The Double Meaning of Community Building in Cedar-Riverside:
Report on the Dania Partners Planning Process

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Over the past year and a half the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood has pursued an ambitious and innovative process. The goal is to unite a multi-ethnic neighborhood around the goal of replacing the historic Dania Hall—a community building that served the neighborhood's earliest immigrants and tragically burned down in early 2000.

The phrase community building has two applications in this context. In one application it is about creating a physical space. Dania Partners—the coalition of neighborhood groups leading the process—is focused on building a building that will be owned and used by the community. In the other application, the coalition members are engaged in community building as the process of building stronger relationships across the neighborhood's ethnic groups that include people of Somali, Ethiopian, Oromo, Korean, Vietnamese, and white American descent.

It is a highly unusual project, for which few models exist. Consequently, the process has experienced some interesting twists and turns.

About this Report

This report is based on my observations of some Dania Partners meetings from the very beginning of the process in August of 2007 through December of 2008, along with analysis of meeting minutes, and interviews with eight of the nine core participants of the process. I used a participatory evaluation process where participants reviewed the main evaluation questions guiding this research, and a participant validation process where participants reviewed the information in this report to add and correct information. The main questions asked participants to reflect on what they saw as the most significant events were in the history of the process, what worked well or not so well, what they would keep or change in the next stage of the process, and what lessons they took away from the experience. All of those who participated in the interviews were pleased with the outcomes, and most also had constructive critiques.

The report is divided into the following sections:

- background
- managing the process
- relationship and individual development
- moving toward the future

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3 See Murphy, Elizabeth, and Robert Dingwall. 2003.Qualitative Methods and Health Policy Research. Aldine Transaction,
A. Background

The entire process lasted from about August of 2007 through January of 2009. But it was not a single process. It started out with wide possibilities as the partners imagined not just the future of the physical building, but of the community itself. That, along with the urging of some participants to pursue direct action goals, led to Dania Partners' involvement in issues requiring intensive community organizing. But the group lacked clarity about leadership roles for doing that initial community organizing, and internal communication breakdowns led to conflict among group members.

The internal conflict suspended the process in late 2007. The process for overcoming the conflict, described below, provided a turning point for the process. Dania Partners narrowed their scope back to Dania Hall, refocused their process on building stronger relationships among themselves, and reset their strategy to emphasize planning and education rather than direct action.

In early 2008 one member conducted interviews with the others to build relationships, learn more about the breakdown that led to the conflict, and assess their degree of commitment to restarting the process. Then in March a small group presented a proposal for a leadership core group—a subset of Dania Partners members who would commit to regular meetings through the planning process, supported by small stipends, and report to the other members. In May the process restarted. The plan was to have 6-8 weeks of meetings, but the process went well beyond that draft timeline. The result is a plan for how to engage the Cedar-Riverside communities in the process of designing and achieving a community building that also builds the leadership capacity of those community members and strengthens relationships between them. It is a plan to build a community while building a building.

B. Managing the process

After the initial conflict, it took some time to gain the momentum needed for people to feel like the process was really going somewhere. To some extent, the group was feeling their way, not completely sure of how to proceed. But, gradually, they built confidence in themselves and each other.

Attendance increased over time. At the beginning of the core group not everyone was there all the time, but we just kept at it. Then they came back. Then they realized they were making decisions.

The strategy for achieving that commitment and a complete plan contains a number of important lessons:

- Choosing stakeholders
- Establishing incentives
- Staff Support
- Pacing
- Leading with ideas
- Community education

They were not all articulated from the beginning of the process, but have emerged as the crucial decisions and tasks that needed to be accomplished.
Choosing stakeholders

Central to the task of creating a plan that would build a building and a community was deciding who the stakeholders would be. The neighborhood has a three-decade reputation for internal dissension, and any consideration of stakeholders for any planning process includes some discussion of who the political enemies are, particularly among the older white residents. Powerful institutional players, including a major hospital complex, the University of Minnesota, and a private college are also pressing on the neighborhood. But the most important consideration was the inclusion of members from new immigrant communities in the neighborhood, who now probably constitute a majority of the neighborhood’s residents. Among those community members, the resultant process involved those most interested in the rebuilding of Dania Hall, and with the greatest capacity to participate. This was a logical starting group, since the plan they were creating focused on involving neighborhood residents in designing the building. That focus, along with the fact that some groups lacked the capacity to participate, meant that some potential stakeholders were not involved as much as some participants wished. Three participants illustrate the complexity involved in considering which stakeholders to recruit and how to involve them:

We missed several stakeholders who could not attend the meetings--Oromo community, Bedlam Theater, Brian Coyle Center, Korean community. Maybe we should have tried to put them in even if it was after we started. [but] Some people don't like to join after something starts.... U of M, the hospital and others were not part of the process. Was it not yet time? Perhaps we should get in touch with them.... We need to get buy-in from those who were not at the table and have leaders sell it to their people. Maybe take the plan to them. Maybe another one-on-one round from the people who were involved. Maybe they were skeptical and if they see a real plan they might join.

...nonprofit organizations need to be represented.... We need to consult the neighborhood and powerful folks, but not worry about them.

I would suggest involving all the people who might use [Dania] to participate. And get all their ideas. When two different ideas come, mediate and say this is good because of this and it's not good because of that and they will get the solution.

The lack of participation from some ethnic groups was not for lack of trying. As another participant notes, “there was a big push early on that we need immigrant groups to show up.” But it is difficult for people of any ethnic group to have faith that a planning process will lead to more than a plan that ends up on a shelf. In addition, such a planning process seems especially unfamiliar to many ethnic group members. So the Dania Partners core leadership group strategy was designed to achieve a consistent group of participants who could imagine the value of a planning process and see it through to the end. And that group included five members from the neighborhood's international immigrants and four white residents.

There is, of course, the danger that such a core group strategy could isolate the planning group. Early
on, the hope was that core group members would reach out regularly to other groups in the neighborhood to keep them informed, but that did not succeed.

One thing we didn't do was for everyone to have a partner and tell them what was going on and for the most part that didn't happen. Doing it every once in a while would have helped.

The fallback strategy was to present the draft plan to the full Dania Partners membership for feedback and fine tuning. The core group organized a meeting of the broader partnership in January of 2009, at the African Development Corporation, and the group unanimously approved the draft plan.

**Establishing Incentives: Stipends and Breakfast**

To promote involvement, the participants chose to distribute small stipends of $70 per meeting to members who attended each meeting. In some cases the stipends could compensate a participant's organization for its contribution of a staff member to the process. But it was mostly designed as a symbolic recognition. Three participants reacted to the stipend strategy:

- Stipends helped motivate me to attend--it makes one more responsible.
- I wonder what role the stipends played. It wasn't enough to get some people to come.
- The stipends are largely symbolic, but are still meaningful.

And while the stipends seemed to play some role in supporting participation, participants actually had more to say about the breakfast meetings. The Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, particularly among its white residents, has a history of evening meetings that would sometimes run late into the night. This time, in an historical departure, the group found that 8:30 in the morning was the most available time to meet. These meetings, held in the meeting room of the African Development Corporation and facilitated by West Bank CDC staff, were accompanied by high quality quiche, muffins, fruit, juice, and coffee. Five people commented on the breakfast, and the one person who did not find the meeting time convenient nonetheless noted the social benefit of sharing breakfast.

- Breakfast together provided a social aspect. The early time--I had to start work late. End of day could have worked better.... [but the] location was good.
- [I liked] the consistency of meeting time, breakfast, location. It becomes routine.
- Breakfast is working great. It really seems to bring people in.
- I don't know if it was the quiche or the 8 am meeting. It was the regularity of it, and having it in ADC's office. We went to a two-week schedule. Morning meetings worked out better for this group.
Breakfast, definitely everybody appreciated. Just feeling the next time would be the same was really good. The time seemed to have everyone attending. The first time we started at 8 and people said "it's rush hour and difficult" so we extended it a half hour. For me one or two days it became a bit hectic but other days it was OK.

**Staff support**

There is a myth still popular in mainstream American culture that community development should somehow be built on a wholly voluntary foundation. But it's just not the case. The people who can attend the necessary meetings are often there because their jobs and organizations support their involvement. Some organizations also provide staff support. Even sending out reminders of meetings is often neglected unless some organization adds that task to a staff member's workload. In this case the West Bank CDC staff sent out reminders along with minutes, and two of the core group members noted the importance of that support.

Reminders of meetings helped us remember.

Debbie taking notes and sending them back [was important].

Also neglected in mainstream understanding of community development that emphasizes diversity is the lack of support for minority groups to truly participate. Minority and immigrant organizations and community members are often the lowest resourced both in terms of time and money to participate, and having strong support that makes participation as painless and fruitful as possible is more important than most understand. In addition, so many superficially participatory processes do not try to build the relationships needed to truly reach across racial/ethnic divides and assure participants that their involvement will matter. One of the white participants articulates an understanding of the situation.

When I think of what worked really well I think of the CDC's leadership role…. Just having a really competent staff [was important].... skilled staff doing the leg work, rather than volunteers. There are too many demands on the immigrant leadership. [The CDC has] been able to engage groups that don't have capacity without putting more burden on their already overburdened structures. It's saying "come be involved, but you're not going to have to spend five hours a week of staff time.” These people keep getting asked and it's just take, take, take. And this process hasn't been like that and I really appreciate it. It's not that people don't want to be involved, it's the resources. People are so hungry to get input, but say "send someone." People get tired of getting asked. This is not some outside entity coming in. The CDC has better contacts [than city or police], and worked to build relationships.

**Pacing**

How fast should such a process go? The group chose to meet every other week, initially thinking that 6-8 weeks should allow them to reach a conclusion. The process ultimately took significantly longer,
actually closer to 8 months. Even then, they were not able to plan with quite the depth they would have ideally preferred.

Because we spent so much time [dealing with conflict], we had pressure, we didn't have time to do more research on alternatives. We would have used students but didn't have time. We know something about alternatives, fortunately.

Interestingly, not one participant mentioned that initial timeline during interviews. Three people did mention that the process seemed too long, but they all noted that having a quality process was also important. And while the third participant in the collection of quotes below ascribes concerns about the length of the process to cultural differences, it is important to note that one of the quotes is from a white participant.

The process is a little bit too slow--could have pushed a bit faster. But it's a double edged sword. Push too fast and you leave people behind. I want to push the process more for the actual development.

The downside for me is my own downfall, and that is the [length of the] process.

Some people said the time of discussion from the day we started to the day we finished was a long time. The discussion of hopes, fears, what we expected; some people said it's a long time and some said it's a waste of time. This is mostly a cultural difference.

There was also an appreciation, from one participant, of the need to be flexible in the timeline:

The pace has been perfect. The last time we thought we were wrapping up but Tim did the presentation and then it was clear we weren't done and everyone was fine with that.

Indeed, in the meetings I observed, it was interesting how engaged people were in adjusting the plan from meeting to meeting. No one asked for wholesale revisions, but they went deeper into detail, drawing out the implications of specific strategies and their possible unintended side effects, engaging in reasoned debate, and adding adjustments. No one seemed interested in prematurely agreeing to a superficial incomplete plan.

Leading with ideas

One of the difficulties in community-based planning is how to start from nothing, with people who may lack experience with participatory planning processes. Completely open-ended processes can allow the group to make choices that will sometimes lead to disaster. But too much direction from experienced leaders or staff can stifle the group's imagination. Finding the magic balance of guidance and open creativity can be elusive indeed. In the early days of the planning process, the lack of guidance, and the presence of strong interests, led the group into conflict. At that point, the group began turning to a planning strategy practiced in the successful 1980s redevelopment of the
that neighborhood, with the leadership of Tim Mungavan.

"At first I resisted my impulse to provide strong leadership in the group. And maybe it wouldn't have worked then. But after the process went off the cliff, I decided to step up my active leadership. I had led many physical planning processes in the past and could draw on that experience to help lead the partners group through to a productive conclusion."4

That strategy involved the presentation of abstract ideas and principles—diagramming out various ways that Dania Partners could involve the community and reach a successful construction project. Sometimes it involved presenting more than one model for groups to compare. At other times it involved presenting a single broad model, and facilitating a discussion on each piece of the model. The models are general enough that people can interpret them differently, and those interpretations then lead to specific plans. Four participants describe their reactions to the process.

One team developed ideas and brought them back to the groups. It gave us a sense of direction.... Discussion of what model to use was really important—that worked really well.

Tim's powerpoints and his historical perspective [was important]. It would be our downfall to not take that into account. It really had the effect of looking outside of the box. When we have something formal written down we can debate and not have to start from nothing. There are times when you have to have a blank sheet, but this time around having Tim present the steps of the process was helpful. At the beginning it may have worked to have a blank sheet but we are beyond that now.

There was lots of collaboration and input on how to engage the community.

[the use of diagramming] was an invitation to talk more openly... It did pick up when we used the diagrams. The turning point was that diagramming started organizing ideas and people could say what they liked and didn't like....

Of course, this is a method that is easy to abuse, as such diagramming can just as easily limit people's imagination as encourage it. The reason this method has worked in Cedar-Riverside is that the diagrams are about strategies that most people say could never work. That is in stark contrast to the way that bureaucratic planners operate—starting with the diagram of the way it is supposed to be done according to a government or corporation's rules. Presenting a diagram that is contrary to people's normal experience supports them to get even more creative, and in these meetings they did. In some cases participants started looking for parts of the diagrams that looked like standard practice—such as placing a governmental approval process above a neighborhood approval process in one diagram—and

4 Quote identified with permission.
started their brainstorming from critiques of those aspects of the model.

**Community education**

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of managing the planning process was the education that went with it. Using the Cedar-Riverside “leading by ideas” planning process requires participants who are well educated in the issues and context of the community. The value of this education to the participants took some of us a bit by surprise, myself included. One participant notes that:

> Going back and talking about what happened in the neighborhood worked better than I thought.

I helped facilitate the kickoff meeting, and I recall that one of the feedback comments from that meeting came from two people who thought I would talk more about the history of the neighborhood. In retrospect, seeing how the same planning principles and methods that worked in the 1970s and 1980s could be applied nearly three decades later, I wish I would have talked more about the neighborhood history at the beginning. But thankfully more of that history came up over time.

> [it was good to have] Randy's involvement--a sociological background to guide us. We got a scholarly perspective so we were not just operating on our own.

> [one lesson is to] have an outsider to observe and guide.

Most of that education occurred without my involvement, and about more than the history of the neighborhood. In some meetings there were long digressions—or at least that is what I thought at the time—into other neighborhood issues such as youth violence. But no one complained about those discussions in the interviews, and one person spoke of its value.

> Learning more about the neighborhood and key stakeholders [was helpful]. This was a forum for the general community ideas and news. So we got the idea we had common goals and concerns.... I learned a lot--about stakeholders and the richness of the neighborhood. Also to be patient and see the bigger picture. We are all under pressure so seeing the bigger picture helped.

Two other aspects of the education process involved studying different forms of community involvement in architectural decision-making, and a discussion of leadership cultures and structures in the neighborhood's ethnic communities. The cross-cultural discussion was highly valued, as we will see in the next section. But at least one person was surprised by what they learned from the architectural decision-making discussion.

> We didn't expect how to learn how well the downtown library design engaged youth. The idea of having a youth-designed space is really useful.
C. Relationship and Individual Development

Along with the development of a plan to both build a building and build a community is the fact that the participants built their own sense of community along the way. At least three people felt like they built enough trust to participate honestly

[an important outcome was] sharing of opinions and ideas about the future of the community and neighborhood--the fact that stakeholders came together. Some of us hardly ever met before this. Discussions and openness was good--there was lots of room for people to express their opinions.

Sometimes people don't speak their mind [at the beginning]. But now people are comfortable to say what's on their mind.

Most important was almost completing the ideas, and coming together to discuss the ideas. But how people are discussing, not imitating others, [and] respecting others, was most important. I never saw two people just confronting [but instead] discussing in a very professional manner.

Five people spoke of the importance of the relationships they developed through this process,

I really think the most important thing is, one, we came to know each other better in the sense of style and background and thought process. We also realized we want the same thing. The best thing is at least we stayed together--it's a more cohesive group.... [in the future] I would take time to get to know one another and take time to set goals--maybe 2-3 meetings to get to know each other. We could deal with the culture of expectations--how to deal with a meeting, the culture of our organizations.... Learn about people's families and then they become more human to you. Then when things get tough you have trust.... I would have had those [getting to know each other] sessions.

I have absolutely loved that the group working on a problem together has meant that I got to know people. There's a certain camaraderie and we're working towards a common goal. I think we're gonna do it.

What has kept me in is the people.

Of all the things I've been involved in it really feels like there's more like glue or cohesion [with this group]. I feel like we're really building cohesion among people coming to the meetings. That's like the Holy Grail of the neighborhood. This is really unparalleled. I have a lot of confidence that we are achieving what Dania Partners set out to do. I ran into [another participant] and we're so happy to see each other and that just says loads about what a positive process this has been.... It's so important too for the neighborhood to be involved in something positive.
What's really surprised me about this is the relationship building within these groups. It may have saved the Coalition.\textsuperscript{5} [another participant] was able to bring forward a couple of board members for election.

One of the really good outcomes is the development of the deeper relationships. I think we have moved a little further in terms of working together.

Such relationships, involving people with dramatically different backgrounds and life experiences, do not come without significant commitment. They also do not come without working through the conflicts inherent in developing truly strong relationships. This section will explore how individuals and relationships developed through:

- conflict management
- building understanding across race and ethnicity
- leadership development

\textit{Conflict management}

The conflict that brought the opportunity to build stronger relationships came early in the process. In that sense, it was unusual. Such conflicts usually don't erupt until a process is further along, as small frustrations begin to add up, and participants become more willing to be more honest with each other. But some of these participants had already been working with each other in other venues. Indeed, in the early meetings, when I asked if everyone felt confident enough in their relationships with each other to move into community action at such an early stage, participants seemed to believe that they did have strong enough relationships. But they were perhaps not strong enough. And for a couple of participants, there was at least one strong personality that the group was not initially prepared to deal with.

At first, we had a strong personality who had their own agenda. But that person left. The weakness was that someone like that could come in and sort of derail the meeting. The group was a little too susceptible to that. The way we work now is fantastic. With that strong personality we didn't find a way to stop that person from derailing us. In the group now that's not an issue.

In addition, the group was guided by a sense of urgency in the early days. Neighboring business owners were encroaching on the space occupied by Dania Hall, the city was releasing plans for a light rail station that would have served the neighborhood poorly, and gun violence had escalated. All of this created a volatile context.

In the early stage of Dania Partners part of our dilemma was that the external climate was full of land mines. There were many things that seemed important that we respond to. It caused us to overlap our identities and mixed up our identities and concerns. And we were in a

\textsuperscript{5} This refers to the West Bank Community Coalition—a community participation organization in the neighborhood.
putting out fires mode and we stretched ourselves thin. Everyone had their own level of stress.

The pressure from one participant to act quickly, and the interests of other participants to do something beyond planning, led to an attempt to confront one of the encroaching businesses. But the need to act quickly, an absence of the necessary strong internal relationships, and the lack of a leadership structure designed for effective community organizing left one participant in the position of facing a meeting virtually alone. That participant confronted the group and suspended their involvement in Dania Partners. At the time, it felt disastrous, and Dania Partners itself suspended its process.

When that whole thing happened I was just so surprised. Whenever you deal with a different culture, there are those moments.

In a community less used to conflict, the story probably would have ended there. But this conflict occurred in a neighborhood that is so often maligned for its greatest strength—its ability to weather its internal conflicts and move on to great accomplishments. This was familiar territory for at least some of the participants. But in contrast to the “old days” where it would have been a knock-down drag-out fight, Dania Partners chose a different strategy. They chose one of their members, Anne Gomez, who was seen as somewhat outside of the conflict, to interview each of the others. The purpose was to understand the sources of the conflict, and to assess participants' interest and commitment to continuing. That strategy provided a dramatic turning point. Not only did it bring out into the open issues of racial/ethnic inequality among the partners, but it also brought out people's continuing commitment to making the process work. Five people commented on the value of that process, and even the one person who was skeptical of it admitted “Maybe that process was necessary to get everyone back on track.”

That meeting where the group decided to deal with the encroachment issue and the subsequent breakdown was very key. I think the response was good. Anne's work talking to people individually...also forced people to show their hand. Conflict does allow you to see people's character. Anne's approach let people say they were committed to it....Adjustment to the breakdown was informative. We asked should we keep going. It elicited a recommitment. Then we identified a core group. We identified expectations.

The main value of the thing with Anne was that it showed a real commitment.

Talking to everyone [about the conflict] helped reassure people. I don't know exactly what helped that along but there seemed to be a certain healing in that process.

One person who commented also saw the process as an invitation to participate.

The initial idea of talking to people individually--when Anne came and talked to me [was important].... E-mail would not have brought me--I needed the personal invite.... It made sense [to shift from issue work].
Issues can polarize and sidetrack, so shifting to planning worked fine for me.

This sense of personal invitation may have been the key quality of the process. The one to one interviews shifted the process from one that had been operating at a relatively superficial level to one of personal conversations and invitations. The participants began committing to both the process and to each other.

**Building understanding across race and ethnicity**

The opportunity provided by the early conflict led Dania Partners core group members on a path toward deeper involvement with each other. And any time a group of ethnically and racially diverse people come together, racial/ethnic differences are a piece of the interaction. For at least one person, the group has made significant strides in its effort toward cross-cultural understanding.

The most important lessons are how to engage the immigrant community. I have not seen any other group in this neighborhood get this kind of participation. Going to the leadership in the mosque was critical. [it's] important to understand the structure of the community they are dealing with. It will be different in different cultures. It is learn as you go--you can't pick up a book at the library--connect with the cultural centers of the community. When we first started we thought people would just come to us. I wish I'd gone earlier to connect with them. There's hierarchy and structure there. As the outsider it's hard to penetrate, particularly if you don't speak the language.

One of the most successful ways that Dania Partners moved toward cross-cultural understanding was at one meeting where they discussed different ethnic leadership models. A number of people noted this meeting, and two in particular saw it as very important.

We had a really good meeting talking about the leadership of the immigrant community.

When we directly addressed the question of how decisions get made in the Somali community, that was really important.... That time in the process where people started to open up and discuss their culture seemed like a very important part of the process.

The hardest part of the process—the beginning of a discussion of racial/ethnic differences—has been overcome. And at least two people are looking forward to the next hardest part of the process—deepening the discussion.

Have a race discussion--how it manifests in public policy, employment, relationships in the community. The old Coalition by-laws 6 was a very

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6 This refers to the West Bank Community Coalition, which used to have a policy allowing only token representation from Riverside Plaza, the enormous apartment complex in the neighborhood with a large Somali population.
racist policy but it was never called that. Name it and then you own it.

One thing that came up that was in the report [about the early conflict] and not addressed was race.... [it's] difficult to bring race up. We need to do this for discussions to be fully engaged. A mistake is to think that level will come naturally. It may be early in the process. We've come quite far but in the back of my mind because we didn't challenge it or dissect [the race issue] there is a bit of a nagging.... In the next phase it's important to look at the race issue and invite it into the process, such as how responsibilities are delegated.

Leadership development

Along with a continuing discussion on race, one of the other issues facing Dania Partners is deepening their leadership development process. Four participants from immigrant backgrounds have already noted some success in leadership development.

Empowerment of neighborhood organizations and leaders.... [and] Tools to navigate the system [were positive outcomes].

This is my first experience [with this kind of planning]. It was a very outstanding experience. Now that I have that experience if I do a similar program I will have a good example.

Now people also realize they have power to make change. Each person is powerful in their own way.

What went well is there seemed to have emerged a committed group that could possibly form leadership for the next phase.

Two of those participants also reflected on ways that Dania Partners can move toward further leadership development in the next stages.

Some people have a long time here and some are new. People assume one ought to know this or that....

It still has not reached a point where individuals feel confident leading part of the process, which is natural.... There is a lot of burden on a few individuals to lead. It may be the race dynamic. One thing we are taught to do in group facilitation is that even people who don't perceive themselves as racist but are part of racist culture [can support racism], so a person of color and a white person are paired as facilitators with the white person playing a supporting role.... Distributing leadership is not merely a process of delegating, but of mentoring and inviting. In the neighborhood people are asked to play leadership roles but there are not often common understandings of what that means. It is difficult to articulate this in a mixed group. Is there a way to make the meetings more multicultural?
D. Moving Toward The Future

Now comes the exciting part—implementing the plan throughout the community. The participants are looking forward to the future with a sense of optimism. The planning process has given participants hope that they can actually succeed at building both a building and a community.

If city planners and funders see what we have gone through and see different stakeholders they may listen more keenly.... This process addressed the voice of the immigrants--people not usually heard. The intention was good. There is [usually] skepticism that the mainstream will just do what they want.

If Dania goes up and we have a building and it's what the community wants that will be a lesson.

As participants reflected on how to achieve that future, they seemed to focus on two themes:

- addressing future conflict
- maintaining continuity

Addressing future conflict

There are conflicts for the group to confront in the future. Three participants focused on the possibility for conflict around the question of who will own the building, and how that question will be resolved.

One little fear--there is some potential for conflict around use or who owns it. I hope we are proactive about that and don't let it polarize us.

I think one of the big sales points is how the building will be owned and we need to get onto that. I think we really need to solve the problem of ownership.

Some people might want to go directly to the ownership issue, but [it may be too soon for that].

There may be other, as yet unpredicted, conflicts. For at least one participant, the group needs to continue to hone its conflict management skills.

At some point in the process [we need] a freer exchange of ideas. It's still very polite. Disagreement still has to sometimes be read into what people are saying. Sometimes groups need to learn how to disagree or challenge an opinion because there are lots of things they may overlook if they don't do that. People new to the process have good ideas but they also have self-doubt.... If we don't move to the next level of relationship, we may not be strong enough. It's not just race, but culture, religion, immigration.
Maintaining Continuity

Another question on participants' minds is what Dania Partners, and particularly the core group, does now that they have fulfilled their initial mandate. There is a sense of success among participants. For one person,

Overall I'm thrilled to be part of it. I'm part of a number of groups and this is the one I feel best about.

At least three people found the experience powerful enough that they want to continue meeting. For one participant, the cohesion is necessary for the Dania Hall project.

...if we stay together we can do this.

The other two can also imagine a linked reason to keep meeting.

I will really feel bad if we don't meet anymore. I wish we could start working on some other problems. The first thing that comes to mind is we have a real youth problem.... We need confidence in the fact that Dania's time has come. I hope we can keep working together.

The neighborhood should be safe or otherwise nobody will use [Dania]. It is better if before it is built the area should be a safe area. So I think safety is first.

Conclusion

This process took much longer than anyone expected. It nearly failed before it really got started. The fact that it did not fail is evidence of the strength of this newly developing multi-ethnic community. New strategies of conflict management are being added to old strategies of participatory planning. New international perspectives are being integrated with alternative community development models. And there are still new lessons to be learned.

In some ways, Dania Partners has now reached the beginning. They are ready to move from a relatively safe core group with strong relationships, to the next challenge of building relationships to the rest of Dania Partners and then to the communities of Cedar-Riverside. I hope this report may shed some light on what they have done so that they may take their next steps with even greater confidence and clarity.