

**OAK PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES  
SPECIAL MEETING FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Saturday, July 9, 2016  
9:00am – 12:30pm  
Main Library – Veterans Room

**AGENDA**

1. **9:00a.m.** Breakfast of Coffee and Pastries
2. **9:15a.m.** Roll Call
3. **9:20a.m.** Harwood Practice and Public Knowledge
4. **9:30a.m.** The Stages of Community Rhythms
5. **9:40a.m.** Community Rhythms Exercise
6. **9:45a.m.** Discussion: Where is Oak Park in the Rhythm Cycle?
7. **10:15a.m.** Consensus: Oak Park's Current Stage in the Cycle
8. **10:30a.m.** Break
9. **10:45a.m.** The Sweet Spot
10. **10:50a.m.** Innovation Space: Library Vision and Mission
11. **11:50a.m.** Reflections and Next Steps
12. **12:30p.m.** Adjourn



# THE STAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE

## THE WAITING PLACE

- In the Waiting Place, people sense that things are not working right in their community, but they are unable to clearly define the problem; the feeling could be described as a “felt unknown.”
- People feel disconnected from leaders and from different processes within the community for making decisions; the community itself is fragmented; discussion about common challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive.
- Community discussion about challenges is infrequent and/or highly divisive. People want to create change, but negative norms for public life keep them locked into old patterns.
- People often are waiting—for issues to become clearer, for someone else to “solve” their problems. People in this stage often say, “Everything will be better when we get the right mayor to save the community!” So people just wait.

## IMPASSE

- At Impasse, the community has hit rock bottom, and people can be heard saying, “Enough is enough! It can’t go on like this any longer!”
- In this stage, unlike in the Waiting Place, there is a sense of urgency in people’s voices; people are tired of “waiting.” But while people want change, they lack clarity about what to do.
- The community’s norms and ways of working together keep the community stuck in an undesirable status quo. The community is mired in turf wars; it lacks leadership at different levels of the community; and people seem fixated on their own individual interests.
- People’s frustrations have hit the boiling point but the community lacks the capacity to act.

## CATALYTIC

- The Catalytic stage starts with small steps that are often imperceptible to the vast majority of people in the community.
- Small numbers of people and organizations begin to emerge, taking risks and experimenting in ways that challenge existing norms in how the community works.
- The size of their actions is not the vital gauge. Their actions produce some semblance of results that give people a sense of hope.
- As this stage unfolds, the number of people and organizations stepping forward increases, and links and networks are built between and among them.
- A key challenge in this stage is the emerging conflict between a nascent story of hope and the ingrained narrative that “nothing can change.” Even as change appears, the old narrative will still dominate people’s communication and outlook until more progress is made and trust builds.

## GROWTH

- During the Growth stage, people begin to see clearer and more pervasive signs of how the community is moving forward.
- People in the community are able to name leadership at all levels and where such leadership is expanding and deepening—from the official level to neighborhoods, within civic organizations and nonprofits. Networks are growing and a sense of common purpose and direction are taking deep root.
- People feel a renewed spirit of community. More people are working together. Efforts are taking place across the community and are targeted to more concerns.
- A feature of this stage is that you can randomly ask people on the street what kind of community they live in, and they provide similar answers. A common story has emerged about the community.

## SUSTAIN AND RENEW

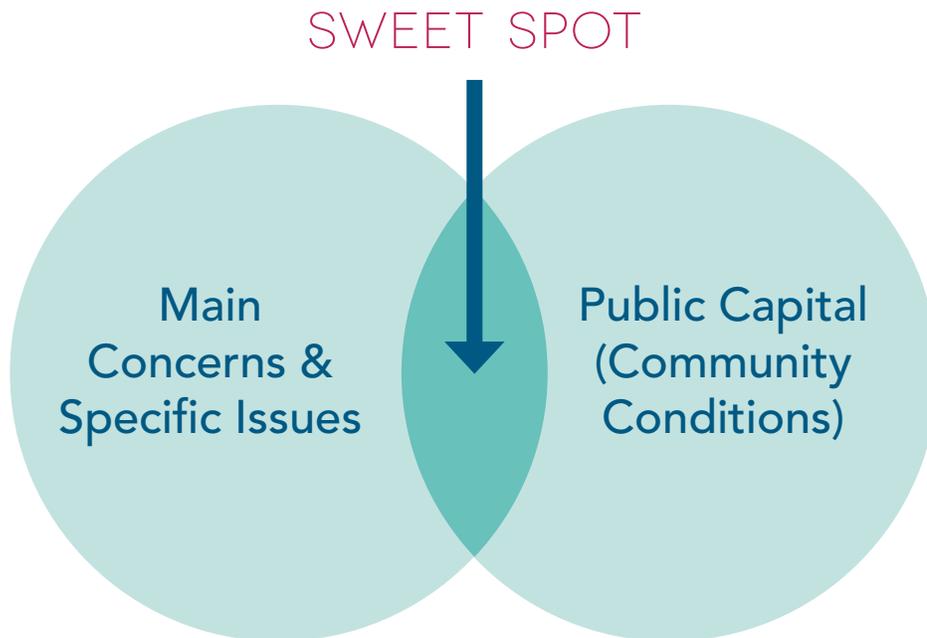
- In Sustain and Renew, the community is ready to take on, in a deeper and more sustained way, the tough, nagging issues that may have been tackled before but were not adequately addressed.
- Such issues might include the public schools, racism and race relations, and economic growth in all neighborhoods; change on these concerns typically requires sustained, long-term effort.
- Lessons and insights and new norms that have emerged over time now pervade the community.
- But the community may be struggling to maintain its momentum. It must find new ways to bring along a new cadre of leaders, civic groups, and active citizens, as others tire or move on.
- There is a danger that the community will fall into a new Waiting Place as it comes to rest on its laurels.

# COMMUNITY LIFE DO'S AND DON'TS CHART

Be careful not to	What to do	What to think about
<b>THE WAITING PLACE</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans</li> <li>• Start visioning exercises that fail or don't have enough community support for action</li> <li>• Try to engage people by making them feel guilty they are not involved</li> <li>• Rely on one-shot projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create forums for conversation and interaction where people feel they belong and crystallize feelings of frustration</li> <li>• Connect community actions to realities in people's lives</li> <li>• Demonstrate small signs of progress</li> <li>• Keep working, despite feelings of limited progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you really know how committed your partners are?</li> <li>• What small things could help us move forward?</li> </ul>
<b>IMPASSE</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans</li> <li>• Convince yourselves there are strong networks and organizations to support new civic work</li> <li>• Shut out community members because they are frustrated</li> <li>• Try to develop action plans too quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let people share their concerns and discover common aspirations for something different</li> <li>• Identify taboo issues that contribute to impasse</li> <li>• Find language that helps people imagine an alternative future</li> <li>• Look for windows to pull people into small efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What issues are citizens most immediately concerned about? Are those issues being worked on?</li> <li>• What is being done to bring people back into public life?</li> </ul>
<b>CATALYTIC</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate activities too quickly, stifling innovation and action</li> <li>• Rush to visioning exercises before the community is ready</li> <li>• Do too much, too fast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try lots of small things with room for failure; emphasize learning</li> <li>• Build Boundary-Spanning Orgs. that can generate change</li> <li>• Encourage informal conversations, networks, and new engagement norms</li> <li>• Develop a new cadre of leaders</li> <li>• Tell authentic stories of progress over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is motivating folks to work together?</li> <li>• Where are the Boundary-Spanning Organizations in the community? Who supports them?</li> <li>• What are we learning?</li> <li>• How do we know if our work is grounded in the community's aspirations?</li> </ul>
<b>GROWTH</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Miss parts of the community left out of progress</li> <li>• Let "official leaders" drive the action</li> <li>• Neglect the need to continually strengthen networks, leaders, and organizations that can keep the community moving forward</li> <li>• Ignore underlying community issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use community-wide engagement activities to coalesce and spring forward from the Catalytic stage</li> <li>• Do bigger projects, building on natural progress and collaborations that have come before</li> <li>• Reinforce positive norms for working together and continue to develop Boundary-Spanning Organizations and new leaders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is doing the hard work? Are community members involved?</li> <li>• Are new people getting involved in the efforts?</li> <li>• How are the new efforts connected to the work done before?</li> </ul>
<b>SUSTAIN AND RENEW</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think "success" has been achieved</li> <li>• Assume others know the story of progress and norms for action that have been built</li> <li>• Become arrogant and feel you have solved it all</li> <li>• Start to rest on laurels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop new leaders across the entire community and new Boundary-Spanning Organizations to create progress</li> <li>• Continue creating opportunities to bring community members into processes—especially new residents</li> <li>• Look for challenges not yet tackled to focus energies, and use lessons learned to expand progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the new leaders?</li> <li>• Who is still missing from the community's progress?</li> <li>• How are we feeling about ourselves: pride, fully humble, or smugly self-confident?</li> <li>• How are we consciously strengthening our norms of working together?</li> </ul>

# THE SWEET SPOT OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Sweet Spot is where you take action on issues the community cares about in a way that builds the conditions for change in your community at the same time.



## NOTES

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# THE SWEET SPOT OF PUBLIC LIFE

## Public Capital: The Conditions for Change

Working in the The Sweet Spot of Public Life requires a focus on Public Capital—the conditions for change that enable communities to move forward. These are the factors that shape the ability and capacity of a community to work together and create change.

**An Abundance of Social Gatherings** that enable people to learn about what is happening in the community and begin to develop a sense of mutual trust.

**Organized Spaces for Interaction** where people can come together to learn about, discuss, and often act on community challenges. These spaces help a community begin to identify and tap resources to address concerns.

**Boundary-Spanning Organizations** that help engage people in public life, spur discussion on community challenges, and marshal a community's resources to move ahead. These organizations help lay the foundation for community action, but do not act as the driving force.

**Safe Havens for Decision Makers** where a community's leaders can deliberate and work through community concerns in "unofficial," candid discussions.

**Strong, Diverse Leadership** that extends to all layers of a community, understands the concerns of the community as a whole, and serves as a connector among individuals and organizations throughout the community.

**Informal Networks and Links** that connect various individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions together to create a cross-fertilization effect of experiences, knowledge, and resources. People carry and spread ideas, messages, and community norms from place to place.

**Conscious Community Discussion** where a community has ample opportunity to think about and sort through its public concerns before taking action. People play an active role in helping decide how the community should act.

**Community Norms for Public Life** that help guide how people act individually, interact, and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for civic engagement.

**A Shared Purpose for the Community** that sends an explicit message about the community's aspirations and helps reinforce that everyone is headed toward a common goal.

# THE SWEET SPOT

February 26, 2007

by Richard C. Harwood

## Finding the 'Sweet Spot'

Increasingly, as I travel the country, I find myself talking about the “sweet spot of public life”—how we can take action on specific issues and build community at the same time. This past week was no different. I spent two days with 40 leaders of local collaboratives in Newark, N.J., good people who are urgently focused on strengthening families and children.

The challenges in Newark (and Essex County) are tough, long-standing, often depressing—but doable. In these communities, people often feel that no one speaks for or listens to them. Finding sustainable pathways for improving their local conditions can be hard. People worry that they are being left behind. Truth be told, many people are falling through the cracks.

The collaboratives sit at two critical nexus points in relationship to these challenges. They work among people in neighborhoods trying to create change; and they sit between “official” city structures and the local neighborhoods and communities to ensure that all people are at the table of public discussion and decision-making. Indeed, they serve as essential connective tissue that can help to bring about a greater sense of community wholeness.

No doubt, there is compelling need for better policies and programs that address people’s core concerns around families and children; but it is also the case, according to the folks in Newark and Essex County, that effective policies and programs also require the community coming together in new ways— from people supporting one another to people taking more responsibility for themselves.

Indeed, a recurring theme of the conversation in Newark was how to tap people’s own potential to create change and come together to forge stronger communities. But what does this mean? How does it happen? How does it sustain itself? This is a challenge I hear everywhere I go.

We must design initiatives that not only focus on a specific issue, but that also build the relationships, leaders, networks, and norms of communities—the stuff that makes communities go—what

I call “The Sweet Spot.” In Newark and Essex County, there were three key components of The Sweet Spot that need attention if the community is to effectively address its core concerns around families and children:

- Cultivating leaders: There is a real need to identify and engage “untapped” leaders in the community who hold authority and authenticity in the eyes of residents. These leaders can help engage, inspire, and support people and their causes in ways that leaders outside the community simply cannot.
- Creating safe space for discussion: There is a real need to create safe spaces in which people can come together to identify their aspirations, wrestle with competing values, and find ways to join hands in building a stronger community and strengthening families. The conversations that are now taking place too often focus on complaints and expert-framed policy issues that fail to move individuals and the community forward.
- Building networks: There is a real need to build networks in which organizations and leaders can learn about each other, build trust, and discover new ways (or strengthen existing ways) of working together. These networks reduce the time and costs associated with mistrust, the spinning of wheels, the pointing of fingers, and the inaction that results when we are unable to overcome obstacles.

The importance of finding The Sweet Spot cannot be over-emphasized. For it is not merely an academic point, or something simply to theorize about.

Rather, the challenge is, how can we move ahead?

Let’s face it, whether in Newark or in other communities, we will never have all the resources, time, and people we want to address the challenges before us. Instead, we must find ways to leverage our resources for making progress. That, I believe, requires that we find The Sweet Spot. Then we can have the very capacities we need to act on the challenges we seek to overcome.

# INNOVATION SPACES

## Innovation Space Tool

You want to turn outward so you can accelerate and deepen your impact.

But those changes won't just happen on their own. After all, the kinds of meetings and conversations that we're used to having quite often pull us back inward, away from the community. With days spent in planning meetings, focusing on ever growing to-do lists, activity chokes out action. And in all those meetings we rarely bring in people from across the organization or group; instead we retreat to silos and turf battles.

To create the change we want out in the community, we need to turn outward. That means we need to create room for a new, different kind of meeting and conversation, one focused on working across silos, learning from one another, and innovating.

That means creating an Innovation Space. Innovation Spaces are regularly scheduled conversations (once every four weeks) that bring different departments and groups together to focus on what you're learning as an organization and how to use what you're learning to create change. These aren't your usual staff or project meetings; here the goal is learning and innovation, not just planning and assigning.

This tool will guide you step by step through creating an Innovation Space.

## The Power of Innovation Spaces

"This has been a culture-changing activity." When a public broadcasting station wanted to turn outward and connect more authentically with its community, the station manager used Innovation Spaces to create a different conversation internally. These conversations led to changes in how the station assessed staff performance, who they engaged in the community, what they put on the air, and where they invested resources. Innovation Spaces "helped us move from one culture to a new culture. We are healthier because of it."

"I couldn't imagine my job now without Innovation Spaces." Innovation Spaces can be a powerful way to brainstorm and create together, but they are also key drivers of accountability. As one leader in an early childhood collaborative shared, "I could not imagine our community without them," but "the key is being intentional, and holding the meetings to a higher standard."

# INNOVATION SPACES

## Intentionality and Innovation

Creating Innovation Spaces and turning outward require that we act with intentionality. Without being intentional about our choices and actions, nearly any effort can seem plausible. Acting with intention is crucial for sustaining change. It is easy to get derailed. These questions will let you check in and see how you are doing and ensure you're focused on the things that really matter in terms of creating change.

Use the Harwood Rating Scale with these questions. Discuss the scores you give each. Record and save the group's answers. Chart your progress over time.

- Are we turned outward toward the community?
- Are our actions rooted in people's shared aspirations?  
Could we stand on a table and talk to people about their aspirations and concerns for their community, and would they believe us?
- Do we reflect the reality of people's lives, and do they believe we have their best interests at heart, even when we disagree?
- Are we living up to the pledges and promises we have made?
- Are we staying true to our urge within?

### THE HARWOOD RATING SCALE

Rating	What it means
We've Got It	We feel good about saying we've got this factor.
Real Progress	We're steadily improving and moving in the right direction. Still room for improvement.
Starting to Improve	We're beginning to demonstrate genuine effort. Things are starting to get better.
Lip Service	We're talking a good game, but our actions are not in line with what we're saying.
Business As Usual	We haven't changed at all—it's "business as usual."
Not Applicable	This factor is either not relevant to our work or not on our radar.

# The Har

## FIVE STAGES

### The Harwood Index

The Harwood Index is a new feature of our work on grading community strength. Communities can use the Index as a tool to help determine where they are at in the Stages of Community Life, to figure out how to move forward, and to plot their progress. (See [www.theharwoodinstitute.org](http://www.theharwoodinstitute.org) for more details.)

The Harwood Index plots five communities going through the Stages of Community Life. Other communities can use the Index as a tool to help determine where they are at in the Stages of Community Life. It is not intended as a scorecard to measure a community's success — instead, it is designed to be a touchstone for communities as they make decisions about how to move forward.

Each of the five communities were plotted on the Harwood Index based on where they were in the Stages of Community Life when we studied their public capital. While their placement on the Index may change over time, each one is an example of what a stage of community life looks like at a single point in time. They also offer insights into the implications for strategies for moving forward.

### The Waiting Place



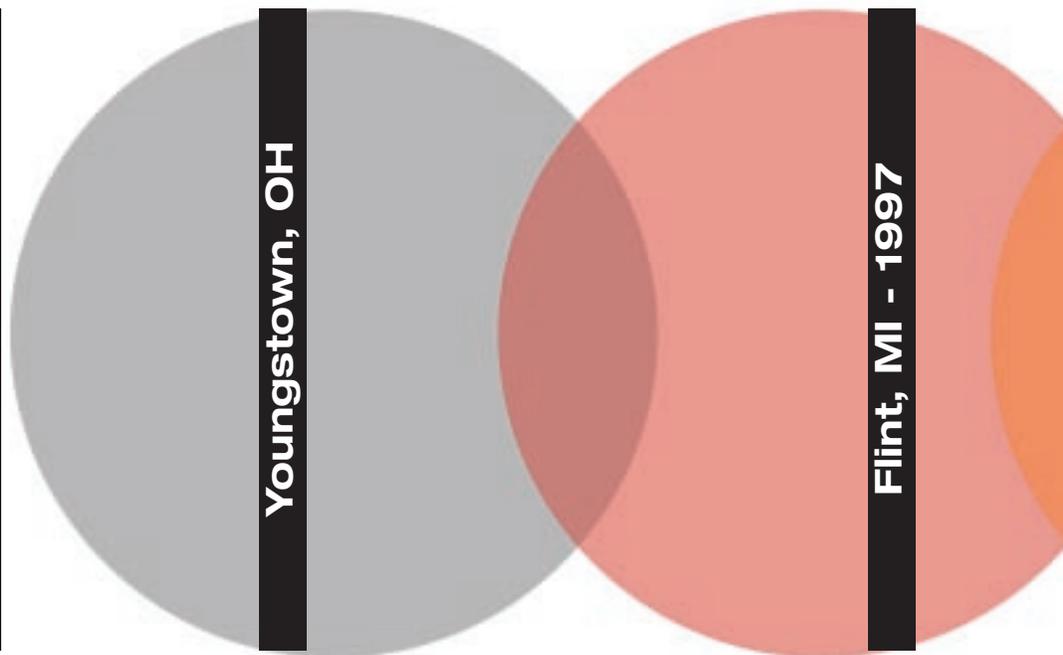
### Impasse



**Greenwood, MS**

**Youngstown, OH**

**Flint, MI - 1997**



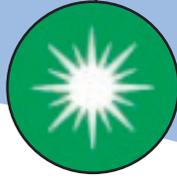
# Wood Index

OF COMMUNITY LIFE

Catalytic

Growth

Sustain/Renew



Flint, MI - 1999

Tupelo, MS

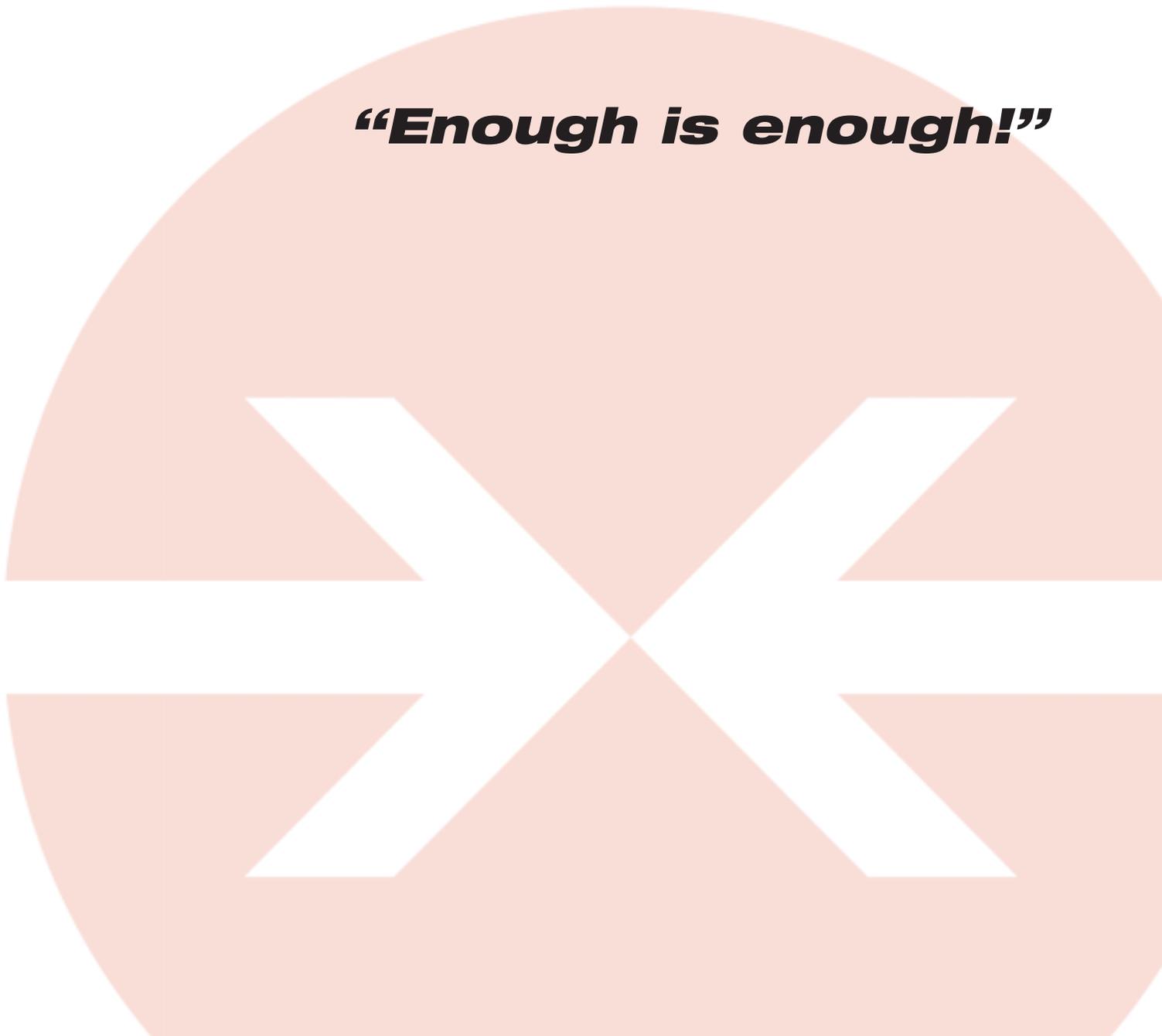
Chattanooga, TN

1997

# Flint, Michigan

## Impasse

***“Enough is enough!”***



## Flint, Michigan at Impasse

*Until the 1970s, Flint, Michigan was a growing and prosperous city. The area's economy was buoyed by an abundance of well-paying jobs at General Motors. People remember a city with well-maintained parks and nice homes, where the public schools provided a focal point for neighborhoods and everybody knew their neighbors.*

*Since that time, Flint has been shaken to its core by the loss of thousands of jobs and a frightening increase in crime. Like Youngstown, Flint has consistently lost population and growth opportunities to its suburbs. Race relations are strained. Residents express fear and anxiety about the city and its future.*

We heard people in Youngstown talk about feeling “stuck” and sensing that something is not working, but they are not able to put their finger on it. In Flint, the challenges have crystallized and people see a clear need for action. We hear them talk with a great sense of urgency that they need to move past this point.

The Flint area is at an **Impasse**. People are saying, “Enough is enough!”

“We have to come together — forget about those lines, those barriers — and bond ... We need to pull together and become one strong voice in order to bring about change,” said one Flint resident emphatically.

One of the turning points in Flint is that people now believe that the role and responsibility of citizens in creating change is paramount. This is very different from what we hear in Greenwood and Youngstown, where people are waiting for someone else, “a knight in shining armor.”

Mired in feelings of helplessness and negativity for a long time, people are also starting to see that they need to look at the Flint area through a new lens if they want to

move forward. One woman described an enormous shift in how she viewed Flint over the course of several conversations with The Harwood Group. “The last time I was at the group meeting, I said, ‘No way would I stay in Flint. I would not buy the house I’ve rented for six years.’” But after talking to people in the group conversations and in her neighborhood, she began to see that others shared her concerns and aspirations. She developed a renewed sense of hope about Flint and its future. She concluded by saying, “Well, I just bought [the house] ... I’ve always been a fighter and I’m not going to stop now.”

People also believe that they need to set a different economic course for the community. They are starting to ask, like one woman did in a conversation with us, “People are going belly up in this town. Now why? What’s going on here?” One man said, echoing others, “Flint can no longer ... depend on General Motors. This basically is not a General Motors town anymore. We’ll never see those days again.”

### “It didn’t used to be this way”

But make no mistake: as people want the community to break with its recent past, they are still deeply mired in it — frustrated and angry.

Instead, in Flint you can still hear the deep pessimism similar to what we heard in Youngstown and Greenwood; it pervades the community. “Each year it’s getting worse. It’s noticeably getting worse,” observed one woman. Another went still further: “I’d describe it as bleak, dark, black — anything that has to do with negativity.” As in Youngstown, people in Flint can remember a time when things were better — when people took care of their property, when they were not afraid to let their kids play outside. “It didn’t used to be this way,” said one woman.

A universal sense of isolation, divisiveness and disconnection permeates Flint. This disconnect makes it difficult for the



community to create and sustain the public capital it needs to address its challenges. As one woman pointed out, “If you don’t feel like you belong in your own little neighborhood, how on earth can you feel like you can go to a town meeting and feel comfortable?”

When asked to name leaders in their community, at any level, people found it difficult to do so. “There’s very few people trying to make Flint a better place,” one man concluded. Throughout our conversations, people were skeptical of leaders’ motives and say that most — especially elected leaders — do not act in the community’s best interests. The divisiveness of Flint’s leaders, who we heard rarely join forces to work together on community issues, further fuels people’s mistrust and skepticism.

In fact, we heard that not only do leaders act in isolation from one another, so too do Flint’s various civic, non-profit and other community organizations. People say that too many Flint area organizations and institutions preoccupy themselves with their own agendas and interests. They rarely reach out to try to learn what is important to those in the community. Instead of combining their strengths to respond to challenges, organizations are viewed as working against each other.

One man described it this way: “It would be like if you unwind the rope, each strand is not all that strong. That’s basically what you have when you have a bunch of different organizations all trying to do the same thing. But they end up coming down to all trying to do it their own way.” The result is continued gridlock, which further splinters the community. People suggest that too many civic groups and institutions have not “changed with the times.”

But one thing that The Harwood Group heard loud and clear is that despite their feelings of isolation and disconnection, residents of Flint do not excuse themselves

from the equation. They say that fear and frustration are keeping them from engaging in public life. They bemoan the failure of individuals to take responsibility to act. And they feel that their lack of participation is contributing to the area’s overall challenges.

### Flint’s Future

Flint is at a decision point. One option is to continue down the well-worn path of least resistance. A path that might lead to even deeper and wider gaps in a community already divided, where the usual routine spells gridlock, competitiveness and people acting to further their own, not the community’s, best interests. As a result, Flint may find itself facing in the future the same — and even more serious — challenges than it does today.

The other path will be much more difficult, but potentially much more rewarding. Many people say the status quo is not working and they are ready to break the impasse: to create a community where people build new ways to work together to address issues of common concern. In choosing this direction, the Flint community has a genuine opportunity to move forward.

Like Youngstown, people in Flint want to tackle issues and concerns that will help them build a better quality of life and a future for their community. In addition to job creation, they talk passionately about children and youth-related problems. “I like helping the youth, because that’s going to be our future,” pointed out one woman. And while people in Greenwood lament that their political leaders are not creating the changes they want to see, people in the Flint area are talking about what each individual needs to do to move the community forward.

“Flint’s not dead yet ... the lights are still on,” claimed one young man. And there are small changes starting to happen across the community as individuals strive to do public business in a new way.

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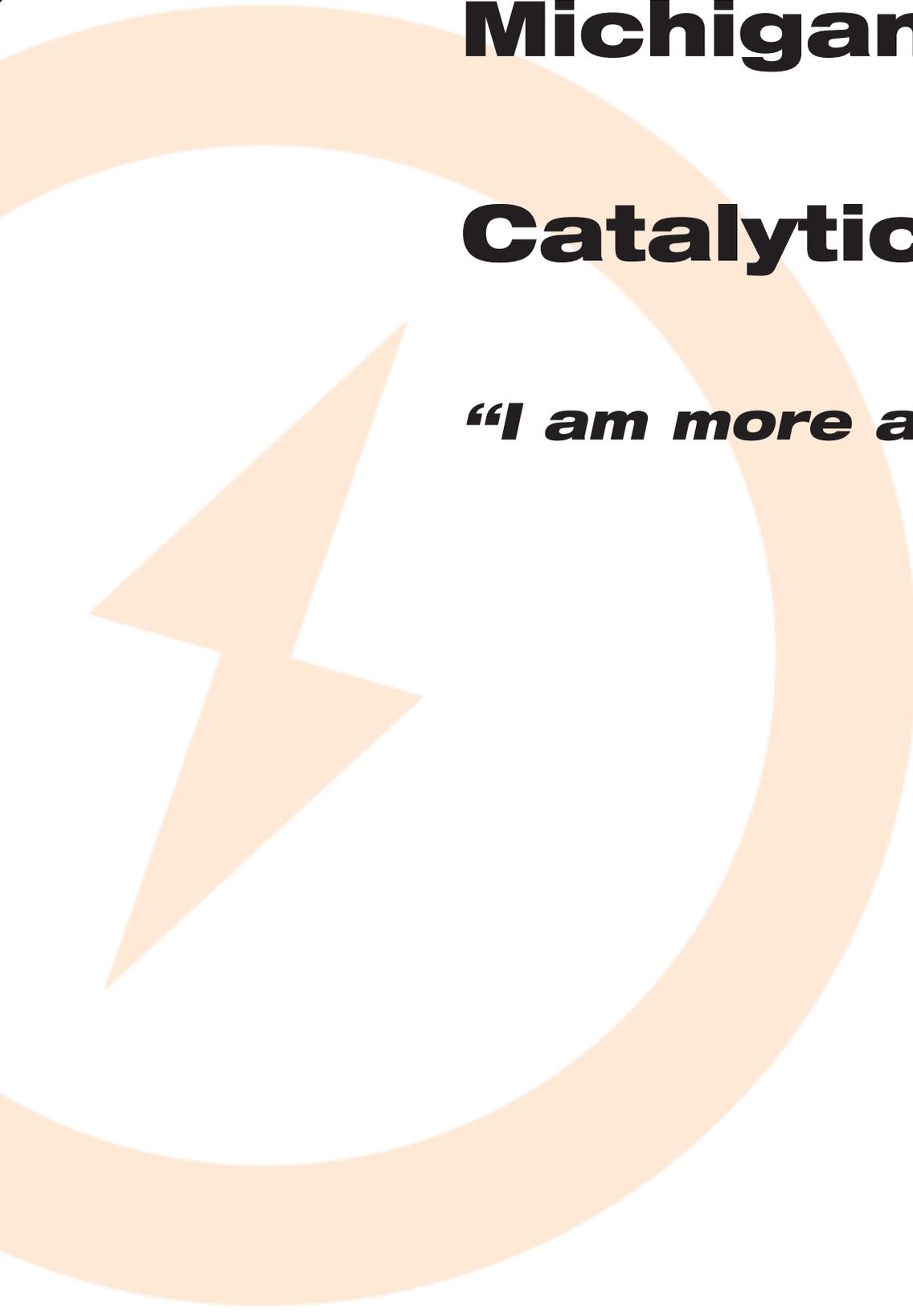


**EXTRA  
1999**

# **Flint, Michigan**

## **Catalytic**

***“I am more active.”***



## “Extra”: Flint, Michigan — Entering The Catalytic Stage

*Today, the Flint area finds itself at the beginning of the catalytic stage. Here is a brief update on the progress of Flint — a sense of how the catalytic stage of community life can start to play out.*

In 1997, we heard the urgency in the voices of Flint residents when the city reached Impasse. People were ready, at least in their minds, to put aside some of their differences and start to come together as a community.

Now in 1999, there is a nascent and growing sense in Flint that ‘at least we are starting to feel some movement.’ From the feeling of impasse, there are new signs of action. Some actions happening are on an individual level and others are more formal as organizations start to connect with each other. These different actions across the community are not necessarily “coordinated”; but they are working in complementary ways, sharing a common sense of purpose and direction. And as new links and connections start to form between people and groups, the actions and new norms will be strengthened and spread further into the community.

Here are some of the types of actions taking root in the Flint today:

**People are taking responsibility for creating a sense of community in their neighborhoods.** During the Impasse stage, people in Flint said that it was vital for individuals to step up to the plate. We are starting to see people re-engage in Flint’s community life in the Catalytic stage. We have heard about numerous community garden, clean-up and beautification efforts in neighborhoods. There are lawn lighting projects where folks raise money so each home gets same the yard lights. People are organizing picnics and festivals so neighbors

can get to know each other. The city-sponsored Community Pride Day is in its third successful year. There is high demand for T-shirts that say “I am taking a step for Flint and Genesee County.”

**People are seeing the importance of talking with each other about their community.** People in Flint have repeatedly told us that folks need to ‘get together’ and have productive conversations about where they want to go as a community. With the *Take A Step* tool, created by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation and funded by the Mott Foundation, people in the Flint area are starting to talk to each other. One church distributed *Take A Step* to every parishioner, a housing organization is using *Take A Step* as part of its new homeowner class curriculum. Over fifty block club leaders and representatives attend monthly meetings of a networking group called The Neighborhood Roundtable.

**Citizen leaders are feeling re-energized and re-engaged in public life.** We heard about one woman who got involved in her block club after a long period of non-involvement and is now president. A group of over thirty citizens that had been trained as “technical assistants” to help block clubs get grant money were not particularly active but now they are eager to lend their services in new ways such as helping groups use *Let’s Step It Up*, an action tool that builds off of *Take a Step*.

Citizen leaders are also trying to work through long-held grudges and disagreements. We heard about two feuding block clubs that got into the same room together and had a conversation about what each was up to. People who have clashed in the past are willing to participate in the same class of *The Place for Public Ideas*, a growing network of leaders and organizations, committed to Flint’s future. They told us that when they came together at *The Place*, they discovered that they share common aspirations for their community. And these leaders learned that even when they disagree,

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*Now in 1999, there is a nascent and growing sense in Flint that ‘at least we are starting to feel some movement.’ From the feeling of impasse, there are new signs of action.*



they can stay at the table and keep moving forward.

**Institutional and agency leaders are showing more interest in working with other groups and tapping into the community.** There are more requests to participate in *The Place for Public Ideas* than there are available spaces. Leaders from different cultural organizations are trying to organize a unified millennium celebration. Leaders are showing more interest in learning from citizens to help them in their decision making. Many are organizing “focus groups” on their own or requesting access to community conversations led by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation.

### **Flint’s Civic Brigade**

The different people and organizations starting to take action are the beginning of, what we call, a Civic Brigade™ for Flint that will grow over time. As more and more people start to see and hear what is happening, they will become engaged and start to create new connections across the community.

Challenges still exist in Flint. Many residents still have little hope for the future and see the city as continuing to decline. The recent closure of General Motor’s Buick City has left some wondering if this is the final nail in the city’s coffin. The public schools and crime in some neighborhoods continue to be a great challenge.

But as The Harwood Group has heard from citizens across the country, people do not expect change to happen overnight. If it took years to go into decline, people say, it is going to take time to get out of it. We have found that a community’s Catalytic stage depends on the small steps taken by a small group of people that start a ripple effect into the community.



# The Harwood Public Capital Framework



# The Harwood P

By looking at a community's "Public Capital," we are able to identify where the community is in the Stages of Community Life.

Developed by The Harwood Group, Public Capital is a framework for looking at the fundamental structures, relationships, networks and norms that need to be in place for a community to work effectively. There are nine factors of Public Capital. Each factor on its own seems simplistic. But, as the factors interact — which they must since they are interdependent — a rich, complex system emerges.

## The Tangible Dimensions of Public Capital

**An Abundance of Social Gatherings** — that enable people to learn about what is happening in the community and begin to develop a sense of mutual trust. These gatherings form the seedbed for public capital. (sporting events, organized potlucks, community festivals)

**Organized Spaces for Interaction** — where people can come together to learn about, discuss and often act on community challenges. These spaces help a community begin to identify and tap existing resources— and at times, new resources— to address concerns. (churches, neighborhood associations, recreation centers, schools)

**Catalytic Organizations** — that help engage people in public life, spur discussion on community challenges and marshal a community's resources to move ahead. These organizations help lay the foundation for community action, but do not act as the driving force. (the newspaper, chamber of commerce, community foundations, non-profit organizations)

**Safe Havens for Decision Makers** — where a community's leaders can deliberate and work through community concerns in "unofficial," candid discussions. (chamber of commerce, civic clubs, non-profit organizations)

## The Links Between the Tangible Dimensions

**Strong, Diverse Leadership** — that extends at all layers of a community, understands the concerns of the community as a whole and serves as a connector among individuals and organizations throughout the community. (Range: elected officials, ministers, teachers, neighborhood association members)

**Informal Networks and Links** — that connect various individuals, groups, organizations and institutions together to create a cross-fertilization effect of experiences, knowledge and resources. People carry and spread ideas, messages and community norms from place to place. (teachers talk education at church; bring insights from church to schools, business people raise issues at civic clubs, one group gives a presentation to members of another group)

**Conscious Community Discussion** — where a community has ample opportunity to think about and sort through its public concerns before taking action. People play an active role in helping decide how the community should act. (Discussions about: development of new housing project, business or economic development, changes in school curriculum)

## The Underlying Conditions of Public Capital

**Community Norms for Public Life** — that help guide how people act individually, interact and work together. These norms set the standards and tone for civic engagement. (put family and children first, take personal responsibility, connect self-interest to larger community interest, the positive tends to win out)

**A Shared Purpose for the Community** — that sends an explicit message about the community's aspirations and helps reinforce that everyone is headed toward a common goal. "We're all in it together"; "We want to grow as a community"; "We want our public institutions to thrive"

# Public Capital Framework

