1996

Citizen leadership and housing: a study of how citizens are leading efforts to revitalize neighborhoods in the city of Richmond

Gregory J. Czika

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses

Part of the Leadership Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Czika, Gregory J., "Citizen leadership and housing: a study of how citizens are leading efforts to revitalize neighborhoods in the city of Richmond" (1996). Honors Theses. 1134.
https://scholarship.richmond.edu/honors-theses/1134

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at UR Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of UR Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact scholarshiprepository@richmond.edu.
Citizen Leadership and Housing:
A study of how citizens are leading efforts to revitalize
neighborhoods in the City of Richmond
by
Gregory J. Czika

Senior Project
Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond
April, 1996
Citizen Leadership and Housing:
A study of how citizens are leading efforts to revitalize neighborhoods in the City of Richmond.

by

Gregory J. Czika

SENIOR PROJECT
Leading Change

Jepson School of Leadership Studies
University of Richmond
Richmond, VA

April 15, 1996
TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. Introduction 1

B. Definition of Citizen Leadership 5

C. Purpose of the Study and Methodology 7

D. Profiles:

1. Barbara Abernathy pg. 10
2. Marion Moshoe pg. 11
3. Yvonne Spain pg. 15
4. Mary Thompson pg. 17
5. Bernice Lewis pg. 19
6. Clay Shepherd pg. 21

D. Research and Analysis 24

E. Conclusions 46

F. Works Cited 48

G. Appendices 50

1. Illustrations pp. 50-4
2. Glossary of Housing Terminology pp. 55
3. Listing of Civic Leagues profiled pp. 56
4. Questions used in the interviews pp. 57-8
INTRODUCTION

Cary Street is familiar to every University of Richmond student. Throughout the year, Cary St. is the primary link between the University of Richmond and everything downtown has to offer: popular restaurants and bars, unique shops, indoor and outdoor concerts, numerous festivals, sporting arenas, and the many parks scattered along the James River. During the football season, UR fans channel east in route to the game. In the spring time UR students impress their family and friends with the sites and scenes along Cary St. as they drive into downtown Richmond. Along the way folks are amazed by the beautiful mansions of the West End. They are delighted with the liveliness of Carytown and Shockoe Bottom. With its rich southern atmosphere enhanced by the remnants of the original tobacco warehouses, these areas in the city of Richmond never fail to thrill its visitors. But there is that one section of Cary St. along the car ride which few like to talk about. At night it is very poorly lit and in the day it is a far contrast from Carytown and Shockoe Bottom. When driving through this portion, which is primarily residential, UR students roll up their windows and ignore it and hope that their family and friends won’t ask “the” question. Are we still on Cary St.?

This paper is going to focus on areas in the city of Richmond much like the one previously mentioned. All of them are residential and are not known by tourists and typically not familiar to suburban Richmond residents. The average UR student would never voluntarily tour these neighborhoods on foot or in a car. But out of ignorance, such individuals do not acknowledge the richness that does
exist in these areas they choose to ignore. The richness is not found in bright paint, smooth sidewalks, or neon signs but found in the many people who make these areas their homes--people who are determined to make a difference.

Over the past few years there has been tremendous initiative by city government and other city agencies, in conjunction with civic leagues and other neighborhood coalitions, to revitalize the decaying neighborhoods on Cary street and throughout the city of Richmond. Few passers-bys probably realize the significant changes that have recently taken place on Cary St. The Cary Mews project which began in April of 1993 transformed nearly an entire block of blighted structures into brand new townhouses and apartments (Betts).

Carver, a section of the city Richmond which lies adjacent to the VCU campus, is a as another example of an area that has experienced drastic housing improvements. Bound by West Marshall St. and West Leigh St. from Lombardy to Belvidere, the neighborhood has seen the rehabilitation of over 135 homes and the addition of over 35 new homes since 1986 (RRHA 2). Both Carver and Cary St, along with two other communities, Newtown South and Church Hill, will be mentioned extensively throughout the paper. They are merely four examples of numerous success stories of communities reshaping and rejuvenating throughout Richmond.

Few redevelopment initiatives would be possible if it were not for tax dollars, corporate gifts, and the efforts of the city government, the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing, and other non-profit organizations such as
Richmond Better Housing Coalition, Habitat for Humanity, and Interfaith, to name a few. But this paper is not about city government and non-profits involved in housing. None of their efforts would be necessary if it were not for the people in the neighborhoods they serve.

This study is concerned with the residents in Carver, in Newtown, or along Cary St. who want to make a difference in their neighborhoods both for themselves and, more so, for their fellow neighbors. It is a look at the people behind the scenes who are steadfast in their love and devotion to their communities. They are individuals who volunteer countless hours as the leaders of civic associations, by identifying the wants and needs in their neighborhoods, and by forming relationships with city officials and non-profits who can provide the resources to make their dreams come alive. These individuals are leaders in every sense of the word. The research conducted in this project will give evidence that Citizen Leadership is one of the most significant contributors to social change and in particular, with the redevelopment of our inner city neighborhoods.

The efforts of citizen leaders fuels political agendas, influences the actions of formal and/or elected officials, and directs the initiatives of community agencies devoted to ridding city neighborhoods of intolerable decay. Citizen leaders are at the front of virtually every redevelopment project underway throughout Richmond. Citizen leaders are the ones who, in essence, lead our government. In many respects, they are silent leaders. People not in touch with the community will never know that an ordinary, every-day resident was really the one who made it all
possible. The public will only see the words "City Council" or "RRHA" or "the Mayor" in the headlines when newspapers unveil the completion of a massive redevelopment project. It is time to give credit where credit is due.
LITERATURE REVIEW: What is Citizen Leadership?

Contemporary Definitions of Citizen Leadership

Citizen leaders have been defined by scholars of leadership as individuals who are concerned with improving the quality of life within their immediate community and care passionately about the issues facing their neighborhoods. Unlike elected officials who must attempt to please the masses, citizen leaders concentrate their efforts on smaller and often more homogeneous populations. “Citizens are powerful actors in public problem solving.” (Mabey 22) They are focused on promoting action from fellow citizens and are committed to producing results for their communities. Defined more specifically, citizen leaders “facilitate organized action to improve conditions of people in low-income communities and to address other basic needs of society at the local level” (Couto 135)

In 1990, The Center for Community Change published a special issue on leadership among residents in public housing. Not surprisingly, the descriptions of these leaders closely parallels the definition of citizen leadership set forth by Couto and Mabey.

Slowly, in places across the country, public housing is becoming better housing. Some recent federal policy changes have helped. But much of the improvement can be traced to public housing residents and their allies organizing to improve their environments.... Some resident groups primarily focus on saving their buildings from demolition. Others are coming together to reduce drug use and crime. More and more are organizing themselves into “resident management corporations” and have begun to partially manage their buildings. (Center for Community Change 1)
Not only are citizen leaders facilitators in the change process, but they are also motivators for other residents to take part in the change process. Couto, through his research and from his experiences, identified citizen leaders as a breed of transforming leaders who, by definition, engage others in efforts to reach higher levels of human awareness and relationships. The goal of the citizen leader is to “raise the floor beneath all members of a society, rather than to enable a few to touch its vaulted ceiling” (135).

Citizen leaders are persistent and demand results. “In all cases, they exhibit the leadership which occurs when people take sustained action to bring about change that will permit them continued or increased well-being” (Couto 136).

As long as our society continues to have variation between economic class or as long as there exist disparity between the incomes of different peoples, there will continue to be disparity between living conditions in different communities. For those individuals living in decaying neighborhoods, this means that the end to the deterioration will not happen overnight nor is it absolutely preventable. For this reason, the job of a citizen leader is, in many ways, never-ending. No leader can prevent deterioration; but a citizen leader can certainly ensure that it remains manageable.

The role of the citizen leader is not a glamorous one. Citizen leaders are pure volunteers who work long hard hours in addition to the responsibilities of paid professions and the many demands of every-day life. They are not in it for fame and fortune. Unfortunately but inevitably, it is formal leaders, elected to represent the
said community, who often receive the publicity and recognition for improving the community. Credit is not always given where credit is due.

*Purpose of the Study:*

This study will first investigate citizen leadership as it is currently understood by scholars of leadership studies. The aim of this project is to emphasize extensively the vital importance and significance of citizen action and leadership in efforts to improve housing conditions in the deteriorating inner cities. Citizen leadership, as it represents leadership behind the scenes, is equally significant as leadership provided by formal leaders in government and government related agencies.

The primary questions to be addressed are as follows: Who are these citizen leaders and what is it in their personalities, their backgrounds, or their life experiences which motivates them to voluntarily assume such extremely demanding leadership roles in their communities? To what extent do their efforts impact their communities and to what extent do citizen leaders impact political agendas and the actions of city officials?

*Methodology:*

The notion of Citizen Leadership will be investigated two ways. In the previous section and in sections to follow, a literature search was conducted to define what is currently understood and accepted about citizen leadership in general. The notion of citizen leadership is primarily explored through a series of
profiles drawn from interviews of six local citizen leaders. When possible, the literature research as well as the questions asked in the interviews aimed to focus on citizen leadership with respect to housing. (Appendix 4) In some instances, though, the analysis reaches beyond the issue of housing. All urban epidemics relate to or overlap one another; eg. crime, concentration of poverty, isolation of race, unemployment, disillusion of the family unit, problems in education. The citizen leaders who have been interviewed in this project have dealt with all of these issues. In many ways, their attempts to improve housing serve as catalysts in bringing about changes (improvements) in many of the other areas mentioned.

This study is based on qualitative research as it is “concerned with the understanding of social phenomenon from the perspective of those individuals studied.” (Schumacher - definition of a qualitative research study)

One of the final objectives, using all of the information from the literature research and primarily from the profiles, will be to define certain characteristics that seem to be common to all citizen leaders and particularly for those heavily involved in housing. Identifying such trends will aid practitioners and scholars in the pursuit of further understanding citizen leadership and the ways in which citizen leaders can be educated and developed.

This project is, by no means, a mere restatement of discoveries already made by other scholars of leadership. Rather, it is designed to define citizen leadership within a very specific context, one that does not currently occupy much space in library stacks. This context is: community change in the area of housing. As a
result the leaders, portrayed in the six profiles and discussed in the sections that follow, are the authorities I have appealed to in providing answers.

*Interviews - personal profiles:*

The purpose of the interviews were to analyze, up close and personal, the personalities, characteristics, and actions which make for successful citizen leaders in an effort to present a realistic portrayal of the phenomenon surrounding citizen leadership.

Other goals were to find out how and why these citizens found themselves in leadership roles. (Some did not even acknowledge that they are in fact leaders) The interviews were also used to investigate the ways in which these leaders have been involved with formal leaders in government and what have been the outcomes as a result of the relationships created.

The intent of the project was not to interview as many leaders as possible. Nor was it to be sure to interview one from every section of the city of Richmond. The intent, rather, was to get to know a select few as well as possible in the short amount of time allotted for this study. Sweeping generalities cannot and will not be made about the world's population of citizen leaders on the basis of these six local interview's. From this small cross section of civic leadership, though, one can illustrate some of the generalities that have already been set forth by scholars of leadership. Furthermore, an outcome of this study may be to begin drawing conclusions regarding the current status of citizen leadership in the struggle to improve housing in the city of Richmond.
**PROFILES**: Six Richmond Area Citizen Leaders

*Barbara Abernathy:*

Ms. Abernathy has been the president of the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) since 1990. Abernathy has lived in Richmond most of her life. "This area has always been fairly nice. When I was growing up, the more affluent blacks lived here... school teachers, nurses and doctors etc... I liked growing up then. We all looked out for one another and adults were regarded as authority figures." Abernathy was absent between 1963 to 1977 while she attended school and the neighborhood changed drastically. Somewhere along the line "people lost the sense of community that I had as a child growing up."

When Abernathy returned in the early 80's, she was determined to restore the Carver community she once knew. She has been very active in the community since her return and has now become a leader in the efforts to make Carver a happy and comfortable place to live. In addition to her responsibilities as president, she also serves on the CACIL housing committee. (Civic Leagues are concerned with any issues facing the community. Safety and Housing are typically the primary concerns.) She now resides in a rehabilitated home next to her sister. Both homes are examples of the kinds of rehabilitation occurring throughout the neighborhood.

CACIL, having between 25 and 35 active members, is one of the strongest civic leagues in the city. "I think we do real good compared to some of the other civic leagues" where attendance is a great concern. CACIL has jurisdiction over the area of the city adjacent to the VCU campus and bound by Lombardy St. and
Belvedere. Carver contains approximately 540 housing units with an estimated 75% in deteriorating condition (RRHA 3).

As mentioned earlier in the introduction of the paper, the neighborhood has changed drastically since 1986 when an aggressive redevelopment program was initiated by Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. Some efforts are running slightly behind schedule, but improvements will surely continue well into the future. Ms. Abernathy is very pleased with the changes that have taken place in her community over the last decade and she has very high hopes for the future.

One of the greatest accomplishments to date has been the construction of the Carver Townhomes. These 35 units are the result of a lease-purchase program initiated by RRHA to provide families from public housing opportunities for home ownership. A second grand accomplishment has been the rehabilitation of 14 inhabitable flats into seven beautiful townhomes. This was arranged also with the assistance of RRHA under a homesteading program. (Appendix 2) Finally, just weeks ago, CACIL celebrated the ground breaking of a neighborhood park, an idea generated years ago that has finally become a reality for the residents of Carver.

Marion Moshoe:

Marion Moshoe is the president of the Newtown Civic Improvement League. Newton (or Newtown South) is located between Pilkington and Hull Streets on the south side of Richmond. At one time there were 83 houses in the area and numerous churches. Through its lifetime, Newtown South has been home to five
neighborhood stores. The neighborhood has produced doctors, dentists, chemists, railroad workers, teachers, musicians, insurance agents, mail carriers, artists, and ministers. (NCIL 1)

Moshoe, now 79, was born and raised in Richmond and has lived in Newtown for over 40 years. He retired from American Tobacco Co. in 1979. Mr. Moshoe and his wife raised five daughters in the neighborhood; he now has five grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren, most of whom live in the Richmond area. Moshoe has a lot of fond memories of the neighborhood and a lot of ties with the surrounding community. It is frightening to think that the entire neighborhood may not have been standing today if it was not for the hard work and courageous efforts of Marion Moshoe.

The city was just waiting for the last few homes to sink into the ground before it would give industry the go-ahead to begin plowing all the memories away of the once vibrant southside neighborhood. Though a few households remained on solid ground they, would have soon been forced out. Sooner or later any residents who chose to stay would find their homes sitting in the middle of a factory parking lot. The city had rezoned Newtown from residential to light industrial. The neighborhood was already, and still is today, bound on one side by a Phillip Morris plant and to the other, by a shipping warehouse. The small community sandwiched in between was being pinched out by industry. (Williams)

Moshoe and his wife discussed the possibility of moving. After much thought, they decided they could never leave all of the memories behind. "This was
a nice neighborhood and I had been living here so long... and with all the children born and raised up in this neighborhood... so I made my move.” Moshoe decided that he, with the help of God, would not allow the zoning changes to go into effect without his voice being heard by city government.

A lot of things can get done in a neighborhood but somebody has to get the lead....somebody. It don’t take a whole lot of people... but somebody got to take the lead. Now I didn’t do this on my own... the Lord revealed this thing to me at night in a dream... Oh no, I didn’t do it on my own. God will show you things. And I’m proud of the neighborhood because I’ve been living’ here so long and frankly, I didn’t want to move but the place was going down... a lot of boarded up houses and all.

Moshoe, would walk from his neighborhood, on the south side of Richmond, across the 14th St. bridge, to city hall to talk with (city manager) Robert Bobb. He made the trek back and forth many times over the next few years.

We talked about the neighborhood. I explained to him (Bobb), ‘I’d like to set up a meeting with you at my house... you set the time.’ He said to me, ‘Well Mr. Moshoe, if somethin’ come up, I’ll get in touch with you.’ I said to him, if somethin’ happen, I’ll get in touch with you.’ (Moshoe and Bobb set the meeting time for 9a.m a month later.) “But the Lord had it fixed so nothin’ came up between that time... and at five minutes to nine, he rang my door bell.

They only talked for a short time, when Moshoe asked that they pray together. Afterward, they went on to discuss the needs in the neighborhood. “I said, ‘Mr. Bobb, this neighborhood’s been going down now for many years. If we could rezone from light industrial back to residential, we could build houses for low income people and for anybody else who wanted to stay in the neighborhood.’…” After they finished, Moshoe showed city manager Bobb all around the neighborhood. Mr. Bobb took to heart everything Moshoe had to say.
A few years later a headline in the Richmond Times-Dispatch (December 9, 1993) read, "Neighborhood’s Rebirth is Moshoe’s Mission: Longtime resident’s
tireless work breathes new life into Newtown South. (Singleton)

What is very interesting about Moshoe, is that he has never had any training
on how to be a successful grass roots leaders. "You see, I was trained (brought up)
not to come downtown, to city hall and rap off at the mouth. I believe in getting
somebody to sit down and talk." Moshoe knew that yelling and screaming would
get him nowhere.

Nearly 8 years have gone by since Moshoe first appeared in city hall to save
his neighborhood. The zoning has since been changed back to residential. Many
new homes have been built with the cooperation of RRHA, RBHC, Habitat for
Humanity, and Richmond Homes. Not only is the new construction for low-
income housing, but some private interest has come back into the neighborhood as
well. Furthermore, residents throughout the community are fixing up their homes
in effort to reflect the regenerated spirit in the neighborhood.

Fortunately, developers have been able to salvage a lot of the original
housing stock in the neighborhood. As a result, they have been able to preserve
some of the flavor of the original Newtown South.

It is fascinating the similarities (symbolic similarities) between the
rehabilitation of a house and the rehabilitation of community. Mr. Moshoe tried to
explain these to me; I did not catch on at first to what he was telling me. I asked,
“What inspired him to take a leadership role in his community?” Moshoe
answered, "You can take an old house with a good foundation... if it ain't gone too bad, sometimes they are better than a new house." I replied as I began to understand the connection, "they could stand forever." Moshoe said, "There you go.... don't worry about the top, 'cause you got a good foundation. A lot of good things are gonna be coming back to the southside... but it's gonna take time."

It was very rewarding for Moshoe to see so many changes take place. I wondered how Moshoe felt about the whole thing after all the time and hard work. All he said was, "I'm very happy.... very happy.... very happy.... very happy."

**Yvonne Spain:**

Yvonne Spain, is a very well known civic leader in and beyond the city of Richmond. She is involved in a vast number of community organizations. To name a few she is very active in the "Governor's Commission on Community Service and Volunteerism." She sits on the board for "Richmond Better Housing Coalition." Spain is also involved with Leadership Metro Richmond. She is even a member of the "Women’s Resource Board" at the University of Richmond. Ms. Spain resides in the Swansboro area in the southside of Richmond. She is well known in her community for her extremely active role in the Swansboro area Civic Association and as President of the "Old South Team."

Meanwhile, she receives very little formal recognition and no compensation for her work. Spain said that most members of her community do not have a clue as to how active she is.... they don't notice that she appears on the evening news,
cable talk shows, and that she has many times been the guest on local radio talk shows. Her neighbors have no idea how much she has impacted their community. What I thought was most interesting, was that Ms. Spain could care less about recognition and financial compensation for all of her work. The only thing that mattered to her was the assurance that she was bringing positive change to the community and secondly, that she was being a positive role model to everyone around her, especially children.

Though Ms. Spain is easily one of the sweetest most welcoming individuals I have ever met, when it comes to her business she is as aggressive as can be. Spain told me about a gigantic community action seminar she once attended. Through it, hundreds of community leaders were instructed on how to take action and get the attention of government officials in many common situations. The participants were taught everything from peaceful protest and letter writing to what would be considered the “more aggressive” strategies. Ms. Spain then told me about a time when a local community was not getting near adequate garbage disposal service. Some involved residents who were determined to rectify the situation promptly loaded all the trash they could and deposited it at the steps of the city government. The very next day the trash trucks made the long awaited stops and the community never again had a problem.

Citizen leaders are sometimes labeled “behind the scenes leaders or silent leaders.” Ms. Spain prefers not to be in the spotlight, but she is in no way a “silent leader.” Spain put it simply when she said, “I just want folks to realize that if you
want to get something done, you've got to open your mouth... if you want to say something... say it! There's no other way people (the government) will know what it is you need unless you tell them. Get one or two people together and plan it... and do it. It works! It's worked for me.” One of Ms. Spain's greatest concerns and frustrations has to do with people's fears in speaking out.

Spain's thoughts on the importance of making oneself heard mirrors, almost perfectly the thoughts of Cheryl Mabey in here article, *The Making of a Citizen Leader.* “Developing a citizen leader begins with encouraging opportunities for 'doing something' with others and for giving 'voice' to one's impressions and reactions” (22).

**Mary Thompson:**

Mary Thompson, a resident of the Fairmount area of Richmond near Church Hill. She has been the president of New Visions Civic Improvement League since it was founded in 1993. Thompson moved to the area when she was a teenager and has lived at her current address since 1953. “In those days all of the homes were very nice. Now we have more homes that are vacant than occupied.” (see appendix 1-A)

A few years ago a meeting held at the VA Museum where various housing organizations and members of the community were in attendance to discuss plans for the East End Transformation area. The transformation area is bound Jefferson Ave, Fairmount Ave, Mosbey St, and N 26th St. (Vancil B4). Thompson's daughter
attended the meeting that night and came home and told her mother about the plans. It was then that Mrs. Thompson decided, "we're gonna need to get together and form a civic league." Thompson acknowledged the need for her community to voice their concerns and to have an active role in the decisions that would affect their neighborhoods. "That's the only way you're gonna see improvement is to get involved."

It is Thompson's hope to bring back the very characteristics of the community which inspired Thompson to remain in the community as long as she has. "We realize that we've got to have a foundation to build on.

New Visions is the foundation for getting those things done. One of our goals is to attract some of the people who grew up in the community to come back and buy homes. We want to provide the kind of experience they once had in this community... it was a happy experience... a loving experience. If you have been a receiver of that experience, then you are to be the one ready to give back and be a part of the community again."

I've always had the idea that if you're not involved in anything... and when something happens you don't like, you don't have a voice.... As long you have an opportunity to voice your opinion or be active in what goes on around you, you're a lot better off than just to sit back and wait for things to happen. Believe me, though, it is a tough job.

Jessie Roots, the Vice President of New Visions, has lived in the community since she was eight years old. Roots was visiting Thompson on the day of the interview. She also offered insight on how the neighborhood has change. "In those days the community was quiet after dark, nothing stirred... You could live in your house without ever locking door." The initial meetings with the community were organized to get input on how to bring back some of the joys that were found in the neighborhood in past years. "Our goal, now, is to get the community back to where
everybody knows everybody else in the community... what is your concern, is my concern. We've had a pretty tough fight.”

The slogan adopted by New Visions Civic Improvement League is, “A community coming to life. Visions today, hope for tomorrow.” The members of New Visions, have fully embraced this vision in the most optimistic sense of the word. Thompson, especially, is probably one of the most optimistic individuals one could ever meet. She has a tremendous amount of hope in people and hope in the future. Seeing the magnitude of some of the blight that has infected her community seems to exemplify a rather hopeless situation. (appendix 1-A) Some estimated 600 homes in the area are in need restoration or demolition. To one side of Thompson’s home, there are structures that look as if they would collapse at any moment. But new homes are springing up all around and pride is returning to the community in full force. As Thompson and I toured her neighborhood, we were surprised to come across a newly laid foundation on the site of a future model home. By the end of our tour, the crew had already raised two of the wall.

Thompson was jumping for joy.

I love what I do and I love people. I love optimism and I love optimism in people. I don’t like for people to say ‘I can’t do this’ because you don’t know what you can do unless you try. Once you try you might surprise yourself about what you really can do. (Thompson)

**Bernice Lewis:**

Bernice Lewis is a retired member of the Church Hill community who has remained extremely active in her involvement not only in housing, but with a
plethora of organizations aimed at improving the livelihood of Church Hill. She serves as Secretary of New Vision Civic League. Along with Mary Thompson, she was very instrumental in starting New Visions a few years ago. She also serves as a secretary for the Interfaith Housing Corp. Lewis is secretary of the board of directors for Richmond Better Housing Coalition. She is also very active in the Church Hill Reunion Committee which sponsors social activities for folks who currently live in the area in an effort to reunite current residents with those who lived in the community in the past.

If all of that isn’t enough, Ms. Lewis is also the president of the board of directors for the Churchill Neighborhood Inc which has a partnership with RBHC called “Inspire.” Together, they are constructing the Jefferson Mews townhouses (appendix 1-D) and various other scattered site home throughout the East End transformation area. Inspire, which is a CDC, (Community Development Corporation) also oversaw the transformation of an old can factory into what is now Church Hill House, a high-rise housing facility for senior citizens and handicapped individuals. The CDC was also a key player in the transformation of the old Fairmount School into the present day Fairmount House, which also houses senior citizens. Some other great achievements include the building of the East End Library, the Harris Clinic (the East End community health facility), and numerous scattered site redevelopment projects which have taken place over the last decade.

Someone called me and asked what civic league do you belong to? I said, well I work with all of them... I’m all around and I guess it’s because I’ve been around for a long time... I’m familiar with practically everything in the community.
Probably her greatest achievement, though, took place in 1990. Ms. Lewis is the founder of the Genesis House Community Center located on P St. just two blocks from her home. (Appendix 1-C) With the help of her church, they were able to raise funds and convert a small warehouse into what is now an already over-utilized facility. Lewis’s son who is now the director hopes to move to a larger, nearby facility sometime in the next couple of years. Primarily, the center serves in offering educational and recreational programs for children in the community. They are especially busy in the summer months when schools are on break.

Lewis has always lived in Church Hill and has witnessed the drastic changes over the years. In the earlier years, “the majority of people were homeowners and they kept the homes up real nice.... and everybody lived like family.” (Appendix 1-B) Like Thompson, Lewis hopes to bring back some of the characteristics the community once modeled.

Lewis worked at MCV as a nurse for a vascular surgeon for 41 years. In addition to her career and raising a family, she has always managed to dedicate time to volunteer in the community. Lewis put it very mildly, saying she thinks she is busier now as a retired person than she was during her career days.

Clay Shepherd:

Clay Shepherd is the President of Your Neighbors Uptown Civic Association. He is also on the board of the Fan District Association. Shepherd resides on Main St. in what is a well integrated (both racially and economically) section of the city. The
Uptown Civic Association encompasses neighborhoods adjacent to Cary St. from the Boulevard to the western edge of the VCU campus. While value is pouring back into this community, it is still plagued by crime and decay. This became very evident when I toured the area with Mr. Shepherd. While walking along the most blighted section of Cary St., we observed a drug raid in progress at a location not far from the VCU campus. Despite the problems which persist, Shepherd, like all of the other leaders profiled in this project, has a tremendous amount of hope for the future of his community.

Shepherd has lived in the Richmond area all of his life. He grew up in Mechanicsville and moved into the city at the age of 19 when he began attending VCU. At that time he was never very active in the community. While he lived on Monument Ave. he belonged to the West-of-the-Boulevard Association. “I paid my dues and I went to the yearly meeting and that was it.”

He did not become actively involved until he moved to Main St. in 1988. Shepherd was very concerned that city government was not adequately involving the community in making zoning decisions. So Shepherd joined the civic league. “It’s our city dammit and we’re not going to take it any more.”

Shepherd’s involvement proceeded to escalate over the next five years. In 1993 he was elected president. During his three years in office some of the most drastic changes have taken place in the area. Your Neighbors has worked very closely with Richmond Better Housing Coalition in such projects as the Cary Mews project. On April 7, 1993, RBHC and Your Neighbors held a ground-breaking
ceremony for the first phase of the Cary 2000 revitalization program. The ceremony marked the construction of 29 beautiful apartments, the Cary Mews, at the northwest corner of Cary and Meadow streets. (RBHC May '93, 1)

Shepherd plans to remain in Richmond and will forever continue to be active. "I've always believed that you don't have a right to bad mouth anything until you get out there and do something to change it yourself." But Shepherd hopes, though, that someone will soon take his place as president. Because Shepherd is equally dedicated to his career, he feels as though he is working two full time jobs. He does not have much time to himself. Shepherd spends the great majority of his spare time working with the civic league (week nights and weekends). So dedicated is he, though, to the cause, he would never think to abandon the position without a willing and able successor.
RESEARCH ANALYSIS: Citizen Leadership Specific to Housing

How Citizen Leaders Come to Power

Citizen leadership undoubtedly begins with some sort of “a positive invitation to become one” (Mabey 22). Whether it may stem from a personal inclination or from outsiders or an outside event, somewhere along the line a citizen leader hears “a calling” to serve.

Marion Moshoe believed God, by planting a vision in his mind, had called him to serve. Others, like Barbara Abernathy, simply felt they could offer new ideas and a new kind of leadership. All of the citizen leaders wanted to take charge of the future.

In, yet other instances, there were specific issues which the future leaders felt very passionate about. So charged were they, that they become the most vocal or most visible in their movement.

I wanted to have a say so in my destiny... to be a part of what ever happened to the community I lived in. I didn’t want to be one of those people that say ‘Look what they did to me.’ (Thompson)

Finally, there are times where individuals are not consciously aware that they are on the track for a leadership position. They could be leading the pack and not even realize it.

It’s a very strange thing... I have been asked to do things that I never aspired to do and I have been put in certain positions where I never aspired to be. I just found myself there (in the leadership position) and I believe it was because I had stood still long enough. It was my time. (Thompson)

The development of a citizen leader also begins with acknowledging the importance of involving as many member of the community as possible. A citizen
leader can generate a significant sense of community strength when they empower citizens and make them feel that they have ownership over certain responsibilities in the change process. Without empowering the community, a citizen leader would quickly fail. The issue of empowerment will be discussed again further in the paper. All of the leaders interviewed are dedicated to the greater good of the community and are not in a leadership position for personal gratitude. They are in a leadership position so that they can lift up and involve those around them. A citizen leader gives voice and added support to the ideas and opinions generated by members of the community.

The Draft

Citizen leaders sometimes do not voluntarily seek leadership roles. At times they are catapulted into taking charge without much choice. (Couto 136) If the surrounding community begins to view a certain individual as a success, and when they have witnessed that person produce results, the community begins to acknowledge that individual as a leader. In other words, one individual, through his or her actions, earns a right of passage. Whether that person wants a leadership role or not, the community views that person as a leader. In such instances, an individuals movement into a leadership role moves rather quickly if not all at once.

Shepherd was literally thrown into his position as president. He admitted he had considered taking the job, but was neither aggressively seeking the position. “Three years ago, while I was in Switzerland on a business trip, they voted me to be
president. When I returned they said ‘guess what...you are.’”

Mary Thompson had a similar experience. She laughed as she explained what happened. “They drafted me and now they won’t let me get out of the gnus!” Mary had proven her competence so exceptionally to the members in her community, that there was no question in their minds as to who should be their leader.

Citizen leaders, once in position, also use the power of “the draft.” Some have found it to be extremely effective. “I stopped asking for volunteers long ago” (Thompson). There is nothing easy about the work involved with a civic association. As much as folks want to see positive change, they fear the work that is involved. Sometime leaders have to demand assistance from their followers. The job can not be done alone.

*What makes a citizen leader?*

A “calling” is not the only prerequisite to a leadership role in the community. Citizen leadership requires distinctive skills and capabilities which in turn require constant development. (Mabey 22) Many leaders are often good speakers who captivate those around them. Furthermore, citizen leaders need to become competent or knowledgeable about what they advocate. Equally important, they must also understand how the system operates, what channels they must go through in dealing with city government, and where certain boundaries of responsibility rest. (Mabey 22)
Beyond having common organizational competencies, the citizen leaders included in this study shared common personality characteristics. They were all extremely friendly, enthusiastic, and very approachable. Moreover, many of them shared the same values.

Patience for a citizen leader is more than just a virtue. It is a necessity. “Some people expect more than they can get... but you can’t get everything done overnight.” (Moshoe) For Barbara Abernathy, the key is having a good mix of patience and perseverance. Couple that with a little insanity and you have got it made. When I asked her what it takes to be a citizen leader, she laughed. “You have to be crazy... You need a lot perseverance— You’ve got to want things bad enough that you are willing to fight for them. — and you’ve got to be patient. It takes a lot of time.”

Bernice Lewis believes strongly in doing what she feels is ‘right’ for her community. First and foremost, this entails that she be a good listener. Cheryl Mabey claims that good listing skills and being able to ask good questions is among the most important skills a leader can have. They are also skills that are often overlooked. (23)

One thing, I believe in doing what is right no matter what. I also try to weigh situations before I make decisions. If I am not hearing things right or if I feel that I am not interpreting things right, then I am not able to do what’s right.... lets face it. If I do not feel I fully understand something, or if I am not clear on what someone said, then I will go to that person and ask them, ‘Explain this to me.’ I can depend on them and trust them to give me the answer.

Lewis also sees herself as a peace maker. “We are all trying to help each other.” Citizen leaders must encourage members in their communities to put aside
and to the best of their abilities remove prejudices. Underlying tensions between
different cultural factions within a community can seriously impede progress in
achieving goals aimed establishing a ‘tight’ community.

Along those lines cooperation among the civic leagues is also very important.
Tensions between communities must also be alleviated. Lewis and Moshoe made it
very clear that they are not in it just for the betterment of their specific
neighborhoods. They are all concerned about the welfare of the city at large. For
this reason they all cooperate very well with one another. Each of the six leaders
were very familiar with one another. They see each other on a regular basis and are
aware of the kinds of things going on in each other’s communities.

Citizen leaders are servant leaders

Shepherd believes that a citizen leader is one who make things a reality
instead of just print in the newspaper. “They bring the bricks and the mortar.”
Citizen leaders are “doers” and they work right along side of the members in their
community.

Moshoe also gave great evidence that citizen leadership means serving the
community. He summed up, in just a few words, exactly what I had been searching
for this section.

I’m a gardening man. I started planting gardens with my father when I was 6
or 7 years of age... and I’ve planted them ever since. I plant and give away
everything... the more I give out, the more I make (plant) and that’s what my
daddy taught me. He said, ‘Don’t you ever sell nothin’ out of the garden.’ I
said, ‘Well why?’ He said to me, T’ll tell you why. The more you give, the
more you’re gonna make... that’s what the word of God said.’
Citizen leaders are transforming leaders

Citizen leaders lift up and motivate members of the community to take action. Even in the most unfavorable conditions, these leaders have a way of “seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.” The key, though, is the fact that they can shed that light upon their neighbors who are discouraged and feel that their situation is hopeless. They show them how to have hope, not only in the situation at hand, but also hope in themselves.

People keep putting me on the front line and everybody keeps telling me that you are a natural born leader. But I’d rather be a follower... cause I can truly help people... to raise somebody... to do some things and basically I want people to have faith in themselves.... that ‘You can do it.’ (Thompson)

Thompson realized early why we had been called to lead her community. This realization promptly made the purpose of New Visions very clear. “We’ve got to reach these people in the community and raise their level of self esteem.”

While Mrs. Thompson and I were touring her neighborhood, we came across some members of the community she had not met before. She wasted no time in introducing herself.

Good Morning. I’m Mary Thompson and I am the president of your civic league. You all could become involved. We need your input... you need to tell us what you want. I need y’all to come to our next meeting and I need you to tell somebody else to come. Who is better to involve than the community itself? Our dream is to involve all of the community members. We can do it!”

Thompson was thrilled to meet some new faces. Likewise, the two were very pleased to meet Thompson and they were excited to hear of the civic league. What took place right before my eyes brought to life the definition of transforming
leadership that appears again and again in texts that sit on shelves of leadership scholars.

Transformational leadership occurs when one or more people engage with one another in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality... it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both leader and led (Burns 57).

The Link with Formal Political Leaders

Citizen leadership in many ways serves as a monitor of “higher” political activity. Citizen leaders keep their elected officials in check. “Citizen leadership means making a political, economic, and social system accountable for whom it serves and fails to serve (Couto 137). Many citizen groups in public housing communities are “pressuring housing authorities to be more accountable and are insisting on better management of the facilities” (Community Change 1). To illustrate this point at the local level, Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority meets with the Carver Area Civic Improvement League (CACIL) on a monthly basis in order to ensure that it has full support of the League for all RRHA activities. A question found on a recent funding application submitted by RRHA asked them to describe their relationship with the Carver Area Civic Improvement League.

CACIL reviews all RRHA-Carver budgets and projects. CACIL supports RRHA’s applications for CDBG’s (community development block grants) and HOME (housing opportunities make equal) funds for the Carver area. As in other communities throughout the City, RRHA has an excellent record in responding to local community initiatives and making sure that neighborhood organizations are involved in the planning and implementation of all RRHA programs being carried out in their neighborhoods. (See appendix 2)
Couto makes three distinct illustrations of the relationship between citizen leadership and government. In one scenario, citizen leadership can be like a parallel government. This occurs when both are concerned about the same issue and are moving in the same relative direction to address the problem. One inevitably beats the other to the punch. The second scenario portrays citizen leadership as a shadow government where citizen leaders appeal to the aid and resources held by the government thus giving them the power to get something done. In other words, the citizens watch over the shoulder of the government as they go to work. In the third scenario, citizen leadership is like a government in exile which occurs when the demand for change exceeds the capacity of public officials to act. The citizen leader can only wait for the issue to become a crisis situation before the government will take action. (Couto 138-9)

The citizen leaders interviewed overwhelmingly agreed that they have strong relationships with city government and the many housing organizations throughout the city. More than ever, representatives from government are visible within the communities. Similarly, the civic leagues and other community organization have been equally visible in city hall.

I asked Ms. Spain to comment on the ways she interacts with members of city government and other formal political leaders (ie district representatives and other elected/appointed officials). She is seen downtown in the government offices numerous times in any given week. She is well known by the mayor and members of city council.
Bernise Lewis felt that the public has the impression that the government is not adequately in touch with the community. "I really believe that the government does the best job they can under the circumstances of red tape and bureaucracy. Outside folk do not know what they have to go through because there are so many laws on the books and it takes forever to get some of those laws off...." Much to their dismay, it can take years for RRHA to approve a project.

Barbara Abernathy has close relationship with representative Tim Kaine, city manager Robert Bobb, members of RRHA and she sits on the board of directors for RBHC. She also sits on a committee call PAD (Providing Affordable Housing) which is heavily involved in the Cary Mews project. She also heads up the housing committee in her own civic league.

In all of the interviews, I could not find evidence of a week link in the relationship between the citizen leaders and city government and other political institutions. Considering all of the bureaucracy that exits today, all felt that the political leaders do the best jobs they can. Much improvement has been made in recent years.

Limitations of Citizen Leaders - common obstacles

Bureaucracy is one of the greatest frustrations for the citizen leader. The citizen leader can know exactly what their neighborhood wants and needs. They can identify the resources to be used for their ideas and they can even begin to make arrangements with another community organizations, and then hit a brick wall. In other words, the ground work can be all completed but an initiative can get tied up
in paper work in some city office. Other times a project reaches an impasse due to an otherwise useless technicality.

The community members in *Your Neighbors Uptown Civic League* just recently voted on a new plan for the area. Shepherd explained to me the complicated steps that lie ahead as they now present their proposal to city government.

Because it involves a zoning change, we now have to go and get it approved by RRHA who will send it on to Land Use... who will then forward it to the city planner... who will then bring it in front of city council for them to vote on and also to fund." Loaded with bureaucratic rules, that's just the way it's done....

Beyond the frustrations of politicking, citizen leaders are faced with many other constraints. Time is always scarce for the citizen leader. There are not enough hours in the day, especially for one who hold full-time jobs in addition to their responsibilities as civic leader. Shepherd and Abernathy both have a day-time jobs. Naturally they are unable to attend the many meeting the government holds during the day which involve community leaders. "I think they (the government) needs to be more sensitive to people who do work." (Abernathy)

Organizations such as Civic Associations are voluntary bodies. Individuals choose to affiliate mainly to see that a set of individual interest are served. Wants and needs are at times much greater than what the government and organizations such as RRHA or Habitat for Humanity can fairly provide. Naturally the city government must attempt to aid all communities as fairly as possible. They are after the greatest good for the greatest number. As a result, resources (especially
funding) gets spread out very thin among the civic league projects.

Citizen leaders are sometimes viewed as ruckus rousers. At times they meet criticism for uncovering new issues which, to the critics eyes, does nothing but add to an already long, unmanageable list of problems that must be addressed. The addition of problems naturally complicates political agendas. Agendas which are complicated often lead to lengthy debates between different interest groups. The whole upheaval leads to public unrest and frustration which is inevitably attributed back to the citizen leaders who “are just out to make a big stink just because they can’t live in a nice part of town.” Due to these such complications, our political system is well known for putting up barriers to change.

Other set backs commonly occur in the building stages of a housing project. The construction of the Carver townhomes met delays when the city had to take precautions to ensure that the townhomes were not be built over a historical landmark. To do so, the city had to hire an archeologist to perform a study before any building could begin. The dig sent the project way off schedule.

The role of a civic leader, as already illustrated, is not often glamorous. It usually requires long grueling hours— without pay and without a great deal of public recognition— It is full of setbacks, obstacles and frustrations— and most unfortunately, it can deprive an individual of time with family and time meant for leisure and hobbies.
Faith and the Church - a provider of vision for the community

Rev. Lawrence B. Samuel has been pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Newtown South for 22 years. The church is 115 years old. Reverend Samuel says that Newtown "has always been a closely knit neighborhood" and the church has always had a close relationship with the local community and has been very instrumental in creating the new vision for Newtown. Samuel quotes the bible in saying, "Where there is no vision, the people will perish" (NCIL 7).

At one time the Second Baptist was considering a move to another area but Rev. Samuels responded, "Why move to another area when we can have a revitalized area right where we are?... Just be patient and give the folks a chance to build up the restore Newtown... We know the background of Newtown, and I feel this is one of the finest areas we could ever want to be in" (NCIL 8).

Mr. Moshoe, who is very active the First Independent Methodist church on Midlothian Turnpike said, "my vision for Newtown South is that I pray to God that I live long enough to see all those houses full up with people, have some young people back in the neighborhood and have a nice neighborhood to live in" (NCIL 10). Moshoe is close friends with Rev. Samuel and other pastors throughout the area.

Moshoe went on to say, "when the work is finished in Newtown South, we'll have a regular shouting church up in the Newtown area."
The church remains to be one of the primary strong-holds within the communities I visited. At numerous times in the conversations, the leaders eluded to their strong faith in God. Many of them indicated that they derive much of their energy and inspiration from a close relationship with Christ.

For Mr. Moshoe, Christ served as teacher and as a guide. Of all of the talents and qualities that define good citizens and leaders in the community, Moshoe believes a strong faith in Christ is paramount.

I’ve had nobody train me to do what I’m doing... nobody... period. Nobody tell me to go to city hall or do this or that. All of this was revealed to me and, you see, everybody has talents... it’s good to have an education... that’s fine. But you need more than that. You need Christ in your life. You need more than education. It’s good to have... but if that’s all you got, you’re in pretty bad shape.

For Mary Thompson, her faith in God provides her answers. She also derives a sense of protection and security. “I just believe that God is going to protect me as long as I’m cautious with the things that I do.” Thompson also feels that God offers hope for all of the members in the community. As Thompson and I were touring her neighborhood, we stopped to talk to a neighbor she had not yet met. (The same one mentioned earlier) The neighbor inquired about how one would apply for one of the new houses going up in the neighborhood. The neighbor seemed very doubtful that she even had a chance. It sounded as if she was not going to bother pursuing it. Mrs. Thompson offered her reassurance. “Nothing is too hard... don’t even go into it like that. You know with God, all things are possible.”
*Faith in the Younger Generation*

Mr. Moshoe realizes that the future of Newtown South rests in the hands of the children who play in the neighborhood park, another recent addition to the Newtown community. He realizes that he needs to pass on to these young citizens, the values and ideals which will transform them into future leaders. Mr. Moshoe is well known and well liked by the children in the community. He very much enjoys spending time with them.

There’s a lot of nice young people in this area. All the young boys and girls up here know me... and can call me by my name. I love them too. They’ll see me and they’ll say ‘Mr. Moshoe, you want me to go to the store for you?’ And I say no thank you... I don’t need nothin’ from the store. Then I’ll go out to the playground and be with them out at the playground. I say, ‘How do y’all like the playground?’ and they say ‘Mr. Moshoe, we just crazy about the playground... it’s nice

Investing and placing hope in the younger generation is something that is very important to the citizen leader. Young people hold the future of the communities. They are the conduits through which citizen leaders can carry their visions into the future. They are the transmitters of the values needed to preserve and perpetuate all of the hard work that has been done in the past. In addition, young people offer fresh ideas. They are full of energy. They symbolize rejuvenation. For these reasons, citizen leaders are vital role models for the children in the community.

Yvonne Spain feels that, parents of today are, for the most part, not the role models that they should be. In the past, the parents were the primary authority figures in a child’s life. Today, many children seek elsewhere to find their role
models. "As much as anything else, we serve as role models for future generations. You have an impact on individuals lives that you may never realize." A tear came to eye and her voice quivered as she continued. Spain told me how much hope she has in the younger generation... hope that they will insist on and bring about a better way of life. "Y'all have energy... you've got fresh ideas that people have never thought of... but who's gonna know if you don't tell them."

Few would disagree that the younger generation has a lot to offer. But, like Spain, many people feel that young people are not challenged enough today. They are not encouraged enough to become active in their communities. Unfortunately, as Mary Thompson put it, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop." The minds that are not being challenged are the minds of the people who are getting into trouble. Instead of experiencing the natural highs involved with their communities, they are getting into drugs.

It hurts me to my heart when I drive through the community and I see young people just standing on the corners and looking up into the sky like they don't have no hope. I hate to see a person inebriated in the gutter, drunk. That person needs some hope. This is not what God intended for you. You can be what he wants you to be; but you've got to want it. I have a lot of hope in younger people.... I want them to know that people love you. Too many folks say that they (the younger generation) is a lost generation but there is no such thing as that.

Recognition and reward

Need for individual recognition was not an issue for any of the interviewed leaders. At times, though, some agreed that the press did not fairly acknowledge the hard work of the citizens compared to the efforts of city government. Abernathy
once wrote a letter to the editor of the *Free Press* after an article had been published regarding the completion of long term project in the Carver community.

I expressed to them how upset I was that RRHA and other entities throughout the city are featured in such articles while nothing is said about the kinds of struggles that the neighborhoods have to go through to get to where we are.... we would go to city council and stay till 12 midnight just to be heard.

Abernathy is not in it for personal gain. She just wishes the hard work of the civic leagues would be better recognized, especially by the media.

Clay Shepherd admitted that he prefers to stay out of any spotlight. "I have never needed other people's recognition. I have my own judgement of myself. It's how I feel about myself that makes the difference. I find reward in knowing I've done something to make something better and in this life you've gotta give something. I've been very fortunate. I have a nice place to live. Things have gone well for me... Not everybody can say that."

For Yvonne Spain, personal recognition is the least of her concerns. "Reward me for what I'm doing?.... Shucks." Spain said that people in the community think she should demand more recognition for all of the effort she puts into the community. "People look at me and say 'Girl, you must be crazy.'"

Bernice Lewis, has in her home, a little area tucked away in a dark corner where she has hung a few of the many awards she has been given over the years. There was also a box of awards laying in her living room that had not been touched. She was not in any hurry to add them to the wall. Despite all of hard work she does, Lewis does not feel that she needs to be in the spotlight. "It's not a part of me... I
never think in terms of getting anything out of it... I think in terms of helping other people and of helping my community.” Out of all the leaders, she seemed to best exemplify Lao Tzu’s definition of the selfless leader.

The wise leader keeps egocentricity in check and by doing so becomes even more effective. Enlightened leadership is service, not selfishness. The leader grows more and last longer by placing the well being of all above the well-being of self alone.” (Tzu 47)

Marion Moshoe believes that seeking recognition goes against the ideals of a citizen leader. “I tells them all, don’t honor me at all. Just treat me like everybody else, ‘cause we in this thing together.” Moshoe went on to say, that when you let others put you up on a pedestal, they can just as easily take you down. But when God puts you up, man can’t take you down. Fame and fortune can be lost so easily. But knowing in your heart that you’ve done something good for people you care about, is a high that people can not take away from you.

Elected officials or formal leaders in government, as sincere as they may be in their efforts to help the community and in bringing positive change, they, by virtue of their position must seek re-election. Naturally then, part of their job must be to seek status; It can not be ignored. Furthermore, serving the community is also their paid profession; Compensation can not be fully ignored. True citizen leaders, on the other hand, are not distracted by the need for public status or the need for financial compensation. By no means does this mean that formal leaders do not care or that they are corrupted by money and status. It is just to say that citizen leaders have that much less on their minds.

Later I asked Mr. Moshoe about the number of awards that were hanging on
his wall. Just as Mrs. Lewis had done, he had placed them out of site. He said, "I
don't let none of that get to my head... Man can't pay us with awards... we don't take
nothin' away from here... (In the end) the Lord will pay you off.

Inspiring More Leadership - getting others involved

One of the greatest challenges and frustrations for all community leaders
deals with the question of: How to get other members of the community informed
and active? "The greatest challenge of all is to overcome the apathy that has
pervaded our whole society. So many people that should be involved are not
involved." (Shepherd)

The use of flyers is a common practice to get the word out. Most people
would not know Ms. Abernathy if they saw her but they all know her by name.
That is because she sends every household in the community a newsletter once a
month. She does not expect for everyone to get involved but she thinks that it is
extremely important for people in the community to be informed of the decisions
which will affect their lives, regardless of whether or not they attend the meetings.

Abernathy feels that her greatest challenge "is trying to get people focused... trying to get them to realize the seriousness of things facing them... to get them to understand that it is not just the presidents job to write letters or to talk to city officials... trying to get them riled up to take a stand."

Block parties like one which took place in the Fairmount area in 1994, are
extremely effective in making a civic league visible. The block party was arranged by
New Visions partly in celebration of some of their successes but more so, it served to
get the attention of residents who were uninformed or disinterested.

Dedication ceremonies are very effective when they occur primarily because they draw a lot of outside publicity to the neighborhood. They serve as an added opportunity for civic leaders to interface with formal leaders in the city.

Leaders like Marion Moshow and Mary Thompson spent much of their time just walking around consorting with member of their neighborhoods. The best way for them to involve people, is by first creating a friendly (more socialable) relationship with the community members. Once the relationship is made, the reason for involvement is two-fold. Civic groups are not just work groups; They have a lot of fun together too.

The moral of the story is that there are many people in the community who are perfectly willing and able to make a difference. The problem is, they either do not know how, they haven't been approached or asked directly, or they just do not understand how one person can make a difference in such a large system. So why bother?

Folks have been discourage .... there have been many broken dreams ....it's just the same old thing ... same old mess. New Visions keeps telling them that it is a new day...a new time... we've got new dreams and they can come true. They need to see some tangible improvement. It's not because they are not interested. There are though a lot of new people who know nothing about the community... We don't have that kind of allegiance we want yet. (Thompson)

Yvonne Spain feels that once people are shown that they can make a difference and once they are given an opportunity to do so; When they get on to their feet and do something and they can see the results unfold, then they have
caught the motivation; In many ways they will be addicted to this natural high that they receive. No drug could ever replace that feeling. They will continue.

Measuring Success

For many civic leaders, success is measured by producing tangible results. Defined earlier in the paper, they are focused on promoting action from fellow citizens and are committed to producing results for their communities.

How do I measure success?... that’s hard to say... I measure success when I can see the results of something I have been working on for a long time and it comes to fruition. Some things I need to see” (Abernathy)

I measure success in seeing some of the plans carry on to completion. It is a wonderful feeling knowing you had something to do in making it better. (Shepherd)

On the same token, there are certainly things that a community leader may not see come to fruition in his or her lifetime. Politicians or elected leaders, unfortunately, one of their main goals is to be re-elected so they have to be dedicated to short term results. A community leader has the luxury of being able to concentrate on the long term as much as anything else. Furthermore, citizen leaders are accustomed to set-backs and even downfalls. They are realistic in their expectations. They also know that, sooner or later, their hard work will pay off.

We don’t get it (success) all of the time... it’s not something that you ever get used to because it’s so infrequent. So when it does happen, it’s a grand moment and you stretch it out for as long as you can. (Abernathy)

The overall mission of Citizen Leaders

The missions and goals of most citizen leaders is not complicated to
understand. For them, “success has one single, clear measure: Will our children have a reasonable choice to live with dignity in their community as adults?” (Couto 137)

I just want to see something beautiful and viable happen and I want people to be happy and comfortable and safe... that's what it's all about. As far as housing, I want to provide affordable housing and have a community where everybody will come together and offer input on what they want. I want to make it better for young people... (Thompson)

To make Carver a better place to live... to rebuild the housing stock... to make Carver a community where people want to live and work... To make this area a far better place than it ever was. (Abernathy)

The motto for the New Visions Civic Improvement League, again is: “the sounds of the community coming back to life” Ms. Lewis' dream is simply to hear those sounds more clearly than ever before.

For Clay Shepherd, success comes when the overall community take responsibility for itself. He wants to teach people to make a difference for themselves.

I really believe that if you work in your own back yard and make things better there... you don't have to worry about the about the world. If everybody did that, the world would be a much better place. (Shepherd)

Similarly, Yvonne Spain feels that once people realize that they can make a difference for themselves, then they will join others in the process.

I think that if you begin to show your neighbors how things can look better... how things can begin to improve, then people will join with you. Some folks don't know what it is to have something as simple as a flower garden. Let them realize that they can make a difference.
Community Involvement is Strengthening

Patricia Arnaudo is the director of the Office of Residential Initiative for HUD. More than ever HUD is encouraging resident involvement in their housing initiatives.

We want residents to play as big a role as they have the capacity for and we can work out a way to it... We want to empower residents to play a meaningful role that will lead them out of poverty (Community Change 3).

The message is also out from community agencies, city government, and from city neighborhoods all across Richmond. Community involvement is on the rise in the fight for better housing. Voices are being heard and great things have resulted. LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation) is one of many housing organizations who is spreading this message. LISC is one of the nations leading nonprofits who provides financial and technical instruction to other nonprofit community development corporations. These neighborhood-based groups develop affordable housing, promote commercial investment, which in turn creates jobs and expands services. (LISC) Their 1994 annual report entitled “The Hidden Good News” features the recent rise of community leadership. There is no better way to summarize the current situation than in the following excerpt.

You won’t hear about it on the six o’clock news and it rarely makes the papers, but while most of the country has been focused on the dual negatives of crime and poverty in America, something else has been happening all across the country. In inner cities where it has too often been believed that nothing could be done to change the cycle of blight and despair, the communities have quietly begun to turn themselves around. People who want to rebuild and save their neighborhoods are coming together...
People are taking responsibility for themselves and their neighborhoods. They are the new pioneers of the inner cities and they believe in the American Dream. They want to raise their children in safety where they live and they don’t take their neighborhoods for granted. They are active in their communities. Some call it neighborhood-based development, others community revitalization, but in truth it is simply democracy in action.

CONCLUSION

The six citizen leaders profiled in this project, have given tremendous evidence that citizen leadership is a vital component to housing initiatives in Richmond and, for that matter, cities throughout our world that have been plagued by deterioration. These leaders graciously welcomed me into their homes, gave me tours of their communities, and spent hours with me as we discussed their individual accomplishments and the accomplishments of their respective community organizations. The strength of citizen leadership begins with and revolves around “empowerment.” Citizen leaders must first be empowered by the government from both the local and national levels. From there, citizen leaders channel empowerment to members of their communities in an effort involve the community— to make the community what they want it to be. With the added support from housing agencies like Richmond Better Housing Coalition and Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority, these leaders have been able to bring drastic housing improvements in neighborhoods throughout Richmond.

Empowering the community to bring about change is not a new concept but only recently has it been adamantly embraced as a necessary complement to formal leadership. We have only just begun.
Special thanks to the COMPS program at the University of Richmond for opening my eyes to the world around me and for giving me the inspiration to investigate citizen leadership more closely than I ever imagined I could.
WORKS CITED

Abernathy, Barbara. Personal Interview. 2 April 1996.


Lewis, Bernice. Personal Interview. 29 March 1996.


Moshoe, Marion. Personal Interview. 3 April 1996.

(NCIL) Newtown Civic Improvement League with RBHC, Newtown South: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Richmond: unk.

"Public Housing Residents Organize to Save and Improve their Homes." Community Change. Summer 1990; issue 9, pp 1-3.


Roots, Jessie. Personal Interview. 30 March 1996.

RRHA (Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority). funding application. Richmond: 1996.


Spain, Yvonne. Personal Interview. 4 March 1996.

Thompson, Mary. Personal Interview. 30 March 1996.


APPENDIX 1-A

A view of some of the housing in Mary Thompson's community in the East-End

BEFORE

AFTER
Scenes from the back yard of Bernice Lewis' home. She hopes these structures will soon be replaced by new homes.
the Genisis House Community Center of Church Hill - founded by Bernice Lewis
APPENDIX 1-D

The Jefferson Mews townhomes are among some of the new construction in the East-End transformation area located near Mary Thompson's home.
The University of Richmond sponsored Habitat for Humanity house located in the East-End of Richmond
APPENDIX 2: Glossary of Housing Terminology

CDBG - community development block grant

CDC - (community development corporation) legal entity composed of a board of directors aimed at promoting housing development in the respective community. CDC’s are eligible to apply for CDBG funds from HUD.

Conservation Area - locality defined by the housing authority and approved by the government. Individuals located within this area are eligible for low interest loans to be used to finance repairs

Historic Area - defined by city, state of federal government. Any construction plans must be presented to an architectural review board.

Homestead programs - organizations such as RRHA may obtain foreclosed or condemned properties (from HUD), usually located within a designated “redevelopment area” and sell these properties to other non-profits housing organizations or private citizens for one dollar. The recipient is financially responsible for all of the rehab or ground-up construction costs and are subject to certain standards and agreements set forth by the housing authority.

HUD - Department of Housing and Urban Development (Federal Govt.)

Lease-purchase programs - programs designed to give people living in public an opportunity for home ownership.

RBHC - Richmond Better Housing Coalition

RRHA - Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Redevelopment Area - localities designated for area wide redevelopment. In these areas the housing authority has the power of eminent domain to obtain, demolish (if necessary) and habilitate housing.

Scattered site housing programs - these are per-unit redevelopment projects. Often, they deal with single family homes “scattered” within a community in need of repair or they may take the form new construction. (see also lease-purchase programs and homesteading programs)
APPENDIX 3: Listing of Civic Leagues

NACIL - Newtown Area Civic Improvement League
   *Mary Thompson - President
   *Bernice Lewis - Secretary

CACIL - Carver Area Civic Improvement League
   *Barbara Abernathy - President.

NVCIL (Church Hill area) or "New Visions" - New Visions Civic Improvement League
   *Marion Moshoe - President

Your Friends Uptown Civic Improvement League - Cary St. area
   *Clay Shepherd - President
APPENDIX - A

Questions Used in Interviews:

The following are questions used in the one on one interviews with the
citizens profiled in the project. Some questions were geared toward revealing the
accomplishments of the individual. Some related to the relationship between the
citizen leaders and political leaders and other government related agents. The
majority, though were concerned with the backgrounds of the citizen leaders and
their personality characteristics.

Where did you grow up and what were the housing conditions like then?

How has the neighborhood changed?

What are the housing needs in your community?

Explain the functions of the organization in which you are involved.

How did you become involved with your organization and how long have you been
involved?

In what other community organizations are you involved and do you hold any
leadership positions with these other groups?

What inspired you to take a leadership position in your community?

What do you get out of it?

Describe your relationship with leaders in city government and housing
organizations such as the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing
Authority, Richmond Better Housing Coalition, and Habitat for Humanity.

Are these other leaders as cooperative as you would like?

Do you feel you have adequate access to information about the decisions made by
the city government and other housing organizations that effects your
community?

How can the relationship between citizen leaders and political leaders improve to
become more effective?

Describe some of your greatest challenges? What are the limitations of citizen
leadership as you see it?
Describe some of your greatest successes?

Do you get recognition? Do you feel that you deserve more?

How have your efforts and the efforts of your organization impacted your community, specifically in the area of housing?

How do you get other members of your community to get involved in bringing about positive change?

Do you think there is currently a lack of leadership at the citizen level?

How do you measure success?

What is your overall mission—your over-arching goals?

What is it in your eyes that makes a citizen leader?

Many of these questions are very broad in nature but were intended to lend themselves to more specific questions. As much as possible the individuals interviewed were encouraged to gear their answers to housing.