

Strategy, Organization, and Success

HAVING LAID THE GROUNDWORK for understanding the field of community economic development (CED), we turn to practice. This section starts with strategy—its importance, methods for setting it, and the options for an overall game plan for revitalizing a community. Without a strategy, CED practitioners run the risk of pursuing the expedient without creating a foundation for future work or generating effects in the community. Jumping right into starting programs runs the risk of letting the tools one has on hand dictate the architecture of the building. Successful CED practitioners also need to develop an understanding of the taxonomy of the players with whom they must collaborate—a wide variety of organizations with differing missions and cultures. If strategy sets the direction and rationale, these various organizations are the actors.

This section includes case studies of two successful CED organizations that have set a strategic direction, mobilized the actors around them, and used programs and projects over decades to have a profound effect on their communities. The first is the Marshall Heights Community Development Organization (MHCDO), a second-wave community development corporation (CDC) operating in the Ward 7 area of Washington, D.C. Early in

its existence, MHCDO set a course for developing affordable housing and was very selective about how and where to work in the community. The second is the Coalition of the Hungry and Homeless of Brevard County, a third-wave CDC that responded to the crisis of homelessness in Florida by networking already established organizations to carefully selected neighborhoods in which to build or renovate affordable and permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness.