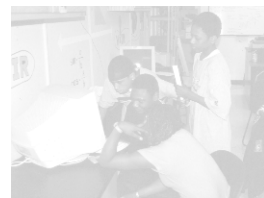
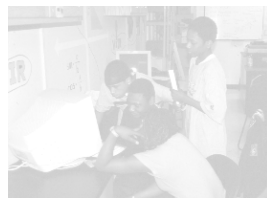
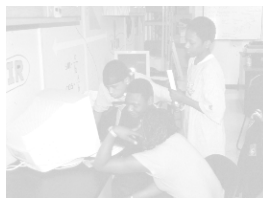
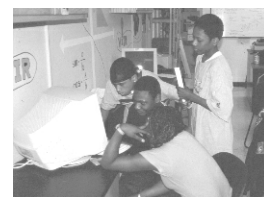
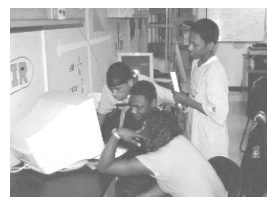
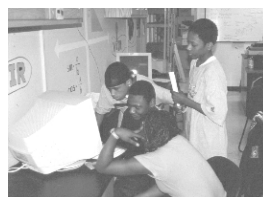
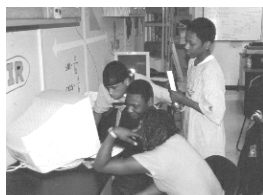




# Community Technology Centers as Catalysts for Community Change

A Report to the Ford Foundation



Stephen Davies & Andrew Wiley-Schwartz, PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES  
Randal D. Pinkett, BCT PARTNERS . Lisa J. Servon, NEW SCHOOL UNIVERSITY  
January 2003

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# **Community Technology Centers as Catalysts for Community Change**

## **A Report to the Ford Foundation**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report presents the findings from our exploratory research into how community technology centers (CTCs) could function more effectively as public spaces and as forces for positive social change at the community level. In understanding the dynamics of their work at present, we hope to inform community technology researchers, practitioners, and funders as to the ways in which the movement can leverage its accomplishments of the past in order to serve communities more broadly as it looks toward the future.

We initiated this research, with funding and direction from the Ford Foundation, in order to assess the situation in which CTCs currently find themselves and make recommendations regarding whether and how CTCs could be supported to take on broader community agendas. The primary assumption driving this work was that CTCs—most of which are located in disadvantaged neighborhoods with rapidly changing demographics—are important not only because of their specific digital divide work, but also because they act as key public spaces in areas where there is a dearth of such community places. We also hypothesized that there was a gap between the community development and community technology fields, and that this new perspective would help to bridge this gap, enabling greater efficiency and effectiveness on both the community technology and community development fields. Through this research, our goals were to:

- Understand the extent to which CTCs already think of themselves and act as public spaces in the communities they serve;
- Investigate perceptions of a gap between community development and community technology work;
- Explore the ways in which CTCs, as public spaces, can catalyze broader positive community change and the strategies they are employing to do so;
- Identify the characteristics of CTCs that are most amenable to carrying out this kind of work;
- Discern what specific kinds of support CTCs require in order to do this kind of work; and
- Make recommendations regarding actions CTCs can take, and that funders can use to establish priorities for CTCs.

### **Methodology**

In order to carry out this agenda, we conducted the following research tasks:

- Reviewed relevant literatures in the CTC, community development, and public space fields.
- Held a meeting of leading edge community technology practitioners in Austin, TX in order to gain their perspectives on the above issues.

- Conducted site visits at the following CTCs: Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC); Playing2Win; Austin FreeNet.
- Conducted in-depth interviews with directors of CTCs and field experts who could not attend the Austin meeting and with attendees whose ideas we wanted to pursue.
- Facilitated workshops and discussions among stakeholders at Playing2Win and BSRC
- Surveyed participants of above workshops and surveys

This report summarizes the relevant literature on public spaces and community change and documents historical and current issues facing CTCs. It then examines these trends through the lenses of public space analysis and community development theory, and identifies areas for further research and action, with specific emphasis on a possible funding program for CTCs that would help to broaden both their mission and traditional sources of funds.

### **Who We Are**

Project for Public Spaces, Inc. (PPS) has an international reputation for its work on the design and management of public spaces. A nonprofit, PPS was founded in 1975 to continue the pioneering work of writer-sociologist William H. Whyte. Using a unique community-driven process that puts residents and stakeholders first, PPS has helped over 1,000 communities improve their public spaces. PPS's activities include: Research and advocacy programs in transportation, parks, markets and public buildings, Publication of books and monographs; Training programs and seminars; maintenance of a database of success stories, a slide library of public space enhancements and elements, and; an awards program designed to highlight the most successful public places in the world. Andrew Wiley-Schwartz, PPS assistant Vice President, Stephen Davies, Vice President, and Fred Kent, President are all involved in the project.

Lisa J. Servon is Associate Professor of Urban Policy and Acting Director of the Community Development Research Center (CDRC) at the Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy at New School University. Servon is a leading community development scholar whose work has focused on microenterprise development, capacity-building strategies for community-based organizations, and the digital divide. Her recent book, *Bridging the Digital Divide: Technology, Community, and Public Policy* (Blackwell, 2002) explores the links between the community technology movement, policy issues, and community development.

Building Community Technology (BCT) Partners is a technology services and consulting firm. BCT develops affordable technology solutions for business and nonprofit customers that use technology to support change strategies and improve organizational effectiveness. These services include web design, database design, systems integration, networking and strategic technology consulting. Dr. Randal D. Pinkett, President and CEO, has led BCT's efforts for this project with support from Lawrence Hibbert and Dallas Grundy. An expert in the strategic use of technology, Dr. Pinkett is a graduate of the renowned MIT Media Laboratory where his doctoral dissertation focused on the role of community technology for the purpose community in low-income communities. Dr. Pinkett holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Rutgers University, M.S. in Computer Science from the University of Oxford, England, as a Rhodes Scholar, joint M.S. in Electrical Engineering/MBA degrees from MIT, and Ph.D. in Media Arts and Sciences from the MIT Media Laboratory.

## **PART I: COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC SPACE ANALYSIS AN OVERVIEW**

### **1. What is Community Technology?**

Community technology centers (CTCs) are generally nonprofit, locally-based organizations that provide IT to groups that do not get access to it in other ways. “Community technology center” is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of types of organizations. CTCs differ along three dimensions: their organizational type, their programmatic orientation, and their target population. The latter two dimensions shape and are shaped by program missions. There are three primary organizational types of CTCs: stand-alone centers; CTCs housed in multi-service agencies; and networks of CTCs (which may comprise one or both of the previous two types). Stand-alone CTCs are centers that were created explicitly to address information technology (IT) and digital divide issues, which include access, training, and content. Other CTCs are part of multi-service agencies, which means they are part of organizations or institutions such as a public library, a YWCA, or a community development corporation (CDC) that offer a variety of services and programs to the community. A third model is a network of CTCs connected by a larger organization. The Austin FreeNet (which has 34 locations, including schools, libraries, community centers, churches, and housing projects) is an example of this type of CTC.

CTCs also differ in terms of their IT programming. Some centers focus on providing access to technology. A public library, for example, may simply provide a space for computers with Internet access, but offer no training. Other CTCs offer either general or specialized classes. Many CTCs, for example, offer basic classes in keyboarding, how to use email, and popular software applications such as Word and Photoshop. Others are more oriented toward providing specific training that can help participants obtain jobs in IT-related fields. The Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) in San Francisco and Per Scholas in the Bronx are two examples of these workforce-development oriented CTCs. Some CTCs use technology more indirectly. For example, the mission of Street Level Youth Media in Chicago,<sup>1</sup> which uses technology as part of a comprehensive program plan, much like a number of other CTCs, is as follows:

Street-Level Youth Media educates Chicago's inner-city youth in media arts and emerging technologies for use in self-expression communication, and social change. Street-Level programs build self-esteem and critical thinking skills for urban youth who have been historically neglected by policy makers and mass media. Using video production, computer art and the Internet young people address community issues, access advanced technology and gain inclusion in our information-based society.

Finally, CTCs differ with respect to their target populations. Although most CTCs target low-income and urban people, they target different segments of that larger population. Some programs target youth, while others target unemployed and underemployed workers,

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, SLYM obtains the majority of its funding from non-technology sources such as youth and arts funders.

and still others serve senior citizens, the disabled, the homeless, and/or a particular neighborhood. Appendix B provides more specific data culled from a 1999 survey of the members of CTCNet (Servon and Nelson 1999).

## **2. The Community Technology Movement: Past, Present and Future**

The community technology movement has been evolving and growing for more than thirty years. Arguably, its genesis dates back to 1968 when the National Urban League established a training program in Los Angeles, CA, for adults in COBOL programming using a mainframe computer. More than two decades passed before the movement reached its next major milestone.<sup>2</sup>

In 1980, Antonia Stone, a former public school teacher, started a nonprofit organization called Playing 2Win (P2W) (Mark & Briscoe, 1995; Stone, 1996). P2W's mission was to address computer access inequities in the low-income community of Harlem, New York. Consequently, P2W opened the Harlem Community Computing Center in a public housing development in 1983, where it enjoyed tremendous success. In 1990, P2W and six similar technology centers created an informal network as a means to share their collective experiences concerning the use of computing in underserved communities—thus helping to formalize the concept of “community technology.” In 1990 and 1992, P2W secured a planning grant and a subsequent three-year commitment from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to establish and develop P2WNet – a network of community technology centers (CTCs) primarily based in the northeast United States. Finally, recognizing the need for additional organizational infrastructure to bring the network to national scale, Education Development Center (EDC) proposed and received a five-year grant from NSF to expand P2WNet into the independent, nationally-based Community Technology Centers' Network (CTCNet). Today, CTCNet is largest network of community technology centers in the United States representing more than 650 CTCs across the country.

The evolution of CTCNet signified one of a number of developments occurring during the early to mid-1990s that significantly advanced the field of community technology. In July 1995, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in the U.S. Department of Commerce, under the leadership of Secretary Ron Brown and Assistant Secretary Larry Irving, released their first statistical report of computer and Internet use in the United States entitled, *Falling Through the Net: A Survey of the "Have Nots" in Rural and Urban America* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1995). This survey represented the first in a series of reports released in 1998, 1999, and 2000 by NTIA (NTIA, 1998, 1999 & 2000) examining the gap between the so-called “haves” and “have nots” with respect to information and communications technology, and popularizing this phenomenon under the term “the digital divide.”

In 1994, NTIA also introduced the Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP), which was later renamed the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP). TOP provided matching grants to nonprofit organizations to fund community-based projects that demonstrated how technology can be used to improve education, health care, public safety, and more, for American citizens. One year later, the Office of Multifamily Housing in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban

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<sup>2</sup> See Servon (2002) for a history of the community technology movement.

Development (HUD) launched the Neighborhood Networks (NN) initiative, which encouraged the development of CTCs in HUD properties. The following year, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 established another major policy initiative, the Universal Service Fund, also known as the “Electronic Rate” or “E-Rate” Program. With an annual budget up to \$2.25 billion, E-Rate provided assistance to schools, libraries, and other public and private entities in gaining access to affordable telecommunications services. These programs were accompanied by a number of other programs, sponsored by a number of government agencies, including the following: the National Science Foundation’s Connections to the Internet Program; the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Construction and Installation of Broadband Telecommunications Services in Rural America Program; the U.S. General Services Administration’s Computers for Learning Program; and the U.S. Department of Education’s Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, just to name a few.

This momentum continued into the late 1990s as a number of foundations, nonprofits and corporations expanded their support of community technology initiatives, undoubtedly spurred-on by the government’s leadership. Philanthropic, nonprofit and private organizations such as the Benton Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Hewlett-Packard Company, the Children’s Partnership, and AOL-Time Warner, all sponsored various projects, initiatives and groundbreaking reports focused on “bridging the digital divide.” At the local level, community technology planners emerged in the cities of Atlanta, GA, and Seattle, WA. At the federal level, the Department of Education established the Community Technology Centers Program in 1999, which spawned the development of more than 100 new CTCs that year alone.

The movement reached an apex in 2000-2001, during President Bill Clinton’s final year in office. In January 2000, Clinton announced his plan to narrow the digital divide during his State of the Union address. This high profile statement placed the issue at the forefront of the nation’s consciousness. One month later, the Clinton-Gore administration released their comprehensive proposal, *From Digital Divide to Digital Opportunity* (The White House, 2000), which outlined specific strategies and budget initiatives for addressing the problem. In April 2000, President Clinton led a “new markets” tour to mobilize public and private partnerships to address what he referred to as the “key civil rights issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (The White House, 1999). The tour included stops at CTCs such as “Plugged In” in East Palo Alto, CA.

By the year 2001, the budget for the TOP program stood at \$42.8 million while the CTC program budget totaled \$65 million. The CTC program had funded close to 400 CTCs and helped expand more than 150 CTCs. To support these centers, the Department of Education established the America Connects Consortium, led by EDC, as a collaboration of eight partners and allied organizations including CTCNet, to provide technical assistance to grantees. Furthermore, by 2001 TOP had awarded 530 grants totaling \$192.5 million and NN had established more than 800 centers in operation nationwide. Clearly, the community technology movement had come of age.

In 2001, dramatic changes occurred in the community technology landscape as the Bush Administration assumed office. As early as February 7, 2001, Michael Powell, the newly appointed chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) likened the digital divide to a “Mercedes divide,” (New York Times, 2/7/01) arguing it was not the



government's responsibility to provide everyone with access to the latest technologies. That same month, the Bush Administration released its first study of computer and Internet penetration under the revealing title, *A Nation Online: How Americans Are Expanding Their Use of the Internet*, (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002) wherein they suggested that the gap had closed significantly in recent years. President Bush then proceeded to cut the TOP program from \$42.5 million in 2001 to \$15 million in 2002 and the CTC program from \$65 million in 2001 to \$32.5 million in 2002. These cuts were followed by a proposed 2003 budget that seeks to eliminate the TOP and CTC programs as of the date of this publication. And despite the mounting efforts of the Digital Empowerment initiative – a coalition of legislators, organizations and individuals formed to salvage the TOP and CTC programs – it is clear that support for the community technology movement has waned in the wake of growing federal disinterest.

### **3. The Community Technology Movement at a Crossroads**

The community technology movement is now at a crossroads. On one hand, the significant momentum established during the 1990s has produced a well-established infrastructure, which includes the following: CTCs such as the Department of Education grantees; networks of CTCs such as CTCNet and the Intel Computer Clubhouse Network; technology training programs such as the Cisco Networking Academy; web resources such as DigitalDivideNetwork.org, Contentbank.org and TechSoup.org; technology programs akin to the TOP funded initiatives; and intermediary and capacity-building organizations such as the America Connects Consortium. On the other hand, this momentum has been noticeably affected by recent and proposed federal budget cuts, the realities of the current economic downturn, and the resulting, diminished support from the philanthropic and private sectors. In addition to these setbacks there are other challenges and opportunities facing the community technology movement.

First, there have been **difficulties in capturing the “late majority”**<sup>3</sup> (Rogers, 1983) – or significant members of the movement's target population (e.g., low- to moderate income or rural communities) who are often the hardest to engage. Some argue that community technology efforts have only been successful in reaching the “early adopters”<sup>3</sup> (Rogers, 1983) – those already inclined to embrace computers and the Internet. Recent studies at MIT, *The Camfield Estates-MIT Creating Community Connections Project: Strategies for Active Participation in a Low- to Moderate-Income Community* (Pinkett, 2001; Pinkett & O'Bryant, 2001) and the University of California, San Diego, *Beyond Access: Qualifying the Digital Divide* (Stanley, 2002), examined the factors that inhibit residents' use of community technology programs. Both reports concluded that a lack of relevance, fear, and cultural considerations, all contribute to this obstacle. A 2000 report published by the Children's Partnership cites lack of appropriate content as a major obstacle (Lazarus and Mora 2000).

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<sup>3</sup> Rogers' “Diffusion of Innovations” is a theory concerning the “process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.” The theory is an extension of the work by two sociologists, Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross, who “published their seminal study of the diffusion of hybrid seed among Iowa farmers” in the 1940's. In this work, they classified the segments of Iowa farmers in relation to the amount of time it took them to adopt the innovation, in this case, the hybrid corn seed. The five segments were as follows: (1) innovators, (2) early adopters, (3) early majority, (4) late majority, and (5) laggards.

Second, **difficulties in distributing lessons learned and forming partnerships locally and regionally** have caused redundancy and prevented the movement from leveraging its collective experience nationally. In 2000, the University of Michigan released a study of CTCs and their efforts to share lessons learned aptly titled, *Surely Someone Knows How To Do This: Organizing Information Flows of Community Technology Centers* (Sandor & Scheuerer, 2000). Their findings included the need for more networking opportunities and better access to documentation of others' practices.

Third, **access to technology, and to some extent technology training, have been the primary focus of a number of community technology initiatives.** While these are indeed important endeavors, they are nonetheless sub-components of a more holistic approach to the use of technology as a means rather than an end. Recently, field experts and scholars have added content and education as key components that CTCs must address (Servon 2002; Lazarus & Mora, 2000). Such an approach emphasizes outcomes in areas such as education, economic development, health care, and employment, instead of access for the sake of access. This was the focus of a report released by the Morino Institute in 2001: *From Access to Outcomes: Raising the Aspirations for Technology Initiatives in Low-Income Communities* (Morino, 2001). In other words, technology should be viewed as yet another tool that can be used to address socioeconomic inequities, but access alone will not enable the tool to fulfill its potential.

Fourth, **the community technology movement has yet to fully align its efforts with the community building movement** – an interrelated and parallel movement seeking to revitalize distressed communities that has emerged over the past half-century. Many community technology practitioners are only beginning to situate their work within the context of much broader efforts to catalyze community change. Analogously, many community building practitioners are only now considering how to incorporate information and communications technology into their community outreach activities. In *Bridging the Organizational Divide: Toward a Comprehensive Approach to the Digital Divide* (Kirschenbaum & Kunamneni, 2001), researchers at PolicyLink coined this disconnect the “organizational divide” and highlighted programs across the country that are integrating community technology and community building successfully. These practices are discussed below. As a recent Seedco (2002) study found, however, these CBOs remain the exception.

Fifth and finally, as the original funding sources for community technology programs continue to diminish, **it will become increasingly incumbent on program directors to identify alternative sources of support as well as new and innovative approaches to service delivery.** Scale and sustainability are critical current issues for the community technology movement. These are perhaps the movement's greatest challenges as well as its greatest opportunities as they may force practitioners to wrestle with each of the aforementioned issues of capturing the late majority, disseminating best practices, moving beyond access to outcomes and facilitating greater alignment with community builders. In other words, the strategies needed to sustain the movement could serve to elevate those programs that have utilized resources effectively and necessitate changes among those that have not.

Naturally, there are a number of CTCs that have overcome these hurdles to play a significant and effectual role in the communities they serve. In some respects, they could be considered

models for the future of the community technology movement – serving as new “public spaces” or places that engage diverse groups of people and contribute to positive local change. The purpose of this research is to explore how these centers are already functioning, and how they could function more effectively as public spaces, thereby becoming a force for social and economic justice at the community level.

#### **4. CTCs as Public Spaces**

Although community institutions, such as libraries, city halls, and CTCs are rarely thought of as public spaces like parks and plazas, they certainly function as public spaces, and can be important anchors in neighborhoods. The benefits of CTCs functioning as good public spaces include:

- Contributing to the local economy (through workforce development, e.g.)
- Helping to create community identity
- Promoting a range of social interactions
- Involving a diverse population
- Improving accessibility
- Increasing participants’ involvement in civil society
- Fostering community activism

Indeed, in the rapidly changing demographic profiles that are typical of low-income neighborhoods, public spaces offer, at their most basic, a common ground for different ethnicities, classes and ages to mix. This is why successful public spaces, those that promote uses and activities across these demographic boundaries, are essential to fostering community change; without them, there are no places where different people can come together as equals comfortably.

Based on its own research as well as quality of life research, Project for Public Spaces has developed a simple graphic that describes a model for evaluating the attributes of livable places. These attributes reflect the common issues that people tend to identify when they talk about livability in their communities, and include tangible, statistical aspects as well as the intangible qualities that people feel towards a place or a neighborhood. These attributes, which are presented in the “Place Diagram” (see Figure 1) fall into three categories:

- *Key Attributes* of places are the components which, based on livability research, are essential ingredients of a place: uses and activities, comfort and image, access and linkages, and sociability. These general criteria arise again and again when people talk about the problems and needs of their communities.
- *Intangible Qualities* of communities that relate to specific types of attributes, such as "safe," "fun," "charming," and "welcoming."
- *Measurements* that help establish a quantitative base for evaluating the qualitative issues, although experience has shown that such measurements do have their limitations.

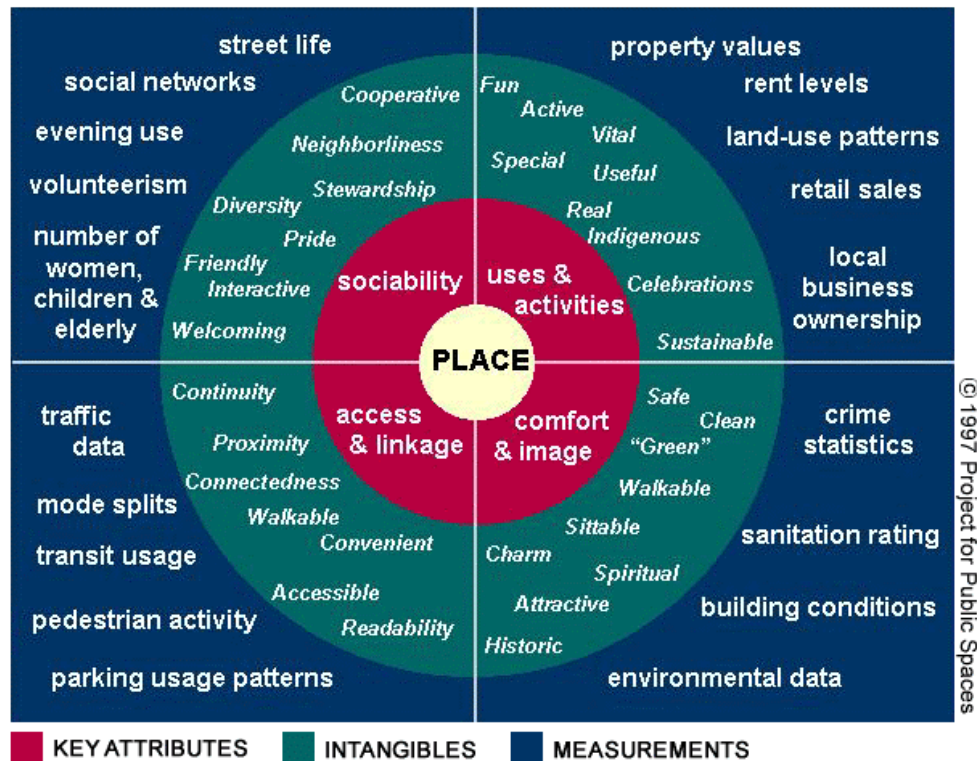


Figure 1: Place Diagram

An important consideration in developing this model was not making value judgments as to the relative importance of different attributes to different communities. Rather, it is up to each community to choose its own priorities. Different socio-economic situations, living conditions, and political context make each community unique. A community is also in the position to determine the *scale* of improvement, that is, whether a project or program should be initiated at a particular site versus in a larger neighborhood context. For this research, our focus was on CTCs as key sites within disadvantaged neighborhoods.

This model can be extended to include other issues. For example, one of the challenges in creating livable places is the general lack of communication between different city agencies, professions, and interest groups responsible for a place. This model helps to identify groups (chambers of commerce, block associations, etc.) associated with specific attributes that could be approached to participate in a project. When these four attributes are present in a public space we can assume it is active, and successful.

The four primary ways of understanding and assessing public spaces, and their application to CTCs, is as follows:

**Uses and Activities** – Activities that occur in a place are its basic building blocks: They are the reasons why people come in the first place, and why they return. They can also make a place special or unique. When there is nothing to do in a place, it will be empty and unused and that generally means that something is wrong. With respect to CTCs, questions we might ask include: Does the CTC have active

programming and drop in times for unrestricted activity? Does it provide for a range of people to do different things at once? Does it accommodate families (provide day care or child-friendly classes at the same time as adult ones)? Is it open for community events or meetings?

**Comfort and Image** - Comfort and image are key to whether a place will be used. Perceptions about safety and cleanliness, the scale of adjacent buildings, and the place's character or charm are often foremost in people's minds in deciding whether to use a place – as are more tangible issues such as having a comfortable place to sit. The importance of people having the choice to sit where they want is generally underestimated. Looking at CTCs with respect to comfort and image leads us to ask: Does the CTC have strong visibility in the community? Do people know where it is and what it is? Is the CTC a safe place? Do parents trust the staff with their children? Do people like to come by even when they are not in a structured class? Are the computers/desks and other stations arranged in a friendly manner that encourages conversation and sharing? Are there other places to sit besides the computer stations, such as tables, sofas, etc.? Is the center welcoming?

**Access and Linkages** – Access concerns how well a place is connected to its surroundings both visually and physically. A successful public space is easy to get to, and is visible as well. People can easily circulate within the space and it is convenient to use different parts of the space. Physical elements can affect access (for instance, a continuous row of shops along a street is more interesting and generally safer to walk by than a blank wall or empty lot), as can perceptions (for example, the ability to see a public space from a distance). Accessible public places have a high turnover in parking, and, ideally, convenient public transit. For this work on CTCs, we focused on the following access/linkage questions: Is the center easy to get to by a variety of different types of transportation? Can children walk there from school or their neighborhood? Is it served by public transportation? Is it located in or near other community institutions or places such as a main street or library? Is it open at limited hours, or accessible to many over a broad range of daily and weekly schedules?

**Sociability** - This is a difficult but unmistakable quality for a place to achieve. When people see friends, meet and greet their neighbors, and feel comfortable interacting with strangers, they tend to feel a stronger sense of place or attachment to their community – and to the place that fosters these types of social activities. Sociability is a critical “x” factor in placemaking anywhere, but it holds a particular value with respect to neighborhoods in transition, as it allows people to come to know each other across race and class lines, or at least become comfortable with different cultural public expressions and interactions. In addition, places that foster comfortable social interactions in this way allow issues to be addressed and perhaps solved. For example, residential streets with low automobile speeds allow children to play and all residents to walk, thus fostering sociability and perhaps the formation of a block club that can address safety and cleanliness issues. With respect to CTCs, we sought to answer the following: Are people helpful to others with problems? Is the population diverse (e.g. women and men, seniors and teens, representative of the community's ethnic diversity)? Do we see groups and individuals mixing, and

relationships forming, that were not formed previously? The answers to these questions can serve as indicators of sociability.

Public space analysis has provided us with a useful lens through which to view CTCs and their community-building activities. Through our research, we have attempted to synthesize this analysis with both a historical perspective on CTCs and the language and analytical tools of community development. This is a particularly important synthesis because we believe that public spaces provide equitable opportunities in neighborhoods with rapidly changing demographics—such as the low-income neighborhoods that are the focus of this study. Since the time of Olmsted -- the development of public spaces and the concept of the civic realm have been linked as both dignifying institutions and essential democratic ones as well.

## **PART II: RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **1. Review of Literature**

For the most part, evaluations of CTCs that have been conducted thus far have focused on individual outcomes. These individual outcomes include: job skills and access to employment opportunities; education and improved outlook on learning; technological literacy as a means to attain individual goals; new skills and knowledge; personal efficacy and affective outcomes; use of time and resources (Mark, Cornebise & Wahl, 1997). Fewer studies have examined community-level impacts, in part because these are so much difficult to define, study, and measure. A few studies, however, have attempted to look at the broader impacts of CTCs. A 1997 (Mark, Cornebise & Wahl, 1997) study by CTCNet, for example, grouped community-level outcomes into the following categories: increased civic participation; social and community connections; and community impacts. The following paragraphs summarize the findings from this study.

With respect to civic participation, "individuals reported increased involvement in civic activities, including writing letters to government officials, organizing and participating in voter registration drives, and experiencing a greater awareness of current events through reading newspapers." Regarding social and community connections, neighborhood residents found CTCs to be safe places for families and children. CTCs created an atmosphere in which new relationships could be formed between people who were not previously connected:

Through relationships developed within a center, participants reported a sense of community and belonging through their attendance at a community technology center. Twenty-eight participants (21 percent) developed new relationships with other participants and with community technology center staff. Participants visit community centers for reasons other than using computers. Eighteen percent of participants reported meeting people, making friends, and feeling a sense of belonging. Eighty-eight percent of participants visited the centers on a regular basis. One participant described the center as her "home away from home," and another mentioned that the center is a "haven." Staff and community members at all the sites have observed the friendships and social aspects of the centers growing over the years. One center is becoming an integral part of the social structure of the surrounding neighborhood, serving as a meeting place for youth and adults. One person mentioned learning more about her community. In eight cases, a greater sense of community engendered such positive feelings within participants that they wanted to find ways "to give something back" to the community and to the center, often by volunteering or teaching classes.

With respect to community dynamics, most CTCs in the study had formed collaborative agreements with other local agencies and organizations in order to extend their reach. However, it is unclear from the report whether the CTCs created these arrangements in order to reach more individuals, or to have a greater impact on broader community outcomes. Many had also established satellite sites throughout a city or neighborhood in order to cast their nets more widely.

A study by PolicyLink (2001) also explored the nexus between technology and community-based organizations (CBOs). Leveraging the skills and connections of both kinds of institutions, and creating partnerships between them, has great potential to catalyze positive community impacts. Rather than focusing on CTCs, PolicyLink has focused on CBOs that are using IT in creative ways to support their work and extend their impact. The types of applications and uses these CBOs have developed fall into the following six categories: advocacy and online organizing; community information clearinghouse; networking and online communities; innovations in service delivery; interactive database development; and community mapping. CTC directors have found this work to be extremely useful. According to Sisnett, “CTCs are actually community-building organizations. [The PolicyLink report] has really given me some new language to think about all of these things.”<sup>4</sup> Our work differs from the PolicyLink work because we focus explicitly on CTCs and are trying to assess the outcomes of such efforts, i.e., whether and how they specifically lead to positive community change.

A survey of 353 community institutions<sup>5</sup> conducted by Seedco in 2001 sought to understand the extent and kind of IT use in these organizations in order to explore the question of whether IT is bringing widespread change to the community development field. Seedco found that IT “has yet to transform the field of community development;” relatively few of the organizations surveyed had moved beyond routine uses of IT (Seedco 2002, p.2). Indeed, most have used IT for internal purposes and have not made the leap to thinking about how IT could be used as a tool to foster a broader range of positive community outcomes. Seedco’s work also suggests that “there is a need for broadening the existing dialogue on the use of IT in the community development field” (Seedco 2002, p.4). These findings support our recommendations, presented below.

Another important piece of research that feeds into what we are trying to do here is the study of the Computers in Our Future (CIOF) program. CIOF was a four-year, \$7.5 million demonstration that funded 11 CTCs in California. The CIOF program is important because some of its goals overlap with our interests in this endeavor. Specifically, there was an expectation “that CIOF centers should serve as a technology resource in the community, helping businesses, community organizations, and local institutions use technology to strengthen their endeavors and the community as a whole; and . . . [that] CIOF centers would help develop leaders from the community to speak out in local and state policy debates” (Fowells and Lazarus, 2001, p.i). CIOF has been important because, from the outset, the program endeavored not only to provide access, training, and content, but also to benefit the communities served by the centers by being: 1) “a community resource for technology, enhancing the capacity of local organizations, institutions, and businesses through partnerships and by providing technology expertise;” and 2) “a community voice to advocate for policies that support and strengthen local communities” (Fowells and Lazarus 2001, p.3). Early findings show that this broader community focus seems to have paid off. CIOF centers both “served as a valuable community resource and tapped into assets already in the community” (Fowells and Lazarus, 2001, p.7). According to program directors, the centers have done this in three principal ways: 1) forging partnerships that strengthen

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<sup>4</sup> Interview, July 2002.

<sup>5</sup> The community institutions fell into four categories: community development corporations, community development financial institutions, community-based organizations, and intermediaries (Seedco 2002).



program impact; 2) enabling economic development through technology; and 3) replicating the model (Fowells and Lazarus, 2001, p.7). In a recent interview, Linda Fowells, project director for CIOF, told us, “As we studied what worked, one of the things we found was that community partnerships were one of the ingredients of success among our grantees.” The CIOF project is similar to our efforts, but differs to the extent that we are looking to influence a broader range of community outcomes.

Finally, a research study was conducted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers specifically to investigate ways to integrate community technology and community development in low- to moderate-income neighborhoods (Pinkett & O’Bryant, 2001; Pinkett, 2002). The project – the Camfield Estates-MIT Creating Community Connections Project – represents a partnership between the Camfield Estates housing development and MIT, started in 1999.

The context at Camfield Estates, a low to moderate-income housing development in Roxbury, MA, included a “community network,” whereas state-of-the-art desktop computers, software, and high-speed Internet access were offered to every family; a CTC located on the premises in the community center where courses were offered to participating families; and “community content” delivered through a community-based web system – along with a community development agenda. Over a two-year period, MIT researchers helped build the capacity of the Camfield Tenants Association (CTA) to combine technology with community building, but also conducted a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the initiative’s impact on the lives of Camfield residents. The early results of the evaluation included the following: 1) reinforced and expanded local ties, 2) a heightened awareness of community resources, 3) enhanced knowledge about local activities and events as well as improved communication and information flow at the development, and 4) a positive shift in participants’ attitudes and perceptions of themselves as learners. The authors conclude that “for the existing pool of community technology and community building practitioners to unite their efforts, it will require the coordinated activities of presently disjoint foundations, policy makers, government agencies and community-based organizations, as well as technical assistance providers, researchers, and industry representatives, in order to be successful” (Pinkett, 2001, p. 371).

## **2. Focus Groups**

### ***AUSTIN CTCNET MEETING***

The 2002 Community Technology Centers’ Network (CTCNet) conference was held in June in Austin, Texas. This meeting coincided with the beginning of our work and thinking about these issues. We used the opportunity of this timing to hold a meeting of the directors of several leading edge CTCs in order to obtain their perspectives on the issue of CTCs as new public spaces with the potential of catalyzing positive community change. We began the meeting by introducing key public space concepts and framing our research around current issues in the community technology field. We then divided the larger group into two smaller groups and led them through a discussion focused on the following questions:

- What **characteristics** does a CTC need in order to take on larger community change issues?
- What **strategies** has your organization engaged in? What has worked well and not so well?
- What **outcomes** have you achieved? How do you know when community change has occurred?
- What kind of **support** do you need in order to take on these issues?

Our findings from this discussion, which we corroborated with interviews with other CTC executive directors and field experts, reflect the diversity of groups situated under the CTC umbrella. At our meeting, we heard about a project in Chicago in which youth document their neighborhoods and residents' stories with video cameras. In Seattle, public officials are experimenting with ways to take testimony via email. CTCs engage in these activities because they believe they will contribute to positive outcomes; however there has been virtually no attempt to measure the specific ways in which these activities actually contribute to broader community change. In many cases, it may be too early to tell whether and how this change is occurring.

Specific findings from the Austin meeting are laid out below:

1. *CTCs believe in the importance of collaborating with other community actors.* At the same time, the extent to which they have actually done this varies. Some recognized that the onus is on them, as the “new kids on the block” to reach out to more established community actors, by attending other community meetings, for example.
2. *CTCs serve as local technology capacity-builders.* They partner with other local organizations, including community development organizations, to provide technology-related capacity building and support (e.g., technology training, strategic technology consulting, etc.). In this manner, CTCs operate as “sub-contractors” or consultants to these organizations on as a fee-for-service basis or as co-applicants for grants.
3. *It is important, but difficult, to find staff members with the right mix of skills.* In order to promote community change from within a CTC, staffers need both technological know-how and an understanding of and connection to the communities in which they work. This combination of people and technology skills is tough to find, particularly when CTCs are competing with firms that can pay much more for people who are facile with technology.
4. *CTCs need sustainable, multi-year support.* CTCs are more costly to operate than are many other types of CBOs, because of the need to constantly upgrade hardware and software, and to pay for skilled staff. Support has grown more difficult to obtain as the number of CTCs has grown and as key funding programs in the federal government have been eliminated, and as the economy has adversely affected corporate actors that had been supporting CTCs' efforts.

5. *CTCs have evolved from technology centers to places that take on a much broader range of issues.* Many centers, even if they began with relatively narrow missions, have broadened what they do to meet the needs of community actors.

### **3. Place Evaluation Workshops**

Based on our early findings, the study team decided to slightly change its research plan and conduct workshops in two CTCs, rather than observe several over a period of time. This decision was made after preliminary observations in several CTCs led us to believe that there was more to be gained from direct contact with CTC stakeholders and users than from observations.

The study team conducted two workshops in CTCs in New York City. The CTCs were selected based on their type; Playing2Win is a stand-alone center, and the Restoration Information Technology and Education (RITE) Center is part of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, a community development corporation with a long history in the neighborhood. We sought to examine two different organizational types of CTC (stand-alone and multi-service) that were interested in leveraging their CTC to do broader community work.

On September 25, 2002, at 6pm, a workshop was conducted at Playing2Win, a Community Technology Center located on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 111<sup>th</sup> Street in Harlem. Approximately 30 people attended the workshop, a mixture of Playing2Win staff, including its executive director, Rahsaan Harris; and teenagers and adults who participate in the CTC's programs.

On October 1, 2002, at 1:30pm, a workshop was conducted in the Restoration Information Technology and Education (RITE) Center at Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation on Fulton Street in Brooklyn. Approximately 15 people were in attendance, including Christine Randall, the director of the RITE Center, staff members of the CDC and CTC, and several seniors who are enrolled in daytime computer classes at the center.

These three-hour exercises began with a customized survey developed by Pinkett and Servon. The survey asked each participant to identify positive and problem issues in the neighborhood, and how their particular CTC can address them. After the surveys were handed in, participants were introduced to the study team, and the general goals and findings of the project. Next, we showed participants a slide presentation that discussed the positive and negative qualities of public places around the country, and gave participants some general observational tools with which to analyze spaces in their community. After the slide show, four groups of 3-8 people spent an hour observing activities and informally interviewing people in the CTC and the immediate neighborhood surrounding it.

Participants used the Place Performance Evaluation (PPE), a PPS workshop tool that asks participants to use common sense and intuition along with structured observation and interview skills. This allows them to very quickly see the positive and negative qualities of a place. In its work, PPS has found that going through this exercise ignites a creative process about how to make a place a "great" place. The evaluation can be done by anyone who is observant from a highly trained professional to a layperson. One member of each group was designated to communicate the group's findings to the entire workshop.

After the observations, the groups returned for a discussion of what each found. Specific suggestions for short and long term improvements were developed. These suggestions were then matched up with the results from the survey given at the beginning of the workshop. Issues in the neighborhood were then approached from the perspective of the Place Game, and the ensuing conversation brainstormed approaches to broader neighborhood problems through the lens of the CTC, and suggested management, programming and design improvements.

### ***Summary of Workshop Results***

#### ***Playing2Win***

##### ***Place Game***

Outside the CTC, participants noted the lack of strong visual identity for Playing2Win and suggested a big sign or mural, as well as strong lighting for the entrance. Pots with flowers, outdoor seating, and policing of litter were listed as easy improvements. Having Playing2Win “take over” the block, with programs, fairs etc., perhaps in conjunction with the neighboring school, were cited as larger-scale improvements that would increase the visibility of Playing2Win, as well as its potential impact on improving the immediate neighborhood.

Inside Playing2Win, participants focused on the awkward arrangement of offices and classrooms. Both students and faculty noted that offices should be able to be closed off from regular foot traffic in and out of classrooms (many offices are pass-thrus to the large rooms). In addition, a sofa and other amenities in the foyer could contribute toward making the facility more welcoming. Additional classrooms are needed, as are more computers, and perhaps some limited snacks or other vending. One big-picture suggestion was allowing Playing2Win to take over the entire facility (now shared with parent organization Boys Harbor), thus also allowing Playing2Win to have an entrance on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

When the broader community development goals were introduced through the survey, many more programming recommendations were incorporated, including teacher certification programs, assisting schools that had no computers, and more business development resources to help raise both employment in the neighborhood and entrepreneurship. In addition, partnerships were cited as possible means of achieving broader goals, and use of the facility by other community groups during “down” hours was also suggested.

##### ***Survey***

Approximately twenty-four participants completed the survey at Playing2Win. The best things about living or working in Harlem according to participants were the people, the location of the neighborhood, and the uniqueness of the neighborhood. The top challenges facing the community were violence (e.g., guns, crime, etc.), a lack of available jobs, and the need for a better educational system. The most commonly cited things that participants would change about the community were more youth programs, less violence and fewer drugs. The top ranked issues in the neighborhood, based on a weighted sum of participants’ rankings, are shown in Table 1.

Rank	Issue
1	Availability of good jobs
2	The quality of our public schools
3	Crime in this neighborhood
4	Availability of decent affordable housing
5	Ability of this community to have a voice in political issues that affect us
6	Safety of our streets
7	Homelessness
8	Availability of quality, affordable healthcare
9	Opportunities to become active in my community
10	Availability of quality, affordable child care
11	Accessibility of businesses that serve our needs
12	Information on parenting
13	Other

**Table 1: Most Important Issues for Playing2Win Participants**

Finally, when asked in what ways technology – and Playing2Win in particular – could help address the issues and problems identified above, the top responses included job training, providing assistance to schools and providing a meeting place for residents.

Based on this information, we concluded that the overarching improvements residents in the neighborhood surrounding P2W wanted to see were: increase available jobs/job training; improve the schools; reduce crime; and expand activities for youth.

#### *Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Information Technology and Education Center*

##### *Place Game*

At the RITE Center, participants evaluated Restoration Plaza, on which a set of classrooms is situated, as well as the main center itself, located inside the BSRC complex.

Plaza evaluators noted the poor visibility and access into the plaza, although it was extremely convenient to transit and located right off of Fulton Street, the main street of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Ideas for improving the plaza included a sit-down restaurant, more programming and events including music at night, better handicapped access, signage from the street, and directional signage in the plaza, and better seating. A fountain or sculpture could provide a focal point in the west plaza, and a community garden could be located on the east plaza, near the Pathmark.

Those who evaluated the inside of the building tended to focus on the experience of entering the building itself and finding the way up to the RITE Center, located on the fourth floor. Heated comments about the entry hall emphasized the poor signage and the location of the directory—many thought it should be right in the middle of the hall to guide visitors to where they are heading. Also the conditions of the downstairs bathrooms were not good. The possibility of allowing a food vendor in the lobby itself was explored.

When looking at the RITE Center itself, the combination of rooms was hardly touched upon, however the programming at the center was considered, and participants focused on using the computer center to incubate businesses, perhaps even the businesses that the CDC sponsors by providing space on the plaza or in other locations it owns in the neighborhood.

When the survey was reintroduced and the community-wide issues of education, community services and jobs were raised, the potential of the CDC as a whole, and of the RITE Center in particular to address these issues was called into question. Most participants seemed to think that Restoration should be the information hub for the community. Instead, it seemed that BSRC was operating under potential, and that many services and opportunities for people in the neighborhood were being squandered due to lack of communication about what is offered at BSRC. The place-based issues, including business incubation, plaza revitalization and programming were all seen as direct efforts to address the community issues and tied the survey and place evaluation together.

### *Survey*

Twelve participants completed the survey at BSRC. The people in the neighborhood and the sense of community shared among residents were among the top responses in terms of the best thing about living or working in Brooklyn. The need for better businesses and a wider range of products and services, the need for better schools, and the need for more jobs/job training programs were reported as the top challenges facing the community. The need for better businesses was also the most commonly cited thing about the community that people would change. The top ranked issues in the neighborhood, based on a weighted sum of participants' rankings, are shown in Table 2.

Rank	Issue
1	The quality of our public schools
2	Availability of good jobs
3	Accessibility of businesses that serve our needs
4	Crime in this neighborhood
4	Availability of decent affordable housing
4	Ability of this community to have a voice in political issues that affect us
7	Availability of quality, affordable healthcare
8	Safety of our streets
9	Availability of quality, affordable child care
9	Opportunities to become active in my community
11	Homelessness
11	Information on parenting

**Table 2: Most Important Issues by Bedford Stuyvesant Participants**

Finally, more classes to promote education, more job training and more job opportunities were the most popular responses when participants were asked in what ways technology – and RITE in particular – could help address the issues and problems identified above.

Based on the information we collected, we concluded that the overarching issues workshop participants wanted to see improvements in are: make businesses and their products/services more accessible; expand job opportunities/job training; and improve schools/educational opportunities.

### ***SYNTHESIS OF WORKSHOP FINDINGS***

The Place Game, especially when used in conjunction with the survey developed by the research team for this purpose, seemed to help the participants gather their thoughts and recommendations and pursue more holistic strategies for the CTCs' ongoing development as community actors. There is no question that all the participants saw the CTC as an appropriate and effective potential community development agent after going through this exercise, and subsequent planning may have allowed these CTCs to pursue the recommendations from the workshops and, perhaps build a strategic plan around them. Deeper engagement with the CTC and its leadership can help establish priorities, and isolate the "doable" short and long term recommendations. With the help of a designer, the design recommendations can be translated into renderings that help the entire community "see" their vision on paper, understand that their concerns and ideas are being taken seriously, and help raise necessary funds for implementation. With the help of a strategic planner, the partnership-based and other programmatic ideas can be fleshed out, partners and funders can be solicited, and short-term ideas implemented.

Particularly interesting was the difference between the recommendations from the stand-alone CTC, Playing2Win in Harlem, and the multi-service agency at Bed-Stuy Restoration. Participants in the Harlem workshop understood that Playing2Win could expand its programs and focus, and were excited about the prospects of the CTC becoming a community center. Participants in Bed-Stuy understood that their organization already had the goals of being a center of community activity and that the organization as a whole was under-performing in that regard. They aligned their recommendations toward the CDC more holistically. In terms of the RITE Center, they looked at how programs there could be developed to better leverage the other activities at the CDC.

## **4. Research Conclusions**

Our hypothesis going into this project was that there was a gap between the community development and community technology fields. CDCs have now been operating in disadvantaged communities for nearly 40 years. The community technology field is much newer. Although CTCs are overwhelmingly located in the types of neighborhoods served by CDCs and CBOs, and often have consistent goals with these older institutions, we believed that there was a gap between the two types of organizations because there appears to be little interaction between them. We have modified our hypothesis as a result of this work. We continue to believe that there is a gap, but it is partly one of language and perception. Although CDCs and CBOs have barely scratched the surface when it comes to using IT to forward their work, CTCs have taken on community development issues as part of what they do. As Fowells told us:

Many CTCs are doing community-building work, but they don't have the language, or the vocabulary, to call it that...For example, they are using

technology for youth development because they are trying to keep kids off the street, get them back in school, etc. Or they are using it as an early intervention strategy for young kids. Or for helping seniors...There are disconnections between the two fields if you define community-building narrowly.

In other words there is a communication gap, but in practice there is significant overlap. Community development and community technology practitioners could gain a great deal by learning from each other. Such knowledge-sharing would benefit both fields, and could lead to important synergies. As Breeden told us: “The key to all of this is that the person who is the spark has to be a risk-taker and able to run with their ideas. We’ve got a lot of ex-teachers and ex-social workers working with CTCs because their own base would not allow them to take the kinds of risks they needed to take to do what they wanted to do.”

Based on this research, we hypothesize that functioning as a good public space is a precondition—necessary but not sufficient—for a CTC to catalyze positive community change.

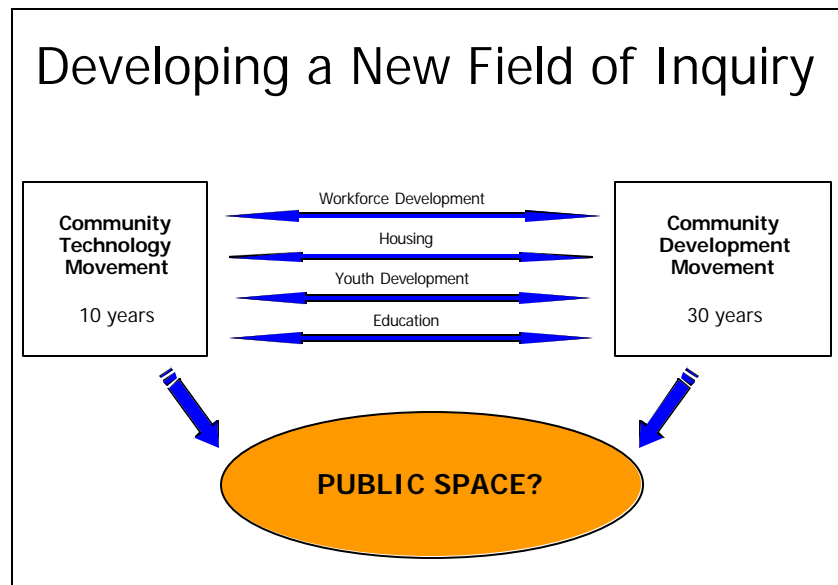
**Through this research, we found that the ways in which CTCs can augment their ability to take on broader community issues include:**

- **Enhancing facility design**, including more gathering places such as conference rooms and lounges, for people to mix and hold meetings and events away from computers.
- **Raising the profile of existing centers** by incorporating plazas, planters, lighting, banners and other entrance treatments. New facilities should be sited in places that get significant foot traffic. Such measures also help give a facility a strong identity within and perhaps outside of the community.
- **Mixing use of space** for people who pay for Internet connections with those who get free connections, thereby increasing the number of drop-ins and casual contacts, and facilitating community-wide use of the center. However, this issue must be handled delicately so as not to exacerbate class and income distinctions among residents.
- **Engaging in partnerships** with existing community institutions, such as schools, libraries, and community centers to leverage the resources of the CTC and those of other institutions.
- **Creating programming agendas that target community issues** in order to: leverage the potential of technology; lure potential partners; and attract a broader funding base.
- **Allowing the space to be used for multiple purposes** such as community meetings and celebrations.



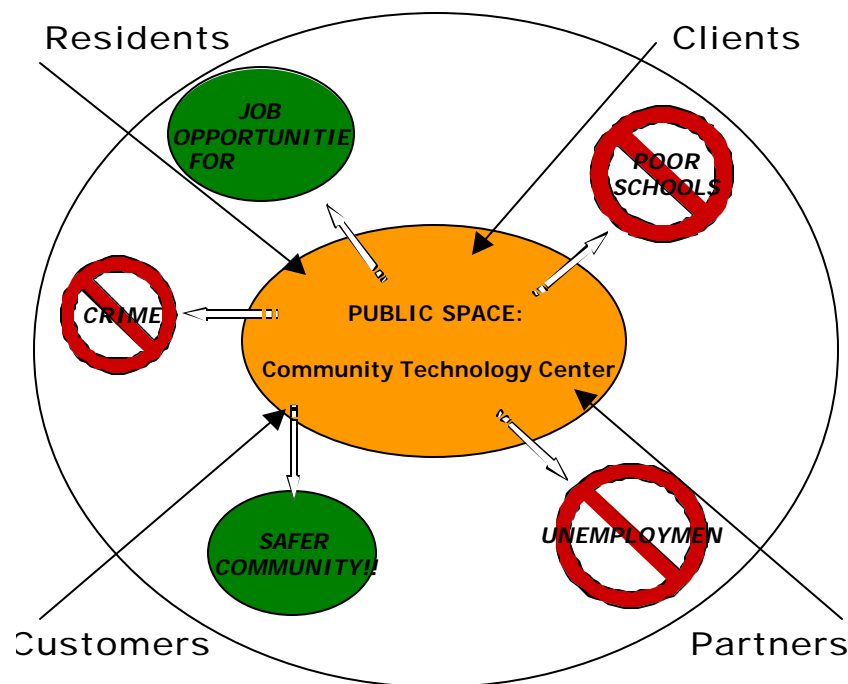
### PART III: RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this research, we believe that funders can play a key role by seeding efforts to create important synergies between community development and community technology as illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3. Figure 2 shows the mutual learning that can come from examining and building upon the target areas currently shared by both the community technology and community development movements. Given that these two movements are somewhat entrenched in their own spheres, funders can create these spaces and help to implement the learning that results.



**Figure 2: Synergies Between Community Development and Community Technology**

Figure 3 illustrates some of the issues that CTCs can work to impact, both by creating positive opportunities and helping to rid neighborhoods of problems, by relying on the contributions of other community partners and clients, as well as staff.



**Figure 3: CTs as Catalysts for Community Change**

Our specific recommendations of where appropriate support and guidance from funders can help CTCs to leverage their technology and their position as new community institutions are as follows:

- *Bridge the community technology/community development gap.* Our research and the work of others (Seedco 2002; Fowells & Lazarus 2001; Pinkett 2002) make a strong case for funders to bring together the community development and community technology fields. We believe that a positive first step would be to host a convening of leading-edge thinkers in both the community technology field and the community development field. Leaders in both these fields should come together as soon as possible to help shape the short-term effort we propose below and seed the longer-term movement we are trying to create.
- *Fund select CTCs that are acting as broad community agents or have the capacity to do so.* A key group of CTCs has the intellectual capacity to take on broader community issues—they understand the benefits and can make the mental leap from what they are doing now to funding broader activities. However, they do not have the organizational and resource capacity—in terms of space, funds, or staff—to take on this work. These CTCs could set an example for others if, through a structured grant process, they were encouraged to plan strategically to take on community development, and find the partners to do so. Planning grants could support research, reflection, and other costs that help the CTC define a broader relationship with the

communities it serves, and raise the required match for the implementation phase.

- *Fund locally-driven strategies with regional connections.* Field experts and practitioners agree that there is no cookie-cutter approach that will work, and that efforts must connect strongly to a community-driven agenda. According to Fowells, “With Computers in our Future, we didn’t impose the details of the model on the organizations. We didn’t mandate the types of classes and activities that were to be held. Some of the organizations were frustrated at the beginning, but it turned out well in the end. It led to community-driven forums, where both sides were asking, ‘What do you want or need most?’ It was also locally-driven in terms of relevant content. Programs were designed that enabled and enhanced that kind of flexibility.” We believe we have begun this process through our place-making exercises. Implementation grants, following the planning grant process, would encourage leading CTCs to put strategic plans in place that would be designed to:
  - i. Increase the capacity of CTCs to become a force for positive social change at the community level;
  - ii. Expand the range of financial resources for CTC programming, management and maintenance;
  - iii. Strengthen the capacity of CTCs to leverage other community institutions through technology, with particular emphasis on community development issues such as education, workforce development, and crime;
  - iv. Help CTCs function more effectively as active public spaces and community institutions.

Based on these recommendations, we propose a joint process involving two primary activities:

1. **Planning and implementation grant process** that would allow leading-edge CTCs to build a strategic plan, identify partnerships, and begin to build capacity in order to implement change at this level.
2. **Convening Community Technology and Community Development leaders** on an ongoing basis to discuss and evaluate the efficacy of further research and funding into the community technology/community development/public space connection.

### **Activity I: Planning and Implementation**

Our research, combined with the severe drop in traditional funding for CTCs suggests that CTCs must broaden their mission and diversify their funding sources to succeed. We therefore propose a two-step funding process to encourage CTC leaders to look beyond their traditional sources, identify needs within their community, involve residents in planning, and secure partners in a strategic planning process. Then, having identified the areas in which they need support, and others that can be supported through partnerships, grantees

can apply for implementation grants, with matching funds from their partners, to enact their strategic plans.

## *PLANNING*

We envision that the planning process would enable participating CTCs to take on tasks such as the following:

### **1. Foster an orientation that is broad enough to encompass a community development agenda, for example, via asset mapping and place analysis.**

CTCs that best lend themselves to catalyzing broader community change have a mission or an orientation toward their work that seeks to address community development issues. For some centers this orientation comes about organically, as a result of being housed within a multi-service or community development organization that has traditionally wrestled with such issues. However, there are a number of centers located within multi-service and community development organizations that remain focused somewhat narrowly on access and training, and have not thought about ways of building bridges between their technology centers and the other work they do. For stand-alone centers that incorporate a broader focus, community development is either an explicit part of their mission or they evolved and reoriented their work over time to take on such concerns.

Regardless, a broader community orientation does not happen by accident. Center leadership must take proactive steps to leverage their resources for community building purposes. For this to happen, it is critically important that residents and staff understand how their work is situated within a larger community context. During our site visits to Playing2Win and Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, we found the “Place Game” and the ensuing conversation about neighborhood issues to be particularly useful in encouraging attendees to look at their center from a community-wide perspective. Other exercises such as community asset-mapping, surveying, focus groups, and strategic planning could be done instead of or in conjunction with the Place Game.

### **2. Solicit resident involvement in identifying, understanding and addressing community issues.**

Like any organization seeking to revitalize a community, leading CTCs must solicit the involvement of residents in identifying, understanding and addressing community issues. This can be achieved through a number of strategies such as involving participants in the design or redesign of the physical space; creating an internal décor that reflects their work (e.g., digital artwork on the walls); or charging annual (usually nominal) dues for membership. Other examples include resident committee membership and resident board membership, as well as regular community surveys, focus groups, and open forums to voice their concerns, shape existing programs, and initiate new programs. Ongoing activities such as these allow CTCs to ground their perspective of relevant issues such as education, housing, workforce development, health and the like.

### **3. Identify ways to make the center more visible, accessible and inviting and devise ways to convert participants’ energy and interest into meaningful collective action.**

The success of any CTC, regardless of how it is measured, is dependent on its ability to draw community members into its space. By paying careful attention to architecture, the layout of

physical space, and other design considerations, CTCs can attract diverse people with diverse ideas. In fact, it is here that we have found the guiding principles of public space to be particularly useful.

However, CTCs must not only take deliberate steps to make their centers more accessible and inviting, they must also take deliberate steps to simultaneously translate their members' participation into meaningful action. This can be accomplished by involving participants directly in the planning and implementation of community development programs as described above, or by leveraging the skills being developed by residents at the center to enhance the CTC's effectiveness or the effectiveness of other local organizations. There are examples of CTCs that have enlisted residents as technical staff, technical help desk attendants, technology consultants, and employees in CTC-based small businesses (e.g., web design, desktop publishing, etc.). In some, but not all of these examples, residents are helping to strengthen the capacity of the CTC or other community-based organizations (CBOs) in ultimately addressing community issues.

#### **4. Enhance CTCs ability to manage supply and demand for their services.**

Although visibility and accessibility are problems for some CTCs, many face demand for their programs that far exceeds what they can deliver. For example, one of our research sites, Playing2Win, currently faces much greater demand from the community than it can meet, and routinely must turn away many of the community residents that want to participate in its programs. Other programs, such as a recent e-business workshop, were eliminated because the funding for the program was limited to two years. Despite the popularity and positive evaluation of this program, and its connection to the needs identified by community residents, P2W did not have the resources to sustain it. This mismatch between supply and demand exists despite the issues raised by workshop participants regarding visibility, etc.

#### **5. Partner with other community organizations or coordinate with other internal service delivery entities.**

CTCs can only undertake community development work to the extent they have the expertise to do so in-house or have partnered with other community organizations that have this expertise. For a stand-alone facility, taking on this work often means partnering with particular organizations to address specific issues such as a school for education, a community development corporation (CDC) for housing, a job training center for workforce development, and a health clinic for health. For a CTC located in a multi-service agency, such work often requires coordinating efforts with other service delivery entities internal to the parent organization along the same lines.

Partnerships are a critical component that promote a CTC's role as a community change agent for three reasons. First, partnerships avoid redundancy of effort. They enable CTCs to augment rather than duplicate the efforts of more established organizations in the longstanding arena of community development. Second, they avoid reinvention of the wheel. Community development is an entirely new domain for some CTCs. Partnerships leverage the experience of CBOs that have been doing this work for years. Third, partnerships offer the best ongoing source of diversified funding for CTCs in communities. Many community institutions lack the technical expertise and hardware to adequately train and provide for their constituents. CTCs can be a prime "contractor/partner" to a library, school or other community institution that would rather invest in them than in an IT

program itself. At the same time, more partners are not necessarily better. CBOs have expressed wariness about engaging in partnerships that might dilute their resources or extend them in ways that are ultimately unhealthy. All parties must enter into partnerships strategically, with a sense of clarity around the specifics each partner will give and receive (Glickman & Servon, 1999).

Interestingly, some CTCs are functioning in this partner role as described in *Community Technology Centers as Technology Assistance Providers to Nonprofit & Community Based Organizations: Emerging Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges* (CTCNet, 2002) published by CTCNet. The report found that CTCs deliver services to other nonprofits ranging from staff training to technology planning to technical support. Other CTCs recognize the need to build their capacity in the area of technology and community development. In doing so, they enlist the assistance of universities as well as nonprofit and for-profit TA providers.

#### **6. Develop sufficient capacity to undertake a community development agenda.**

A final theme that emerged during our work was the need for CTCs to possess sufficient capacity to undertake a community development agenda. Many of the aforementioned success factors are diminished if not nullified when a CTC does not have the space, staffing, resources and expertise to take on this work. Naturally, capacity can be strengthened through partnerships but partnerships alone are not enough.

Capacity building can take several forms. Generally speaking, it can include expanding the centers' space, increasing the number of staff, training staff in community development practices, and upgrading the centers' hardware and software infrastructure. With respect to CTCs as catalysts for community change, this also includes building their specific capacity (as well as their community partners' capacity, if relevant) to use technology for community development.

The use of technology for community development is an emerging field with a growing body of specialized knowledge. Its locus is found at the intersection between the work of community technology centers, community-based organizations and nonprofit technology assistance providers or strategic technology consultants who work with CBOs to strengthen their technology and community development capabilities.

Interestingly, some CTCs are functioning in this role as described in *Community Technology Centers as Technology Assistance Providers to Nonprofit & Community Based Organizations: Emerging Practices, Opportunities, and Challenges* (CTCNet, 2002) published by CTCNet. The report found that CTCs deliver services to other nonprofits ranging from staff training to technology planning to technical support. Other CTCs recognize the need to build their capacity in the area of technology and community development. In doing so, they enlist the assistance of universities as well as nonprofit and for-profit TA providers.

### ***IMPLEMENTATION***

Grantees, having finished the planning phase, could apply for implementation grants to begin addressing the needs identified in their strategic plans. A proposed time frame for planning and implementation appears below.

## **Activity II: Convene Community Technology and Community Development Leaders**

In *Surely Someone Knows How To Do This: Organizing Information Flows of Community Technology Centers*, Sandor and Scheuerer (2000) presented the following findings concerning the challenges to sharing and exchanging best practices among CTCs:

- Information seeking is difficult.
- Online information resources do exist.
- Community technology staff look for information they can trust.
- People are the greatest resource.
- Staff seek more networking opportunities.
- Staff need better access to documentation of others' practices.

In summary, although information resources for CTCs do exist, there is still a need to expand staff's networks to gain greater access to trusted people and documentation of others' practices. These findings are also directly relevant to the role of CTCs in building their local communities. The distinguishing factor here is that CTCs doing community development work need access to other CTCs doing community development work, which adds yet another layer of complexity to their already difficult search. Our findings suggest that an exchange at this level is only taking place on a limited basis even among leading CTCs and therefore needs to happen more often.

Therefore, we suggest a forum of community technology and community development leaders and field experts, be convened to cross-pollinate lessons and strategies. Program grantees, by definition the vanguard of CTCs engaged in community development work, should be convened regularly along with this forum, to share success stories and lessons, and gather additional resources.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

Below is a timeline for next steps that we recommend be taken between now and the beginning of Phase 3 of this project – the implementation grant phase. We envision Phase 2 as a pilot to fund 3-5 CTCs nationwide to prepare project plans that will be the basis for Phase 3 activities. Phase 2 plans will require participating CTCs to assess the issues and opportunities in their communities, and engage local community partners to work with them on creating a plan to address these issues. The deliverable for Phase 2, then, will be a project plan. We envision the work of the research team to consist of:

- structuring and framing the conversations with the community technology/community development advisory board
- briefing CTC participants on our work thus far
- training and consulting with CTCs regarding how to approach assessment and planning tasks in their communities
- conceptualizing tools to be created for Phase 3 that would be used to bring the project to scale

1. November/December 2002: Create an Advisory Board of community technology leading edge practitioners and field experts.
2. Select CTCs to participate in Phase 2 pilot. The purpose of these pilots would be to test our findings on a small scale by enabling 5 - 6 local CTCs to engage in a project linked to broader issues in its community. We believe that, for this pilot phase, it will be important to select CTCs that: already have a mission that extends beyond technology; have active and engaged stakeholders; and are stable enough in their existing operations to take on this kind of new project. We would aim to select stand-alone CTCs, CTCs that are part of multi-service agencies, and CTCs that are part of networks.
3. January 2003: Convene a meeting with community technology and community development leaders and field experts". This meeting would represent a first step in bringing together the expertise and leadership of the community development and community technology fields.
4. February 2003: Convene CTCs. The purpose of this convening would be to present our Phase 1 findings to them and train them on how to construct their strategic plans.
5. March 2003: Conduct site visits at CTCs; consult with them—conduct Place exercise and help with conceptual design.
6. April-May, 2003: Follow-up site visits, where needed.
7. June 2003: Convene all CTCs. CTCs would bring drafts of their final plans to present at this meeting and must also bring community partners.
8. August 31, 2003: Final plan due from CTCs.
9. September 2003: Phase 3 begins. Participating CTCs to be selected from those that participated in Phase 2, implementation grants begin.



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## **APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED**

Laura Breeden, 13 September 2002  
Linda Fowells, 20 September 2002  
Betty Marver, 23 September 2002  
Ana Sisnett, 17 July 2002

## APPENDIX B: CHARACTERISTICS OF US CTCs

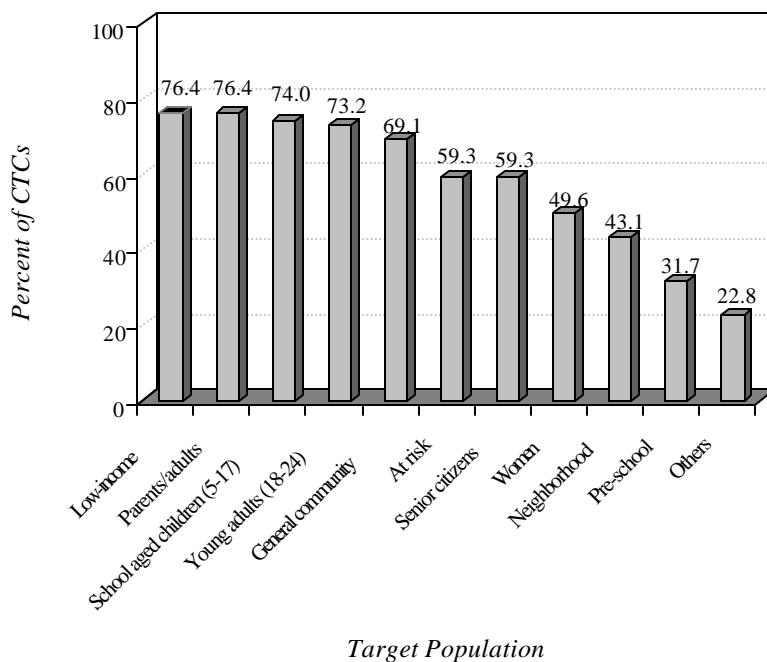
The following information comes from a mail survey of 328 US CTCs conducted during the summer of 1999.<sup>6</sup>

### Target Population

More than three-quarters of survey respondents target low-income populations and parents/adults (Figure 1). Nearly equal percentages provide services and programs for school-age children (72.1 percent) and young adults (71.3 percent). More than half (59.3 percent) of CTCs offer programs for senior citizens and women.

Whereas 70 percent of CTCs serve the general community, 43.1 percent target geographically defined neighborhoods. Nearly a quarter (22.8 percent) of respondents serve other constituencies, including homeless and mentally ill populations, recent immigrants, artists, and HIV-positive individuals and people with AIDS.

**Figure 1: Target Populations Served by CTCs**



### Services Provided

CTCs provide a multitude of services and programs ranging from health services and counseling to transitional housing and library services. Despite the wide diversity among CTCs, the survey results indicate that overall there is a strong emphasis among CTCs on education and job preparedness. Over half of all respondents provide adult education and

<sup>6</sup> The information presented here comes from Servon and Nelson 1999. The response rate was 37.2 percent.

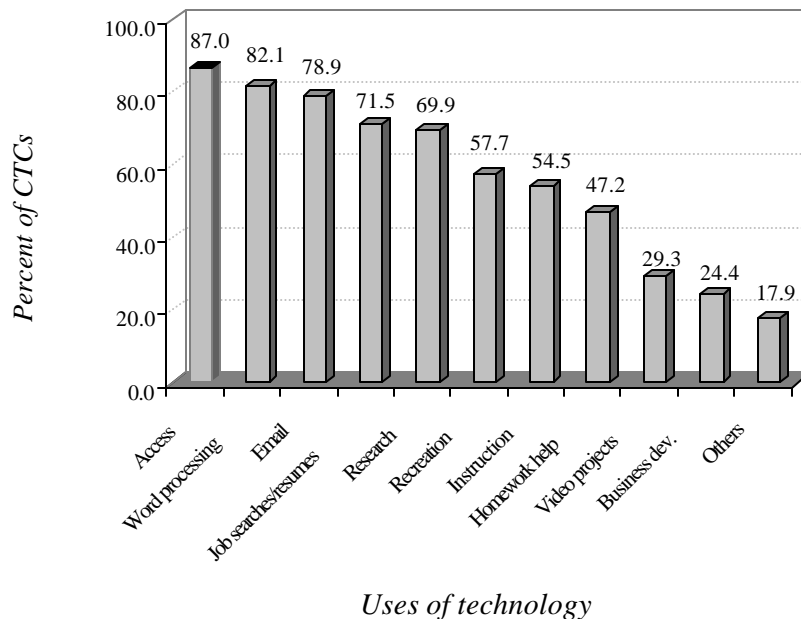
literacy (56.6 percent), general youth development (53.3 percent), and tutoring (51.6 percent). More than 40 percent of all CTCs focus on job training while 35.2 percent work on youth employment and school-to-career services. During the course of interviews, some CTC directors and field experts explained this focus on job training as a function of available funding dollars. It is possible that CTCs engage in workforce development partly because it is easier to fund than are other activities. In addition to their emphasis on education and training, nearly half (46.7) of CTCs provide community development functions, 37.7 percent engage in advocacy and 41.8 percent provide other services.

### **Uses of Technology**

In line with their emphasis on education and training, 82.1 percent of CTCs use technology to build word-processing and keyboarding skills (Figure 2). Over 70 percent use technology to conduct job searches and build resumes, more than half (54.5 percent) offer computer-based instruction, and 47.2 percent provide homework help.

The most common use of technology at CTCs, however, is to provide unstructured computer access. Eighty seven percent of CTCs offer general computer access and more than three-quarters (78.9 percent) use technology as a communication tool (i.e., offering access to e-mail). In addition, over half (57.7 percent) of CTCs indicated that technology is used in their programs for recreation and entertainment. Fewer, yet still significant, percentages of CTCs use technology for video projects (29.3 percent) and business development (24.4 percent).

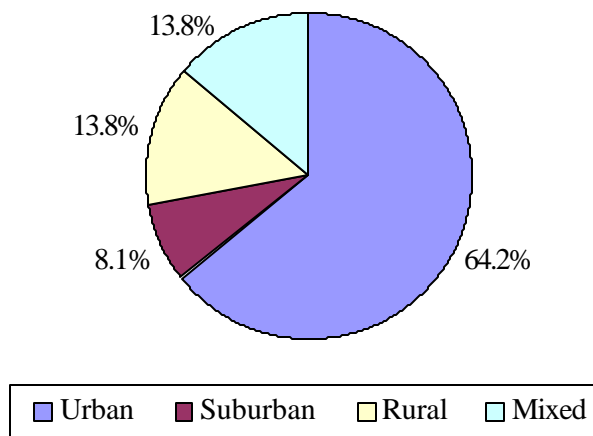
**Figure 2: Uses of Technology in CTC Programs**



### **Area Served and Location**

In terms of geographic area, nearly two-thirds (64.2 percent) of CTCs are located in, and serve, urban areas (Figure 3). Trailing behind urban-based CTCs are those that serve rural and mixed communities, each of which account for 13.9 percent of CTCs. Suburban-based CTCs had the lowest showing, representing only 8.1 percent of survey respondents. All of the CTCs we visited were located in urban areas.

**Figure 3: Geographic Areas Served by CTCs**



Survey results showed that most CTCs (57.4 percent) operate their technology programs within previously existing CBOs. Nearly a quarter (24.6 percent) are located in housing-project communities. Smaller shares of CTCs offer technology services and programs at schools (18.9 percent) and libraries (15.6 percent). Nearly two-fifths (38.5 percent) of CTCs indicated that they offer their technology services and programs at other locations, including stand-alone computing centers, mobile computer labs, public-access television centers and, in one instance, a beauty salon. Many CTCs offer their services and programs at multiple locations.

## APPENDIX C: PLACE WORKSHOP RESULTS, DATA AND DISCUSSION

### Workshops at Playing2Win and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation

On September 25 and October 1, we held workshops at Playing2Win and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. The goals of these placemaking exercises were to understand the ways in which key stakeholders at P2W and BSRC thought about the space the CTC occupied and the work the CTC did, and how this space and work related to larger issues in the communities. Figure 4 illustrates the objectives of these workshops.

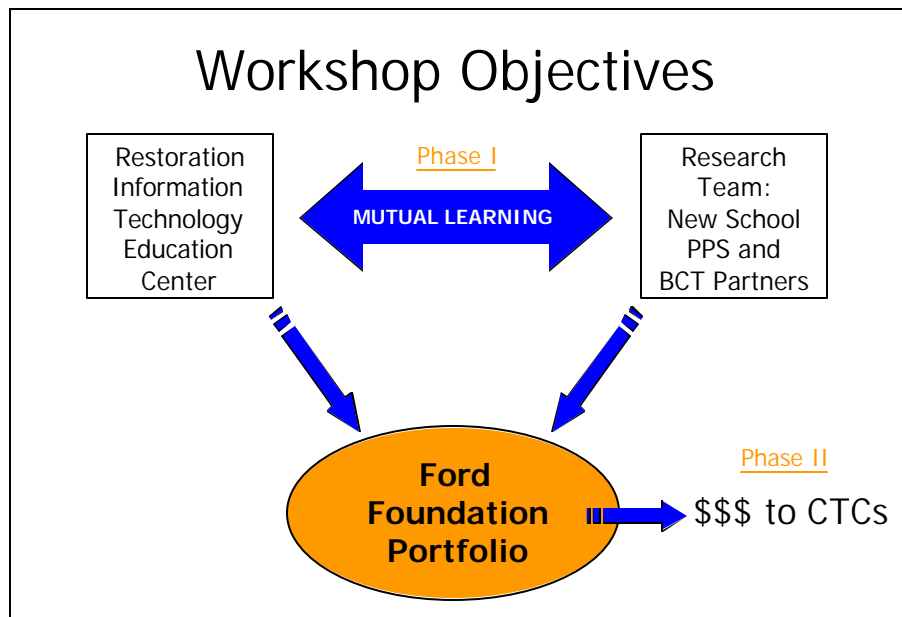


Figure 4: Workshop Objectives

During our site visits to Playing2Win and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation (BSRC), we distributed a survey at the beginning of each workshop. The purpose of the surveys was to identify community issues such that the results, which were compiled and analyzed during the placemaking exercise, could serve as a basis for discussion at the end of the workshop.

The surveys consisted of the following five questions (note that for the fourth question, participants were given a list of twelve candidate issues):

- What is the best thing about living or working in this community?
- What are some of the challenges facing this community?
- If you could change one thing about this community, what would it be?
- Please rank the top three issues that you think are the most important in this neighborhood?
- In what ways can technology—and this CTC in particular—help to address the issues and problems identified above?

The findings from the surveys are discussed below.

### ***PLAYING2WIN***

Based on the information we gathered from workshop participants who completed surveys, we concluded that the overarching issues in the neighborhood surrounding Playing2Win were as follows:

- *Increase available jobs/job training* – The lack of available jobs was the second most commonly identified challenge facing the community, the top ranked issue, and the most frequent suggestion for how Playing2Win could help address community issues. Some of the ideas that were generated during discussion included a business incubator that could build upon Playing2Wins existing entrepreneurship training program, job training for adults and job matching with local employers.
- *Improve the schools* – Education was identified as one of the top challenges and the quality of schools was among the top ranked issues. During the final discussion, a number of ideas were generated to address this issue such as building the technology capacity of local schools, teacher training, and continuing the after school tutoring program at Playing2Win.
- *Reduce crime* – Crime was the number one challenge facing the community, the second most popular thing people said they would change and about the community and the third-ranked issue identified by participants. There was general consensus that Playing2Win already helps to reduce crime by keeping people off the streets and offering productive activities for people to spend their time.
- *Expand activities for youth* – The need for more youth programs was most commonly identified as the thing people would change about the community. In fact, the area of youth development was generally acknowledged as one of Playing2Win's strengths.

### ***BEDFORD STUYVESANT RESTORATION CORPORATION***

Based on the information we gathered from workshop participants who completed surveys, we concluded that the overarching issues in the neighborhood surrounding BSRC were as follows:

- *Make businesses and their products/services more accessible* – The need for better businesses and a wider range of products and services was the top challenge facing participants. Furthermore, the need for better businesses was the most commonly cited thing about the community participants would change, and the accessibility of businesses that serve our needs was the third most important issue according to participants. One of the suggestions that was made during the wrap-up discussion was for the RITE center to support the financial and technological needs of local entrepreneurs as a means to address this issue.



- *Expand job opportunities/job training* – Jobs and job training programs in the community was one of the top challenges faced by participants as well as the second most popular suggestion in terms of the RITE center's role in the community. Additionally, the availability of good jobs was the second-ranked issue by participants. At the end of the workshop, it was suggested that the RITE center establish stronger ties between its technology training activities and the workforce development activities at BSRC.
- *Improve schools/educational opportunities* – The quality of public schools was participants' top-ranked issue. Similarly, the need for more classes that promote education was the most popular response in terms of ways the RITE center could address community issues. Although the RITE center is already focused on providing training courses and other educational opportunities for Brooklyn residents, it was also clear that the center could play an even stronger role by working with local schools, expanding its existing programming, as well as offering new courses based on residents' needs.
- *Other issues* – Other issues that were prevalent in the survey results at BSRC included crime, the need for affordable housing and the importance of residents having a voice in political issues.

### **Playing2Win Place Game Results**

Sept. 25, 2002

#### ***PLACE EVALUATIONS - OUTSIDE***

1. **Comfort & Image** – most participants rated comfort & image fair to poor; they noted the lack of benches or other places to sit in the immediate area (though some mentioned Central Park's and the circle at 110<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>'s relative proximity); most of them thought the area was safe, despite some negative behavior, based on its general business; the look of the newer building across 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. was cited as a bright spot in the 'hood; lack of cleanliness on the street and sidewalk was a major issue, as was the smell emanating from the sewer
2. **Access & Linkage** – the consensus here was that access to transit and walkability were great, but signage for and visibility of P2W was severely lacking
3. **Uses & Activities** – no consensus here: some thought that there was all that you need in a neighborhood, while others wished for a greater mix of businesses and services, including a library and some place selling fruits and vegetables; food options were given generally positive ratings, though some perceived the businesses as not adding much to the neighborhood
4. **Sociability** – busy street, lots of folks know one another, but some negative social activity, mostly dealing, was going on; one teen mentioned the lack of youth employment opportunities leading to negative social behavior; another noted that the number of folks out on the street was good because it gave the area an opportunity to change for the better

### *IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES - OUTSIDE*

1. **What is best about this place:** easy access to MTA was top on the list, as was P2W's existence in this location; the generous food options in the area were mentioned, as well.
2. **Quick, cheap improvements:** planting trees and flowers, adding some benches and cleaning up the trash would make the area more inviting; adding more street lighting and lighting by the entrance to P2W would make it safer and more visible; paint a big mural on the wall outside P2W; enlarge P2W's windows; make the entrance to P2W more identifiable as a technology center and what it does; organize interesting community-oriented activities for all ages
3. **3 long term, big impact changes:** add a library to the block/neighborhood; close the streets for certain hours for kids to play; make a taller, wider, more visible entrance, with more glass; improve P2W's location to the corner or to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave.; encourage entrepreneurship in the neighborhood and partnering with other community organizations was also mentioned
4. **What someone who is in the "place" likes about it and what they would do to improve it:** people liked the "feel" of the neighborhood, the people; cleaning up the dealing was cited as one of the major improvements needed, as was better NYPD relations, more attention from the politicians, and a partnership for P2W with the local school
5. **Local partnerships/talent that could help implement these changes:** the neighboring school, local churches, tenants' and block associations, and local stores could be partners; many participants thought partnering with the video store on the corner for educational and entrepreneurial purposes was a good idea, as well; also could partner with Youth Build, and other community organizations; support could be given via the mayor's office, the city council and local reps

### *PLACE EVALUATIONS – INSIDE*

1. **Comfort & Image** – averaged fair to good; the space is inviting, but could be more comfortable; there is need for more space, in general
2. **Access & Linkage** – access to technology is excellent, but the flow of the space needs to be improved; should be classes on Saturdays;
3. **Uses & Activities** - there are lots of activities going on; could be more IT staff and newer and better equipment
4. **Sociability** - it's a good place to socialize and interact; could be more partnerships

### *IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES – INSIDE*

1. **What is best about this place:** the access to technology, multitude of activities and the space's inviting appearance;

2. **Quick, cheap improvements:** change the layout of the entrance area; improve signage to both inside and outside; paint the lounge, make it more colorful and keep it cleaner; change the artwork on the walls (it has been there forever); put up curtains; divide work areas from the offices better
3. **3 long term, big impact changes:** change the layout to improve flow in the space; entrance should be moved to 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. to make it more accessible and visible; hire more IT staff and improve security
4. **What someone who is in the “place” likes about it and what they would do to improve it:** appealing colors in the space; would relocate non-P2W tenants, so P2W could have more space
5. **Local partnerships/talent that could help implement these changes:** Youth Build! Columbia University; local banks; 125<sup>th</sup> St. Development Corp.; tenants organization; churches; scholarship programs; counseling programs

## **RITE Place Game Results**

Oct. 1, 2002

### ***PLACE EVALUATIONS – EAST PLAZA, NEAR PATHMARK***

1. **Comfort & Image** – notch above fair: needs more color, more plantings; plaza is “dull”; feels safe and well-maintained; seating is fair, could be better
2. **Access & Linkage** – between fair and poor: Restoration not easily identified at a distance; walkability rated fair due to unsafe infrastructure that is easy to stumble into; transit access is excellent; access to wheelchairs, on the other hand, is very poor, with steep ramps, a wheelchair access point frequently gated off and locked, and a ramp to a building that runs right into glass doors
3. **Uses & Activities** – poor mix of goods & services, with low to fair amount of economic viability; busy area, but a lack of engaging activities; what activities are there, are not well-promoted; it was mentioned that with all the people and traffic in the area, Restoration should be the hub of neighborhood activity, *the* central gathering place, but that it is not, due to poor signage (i.e. no signs on street corners) and lack of promotion and information; there are also no signs for the restrooms; should be an information kiosk and better signage
4. **Sociability** – good: people are out and about; little to no evidence of volunteerism in the area – it is mostly hidden (i.e. in the building); there was a good activity mix, especially for after-school and weekends; pride in area was given good to mixed reviews

### ***IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES - EAST PLAZA, NEAR PATHMARK***

1. **What is best about this place:** the potential of the space, its convenience and access to transit;
2. **3 quick, cheap improvements:**
  - a. add more color to the landscape, some plantings; have volunteers from Bed Stuy take care of flowers, plantings;
  - b. teach gardening; get a plant business in one of the storefronts
  - c. signs & directions; an information kiosk
3. **3 long term, big impact changes:**
  - a) get a nice sit-down restaurant as a tenant, or a café (or both)
  - b) improve advertising and programming for Billy Holiday Theater
  - c) event programming – late night shopping once/week with live music
4. **What someone who is in the “place” likes about it and what they would do to improve it:** need better handicapped gate to Pathmark, as it’s often locked; no signs
5. **Local partnerships/talent that could help implement these changes:**  
Billy Holiday Theater; Youth Arts; Senior Citizen’s Council

### ***PLACE EVALUATIONS – WEST PLAZA, NEAR FULTON ST. ENTRANCE***

1. **Comfort & Image** – fair: plaza is attractive, but somewhat dingy

2. **Access & Linkage** – fair to poor, though access to transit was rated good; steps from the street were noted as being unsafe to walk up and unattractive; why no wheelchair ramp?; very poor signage from the street and even from within the plaza; no sense of what “Restoration” is
3. **Uses & Activities** – good: good mix of stores; very nice to have Post Office there; newsstand was bustling; not much activity going on in upstairs part of buildings; some events on the weekends, but not frequent; generally a busy, active plaza, though
4. **Sociability** – good; lots of groups, children and seniors

***IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES - WEST PLAZA, NEAR FULTON ST. ENTRANCE***

1. **What is best about this place:** fact that the businesses, services and activities are there
2. **Quick, cheap improvements:**
  - a) directory of services/businesses posted on Fulton St.; more signs, in general
  - b) some benches; people currently sitting on steps and ledges
  - c) advertising on trains, etc.
  - d) more greenery; flower boxes
  - e) music in the plaza
  - f) better lighting
3. **Long term, big impact changes:**
  - a) better access ramps for wheelchairs
  - b) face lift façade, add lighting from Fulton St.
  - c) add greenhouse as business behind façade
  - d) fountain/sculpture in center of plaza
4. **What someone who is in the “place” likes about it and what they would do to improve it:** likes the structure of the plaza, but thinks that there should be more activities, especially for youth and children
5. **Local partnerships/talent that could help implement these changes:** local musicians, so they could play in the plaza

***PLACE EVALUATIONS – INSIDE RITE***

1. **Comfort & Image** – fair: safety was good, security was present and attentive at both entrances; lighting is bad (in the lobby); well-maintained, but not clean (specifically the lobby bathrooms); no places to sit in the lobby; RITE’s other facility is not very safe, poorly lit
2. **Access & Linkage** – signage and info was poor, RITE not identifiable from lobby; directory is in the wrong place
3. **Uses & Activities** – no place to eat; events, activities and what Restoration is and does needs more publicity; used to be a skating rink outside
4. **Sociability** – good/fair: busy area, but needs more publicity; there is no common reason for people to be there because so many different things going on at once, so sociability suffers

### ***IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES – INSIDE RITE***

1. **What is best about this place:** the center itself and the services it provides are pivotal to community's past, present and future
2. **Quick, cheap improvements:**
  - a) clean and monitor the bathrooms
  - b) improved signage in lobby: some kind of directory and/or info kiosk; should be bilingual and posted in braille
  - c) get donations of paper so people can print things out (could incubate a small office supply business)
  - d) allow a food vendor to sell in the lobby
3. **3 long term, big impact changes:**
  - a) incubate businesses on Fulton St. and in plaza from RITE center; businesses would get training and technical support from Restoration; would advance the need for African American-owned businesses, boost the "black economy";
  - b) training employees of businesses in area, providing education would have the effect of raising the level of service
  - c) increase bilingual services, outreach
4. **What someone who is in the "place" likes about it and what they would do to improve it:** N/A
5. **Local partnerships/talent that could help implement these changes:** Restoration already has connection with local merchants' association, should build on that; could connect with WEP program to have a matron program for Restoration Plaza