

# Revitalising the Calumet: A Model for Urban Regeneration?

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# REVITALISING THE CALUMET: A MODEL FOR URBAN REGENERATION?<sup>1</sup>

Collaborative decision making has become a popular planning tool. Collaborative planning occurs when stakeholder groups, often with widely disparate viewpoints, come together to jointly address and arrive at consensus about complex problems. Proponents argue that seemingly intractable conflicts can be addressed through collaboration, and that complex issues involving the setting of goals and objectives and the allocation of resources can be resolved in ways that can not be done through independent action (Julian 1994).

This paper looks at a specific collaborative process in the United States, the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership (LCEP). LCEP is a collaboration of some thirty stakeholder organisations, including local governments, voluntary organisations, community groups, and academic institutions that have come together to foster efforts to revitalise the Lake Calumet region of southeast Chicago, Illinois. The diverse partners that make up the LCEP have wide ranging interests relating to the historical, cultural, social, economic, and physical character of the region. They also vary in size and in the amount of influence they can exert in affecting change in the region.

The research focuses on whether the Lake Calumet Partnership is an effective tool for positive change in the Calumet region. To do this it examines the benefits that accrue to individual Partners, the role the Partnership has in developing a unified plan for the region, the role that power plays in the Partnership, and what happens when individual Partners find it beneficial to act outside of the Partnership framework. It also examines some issues that are common to partnerships as models for promoting urban revitalisation, especially as they relate to local area partnerships for urban regeneration in Great Britain.

## Collaborations, Partnerships, and Citizen Participation

Collaboration involves co-ordinated and co-operative efforts by a variety of individuals or organisations each having an interest or stake, often widely varying, in some critical issue, policy, or program. Frequently the interest centres on a geographic location. Seen as a means for arriving at consensus, collaboration commonly involves the adoption of shared rules, norms and structures of decision-making, and the acceptance of joint ownership and responsibility for decisions (Gray 1989, Wood and Gray 1991). Collaborations typically involve face-to-face continuing dialogues facilitated by an individual or organisation not aligned with any specific stakeholder viewpoint. Collaborative decisions are arrived at through procedures that lead to consensus and methods are used to ensure that all stakeholders are heard and respected (Innes and Booher 1999).

Proponents of collaboration see it as a “strategy for dealing with conflict where other practices have failed”, and a “societal response to changing conditions in increasingly networked societies, where power and information

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<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to acknowledge the role that Dr. Mark Bouman, Dr. Janet Halpin, and Mr. Michael Siola have played in the research reported on in this paper. We four have worked as partners in facilitating the formation of the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership and have jointly worked to understand its context as a partnership, its strengths and successes, and its weaknesses and failures.

are widely distributed” (Innes and Booher 1999, 412). Planners, it is argued, have turned to collaborative problem solving in recognition of the political nature of planning, and as a way to mediate the interests of powerful groups, while promoting the interests of less powerful groups (Julian 1994). While collaboration and consensus building may produce implementable, mutually beneficial agreements among stakeholders, the most important results may be the production of new relationships, new practices, and new ideas (Innes and Booher 1999).

Drawing on work by Susskind and Cruikshank (1987), Gray (1989), Julian (1995), and Selin and Chavez (1995), Margerum (1999) has identified three phases of the collaborative process. They are:

- The *problem-setting phase*, which includes bringing stakeholders together, obtaining their commitments to work collaboratively and developing a structure to facilitate the collaborative process;
- The *direction-setting phase*, which includes stakeholders working together to identify problems, exchange information, resolve conflicts, determine common goals, achieve consensus, and identify implementation actions; and
- The *implementation phase*, which includes stakeholders establishing a structure for implementation, designing an approach to implementation, implementing actions, and monitoring and measuring outcomes (Margerum 1999).

Margerum states that the motivation to continue beyond the first two phases of collaboration depends on the factors motivating stakeholders to enter into the process in the first place. He cites the desire to resolve conflict and an interest in building consensus as differing motivating factors that can affect outcomes (Margerum 1999).

Formal collaborations are frequently accomplished through the creation and maintenance of partnerships. Partnerships have become a common mechanism for co-ordinating the activities of public agencies, especially when agency missions are overlapping or when several agencies are charged with delivering programs to the same group of people or the same geographic location. Partnerships among public agencies are seen as mechanisms for providing co-ordination of work of a “jungle of interconnected organizations” (Alexander 1993, 328).

Increasingly partnerships are used for bringing disparate entities, such as government officials, representatives from business and industry, and community advocates together for consensus building and joint planning. In the U.S. and Australia partnerships are used in land and watershed management schemes (Innes 1992, Margerum 1999, Paulson 1998). In Britain, partnerships and collaboration are playing an increasingly significant role in a variety of social and area regeneration schemes (DETR 2000).

When citizens or community organisations are involved in collaborations and partnerships, the process can be seen as being a form of citizen participation. But simply including community members in a partnership does not, by itself, insure that there will be meaningful citizen involvement. While Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) classic “ladder of citizen participation” includes a rung called “partnership”, the structure and functioning of a partnership can result in citizens and their organisations performing at any level of Arnstein’s ladder from the lowest rung, manipulation, up to and including the rung of real partnership<sup>2</sup>. Promoting citizen participation in partnerships can be a way for government or others in power to obfuscate community interests altogether if the real decision making processes lie elsewhere outside of the boundaries of the partnership.

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<sup>2</sup> That is, if citizens have only token representation and are given few resources and information needed to participate in a partnership, their involvement is likely to have little impact and it could be argued that they are being manipulated rather than being treated as real partners.

In a recent paper presented to the Association of American Geographers, North (2001) points out that including community in partnerships, especially if unsupported or poorly supported, can lead to a short-cutting of genuine consultation and to little more than therapeutic consultation used to mask real decisions being made elsewhere. Nonetheless, he contends that community actors can succeed in partnerships and can positively affect both the partnership and other partnership members. Parkes (2000), writing about the efforts of the Kings Cross Railway Lands Group, an activist organisation with fifteen years of experience, is in agreement with North. He says that the KCRLG has benefited from its involvement in the Kings Cross Partnership and has proven to be an effective institutional player, albeit one that is not afraid to rock the boat when necessary.

Taylor (2000) cites three tensions that limit the meaningful involvement of citizens in the British partnership schemes. The first of these is tension between public accountability and flexibility, the need for government to account for its expenditures which limits its willingness to be flexible. The second is between participation and leadership, the fact that while representation of community interests is often welcome, their leadership role is frequently limited. And the third is between consensus and diversity, the need to balance community differences with common interests.

In the next section of this paper I describe a collaborative partnership formed to assist in the planning and implementation of revitalisation initiatives in an economically and environmentally depressed section of Chicago, Illinois, USA. By focussing on the initiation of this partnership, its activities to date, and its successes and failures, I hope to provide some insight into the collaborative partnership process especially as it relates to the roles of citizens and citizen organisations as participants in partnerships. Following my analysis of the Chicago partnership, I will briefly compare and contrast it with one formed to promote area regeneration in the Barton Hill area of Bristol, UK. .

## **The Calumet Region of Southeast Chicago**

The Calumet region of southeast Chicago is typical of areas found in many post-industrial cities. It was and continues to be a major industrial district in Chicago (see figure one), but it bears the scars of past industrial misuse. Currently the region consists of a mixture of industrial uses, abandoned brownfields sites, degraded wetlands, and socially and economically stressed neighbourhoods.

Industrialisation of the region began in the 1870s when small iron and steel factories were built at the mouth of the Calumet River. Several of these were later merged into U.S. Steel's Southworks facility, once the largest integrated steel making plant in the world. In the 1880s George Pullman built his great 'palace car' factory and model workers community on the shores of Lake Calumet. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the region had become one of the major industrial areas in the U.S.

Large integrated steel plants, railcar manufacturers, chemical plants and refineries, and other monuments to heavy industry still dot the region. But, on the Illinois side of the border between Illinois and Indiana over 20,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since 1980 and many of the landmark industries, U.S. Steel South Works, Wisconsin Steel, Republic Steel, Pullman-Standard, General Mills are now closed. The legacy of the industrial activity is of uncounted brownfields sites, 21 operating or closed municipal landfills, large sewage treatment plants, and communities whose residents bear a disproportionate price of the industrial past and present. There are more than 25 past and present seriously contaminated sites, more than a thousand hazardous substance producing or using firms reporting to the

Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Toxic Release Inventory, and there are ongoing concerns about water, air, and soil quality. Despite all its negatives, the region's wetlands are home to a wide variety of animal and plant life, including a number of rare and threatened bird species, such as the Black Crowned Night Heron and the Yellow Headed Blackbird.

For the past quarter century there has been growing concern about the quality of the region's environment. Some environmental activists, mostly locally based, have focused on the need to clean up the regions' polluted areas, while others, a mixture of local residents and members of outside organisations, have focused on protecting and restoring the region's remaining "natural" areas.

A city of Chicago proposal in 1990 to build a new airport in southeast Chicago that would have obliterated the area brought together a peculiar mix of local community groups, industrialists, and environmentalists to oppose the airport's construction. When the airport proposal died some of these organisations banded together to support a proposal to create an "urban ecological park" in the region, centred on the largest water body, Lake Calumet. While a National Park Service feasibility study, conducted in 1998, rejected the idea of National Park designation, it did suggest that the region might meet the criteria for a National Heritage Area (Byrnes 2000).

## **The Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership**

Sometime prior to the spring of 1998, the Chicago regional office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began hosting informal meetings of governmental agencies to share information about environmental issues and activities in the Calumet. Seeking to include the local community in these meetings, the EPA asked for the assistance of Chicago State University's Calumet Environmental Resource Center in identifying local community organisations to be asked to attend the meetings, and in providing space so the meetings could be held within the region.

By spring of 1998 a few community people were attending the monthly meetings. At one meeting, a presentation was made by a representative of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) about the state agency's Conservation 2000 (C-2000) program. A key element of the C-2000 program was the formation of "ecosystem partnerships", stakeholder groups that came together to develop local watershed plans and promote local watershed improvements<sup>3</sup>. Partnerships were eligible to receive state funding to implement projects. The group was told that IDNR would look favourably on a request to form an ecosystem partnership in the Calumet area.

Two local Calumet community organisations, the Southeast Chicago Development Commission and the Southeast Environmental Task Force agreed to act as convenors of a series of meetings to explore the possible formation of a Calumet Partnership and the USEPA agreed to provide funds for a meeting facilitator. After a bidding process the Calumet Environmental Resource Center was chosen to be the facilitator.

Exploratory meetings began in autumn, 1998. Over 60 people attended the initial meeting and nearly all them supported the idea of an ecosystem partnership as a mechanism for promoting revitalisation efforts in the Calumet region. At subsequent meetings the outline of a partnership proposal was developed and a formal request to establish the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership was submitted to IDNR in February, 1999. The request was submitted on behalf of fourteen organisations, listed in the proposal as being "interested partners" (see Table 1). The goal of the

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<sup>3</sup> At the time the presentation was made there were approximately 25 existing Partnerships scattered throughout Illinois.

Partnership, as listed in the proposal, was to promote a holistic vision of sustainable development in the Calumet region that combined both an industrial and environmental focus. In March, the IDNR responded favourably and the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership (LCEP) was born.

Shortly thereafter the City of Chicago's Department of Environment (DOE) became a LCEP member and agreed to fund a strategic planning process for the group<sup>4</sup>. Following this process, which lasted through the summer, the group turned its attention to the C-2000 funding process and developed 11 proposals that were submitted to IDNR in February, 2000<sup>5</sup>. The proposals covered a range of activities, from habitat restoration, to pollution abatement, to support for a community wetland festival. All were consistent with notions of restoring the physical environment, promoting sustainable industrial growth, rebuilding the area's neighbourhoods, and promoting the industrial-environmental heritage of the Calumet area. Total funds requested exceeded \$400,000.

### **COLLABORATIVE PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY, AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE CALUMET REGION: COOPERATION OR CONFLICT?**

From the outset the Lake Calumet Partnership has embraced a program of sustainable development as the revitalisation strategy for the region. There has been general agreement among all of the partners, including industry, government, community and environmental members that this is a desirable strategy. There is, however, not much agreement as to what sustainable development is. Over time competing visions for the region have emerged. These visions utilise the rhetoric of sustainability as well. While the Partnership has a broad base and seemingly represents the interests of government, industry, environmental and community, it may neither be able to influence the final character of revitalisation efforts nor ensure that future development is sustainable.

Recently the Calumet region has been "rediscovered" and is frequently cited as being a good site for redevelopment. The city of Chicago has become quite interested in the region since it contains the only vacant land parcels within city boundaries large enough to support major redevelopment. City planners have begun to promote the region as the as a site for new, albeit "cleaner" industrial development. At the same time the City has been promoting the region as having great environmental potential.

The City's dual interest in the Calumet's economic and environmental potential is not new. In 1998 the City's Department of Environment proposed "the first step in a long-term effort that combines ecological rehabilitation with industrial redevelopment in the Lake Calumet area" (Malec 1998). This proposal called for a cost benefit analysis to measure the potential economic impacts on land values of making ecological improvements and building an environmental interpretative centre, and a study of the potential for using the region's environmental resources as part of a tourism strategy (Malec 1998). This proposal was followed by a February 1999 international brownfields conference held in the region to advance "sustainable industrial and ecological revitalization of the Lake Calumet ... region" (Workshop Summary 1999).

At a joint press conference held overlooking Lake Calumet in June, 2000, Chicago's mayor and the Governor of Illinois announced that together they were committing \$40 million to restore the region and to demonstrate that productive industry and passive open space could coexist. They outlined

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<sup>4</sup> Early on it was recognised that participation by the City of Chicago would be critical to success of the Partnership. In addition to DOE, the City's Department of Planning and Development began attending meetings. DPD chose not to join the Partnership, however, stating that the City should have only one formal representative.

<sup>5</sup> C-2000 funds are granted on a competitive basis. All Partnerships, of which there are approximately 30, submit proposals at the same time and the evaluation process continues for about seven months.

plans for creating a 3,000 acre Calumet Open Space Preserve, building an environmental centre for interpreting the natural and industrial heritage of the area, constructing the largest solar power generating station in the U.S., and building a plant to convert methane gas from existing landfills into electricity. A massive Tax Increment Financing District (TIF)<sup>6</sup>, covering the entire Calumet region, was proposed as the mechanism for funding industrial development, creating jobs, and restoring the natural areas (City of Chicago June 2, 2000). Members of the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership had been kept abreast of the developing initiatives, were informed of and were present at the press conference, and were generally supportive of the initiatives outlined by the Mayor and Governor.

In August the Mayor announced that the Ford Motor Company had agreed to a "massive expansion" of its existing manufacturing facility adjacent to Lake Calumet. The expansion, it was said, would include acquiring 500 acres of land for a "supplier park" and creating about 1,000 jobs (Roeder August 20, 2000).

The City was less open with the Partnership about the Ford expansion both before and after the announcement was made. Members were assured that the expansion would be consistent with environmental guidelines for the region and that the Partnership would be informed as further plans developed. However, there was no promise made that the Partnership would have any input into these plans.

The actions taken by the City and its public and private partners in proposing major initiatives for the Calumet region suggest that Partnership's influence in guiding redevelopment will be limited. The Partnership has been heavily consulted about planning for the open space preserve and the environmental centre, but the actual decisions regarding both will be made by the City itself. There was consultation about the TIF financing scheme and related transportation initiatives, but it was obvious from the outset that the City was determined to create the TIF district no matter what advice was given. And the City's negotiations with Ford and the plans for the industrial expansion have occurred completely outside of public view.

The primary goal of LCEP is the development of a sustainable Calumet region. A broad coalition of industry, environment and community is envisioned as necessary to achieving this goal and collaboration and consensus are seen as the means for achieving it. The competing vision that has emerged, however, places the City of Chicago fully in charge of both the environmental and the industrial redevelopment of the area. Whether the City's goal of a "sustainable Calumet" is consistent with that of LCEP is open to question.

Sustainable development has figured prominently in the City's rhetoric. But the development realities are closer to business as usual. First, it appears that the combined effort to attract the Ford expansion to the area was an act at least partially born of desperation. The City needed a proposal to lure jobs to Chicago and to counter a competing offer for the expansion of another Ford plant in Atlanta, Georgia.

Second, the City Department of Environment's (DOE) proposal to locate the environmental centre at Indian Ridge Marsh (see figure 2), a site supported by the Partnership, has been stymied by the City's Department of Planning and Development (DPD). DPD argues that heavy truck traffic to be generated by proposed industrial activities will be incompatible with recreational travel at the DOE site. The final decision on siting the

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<sup>6</sup> Tax Increment Financing is a method for generating money for public investments such as infrastructure improvements and development incentives. The TIF scheme uses the increases in taxes generated by new development to pay off bonds sold for the public investments. The efficacy of the scheme hinges on the expectation that new development will actually occur so that additional tax dollars will be available to repay the bonds.

environmental centre was to be made by last August. As of May, 2001, the decision remains on hold.

Finally, on February 9<sup>th</sup> of this year Jacques Nasser, President and CEO of the Ford Motor Company announced a \$6million gift for the new environmental centre. At the same time the Mayor and Governor announced the formation of a Calumet Sustainable Growth Advisory Committee that will work with the City to find additional private investment to acquire and clean up a site, build the centre and create programming (City of Chicago February 9, 2001). Changes in rhetoric from “sustainable growth” to “sustainable development”, the foregrounding of what are said to be projects previously identified by the Governor and Mayor, and the “downtown” make up of the newly appointed “blue ribbon” committee, leave little doubt who is in charge of development in the region.

The Partnership has also been unsuccessful in promoting its vision for the region to its sponsor, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. In September, 2000 the IDNR rejected all but one of the 11 redevelopment proposals the Partnership had submitted in February, dashing the Partnership’s plans for quick implementation of its agenda. The only funded proposal was a sizeable grant to the City of Chicago for hydrological improvements of the wetlands surrounding Lake Calumet. While the improvements are needed and urgent and are supported by the Partnership, the grant is essentially part of the State’s commitment to the region announced at the June 2000 press conference and not a grant to the Partnership. By rejecting all the other proposals, IDNR left the Partnership members other than the City with no funding for projects they had hoped to undertake.

LCEP has been unable to convince IDNR that the highly urbanised, highly polluted nature of the Calumet region calls for more extensive efforts than the habitat protection and restoration projects the agency apparently is prepared to fund. One of the projects that had been submitted to IDNR was a pollution prevention project, that included a series of “good neighbour” dialogues between community and environmental organisations and local polluting industries. The proposal had been jointly developed by industry and environmental LCEP participants and the full membership had given it a high priority ranking. IDNR, however, rejected it as inappropriate for C-2000 funding. The project has been re-submitted this year with an accompanying statement summarising the Partnership’s commitment to the unique environmental character of the region. An argument is made in the statement that attention to ongoing pollution and its prevention in the area will do more to protect and restore the Lake Calumet habitat than funding of remediation efforts. Even though some IDNR officials admit to the logic of the argument, it is doubtful whether the agency will ever fund the project.

## **HAS COLLABORATION AND CONSENSUS SUCCEEDED IN THE CALUMET?**

The Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership has been struggling to develop a strategic plan for the region. Work on the plan began during summer, 1999, and it is still not completed. Members of the Partnership have always understood the power that the City has to implement change in the region and they have worked to develop a plan that would be consistent with the City’s plans for Lake Calumet, its wetlands, and the surrounding industrial land. But the City’s plans remain opaque. The long expected City strategy for ecological management of the Calumet has yet to be released. While pieces of the City’s economic development strategy for the region have been announced, its full strategy is unknown.

The LCEP strategic plan is being prepared as part of its relationship with the State’s Conservation 2000 program and is being funded by the IDNR. Given its refusal to support previous LCEP project proposals, it is unclear whether IDNR will support a completed LCEP plan. IDNR has said that the

LCEP plan should focus on the needs of the region, but its rejection of the LCEP proposals suggests it feels that the LCEP vision and the proposed projects are outside of the scope of the C-2000 program.

At the most recent LCEP meeting (April 2001) members were asked what they felt was the most important function of the Partnership. There was a consensus of opinion that the Partnership is needed and that it provides a forum for learning about what is going on in the region and for sharing ideas. These responses suggest a lowering of expectations for what members feel the Partnership can accomplish, but are consistent with the City's view that LCEP is a valuable source of citizen input. Researchers from Chicago State University who are responsible for writing the strategic plan and for facilitating Partnership meetings have decided to reflect these more limited expectations in the plan and conduct of future Partnership meetings.

The LCEP can boast of many accomplishments. Its formation marked a major step towards developing a common agenda for the region. The coming together of representatives from government, industry and business, environmental groups, and the community to share ideas and to work towards a common agenda has forged new relationships and strengthened old ones. Both the City and the community have benefited by its presence. It has provided a forum at which the City could present its ideas for the region, get meaningful feedback, and solicit support for its proposals. And through its affiliation with the State's C-2000 program, LCEP has given the Calumet region greater visibility statewide than it has had previously.

The Partnership has been a positive experience for its participants. The people attending the meetings have come to know each other and have worked hard at the building of consensus and respecting the various viewpoints represented at the table. Within LCEP there is much "shared capital" (Innes et. al. 1994).

The three-phase model of collaboration suggested by Margerum (1999) can be used as a tool for evaluating LCEP. Margerum suggests that the first two phases, *problem setting* and *direction setting*, are preliminary to the key aspect of collaboration, *implementation*. He says that *implementation* can lead to three types of results; achievements (consensus, trust, and the creation of shared capital), products (plans, education projects, restoration and clean up efforts, etc.), and outcomes (changed policies, new priorities, etc.) with outcomes being the most desired. His own studies of collaborations in Australia and the U.S. leads him to conclude that groups usually succeed in producing achievements, frequently succeed in producing products, but are nearly always unable to influence policies, programs, decision making, or the allocation of resources, funding and staffing.

Although the LCEP is still evolving as a collaborative partnership, it appears to be acting consistent with Margerum's observations. The first two phases, *problem setting and direction setting* were quickly achieved when the group first formed. *Implementation* has proceeded much more slowly. Achievements (i.e. consensus, trust, and shared capital) have been accomplished, but progress in developing products (i.e. the strategic plan) has been slow. It is unlikely that LCEP will ever achieve any important outcomes.

Failure to achieve outcomes may result from poor communications, problems with resolving conflicts, personality differences, extremely difficult problems, long history of antagonisms, and inadequate funding to support implementation. However Margerum contends that structural factors are the most serious barriers to implementation. They are:

- Disparities among stakeholder power and resources, such that individual stakeholders may seek alternate routes outside of the collaborative process;
- Lack of agreed upon strategic direction including failure to set priorities and identify specific actions;

- Lack of community involvement with groups viewing themselves as representatives of the community rather than being representative of the community; and
- Lack of stakeholder commitment to implementation.

With the exception of the problem of funding, non structural problems either have not affected LCEP or they have been overcome. The structural factors, however, present more serious barriers to success.

There are disparities of power and resources among the Partners, with the City of Chicago overshadowing nearly all other members. The City initially was not a member of the Partnership. Its participation was sought, however, because members realised that little could be accomplished without the City's approval and support.

Getting the City to become a member did nothing to change its position with respect to its power. Along with its political allies, the City can, if and when it chooses, act on its own. That the City is negotiating an economic development agreement with the Ford Motor Company, and that it refuses to fully disclose its plans for the environmental centre shows that whenever it is advantageous, the City will act independent of Partnership.

The C-2000 funding process requires each partnership to establish priorities and to rank proposals in a manner consistent with them. LCEP has struggled with this meeting this requirement but in both of the C-2000 funding rounds it has reached a consensus on priorities.

Whether LCEP truly represents the Calumet community is a subject of ongoing debate. Environmental organisations are represented in numbers beyond their actual influence in the region and community organisations are under-represented. All but a few of the environmental groups are based outside of the community, although their long term interest in preserving Lake Calumet and the surrounding areas qualifies them as stakeholders. There are only a few locally based environmental organisations in the Partnership, notably the Southeast Environmental Task Force.

LCEP is "too white". Much of the area's population is African-American and Latino, but neither group is well represented in LCEP. Members of LCEP are aware of the lack of minority representation and have launched a project to recruit more minority participants.

Commitment to implementation is also a problem. While the City's disregard of the collaborative process when it is inconvenient is the most obvious indication of limited commitment, other organisations are also not fully committed to the collaborative partnership process. Attempts to avoid issues on which the Partners could not arrive at consensus led one long time Calumet area activist to pronounce LCEP a failure and to withdraw from it.

### **CAN THE LCEP EXPERIENCE BE GENERALISED?**

Since February I have been closely observing Community at Heart (CAH), Barton Hill, Bristol. CAH is an organisation created to manage the British government's New Deal for Communities program in Bristol. It is one of 16 "pathfinder" New Deal groups in the UK, all of which are structured as "partnerships".

CAH is set up as a charitable company with the intent of creating a community controlled process. The board of the company consists of twenty members, twelve of whom are community residents. The other eight board members represent various governmental agencies and voluntary organisations. Initially resident members were appointed to the board, but there is presently an election underway to elect the resident board members. In the future all community resident board members will be elected. Rather than representing organisations or associations within the Barton Hill area, elected board members will represent one of four local neighbourhoods. The board is responsible for implementing the community vision that was articulated in the New Deal bid, for managing approximately £50 million in

project funding over a ten year period, and for devising strategies to allow CAH to continue beyond the life of the New Deal program.

The presence of a majority of local residents on the CAH board does not ensure a community controlled process. Some community leaders are concerned that the current board is too passive. They feel that the residents on the board are not acting as leaders, but rather are only responding to proposals that are brought to the board by either the CAH staff or by agencies interested in taking advantage of the New Deal funding.

There are many similarities between LCEP and CAH. Both partnerships consist of representatives of the community, government, and charitable organisations. Both exist as mechanisms for promoting community regeneration. Both have adopted definitions of regeneration that are holistic, seeing renewal as not just physical redevelopment, but social, economic, and cultural development as well.

But there are differences. CAH is a creation of the Central Government. It exists to implement the Government's New Deal Program in Barton Hill. As such it is subject to Government scrutiny and review. LCEP is not part of any government structure even though representatives of government agencies are participants. Being outside of government gives it a degree of freedom and flexibility that CAH does not have.

Because CAH is part of the governance structure it has access to the funds that it needs to implement its programs. LCEP, to the contrary, must compete with other groups, organisations, and government agencies for funding. For the most part it has been unsuccessful in raising funds to implement its programs.

But a direct relationship between CAH and the Government has its own problems. Government guidelines set strict limits on the kinds of programs CAH can undertake and limits its flexibility to develop a regeneration program that meets unique needs in the community. The development of projects must follow a cumbersome proposal process and most projects must undergo government review and approval. This means that it often takes months before an idea can be converted into an actual project.

Government officials are thought to be more interested in the production of outputs and products than in the building of community capacity. There is pressure on CAH to spend the Government money and to produce demonstrable outcomes. Community oversight tends to be set aside in the rush to "produce". The programs CAH has implemented so far focus on what Brickell (2000) has said is the Government's emphasis on formal representation and management rather than on "direct practical involvement" and promotion of local entrepreneurship.

CAH has been more successful than LCEP in directly getting things done. CAH's advantage is its access to resources. But the CAH board must rely on other organisations and agencies to develop projects. Some board members worry that too much of what is being implemented is supply driven. That is, current projects being proposed and implemented are ones that agencies and organisations want to offer, not ones the community has decided are needed.

LCEP does not have direct access to funding for its proposals and it can not directly influence the way in which regeneration proceeds in the Calumet area. Nonetheless it has considerable indirect influence. Its proponents argue that it has become a critical voice in the discussion relating to community renewal in the area. Its role as a forum for sharing information and debating issues should not be minimised. Its long term ability to influence change, could be as significant as that of CAH, if it continues to be a strong voice for community based renewal.

From comparing and contrasting the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership and the Community at Heart three common dimensions of a collaborative partnership process can be identified. Each is important in

determining the degree to which real community involvement is supported within a partnership. They are:

- *Control* – the degree to which the community really controls the scope and direction of the partnership process;
- *Flexibility* – whether the process can be modified in ways to make it more effective and efficient and to make it responsive to community needs and concerns; and
- *Governance* - the degree to which the process is integrated into the process of government decision making.

Both LCEP and CAH exhibit a high degree of community control. CAH ensures community control by having a majority of resident board members. LCEP ensures community control by operating through a consensus model whereby decisions must be consistent with community wishes<sup>7</sup>.

With respect to flexibility LCEP ranks high and CAH low. The open consensus approach of LCEP was determined solely by the members and the focus of the group has shifted to meet changing conditions in the community. CAH, to the contrary, is subject to considerable bureaucratic rules and regulation and has much less ability to reshape itself at any future time.

With respect to *governance*, CAH clearly has the superior position. CAH is a creation of government and is designated to carry out the New Deal program. LCEP is peripheral to governance and decision making processes for its area. It must exert persuasive power if it is to influence governmental decisions.

I would like to suggest that three dimensions, *control*, *flexibility*, and *governance*, provide the basis for any scheme that attempts to measure the role of community members in any area regeneration partnership model. Based on the three dimensions, goals for community involvement would be high levels of community *control*, *flexible* structures and a meaningful link to the process of *governance*.

In this paper I have presented the case of an American regeneration partnership, the Lake Calumet Ecosystem Partnership. I have attempted to explain how the partnership came into being and how it works to implement its goals. I have also discussed the strengths, weaknesses, and limitations of this approach to partnerships. By briefly introducing the British partnership model I have provided a framework for comparing partnerships and hopefully the beginning of a discussion about how partnerships might be structured to promote meaningful community involvement in area regeneration. Minimally the paper provides the opportunity to share experiences, learn of alternate approaches to addressing similar issues, and to evaluate current practices.

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<sup>7</sup> CAH appears to be an exception to the way that partnerships are commonly structured in the UK. According to Purdue et. al. (2000) community regeneration, and by implication regeneration partnerships, "remains driven by the onerous forces of a top down policy system, with little force behind the drivers of real community engagement and empowerment" (p. 46).

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