

The meeting started off with PolicyLink explaining their organization and role. They are a national social and economic equity research and advocacy organization. They work with neighborhoods and communities across the country around the principle of “Lifting Up What Works.” They have volunteered to work with the Green Impact Zone to help develop a strategic plan, develop an organizational structure, assist in identifying resources, and assist in identifying other projects from around the country that have addressed similar issues.

Angela Glover Blackwell of PolicyLink laid out the broad outlines of the challenges and opportunities that every community, including the Green Impact Zone, confronts when undertaking community building. She spoke about how a community builds a shared framework for change.

Radhika Fox of PolicyLink then provided an overview of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the opportunities and challenges presented by the act. Although much of the funds flow through existing programs that rely on the old ways of doing business there are a lot of opportunities to use these funds to develop innovative approaches to community building.

Marc Philpart of PolicyLink reviewed five recent projects that have been successful in redeveloping communities. The common elements of these projects that the Green Impact Zone can learn from include:

- ❖ They were creative – do not let the rules get in the way
- ❖ They were well funded – it does take money to foster community transformation
- ❖ They were disciplined
- ❖ They were innovative
- ❖ They all entered community building through a different door

(These opening remarks by PolicyLink are summarized in a companion PowerPoint in pdf format.)

Following the PolicyLink opening remarks Angela Glover Blackwell guided a conversation about the Green Impact Zone; expectations, challenges, organization, vision, and strategy. Following is a summary of the comments that came out of this discussion:

- ❖ We need to focus on 4-5 big things
 - ◆ Such as economic viability of families and individuals
 - Individuals need skills
 - Need access to jobs
 - Need a living wage
 - Need infrastructure for economic development within the zone
 - ◆ Concern about creating sustainable jobs as opposed to short-term jobs
 - Emerald Cities program may be a model to explore
 - ◆ Need a market for green jobs
- ❖ We need to connect to regional economic activity
- ❖ How do we connect all of the existing programs
- ❖ Existing programs and their rules are barriers to innovation
- ❖ We need to improve the environment of the community to make it attractive to live in
- ❖ We need to find out how residents define success
- ❖ We need rooftops to get businesses – we need positive marketing of the area

- ❖ The community has done a lot, but now needs to move to the next level of development of housing and businesses in the zone
- ❖ All level of bureaucrats need to interpret requests as “yes”
- ❖ The Green Impact Zone needs to serve current residents, but also bring in new residents – depopulation is a big issue
- ❖ The specter of gentrification is sometimes used as an excuse not to invest in the community – just need policies to deal with this upfront
- ❖ We need new policies as much as programs – and the policies need to be enforced
- ❖ We need gap funds to fill holes that are not covered by federal funds – this means foundations and businesses
- ❖ The Green Impact Zone should consider operating the weatherization program
 - ◆ One thing that can be drawn from the above comments is that the Green Impact Zone is facing challenges similar to what other communities face. What is needed is a vision around economic viability, need to address sustainability of neighborhood over long-term, how to support innovation and policy, how to attract new residents while keeping the current ones and lifting them up, and bring people and programs together. A sharp vision, sharp strategy, and the right people can really make a difference

The Green Impact Zone needs some early victories. This could be a weatherization program run by the zone, green jobs using Pathways out of Poverty funds, or the development of specific strategies for funding, outreach (draft already exists), workforce development, entrepreneurship.

Based on the above discussion Angela Glover Blackwell suggested seven steps for the Green Impact Zone to follow:

- ❖ **Develop a shared vision – this needs to be shared by the neighborhood leadership, residents, the Coordinating Council, stakeholders. It is not necessary to spend a lot of time on this.**
- ❖ **Build partnerships and buy-in**
- ❖ **Identify needs and resources – what needs to be changed to be effective**
- ❖ **Develop a credible leadership structure – need to build in collaboration**
- ❖ **Develop a set of benchmarks and indicators for everyone to use and track – evidence based programs and continuous evaluation and adjustment are critical**
- ❖ **Identify policy changes that will support a new way of doing things – this is a way to get things done without a lot of funds. The Citizen Housing Committee may be a place to start.**
- ❖ **Create buzz**

The Coordinating Council agreed this was an excellent agenda for the Green Impact Zone and that we should start by developing a shared vision, along with outcomes and a few initial projects to begin with. The whole thing should be able to be presented in no more than a couple of pages.

Stakeholders should include the private sector employers. We also need to think about what the role should be of businesses, in and out of the zone, in the Green Impact Zone. We also need to define what we mean by “Green.”