknowledge our strengths.

*“Canadian cities are ... still well served by a legacy of good public investment in the 1960s and 1970s. (Berridge 2000, as quoted in Bradford, 2002:26)*

*However, ... there are clouds on the horizon which should cause us to reflect.” (Polèse 2002, as quoted in Bradford, 2002:26)*

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