

GRASSROOTS:

A STUDY OF NEIGHBORHOOD
POLITICAL ORGANIZATION
IN TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY



GRASSROOTS: A Study of Neighborhood Political Organization
in Tacoma and Pierce County.

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GRASSROOTS STUDY COMMITTEE

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League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County, January, 1981.

We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. —T.S.Eliot

...."Don't make a one-day, solitary stand at the polls; begin to live in daily collaboration with your neighbor. The way we live day to day in our own communities will do far more to change the faltering political machinery than our campaign canvassing and yearly fling at the polls." —Ed Gondolf

INTRODUCTION

When you borrow an onion from a neighbor or ask a neighbor to watch your home for anything suspicious when you go on vacation, it has probably occurred to you how many possibilities exist for organized cooperation among neighbors. Many of these possibilities are actualities in neighborhoods across the country and in Tacoma-Pierce County: food co-ops, childcare co-ops, "neighborhood watch," cooperative truck gardens, community technologies ... and political action. A Gallup survey taken in October, 1977 in communities of over 50,000 population across the United States finds "more than half the nation's city dwellers are relatively optimistic about the future of their neighborhoods. And they are willing to take action, including direct confrontation of city officials, in tackling problems of crime, poor housing, inefficient local government, and traffic congestion." This "new localism" is shown in the groundswell of neighborhood activism in the U.S. today, reflecting people's distrust of government at remote levels and the failure of top-down solutions offered by big government and large institutions.

The term "neighbor" goes back 1,100 years to the time of King Alfred the Great. "Neighborhood" then signified not only a place but also an attitude of mind — friendship in action. Today's "new localism" is a resurgence of neighborhood spirit in a contemporary form. The Christian Science Monitor in its 1977 series, "A Nation of Neighborhoods" describes the movement as

"... percolating unnoticed in America's hinterlands long before the civil rights, antiwar, and environmental protests grabbed the headlines. In the wake of Vietnam and spurred by the bicentennial celebration, much of the nation is getting back to the business of solving tough domestic problems. The renaissance of the neighborhoods coincides with an evolving "ethnic pluralism" and the growing recognition that the Emersonian notion of America as a melting pot never totally panned out. The fervor also comes at a time when many individuals in a drifting nation are looking for their roots and are attracted by the idea that "small" (or at least no bigger than necessary) is "beautiful."

For purposes of this study, neighborhood is defined as a political and geographical unit of contiguous properties and people. However, neighborhood is more than buildings or streets -- it is primarily people; what the Christian Science Monitor calls "social fabric - the people and how they feel about one another. It is difficult to define perhaps because it is self-defining. Community is an insider's commodity; it belongs to those who belong ... Depending on who asks, your neighborhood may be a condominium or a trailer camp, one block, several blocks, a parish, a precinct, an urban renewal area." According to Milton Kotler of the National Association of Neighborhoods, "The most sensible way to locate the neighborhood is to ask people where it is People walk their dogs through their neighborhood, but rarely beyond it." Acknowledging the amorphous qualities of

"neighborhood", this study nonetheless focuses on the neighborhood as a geographical unit organized for action, this action often being political.

Within these parameters neighborhood organization becomes a governmental issue that can be evaluated according to League principles supporting democratic procedures, representative government, citizen participation, clear assignment of responsibility, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government. Before the League urges the extension or strengthening of neighborhood political organizations as an effective means to implement our various positions, we need to know more about the origins of neighborhood organizations, their function and structure, and their relationship with existing governmental bodies and with one another. Are neighborhood organizations a vehicle for developing consensus or do they introduce or increase social fragmentation and add an additional layer of government, expanding the bureaucracy? Are they pressure groups in competition with one another for tax dollars or the ultimate in participatory democracy?

This study of our grassroots is descriptive, practical and philosophical. It contains factual information about neighborhood organization here and elsewhere; a "how to" presentation by a League member who is active in her community organization; and speculation about the future of political activism through neighborhood organization. You may join in that speculation about grassroots political organization and its integration with community or neighborhood groups. Should these grassroots be fertilized and watered, carefully cut and edged, or should they be weeded out? Should League nurture them here in Tacoma and encourage their growth in the county?

TWO MODELS OF NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Neighborhood organizations may be divided into two classifications. The first model, a SINGLE PURPOSE group, organizes around one issue, usually a threat to the neighborhood. Its posture is reactive; it responds to outside action rather than initiating its own program. Its size fluctuates, usually beginning as a small group which swells in size as the issue gains momentum, and shrinks again as the issue gets resolved or tabled.

Local examples of the single purpose model would include the Burley Lagoon Improvement Association, located on the Kitsap Peninsula. This group organized three years ago to fight the development of the Holly Tides Shopping Center. The shopping center has been officially approved in a modified form and the association's next step is court action. In Tacoma the Wapato Neighborhood Coalition, bounded by S. 56th, S. 72nd, Park Avenue and I-5, organized to oppose a rezoning of 11 acres on the south side of S. 72nd that was to be developed into a high-rise business complex. The neighborhood group raised \$8,000.00 to hire a lawyer and succeeded in stopping the rezone, keeping the area zoned for single family residences. The group last met in the summer of 1979 and has taken on no other issues.

The second type of organization, a COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT model, has a more general purpose, that of community betterment. At any one time, it has several issues of concern. It is proactive, initiating action to accomplish its goals. Though its nucleus is small, the Community Development group attempts to build and hold a broad membership. This type of group often incorporates, both to become more official in the eyes of government and to protect its individual members in the event of a lawsuit. The Community Development model tends to be on-going, holding regular meetings of its directors and, less often, of the group

s a whole.

The Eastside Improvement Club, bounded by E. 28th, E. 38th, Portland Avenue and the city limits, is an example of the Community Development model. In the summer of 1976, concerned neighbors began meeting informally in each other's homes to discuss their frustrations over their rapidly deteriorating neighborhood. They began holding monthly meetings and listening to speakers from various city departments. Their first project was to improve the neighborhood playground. When the Metropolitan Park Board turned down their request for funds, the group applied for a Community Development Block Grant, and succeeded in getting funding on their second application. Linda Bowman, an active member of this Eastside neighborhood, reports on the group's progress:

The Community Development Department has assisted us in preparing a Comprehensive Revitalization Program. These are some of the areas in which we have been working a very successful L.I.D. Street Program that has surfaced many dirt roads in the community. Over thirty homes in the area have been rehabilitated this last year. To support the revitalization program we conducted a housing survey which documented the fall in our home ownership rate and, along with other detailed information, the community petitioned the city for a moratorium on the construction of more rental housing. This moratorium has been in effect the past year and we are now seeing the construction of new single family homes in our neighborhood that was previously undesirable for new construction. We have worked on obtaining a needed traffic light, community needs assessments and clean-up projects. We have just completed a neighborhood arts project and this month will begin a code enforcement program. Our community is developing a sense of pride and a joy in working together. We are concerned for our neighbor's needs and are confident that together we can resolve most any problem.

About 200 neighbors now attend monthly meetings at the Roosevelt Heights Christian Church.

Like the Eastside Improvement Club, Pierce County's Frederickson-Clover Creek Community Council organized in 1972 as a Community Development group. Although the Port of Tacoma's plans to industrialize the area provided the initial impetus, other issues were included from the outset and a permanent organizational structure was established. In addition to its officers, the area has 7 district representatives on the council which holds monthly meetings. The general membership meets four times a year.

A Single Purpose group may become a Community Development group. Once a neighborhood begins working together to address a particular problem, it may identify additional concerns and broaden both the agenda and the membership. This transformation is difficult to achieve and maintain. While neighborhood groups have considerable success in uniting people for a particular cause, it is harder to sustain interest in developing a comprehensive agenda. Some Single Purpose groups which do not become Community Development groups retain a skeletal organization that "watchdogs" the neighborhood, serving as a nucleus for action. In essence, this is still a Single Purpose group since it has no diversified or continuing agenda and remains reactive.

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION - TACOMA AND PIERCE COUNTY

TACOMA: The number of Tacoma neighborhoods registered with the Neighborhood Action Program in Tacoma's Community Development Department has increased from 26 in March of 1980 to 40 as of December, 1980. "Registered" means that a group member has filled out a brief form stating the organization's name, purpose number of members, meeting dates, and status (whether "informal" or "nonprofit corporations"). A registered group may be inactive. According to Rebecca Davis, staff member of the Neighborhood Action Program, about half of the groups are creatively active, constantly addressing on-going neighborhood concerns. The others are more reactive, responding to a perceived threat or undesirable development in their area. In this latter category, the leadership meets fairly regularly, remains alert to issues, and activates the larger group when it seems advisable.

Tacoma officially recognizes its neighborhoods through the Neighborhood Action Program, whose funding has been assured through 1981. The NAP was established in 1978 from Community Development Block Grant funds upon application from several citizen groups. The application was approved by the city's Urban Policy Committee, an appointed citizen committee which recommends to the City Council the uses of grant monies from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The major criterion for distribution of the funds requires that the agency, organization or person applying must use the grant for a project that will benefit mostly low and moderate income people (52% rule).**

The Neighborhood Action Program (NAP) is a resource for any neighborhood group requesting assistance. NAP has a staff of two to technically assist neighborhoods in organizing, assessing needs, fund-raising, and self-help projects. They also make arrangements for city officials to address group meetings. The NAP publishes a monthly newsletter "The Grapevine" which publicizes current projects in neighborhoods and identifies city services and plans that affect neighborhoods. Early in 1981 NAP will issue two publications: the Neighborhood Hotline Directory will list basic information on the histories and projects of neighborhood groups in Tacoma; the Guide to Foundation Grants will list private funding sources for neighborhood groups.

Tacoma's relationship with its neighborhoods has progressed in predictable fashion. Mr. Paul Hartsock, a planning consultant hired in 1976 by the City of Cincinnati to develop a Division of Community Assistance within the City Manager's Office, identifies a pattern of neighborhood political activism. The first neighborhood that approaches city hall is usually successful. Then, as others organize, the group that can mobilize the largest number of residents gets heard, the "squeaky wheel" syndrome. City (or county) governments must decide at some point whether to officially recognize neighborhoods, set the terms of that recognition, and the method of incorporating the neighborhood structure within existing policies and procedures. Official recognition often amounts to an office of neighborhoods which works with neighborhood groups. This help may reach the stage of drawing up neighborhood plans. Should such plans become part of the city's active agenda and receive funding, this official recognition has reached the ultimate policy level - incorporation into the budget.

PIERCE COUNTY: There seems to be a new or renewed interest in neighborhood groups in Pierce County as residents find that unifying and flexing their collective muscle can have a positive effect on their neighborhoods. Interviews of individuals from twenty county groups revealed both much in common and also wide variety. This variety is perhaps an indication that as a healthy group ages, its interests expand and its membership grows to deal with more diverse issues.

** The 1981 recommendations of the Urban Policy Committee are included in the Appendix.

The organization and pattern of development of county neighborhood groups is similar to that in Tacoma and elsewhere in the United States. There is the same proportion - about half and half- of Community Development and Single Purpose groups with the former meeting regularly and the latter when the board or officers perceive a need for community action. Both models of organization seem to owe their existence to a strong leader or, in a few cases, to a dedicated core group. The county groups usually cover large geographical areas and most are incorporated, non-profit organizations.

The county has no office of neighborhoods but it has responded to organized community pressure, the initial step in the pattern of neighborhood activism cited earlier. Rapid development and population growth in the unincorporated areas of Pierce County have given impetus to neighborhood political action. However, some areas beset by the problems attendant to rapid growth show no signs of organizing. An explanation given for such an organizational void in the Parkland-Spanaway area is the disparate population elements. On the one hand, there are transient students and military personnel and on the other hand, there are long term property owners hoping to profit through the sale of their land: that "social fabric - the people and how they feel about one another" is missing.

Neighborhood organization is not extensive in Tacoma and Pierce County. Rebecca Davis of the Neighborhood Action Program estimates that Tacoma is 40% organized. Neighborhood activist Wesley Pruitt estimates that Pierce County, outside the city of Tacoma, is 10% organized. However, individual neighborhoods in both city and county have exhibited considerable political sophistication and clout in addressing "city hall" or the "courthouse".

In the city and in the Peninsula area where there is a concentration of neighborhood organizations, coalitions are forming to increase the effectiveness and influence of neighborhood groups. The United Neighborhoods of Tacoma was begun in 1979 under the leadership of individuals active in their neighborhood groups. This effort has been encouraged by the Neighborhood Action Program as a means to improve its service to neighborhood groups. The creation of a communications network to pool and share information will help prevent the reinvention of the wheel. By-laws have been submitted to the various neighborhoods registered with the city and, if approved, officers will be elected in January, 1981. In time, the coalition hopes to develop a consensus platform and to become a lobbying group for neighborhood concerns in city politics. In Pierce County, the United Peninsula People incorporated in the spring of 1979 under the leadership of Wesley Pruitt. Although this group has a continuing interest in land use issues, one of its objectives is the organization of more peninsula neighborhoods.

Although the needs and concerns of each neighborhood are distinct, similarities occur in the issues considered by the groups. In identifying their successes and ongoing concerns, city and county neighborhood organizations frequently cited zoning and land use; public safety; development of parks and recreation, and rehabilitation of housing.

Land Use, specifically, resistance to high density development, seems to be the principal factor motivating the formation and subsequent political activity of neighborhood groups. Neighborhoods organize to oppose developments that will substantially alter the character of their community. The accompanying charts

indicate the predominance of land use concerns and the variety of tools available to influence or modify land use decisions. These tools may range from a lawsuit to community involvement in preparing a comprehensive plan. Neighborhoods have addressed city hall to obtain down-zones; to oppose re-zones or variances; to fight spot zones and spot annexations; to work with the planning department. Where they were unsuccessful in stopping a particular development, they have won modifications that will lessen the impact of that development.

Such activities as polling the area to determine the feasibility of a "crime watch"; the hiring of an off-duty policeman; determining the adequacy of the water supply for fire fighting; lobbying for additional fire department personnel, emphasize the primacy of public safety as a neighborhood concern.

The parks and the various recreational facilities cited as notable successes or identified as projects underline the emphasis on land use concerns and the importance of local parks and recreational opportunities to a neighborhood. The projects evidence both a concern for a quality environment and attention to the varying needs of the people.

A fourth major concern is the revitalization/rehabilitation of housing. There are three target areas where Community Development Department planners are encouraging groups to improve their properties. All three - the Eastside, the Central Area, and South Tacoma - have active organizations to help citizens with information about opportunities to realize their plans. The Neighborhood Housing Service, a program partially funded by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), is coordinating efforts by the city, the financial institutions, and the residents to upgrade housing in the area from S. 48th to S. 80th Streets, bounded by Interstate 5 and South Tacoma Way. Already 80 applications for aid have been received. Twelve projects are either completed or under way.

The information presented in chart form on the succeeding pages was obtained through interviews with active members of the neighborhood organizations. The projects identified and the successes claimed have not been further researched by the League study committee. The data assembled is a representative sampling of county and city neighborhood groups.

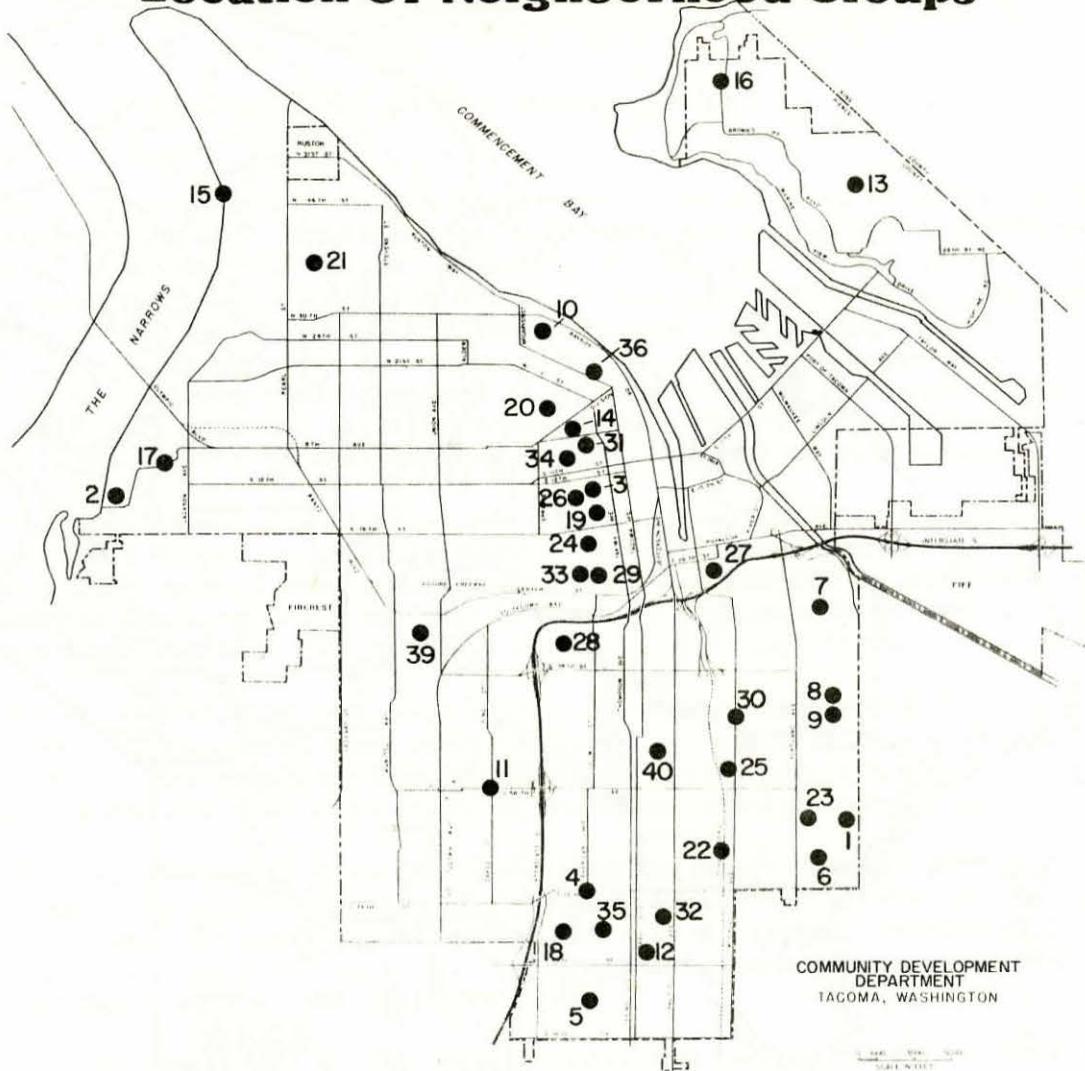
NAME	AREA	BEGUN	MODEL	STRUCTURE	MEETINGS	PROJECTS	NOTABLE SUCCESSES
Neighborhood Improvement Club	S 6th to S 9th, I, J, K Sts.	1978	Single Issue	Informal 2 co-chairs, by consensus	No regular meetings "on call"	Clean up alleys and vacant lots; seek city assistance in clean-up.	More neighborhood pride as evidenced in home improvements, rehabilitation.
Stadium-Seminary District	Ruston Way to N Eye St., N 6th to Division	1972	Single Issue			monitor fringe developments; work for local historic registry so ordinance may be passed permitting citizens to help set area policy.	state and national historic registry listing.
McKinley Hill Boosters	I-5, S 56th Pacific Ave., Portland Ave.	1973	Community Development	Incorporated 5 officers elected each January	Monthly - about 30 in attendance	Cooperation with Eastside Improvement Club on mutual concerns.	Landscaped library grounds; furnished meeting room in library, developed playfield; secured funding for 30-unit retirement home; kept Mottet Library open.
Norpoint Boosters	Northeast Tacoma Browns Point Dash Point	1976	Community Development	Incorporated 4 officers and board of 5 committee heads	Board meets once a month. General meeting bi-monthly	Monitor hearings on land development; Development of Alderwood Park 6½ acres of city land.	Influenced NE Tacoma plan to <u>keep condos off slope.</u>
Gig Harbor Community Improvement Association	Town of Gig Harbor	1979	Community Development	Incorporated Board of 3 elected and 4 appointed about 12 dues paying members	One Board and one general meeting monthly.	Historic preservation; animal control; waterfront uses; public transportation; police protection; view preservation.	<u>Prevented building of condominiums on Gig Harbor waterfront.</u>

NAME	AREA	BEGUN	MODEL	STRUCTURE	MEETINGS	PROJECTS	NOTABLE SUCCESSES
Manitou Improvement Club	Manitou Area (Southwest Tacoma)	1905	Community Development	Incorporated 4 officers and board Annual elections	Open board meetings monthly.	Park developed near Mt. Tahoma H.S. Rental of clubhouse to outside groups.	<u>denial of variance for duplex</u> in neighborhood.
Old Town Improvement Club	Garfield Gulch, N 18th Yakima, N Carr, N 29th and waterfront	1940	Community Development	Incorporated Officers and trustees responsible to geographic areas.	Monthly	Influence North Slope Plan, working for historic registry at national level.	1980 Street Fair <u>Denial of rezone</u> for multiple dwellings "New blood" in group.
Southend Concerned Citizens	Fire station #10 district (S. 56 to S. 96, city limits east of freeway)	1980	Single Issue	Informal 4 officers Annual elections	Officers meet twice monthly. 4 general meetings a year.	Pressure Fire Dept. for station repair and for personnel to maintain fire truck.	Changed school bus stop location so waiting school children did not vandalize library.
Wedge Association	6th Ave., Division, Wright Park	1978	Single Issue	Incorporated 3 officers, board of 15 Replaced on retirement.	No regular meetings events organized "on call".	Assisting Planning Department in research for neighborhood plan.	Tacoma City Council grants permission for neighborhood plan.
West Slope Community Council	Narrows Bridge, S. 27th, Bridgeport	1972	Single Issue	Informal 3 officers elected for indefinite terms.	No regular meetings "On call" status.	None, currently	Influenced developers of Selden-Anderson property.

NAME	AREA	BEGUN	MODEL	STRUCTURE	MEETINGS	PROJECTS	NOTABLE SUCCESSES
Burley Lagoon Improvement Association	Purdy Sand Spit, Mullerix Rd., Sidney Rd., Highway 16	1978	Single Issue	Incorporated Elected board - 4 officers and 3 members at large	Quarterly board meetings No regular general meetings	Monitor Kitsap Co. planning process Canvas area/opinion polling Continue efforts to stop Holly Tides Shopping Center	Environmentally sensitive designations for Minter & Burley. Obtained <u>modifications in plans</u> for Holly Tides Shopping Center.
Arletta Citizens' Action Association	Arletta and Surrounding Area	1979	Single Issue	Incorporated Elected officers	No regular meetings	Continue efforts to maintain rural atmosphere.	Number of homes in the Busch Addition (a development) <u>reduced from 131 to 71.</u>
East Gig Harbor Improvement Association	96th Colvos Passage Gig Harbor Bay	1976	Community Development	Incorporated Elected officers and board of directors	Open quarterly board meetings Annual meeting	Study and monitor water supply re fire protection. Roads and Improvements Resolution of jurisdictional tangle in Gig Harbor Bay	Worked with Seattle Yacht Club to get mutually satisfactory use of their Gig Harbor property. <u>Prevented spot annexation</u> by Gig Harbor.
Serve Our University Place (SOUP)	Puget Sound, City limits of Tacoma, Fircrest, and Steilacoom and Lakewood	1978	Community Development	Incorporated Elected board of 7 who elect officers	2 monthly board meetings 1 general meeting per month	Working for comprehensive plan. Aims/concerns: bicycle lanes, jogging paths, air quality	<u>Stopped multi-family dwellings</u> in area where sewage capacity insufficient. Stopped widening of Grandview to four lanes.
Frederickson-Clover Creek Community Council	208th St. E, 22nd Ave., 152nd St. E, 74th Ave., 84th Ave.	1976	Community Development	Incorporated Elected Council - Pres., V.P., Sec., Treas., 6 area reps. 60 dues paying members	Monthly Council meetings general meetings at least 4 per year	Canyon Rd improvements Volleyball court and picnic area for fire station.	Traffic signal at 176th & Pacific Traffic button, dividers at 176th & Meridian <u>Prevention of chlorine gas plant</u> in area Input into Port development of Frederickson

NAME	AREA	BEGUN	MODEL	STRUCTURE	MEETINGS	PROJECTS	NOTABLE SUCCESSES
Steilacoom Lake Improvement Club	Property bordering lake	1968	Single Issue	Incorporated Elected officers	2 per year additional as need arises	Spray for weeds and pollution Employ off-duty policeman for lake safety	Fish kill clean-up Promoted creation of improvement district (ULID) for the Clover Creek/Chambers Creek sewer system
Lakes District Community Council	Clover Park School District minus military base territory	1977	Single Issue	3 officers & 17 members from elementary school attendance areas & at large members	Monthly	Formed by resolution of County Commissioners to update comprehensive plan; at the urging of area residents.	Reported residents' preference re Steilacoom Blvd.-Custer Rd. traffic problem.
Lake City Community Center	undefined	1920	Single Issue	Incorporated Elected board and officers and 15 members	Board monthly Membership monthly	Encourage use of community center/ Place for youth activities to reduce vandalism Increased rental usage	Raised funds to build community center.
Peninsula Narrows Residential Association	town of Gig Harbor to Weatherswood Highway 16 Puget Sound	1978	Community Development	Incorporated Elected officers & board	Monthly	Work with Highway Department to beautify west entrance to Narrows Bridge.	<u>Stopped development</u> in area with inadequate drainage. Surveyed area on issues (schools, transportation, crime watch)
Peacock Hill-Crescent Valley Improvement Association	G.H. city limits Pierce County line 54th off 144th Crescent Valley Drive	1978	Single Issue	Incorporated Governing board and officers	No regularly scheduled meetings	Newsletter to keep members posted.	Plan for 48 condominiums <u>withdrawn</u> and replaced by 21 single family dwellings.
Fox Island Community and Recreation Association	Fox Island	about 1968	Community Development	Elected officers, Board appointed by officers		Sponsor community events - fair, plant sale, Halloween Party Informational meetings	Maintenance of a sense of community. Instrumental in building tennis courts.

Location Of Neighborhood Groups

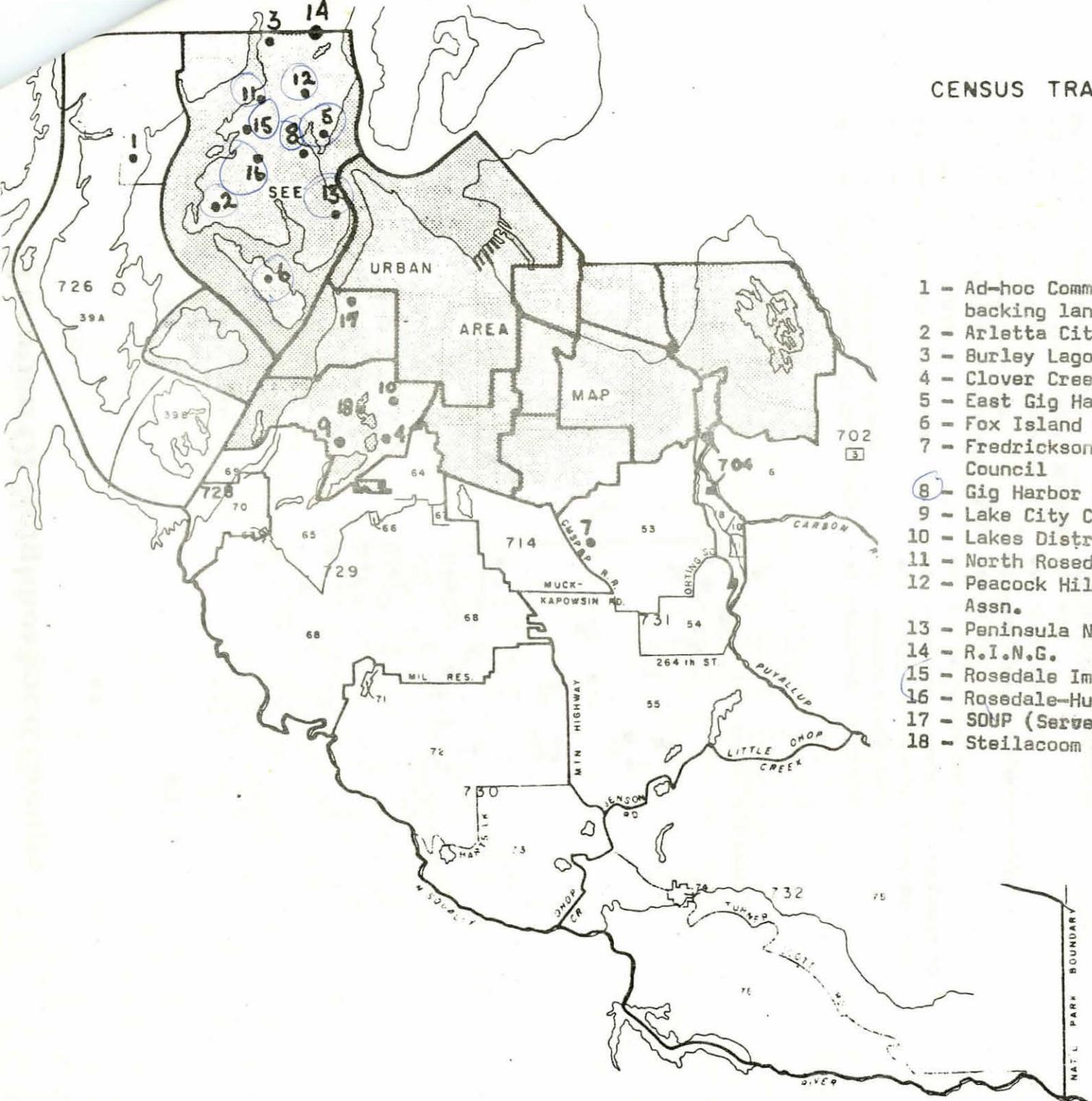


- 1 - SWAN CREEK NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION
- 2 - TITLOW LODGE RECREATION CENTER
- 3 - SMACL
- 4 - WAPATO NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION
- 5 - SHERWOOD COALITION
- 6 - CLOVERDALE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ASSN.
- 7 - EASTSIDE IMPROVEMENT GROUP
- 8 - CONCERNED CITIZENS FOR SALISHAN
- 9 - SALISHAN ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES
- 10 - OLD TOWN IMPROVEMENT CLUB
- 11 - NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICE
- 12 - BAKER ADVISORY GROUP
- 13 - NORPOINT BOOSTERS
- 14 - WEDGE ASSOCIATION
- 15 - SALMON BEACH IMPROVEMENT CLUB
- 16 - N.E. TACOMA RECREATION ASSOCIATION
- 17 - WEST SLOPE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
- 18 - SOUTHEND CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
- 19 - PEOPLES CENTER ADVISORY BOARD
- 20 - UPPER NORTH SLOPE NEIGHBORHOOD.
- 21 - WESTGATE HOMEOWNERS
- 22 - BISMARCK ACTION GROUP
- 23 - CLOVERDALE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ASSN.
- 24 - CONCERNED NEIGHBORS FOR IMPROVEMENT (CNI)
- 25 - E. 'G' ST. CITIZENS COALITION
- 26 - FAKTS
- 27 - HAWTHORNE NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP
- 28 - JENNY REED
- 29 - KAL
- 30 - MCKINLEY HILL BOOSTERS
- 31 - NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT CLUB
- 32 - THE NEIGHBORS
- 33 - SAC
- 34 - SCAM
- 35 - SOUTHEND CONCERNED CITIZENS
- 36 - STADIUM SEMINARY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMM.
- * 37 - HISTORIC TACOMA
- * 38 - SAVE OUR SHORELINES (SOS)
- 39 - OAKLAND/MADRONA IMPROVEMENT GROUP
- 40 - STEWART COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

* CITY WIDE

CENSUS TRACTS — PIERCE COUNTY

1970



- 1 - Ad-hoc Committee of Key Peninsula backing land use planning
- 2 - Arletta Citizens" Action Assn.
- 3 - Burley Lagoon Improvement Assn.
- 4 - Clover Creek Group
- 5 - East Gig Harbor Improvement Assn.
- 6 - Fox Island Community & Recreation Assn.
- 7 - Fredrickson-Clover Creek Community Council
- 8 - Gig Harbor Community Improvement Assn.
- 9 - Lake City Community Center
- 10 - Lakes District Community Council
- 11 - North Rosedale Neighborhood Assn. *Community Improvement Assn.*
- 12 - Peacock Hill-Crescent Valley Improvement Assn.
- 13 - Peninsula Narrows Residential Assn.
- 14 - R.I.N.G. *Rectify _____ N _____ G _____*
- 15 - Rosedale Improvement Club
- 16 - Rosedale-Hunt Street Residential Assn.
- 17 - SDUP (Serve Our University Place)
- 18 - Steilacoom Lake Improvement Club

NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION IN A BROADER CONTEXT

SEATTLE: In 1968 Forward Thrust Bonds funded the drafting of plans for 22 Seattle neighborhoods identified as "critical" due to rapidly deteriorating housing. An additional eleven neighborhood plans are "in the works" funded from Community Development Block Grants. Seattle's Office of Neighborhood Planning is the hub of these efforts. A planner is assigned to work with neighborhood residents and the ONP then works to get neighborhood projects into the capital improvement budget of the Public Works Department. Now that Seattle is revising its comprehensive plan, the ONP is aiming for the inclusion of certain development restrictions as part of city policy.

Director Susan Appel reports that the Office of Neighborhood Planning has survived 1981 budget cutting, retaining four of its six member staff. Although a city council member had recommended that the ONP be disbanded once its federal funds run out, sufficient pressure was brought to bear by the neighborhood people to assure ONP's continuance through 1981.

CINCINNATI, OHIO: With its hills providing precise geographic divisions, Cincinnati neighborhoods have been organized for about 50 years. Prior to World War II, the neighborhoods had an ethnic base; now, the character has become a community base with shifting and mixed ethnic composition.

In 1976, Paul Hartsock, planning consultant for Quest Research Corporation, was hired to develop a Division of Community Assistance within the city manager's office. The goal was to change the city's paternal relationship with neighborhoods into a partnership. Well-organized community groups were already in existence in 80% of the neighborhoods.

Within three years, ten of the neighborhoods had become "community redevelopment corporations", legally qualified to undertake neighborhood revitalization or rehabilitation projects. One such corporation acquired 200 deteriorated housing units in the neighborhood from the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) which they fixed up to rent to low-income people. Since the neighborhood corporation maintains the units, they have the control that is lacking when absentee landlords own low-income housing stock.

Mr Hartsock concludes that initially, the city's investment appeared sound. The one million dollars used to set up the Community Assistance Division resulted in individual neighborhood plans, and provided such services as leadership training. However, the Division failed to reach its goal of a partnership with the neighborhoods. The Division's added staff began to act independently of neighborhood groups and the various plans were not always translated into projects funded by the city budget.

A Cincinnati experiment in private funding had mixed results. The Mott Foundation provided grants totalling \$15,000 to the neighborhood organizations: \$5,000 the first year, \$4,000 the second, diminishing eventually to an annual grant of \$1,000. There were few restrictions on the grants and a variety of projects were undertaken. One neighborhood rehabilitated a donated house and sold it to fund additional projects; some funded membership drives; others staged neighborhood events and fairs. As the grants diminished, so did interest in the money's use. With changes in the neighborhood leadership, rival factions

could not agree on grant allocations.

Based on his Cincinnati experiences, Hartsock identifies self-sufficiency as the most important quality for successful neighborhood organization. A strong grassroots organization can accomplish worthwhile projects without outside funding. He cited the example of East Price Hill in Cincinnati where an environmental park was developed on donated land with volunteer labor.

The November, 1980 issue of Planning cites some lessons learned by neighborhood planners in cities across the country.

1. Neighborhood planning programs are advisory.

They don't give budgeting power to citizens and neighborhood planners. Decision-making is not decentralized. There is no assurance that plans will be implemented

2. Neighborhood groups must present a united front or they'll have no clout.

3. The trend in neighborhood planning is away from the preparation of comprehensive plans for each neighborhood in favor of specific projects with an emphasis on self-help.

NEIGHBORHOODS AND THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Action at the national level parallels that of local governments. Citizen groups lobby for neighborhood concerns and a federal agency sets up a program to respond to citizen demands. Within the federal government itself, attention to neighborhoods peaked about one and a half years ago. President Carter's Urban Policy resulted in an Office of Neighborhoods, Voluntary Agencies, and Consumer Protection (ONVACP) in the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Nationally known neighborhood activist Karen Kollias effectively lobbied Congress for the passage of the Neighborhood Self-Help Development Act. The ONVACP identifies successful neighborhood groups who then set up training programs for fledgling neighborhood organizations. Community groups can also apply directly to the federal government for funds to implement "innovative ideas" provided that the applicant group has demonstrated success in organizing and public relations.

One important lobbying group for neighborhoods is the five-year-old National Association of Neighborhoods (NAN). A national neighborhood platform was drafted at its national convention in 1979. The platform's primary issue is housing displacement. As old neighborhoods are rehabilitated, housing costs increase, forcing out low income residents. The platform also issued statements on a broad range of issues including nuclear power, tenant rights, health care, and anti-speculation taxes. NAN has set up the Neighborhood Action Coalition to lobby for its legislative program at various levels of government.

Syndicated columnist Neal Peirce, disturbed by the wide-ranging agenda of the National Association of Neighborhoods, argues that national politics is not the appropriate arena for neighborhood groups. "The strength of the neighborhood movement -its diversity and local self-reliance- is its weakness in national politics. The measure of the movement's success in the 80's may be its ability to keep its eye on the scene where its action has begun to turn so many cities around: the local turf."

SPECULATION ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD MOVEMENT

In Human Scale author Kirkpatrick Sale dreams of real democracy practiced at the neighborhood level. Economically self-sufficient communities can be developed through sharing, recycling, the development of local products and raw materials, by using general instead of specialized machines, by networking with other communities and by doing without what is not needed. Sale sees neighborhood government as the appropriate level for many decisions to be made and carried out; decisions about quiet streets and even criminal justice. Neighborhoods could govern by consensus rather than majority rule and achieve harmony by doing away with the conditions that breed disgruntled minorities.

Although a country run by networks of neighborhood governments is an improbable dream, one reads about many examples of neighborhood projects motivated by a need for cohesiveness and self-sufficiency. Among the projects are crime patrols, gardens, block clean-ups, beautification and revitalization. Some neighborhoods are becoming service providers, mini-governments whose projects range from day-care centers to music and arts festivals.

It is perhaps easier to imagine a scaled-down version of Sale's neighborhood utopia, a scenario that has been suggested by other neighborhood theorists. Neighborhoods might well become real governments, making some of those decisions now made at the city, county, and even more remote levels of government. What authority, if any, should be given neighborhood organizations? Are there decisions on such matters as street use, parks, public safety and land use that might best be made at the neighborhood level? Neighborhood government might offer what we seem to need most nowadays in relation to our government - greater trust, participation, and influence.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

According to Milton Kotler, Executive Director of the National Association of Neighborhoods, the most successful cities are those in which "the neighborhoods and city hall make love, not war." If this is so, we need to chaperone the courtship and draw up the marriage contract.

1. Should the various levels of government encourage with funds or technical assistance the development of neighborhood organizations? _____
2. Do you share Sale's dream of self-sufficient neighborhoods governing by consensus? ?
3. What, if any, decision-making should be done at the neighborhood level? ?
4. Should neighborhood participation in planning and budgeting be incorporated into official government processes? > yes
5. Do you support continued funding of Tacoma's Neighborhood Action Program? Would you like to see a comparable office within county government?

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD: based on the experiences of League member Marilyn Martinez with the Frederickson-Clover Creek Community Council.

1. Start with an issue of concern to you and your neighbors.
2. Doorbell your area. Get to know your neighbors and their concerns. Explain how a neighborhood group works. Generate their interest by indicating how a neighborhood organization might help solve their concerns.
3. Plan a meeting of all concerned parties. Advertise. Signs work well, as does word of mouth among friends and neighbors.
4. Plan the meeting well. Have a prepared agenda. Invite a speaker with expertise in neighborhood groups. A qualified speaker may be found through a local college.
5. Discuss issues affecting the area. Identify more than one concern if you want the group to continue after the One Big Issue is solved. To broaden the membership you must have an issue for everyone to identify with, be it land use, traffic problems, police protection.
6. Set up some structure: secure volunteers for a by-laws committee; define the boundaries of your neighborhood and break into districts; develop job specifications for the officers and district representatives.
7. Set the next meeting for a by-laws committee report and the election of officers and district representatives.

PRACTICAL WORDS OF WISDOM from Marilyn

Make sure that everybody has a specific job to do. Job descriptions for the officers and district representatives should be included in the by-laws. EXAMPLES: the district rep should prepare a monthly report on activities in his area that are of interest to the group. Another member can check on all meetings affecting the entire area.

Have definite meeting times. COMMUNICATION IS ONE OF THE ESSENTIALS. The board of directors or council might meet the second Thursday of the month, for example, with general meetings scheduled quarterly. This information should be included in the by-laws. The council or board meetings should be open with everyone urged to attend or to express their concerns through their district rep. GOOD COMMUNICATION IS MOST IMPORTANT!

Elect good officers.

Keep good records, including minutes and all correspondence. Taping meetings with public officials is helpful and a good future reference.

Treat all people with respect and LISTEN to their concerns regardless of how trivial they seem. In neighborhood groups you will have many people of diverse opinions and life style working together. You can meet this challenge with businesslike meetings that follow a firm agenda.

July, 1981 - June, 1982

<u>Project Title</u>	<u>Funds Recommended</u>
Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program Loan Match	\$ 150,000
McIlvaigh Community Recreation Improvements	50,000
Rubberize - Wading Pool Oakland Playground	800
Wading Pool Fencing (five pools)	1,575
Eastside Neighborhood Pool	170,000
Salishan Electrical System Renovation	100,000
Newer and Safer Bike Routes	15,000
Open Space and Sidewalks Project	1,000
Street Lighting - South 7th and 8th	3,700
Street Lighting - Stewart Neighborhood	13,000
SMACL Street and Alley Lighting	6,000
Community Services by Youth	21,219
Puget Sound Legal Assistance Foundation Housing Clinic	57,649
Tacoma Vegetable Gardens	82,500
Arch. Barrier Removal - City Parks	36,687
Carnegie Library Arch. Barrier Removal	20,000
Comprehensive Curb Ramping	64,000
Emergency Home Repair	65,554
Neighborhood Preservation Program Loans	450,000
Fort Nisqually Restoration	28,000
Restoration of the Roof of the Pagoda	26,500
YWCA Rehabilitation and Restoration	186,764
South Tacoma Business District - Rev. Loan Fund	50,000
Jenny Reed Open Space Acquisition	55,300
Ruston Way Riprap and Improvements/Marine Park	50,000
Open Space Acquisition	70,000
LID Participation (Streets)	200,000
Section 108 Loan Loss Reserve	100,000
UPS Law Center Loan Interest	200,000
Unspecified Local Option	50,000
Neighborhood Action Program	73,337
Neighborhood Preservation Program	282,666
Administration Planning Economic Development and Historic Preservation	821,443
TOTAL	<u>3,502,000</u>

The Urban Policy Committee has made its final recommendations for projects to be funded in the seventh year of the Community Development Block Grant program in Tacoma.

The Committee has recommended 30 projects ranging from housing improvement loans to neighborhood recreation facilities to street improvements and business loans. The City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed Community Development application on January 27, 1981 at 6 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, first floor, 740 St. Helens Avenue. The Council is expected to approve the final application for \$3,502,000 in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds the first week in February.

The application will be submitted to HUD by the end of March. Funds will be available in July to implement the approved projects.

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INTERVIEWS

Susan Appel, Director of Office of Neighborhood Planning, Community Development Department, Seattle.

Linda Bowman, Eastside Improvement Group, United Neighborhoods of Tacoma, Urban Policy Committee.

Rebecca Davis and Elton Gatewood, Staff, Neighborhood Action Program, Community Development Department, Tacoma.

Paul Hartsock, President, Quest Research Corp., Seattle, Wa. and Cincinnati, Ohio.

Wesley Pruitt, Peninsula-Narrows Residential Association, United Peninsula People.

John Rieber, Planning and Evaluations Manager, Department of Human Development, Tacoma.

Edward Sheridan, Former Director of Community Organization and Development Department, Continuing Education, University of Washington.

Telephone interviews with leaders of neighborhood groups in Tacoma and Pierce County.