



*Los Angeles Urban Funders:
Philanthropic Initiative in the
Aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest*



The Center on Philanthropy & Public Policy
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Foreword | i |
|----------------|---|

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Executive Summary | iii |
|-------------------------|-----|

Los Angeles Urban Funders:
Philanthropic Initiative in the Aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| I. Introduction | 1 |
|-----------------------|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| II. Structuring the Funder Collaborative | 5 |
|--|---|

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Bimodal Funding Model | 7 |
|-----------------------------|---|

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| A Time-Limited Effort | 8 |
|-----------------------------|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| III. Working in the Neighborhoods | 9 |
|---|---|

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Pacoima Neighborhood Initiative | 12 |
|---------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Vermont/Manchester Neighborhood Initiative | 14 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Hyde Park Neighborhood Initiative | 16 |
|---|----|

| | |
|---------------------------|----|
| IV. Concluding LAUF | 19 |
|---------------------------|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Implications for Supporting Funder Collaboratives | 21 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Lessons for Philanthropic Practice and Community Development | 21 |
|--|----|

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Passing the Lessons Forward | 24 |
|-----------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| V. Twenty-Five Years Later: The Value of Perspective | 26 |
|--|----|

Foreword

Twenty-five years ago, Los Angeles experienced civil unrest that surfaced underlying racial tensions and exposed economic disparities that were decades in the making. As so often happens, it takes a crisis to create an opportunity for bold leadership. Twenty-nine foundations and corporate funders banded together to form Los Angeles Urban Funders (LAUF), a philanthropic collaborative focused on addressing conditions in three of the city's poorest neighborhoods: Pacoima, in the San Fernando Valley, and two underserved areas in South Los Angeles, Vermont/Manchester and Hyde Park.

This remarkable effort, which operated from 1996 to 2006, emerged from a series of conversations among the philanthropic community that began in the aftermath of the civil unrest, leading to its creation as a formal initiative of Southern California Association for Philanthropy (known today as Southern California Grantmakers). In the process, the funders created a structure and process for operating as a collaborative and developed a set of principles and approaches that guided their efforts to help revitalize these three communities.

During the last year, there have been a variety of remembrances looking back, reflecting, and trying to find meaning from that difficult time for today's challenges. Here at The Center, we felt it important to take this opportunity to reflect upon what philanthropy learned from its efforts to mount LAUF as well as the impact it had on the neighborhoods, philanthropic practice, and the field of community development. It is a unique story that is unprecedented in a number of respects – in particular the willingness of foundations to collaborate, not only with each other, but also with community groups and leaders. And, while it is embedded in southern California, its implications extend nationally.

Despite its pioneering contributions, LAUF is a story that many in philanthropy do not know – even here in Los Angeles – nor are its lessons to advance philanthropic practice and inform efforts to improve neighborhoods fully appreciated. Consequently, we thought it valuable to document LAUF, and engage the leaders from philanthropy and the community to reflect on their work and its impact – with the benefit of a longer-term perspective. To do so, we launched an inquiry spearheaded by Elwood Hopkins, a frequent collaborator and LAUF's Executive Director. In this report, he provides an in-depth look at how LAUF was formed, organized and structured, and, ultimately, how and why it made the choices it did in working with the three neighborhoods. He shares reflections on LAUF's work today, including some of its lasting contributions and enduring lessons. We are grateful to Bank of America, a key mover in the establishment of the effort and a stalwart supporter throughout its history, for the support that made the inquiry possible.

James M. Ferris

Director

The Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy

Executive Summary

Shortly after the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest, a funder collaborative emerged in an attempt to improve socioeconomic conditions in some of the city's most neglected neighborhoods. In all, more than 29 foundations of various sizes, scopes, and mission participated in Los Angeles Urban Funders (LAUF), collectively distributing more than \$25 million to three of the most economically depressed areas of the city: Pacoima, Vermont/Manchester and Hyde Park. LAUF took a collaborative, neighborhood-focused approach that lasted a decade and provided a bold, fresh take on both philanthropic practice and community development. This report documents LAUF: its structure, processes, and approach; and, the work in the three neighborhoods that generated lessons for philanthropic practice and community development. In addition, it offers perspectives on the effort more than a decade after LAUF concluded in 2006.

At the time of its formation, LAUF's structure as a funder collaborative was unique. Rather than creating a freestanding nonprofit, it was embedded within the Southern California Association for Philanthropy (SCAP), which acted as a fiscal sponsor and custodian. Participating funders were required to contribute to a pooled fund for scaffolding the neighborhood initiatives and bolder, more experimental elements of the work. It also acted as a litmus test of each funder's willingness to take risks and commitment to the endeavor. Decision making was aggressively democratic, often requiring consensus from all LAUF Board members. While this often led to heated debates, it resulted in the give and take necessary for genuine collaboration. LAUF also utilized a bimodal funding model that combined the pooled funds with a commitment by each participating funder to support at least one nonprofit performing a role in the initiative through its regular grantmaking. This built community capacity and helped ensure sustainability among partners.

LAUF took an innovative approach to comprehensive community initiatives, underscored by their adaption to circumstances in Los Angeles. First, it built on local neighborhood infrastructure and partial community initiatives that were already underway, reducing the time and expense of creating something new and minimizing local resistance. Second, comprehensiveness was built around specific neighborhood concerns – student achievement in Pacoima and substance abuse in Vermont/Manchester. This energized residents and acted as an entry point for addressing a wider range of contributing factors. Third, there was a concerted effort to help neighborhoods develop different pathways to enhance economic opportunities for residents and unleash market forces, a role that many foundations were unaccustomed to playing at the time. Finally, the neighborhood initiatives were not built around a single partner or lead agency, but multiple and evolving stakeholders that changed over time to reflect dynamic community interests.

When LAUF ended in 2006, it had made an indelible mark on the landscape of southern California philanthropy with implications for the nation, modelling new and effective ways for foundations to work with each other and with low-income communities. There were several lessons for philanthropic practice, especially those working on issues concerning community development. Among them: funders must commit to neighborhoods themselves rather than individual nonprofits or partners; informal associations can be important strategic partners by reflecting community concerns; management assistance is best delivered to all nonprofits simultaneously as a way to build community capacity and get partners working together; funders can shore up unstable partners by sharing risks; the public sector can be engaged more effectively once the community has set its own agenda; and economic development and market-oriented philanthropy are keys to any community revitalization effort.

More than fifteen years after LAUF concluded, philanthropic and community leaders underscored the lasting effects. Foremost, LAUF demonstrated that heightened collaboration among foundations can translate into greater cooperation at the neighborhood level leading to improved outcomes. Relationships were built between funders and neighborhood partners, helping to expand community capacity and increase opportunity for additional investments across sectors over the long term. Moreover, relationships among funders were strengthened, leading to a more collaborative and cohesive funding community in southern California for a wide-range of issues.

For the foundation leaders who participated, the LAUF experience helped to shape how they think about grantmaking at their respective foundations, highlighting the importance of neighborhood-driven ideas and building on existing community projects and initiatives as opposed to creating something new. Finally, it put into greater focus the value of community organizing, activism, and civic engagement. As part of LAUF, funders supported activists pressing for public policy change; consumers organizing their buying power to attract businesses; parents influencing their children's schools; and pulling residents together in block clubs, church congregations, merchant associations, tenant groups, or homeowner associations to tackle large projects. LAUF funders worked so closely with their neighborhood partners, they learned about organizing up close by looking over the shoulders of their neighborhood-based partners.

Los Angeles Urban Funders:

Philanthropic Initiative in the Aftermath of the 1992 Civil Unrest

I. Introduction

In the wake of the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest, 29 private and corporate foundations – encompassing the full array of philanthropic funders in size, scope, mission, and approach – came together to collectively respond to the societal rupture that had impacted some of the city’s poorest neighborhoods. (See Table 1: LAUF Funders). From 1996 to 2006, they worked with local community groups to frame and carry out major initiatives aimed at improving socioeconomic conditions in three low-income communities. Collectively, they distributed more than \$25 million, a figure that comprises both grants from individual foundations and expenditures from a pooled fund to which they all contributed. In a city known for geographic sprawl, decentralized leadership, and a fragmented philanthropic field, it was an unprecedented act of collaboration.

Long before 1992, foundation leaders in southern California had been acutely aware that poverty was concentrating geographically in different parts of Los Angeles. But the civil unrest was a wakeup call, a watershed moment that forced foundation leaders to step back from day-to-day grantmaking, ask themselves hard questions, and consider the relevance of their practices to the situation unfolding around them. With more than 1,200 foundations in Greater Los Angeles giving away roughly \$429 million a year, many felt they should have made more headway in addressing urban poverty.¹ But uncoordinated funding had resulted in isolated nonprofit efforts, minimal cooperation across groups, and a failure to tackle issues in a systematic manner.

¹ Based on data circa 1992 in *California Foundations: A Profile of the State’s Grantmaking Community*, The Foundation Center in cooperation with The Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy (2001).

In this context, Los Angeles Urban Funders (LAUF) was created in reaction to the civil unrest, emanating from the merger of two efforts: (1) a series of conversations and discussions led by Lon Burns, President of the Southern California Association for Philanthropy (SCAP);² and (2) the work of the Rebuild LA Philanthropy Task Force;³ chaired by Dennis Collins, President of The James Irvine Foundation.

In December 1992, the SCAP Board officially authorized the creation of a “community fund” to strengthen select disadvantaged neighborhoods. With seed grants from the Lawrence Welk Family Foundation and Roth Family Foundation, SCAP commissioned a study to gauge the interest of its members to participate in such a fund. The resulting report, *New Directions for Southern California Philanthropy*, published in November 1993, validated the SCAP Board’s decision. It revealed that only 34 percent of funders actually targeted funds to the city’s neglected areas, and 65 percent wanted to increase their funding in those areas moving forward. More than 70 percent hoped to elevate their dialogue with community leaders to address more systemic issues, and 66 percent were interested in developing a collaborative funding mechanism.

While the study was intended primarily as a fact-gathering project, 15 foundation leaders agreed during their interviews to serve on the governing board of a collaborative fund if it were created. The foundations these leaders represented soon became a formal foundation consortium designating resources to be allocated collectively in three low-income Los Angeles neighborhoods – Pacoima, Vermont/Manchester, and Hyde Park – over the course of a decade.

Twenty-five years later, it is hard to appreciate how bold and groundbreaking LAUF was and the difficulty its founding members had in bringing it into existence and creating a workable structure and process. In 1992, more than a few foundation leaders – trustees, presidents and senior foundation executives – viewed LAUF with skepticism and doubt. It was, in fact, a highly experimental effort where costly mistakes were made and hard lessons were learned. But more than that, it challenged closely held assumptions about how philanthropy should do its job. Today funder collaboratives have become somewhat more frequent, including here in southern California. The lessons from LAUF have no doubt influenced subsequent efforts in the region as well as communities across the U.S.

The experience of LAUF has also helped to inform the development of place-based neighborhood initiatives that have proliferated in the public, private, and philanthropic sectors in recent decades. Although there were examples of funder collaboration elsewhere in the country, and neighborhood

² This report refers to Southern California Association for Philanthropy (SCAP), which was the name of the organization during this period. It subsequently changed its name to Southern California Grantmakers, a regional association of grantmakers that provides its members networking and professional development. Similar regional associations are found in communities nationwide. In the early 1990s, SCAP’s members included about 120 private and corporate foundations.

³ Rebuild LA (RLA) was a high-profile nonprofit created in 1992 under the leadership of then-Mayor Tom Bradley to lead the economic revitalization in the wake of the civil unrest. It called upon corporate CEOs and other private sector leaders to make commitments to bring new manufacturing and retailing to South Los Angeles as well as related training programs. It had numerous committees and task forces, including the Philanthropy Task Force, which was established to move foundation dollars into areas affected by the civil unrest.

revitalization was certainly not new, the combination of the two was largely uncharted territory.⁴ Neighborhood-level relationships were organized around a community-level outcome in an approach that would many years later be popularized as “Collective Impact,”⁵ and the funder collaborative was in turn structured to support these relationships. For the funders, it meant frequent communication with partners, agreement on goals, and flexibility around resource allocation. Over the lifespan of LAUF, this intersection of funder collaborative and neighborhood initiative created unique synergies and parallel learning tracks that frequently cross-fertilized one another.

TABLE 1. LAUF FUNDERS

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| ARCO Foundation | Jules and Doris Stein Foundation |
| The Bank of America Charitable Foundation | LA84 Foundation |
| Boeing Employees Community Fund | Lawrence Welk Family Foundation |
| Bowen H. and Jan McCoy Miller Foundation | Liberty Hill Foundation |
| California Community Foundation | Pacific Life Foundation |
| California Consumer Protection Foundation | The Prudential Foundation |
| The California Endowment | Robert Ellis Simon Foundation |
| The California Wellness Foundation | The Rockefeller Foundation |
| Crail-Johnson Foundation | Roth Family Foundation |
| The Durfee Foundation | Sony Pictures Entertainment |
| ELA Foundation | Times Mirror Foundation |
| FannieMae Foundation | The United Methodist Urban Foundation |
| FreddieMac Foundation | Wells Fargo Foundation |
| The James Irvine Foundation | William Randolph Hearst Foundation |
| Joseph Drown Foundation | |

⁴ One analogous effort, East Bay Funders, began a year before the civil unrest in Los Angeles. This northern California funder collaborative provided planning and implementation grants to groups of nonprofits in three Oakland neighborhoods: Castlemont, Fruitvale, and Sbrante Park. East Bay Funders freely shared their insights with LAUF leaders at a key moment in LAUF’s development.

⁵ See: “Collective Impact,” John Kania and Mark Kramer, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2011.

By the time the LAUF Board adjourned for the last time in 2006, it had made an indelible mark on the landscape of southern California philanthropy. It had modeled new and effective ways for foundations to work with each other and with low-income communities. It had demonstrated that heightened collaboration among foundations can translate into greater cooperative activity at the neighborhood level – which in turn can lead to improved community outcomes. LAUF had demonstrated a model for more collaborative philanthropy, including insights into the limitations of philanthropy’s capacity to sustain collaboration indefinitely.

With the 25th anniversary of the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest, there was a moment to reflect back on LAUF. We conducted a six-month retrospective inquiry with two principle objectives. First, to document LAUF – its structure, processes, and approach; the impacts on the neighborhoods; and the lessons learned in terms of philanthropic practice and community development strategies. And, second, to offer reflections of involved philanthropic and community leaders on the LAUF experience more than fifteen years after the collaborative’s conclusion.

To carry out this inquiry, we examined detailed “chronologies” prepared by anthropologist Dr. Julia Solis, who kept meticulous accounts of what happened in each site and painstakingly checked facts with both funders and community leaders. We sifted through detailed minutes of the monthly four-hour funder collaborative meetings and pored over grant agreements, contracts, and copious field notes. We reviewed audio recordings of interviews and funder collaborative meetings. Finally, we engaged participating philanthropic and community leaders through reflective roundtables and interviews, culminating with a convening on June 1, 2017. A list of those participating is included in the Appendix.

The findings from this inquiry are summarized in this report. It begins with an overview of the structure and mechanics of the funder collaborative, highlighting one of its more unique features: the bimodal funding model and its time-limited nature. It then describes how LAUF approached its work in the community before detailing its efforts in Pacoima, Vermont/Manchester and Hyde Park. The inquiry then discusses how and why LAUF ended, its impact, and what it might teach those interested in similar initiatives today.

II. Structuring the Funder Collaborative

The funder collaborative did not come together easily. A number of years elapsed between the earliest discussions in 1992 and the official launching of LAUF and its neighborhood initiatives in 1996. (See Table 2: LAUF Timeline). The long hours spent deliberating issues and struggling with early decisions led a few in the philanthropic community to deride LAUF as a waste of time. Even some LAUF members considered the process “grindingly slow” and worried that fear of making mistakes was paralyzing the group. In retrospect, however, this formative period was essential for setting ground rules, adopting new group norms and behaviors, and building a familiarity among members.⁶

The governance of LAUF was carefully constructed. Decisions were made by the LAUF Board, which was comprised of a foundation leader – the president, a trustee, or high-level designee – from each member foundation. These representatives were asked to keep others at their foundation briefed on progress. Two elected co-chairs ran monthly meetings. There were three standing committees: (1) the Program & Evaluation Committee formulated recommendations related to neighborhood selection, evaluation, and program-related issues; (2) the Finance and Governance Committee oversaw the relationship between SCAP and LAUF, monitored budgets and financial statements, and recruited new members; and (3) the External Relations Committee, formed several years in, was charged with communicating LAUF’s work to the broader philanthropic community and external audiences.

Rather than incorporate LAUF as a freestanding nonprofit, the group decided to embed it within the Southern California Association for Philanthropy (SCAP). As institutional base, SCAP served as fiscal sponsor and custodian of the pooled funds. As a neutral intermediary, SCAP protected LAUF from perceptions it was controlled by any one foundation. And, as a membership association, SCAP sent the message that LAUF symbolically belonged to the funder community in southern California. According to formal agreements, the LAUF Board was delegated authority to “recommend” funding allocations, which were technically subject to ratification by the SCAP Board. However, for all practical purposes LAUF functioned independently.

The LAUF Board required each member foundation to contribute an unrestricted grant to the pooled fund. Some foundations, especially those with narrow or explicit priorities, struggled with the notion of lifting categorical constraints. Their boards felt deeply uneasy relinquishing control and trusting that their missions could still be advanced, perhaps even more effectively, by de-categorizing funds. But the LAUF Board made it a firm requirement, and foundations unable to comply did not participate. LAUF members were ultimately glad they held such a hard line because the willingness to pool funds became a litmus test of a funder’s readiness to take risks.

⁶ Facilitating and guiding the member foundations during this formative period was Jan McElwee, a philanthropic consultant who had formerly run philanthropic activities for Carter-Hawley Hale, one of the largest department store retailer in the country, headquartered in Los Angeles.

TABLE 2. LAUF TIMELINE

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 1992 | <p>APRIL-MAY: Los Angeles Civil Unrest occurs</p> <p>JULY: Rebuild LA launches with a focus on areas affected by the urban unrest</p> <p>DECEMBER: SCAP Board authorizes creation for “community fund” and assigns consultants to conduct feasibility study</p> |
| 1993 | <p>NOVEMBER: SCAP releases feasibility study, New Directions for Southern California Philanthropy, that recommends formation of LAUF</p> |
| 1994 | <p>JANUARY: An interim LAUF Board begins meeting monthly to define operating policies and recruit additional funders</p> |
| 1995 | <p>MAY: LAUF hires community development consultants to help LAUF board design its neighborhood strategy</p> <p>JUNE-NOVEMBER: LAUF considers 21 potential sites</p> |
| 1996 | <p>JANUARY: LAUF hires an Executive Director</p> <p>MARCH: LAUF selects three target areas – Pacoima, Vermont/Manchester, and Hyde Park</p> <p>JUNE: LAUF enters into partnership with Pacoima Urban Village, effectively beginning the Pacoima Initiative</p> <p>OCTOBER: LAUF expands its partnership in Pacoima to encompass the FamilyCare/Healthy Kids network of school-based parent centers</p> |
| 1997 | <p>FEBRUARY: LAUF enters into a partnership with the Community Coalition to lead the comprehensive initiative in Vermont/Manchester</p> <p>APRIL: Pacoima Workforce Development Initiative is launched as a partnership of the school-based parent centers and Valley Economic Development Center</p> <p>JUNE: LAUF enlists a community organizer to begin building the capacity of block clubs and churches in Hyde Park</p> <p>OCTOBER: LAUF expands its partnership in Pacoima to encompass the FamilyCare/Healthy Kids network of school-based parent centers</p> |
| 1998 | <p>FEBRUARY: Community Coalition launches GROW campaign in Vermont/Manchester</p> <p>MAY: GROW campaign successfully secures improved standards at local supermarket</p> <p>JUNE: Hyde Park Community Network forms and begins carrying out collective projects and launching events</p> |
| 1999 | <p>MARCH: Vermont/Manchester and Hyde Park initiatives are reconfigured as two sites within one larger South LA initiative</p> <p>JULY: LAUF provides comprehensive management assistance to cohorts of nonprofits in all three sites</p> |
| 2000 | <p>MAY: LAUF commits to support neighborhood initiatives for another five-year term</p> |
| 2001 | <p>JANUARY: LAUF begins sustainability planning with all three sites</p> <p>MAY: Preliminary evaluations indicate success of Pacoima Workforce Development Initiative</p> |
| 2002 | <p>JANUARY: LAUF begins sustainability planning with all three sites</p> <p>MAY: Preliminary evaluations indicate success of Pacoima Workforce Development Initiative</p> |
| 2003 | <p>APRIL: Wells Fargo Bank commits to build on the LAUF work by opening a bank branch in Pacoima</p> |
| 2004 | <p>JANUARY: Bank of America commits to undertake three neighborhood initiatives in Los Angeles that draw lessons from LAUF</p> |
| 2005 | <p>APRIL: LAUF begins to consolidate relationships between individual funders and nonprofits in the neighborhoods</p> |
| 2006 | <p>JANUARY: LAUF concludes its work and finalizes its evaluations</p> |

Since the mix of participating foundations was diverse in terms of asset size, there was no standard amount donated to the fund, or even a contributions formula. Instead, each funder was asked to contribute to the fund a grant deemed “significant relative to its average grant size.” The definition of “significant grant” was left vague, and there was no official penalty for funders who gave less than their foundation size would warrant. But, by and large, peer pressure was sufficient to generate appropriate contributions.

Decision making on the LAUF board was aggressively democratic. Regardless of how much it contributed to the pooled fund, each foundation was given an equal voice at the table and one vote in any decisions. The assumption was that a foundation’s influence at the table should be based on their substantive expertise and should rise and fall depending on the relevance of that expertise to the matter at hand. When issues of early child development rose to the fore in one community, for instance, funders experienced with early education grantees were given deference, regardless of the foundation’s grantmaking level. While the board occasionally resorted to vote counting, most decisions were made on a consensus basis.

For consensus-based decision making to work, members had to forego the polite, non-confrontational culture that was so firmly entrenched among them. A culture based on conflict avoidance was simply not conducive to genuine collaboration, especially where there were deep, underlying differences of opinion. Early on, some funders would seem comfortable with board decisions, only to express concerns privately. Consequently, project staff were charged with finding creative consensus-building techniques that could help members speak freely, weigh in on important issues, and reach compromise.

BIMODAL FUNDING MODEL

The most innovative feature of LAUF’s structure was its two-part strategy for financing the neighborhood initiatives: the bimodal funding system. It was born from the recognition that conventional grantmaking, by itself, represents a set of structural constraints that inhibit the emergence of major neighborhood initiatives. Short-term, issue-specific, competitive grants made to targeted nonprofits or projects are exactly the opposite of what is required to incentivize the formation of community-wide collaboratives that cut across issue areas and spark systems reforms. What is needed instead is a flexible funding stream that can support all the activities required to frame a place-based initiative: convening, catalyzing, planning, facilitating, and making risky or innovative investments. Once the initiative is in place, regular grantmaking becomes essential. Specific nonprofits, programs, or strategies comprising the initiative will be best funded by foundations that possess categorical expertise and competitive review processes.

The bimodal funding system established a structure to coordinate these two funding streams. The collaboratively governed pooled fund – removed from the more conservative accountability of individual foundations – was used for activities that set up the initiative scaffolding. At the same time, all funders committed to fund at least one nonprofit performing a role in the initiative through their regular grantmaking. These independent funding decisions were, of course, subject to each foundation’s internal proposal requirements, categorical guidelines, grant conditions, and timelines. Taken together,

this set of individual grants constituted a coordinated portfolio of investments that made funding more predictable for local partners. And the relationships between individual funders and grantees that were established laid the groundwork for sustainability.

Bimodal funding ensured the highest, best use of the pooled fund. With individual members supporting conventional nonprofit expenses, the limited pooled funds could be reserved for risky, bold, or unconventional expenses. “The pooled fund,” explained Carolyn Brooks of Prudential Foundation, “should never be used for something we could fund on our own. Making conventional grants from the pooled fund would not justify the transactional costs of a funder collaborative. There were definitely times when we had to be on the same page with a shared understanding of what was going on in the neighborhoods. But when it came to individual nonprofits and programs, the collaboration would only be cumbersome. It would feel like walking with our legs tied together.”

For the funding model to work, each member needed sophisticated understanding of how its categorical funding areas contribute to comprehensive solutions, and how the type of agencies it supports fits into the local nonprofit ecosystem. Board meetings became an interactive opportunity to see how their individual grants were part of a coherent strategy.

A TIME-LIMITED EFFORT

From the outset, LAUF was designed as a time-limited endeavor. This was a primary reason for situating it within SCAP as opposed to creating a separate nonprofit. Originally, the LAUF Board committed to a five-year timeline, a somewhat arbitrary decision based on the fact that five years seemed like a significant but not-too-onerous extension of the three-year grant periods most funders considered their maximum. But there was always an expectation that the initiative would likely be extended, which it was – by another five years – in 2000. A decade was considered a reasonable timeframe within which LAUF could step in, achieve meaningful change, and leave.

LAUF’s exit strategy was built in almost from the outset with the bimodal funding model. Once the apparatus for community-wide collaboration had been established in each site, the pooled fund became less critical and the transactions costs of maintaining it less justifiable. Individual grants to particular nonprofits, on the other hand, rose in importance. During this gradual transition, LAUF continually adapted itself to its changing function. Board meeting frequency was reduced to alternating months and then quarterly, a direct reflection of the growing self-sufficiency of the neighborhood initiatives. By design, the community fund’s budget during the second five years was half what it had been for the first five. And the content of LAUF Board meetings shifted emphasis to the solidification of individual funder relations with specific nonprofit partners.

III. Working in the Neighborhoods

Beyond the design and structure of the funding collaborative itself, LAUF dedicated significant resources to investigate different community-building approaches they could leverage in Los Angeles as well as on which neighborhoods to select. Here we examine how LAUF set about its work in the three neighborhoods it ultimately chose – Pacoima, Vermont/Westchester and Hyde Park – and briefly describe how the work unfolded in each of the communities.

Beginning in 1995, with the help of Denise Fairchild, a specialist in community economic development, and Cecilia Sandoval, an expert in health and human services, LAUF members examined urban poverty initiatives across the country, searching for more than a year for templates to apply in Los Angeles. From this research, LAUF members resolved to mount a new kind of effort called a “comprehensive community building initiative.” While examples could be found in most major East Coast cities,⁷ nothing similar had yet been attempted in Los Angeles.

At first glance, comprehensive community building initiatives seemed like nothing new. They were massive attempts to uplift the living conditions of specific low-income neighborhoods by simultaneously addressing poor housing stock, low-education levels, unemployment, widespread health problems, inadequate parks and recreational facilities, and lack of access to social services. This ambitious vision had driven public sector urban policy since the 1960s, finding expression in Urban Renewal, Urban Development Action Grants (UDAG), Model Cities, Enterprise Zones, and Empowerment Zones.⁸

But this new generation of comprehensive community building initiatives differed from earlier efforts because they were conceived by philanthropic leaders, not government officials. Whereas most public sector programs focused on physical improvements and social service delivery, the new comprehensive community building initiatives also embraced more abstract and elusive notions of community capacity-building – the idea that that qualitative factors like stronger nonprofits, network formation, connections to outside resources, and leadership development – could directly impact socioeconomic indicators on the neighborhood scale.

LAUF members wholeheartedly embraced the concepts behind the newer generation of comprehensive community building initiatives, yet they adapted them to the unique circumstances in Los Angeles. LAUF approached its work in the neighborhoods in the following ways:

⁷ The initiatives from which LAUF drew the most were the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the Bronx, Chatham Savannah Youth Futures Authority in Georgia, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston, Sandtown-Winchester Initiative in Baltimore, and the Neighborhood and Family Initiative in Memphis, Detroit, Hartford, and Milwaukee.

⁸ For a historical overview of geographically-targeted revitalization efforts, see “The State of Place-Based by Initiatives” by Elwood M. Hopkins in *Place-Based Initiatives in the Context of Public Policy and the Market: Moving to Higher Ground*, edited by Elwood M. Hopkins and James M. Ferris, The USC Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy, March 2015.

Local neighborhood infrastructure and community initiatives were used as building blocks.

Most comprehensive community building initiatives were launched as brand new undertakings as opposed to continuations of indigenous local efforts. In contrast, LAUF deliberately sought communities where partnerships, even fragile ones, had begun to self-organize around long-held local concerns. In a sense, LAUF treated these existing arrangements as “partial initiatives,” even if local leaders did not yet call them that. It seemed illogical for LAUF to start something from scratch when it could expand upon existing efforts and support the natural accretion of partners and strategies. This strategic decision would dramatically reduce time and expense and minimize local resistance.

Specific neighborhood concerns mobilized and energized residents, serving as entry points for addressing a wider range of issues and contributing factors. LAUF adopted a completely different approach to “comprehensiveness,” coalescing around a single objective as a way to address all contributing factors. Other initiatives tackled a range of issues simultaneously – housing, education, employment, health – hoping to discover the interconnections between the issues through comprehensive planning. But in most neighborhoods LAUF members visited, they observed some semblance of organizational cooperation and at least some minimal stirrings of a community-wide strategy. In two of the neighborhoods where LAUF ultimately focused, residents had already mobilized around a single concern, which in turn energized a critical mass of the local population. One was around improved student achievement; the other, a focus on substance abuse reduction.

Consider student achievement, which was the focal point in Pacoima, the first neighborhood chosen by LAUF. To succeed in school, a child needs a stable family, decent home, good health, recreational and cultural opportunities, and at least one parent with income. Improving student achievement, then, still requires a comprehensive scope, even if there is a particular outcome that is serving as the organizing element. Whatever the guiding objective, LAUF would fill in missing strategies and complete the comprehensive array in a logical, organic way.

Neighborhood strategies developed different pathways to enhance economic opportunities for residents. “Economic opportunity” emerged early on as paramount, a dominant theme that would be a common thread to all of LAUF’s initiatives. In part, this could be attributed to academic literature concluding that the civil unrest had been rooted in a deepening and combustible economic divide. Although southern California’s economy was booming in 1992, economic opportunities were not filtering down to low-income communities. A central challenge, then, was to connect neighborhoods to regional economic opportunities. This emphasis was also driven by the recognition that economic strategies were insufficiently developed in every neighborhood and that few local foundations focused on economic development in a robust way.

Multiple and evolving partners with varying organizational forms helped to reflect community-wide interest. LAUF members rejected the “lead agency” model used by many neighborhood initiatives. In this model, funders anoint one nonprofit with managerial and re-granting responsibilities over other local groups. It assumes that this nonprofit can speak on behalf of the entire

community and that their leadership will be respected by other community groups. For funders, lead agencies simplify neighborhood partnership by reducing it to a single funder/grantee relationship. But lead agencies inevitably raise questions of legitimacy and authenticity.

The debate over the lead agency question led LAUF funders to grapple with what it really means for funders to partner with a neighborhood. They all understood what it meant to partner with a nonprofit. But partnering with neighborhoods, if approached seriously, was a far more daunting task. How could a shifting collection of interest groups, organizations, sub-populations, and factions be considered, in any real sense, a “partner?” To carry out a comprehensive neighborhood initiative, they concluded, there must be an evolving configuration of multiple nonprofits and informal associations that begins to represent community-wide interests. And they must be grounded in large-scale, continuous resident engagement, not superficial resident input sessions or community hearings. Success would depend on partnership configurations that were organized in a coherent way and that were capable of interacting with a body of funders.

All of these considerations were factored into neighborhood site selection. For nearly a year, from May 1995-March 1996, the LAUF Board assessed potential target areas, ultimately choosing three. During that year, it became clear that while funders were very knowledgeable about nonprofits – and could often describe in detail those that have strong boards, sound finances, or exemplary programs – they were less familiar with neighborhoods. They often had a limited grasp of what neighborhood their grantees were situated in or how they interacted with other groups in the vicinity. Wendy Wachtell of the Joseph Drown Foundation stated it simply: “As funders, we knew nonprofits; we didn’t know neighborhoods.” Caroline Boitano added, “LAUF allowed us to understand neighborhoods as an ecosystem, which turned out to be crucial to the work ahead.”

Denise Fairchild and Cecilia Sandoval then guided site selection. Each possessed extensive relationships in the city’s low-income neighborhoods, but in any given neighborhood there was little overlap between their professional networks. Fairchild was familiar with the heads of local job training programs and economic development corporations, whereas Sandoval worked closely with family preservation agencies, health clinics, and youth counseling programs. The distinction between the knowledge base that each brought to the neighborhood discussion was, in some ways, a reflection of the bifurcation characterizing the community development field.

The consultants proposed a set of 29 neighborhoods and helped the funders to rank them according to a range of criteria. These included: affiliation (the potential public and private partners in the area); leadership (the presence of individuals with influence throughout the community); potential (readiness to undertake a visioning process); manageability (including composition and size); degree of risk (likelihood of long-term impact); possibility of testing experimental approaches; and LAUF’s potential role. The funders then organized full-day site visits to the five neighborhoods that met all of these criteria.

In the final analysis, LAUF members chose three neighborhoods at different stages of evolution in terms of their community capacity. The rationale was that this would enable them to learn how the role of philanthropy in a neighborhood might differ depending on its level of capacity. As it turned out, the selected neighborhoods were indeed varied – but not always in the ways predicted.

PACOIMA NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Located in the Northeast San Fernando Valley – more than 30 miles from the main disturbances of the civil unrest – Pacoima was an unexpected choice for a first LAUF site. But LAUF had committed to work with many different types of low-income neighborhoods. And, Pacoima, a small neighborhood that was home to many first and second-generation immigrant households from Mexico, seemed poised for partnership with philanthropy.

Even before LAUF became involved in Pacoima, parents and teachers were actively working together to improve academic performance in the community through a series of efforts around curriculum reform, new forms of school management, expanded afterschool programming, and college preparation. Community members recognized that for children to achieve academically, they needed safe, healthy, and nurturing home environments. To achieve this, parents required a range of family support services: parenting classes, health screenings, mental health counseling, domestic abuse interventions, and so on. Toward that end, the Los Angeles Educational Partnership and the United Way created a network of school-based family centers to provide these types of services. By 1995, a model program had been created and replicated in six schools across Pacoima schools in a collaborative network called FamilyCare/Health Kids (FCHK).

Yet one of the primary pre-determinants to student success – family economic stability – was still not being adequately addressed. So, in 1996, LAUF partnered with a small local nonprofit to work with the parent centers to expand the scope of FCHK's work. It soon became evident that the nonprofit lacked the neutrality and breadth of relationships to work with all the schools across the community, and the effort broke down. LAUF struggled with whether to withdraw from Pacoima, but ultimately concluded its commitment to the neighborhood must remain steadfast, even if the local partners changed.

LAUF contracted a team of facilitators, economists, researchers, and organizers to carry out:

- A series of focus groups among principals, teachers, and parents in each school to ascertain interest in undertaking a community economic development strategy.
- A nine-week training series, which familiarized parents with the range of community economic development strategies and facilitated a process through which parents selected workforce development as their focus.
- A mapping process to determine the precise residential locations of all the families in Pacoima schools using enrollment records, and geographic clusters for door-to-door outreach.
- A massive resident-driven survey process through which 60 residents reached out to 1,500 households to obtain information about the local labor pool and the barriers to their employment.

- A survey of business leaders that identified types and numbers of available jobs, reasons why Pacoima residents were not being hired, and a recommendation that Valley Economic Development Center (VEDC) be directly involved in the workforce initiative.

As a result of this capacity-building process, a workforce development initiative was constructed on the platform of the FCHK collaborative. In this way, the parent centers would not only be treated as “one-stops” for human service delivery but “intake valves” linking residents with jobs.

VEDC emerged as the natural institutional base for this initiative. It had a 20-year track record of providing technical assistance, financing, and employment services for local businesses. It had even recently extended its work in Pacoima through the opening of a satellite business assistance center. However, while VEDC was the only logical partner for the workforce initiative, it presented daunting challenges to LAUF. Although VEDC programs were running well, the agency confronted an IRS investigation into potential financial misconduct; a president resigning under troubled circumstances; and news headlines raising questions of mismanagement.

Under normal circumstances, not one of the foundations in LAUF would have funded an agency with problems like those afflicting VEDC on their own. LAUF grappled with the tension between normal ways of making grants and what is required in changing communities. In the end, LAUF members agreed they could take the risk collectively by using their pooled funds. They also carried out an organization audit, made management recommendations, put forth a LAUF member to serve as a VEDC Board member, and began funding the organization through a month-to-month contract, which was converted to a grant as normal agency function resumed.

In terms of staffing, the workforce initiative was designed to mirror FCHK. Just as parents had been trained as case managers in the parent centers, the workforce initiative enlisted parents as “career coaches” responsible for initial intake in screening of job candidates. The director of the local public housing community center was recruited to lead the program. This approach turned out to be the right one.

The workforce development initiative began operation in the parent centers in late 1998. By 2002, no fewer than 1,121 individuals had registered with the initiative. More than three-fourths were Latinas, 86% had either completed or were in training, and 44% had received a service referral. Of the almost 900 who had reassessment visits with the career coaches, 88% were employed, and job retention levels were exceptionally high: 75% still had their job after three months; 70% after six months. What’s more, the per-person cost of the program was one-fifth the workforce program standard. Success was attributed largely to the fact that the “career coaches” were not professionals from outside Pacoima. They were themselves parents, linked to one another with strong natural helping networks, social bonds, and constructive forms of peer pressure.

When one assesses the workforce initiative in the context of the larger set of efforts by LAUF in Pacoima, the effect is even more pronounced. A 2005 evaluation examined the cumulative effect of this comprehensive array of interventions on children's performance as measured by standardized test scores, grades, attendance, and conduct. It tracked 500 families where: (1) a child was affected by curriculum reform; (2) that child participated in an after-school program that reinforced classroom learning; (3) one or both parents utilized human services through the parent centers; and (4) someone in the household got a job through the workforce initiative. The results showed improvements across all measures. Standardized test scores for these children rose anywhere from 100-200 points.

Although poverty levels remain roughly the same then as today, the community has acquired a more aspirational, middle class outlook. In fact, parent inclusion and activism exceeds that in most middle class communities. Parents have become deeply involved in study, assessing, and reforming curriculum. For those funders who were anxious to see capacity-building investments translate into quantifiable outcomes, these signs were welcome news.

VERMONT/MANCHESTER NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Vermont/Manchester, situated in South Los Angeles, was an epicenter of the riots. It is bounded by 79th Street to the North, 91st Street to the South, Harbor Freeway to the East, and Van Ness Avenue to the West. In 1996, its population of 75,000 was transitioning from an African American community to a Latino one, with the balance at 60 percent African American, 40 percent Latino.

The neighborhood is one of many in the area served by the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention & Treatment (Community Coalition), a network of 250 grassroots groups with vast numbers of resident members. The Community Coalition organized around issues of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention. While LAUF had been opposed to anointing a "lead agency," the Community Coalition challenged assumptions about what a lead agency could be. It conducted research, synthesized information, educated and organized thousands of residents, cultivated leadership and created strategies through which local nonprofits worked together. To at least one funder, it was the "only game in town."

Formed in response to the crack epidemic, the Community Coalition drew on civil rights traditions to mount large-scale pressure campaigns that addressed factors contributing to drug and alcohol abuse. The Community Coalition had always viewed substance abuse issues as symptomatic of broader systems issues. It enforced nuisance land use regulation and stopped the reopening of liquor stores and motels that harbored dealers; it protected public funding for social services; and it lobbied for capital

improvements in dilapidated schools.⁹ The one strategy that remained out of reach to the Community Coalition related to economic opportunity, which became the focus of LAUF's partnership in Vermont/Manchester.

Beginning in 1997, LAUF funded the Community Coalition to lay the groundwork for a new campaign, building organically on existing ones, which could tackle the root problem of poverty and economic marginalization. LAUF also provided companion technical assistance along the way. Together, they:

- Surveyed every possible household in the target area to assess their interest in economic issues.
- Identified and trained community residents in the full array of economic development strategies using the same nine-week training program used in Pacoima.
- Conducted research on how organizing strategies could help to advance land development – the economic development approach residents felt built most organically around nuisance abatement.
- Mapped local assets for its community economic development strategy, including several church-based economic development corporations and strengthened the local nonprofit partners through management assistance.
- Studied the various aspects of land development, analyzing which functions could be best taken on by the Community Coalition and which should be handed off to other partners.
- Supported the development of a successful campaign called “Greater Resources Through Organizing and Working,” designed to hold existing supermarkets in the area to higher standards of service, pricing, and cleanliness.
- Carried out “study tours” to Boston, where residents had successfully mobilized for community-driven eminent domain, and San Diego, where resident investment structures had been established for retail development.
- Successfully advocated for the development of a new public elementary school in the Vermont/Manchester neighborhood, which became a stimulus for local improvement.

In short, the capacity building process supported by LAUF helped the Community Coalition and its partner nonprofits move from a strictly “fighting back” stance to one that embraced “building up.” Using an organizing approach to attract businesses represented a significant adaptation for the Community Coalition. Its members – who previously used their power as voting citizens to pressure for change – learned to mobilize their power as consumers.

In addition to helping to site a new public school in the community and improving a neighborhood supermarket, the Community Coalition's staff began developing a portfolio of local land development projects on vacant or underused properties. The priority project was a 16-acre stretch of largely vacant land at the intersection of Vermont/Manchester. The Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) had designated this site as its own priority project in 1992, and millions had been

⁹ For a detailed discussion see “Empowerment Evaluation: Building on a Tradition of Activism in the African American Community,” by Cheryl Grills, Karen Bass, Didra L. Brown, Aletha Akers in *Empowerment Evaluation: Knowledge and Tools for Self-Assessment and Accountability* (David Fetterman, Shakeh Kaftarian, and Abraham Wanderson, editors).

allocated for its development, but funds had since shifted to other CRA target areas. This property, held in speculation for decades by an absentee landlord, was one of the last major commercial intersections available for development in South Los Angeles.

Unfortunately, the fate of this intersection was to become a case study for why vacant lots remain undeveloped in Los Angeles. Despite the CRA's plans prescribing retail development for the site, and overwhelming community support, the CRA and the local councilman's office proceeded with development of a County Administration Office Building. Community Coalition members voiced their opposition with far more sophistication than typical not-in-my-backyard malcontents, explaining that county buildings do not generate tax increment financing and tend to bring their own workers instead of hiring local residents.

It was a defeat, but – empowered with its growing expertise in land development – the Community Coalition immediately set out to make plans for the few remaining adjacent sites included in the county plan. Its explorations into economic development continued through the hiring of a new organizer with experience negotiating “community benefits agreements” between resident groups and large real estate developers. The organizer immediately redoubled efforts to ensure that development strategies initiated by the Community Coalition would continue.

Working at a neighborhood scale influenced the Community Coalition's approach to organizing. While its primary approach is still establishing a constituency large enough for citywide policy impact, it now finds benefit in smaller geographic neighborhoods when analyzing local conditions, partnering with local nonprofits, and observing measurable impacts. Today, the Community Coalition's “Transforming Neighborhoods” strategy focuses on five areas in addition to Vermont/Manchester: King Estates, Westmont, Green Meadows, Vermont Vista, and Hyde Park.

HYDE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Hyde Park, LAUF's third community was, like Vermont/Manchester, a historically African American residential neighborhood with a faded commercial corridor that had been a focal point of violence and destruction during the civil unrest. In fact, it was located just a couple of miles northwest of Vermont/Manchester. In contrast to Vermont/Manchester, the Latino population was still relatively small.

LAUF selected Hyde Park because it was a chance to learn how philanthropy could best support a community with limited capacity for solving neighborhood-wide problems. Hyde Park presented distinct challenges. Several major collaborative efforts had recently failed, and many in the community felt hopeless and distrustful of outside institutions. Moreover, despite LAUF's attempts to downplay the amount of money it might bring to Hyde Park, a small group of residents, seeing themselves as “gatekeepers,” had unofficially formed into a steering committee with the express purpose of directing the allocation of LAUF funds. LAUF had to manage the expectations of this small group while expanding the base of leadership.

It appeared that the most progress that could realistically be attained in Hyde Park within the timeframe of the initiative would be development of small-scale vehicles for interaction – opportunities for residents to develop collaborative problem-solving skills, learn to articulate frustrations and hopes with one another, and develop a sense of community in small groups. There could be modest projects leading to visible, short-term results. From there, ever more ambitious efforts could be pursued.

Since there were already pockets of engagement occurring in informal associations like block clubs, churches, and small groups of business owners, LAUF resolved to strengthen and support these as mechanisms for solving problems. Through a team of community organizers, LAUF:

- Convened neighborhood-wide assemblies of the 21 block clubs in the area, which had traditionally functioned in an isolated manner and organized them to carry out collective projects.
- Transformed the Hyde Park Family Service Center with workstations and copying machines into the hub for cross-block club cooperation.
- Supported nine separate block clubs to submit a package of proposals for small neighborhood improvement projects to the City of Los Angeles' matching grant program. When the City rejected the proposals, a LAUF member underwrote them.
- Organized local merchants and small business owners along the Crenshaw Corridor into a Hyde Park Merchants Association that advocated for street repairs and administered a façade improvement program.
- Created a network among the sixty churches in the neighborhood, helping them work together on projects like food and clothing drives.
- Funded all of these associations, collectively known as the "Hyde Park Community Network," to mount community fairs and holiday festivals, coordinate public safety campaigns, and mobilize residents to participate in community hearings related to community development.

Ultimately, LAUF's role would be to not only strengthen these associations but to also help them coalesce around a shared agenda, establish a network structure, and link with wider organizing campaigns. There were many positive outcomes, and an ever-broadening base of residents became more informed about issues in their community. It was an impressive demonstration of the power of informal associations and natural helping networks – as opposed to nonprofits – to animate a community.

There was also tangible shift in the dominant mood of the neighborhood, and many were noticing. The associations were cultivating a healthy frustration with local neighborhood conditions and a sense that people coming together in small groups could change those conditions. Residents were becoming more realistic about what partnerships with outside institutions might look like.

But while the collective efforts the Hyde Park Community Network was significant, it was not clear how this energy could be channeled into bolder initiatives or more lasting transformation.

Around this time, a series of revelations led to a radical rethinking of the Hyde Park initiative. The LAUF Board was reminded that the Community Coalition had carried out concentrated organizing in Hyde Park on a number of occasions over the years. Hyde Park residents, many drawn from block clubs, had been mobilized to carry out pressure campaigns against several nuisance properties in the neighborhood, including liquor stores and a motel. The Community Coalition had even used the Hyde Park Family Service Center as a location for meetings and a staging area for the organizing. After all, while the Community Coalition had been encouraged to focus on Vermont/Manchester for the LAUF partnership, it was created to be an infrastructure for resident organizing, research, and strategic planning throughout South Los Angeles.

The newly strengthened informal associations of Hyde Park, then, might potentially be “plugged into” the large Community Coalition structure. After a series of exploratory conversations, the Hyde Park networks were connected with Community Coalition organizers. Today, Hyde Park remains a special target area for the Community Coalition; and through this arrangement, significance advances have been made in reducing crime and substance abuse, promoting higher public school standards, and fostering the development of better retail and housing.

IV. Concluding LAUF

LAUF wound down by 2006 as a funder collaborative, though work continued in the neighborhoods. The funders carefully orchestrated a shift from the pooled fund to individual grants as the initiative approached its conclusion, a key to establishing sustainable neighborhood initiatives. The end goal was for each funder to do regular categorical grantmaking in the community, but with a more sophisticated understanding of how their grantees contribute to a larger community effort. As one funder put it, “the challenge is to view our collective categorical grants in a community in the same way a single large foundation might view its portfolio of related grants. We must learn to operate not as two dozen individual foundations, but – at least as far as our neighborhoods are concerned – as a single “virtual” foundation.”

By and large, LAUF succeeded at this transition. The neighborhood partnerships LAUF helped forge remained in place. A number of successor bodies in the sites also helped secure these affiliations. For example, the steering committee created by the Youth Policy Institute’s Promise Neighborhood Initiative in Pacoima continued to regularly assemble key stakeholders in Pacoima. In South Los Angeles, the organizing committees and task forces created by the Community Coalition during the “Transforming Our Neighborhoods” initiative ensured groups continued to work toward shared objectives. Most LAUF members sustained working relations with one or more nonprofits in the communities, coordinating with one another to various degrees. For Torie Osborn, who was then Executive Director of the Liberty Hill Foundation, “One of LAUF’s lasting effects is that it facilitated relationships between individual funders and neighborhood nonprofits that fit their guidelines. These relationships are outlasting LAUF.” Many of these relationships still remain today.

LAUF had also set out to alter funder behaviors, which by many measures it did. Some individual funders actually altered the type and quality of grants they make, seeking more collaborative proposals involving multiple agencies or administering a related set of grants to clusters of nonprofits in the same neighborhoods. In Pacoima, the strategy that enabled healthcare outreach workers to pursue career paths in nearby hospitals was actually not funded by the pooled fund, but by a linked set of grants from The California Endowment to FCHK and VEDC. Some funders offered grantees additional funds above and beyond operating expenses to underwrite their collaborative activities. More commonly, LAUF funders continued making regular categorical grants but developed them differently. They engaged in dialogues with grantees about how these grants fit into community-wide strategies and tweaked or modified those grants to allow for stronger linkages.

Another change that had been catalyzed by LAUF was the attraction of funding from other foundations or government sources to the three neighborhoods. Pacoima agencies found themselves eligible for new public funding, eventually receiving a coveted national “Promise Neighborhood” designation.¹⁰ In South Los Angeles, LAUF helped stimulate a substantial migration of funding

¹⁰ The 2012 Promise Neighborhood designation in two LA Neighborhoods – Hollywood and Pacoima – provided \$30 million in federal funds, along with \$30 million in private matching for cradle-to-career services for 18,000 youth.

from other foundations, something called for in the original *New Directions for Southern California Philanthropy* study. In fact, of the twelve nonprofits that underwent management assistance in South LA, none had received a foundation grant prior to LAUF. At least 95% of their funding came from government with the remainder coming from individual donations. By the end of LAUF, each organization had received either one or two foundation grants. This movement of dollars helped many nonprofit agencies that were overly dependent on public dollars to diversify their revenues.

Despite the premeditation that had gone into it, the wind down of LAUF felt premature to many LAUF funders and community partners. There was hesitation about eliminating the pooled fund. After all, it might be needed to shore up critical partners, fortify partnerships, or fund bold, risky ventures that would further advance the neighborhood work. Just before LAUF's final meeting, Patrick Escobar of the LA84 Foundation said, "It's scary to me to think about moving forward without a pooled fund. We would not have accomplished what we did without it." Others felt that there was potential to replenish the fund to explore the next set of challenges with the neighborhoods, or move on to new neighborhoods. Janice Pober, who leads corporate social responsibility at Sony Pictures, observed at the time, "We are slowing down just as we hit our stride." Shirley Fredricks of the Lawrence Welk Foundation had put it more graphically, "I feel like I was on a motorcycle and hit the wall."

But the momentum to continue LAUF in its current form was simply not there. In fact, the experience of LAUF suggests that there may be limits to how long a funder collaborative can be sustained. In the beginning, the LAUF Board was comprised almost entirely of foundation presidents who could authorize unrestricted financial investments and far-reaching institutional commitments. But in later years, as the presidents felt LAUF had matured and stabilized, they delegated responsibilities to program officers and senior program staff who felt greater pressure to operate within restrictive categorical guidelines. Also, funders joining later in the process had not shared the early bonding experience that buoyed veteran board members over the long haul.

One implication of all this is that collaborative, pooled funds like LAUF may not need to be permanent, ongoing endeavors. They may be time-limited compensatory measures that mitigate the fragmenting effect of traditional, categorical grants awarded through competitive applications. They may be temporary structures that form and disband as needed, staying together only long enough to create the infrastructure for neighborhood initiatives or provide some generalizable benefit that enhances the effectiveness of individual grantmaking.

In short, intensive funder collaboratives like LAUF seem to have a built-in expiration date. For this reason, too, the notion of funder collaboratives forming, coming apart, and reforming seems to make sense. The experience of participating in LAUF created capacity for collaboration in the philanthropic community. But what kind of support system is needed to enable the continuous birth and rebirth of funder collaboratives? This question occupied the funders in the waning days of LAUF, and still challenges collaboratives today.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORTING FUNDER COLLABORATIVES

One of the primary reasons for situating LAUF within SCAP was that it had always seemed like a natural infrastructure for helping to form and spin-off collaboratives in the region. Funder collaboration was part of SCAP's mission, it had a large and diverse membership base, and it operated many program formats that could be adapted to funder collaboration. In practice, the situation was more complex. Despite what seemed to many a natural fit, the very existence of LAUF challenged SCAP to fundamentally rethink its role. Although the relationship worked quite effectively, it was often an uneasy synergy. As LAUF's budget ballooned beyond the size of SCAP's operating budget, some SCAP board members worried it would demand too much of the SCAP president's time. More profoundly, it forced a general discussion about the nature of membership associations: should they play a proactive leadership role in catalyzing funder collaboratives and provide institutional support to them? Or, should the association maintain a responsive stance, providing program activities as requested by members?

Today, funder collaboration has become a definitive feature of SCAP or Southern California Grantmakers as it is now called. After LAUF had ended, the SCAP Board reaffirmed its commitment to supporting funder collaboration in principle through networking and educational events that helped funders find points of potential collaboration. But it stopped short of committing to proactively create collaboratives or provide institutional support on the scale of LAUF. Nevertheless, funder collaboratives have managed to multiply in southern California. Indeed, they have proliferated. Not surprisingly, some – like Long Beach Funders – were seeded by LAUF members. Place-based initiatives have multiplied as well and in rapid succession. Many involved in these initiatives consider LAUF to be their pre-cursor. If LAUF intended to send ripples into southern California philanthropy, it did. However, rather than lead to a permanent infrastructure for forming, staffing, and managing funder collaboratives, its primary legacy was the reproduction of its approach and the sharing of its lessons learned.

LESSONS FOR PHILANTHROPIC PRACTICE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

From the outset, LAUF was a rigorous self-reflecting learning organization, and it accumulated substantial insights from its work. There were six key lessons drawn from its experience, and each lesson contains implications for philanthropic practice and the community development field.

Funders must commit to neighborhoods, not nonprofits. Partnering with a community usually requires some configuration of nonprofits and informal associations that collectively represent or approximate community-wide interests and are capable of interacting with a body of funders. The challenge is that these configurations are seldom static. Sometimes, networks expand outward from a nucleus of organizations to a wider network. At other times, there must be a complete dismantling, repairing, or reconstituting of relationships. There is a great temptation to declare failure when an alliance with a particular organization or group of organizations dissembles. But to ensure that the initiative moves forward, funders must remain steadfastly committed to the neighborhood, even if the configuration of partners changes over time.

Over the course of the initiatives, LAUF played many roles: convener, facilitator, advisor, and honest broker. It provided political cover, strengthened under-represented groups, and acted as “keeper of the faith,” holding stakeholders to a long-term community-wide focus. LAUF disbursed its pooled funding in correspondingly diverse ways: contracting with consultants, giving stipends to local leaders, directly funding small projects, and issuing RFPs.

While funders often prefer to finance programs and initiatives without shared responsibility for defining objectives and controlling quality, as the neighborhood initiatives evolved, LAUF used the kind of shared governance and responsibility one would expect in a genuine partnership. Near the end, as neighborhood initiatives became self-sufficient, LAUF essentially delegated authority to them, granting full discretion to use funds as they saw fit. It marked a significant leap in community capacity.

Informal associations can be important strategic partners. Funders often consider nonprofit agencies to be their only vehicle for community change, when they actually have considerably more latitude to work with other types of organizations. In the case of neighborhood revitalization, informal associations and natural helping networks – block clubs, parent associations, church congregations, prayer groups, and merchant associations – become vital players. In contrast to nonprofit agencies, which are often inherently limited in the number of people they can touch by professional standards for case management or service delivery, associations can serve as aggregators for hundreds or thousands of people.

Further, although nonprofit agencies are often asked to be the “voice of the community,” few have the capacity to carry out the intensive resident outreach or constituency building required to maintain a nuanced understanding of resident views and sentiments. Associations, in contrast, directly engage residents in regular activities and can serve as trusted communications channels for more intense, large-scale outreach. In fact, if the goal is to have impact that is truly community-wide, associations – not nonprofits – are often more effective vehicles.

On the other hand, many associations are not incorporated and have no boards of directors or full-time staff, which makes it more difficult to carry out due diligence and have consistent, professional leadership. The informal structures can make relating with associations challenging for funders. Appreciating and navigating the tradeoffs between nonprofits and associations became a key to success in all of the initiatives.

Management assistance is best delivered to all nonprofit partners at once. Many foundations have recognized the importance of investing in management assistance to improve nonprofit effectiveness. LAUF learned that for a neighborhood initiative to succeed, management assistance had to be provided in a coordinated, synchronized way to all of the nonprofits participating in the initiative. Neighborhood networks and coalitions are only as strong as their weakest member. Consequently, LAUF learned that nonprofit management – conceived as a community-wide capacity-building intervention – needed to be an integral aspect of each initiative. LAUF’s management assistance program operated on two-levels: classroom training for the entire cohort of agencies in a

neighborhood combined with one-on-one customized training for each nonprofit. In the training series, executives learned six core competencies: board development, strategic planning, human resource systems, financial planning, evaluation, and partnerships.

Because the program was integrated into the initiatives, its utility was continually measured in terms of its impact on community outcomes. Upon enrollment, each nonprofit committed to make one improvement in a management practice or system and develop a simple logic model for how this improvement would result in better client and community outcomes. The hypothesis was that stronger organizations lead to stronger coalitions, which in turn lead to better outcomes for individual organizations as well as their collective impact on the community. One benefit of having agencies from one community undergo management training as a group is that they begin to explore the redistribution of roles among them or inter-agency restructuring as a way to achieve better outcomes. To reduce cost and minimize duplication of services, organizations in LAUF neighborhoods pursued the collective leasing of service, the creation of an administrative hub, and the merging of programs.

Funders can shore up unstable partners by sharing the risk. Under normal circumstances, a foundation would be considered foolhardy to make a grant to an agency that was known to be financially unsound or reputationally compromised. When considered as an isolated transaction grant, funding an organization with evident weaknesses makes little sense. But in the context of a community-wide strategy, that organization may have a critical role to perform that necessitates deeper commitment. Funders may be called upon to shore up such organizations if their role is crucial to the neighborhood initiative. This was true, of course, in the case of both the Community Coalition, which lost much of its government funding just as the initiative was beginning, and the Valley Economic Development Center, which struggled with troubling leadership and financial issues. Traditional perspectives on due diligence had to be turned on their head in the context of a community-wide effort.

The public sector should be engaged once the community agenda is set. LAUF has been critiqued for engaging the public sector late in the process. But LAUF members observed early on that elected officials and government agencies, while generally possessing laudable intentions, can overwhelm or intimidate residents if they get involved too early. They can inhibit the ability of residents to set their own agenda. LAUF members agreed that they needed to enable stakeholders in each neighborhood to conceptualize their own long-term plan before bringing in government. That way, there would be a better chance of aligning the public sector with community goals, instead of the other way around.

For instance, when public sector funders finally came to the table in Pacoima, it was because the furtherance of the neighborhood initiative required assurances of stable school district funding for the school-based parent centers. Negotiations with the Community Development Department were needed to ensure that the school-based parent centers could be treated as satellites for the city's occupational training program, a complement to the workforce initiative. In South Los Angeles, the community needed to assert an adversarial position with government agencies, pressuring them to halt the opening of liquor stores and motels and aggressively pursue supermarkets and other desired retailers. As one funder pointed out "elected officials have consolidated agendas on behalf of all the communities they represent; we wanted to create a voice so that neighborhoods could shape their

own agendas.” During some early conversations between LAUF members and elected officials, LAUF members had an “allergic reaction.” “We saw that many elected officials had points of view that were different from their constituencies,” says Caroline Boitano. “It was more appropriate for us to help the community leaders take the lead with elected officials.”

All roads lead to economic opportunity. LAUF had set out knowing that economic opportunity would need to be an important emphasis for all of the neighborhood initiatives. But as work progressed, it recognized that achieving economic opportunity in these neighborhoods required philanthropy to do more than fund organizations that carried out economic development strategies; it needed to understand the ways that philanthropy could intervene in market forces. It needed to embrace a “market-oriented philanthropy.” This would mean thinking like economists, understanding the market imperfections that prevented regional economic opportunities from reaching low-income neighborhoods of their own volition. From this analysis came a growing recognition that philanthropic dollars, while minuscule relative to the vast capital flows of the private sector, can nonetheless influence the market. Like a tugboat nudging an ocean liner, foundations could shift the direction of something larger than itself.

It was, after all, a relatively small investment by LAUF in a market study focused on local consumer financial behaviors that prompted the opening of a new bank in one of the neighborhoods. LAUF funds constructed new pipelines that graduated small business owners from a microloan fund to mainstream lending institutions. LAUF funding also organized consumers to document supermarket conditions and resident buying power, altering management and pricing standards in area supermarkets. And, an investment in an organizational facilitator successfully aligned the employment needs of major hospitals with the content of job training programs, increasing the number of residents entering a career with strong growth potential. Although the outcomes were less successful, it was a small planning grant that helped open city agencies to the idea of a resident-driven eminent domain process that would liberate vacant properties from land speculation limbo and return them to productive economic use. Similarly, LAUF funding helped leaders explore the notion of resident IPO structures in local real estate developments and new policies for the conversion of garage apartments and granny flats to legitimate housing. Each of these strategies holds the potential to unleash market forces well beyond the scale of the investment.

PASSING THE LESSONS FORWARD

In the final years of LAUF and for several years to follow, these lessons were shared with foundations across the country. In 2000, at a special two-day session at the Council on Foundations Annual Conference in Los Angeles, a “learning laboratory” was held, where small groups of foundation executives from nine different cities around the country spent time with LAUF Board members and neighborhood partners. Each city, to one degree or another, applied the lessons above and engaged in funder collaboration around a neighborhood initiative. LAUF staff was even loaned to a funder collaborative in San Diego and Long Beach to facilitate meetings and help negotiate neighborhood partnerships. In all, nine funder collaboratives formally requested help from LAUF ranging from technical assistance to consultation calls to visits from LAUF delegates.

These lessons also had direct relevance to the many place-based initiatives that were arising across Los Angeles and California, even those that did not have an affiliated funder collaborative. LAUF staff provided consultations and assistance to these efforts. These included fourteen place-based initiatives focused on health outcomes that were launched by The California Endowment, whose President, Dr. Robert Ross, had been LAUF's final Co-Chair. LAUF staff helped the Crail-Johnson Foundation, another LAUF member, to frame a 25-year place-based initiative in San Pedro. It also helped Sony Pictures Entertainment to design a place-based initiative in the Culver City neighborhoods surrounding the studio. Later on, staff supported Wells Fargo Bank, Bank of America, and JPMorgan Chase, which all had participated in LAUF, in carrying out their own place-based initiatives in Pacoima, Compton, Boyle Heights, Westlake/Pico Union, Vernon Central, and South Crenshaw. LAUF staff also provided assistance to the California Community Foundation when it launched a place-based initiative in El Monte, an inner-ring suburb of Los Angeles.

LAUF staff assisted with initiatives that were not led by former LAUF members, too. It helped the Los Angeles Urban League when it launched a place-based initiative in the neighborhood surrounding Crenshaw High School. And provided support to First Five LA's "Best Start Communities," neighborhood initiatives focused on early childhood outcomes.¹¹ It assisted Tesco Supermarkets carry out an initiative focused on healthy eating in Compton. And, it also helped the Annenberg Foundation when it was contemplating a South Los Angeles initiative.

Many of the lessons learned became familiar to philanthropic and community leaders in Los Angeles and found expression in many neighborhoods, even if LAUF itself had ended.

¹¹ First Five is a quasi-public nonprofit created in 1998 with revenues from California's Prop 10 tobacco tax. Its focus is on supporting early childhood development. The "Best Start" communities include: Palmdale, Panorama City, South El Monte/El Monte, Broadway-Manchester, West Athens, Watts-Willowbrook and Wilmington.

V. Twenty-Five Years Later: The Value of Perspective

For the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest, there were numerous events, commemorations, exhibits, and symposia intended to reflect on what was learned and assess the long-term impacts of initiatives that had been launched in the aftermath. The event entitled “Los Angeles Urban Funders: A Retrospective,” held at The USC Center on Philanthropy and Public Policy in June 2017 and attended by more than a hundred civic leaders, was one of these. Most of these events, including the LAUF event, addressed a grave reality: 25 years later, most of the economic root problems that led to the civil unrest in Los Angeles persist. Poverty remains as extreme as ever. Unemployment is high and wages are low. Burned out buildings have been torn down or rebuilt, but the main commercial corridors have otherwise changed little.

Speakers at all of these events also raised the idea that the 1992 Los Angeles Civil Unrest represents more than a local historical snapshot. It is a forecast of things to come for the entire country. The polarization of poverty and wealth and the widespread demographic displacement and racial animosities linked to it are becoming manifest in other parts of the country. In that sense, it was a precursor to the recent wave of civil disturbances in places like Baltimore, Dallas, and Ferguson. As Dr. Manuel Pastor of the University of Southern California puts it, Los Angeles is “America Fast Forward.” Any progress made here in Los Angeles is going to become increasingly relevant to solving social problems in cities nationwide.

But has Los Angeles made progress? While it may be a surprise to some, the consensus among many civil leaders who have been most active in South Los Angeles over the last 25 years is that we have. Although we can never be sure, there is general agreement among those interviewed that riots are less likely to happen in Los Angeles.

If the general socioeconomic conditions have not changed much, to what can we attribute the optimism? The answer is that, while problems persist, there are now organizations and structures that channel human energy and direct it to constructive purposes. Dr. Pastor has suggested that one of the main sources of rage that fueled the riots was that “too many people felt their potential was anonymous. It has taken 25 years of organizing to get us to the point where the potential can be seen.” Dr. Robert Ross described LAUF as a “riot prevention strategy,” because its emphasis on channeling people’s energy in constructive ways would mean that future crises could be addressed in other ways.

So, of all the efforts that were mounted in the aftermath of the civil unrest, the ones that seemed to have qualitatively changed Los Angeles are those that focused on organizing, activism, and civic engagement. LAUF was certainly not the only initiative to embrace these crucial activities, nor was it the largest. But it contributed meaningfully. In each neighborhood, LAUF supported a different model of community organizing: activists pressing for public policy change; consumers organizing buying power to attract businesses; parents influencing their children’s schools or participating directly in

service delivery; residents coming together in block clubs, church congregations, merchant associations, tenant groups, or homeowner associations to tackle large projects. There was a relevant approach for neighborhoods at every level of capacity, cultural assimilation, and socio-economic development.

Of particular significance among these are the civic organizational structures that could adapt to demographic change. The oceanic shift from African American to Latino that has defined South Los Angeles could have been a much greater source for conflict than it has been. The fact that the Community Coalition labored to ensure that all racial and ethnic groups were included in campaigns, focusing on common goals and not differences, and that senior leadership always represented these groups, or that the executive director role was filled initially by an African American, (Karen Bass, who is now a US Congressperson) and is now occupied by a Latino, were all real indicators that the Community Coalition could work for all residents. While the Community Coalition is the most impressive example, other organizations and associations in the LAUF neighborhoods strived to achieve the same.

And again, LAUF was only one effort among many. Kafi Blumenfeld, former Executive Director of the Liberty Hill Foundations, suggest that multiracial coalitions have worked to “reweave the fabric and reality of the city. Black and brown students led the charge for college-prep classes for every student in our school district. Immigrant Korean and Latino workers came together to force restaurant and hotel bosses to the bargaining table. And a labor movement largely revitalized by an immigrant workforce went to unionize security guards that were mostly African American.”

To be sure, top down approaches have played important roles, too. Several mayoral administrations, to varying degrees, have put forth policy frameworks aimed at increasing opportunity for low-income neighborhoods. Significant policy reforms have occurred at the highest levels of the Los Angeles Police Department. Even corporations, despite the disappointments of Rebuild LA, have found ways to reach out to low-income communities. Without the sense among community residents that they could connect to these approaches, the climate in Los Angeles might be as combustible as it was in 1992.

Finally, foundations embraced organizing through this process. With few exceptions, community organizing received scant attention from funders in the years leading up to the unrest. Today, it is an activity embraced by virtually all of the mainstream foundations. Foundation leaders speak fluently of equity, social justice, and inclusive markets – terms that were seldom mentioned before. And, because LAUF funders worked so closely with their neighborhood partners, they learned about organizing up close, by looking over the shoulders of their neighborhood-based partners.

This enabled some funders to apply organizing principles among their own philanthropic colleagues through formal and ad hoc funder collaboration. It was organizing of this kind that migrated so much philanthropic funding to nonprofits in South Los Angeles that had never received a foundation grant. And, as indicated earlier, funder collaboratives have now formed around many issues related to urban poverty. Although none have quite matched the intensity of LAUF in terms of its boldness and the sheer commitment and tenacity of its members, the capacity to work together exists.

The question that initially haunted LAUF members was this: could a funder collaborative of the caliber of LAUF coalesce without the riots? Today, there is a sense that the answer is yes. If and when another major social upheaval occurs, the region now has structures for collaboration that are ready to be activated. And funder collaboratives are already coming together in Los Angeles in an attempt to get out in front of crises. But for other urban centers and regions with concentrated poverty, the question remains a timely one to ask. The extent to which philanthropic leadership can consolidate its forces before unrest occurs remains to be seen.

Appendix: Inquiry Participants

In April 2017, The Center hosted three 2.5-hour roundtables on the campus of the University of Southern California with the leadership of LAUF to get their perspectives and reflections on its impact on three neighborhoods and its implications for philanthropy in southern California. Two months later, on June 1, 2017, The Center hosted a hundred philanthropic and community leaders for a retrospective and discussion to learn about LAUF and the impact it has had. (The * below denotes panel participants at the June 1, 2017 Convening: Los Angeles Urban Funders in Retrospect.)

Roberto Barragan

President
Valley Economic Development Center

Raul Bustillos*

Senior Vice President of Community Relations
Greater Los Angeles Region
Bank of America Corporation

Dannielle Campos*

Senior Vice President
ESG Program Director
Bank of America Charitable Foundation

Denise Fairchild

President
Emerald Cities Collaborative

Dorothy Fleisher

Program Director
W.M. Keck Foundation

Shirley Fredricks

Vice President
Lawrence Welk Family Foundation

Peggy Funkhouser

President and CEO (ret.)
Los Angeles Education Partnership

Marlene Grossman

Executive Director
Pacoima Beautiful

Helen Kleinberg

County Commissioner
Los Angeles Commission for Children and Families

Gloria Lazalde*

Founder
Proyecto Mariposa

Mary Lee*

Deputy Director
Policy Link

Antonio Manning

President and CEO
Affordable Living for the Aging

Jan McElwee

Principal
McElwee Group

Claire Peeps

Executive Director
The Durfee Foundation

Janice Pober

Senior Vice President Corporate Social Responsibility
Sony Pictures

Dr. Robert K. Ross*

President and CEO
The California Endowment

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