Project 20/20 Year in Review and
2010 Strategic Direction
A Project 20/20 Leadership Meeting
November 25, 2009
United Way, 7:30 a.m.

Welcome and Opening Comments

Talia Champlin opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda.

The focus of the meeting was to review the past 18 months of the Project and to set the strategic direction for 2010. Members used a Community Rhythms tool created by the Harwood Institute to assess the Greater Battle Creek Community as it relates to the Five Stages of Community Life. The discussion and exercise was facilitated by John Barrett of Humanergy, Inc.

Project 20/20 Year in Review

Chris Sargent provided an overview of the Project's mission, vision, timeline and phases. He also reviewed past meeting topics and speakers for the Community Forums and Leadership meetings. He then reviewed statistics about Project 20/20's impact on engaging and informing the community. A total of 492 people have attended Project 20/20's forums and Leadership meetings (199 – Leadership, 293 – Forums). Over 41% of members attended two or more meetings. The most visited pages on the Project 20/20 website are 1) Forums, 2) Meetings and 3) About Us. There are 257 people that have subscribed to Project 20/20's email list. At each meeting, a survey is distributed to members to obtain feedback. A summary of the survey results is as follows: 96% are better informed, 95% are more likely to become engaged, 93% made a connection, 95% were able to provide input and 96% were likely to return to a Project 20/20 event.

Group Discussion and Input

John Barrett of Humanergy facilitated a group discussion to assess the Greater Battle Creek community using the Community Rhythms Tool. Members individually read and answered questions they believed best reflected how they felt about the community. The four questions were related to 1) the breadth and depth of leadership at all levels of the community, 2) the strength of community norms that help guide how people/organizations act individually, interact and work together, 3) the breadth and depth of informal networks/links that connect to create a cross-fertilization effect in the community and 4) the strength of community catalytic organizations (complete questions on page 3).

John then reviewed the Five Stages of Community Life with the members. Those stages are Waiting Place, Impasse, Catalytic, Growth and Sustain/Renew. Each member was asked to review which Stage of Community Life they felt Battle Creek was in and discuss their view within small groups. Members discussed their reasoning on why they chose each stage and reported to the larger group. Most of the members came to the conclusion that the Greater Battle Creek area was at the Catalytic stage. However, there was one group that thought the community was in-between the Impasse and Catalytic stages. Members then reviewed the Do's and Don'ts of Community Life. Full descriptions of the Five Stages and the Do's and Don'ts are on pages 4-5.

A summary of member comments made during the Community Stage group discussion:
- Many informal groups/networks – question how well they function
- Handful of catalytic organizations
- Initiatives have energy then hit a wall and die
- Need a new way of thinking
- We are de-programmed to embrace new things
- Other leadership initiatives in the community need to come together
- Too many little empires stuck in the old ways
- Need people with young ideas in leadership roles
- Positive sense of good thing going on
- Overall feeling of optimism that leaders are emerging, but the trust isn't there yet
- The community is beginning to make small changes
- Organizations are present but the trust and messages they carry aren't always positive
- No fostering of emerging leadership
- No common focus/vision as a community
- WKKF/BCU closest to collective large vision
- Plenty of good leaders/organizations
- Turf issues
- Renegades aren't validated
- Limited resources have forced competition vs. cooperation

Members were then asked to discuss within their groups recommendations for Project 20/20 to champion in 2010 to move the Greater Battle Creek Community forward.

Ideas for Moving Forward/Recommendations:
- Sustainable leadership/leadership development
- Highlight strengths/uniqueness as well as history/innovation
- Need to recognize we are not as far along as we would hope as a community
- Get more people involved - invite leaders from centers of strength, find leaders
- Promote Project 20/20 community-wide (neighborhoods, establish relationships, etc.), use the right tools
- Encourage networks and conversation
- Develop a sense of where we want to be as a community – something short of a vision
- Look at time/location for forums at Burnham Brook
- Focus on education (reduce truancy, teen pregnancy rates)
- Projects for youth (at-risk/effective education)

<u>**Closing Comments**</u>
Talia thanked the members for their commitment to moving Battle Creek forward. The discussion and input from the members will be reported to the Advisory Committee and used to set the direction for 2010. Talia also thanked John Barrett of Humanergy for providing his facilitation services in-kind to the Project.

The next Leadership meeting will take place on January 27, 2010 at 7:30 a.m. at United Way in the Board Room. Members were asked to complete a survey, make an on-line donation and invite others to attend.

Answer each question by checking the box beside the answer you believe best represents how you feel about the community.

1. How broad and deep is the leadership – at all levels of the community (including official leaders, quasi-official, people on neighborhood blocks, connectors between organizations), who understand the true concerns of the community as a whole, and who hold strong credibility and trust?

   ☐ **A.** Not much depth beyond some official leaders and civic leaders (if they even meet the definition above).

   ☐ **B.** A core group of such leaders starting to emerge.

   ☐ **C.** Core group expanding; depth within the community starting to form.

   ☐ **D.** Rich supply of leaders at all levels of and throughout the community.

2. How strong and constructive are the community norms for public life – that help guide how people and organizations act individually, interact, and work together?

   ☐ **A.** Stuck into old patterns such as finger pointing; looking for ways to place blame; turf battles; mistrust; divisive, frustrated, or non-existent community conversations.

   ☐ **B.** While old patterns still exist, can see new ones starting to develop. People starting to work more toward solutions, hold more constructive conversations, take greater personal responsibility. Seeds of trust appearing.

   ☐ **C.** A common sense of direction and purpose flourishes throughout community; people in the community work well together; things get done; constructive community–wide discussions are the expectation. Trust exists.

3. How broad and deep are the "informal networks and links" – that connect various individual, groups, organizations, and institutions together to create a cross-fertilization effect of experiences, knowledge, and resources in the community; where people carry and spread ideas, messages, and community norms from place to place?

   ☐ **A.** Tattered.

   ☐ **B.** Forming, but not yet strong, broad, and deep.

   ☐ **C.** Strong, growing, widespread, functioning really well.

4. How strong is the collection of catalytic organizations – those 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 – often convening different groups and resources – but once an initiative is up and running, they move on to the next challenge.

   ☐ **A.** We've got lots of organizations, but can't really see more than one or two catalytic organizations – and I am not sure if they're even the real thing.

   ☐ **B.** We've got one or two true catalytic organizations but they're often overworked and/or overwhelmed; they often tend to have a hard time keeping their focus.

   ☐ **C.** We've got a real handful of true catalytic organizations; you can feel their presence and good work. They enjoy strong credibility and trust across the community.

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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 of 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 of 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 gives 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 non-profits. 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.

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COMMUNITY LIFE DO'S AND DON'TS CHART

BE CAREFUL NOT TO	WHAT TO DO	WHAT TO THINK ABOUT
WAITING PLACE		
▶ Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans ▶ Start visioning exercises that fail or don't have enough community support for action ▶ Try to engage people by making them feel guilty they are not involved ▶ Rely on one-shot projects	▶ Create forums for conversation and interaction where people feel they belong and crystallize feelings of frustration ▶ Connect community actions to realities in people's lives ▶ Demonstrate small signs of progress ▶ Keep working, despite feelings of limited progress	▶ Do you really know how committed your partners are? ▶ What small things could help us move forward?
IMPASSE		
▶ Inflate expectations by announcing grand plans ▶ Convince yourselves there are strong networks and organizations to support new civic work ▶ Shut out citizens because they are frustrated ▶ Try to develop action plans too quickly	▶ Let people share their concerns and discover common aspirations for something different ▶ Identify taboo issues that contribute to impasse ▶ Find language that helps people imagine an alternative future ▶ Look for windows to pull people into small efforts	▶ What issues are citizens most immediately concerned about — are those issues being worked on? ▶ What is being done to bring people back into public life?
CATALYTIC		
▶ Coordinate activities too quickly, stifling innovation and action ▶ Rush to visioning exercises before the community is ready ▶ Do too much, too fast ▶ Start to rest on laurels	▶ Try lots of small things with room for failure, emphasize learning ▶ Build Centers of Strength that can generate change ▶ Encourage informal conversations, natural networks, and new engagement norms ▶ Develop a new cadre of leaders ▶ Tell authentic stories of progress over time	▶ What is motivating folks to work together? ▶ Where are the Centers of Strength in the community? Who supports them? ▶ What are we learning? ▶ How do we know if our work is grounded in the community's aspirations?
GROWTH		
▶ Miss parts of the community left out of progress ▶ Let "official leaders" drive the action ▶ Neglect the need to continually strengthen networks, leaders, and organizations that can keep the community moving forward ▶ Ignore underlying community issues	▶ Use community-wide engagement activities to coalesce and spring forward from the Catalytic stage ▶ Do bigger projects, building on natural progress and collaborations that have come before ▶ Reinforce positive norms for working together and continue to develop Centers of Strength and new leaders	▶ Who is doing the hard work? Are citizens involved? ▶ Are new people getting involved in the efforts? ▶ How are the new efforts connected to the work done before?
SUSTAIN AND RENEW		
▶ Think "success" has been achieved ▶ Assume others know the story of progress and norms for action that have been built ▶ Become arrogant and feel you have solved it all	▶ Look for challenges not yet tackled to focus energies, and use lessons learned to expand progress ▶ Develop new leaders across the entire community and new Centers of Strength to create progress ▶ Continue creating opportunities to bring citizens into processes — especially new residents	▶ How are we consciously strengthening our norms of working together? ▶ Who are the new leaders? ▶ Who is still missing from the community's progress? ▶ How are we feeling about ourselves: pride, fully humble, or smugly self-confident?

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