



NACEDA Inaugural Summit, March 2007
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www.community-wealth.org

Empowering Communities: Policy Strategies & Tools for Community Economic Development

The newly formed National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA) held its first annual public policy forum on March 12-14, 2007, in Washington, D.C. NACEDA was created by leaders of state community economic development associations who hope to build a new group that effectively represents the interests of community development corporations and their allies at the national level. Last summer, the National Congress for Community Economic Development (NCCED), one of the nation's oldest community development associations, shut its doors. NACEDA arose in large measure to fill the void that NCCED's departure from the scene had left.

Roughly 125 people were in attendance, including staff, Board members, and invited guests from intermediaries, research organizations, and financial institutions. Diane Sterner, Chair of NACEDA and head of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, opened the conference. Presenters and roundtable leaders at the conference included Ellen Lazar of the Fannie Mae Foundation; Sheila Crowley of the National Low-Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC); Steve Tuminaro of NeighborWorks America; Buzz Roberts of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation; Ali Solis of Enterprise Community Partners; Joe Beldon, Housing Assistance Council; Garth Rieman of National Council of State Housing Finance Agencies; Marcia Sigal from the Council of State Community Development Agencies; Josh Silver of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition; and Carol Wayman of the Corporation for Enterprise Development.

Discussion at the forum addressed both current policy issues (such as rural development, Housing & Urban Development funded-programs, predatory lending legislation, and asset development) as well as broader issues regarding the state of the community development movement.

A central focus of the conference was on peer support and training. Specific peer groups were organized to discuss fundraising, state policy, membership support and assistance, and governance. NACEDA also developed an initial set of policy papers calling for more responsive funding for key programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG); HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME); Rural Community Development; Section 504 Very Low Income Repair Program; Section 523 Self-Help TA Program; Section 515 Rental Direct Housing; Section 502 Single Family Direct Loans; Rural Development Utilities and Business; Direct Community Grants; Rural Preservation Demonstration; and Rural Preservation Revolving Loans.

As for the broader discussion, Roland Anglin of Rutgers University (and formerly of the Ford Foundation and SeedCo) gave the keynote address to open discussion on the broad challenges facing community wealth builders. Anglin noted that typically debates centered on issues such as whether community economic development is a movement or an industry or whether CDCs can succeed in their difficult environment. But for Anglin, “the biggest challenge CDCs face is from globalization, and specifically from the immigration brought about by globalization... CDCs must embrace new groups by embracing their cultures.” Anglin also called on greater attention to be paid to recruiting new activists to the movement: “[We need to] put in place the path so that a young person who wants to come into our field can succeed. I think of our work as passion helping communities and people.” Anglin concluded by noting that, while community development is a strong field, this actually increases the need for tough internal questioning: “We should celebrate it by asking questions about it.”

Harold Simon of the National Housing Institute (publisher of *Shelterforce*) moderated a panel that followed up on Anglin’s remarks. Bernie Mazyck of the South Carolina Association of CDCs called for stronger university support for the study of community wealth building. “Just one university has a terminal degree in community economic development,” Mazyck noted. “If we are all that and a bag of beans, can’t we do better than that?” Lisa Hasegawa of the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development (National CAPACD), talked about her group’s work with immigrant communities. “We need to bring together the knowledge of the community economic development field and energy of immigrant neighborhoods movements,” Hasegawa said, “The challenge for our organization is to partner [many different Asian communities] together to be a stronger collective without having competition for funding turn into a zero-sum game.” Kim Burnett of the Surdna Foundation spoke about the relationship between community economic development and environmentalism. “Cities, community development, and smart growth are connected,” Burnett said. “Community development grounds smart growth in people and place; equitable development is what community economic development is about.” Joe McNeely, founder of the Development Training Institute, focused on the need for racial inclusion and coalition building: “We never honestly addressed the issue of race ... we never faced up within to the racial politics among ourselves. Too often, we practice coalition by subtraction.”

Following the initial panelists, members of the audience were encouraged to come up to the front of the room and “replace” panelists and make interventions themselves, which more than a dozen participants did. Raymond Ocasio of the Newark, NJ-based La Casa de Don Pedro talked about the importance of building community capacity. Robert Zdenek of Alliance for Healthy Homes (and a former Executive Director of NCCED) said he was, “excited about NACEDA and the new direction.” Stephen McCulloch of Bethel New Life CDC of Chicago pointed to the importance of thinking of leadership as bridge building. “There is a gulf,” McCulloch noted, “between people of color and Chicago as well as many of the metro areas around the country. We are segregated. It needs to change. We need dialogue, commitment, to do business with each other.” Kerry Doy of the Los Angeles-based Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment underlined the calls of others to directly address racial divisions within the movement: “I’ve been in CED [community economic development] for 35 years. Race really needs to be dealt with. It is actually imperative. That’s the biggest reason NCCED died. There was so much polarization that nothing could get done. You need to develop a plan of what to do. For instance, our

organization has both Japanese and Chinese-Americans. Japan has had hostilities with China for 5,000 years. It is significant that Asian communities in the United States are able to work together for the common good.”

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