CITIZENS Changing Ideas INTO ACTION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY LEARNING

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the University of
Tennessee at Chattanooga In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Education

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Chattanooga, Tennessee

August 2013
ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study defines and explores the concept of community learning as a driver of economic and social change. Community learning refers to the creation of new knowledge and skills as a result of people interacting with each other to affect change within a locality. Jointly-created knowledge and skills build the efficacy of individuals as well as the capacity of a group to further its purpose. The question that shaped this study was: How do communities educate themselves for change? A theoretical framework is developed based on social constructivist learning theory, organizational and collaborative learning, and community development. This study applies Morse’s (2006a) six postulates of community learning to the creation of Chattanooga Venture, a non-profit organization in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1984. Three primary sources—personal interviews, organizational documents, and newspaper accounts—ground the study in the lived experience. By applying Morse’s postulates to the origin of Chattanooga Venture, the study examines both the process and structure of community learning and has implications for both theory and practice. The significance of this study is to determine if a theoretical understanding of community learning can be applied to creating stronger and better communities, increasing the knowledge-base both individually and collectively, and generating social and economic productivity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people contributed to my journey of writing about community at the same
time creating community. I am grateful for the many people in Chattanooga working hard
to build this community and for the opportunity that UTC has provided me to apply
theory and understanding to practice and observation. I thank Mary Tanner for being my
first touchstone with the program and for being a model of community-university
relations. I thank Valerie Rutledge, Jack Murrah, and Helen Johnson for serving on my
professional review committee. Beverly Kutz at the UTC library was very helpful to me
in many ways. I thank my Learning and Leadership co-horts, Selwyn Samaroo, Joel
Baxley, and Leslie Jensen-Inman. Greg Laudeman has not only been my co-hort from
beginning to end but is responsible for most of my thinking and many of my explorations.
I am so deeply grateful for his co-learning.

I wish to thank my dissertation committee for their insights, critiques, and
challenges that assisted with this study. Dr. Freeman ensured my methodology was
sound; Dr. Black grounded me in Chattanooga’s history; and Dr. Rausch encouraged
reflection. From day one to the end, Dr. Tucker was adviser, mentor, and co-learner
offering an unequaled intellectual and personal journey that is truly life-embedded.

I thank the Chattanooga Public Library staff: April Mitchell, Suzette Raney, Jim
Reece, and Jennifer Rydell for their kind assistance; Mary Helms for her leadership of the
Local History section, and director Corinne Hill for her vision of possibilities for the
library as a tool for life-long learning in the community. Special thanks to Charles Shaffer and Geri Spring for organizing the Chattanooga Venture files; to Josh McManus, Jenny Berz, and Elizabeth Bell in the Leadership Chattanooga class who prepared the files for transition to the library. The Chattanooga Venture archive is a valuable community asset in the library’s keeping.

I thank the Chattanooga History Center for access to the archival transcriptions and for their assistance in the research, including Marlene Payne, Marie Bourassa, Alyssa Gaddis, as well as director Daryl Black.

I thank these people for sharing historical materials with me: Tom Hebert, Diane Parks, Ron Harr, Catherine Cox, Roberta Miles, and Pat Wilcox. I thank Kelly Smallman for research assistance. Ron Thomas for the loan of books on participatory processes. Anne Bright for teaching me proprioceptive writing which was the bedrock of my reflective practice.

I thank Rick Morse at University of North Carolina for his guidance for his conceptual framework that gave my work an invaluable structure.

I thank the people who participated in the research through interviews with me: Jeannine Alday, Tom Hebert, Johnny Holloway, Ron Littlefield, Gianni Longo, Roberta Miles, Maria Noel, Harry Tate, and Pat Wilcox. Mai Bell Hurley, Rick Montague and Stroud Watson endured several interviews and served as my steering committee.

My family instilled my love of learning and community. My mother was losing her memory as I wrote this study reminding me of the importance of telling our stories when we can. My uncle, Dr. David P. McCallie, published a book at age 90, and always reminded me of the importance of family, education, history, and caring for each other.
My brother Tom McCallie assured me that the need for this study continues; and my other brothers, their wives, my cousins, nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews are such an important part of who I am.

Thanks to the many friends who inspired and encouraged me, particularly Susannah Alexander, Beth Austin, Atalay Cokberkit, Ann Evans, Isao Fujimoto, Gue Hudson, Ann Law, Ellen and Igor Likhotkin, Annie Liu, Fred and Elizabeth Lorish, Milenko Matanovic, Katherine Mitchell, Sara Morgan, Mary Petruska, Carolyn Shaffer, Judy Schwartz, Dana Shavin, Julia Li and Victor Teixeira, Cilla Tucker, and Yiliang Zhao.

And most of all, to my husband and daughters. Mel has been my rock and strength by nurturing and supporting me throughout this journey. My daughter Mae inspired me by her own academic pursuits at the same time, with a similar focus on community development and action so we could sometimes talk “lit review” at the dinner table. My daughter Katie inspired me by her commitment and journey that has taken her into far territories. Both of them encouraged me and it is for them and for the next generation that I dedicate this work. May you build community wherever you are.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................. v

LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................. xiii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................. xiv

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1

   Problem ............................................................................................................. 2
   Background ........................................................................................................ 3
   Purpose .............................................................................................................. 5
   Significance ....................................................................................................... 6
   Rationale ............................................................................................................ 7
   Conceptual and Theoretical Framework ............................................................... 8
   Research Method ............................................................................................... 10
   Overview of Chapters ......................................................................................... 11
   Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 12

II. LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................. 14

   Introduction ...................................................................................................... 14
   Building a Theoretical Framework .................................................................... 14
   Learning in Communities .................................................................................. 18
   Learning Communities ...................................................................................... 19
   Community Development .................................................................................. 21
   Community Learning Centers .......................................................................... 23
   Social Constructivist Learning Theory ............................................................... 23
   Piagetian Concepts ............................................................................................. 24
   The Integrative Group Process .......................................................................... 31
   Organizational Learning ..................................................................................... 34
   Institutionalization ............................................................................................ 39
   Sense of Community and Social Capital ........................................................... 40
   Community Field and Social Networks ............................................................ 43
   Demise of Community ....................................................................................... 46
   New Culture of Learning ..................................................................................... 48
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipation</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Shift</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Events</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattanooga in Motion</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Nights in Chattanooga</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of the City</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moccasin Bend Task Force</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life Conference</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Positioning Statement: Readiness</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. LEADERSHIP</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Visit to Indianapolis</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIPC: Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons Learned</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Arts</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Mean Business Conference</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City/County Leadership</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Positioning Statement: Leadership</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. OPENNESS</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Options Study Group</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners for Economic Progress</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Coordinating Council</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positioning Venture</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Final Meeting</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emerging Leader</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Positioning Statement: Openness</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. STRUCTURE</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Announcement</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chattanooga Venture Committee</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Storefront</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision 2000</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Cross-validation of Data Collection with Self as Inquirer .......................... 90
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Conditions of the Crisis Situation in Chattanooga in 1980s.............................. 115

Table 2 Synopsis of Lessons Learned in Indianapolis, October 19, 1983 ....................... 170

Table 3 Consultants for Learning Events, 1981-1983 .................................................. 182

Table 4 Cities Studied by Options Study Group, 1984................................................... 190

Table 5 Options Study Group: Summary of Lessons from Other Cities, 1984 ............ 192

Table 6 Organizational Committees of the Chattanooga Venture Steering Committee, 1984 ........................................................................................................................................ 215

Table 7 Themes and Learning Events, Chattanooga, 1980-84 ........................................ 244

Table 8 The Community Process through Learning Events, Chattanooga, 1981-84..... 251

Table 9 Ideas Generated by the Community Process, Chattanooga, 1981-84 ............ 253
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For democracy to work, community is necessary. Lewis Friedland

This study proposes a learning-based approach to economic and community development. People are a region’s greatest resource. The focus and energy to create change comes from the creative interconnectivity of people around ideas that have meaning and value to them (Kilpatrick, 2000). Those ideas are generated through the creative, integrative community process (Follett, 1918/1998) then fed-forward to the structure of the community (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999). The interrelationship of process and structure (Morse, 2006a) is what makes it possible for learning and connection to generate the vision that drives change (Senge, 1994).

The concept of community learning refers to the creation of new knowledge and skills as a result of people interacting with each other to affect change within a locality, (Smith, 2001, Moore & Brooks, 2000; Morse, 2006a). The concept is grounded in social constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986), which asserts that individuals construct their own meaning and build concepts from experiences and actions in a social context (Isaacs, 2000; Wadsworth, 2004). The assumption is that acquired knowledge and skills build the efficacy of the individuals as well as the capacity of the group to further their purposes (Lane & Dorfman, 1997; Peters & Armstrong, 1998). The significance of this exploration is that a better understanding of community learning has
the potential to create stronger and better communities, increase the knowledge-base both individually and collectively, and generate social and economic productivity (Cunningham, 2008; Laudeman, 2013; Sharp et al., 2002).

**Problem**

My study started with a question: How do communities educate themselves for change? I needed to ground the research in a community that had demonstrated significant economic and social change in recent years. Chattanooga, Tennessee, has been recognized for its transformative story from a stagnant town to a vibrant city (Bunnell, 2002). I wanted to know not just how it started to change but why it worked. Was it just particular circumstances unique to a certain time and place that could not be replicated, or was there a theoretical framework that could help to understand the processes that engendered successful change? If there was such a theoretical framework, could it be used in other places at other times to address different problems and different circumstances?

In this study, I examine the role that learning played in Chattanooga's transformation. Bunnell (2002) acknowledged that planning is “a collective learning process” (p. 141) in which people are exposed to new ideas and perspectives, but I push further to explore and describe the role and dynamics of learning on a community level, defining a concept called community learning (Morse, 2004, 2006a).

The literature on community learning is underdeveloped and lacks a clear conceptual framework (Moore & Brooks, 2000). In traditional planning literature, learning is only indirectly addressed. The body of literature on community development and renewal acknowledges learning activities but fails to develop the concept of
community learning as a force for change. The growing body of literature on organizational learning acknowledges learning for its strategic significance for collaboration and innovation but doesn’t address the specific needs or peculiarities of communities as opposed to organizations. There exists, therefore, a need to understand and develop the concept of community learning theoretically and to describe the concept in practice from those who have lived it.

**Background**

Many stories have been told about Chattanooga’s change, calling it a turnaround, a transformation, and a renaissance (Bunnell, 2002). Chattanooga, Tennessee, was called the most polluted city in the nation in 1969, but even as the pollution abated in the following decade, the city was still beset with problems, fragmented, and resistant to change (Longo, 1980; Minshall & Moody, 1983). Generally Chattanooga was considered a backwater town on the Tennessee River, or it had no identity at all, as a 1983 report by the Battelle Corporation stated: “Perhaps Chattanooga’s greatest weakness in regard to image is the fact that it does not have one” (Minshall & Moody, 1983).

In the 1990s Chattanooga was acclaimed with such headlines as these: “Chattanooga Turnaround,” “Chattanooga Reborn,” “Cinderella Story,” “Tennessee Triumph,” and “Back from the Brink” (Bunnell, 2002, p. 55). In *The Ecology of Place*, Beatley and Manning (1997) referred to Chattanooga as “one of the most dramatic examples of a U.S. city that has recast itself in terms of green principles” (p. 97).

In 2008, Volkswagen chose Chattanooga as the site for its new auto manufacturing plant in the United States, citing in the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* (Pare, 2008) the “intangibles.” The sense of renaissance was not limited to economic
factors but included a wide range of initiatives. For example, as recently as August 2011, *Outside* magazine designated Chattanooga the best outdoor city in the nation for its many venues for outdoor activities, and in January, 2012, the *New York Times* featured Chattanooga as one of 45 cities *in the world* to visit in 2012, noting the city’s recent developments in the arts and creativity. An intangible sense of renaissance combined with very tangible urban developments, natural features, and outdoor activities, as well as artistic and creative offerings—how could such a wide range of activities reach a level of national and international recognition in a relatively small and formerly unnoticed city?

In telling the story or in trying to explain how Chattanooga made these changes, urban planning is often cited (Bunnell, 2002; Cunningham, 2008; Manning and Beatley, 1997). Gene Bunnell (2002), himself an urban planner and professor of urban studies, highlighted Chattanooga for the opening story in his book, *Making Places Special*: “The positive changes that have occurred in Chattanooga did not just happen by chance. They came about because people came together and planned: first to identify and agree on what kind of city they wanted Chattanooga to be, and then to decide how best to achieve that desired outcome” (p. 143). But urban planning is done in many places and often doesn’t result in the wide-range and depth of changes witnessed in Chattanooga. If urban planning doesn’t fully account for the changes in Chattanooga, what can we learn from Chattanooga’s story that is often left undefined and undescribed?

Over the years, the story has changed and the tellers have changed, but I have noticed that the story usually starts where the teller entered the story. Likewise, this study begins about the time that I returned home to Chattanooga. I came back to visit in the summer of 1981 on the eve of the first of Five Nights in Chattanooga, a series of open air
concerts. I watched B. B. King in a live concert with the most diverse audience I’d ever experienced in my hometown on a vacant lot in the heart of downtown considered dangerous after dark. People sat on street curbs or in lawn chairs, black and white, young and old, happy to be there, enjoying the music and the summer evening. Sitting on the curb with my feet in the gutter, I met two new friends, and I realized something was happening in my hometown.

I stayed and soon married and had a child while these events told in this paper were happening. Chattanooga was giving birth too.

**Purpose**

Creswell (2007) states three purposes for a qualitative study. The first is “heightening awareness for experience which has been forgotten and overlooked” (p. 102). The research should shed new light on or engender a better understanding of the way things are. That insight may come through someone else’s experiences shared through interviews or from other data discovered in the research process, but it also comes through the patterns and themes suggested by the material, and from the integrative and interpretive process of analysis.

The second purpose of a study of this nature is to encourage dialog. The new or heightened awareness can bring attention to something that has been, in Creswell’s words, forgotten and overlooked. The early stages of Chattanooga’s renaissance, the actions which led to creating “one of the most dramatic revitalization stories on the planet” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 241) have been forgotten and/or overlooked.

The third purpose is to lead to “improvements in practice” (Creswell, 2007, p. 102). The methods that cities use in conducting strategic planning could be improved
with a better knowledge of how communities learn. The practices that promote community learning can alter how cities plan and prepare for change.

The purpose of this study is to do all three: heighten awareness, create dialog, and lead to improvements in practice. If community learning is a driver of economic and social development, then those communities that understand the principles and apply them successfully will be better positioned for the future than those that don't (Morse, 2006b; Cunningham, 2008; Moore & Brooks, 2000).

**Significance**

Communities are changing rapidly across the globe. Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown (2011) in *A New Culture of Learning* define a concept of learning which is based on two elements: almost unlimited resources for learning and a bounded environment of experimentation. By unlimited resources for learning, they are referring to the informational resources of the Internet. The idea of the new culture of learning is to connect learning (individual) and participation (collective)—in an always-changing environment. Not only is the environment changing, but the people in it are as well, in both senses—the individuals change personally over time, and the individuals who are participating come and go. In both senses, the environment and the people in it are constantly changing.

The increased efficacy that takes place in a community or a region due to *vision, connection* and *learning* has been recognized by Richard Florida (1995): These *learning regions* (or communities) "function as collectors and repositories of knowledge and ideas, and provide an underlying environment or infrastructure which facilitates the flow of
knowledge, ideas and learning. Learning regions are increasingly important sources of innovation and economic growth” (p. 528).

Laudeman (2013) proposed a multi-level theory of learning that explains how learning aggregates in increased capabilities from the individual to the group to the regional level. He drew a direct connection between learning—particularly generative learning or innovation—and community. His theory in essence is: Community yields learning: “Community results in learning, the stronger community is the greater the learning, and substantive learning does not occur without community. Community makes people smarter. Community also makes organizations and regions smarter” (p. 88).

The word community, in this paper, is defined as people living in a geographical locality, or communities of place (Harper & Dunham, 1959; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Community learning is a key concept in exploring and understanding how local areas can increase their capacity or achieve growth and development (Morse, 2004, 2006a, 2006b).

**Rationale**

Storm Cunningham (2008) proposed the concept of a renewal engine as the tool for communities to generate an economy based on restoration and renewal. He identified Chattanooga Venture, a non-profit organization started in Chattanooga in 1984, as "the world's first renewal engine" (p. 247). Bunnell (2002) an urban planner and author also identified Chattanooga Venture as “the vehicle for bringing the community together” (p. 94). With that identification, then, as both engine and vehicle, I chose Chattanooga Venture and the antecedents that went into its creation as the focus for this study.

Storm Cunningham identified three elements essential to a renewal engine: visioning, culturing and partnering. Of those three, culturing is the one least understood
and most often not done well. As a result of poor culturing, projects do not get the buy-in of the community and are opposed or fall short of expectations. Learning and social interaction are the essential components in the culturing process. Culturing (learning) and interaction (connection), then, according to Bunnell (2002) and Cunningham (2008) form the conceptual basis not only for an effective planning process, but also to "build a community's capacity for renewal" (Cunningham, 2008, p. 264) and to drive change with a sense of "strategic alignment" (Cunningham, 2008, p. 88).

**Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in social constructivist learning theory (Piaget, 1973; Bruner, 1990; Wadsworth, 2004) with implications that individuals construct knowledge as they interact (Vygotsky, 1978) and as they build things together (Papert, 1973). Constructivism is “the view that meaning is constructed internally by individuals as they act within their environment, rather than having meaning passively transmitted from the environment” (Gray, 2004, p. vii). Human social interaction is essential for the construction of concepts and for the continual validation and reconstruction of conceptual development (Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986; Smith, 1998; Thomas & Brown, 2011).

The conceptual framework is based on the reciprocal nature of learning and community: learning builds community and community builds learning (Senge, 1994; Argyris, 1993; Laudeman, 2013). At its core, community learning is a highly participatory process, rooted in social interaction (Lane & Dorfman, 1997; Morse, 2006a); however, the concept of community learning is nascent and there is little theoretical development (Moore & Brooks, 2000).
The concept of community learning has roots in social learning theory, organizational learning, and community development. Ricardo Morse (2006a) defined community learning as “a process of collaborative learning occurring at the community level” (p. 51). As a collaborative process, it is not just individuals learning in community but a socially constructed process of learning as a community: “Community learning is quite simply the phenomenon of a given community learning as a community” (Morse, 2004, p. 20).

The concept of community learning builds on the growing body of literature in organizational learning that distinguishes between group learning and individuals learning in groups (Smith, 2001). It promotes the idea that while individuals within the organization learn, the organization itself, as a social collective, learns also (Argyris, 1993). An organization that learns is called a learning organization (Senge, 1994). In order to expand the capacity of the group (organization or community), the kind of learning that is necessary is generative learning, and Senge (1994) defined generative learning as one that “opens your mind, allows free association of ideas, and makes new connections” (p. 206).

Ricardo Morse (2006a) has developed the conceptual understanding of community learning as both process and structure: “It is the structure of the community that makes the process of ‘community learning’ possible, while at the same time, it is the community process (occurring in dialogue and other forms of communicative action) that helps build community structure” (p. 68). The community’s structure is identified through the web (Lane & Dorfman, 1997) of interconnected organizations, institutions, and interpersonal relationships that create a field or network linking people and
institutions across the community (Wilkinson, 1991/1999; Friedland, 2001). “It is through these linkages, and the interactions that occur within them, that we see collective learning in groups make its way to the community level and become institutionalized in such a way as to provide evidence that a community is learning” (Morse, 2004, p. 20).

Morse’s (2004, 2006a, 2006b) conceptual framework on community learning proposes six postulates, which can be used to determine if community learning has taken place. The six postulates are based on the understanding that knowledge and skills are built through social interaction in dialogue and deliberation (Isaacs, 2000; Lane & Dorfman, 1997), and that the knowledge and skills, i.e. increased capacity or efficacy, are “fed-forward” into the community structure or to the level of the “community field” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999), thus enhancing the capacity or efficacy of the community (Peirce & Johnson, 1997; Atlee, 2003). The structural evidence of community learning provides a significant opportunity to determine if community learning has taken place and if it is on-going.

**Research Method**

Phenomenology is a method of qualitative research that leads to understanding a concept or a phenomenon from the perspective of the people who lived it (Husserl, 1970; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2007). Phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences of individuals and the meaning they ascribe to the phenomenon being studied. Phenomenology explores how people “make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The phenomenon studied in this paper is the creation of Chattanooga Venture from the experience of those who lived it.
I used three primary sources for researching Chattanooga’s experience: personal interviews, organizational documents, and newspaper accounts. People tell what is meaningful to them. Organizational documents record intent and factual evidence of the time by providing minutes of meetings, advance materials for an event, reports, and grant proposals. Newspaper articles provide a public record with tension and conflict and quotes with the immediacy of the daily news. All three of these data sources have both strengths and weaknesses. Personal accounts vary. Organizational documents are seldom analytical. Newspaper articles are frequently inaccurate. Triangulation of these sources not only gave validity and ensured trustworthiness of the story (Shenton, 2004), but it also amplified the story from different perspectives.

In this study, I follow Moustakas’ (1994) research design, as laid out by Creswell (2007). I examine the origin story of Chattanooga Venture in the early 1980s from the lived experience (Groenewald, 2004). The study explores how and why Chattanooga Venture emerged in Chattanooga, the early ideas and concepts and their meaning to those who participated, the community process, and the structural repositories of the ideas and concepts. In order to determine if community learning took place, I apply Morse’s six postulates to the conceptualization and development of Chattanooga Venture. The study covers the years 1980-1984.

**Overview of Chapters**

Chapter I provides an introduction to the concept of community learning and the focus of the study. It indicates the purpose, significance and rationale for the study and introduces the theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the methodology of the research.
Chapter II reviews the literature in the field of community learning and delineates the theoretical framework in learning theory, organizational learning and community field analysis.

Chapter III further explores the conceptual framework by providing an historical overview of participatory practices. The conceptual framework of Morse’s six postulates of community learning is explored in more depth.

Chapter IV explains the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenological research. The research design is laid out in detail and the steps taken to ensure trustworthiness are explained. The chapter ends with a section on the author’s positionality in the study.

Chapters V-IX describe the story in Chattanooga. The chapters are divided by themes that emerged from the data: personal interviews, documents and newspaper articles. The themes fall chronologically in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>THEMATIC TITLE</th>
<th>TIME FRAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>CRISIS (early 1980s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>READINESS (1981-83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>LEADERSHIP (1983)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>OPPENNESS (1984)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>STRUCTURE (1984)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Chapter X, I analyze the findings through the learning-based lenses of the 4-I framework of Crossan, Lane and White (1999) and the Six Postulates of Community Learning by Ricardo Morse (2006a). At the end I draw my conclusions on community learning and define areas for further research.

**Conclusion**

Although the literature on community learning is nascent, a new culture of learning is emerging which will have significant bearing on this exploration because of
the accessibility of the almost unlimited resources made possible by the Internet and the associative capacity through social media (Thomas & Brown, 2011; Jenkins et al., 2011). This study builds a case for community learning, even before the advent of the Internet, and explores the theoretical underpinnings and implications of community learning as an impetus for economic, social, and cultural change.
LITERATURE REVIEW

No theory, no learning. W. Edwards Deming

Introduction

The literature on community learning draws from many different skeins of thought and practice, from learning theory to community development. The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the theoretical threads, first in the field of learning theory, particularly as they relate to social constructivist learning theory, collaborative learning, and organizational learning; and secondly, in the field of community development, particularly as they relate to the integrative group process, community field theory, and social-network analysis. Together they will form the warp and weft of a theoretical concept. The next chapter imprints on this theoretical weaving a conceptual design, based on the six postulates of community learning proposed by Ricardo Morse (2006a). Morse’s six postulates are the lens that are applied to the experiences in Chattanooga to define and explore them as community learning.

Building a Theoretical Framework

The body of research and writing on community learning is nascent. Only a few sources address the concept directly, and they draw from literature in various fields, including community planning and development, organizational learning theory, group process, and action research. The concept of community-level learning still lacks
conceptual development (Moore & Brooks, 2000). “Although the field is beginning to explore the community learning approach peripherally, a theory of community learning, to date, has not been developed” (Morse, 2006a, p. 50). Morse (2004, 2006a, 2006b) documented the gap in the literature and identified the fields contributing to the concept, on the one hand, from community development (citizen participation, collaborative planning, social network theory, community field analysis) and, on the other hand, from learning theory (adult learning, collaborative learning, organizational learning, and learning communities).

Community learning could be confused with learning in community (Smith, 2001), which includes a wide-range of adult-education programs, often referred to as life-long learning (Brookfield, 1983; Knowles et al., 1984). Furthermore the similarity of the terms community learning and learning communities causes confusion, although there is a significant relationship between these two terms (Kilpatrick, et al., 2003), which will be explored later in this study.

Community learning has been defined as “people engaging with each other to bring about changes that enhance local life” (Smith, 2001, p. 6). An analysis of the terms used by Smith (2001) reveal definite assumptions integral to the concept. “Engaging with others” does not specify whether that engagement is mediated by an organization or self-directed, intentional or coincidental, ongoing or temporary, instructional or derived from life experiences, but it, in any case, assumes social interaction. The stated purpose of bringing about change sets community learning apart from normative adult-education classes, which could be for the purpose of self-improvement, job training, or general enrichment (Knowles et al., 1984). If the intention is “to bring about changes,” as Smith
(2001) states, then the process is not purely educational, but rather goal-oriented and transformational in purpose, with the stated goal to “enhance local life.” By using the reference to local life, Smith defines community geographically, or as community of place (Harper & Dunham, 1959; Wilkinson, 1991/1999; Friedland, 2001). In summary, Smith’s (2001) definition claimed three assumptions regarding community learning:

- Community learning is grounded in social interaction.
- Community learning is change oriented.
- Community learning is a practice of communities of place.

In 1997, Moore and Brooks (2000), at the University of Georgia, sponsored the 29th Annual Conference of the International Community Development Society, which focused on learning communities. In addition, Moore and Brooks worked with numerous communities in the Southeast United States and based their observations on communities using a learning approach to problem solving. Moore and Brooks (2000) concluded:

Communities that design creative ways to utilize their social capital (Putnam, 2000) in keeping all residents informed and involved, such as formal and informal organizations, leadership roles, public meetings, newspapers, or computer technology will be further ahead in their quest for learning and development. (p. 12)

Falk and Harrison (1998) illustrated how learning took place through the associational life of the community by documenting the learning exchanges of a craft club in a small rural community in Australia. The research showed how various kinds of information were shared and skills were developed (knitting, sewing, etc.). When those skills were turned into economic activities (fairs, sales, and purchases), the rewards were often transferred into recognition and sponsorship of other community projects:

It appears that the nature of the learning is one of mutual benefit. It could be said that through the group’s behavior and practices (capacity building) the community has benefitted not only through individual stimulation, interest and social means of verifying identity, but also through outcomes
for the betterment or sustainability of the community. (p. 624)

In a dissertation titled “Community Learning: Process, Structure, and Renewal,” Ricardo Morse (2004) explored the concept of community learning as it related to public administration. He identified community learning’s roots in the ethos of collaborative pragmatism and in community development theory. Community learning provided an “alternative paradigm” for public administrators working with communities that are seeking change, based on public-participation models that reflected a civic culture or a community-renewal movement at work when postmodern conditions caused fragmentation and dissonance even in the concept of community. Morse (2004) looked for evidence that the knowledge was “fed-forward” in the structure of the community. He warns against process without structural evidence: “If the integrative community process – the process of creating new knowledge and new understandings – fails to occur at the level of the community field, then it is short of community-level learning” (p. 94).

Kasl and Marsick (1997) distinguished community learning as the product of group learning and defined it as: “When all members perceive themselves as having contributed to a group outcome, and all members of the group can individually describe what the group as a system knows” (p. 250). In this way, community learning, like collective learning, was, according to DeGeuss (1988) a “fundamental strategic process and the only sustainable competitive advantage of the future” (cited in Vera & Crossan, 2004, p. 222).
Learning in Communities

Smith (2001) distinguished between community learning and learning *in* communities. Learning in community refers to outside-of-school activities (youth or adult learning opportunities outside of the context of school), both intentional and informal. That distinction between formal (schools, colleges, and instructional settings) and informal settings (everyday activities, home, work, or play) is muddied because many social clubs or non-school organizations in a community provide intentional educational activities with instruction: “Although learning occurring outside schools, colleges and universities may be unplanned and accidental, there must be much that is purposeful and deliberate” (Brookfield, 1983, p. 12). Brookfield’s distinction tended to set school against community, but his purpose was the illustration of the many ways for learning in community, not necessarily education, which are intended to bring about community change: “It is education *in* the community rather than education *for* the community” (Smith, 2001, p 5).

Learning in community is represented by examples of adult learning (Brookfield, 1991). The literature on adult learning shows that adults learn best when their *prior* learning is valued or incorporated into the process and the learning activities and content are relevant or useful to the learner (Knowles et al., 1984). In the United States the term *life-long learning* has taken hold of the adult-education movement, referring to continuing the learning process after the school year’s end (Brookfield, 1983; Jensen et al., 1964). The idea of life-long learning, however, tends to individualize learning, referring to learning as an individual’s effort to continue to learn throughout one’s life. It
does not necessarily require social interaction, nor is it oriented toward change or to local improvement (Kessler & O’Connor, 2001; Holman et al., 2007).

**Learning Communities**

The two terms “community learning” and “learning community” are easy to confuse, because they are the same two words but in reverse order. Reversing the order changes the meaning, however. The difference stems from which word is the noun—is it a different kind of learning or a different kind of group? The term *learning communities* is used widely to describe any group of people engaged in a learning process. University campuses claim to have many “learning communities” when groups form to continue a field of learning outside of class structure, often online (Kamenetz, 2010). Likewise, the Internet spawns learning communities that expand beyond geographical boundaries (Jenkins et al., 2011; Thomas & Brown, 2011).

Kilpatrick, Barrett, and Jones (2003) distinguished between curricular learning communities (associated with schools) and those that are profit-based, focused on “the profits that accrue from building on the synergies of individuals in common locations or with common interests as they work towards sharing understandings, skills, and knowledge” (p. 2). The latter are found in partnerships, such as public-private partnerships, collaborations between governmental bodies and private companies.

Sue Kilpatrick’s (2000) research at the University of Tasmania looked at the role of community learning and learning communities in regional areas of Australia, concluding that traditional, top-down models of community development are outmoded: “Policy makers and communities are starting to recognize that the old top down policy approach needs to be replaced by, or at least tempered with, a bottom up approach to
policy” (p.1). Some examples of bottom up involvement included public investment at the regional level, facilitating and building local capacity, increasing information sources, and government and communities working together collaboratively.

A learning community addresses the learning needs of its locality through partnership. It uses the strengths of social and institutional relationships to bring about cultural shifts in perceptions of the value of learning. Learning communities explicitly use learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development which involves all parts so the community. (Yarnit, 2000, p. 11 as cited in Kilpatrick et al., 2003 p. 2)

In describing learning communities in small towns in Australia, Falk and Harrison (1998) referred to several characteristics of local communities that exhibited community learning, including:

1. Forums for sharing ideas and visions
2. Discussion of issues in newspapers articles, elected official meetings, and informal networks
3. Teams working on projects or events
4. Recognition of volunteer participation and teams

Moore and Brooks (2000) listed activities which involved community learning based on community development practices, such as identifying issues, getting people together to discuss those issues, organizing themselves, seeking information and relevant experiences, solving community problems, and then the on-going process to “learn, act, reflect, learn act, reflect and so on” (p. 8). However, Morse (2004) pointed out that these characteristics are simply group activities and may not result in community-level learning.

Morse (2006a) saw a connection between community learning and learning communities that reflects a direct relationship between process and structure: “A ‘learning community’ has a well-developed community structure that has
institutionalized the practice of community learning, thus facilitating a sustained process” (p.73). If a local community has institutionalized its process of learning then it can be called a “learning community.” The important concept in Morse’s work is the idea of structural embodiment of the community learning processes beyond individual or even group learning to encompass broader representation of the “community-level” institutions, across the web of the community (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999; Lane and Dorfman, 1997). “As communities institutionalize learning processes, they can be said to be ‘learning communities’” (Morse, 2004, p.2). In Chapter III of this study, I will explore this concept further and examine Morse’s six postulates of community learning.

Community Development

Associating community learning with community development emphasizes the role of voluntary associations and collaborative activities between citizens and government (Morse, 2004; Smith, 2001). Based on research in an Australian community, Falk and Harrison (1998) described community learning as that which both produced and sustained development with economic and social outcomes: “Community learning is a broad name for those individual and group processes which not only produce, but also sustain community development outcomes” (p. 614).

Ellerman (2007) identified an underlying conundrum at the root of development theory, one that may have a bearing on placing community learning in the field of community development. If development assistance comes from outside the community, or even from some sources within the community, with the intention of being helpful, in most cases, it may actually make the receivers more dependent:
The assumed goal is transformation towards autonomous development on the part of the doers, with the doers helping themselves. The problem is how can the helpers supply help that actually furthers rather than overrides or undercuts the goal of the doers helping themselves? This is actually a paradox. (Ellerman, 2007, p. 563)

The developmental paradox is similar to the one that exists in education, with the teacher being equivalent to the outside aid giver and the student being the receiver. If the goal of development or education is to build capacity and autonomy, then the process is one of learning with the intention of building autonomous and self-directed learners. Community learning shares the same paradox with development theory and requires that the learning process be designed to build capacity and autonomy.

In “Education and Economic Development,” Nielsen and Kinghorn (2008) looked at the results of education-based development not in a traditional way of measuring economic development but as the interactive processes of learning instituted in the community. They were seeking an approach to economic development that stemmed from the ways that educational experiences result in productive, collaborative learning:

If sustained prosperity depends on the ongoing ability of the people who reside in a place to recognize and deal with issues as they emerge, then an intervention to promote development can be judged a success only when it results in more effective networks of public interaction and communication, within which invention, innovation and trials of new ideas can more effectively take place. (p. 8)

The focus here is on the learning that takes place as people “deal with issues” and the resultant networks of interaction and communication. Those networks provide the means to act collaboratively through “shared insights into the power—the capacity and potential—to act in the future” (Nielson & Kinghorn, 2008, p. 8). To be successful the networks of interaction and communication should be ongoing in some capacity beyond
the initial intervention or activity in order for the learning process to generate new ideas, innovations, and collaborative efforts.

Community Learning Centers

The term community learning in the U.S. was not in common use until the federal grants program (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html) which encouraged schools to stay open longer in the day to provide a safe place for students to stay for homework, mentoring, enrichment in fields such as art, music, or technology. The centers often included people from the community, such as teachers or mentors or volunteers. The program has grown in all 50 states particularly in rural and inner-city areas.

Community learning centers, as defined by the government program, are school-based, student-focused projects, while worthy in their own right, but are not the focus of this study. In fact, using the term “community learning” for these school-based centers may permanently muddy the use of this term in the United States.

Social Constructivist Learning Theory

The theoretical framework for community learning is drawn from social constructivist learning theory, which is evidenced in organizational learning concepts, integrative group process, and collaborative learning. Constructivism is “the view that meaning is constructed internally by individuals as they act within their environment, rather than having meaning passively transmitted from the environment” (Gray, 2004, p. vii). Human social interaction is essential for the construction of concepts and for the continual validation and reconstruction of conceptual development (Piaget, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1960; Bandura, 1986; Thomas & Brown, 2011).
John Dewey (1897) set forth early concepts of constructivism in his pedagogic creed, which claimed that the individual built his consciousness through his participation in the social process of education. Vygotsky (1978) identified the internalization of socially-rooted activities as the basis for learning. Vygotsky shared many aspects of analysis with Jean Piaget, but the two theorists, one in Russia and one in France during the years of geopolitical isolation, never had the opportunity to share ideas or, if you will, *assimilate* or *accommodate* each other’s thinking. Vygotsky and Piaget both were constructivists; both believed that learning and development were self-regulated as individual construction, changing through adaptation (Wadsworth, 2004). They both saw social interactions playing a significant role in learning, perhaps in different ways. They differed in their views of how learning took place, Vygotsky giving more credence to the transmission of knowledge from the culture (Wadsworth, 2004).

*Piagetian Concepts*

Jean Piaget's work in social and cognitive development was paramount for constructivist learning theory although he is often overlooked as a constructivist due to later controversies over biological issues (Wadsworth, 2004). Piaget’s ideas of *assimilation, accommodation, and disequilibrium* as constructivist tenets of human learning have a significant bearing on community learning and, therefore, deserve to be examined in some depth.

Piaget’s initial work was in biology. He saw cognitive and affective development being continuously integrated, using processes of mental or cognitive adaptation similar to those of biological adaptation: “Cognitive and affective development are a result of continual attempts at adapting to and constructing the known/understood world” (Gray,
2004, p. vii). When Piaget was first introduced in the United States, his views were not readily accepted because they conflicted with the prevailing behaviorist views (Rosenthal & Zimmerman, 1978; Zimmerman & Blom, 1983). Lauren Resnick (1987) claimed: “Constructivism, a central tenet of Piagetian theory, in the past sharply divided Piagetians from learning [behavioral] theorists. Today, cognitive scientists generally share the assumption that knowledge is constructed by learners” (Resnick, 1987, p. 10).

Piaget’s research established the cognitive basis for constructivist theory:

The clearest result of our research on the psychology of intelligence is that even the structures most necessary to the adult mind…are built up little by little…. There are no innate structures; every structure presupposes a construction. All these constructions originate from prior structures. (Piaget, 1967, pp. 149-150)

New learning is built on what is already known. Prior structures form the basis on which new learning is built:

The greatest variability in constructed knowledge among people is probably found in their social knowledge. Cultural differences and local subcultural differences can be great. [People] construct social knowledge from and within the sociocultural communities they live in and experience. (Wadsworth, 2004, p. 144)

Exploration is an overarching principle in the Piagetian framework (Edelstein, 1992). Exploratory action and social interaction build social knowledge. As important as exploratory action is to a child’s development, likewise it is a key component of community learning. Because social interaction is key to development, humans are dependent on social interaction for the construction of concepts and for the continual validation and reconstruction of conceptual development.
Four concepts central to Piagetian thought describe how we acquire and construct knowledge: schema, assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration (Wadsworth, 2004, pp. 13-20):

- **Schema** is the word for the cognitive structures on the mind, concepts or categories by which we organize thinking and knowledge.
- **Assimilation** is a cognitive process by which we integrate new information or perception into an existing schema.
- **Accommodation** is a cognitive process by which new information or perception results in changing the existing schema.
- **Equilibration** is the cognitive process by which one coordinates what is experienced with existing structures.

These activities of the brain happen all the time as we experience the world, come in contact with the environment and interact with other people. When a conflict occurs between what is experienced and our already existing schemata, disequilibrium occurs.

- **Equilibration** is the cognitive process by which one coordinates what is experienced with existing structures.

The continual process of equilibration makes growth and development possible. Motivation can be thought of, in Piaget’s thinking, as the drive for equilibration when conflict, or disequilibrium, occurs (Wadsworth, 2004, p. 19). Equilibration is the key element in Piaget’s view because it coordinates the other three factors whereby a person makes his internal mental structures consistent, or in equilibrium, with his interaction with the external environment or social experiences. Intellectual or cognitive growth and development proceed through different stages or levels of development (Piaget, 1952) throughout life from childhood through adulthood, assimilating and accommodating new information, finding equilibrium, and thereby constructing new knowledge. This is a self-
regulating process (Wadsworth, 2004). The process of the mind, or intellectual
development, is one of continual adaptation and construction (Bruner, 1966b).

Adults continue to assimilate and accommodate experience into cognitive,
affective, and social understandings, which are constantly being constructed and
reconstructed. The process is natural and spontaneous, occurring within the mind of the
individual (Bandura, 1977). Conflict or confrontation with new experiences brings about
changes in thought or feelings and new mental schemes and social arrangements are
constructed (Festinger, 1957; Aronson, 1969).

The process of community learning, likewise, is natural and spontaneous, arising
from the natural interaction of people in a community. Increased interactions increase the
possibility of learning (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). Conflicts and confrontations that occur
in the process of interaction are also a natural part of engagement and, in fact, are
necessary components for community learning, providing motivation or a stimulus for
seeking equilibration by assimilating and accommodating other views (Isaacs, 2000;
Aronson, 1969). The motivation to solve a problem derives from the drive for
equilibration, and in the process, knowledge is constructed (Piaget, 1967; Wadsworth,
2004). That knowledge, in a community context, is community learning (Kilpatrick,
2000; Morse 2006a).

A significant factor in community learning is the fact that the meanings of words
and concepts are socially constructed (Piaget, 1973; Gattegno, 1970). In other words, the
meaning one person associates with a word or idea may not always be the same,
especially as the concepts become more abstract (Bruner, 1990). For example, people
may have the same mental concept of a physical object such as a table, but does everyone
have the same understanding of concepts such as family or consensus or freedom? The meaning is a constructed concept in each individual mind based on experience and interaction with others (Wadsworth, 2004). The meaning of words and concepts may be a problem for communities when not everyone has the same meaning for the same words (Isaacs, 2000).

Cognitive dissonance occurs when one’s expectations, based on current thinking, are not confirmed (Festinger, 1957). Community cognitive conflict, then, occurs when community issues confront or contradict people’s current thinking or expectations. Conflict can create disequilibrium. Disequilibrium can be motivating. This explains why a “crisis” is often considered necessary to prompt community action (Cunningham, 2008) and, therefore, can be seen as a motivator for community learning to take place. The crisis or the conflict is the basis for creating the conditions necessary for cooperation. Edelstein (1992) described cooperation in terms of a learning environment: “Cognitive conflict is frequently, if not always, nested in interactional conflict, and social conflict generates cognitive conflict—the signal and function of collaboration” (p. 169).

Learning involves assimilating and accommodating new information or changes in the environment, constantly constructing and reconstructing new knowledge and new capacities (Piaget, 1967). On the community level new information might result in improving the capacity of the (people in the) community, for example to accommodate new pressures or assimilate new populations, which requires knowing what the needs are and constructing ways to solve problems that meet those needs (Moore & Brooks, 2000). If we define community capacity in terms of learning, we could use a Piagetian description of the construction of knowledge: People construct knowledge from
exploratory actions. Actions can be physical or mental. Actions generally have two phases. The first phase is exploration of an object or an idea. If the exploration “provokes disequilibration, then exploration continues but is focused on making sense of (assimilating) that which produced the disequilibrium. This is construction of knowledge” (Wadsworth, 2004, p. 149).

Taking action together in a community promotes learning in both of the ways described above. First it promotes exploration. The process of exploring problems may involve learning new information, defining terms, or finding common values and meaning (Moore & Brooks, 2000). If the exploration provokes disequilibration (conflict, confusion, controversy, etc.), and if the exploration continues—the participants assimilate new information, interact with more people, create more conversations and interactions, which in turn provoke accommodation of the thinking of a broader range of people, issues, and methods that produced the disequilibrium in the first place (Aronson, 1969; Bandura, 1986; Bruner, 1966b; Follett, 1998).

Initially, constructivism was not well received in the U.S. because of the strong hold of behaviorist thinking on educational psychology (Bredo, 1997). Instead of looking at stimulus and response, or observable behavior, the emphasis moved toward meaning-making as the basis for cognitive construction. According to Jerome Bruner (1990), this was “an altogether more profound revolution…. to discover and to describe formally the meanings that human beings created out of their encounters with the world…. focused on the symbolic activities that human beings employed in constructing and making sense not only of the world, but of themselves (p.2).
Bruner’s research proposed three modes of cognitive representation which are not linear but rather integrated into each other: *enactive*, or action–based, representation; *iconic*, or image-based, representation, and *symbolic*, or language-based, representation. If Piaget’s stages are considered maturational and thus age-based, then Bruner suggested that learning could take place among children or adults at any age if the material is organized appropriately (Bruner, 1966a).

Bruner’s concept of the spiral curriculum or “instructional scaffolding,” (Bruner, 1966a) was a constructivist model because it assumed that students made sense of their experiences, based on their cognitive capabilities and the interaction with their environments (Bredo, 1997). Bruner incorporated the concept of developmental stages suggested by Piaget, but expanded on it by claiming that students could learn anything at any age if the subject is introduced or applied in an appropriate way at deepening levels of understanding. Likewise, Vygotsky (1978) saw learning in a spiral: “Development, as often happens, proceeds here not in a circle but in a spiral, passing through the same point at each new revolution while advancing to a higher level.” (p. 56)

Bandura’s (2001) social cognitive learning theory emphasized human agency, i.e. efficacy, both individually and collectively: “People’s shared belief in their collective power to produce desired results is a key ingredient of collective agency” (p. 14). Bandura’s (2001) research showed that group attainment reflected both the shared knowledge and skills of the members of the group but also the interactive nature of the group and the degree to which they achieved a synergistic dynamic in their interactions: “Because the collective performance of a social system involves transactional dynamics,
perceived collective efficacy is an emergent group-level property, not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members” (p. 14).

The Integrative Group Process

Mary Parker Follett, who lived from 1868 to 1933, has been proclaimed the “prophet of participation” (Morse, 2006c, title) for her early concepts of group process that Morse (2006a) considered to be at the core of community learning. Follett wrote in philosophy, psychology, political behavior, and organizational management, but was most known as a business and management consultant. Follett’s work fits in the tradition of the American pragmatists, John Dewey, William James, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Pierce and was contemporaneous and consistent with Dewey’s creative democracy, grounded in experience (Bernstein, 2010). Her books, The New State (1918, reprinted in 1998) and Creative Experience (1930), are weakened by outdated diction but are surprisingly and immediately relevant to understanding the phenomenon of community learning. Because Follett is largely unknown today, except in certain circles, I have elected to give her work a closer look.

Follett’s (1930) study in human relations coined the term coact: “We want to know how men can interact and coact better: 1. To secure their needs; 2. To understand and so broaden their ends” (p. xii). The central problem of social relations was described as the question of power, that is, not how to transfer or control it, but how to develop power. When she talked about power, Follett was referring to a process that integrated different, often conflicting, social interests, “not just to develop power in the individual, but also in the productive power of the collective life, that is in organizations and communities” (Follett, 1930, p. 49). When she talked about power or even social
interests, it is hard not to connect those terms with the governing class, those in power, those whose interests dominate, but Follett was referring to a process that integrated rather than alienated or separated: power with, not power over.

The word *integration*, was for Follett, the most suggestive. When differing interests confront each other, there were four possible results: 1. voluntary submission of one side; 2. struggle, and victory of one side over the other; 3. compromise; or 4. integration. Integration was not a compromise because neither side gave up anything. In compromise the individual had to give up something in order to compromise, but integration was finding a “unifying solution” (Follett, 1930, p. 161). “Not all differences, however, can be integrated. That we must face fully, but it is certain that there are fewer irreconcilable activities than we at present think, although it often takes ingenuity, a ‘creative intelligence,’ to find the integration” (Follett, 1930, p. 163). An early advocate of transformational leadership, Follett described the leader as one who had the capacity to interpret the collective intelligence of the group.

The *circular response* was a constructivist concept developed by Follett to describe how the collective intelligence builds or grows from within a group process. “In social situations my response is to an activity which my response is changing while that activity is changing my response; further, that my response is not merely to the other activity but to the relating between the self-activity and the other activity” (Follett, 1930, p. 218). She used the example of when an expert (like herself) is brought in to advise a group, in actuality, the group may change the conclusions of the expert, while the conclusions of the expert are changing the experience of the group.
This mutual influence of one upon the other formed the basis of Follett’s analysis of the group process, which was a core concept of her work. She illustrated the group process in *The New State* (1918/1998), with an example of an ordinary committee meeting of three people, A, B, and C, as follows:

“A says something. Thereupon a thought arises in B’s mind. Is it B’s idea or A’s? Neither. It is a mingling of the two. We find that A’s idea, after having been presented to B and returned to A, has become slightly, or largely, different from what it was originally. In like manner it is affected by C and so on…until the common idea springs into being.” (p. 25)

Follett (1930) used various terms, intermingling, or interpenetration, or progressive integratings for our influence upon each other through interaction. It was the basis of democracy and of creativity. This creative experience—a cooperative construction—she contended “will be fundamental for our political life” (Follett, 1930, p. 225).

Applying principles of Follett’s integration and group process to the classroom, Peters and Armstrong (1998) used the term, “jointly constructed knowledge,” and defined the group learning experience as “more than the sum of individual experiences because of the interactive nature of the knowledge construction process” (p. 76). They emphasized the importance of the relationships involved in the learning process because meaning of words and concepts are understood in the “context of the relationships: “The construction of knowledge within this relationship is joint knowledge construction, and is also other than the sum of individual members’ knowledge,” or in other words, 1 + 1 = 3 (p. 76).

Kasl and Marsick (1997) conducted research on group learning as a “knowing system,” calling attention to the fact that most group learning is considered individual learning in groups and has not “conceptualized the group itself as a learner” (p. 250).
Their research was guided by the question: How does a group as a knowing system come to know what they know? (p. 250). Most of their findings were pertinent to groups engaged in a learning task, rather than in a community setting, but they found that social interdependence played a significant role: “In group learning the system as a whole cannot benefit fully unless individuals see their fate as intertwined with the learning success of others” (p. 253). They contended that “a theory and practice of group learning could contribute significantly to adult educators’ capacity to re-envision learning” (p. 250).

Organizational Learning

Organizational learning is the phenomenon of social groups sensing and adapting to their environs (Argyris, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1992; Schon, 1983). It applies to formal organizations such as agencies and firms, as well as to small groups (Geranmayeh, 1992). In the past two decades the literature on organizational learning has mushroomed, but still there is no clear theory about how organizations change and thrive or decline, why some organizations change proactively to sustain themselves and others do not, and why organizations succeed and fail (Vera and Crossan, 2004; Sims and Lorenzi, 1992; Argyris & Schon, 1992). The critical concept is that an organization itself—as opposed to just its members—can learn as knowledge is embedded in its structure and function (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

Peter Senge (1994) described a learning organization as “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (p. 14). In The Fifth Discipline (1994), Senge posited five core disciplines that he considered vital for learning organizations. The following is a brief description of each. 1. **Personal mastery** applies to
individual learning and continual improvement; 2. **Mental model** refers to the way one looks at the world and one’s framework for the cognitive processes; 3. **Team Learning** starts with dialogue and continues through patterns of interaction; 4. **Shared Vision** is a set of principles and guiding practices for making that transition to the future; and 5. **Systems thinking** is the discipline that integrates the others, holistic thinking. Systems theory’s ability to comprehend and address the whole and to examine the interrelationship between the parts provides both the incentive and the means to integrate the disciplines.

According to Senge (1994), shared vision is vital for any organization or community, because it provides the focus and energy for learning; "Generative learning occurs only when people are striving to accomplish something that matters deeply to them” (p. 206). In order to accomplish the shared vision, learning needs to take place. The kind of learning that needs to take place, generative learning, as opposed to adaptive learning, is one that expands the capacity not only of the individuals, but also the capacity of the organization or the community. In Senge’s (1994) model, a shared vision has the power of “focusing the energies of thousands and creating a common identity among enormously diverse people” (p. 207). Generative learning (creating new knowledge) on a collective level creates new connections and opens new possibilities (Kasl & Marsick, 1997). Connection and learning increase from working together to accomplish a shared vision which, in turn, gives meaning to individuals and builds their capacity and sense of agency or effectiveness (Bandura, 1986). At the same time, connection and learning build the capacity of the organization or community (Senge, 1994; Bandura, 1986; Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schon, 1992; Geranmayeh, 1992). As a result, learning builds
community and community builds learning (Laudeman, 2013). The interrelationship between learning, connection, and vision is at the core of organizational learning and community learning (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

The literature in organizational learning shares many principles with community learning, but the two concepts differ in some significant ways. Communities are unbounded whereas organizations have clearer boundaries; communities do not have the strategic properties of formal organizations (Morse, 2006a). The processes and assumptions of organizations, especially business organizations, are not exactly relevant to communities, especially geographically defined communities. Moore and Brooks (2000) caution against applying findings from business and industry to communities for the following reasons:

1. Businesses have hired and selected individuals to align with the company culture and goals. Communities are multi-dimensional with diverse individuals, groups, and interests.

2. Goals of businesses are bottom-line oriented or in-line with the mission, which has been established from the top. Communities rarely have goals, but if they do, they are different from businesses and have more to do with living conditions.

3. Leadership in businesses is usually clear and hierarchical. There are many different leaders in a community, many voices, and countervailing groups and interests.

4. Communication in businesses usually goes through set structures, departments and divisions, or is managed by the marketing and
communication department. Communication channels in communities have many different styles, patterns and networks, and often have to create ways to share information.

5. Businesses are focused on the goals and strategies that fit in the mission; whereas, communities seek multiple outcomes for residents, based on needs and conditions, available funding and partners. (pp. 4-5)

However, both organizations and communities are “social collectives with many similar properties, such as the existence of groups, interpersonal networks, and other patterns and structures of social interaction” (Morse, 2006a, p. 58). Therefore, the research and writing on organizational learning provide an entry for understanding community learning. Despite the recognized research and writing on organizational learning, there was little convergence in the literature with community learning (Isaacs, 2000). Furthermore, there was a gap in the literature on organizational renewal, according to Crossan, Lane, and White (1999). They researched organizations in which strategic renewal was the focus of the organizational learning. They presented four processes (intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing), and they linked individual, group, and organizational in a multi-level approach.

New ideas occur to people, not to organizations; however, for new ideas to come to bear on organizations, there has to be some interaction in which “some of the individual learning and shared understandings developed by groups become institutionalized as organization artifacts” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 524). The artifacts are specific manifestations that may occur in routines, customs, strategies, policies, or other systems of the organization (Hedberg, 1981; Srivastava, 1983). The
feed-forward and feedback analysis of organizational learning is based on the premise that organizational learning is multilevel: individual, group, and organization (Laudeman, 2013). There is a flow and tension “in the feed-forward and feedback processes of learning across the individual group, and organizational levels. Feed-forward relates to exploration. It is the transference of learning from individuals and groups through to the learning that becomes embedded—or institutionalized—in the form of systems, structures, strategies, and procedures” (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 524).

The 4-I framework of organizational learning as proposed by Crossan, Lane and White (1999), contains four related functions that occur over the individual, group and organizational levels. These four functions are intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing, and are defined as:

- **Intuiting** is the preconscious recognition of the pattern and/or possibilities inherent in a personal stream of experience.
- **Interpreting** is the explaining, through words and/or actions, of an insight or idea to one’s self and to others.
- **Integrating** is the process of developing shared understanding among individuals and of taking coordinated action through mutual adjustment.
- **Institutionalizing** is the process of ensuring that routinized actions occur.

Intuiting is a largely subconscious, complex, and highly individual ability “to discern and comprehend something new, for which there was no prior explanation” (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 526). From a learning perspective, it involves seeing patterns, connections between things, similarities and differences, both what is and what can be. The intuitive learner becomes an “expert, “ as he becomes absorbed in the field of curiosity until the unconscious intuition begins to be conscious and explicit and, at that point, actions become evident: “What once would have taken much deliberation and planning becomes the obvious thing to do” (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 526).
From a community learning perspective, institutionalization is the evidence that learning is fed-forward into the structure of the community: “Institutionalizing is the process of embedding learning that has occurred by individuals and groups into the organization, and it includes systems, structures, procedures and strategy” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 525).

**Institutionalization**

Since the process of institutionalization is at the core of what sets organizational learning apart from individual or group learning, it plays a significant role in examining community learning. In a community, different individuals come and familiar ones go, and those that stay often change roles over time. What individuals learn would be thought to leave with them, but some of that learning stays, embedded in the policies, systems, structures, routines, and other practices of the organization and the community.

This institutionalization is a means for organizations to leverage the learning of the individual members. Structures, systems, and procedures provide a context for interactions. Over time, spontaneous individual and group learning become less prevalent, as the prior learning becomes embedded in the organization and begins to guide the actions and learning of organizational members. (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999, p. 529)

Institutionalization presents structure as both a medium and an outcome of practice (Stones, 2005). Morse (2004) distinguished between the process of community learning and the outcomes of community learning by asserting that community learning should result in a change in the structures of the community: “Community learning occurs when the knowledge created in the integrative ‘community process’ is fed-forward and embedded at the level of community structures” (p. 1). Morse’s (2006a) example of a project in Wytheville, Virginia, described a community visioning process where
collaborative learning took place over time: “The concept of community learning considers both the process and the structure of community.” (p. 59). He outlined three ways in which the new ideas or new knowledge could be “fed-forward and embedded” in the community structures:

- Through the participants of the learning process who represented the different institutions that make up the community structure
- Through the integrative medium of local media outlets
- Through formal and informal processes of knowledge transfer from the group to community level, where the community level was represented by a citizens committee (Morse, 2004, p. 2)

The concept of the structuralization of community learning draws attention to the creation of new organizations, citizen committees, affiliation patterns, development of new leaders, and channels of communication that result as outcomes from community learning processes (Morse, 2006a; Crossan, Lane & White, 1999). The processes of those structures (representation, diversity, participation, leadership, decision-making) should both reflect changes that allow for and promote greater interaction and learning, i.e. generate a culture conducive to learning embodied in the organizations in the community (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

_Sense of Community and Social Capital_

Three descriptive categories of community are represented by *communities of place, communities of interests*, and _communities of identity_. According to Hogget (1997) the geographical definition of community is often superseded by the concept of people associated through interests as “elective” or “intentional” communities selected by choice not coincidence of location. Communities of interest abound in contemporary society, increasingly promoted and proliferated by the advent of the Internet (Jenkins et al., 2009).
Communities shaped by interests rather than defined by geographical boundaries are referred to as *communities of interest* or *communities of practice* (Brown & Duguid, 1991).

“People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity” (Cohen, 1985, p. 118). Cohen’s (1985) work centered on the need for belonging and attachment that give people a sense of meaning. The idea that people construct community by interests or identity formed the basis for the concept of community as social networks (Willmott, 1986; Putnam, 2000; Wenger, 1984). Even in geographical communities, the strongest ties are often through social networks (Smith, 2001; Jenkins et al., 2009; Thomas & Brown, 2011).

The tendency to form social networks is nothing new. In the early days of American society, Alexis de Tocqueville, a French observer of American civil life, described *voluntary associations* in his compendium *Democracy in America*, first published in 1835, as a way of “pursuing in common the objects of common desires” (de Tocqueville, 1835/1968, p. 514):

> Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. (p. 513)

Robert Putnam’s (2000) expose of American life, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*, described *social capital* as—“social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). According to Putnam, community engagement built personal and social efficacy and contributed to a sense of security and freedom. While de Tocqueville (1835/1968) warned that over time
individualism and increasing prosperity would lead to individual isolationism and a
tendency to “imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands” (p. 508), Putnam
(2000) documented the actual decline in attendance at social clubs, churches,
neighborhood associations, and even at family dinners; that is, participation in traditional
social networks and voluntary associations was declining in the late twentieth century,
thus indicating a loss of social capital in American communities (Putnam, 2000).

McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) seminal work on community defined a theory and
an instrument to use in determining a sense of community in these four categories which
are determined by associated questions. 1.) Membership: Are boundaries clear, does one
feel a sense of belonging and emotional safety, a personal investment, and is there a
common set of symbols or representation of the group? 2.) Influence: Does influence go
both ways, does the individual feel he has some influence on the community and does the
community influence the individual? 3) Integration and fulfillment of needs: Is the
individual rewarded for participation? 4) Shared emotional connection: Is there an
emotive element of community?

Trust in other people is a core value of community and enables both cooperation
and human social development (Smith, 2001; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Despite the
countervailing forces in economic and social developments, buffeted by the forces of a
market economy and the globalization of labor and resources, individuals continue to
make connections to accomplish ends. Connectivity reinforces identity, meaning, and
attachment (Cohen, 1985; Lane & Dorfman, 1997)
Community Field and Social Networks

Some researchers have given up on the concept of community altogether, in favor of enhancing the quality of social networks (Stacey, 1969; Godwin, 2008; Shirky, 2008). Driven by market forces and increasing globalization (Beck, 2001), individuals are infused with insecurity, anxiety, uncertainty, competitiveness and personal failings which have caused individuals to fall back on their own resources (Bauman, 2001).

The Internet has provided an unlimited tool for social networking but has, at the same time, caused people to rely on electronic connection with the potential loss of direct face-to-face interaction and relationship-building which is the essence of community-building and negotiation (Saunders, 2005). Sherry Turkle (2011), a professor of computer culture, warned “The ties we form through the Internet are not, in the end, the ties that bind. But they are the tie that preoccupy” (p. 280). The pull toward individualism as prosperity increases (de Tocqueville, 1968; Putnam, 2000) and the push to act as consumers of products and services are balanced, in part, by social instincts according to Matt Ridley’s (1997) hallmark study, The Origins of Virtue. According to Ridley (1997), the human mind is wired to be cooperative, thus making possible the survival of civilization. Ridley (1997) contended:

Humans have social instincts. They come into the world equipped with pre-dispositions to learn how to cooperate, to discriminate the trustworthy from the treacherous, to commit themselves to be trustworthy to earn good reputations, to exchange goods and information, and to divide labor. (p. 249)

Mary Parker Follett described as early as 1918 (reprinted in 1998) the integrations on the community level as the creative, integrative community process (Morse, 2006a). The community process is, quite simply, connection and interaction among people living
in the area (Follett, 1918/1998). This happens quite naturally in the course of meeting basic daily needs and it becomes more organized on a level of associations and organizations of common interests. But there is another level, that is the level of collective action, which refers to linking and coordinating a web of interrelationships that make up the “community field” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999). Activity on the level of the community field builds the “social capital” of a community, which was defined earlier as the “connections among individuals…and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them (Putnam, 2000). The building of the social capital of a community is a constantly changing dynamic:

As it is true in any social field, the process of interaction that drives and constitutes the community field is in a continuous process of change and development. Thus, the structure of the community field is never fixed; it exists in the ebb and flow of the process of generalization, which in turn arises and is constantly modified by locality oriented actions and special-interest fields. Development of this process is the central activity in community development. (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 91)

Putnam’s (2000) concept of social capital, for example, had two sides; private social capital refers to the benefits that accrue to the individual as a result of relationships within the community (“bonding ties”), and public social capital refers to benefits that accrue to the public realm (“bridging ties”). In looking at the connections and relationships among people on the community-level, Granovetter (1973) identified the importance of “weak ties” (bridging ties) as “structural stability,” and he asserted that structural stability “depends on weak ties” (p. 1361). Kilpatrick et al. (2003) explained that “the presence of bridging (or ‘weak’) ties between groups within a community and between communities, and linking ties with public and private institutions, in addition to
bonding ties, has a positive impact on community sustainability” (p. 4). Or, more simply and succinctly, connection “facilitates cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 3).

Wilkinson’s (1991/1999) work on the ”community field,” built on Kaufman’s (1959) interactional theory of community, was based on locality. Wilkinson (1991) delineated three conventional elements of community: a locality, a local society, and a process of locality oriented collective actions. A locality is “territory where people live and meet their daily needs together” (p. 2). The local society is “a comprehensive network of associations for meeting common needs and expressing common interests” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 2). And the third one, referred to as the “community field” is a “process,” that is “interrelated actions through which residents express their common interest in the local society” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 2).

With this definition of community embodying all three of the elements, Wilkinson (1991) eliminated other uses of the word community for such things as a club or association of like minded people, or a virtual association based on interests: “People who think of themselves as a community do not necessarily constitute a community, unless they also live and act together in a local society” (p. 3). Both a sociological and psychological aspect of community is acknowledged in this definition because community becomes both the “setting and mechanism of empirical contact between the individual and society” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 3); thus meeting the “needs for collective involvement and social definition of self. One meets those needs primarily through interactions and involvements in the local society” (p.3).
**Demise of Community**

For a long time, sociologists have warned of the demise of community in America (Warren, 1978). The image of community grew from an agrarian past, a relatively tight-knit society of common interests (Toennies, 1957; Friedland, 2001). Emile Durkheim traced the change in communities during the industrial revolution as communities became integrated into the larger society (cited in Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 3). *The Community in America* by Roland Warren (1978) observed a turbulent shift in communities and declared they could no longer be understood in traditional terms.

The contradictions in communities came to a head by the late 1970s, captured in Barry Wellman’s (1979), “The Community Question,” where he pointed out the conflict between conservative values for order, control and likeness came in conflict with urbanizing values demanding, tolerance of diversity and negotiation among conflicting interests which “reduce the probability that community, as an area-wide phenomenon, could persist” (Wilkinson, 1991, p. 4).

In addition to industrialization and capitalism, other oppositional forces on communities were globalization, urbanization, immigration, racial integration, and change in social norms and generational expectations (Friedland, 2001). “Urbanization of the world” (Tilly, 1973) reduced the probability that communities would be able to identify their common interests and act collectively or it would take a severe threat to bring the community to act together. Wilkinson (1991/1999) argued that even though all three essential elements of community had been altered, “the community has not disappeared and has not ceased to be an important factor in individual and social well-being” (p.5).
As boundaries became less defined, people have more extra-local ties, meaning they are linked to associations and units outside the local community, which tended to be stronger than those in the local area. Why not focus attention on those ways (structures and associations) through which people meet their needs?

Friedland (2001) examined the question of how communities have changed since the early 1980s. Is the concept of community still relevant “in a postindustrial society that is rapidly advancing to a networked form of social organization”? (Friedland, 2001, p. 358). He argued, in fact, that community is necessary for democratic action and that new forms of integration have emerged. Based on Habermas’s (1981/1987) theory of communicative action, Friedland proposed the concept of the *communicatively integrated community* as a framework for describing the role of communication technology in community. Friedland (2001) defined those communities that allow for robust democratic networks as *communicatively integrated* (p. 360). His central tenet was that communication is “the central system of action that binds together many different types of social action and groups” (p. 361).

Friedland (2001) claimed that community and communication have changed dramatically: “The linked forces of post-industrialization and globalization, and the communication networks on which they depend, bring the concept of community itself into doubt.” (p. 362). Some contemporary writers have suggested that community has been with networks (Jenkins, 2009; Sharp, 2001). However, even as networks are the emergent form of social organization, researchers find that community of place still allows opportunities for interaction not found in networks alone: “…Their exploratory finding that context matters continues to argue that place is significant for civic
engagement” (Friedland, 2001, p. 363). Although Putnam (2000) and Bellah (1996) agreed that civic identity and the social structures necessary to support it had declined in the late twentieth century, Friedland (2001) stated: “In short, community persists, but under conditions that are radically different from those that existed as recently as thirty-five years ago” (p. 364).

Jeff Sharp (2001) reinforced Wilkinson’s (1991/1999) community field theory by looking at the economic and development aspects of rural communities associated with community capacity and the capacity for local action. Using community network analysis, Sharp focused on actions that developed relationships and lines of communication across interest lines. According to Morse (2006a), “community develops as the community field develops” (p. 53), building on Wilkinson’s community field theory, or “a process of interrelated actions through which residents express their common interest in the local society” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 2). Communities can be thought of as comprising a variety of social fields, in which a field is an “unbounded whole with a constantly changing structure” (Wilkinson, 1991/1999, p. 32). A social field is “a process of interaction directed toward a specific outcome” (Sharp, 2001, p. 404). It is comprised of individuals, associations, and organizations (Bridger and Luloff 1999). A community field, on the other hand, is “a special kind of field directed at more general purposes” (Sharp 2001, p. 404).

New Culture of Learning

Jenkins, et al., (2009) described the new culture as a participatory culture, defining participatory culture as it relates to networks of creativity:

For the moment, let’s define participatory culture as one with 1. Relatively
low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; 2. Strong support for creating and sharing creations with others; 3. Some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices; 4. Members who believe that their contributions matter, and 5. Members who feel some degree of social connection with one another (at least, they care what other people think about what they have created). (pp. 5-6)

The new culture of learning defined by Thomas and Brown (2011) is based on almost unlimited resources for learning and a bounded environment of experimentation. The unlimited resources for learning are the informational resources of the Internet. The idea in *A New Culture Of Learning* (Thomas & Brown, 2011) is to interconnect individual and collective learning in a changing environment. Thomas and Brown call this learning environment a *Petri-dish*, a bounded environment in which experimentation takes place. If the Petri-dish expands to the community level, the environment is still contained, but it is larger, more complex, and less controlled. Since the experience in this study happened before the Internet existed, what can we learn from the principles of that experience that could apply to the new culture of learning? In this study we are examining the culture of learning in one city at a time before the Internet existed.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have presented the theoretical threads of learning theory and community development that weave together the concept of community learning. In the next chapter, I weave into the theoretical framework an historical background of community participation processes. Finally Morse’s (2004, 2006a, 2006a) six postulates of community learning provide the final background for the theoretical and conceptual framework.
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Only integration creates. Mary Parker Follett

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the literature that provided a theoretical understanding for community learning. In this chapter, I describe a conceptual framework based on that literature as applied in Ricardo Morse’s six postulates of community learning (Morse, 2004, 2006a, 2006b). This conceptual framework will provide a lens to look at the experience of creating Chattanooga Venture as a community learning phenomenon.

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part presents an historical overview of public process in America in order to put the conceptual framework in an historical context. Part two presents the conceptual framework of community renewal as presented by Storm Cunningham (2008), in terms of visioning, culturing and partnering. The third section of this chapter presents and describes Morse’s (2006a) six postulates of community learning.

Ricardo Morse (2004, 2006a, 2006b) developed a conceptual framework for community learning in both theory and practice. His conceptual framework proposed six postulates, which can be used to determine if community learning has taken place. If community learning is a driver of economic and social development, then, according to
Morse (2006a) and Cunningham (2008), those communities which understand the principles of community learning and renewal and apply them successfully will be better positioned for the future than those that don’t (Moore & Brooks, 2000; Kilpatrick et al., 2003; Falk & Harrison, 1998; Sharp, 2001).

**Historical Overview**

An historical view of planning reflects an increasing trend toward public participation in planning and development. Contemporary planners criticize the so-called urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 60s as a “surgical” removal of neighborhoods, buildings, landmarks, and populations causing physical and psychological damage (Bunnell, 2002; Cunningham, 2008). Traditional planning was top down, driven by local or federal government agencies and planning experts (Fullinwider, 1999). In the 1960s even the term “public participation” had a radical tone, echoing racial demonstrations and student demands (Kanter, 1989). The involvement of the public in planning and development began to change in the 1970s, and in the two decades that followed *public participation, civic engagement, and community involvement* became *buzz words*, with an abundance of processes to choose from (Holman et al., 2007) and a host of consultants, authors, and experts promoting concepts of engagement in businesses, organizations, and communities (Spencer, 1989; Owen, 1992; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001; Levine, 2000; Fullinwider, 1999).

The literature in the field of community development holds contributions from early researchers and practitioners in organizational learning and development. Kurt Lewin (2008), credited as an early theorist on intergroup relations, organizational and personal change, and interactive research, founded the Research Center for Group
Dynamics in 1945, coining the phrase *group dynamics*, which was best known for the “T-group” or training-group as a process for change (Holman et al., 2007). Lewin’s work of applying behavioral science to group interaction was continued at the National Training Laboratory in Group Development by such practitioners as Kenneth Benne, Edgar Schein, Ron Lippitt, and Chris Argyris. Benne initially promoted “learning groups,” influenced by Mary Follett’s integrative group process (French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2005).

Organizational development formed the basis of the “whole systems approach” (Weisbord, 1992) to understanding human behavior and group dynamics. Doyle and Straus’s (1976) book, *How to Make Meetings Work*, transformed the experience of everyday business and civic meetings with their “new transactional methods.” Herbert Shepard applied Lewin’s thinking to community development and developed the first doctoral program in organizational development at Case Institute of Technology (French, Bell & Zawacki, 2005). Robert Blake and John Bowlby applied a whole systems approach to family therapy. Eva Schindler-Raiman and Ron Lippitt applied group dynamics and organizational behavior to community and collaborative change (Holman et al., 2007).

Despite these trends toward greater participation, by the late twentieth century, warnings were set off for the demise of American communities (Fullinwider, 1999). Conflicting trends of individualism and globalism tore at the heart of America’s fabric (Bellah, et al., 1996; Gardner, 1995), and the National Commission on Civic Renewal found “troubling evidence” that a feeling of powerlessness had turned America into a “nation of spectators,” as their report was titled (National Commission on Civic Renewal, 1998).
The findings of the National Commission on Civic Renewal were reflected in Robert Putnam’s (2000) claims in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community*, that civic society in America was under decline. Putnam’s groundbreaking treatise cited statistics and attitudinal-survey data that demonstrated participation in social activities was down. The significance of his findings was based on his concept of *social capital*, a belief that associations have value that accrue both to individuals and to society. Social capital was defined in Chapter II as “connections among individuals” – the networks, norms, and trust associated with them (Putnam, 2000). The research demonstrated that social capital accorded to individuals in many ways, economically, socially and even with evidence in better health and more satisfying lives. Those communities with high social capital were reported in Putnam’s (2000) research as having less crime, better education, and more functioning economies. Putnam and Lewis Feldstein (2003) wrote a follow up, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, that documented the many people and activities at work to build the social fabric.

Likewise, the National Commission on Civic Renewal noted the countervailing trends in the 1990s of a growing movement of public participation and civic renewal and recommended steps to further it (Fullinwider, 1999). The movement, as such, had no ideological base, but at its core were both conservative values of individual responsibility and limited government and liberal values of inclusion of diversity and an affirmation of bottom-up rather than centralized decision-making (Fullinwider, 1999; Wellman, 1979).

A plethora of group processes exploded on the scene in the 1980s and 90s (Holman, et al., 2007); many of them were initially introduced in businesses seeking a management style that allowed for flexibility, responsiveness to change, innovative
thinking, cross-boundary communication, employee engagement, team building,
organizational learning, and strategic vision (Spencer, 1989; Weisbord, 1987; Schwartz,
1991). They were rooted in a variety of sources, including organizational development,
continuous improvement, social sciences, psychological research, cooperative learning,
strategic planning, urban development and even in the arts, such as street theatre, or
creative expressions of indigenous cultures (Holman, et al, 2007; Spencer, 1989). The
processes quickly spread from business management to community and civic groups, and
somewhat less rapidly to governance (Franklin, 2001; Wagenaar, 2007) and were adapted
as needed, as the processes themselves were “co-created” by the participants (Atlee,
2003). Examples of methods based on structured participatory processes intended to
increase the capacity of the individual and the group are:

- Action learning (Reginald Revans)
- Appreciative Inquiry (David Cooperinder & Suresh Srivasta)
- Asset-based Community Development (Kretzmann & McKnight)
- Citizen Deliberative Councils (Tom Atlee)
- Community Engagement (Peter Block)
- Collaborative Loops (Dick and Emily Axelrod)
- Continuous improvement/kaizen (Edward Deming)
- Future Search Conference (Marvin Weisbord)
- Nominal Group Technique (Andrew Van de Ven, Andre Delbecq)
- Open Space Technology (Harrison Owen)
- Scenario development (Peter Schwartz)
- Strategic Planning (Porter & Minzberg)
Six Sigma (Motorola Company)

Study Circles (Paul Aicher)

Technology of Participation (Institute of Cultural Affairs)

Visioning (Fritz, Senge, Halprin)

Whole Systems Approach (Bill Adams)

World Café (Juanita Brown, David Isaacs)

The effectiveness of participatory processes was based on collective learning that came from bringing people together to interact in ways that transcended the contribution of any one person (Schwartz, 1991; Spencer, 1989; Weisbord, 1992). “Together these processes point to the emergence of a new approach to governance, one that is more deliberative and democratic than traditional forms of public participation” (Booher, 2004, p. 32). They gave form and structure to Follett’s (1918/1998) “integrative community process” by realigning relationships and giving credence to experience.

Each process had a structure, and the structure meant “workable, empowering ground rules” (Spencer, 1989, p. xiv). Some of the processes included certain participants (members, stakeholders, invited attendees) and others were more random (open to the public, whoever attended), but in various ways these processes exhibited the theory behind Surowiecki’s (2005) *The Wisdom of Crowds* in which he claimed:

> If you put together a big enough and diverse enough group of people and ask them to “make decisions affecting matters of general interest,” that group’s decisions will, over time, be “intellectually [superior] to the isolated individual,” no matter how smart or well-informed he is. (p. xvii)

The concepts of public participation, civic engagement, and community involvement took many forms and became commonplace in planning circles. Peter Levine (2000) described the upswing in public participation in the 1990s as “a new
progressive movement,” harkening back to the Progressive Era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Reports of civic innovations and successful initiatives in communities (Sirianni & Friedland, 2001; Gardner, 1995) described a broader movement of renewal, dubbed the “American Communities Movement” (Kesler & O’Connor, 2001).

The two trends, one of greater participation in the workplace, organizations, communities, and government planning and the other of increased individualism, consumerism, globalization, and technology were happening simultaneously, as Americans tried to come to grips with their changing world as well as their communities (Fullinwider, 1999).

By the twenty-first century, another force laid siege to communities of place. The concept of place nearly fell out of the definition of communities altogether as the Internet and social networking took hold and communities became “virtual.” Locality became peripheral as networks and linkages could be anywhere at any time. Clay Shirky (2008) advocated for social networking tools to overcome the traditional limitations of organizations and communities and to increase cooperation in ways as yet unimaginable.

Three Elements of Renewal

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, there emerged a “worldwide flourishing of enthusiasm for democracy” (Sullivan, 1999, p, 31), and that enthusiasm became evidenced in communities seeking democratic means of renewal (Cunningham, 2008). Storm Cunningham (2008) studied communities around the world and in the United States that were seeking renewal. Cunningham’s conceptual framework of community renewal involved visioning, culturing, and partnering.
According to Cunningham’s (2008) research, factors commonly found to obstruct renewal efforts in communities were: 1. Lack of a shared vision; 2. Inadequate public policy; 3. Inadequate or misdirected budgets; 4. Inability to respond effectively or quickly; and 5. Lack of cooperation or partnerships. Therefore, in order to accomplish the goal of “rapid, resilient renewal,” Cunningham (2008) proposed three essential concepts, visioning, culturing and partnering: visioning engaged the community and inspired new plans; culturing prepared the populace for changes and embedded supportive policies, incentives, and services; and partnering enabled funding and implementation. Taken together, the three functions (visioning, culturing, and partnering) “created something long sought after in the corporate world, i.e. strategic alignment” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 88). Strategic alignment occurred when organizational goals and strategies were supportive of each other. The alignment of purpose and action created a synergy that was, in Cunningham’s (2008) terms, greater than the sum of individual efforts:

The three processes comprise a system for action: You engage all the stakeholders to create a shared vision that renews your natural, built, and socioeconomic environments in an integrated manner. You imbed the renewal rules into the culture and governance of the community. (italics in the original, p. 88)

Cunningham (2008) noted a pattern among those communities that achieved significant results in renewal efforts; in most cases those communities had an organization that was committed to the task of renewal, which he called a renewal engine: “Properly structured and managed, renewal engines powerfully enhance a community’s capacity to renew itself” (p. 85). According to Cunningham, the renewal engine should be a permanent, nonprofit, public-private organization, and the purpose of this organization was to shelter renewal processes “from disruptive influences if they are
to continue long enough to achieve the goal of rapid, resilient renewal” (p. 88). The three functions of a renewal engine were:

*Visioning*

Visioning was one of the processes commonly at use in communities in the 1990s but with varied results (Lachapelle, Emery, & Hays, 2010). Peter Senge (1994) led the charge for shared vision in companies: “Shared vision is vital for the learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning” (p. 206). In creating the vision, learning needed to take place. The kind of learning that needed to take place, *generative* learning, expanded capacity (Senge, 1994).

In describing visioning, most practitioners emphasized the importance of engaging the diversity of the community (Holman et al., 2007; Moore & Brooks, 2000), which Cunningham (2008) called the *stakeholders*, the wide range of those with interests at stake in the process of creating the vision. The vision itself contained a shared sense of direction, shared meaning and values (Senge, 1994). “Simply put, your vision should describe the type of place you’d like your community to become, the direction you wish to pursue” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 90), distinguishing a vision from a plan or strategies.

Planning came after the visioning process, and a strategy executed the plan. Since most planners, and certainly government or business leaders, were squeamish about something that sounded vague and uncertain, the vision statement was grounded in the current realities of the community, helped guide decision-making, and required occasional updating (Cunningham, 2008; Bunnell, 2002).
Culturing

Of the three functions (visioning, culturing and partnering), it was usually the culturing component that was most often left out (Cunningham, 2008). From Cunningham’s observations those cases where culturing was omitted or slighted, projects may have proceeded to completion, but they lacked the support of the popular and political culture, faced opposition, or had to cut back or change course. Without developing the culture to accept change, community projects faced the prospects of falling short (Holman et al., 2007). Because American culture, the societal and political milieu, was already reinforced with policies that inhibited renewal, such as regulations, building codes, zoning, subsidies, etc., Cunningham (2008) asserted that the culturing process was essential in reorienting and cultivating a culture conducive to renewal practices: “Culturing also means helping the populace come to grips with a future that might be very different from their past. Culturing helps them [make the] shift” (p. 92).

Furthermore, evidence that culturing had taken place would be found in the results:

Imbedding the three renewal rules into all phases of the revitalization process—from vision and strategy; to policy and legislation; to the design, implementation, review, revision of your plans—will decrease the cost and increase the speed, quality, and safety of your renewal. (Cunningham, 2008, p. 93)

Imbedding policies and practices that support a culture of renewal, according to Cunningham (2008), builds confidence in a community and attracts economic investment.
Partnering

Partners build “new possibilities for coordinated action” (Isaacs, 2000, p. 232). The partners are entities that might not work together otherwise but are attracted by the vision and the bold plan. “Partnering is where vision meets money” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 95). A public-private partnership may include government, businesses, foundations, academia, non-profit organizations, and key individuals and is essential to implementation and financing at a scale that will have an impact: “Partnering is how you assemble sufficient resources and knowledge to do enough of the right things to make a difference” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 95).

In summary, the goal of “rapid, resilient renewal,” as Cunningham (2008) proscribed, should be the work of a non-profit organization (renewal engine), which incorporated the three renewal functions (visioning, culturing, and partnering), kept the process going, kept it safe from political pressures, staved off financial interests, and revived it against attrition. The renewal engine, as Cunningham envisioned it, is a permanent, non-profit organization committed to this purpose.

In short, “It’s through a renewal engine that communities embed the renewal rules into their public policies. And it’s thorough a renewal engine that communities create the project partnerships that translate vision into reality” (Cunningham, 2008, p. 97); the renewal engine, in essence, creates on-going “opportunities for interaction” (p. 101).

Six Postulates of Community Learning

Seeking a community-based approach to public administration, Ricardo Morse (2006a, 2006b) developed a conceptual framework that used community learning as the “lens for interpreting participatory practice” (2006a, p. 50). Morse’s conceptual
framework is based on the literature of whole systems change, collaborative learning, organizational theory, and community-field analysis, as discussed in the previous chapter. His approach fills a gap in the literature by addressing community learning as both process and structure.

Community learning is both the process of attaining change and the structural results of the change. The community structure refers to the social and organizational structure of the local society or “the ties between people, groups, associations, organizations, and institutions” (2006a, p. 59). The relationship between process and structure can be clearly seen:

The structure and process of community are naturally interrelated, as the structure provides ‘space’ for the process and the process is what builds the structure. The process and structure of community are therefore two sides of the same coin, inextricably linked and always influencing each other. (Morse, 2006a, p. 59)

Morse’ postulates provide a conceptual base to determine if community learning has taken place. Morse (2004, 2006a, 2006b) documented a community-wide visioning process in Wytheville, Virginia, as a practical example of community learning. Evidence that community learning had taken place in the Wytheville project was observed as the knowledge and skills created in the interactive process on the local level were “fed-forwarded” and “embedded” within the community’s structure (Morse, 2006b; Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

It is through these linkages, and the interactions that occur within them, that we see collective learning in groups make its way to the community level and become institutionalized in such a way as to provide evidence that a community is learning. (Morse, 2004, p. 20)
The theoretical framework for the postulates has already been presented in Chapter II, but I will summarize and review some of that literature as I present each postulate. The postulates will be applied in the final chapter to determine in what ways the experience of creating Chattanooga Venture was a community learning experience.

The first three postulates describe the creative, integrative community process (Follett, 1918/1998; Morse, 2006a) in terms of learning and interaction (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). Postulates 4 and 5 focus on the community structure, both as relationships between people and as interinstitutional linkages. By looking at both process and structure, the postulates prepare the way for moving toward a community with an on-going and sustained capacity. If a community reaches this level, it is considered a *learning community*, as proposed in postulate 6.

Postulate 1:

*The community process creates new, collective knowledge in the form of shared meanings or collective ideas.*

The first postulate states that an interactive community process results in new ideas or shared meanings and values (Lane and Dorfman, 1997). These ideas and meanings are a form of collaborative learning (Booher, 2004) and new knowledge (Bredo, 1997) on the community level, generated through interactive process of human relationships (Follett, 1918/1998). Emphasis is placed on the meaningfulness (Bruner, 1990; Weisbord, 1992) that the ideas carry for each person. “Communicative engagement produces more than just new ideas” (Morse, 2006a, p. 56):

As people create common understanding, they come to see others in a new light in a way that builds and nurtures the bonds of community. This connection demonstrates an important, inherent link between community process and structure. (Morse, 2006a, p. 64).

The community process is one whereby citizens create new knowledge and transform collective understandings through communicative action—the process of collaborative learning. This includes a range from groups of two people interacting up to larger groups that engage in dialogue. The integrative process of community unites differences, synthesizing them into something new. (Morse, 2006a, p. 59-60)

Shared meaning builds into commitment which allows coordinated action: “Some of the most powerful forms of coordination may come through participation in unfolding meaning, which might even be perceived differently by different people” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 232). Different perceptions or values may lead to conflict (Wellman, 1979), and the conflict may lead to the drive for equilibration or seeking resolution of the conflict (Zimmerman & Blom, 1983; Wadsworth, 2004). Through dialogue people express and hear differences among members of a group in a way that has potential for “shared understanding or collective mind” (Crossan, et al., 1999, p. 528).

Postulate 2:

*Structured process of dialogue and deliberation facilitate the community process.*

The second postulate makes a case for “dialogue and deliberation” as a “structured process” to promote the community process. Dialogue and deliberation are two specific examples of “structured process” that represent “public talk that stimulates collaborative learning” (Morse, 2006a, p. 62). Although dialogue is “a practical, everyday tool, accessible to all” (Yankelovich, 1999, p.15), Daniel Yankelovich warned against
using dialogue as an instrument of decision-making or for negotiation. Yanklovich (1999) described dialogue as “a highly specialized form of discussion that imposes a rigorous discipline on the participants” (p. 16). The need for dialogue resulted from the erosion of hierarchy in the workplace, economic disruption, mistrust and resentment, aligning different cultures, and a wide range of problems on a world-wide scope (Bohm, 1996).

William Isaacs (2000), the director of the Dialogue Project at MIT’s Organizational Learning Center, described dialogue as “triple loop learning,” in reference to Argyis and Schon’s (1992) “double loop learning,” because it not only invited reflection but also asked “why.” In other words, dialogue asked the participants to suspend judgment and remain open to understanding, rather than reaching consensus on decisions. Deliberation tends to be issue-oriented, names problems, and explores solutions. Dialogue is less-issue oriented, more open, based on experience, and may not reach a decision: “Dialogue seeks understanding whereas deliberation seeks consensus” (Morse, 2006a, p. 63). The benefit of dialogue and deliberation is best achieved with a facilitator or practitioner who can guide the parties through a facilitated process despite the differences (Bohm, 1996), and both can be tools for community learning (Morse, 2006a).

The key word in Postulate 2 is “facilitate”—facilitation requires the intervention of a process and/or a person that helps a group achieve a purpose. Facilitation implies an enabling role, not a teaching or didactic role, that is, to aid the group to overcome obstacles and move forward, as the group defines its direction or purpose (Spencer, 1989; Weisbord, 1992). Dialogue and deliberation emphasize listening, talking and purposive communication (Isaacs, 2000). The purposive communication may take place in many
ways, but the key concept here is that a facilitated or structured process needs to bring people together in ways that “focus on developing relationships and lines of communication across interest lines” (Bridger & Luloff, 1999, p. 384).

Isaacs (2000) noted that dialogue is not practiced frequently and it, therefore, requires facilitation. The facilitators try to move the group to the areas where meaning and values are expressed and shared, thus making it possible to “lift us out of polarization into a greater sense” and thereby, access “the intelligence and coordinated power of groups and people” (Isaacs, 2000, p. 19).

Earlier in this chapter, I listed many examples of interactive tools that have been developed to facilitate group process and collaborative efforts (Holman et al., 2007). These processes were developed partly because of the perceived weaknesses of dialogue and deliberation, and partly as alternatives or new approaches to collaborative learning and cooperation that are more “deliberative and democratic” (Booher, 2004, p. 32) than traditional methods. Approaches other than dialogue and deliberation may accomplish the same intent of the postulate.

Postulate 3:

The community process creates, maintains, or strengthens the relationships which constitute the social structure of community.

The third postulate argues for relationships as the building blocks of the community structure—a web of relationships constituting the social matrix or the structure of the community (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). “The ‘community’ of community learning is represented by a structure of relations and that for learning to happen at the community level it must impact that structure” (Morse, 2006b, p. 91).
The community’s structure was identified through the associative fabric on the personal and intrapersonal level, that is, through clubs, organizations, and institutions, and through intrapersonal relationships that created a network linking people and institutions across the community (Wilkinson, 1999; Friedland, 2001).

Most social relations are passive. People see each other, exchange greetings, keep in touch to some degree, but in general, don’t “do” anything. Most relationships that extend across institutions (professional peer relationships that meet at professional gatherings or associations) are also passive, but “passive relationships do not allow a community to adapt in response to external and internal changes” (Lane & Dorfman, 1997, p. 4). An inactive community process exhibits stale lines of communication—the same people on boards and committees, similar class and race groupings, or few ways to meet new people and involve new residents in the community dynamics. An active community process, on the other hand, will mix people across boundaries, bring people together frequently in different arrangements, and develop new lines of communication which in turn strengthen the web of interaction throughout the community (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). The shift toward “active” relationships means that people are not limited by the “roles” they play; significant interaction is more than overlapping boards or levels of leadership. Active interinstitutional relations are based on active relationships. Personal relationships impact organizational relations which, in turn, impact the community structure (Wilkinson, 1999).

Granovetter (1973) defined “strong ties” as circles of friends and family and “weak ties” as social networking; Putnam (2000) built on this concept to define social capital contained in “bonding ties” (inclusive) and “bridging ties” (exclusive): “bridging
social capital can generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves” (pp. 22-23). Both kinds of ties are notions of the social matrix that refer to relationships that are either “public” or “private” in terms of the benefits that accrue either to individuals or to the group (Morse, 2006a). These relationships constitute the formal and informal networks and have a positive or negative impact on community learning (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). “Managing change through learning has highlighted the importance of relationships between people and the formal and informal infrastructure of communities” (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 4). Some practical strategies to build the capacity of the community emphasized the role of relationships in these ways: create opportunities for interaction, develop leadership skills, foster externality (weak or bridging), and establish brokers to build and maintain bridging ties.

Underscoring the third postulate is an assumption of diversity (Morse, 2006a). “Strong social capital is associated with tolerance of diversity” (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 5). Cunningham (2008) identified the stakeholders as representing the diversity of the community, as public (government), private (business), and the civic or volunteer (community) sector. They are representative both individually and across different social fields (Wilkinson, 1999). Without diverse representation, the culturing component of the community process is not complete and does not allow for the integration (Follett, 1930) or equilibration (Wadsworth, 2004) necessary for community learning (Falk & Harrison, 1998).

Postulate 4:

A model of community as the structure of interinstitutional relations focuses the attention of researchers and community participants on the
Postulate 4 focuses on the interinstitutional structure of the community. Morton’s (2003) “civic structure” and Wilkinson’s (1991/1999) “community field” are similar to a spider-like web described by Lane and Dorfman (1997) as “a network of connections and interrelationships among individuals, institutions, and groups of individuals and institutions…[which are] the defining aspect of a strong community” (pp. 2-3). According to Morse (2006a), “it is across this web of community relations that learning occurs and is distributed” (p. 68.) Therefore, Postulate 4 looks at this web of relationships, with Postulate 4 emphasizing the linkages between institutions and organizations, partnerships, collaborations, teams, or task forces, especially those that cross social fields.

“Learning interactions take place between individuals” (Lane and Dorfman, 1997, p.2) but the community, or rather networks within the community, enable people to come together to share interests, solve problems, learn from each other, which is a form of collective learning. That kind of interaction builds social capital (Putnam, 2000) in the normal course of going about economically driven activities in the course of a day (Falk & Harrison, 1998). Sue Kilpatrick (2000) found that social capital was both “built and used in learning interactions between individuals” (p. 3). Her research showed that people bring two kinds of resources: knowledge resources and identity resources. Knowledge resources are embedded in someone who knows who, where, and when to go for advice and knowledge of how to get things done locally; identity resources are the ability and willingness to act for the benefit of the community. “Learning interactions can build or strengthen knowledge and identity resources, and so build social capital, the quality of
the social capital that is built depends on the quality of the knowledge and identity resources used in the interaction” (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 4).

Morse (2006a) emphasized the importance of structure: “Collaborative learning can be easily observed in small groups, work teams, study circles, etc. But whether or not the learning entity is a larger collectivity—an organization, network, or community—depends upon structure…Focusing solely on the creative process of dialogue fails to explain how a community might learn” (p. 65). Lane and Dorfman’s (1997) use of a spider web as a metaphor for community structure highlighted the interconnectedness of individuals, groups, and institutions in a “structured, functional maze of connections and interrelated fibers” (p. 2) which grows stronger as the interconnections become more dense. Lane and Dorfman emphasized in order to be effective, people needed to connect outside of, or across, the boundaries of the “roles,” or positions that people hold. The boundary-crossing relationships build a stronger web and “it is across this web of community relations that learning occurs and is distributed” (Morse, 2006a, p. 68).

In Boundary Crossers (1997), Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson concluded from their study of many successful communities, “There is no magic structure—just people and relationships” (p. 64). Because relationship-building across traditional barriers is hard work for communities, John Parr and Bruce Adams developed a “tool for community builders,” i.e., a checklist of players for communities. The Parr/Adams matrix for maximizing civic capacity is a cross-reference checklist of players and arenas of action. The players on the Parr/Adams list are individuals, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and government. The arenas are neighborhood, local, regional, state, and national. This matrix of players and arenas is
proposed as a way to build capacity both of the individuals and the arenas involved. “Players need to create partnerships among themselves and also influence decisions

The “Principle of Interconnectivity” (Kilpatrick, 2000) promoted interaction across individual, group and regional levels, stating that relationships between people, usually in the form of a group, are instrumental in sharing ideas. In community development linkages in the social structure of a community cut across different sectors of the community field (Bridger and Luloff, 1999) and the strength of the linkages “is the defining aspect of a strong community” (Lane & Dorfman, 1997, p.2). Thus Morse (2006a) based Postulate 4 on the mutual relationship of process and structure: “It is the structure of the community that makes a process of community learning possible, while at the same time it is the community process (occurring in dialogue and other forms of communicative action) that builds community structure” (p. 68).

Postulate 5:

*Community learning occurs as knowledge created through the community process is fed-forward to the level of the community structure or field. A community has learned when this collective knowledge is institutionalized across the community structure, or rather, is embedded across the web of community institutions.*

In Postulate 5, a very close relationship between process and structure is demonstrated: “In drawing together process and structure, we see that for collaborative learning to become community learning, the knowledge created in the learning process must reach the level of community structure” (Morse, 2006a, p. 68). The makeup of the participants is one factor. If the participants come from different social fields, represent different interests of the community, and are concerned with the community as a whole, then benefits will accrue to the community (Whyte, 1991). But the work of the group
doesn’t necessarily translate into community-level learning. “There must be some way to embed the new knowledge, the integrations, at the level of community structure either through the makeup of participants or the nature of the discourse;” or in other words: “Community learning is about a feed-forward process from the group level to the community level” (Morse, 2006a, p. 69).

The feed-forward process may be evidenced through various “artifacts” (Crossan, Lane and White, 1999) such as a publication in which people from various interests participate in its publication, a series of media stories produced by participants and shown community-wide, or a presentation or exhibit created as a result of the interaction. Over time, the shared meanings and values (Argyris & Schon, 1992) may be evidenced in the language or norms of the community (Kilpatrick, 2000), such as the practice of involving the community in planning (Bunnell, 2002), or in an event or celebration, repeated over time, embodying the values and expectations created by the community process. These norms may become “embedded” (Crossan, Lane and White, 1999) in the structure of the community by being incorporated into the by-laws of organizations, or by stated principles by which organizations function, or by an on-going inter-organizational event, or by creation of new organizations embodying these principles in function or design (Cunningham, 2008).

Morse (2006a), again, emphasized the role of diversity and cross-boundary relationships. Is the integrative process involving people from different social fields (Sharp, 2001) with different histories (Kilpatrick, 2000) representing different positions or institutional affiliations? Is it a setting for active relationships? Is a space created for openness and communication (Owen, 1992)?
One cannot assume that the existence of the ‘community process’ automatically translates into community-level learning. There must be some way of embedding the new knowledge, the integrations, at the level of community either though the makeup of participants or the nature of the discourse. (Morse, 2006a, p. 69)

Learning and interaction may be happening in small groups, even active groups across boundaries, like a community-wide task force or a collaborative effort to address a shared need (Booher, 2004; Peters & Armstrong, 1998), but if the learning “remains within the narrower interests of a social field and fails to make impacts across the community structure, it has fallen short of ‘community learning.’ It is when the knowledge is institutionalized across the community’s structure that community learning has occurred” (Morse, 2006a, p. 68).

Postulate 6:

A “learning community” has a well-developed community structure that has institutionalized the practice of community learning, thus facilitating a sustained community process. Such communities are said to be taking advantage of the “collective intelligence.” They have created ongoing “forums for interaction,” or space for the community process at the level of the community structure or field.

By the time we have examined the first five postulates, we have explored the possibility of evidence of new ideas generated by the community process, the presence of active relationships, a facilitated structured process resulting in community learning, and linkages across the community field. We may already assume that a group of dedicated people or an organization working together on behalf of the community as a whole is generating these changes, but the postulates provide an evidence-based framework to determine if those changes are fed-forward to, and embedded in, the structures of the community for an in-depth and on-going impact. To achieve Postulate 6, however, the conceptual goal moves from community learning to a learning community:
The argument is made that community learning is a source of renewal and change for communities, much as organizational learning is for organizations. … But in the end, real, lasting change and renewal occur when community learning leads to the transformation of a community into a learning community. A learning community, as the name implies, is continually learning and thus has the greatest capacity for renewal, adaptation and change, and sustainability. (Morse, 2006b, p. 97)

Organizational learning concepts relate to concepts of community learning.

Senge’s (1994) definition of a learning organization, that is, “an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (p. 14), may have some application to a learning community. Learning occurs individually and in groups as ideas are processed, but just as in organizational learning where the learning becomes embedded in “the systems, structures, strategy, routines, prescribed practices of the organization” (Crossan, Lane and White, 1999, p. 529), community learning becomes embedded in the community structures and practices.

Mary Follett (1918/1998) called “integration” the process by which “different ideas and perspectives are synthesized to create something new” (pp. 24-32) as the basis for the emergence of a collective intelligence from the group process (Atlee, 2003). The participatory process, at its best, results in a collective intelligence which is the result of the creative or integrative process that often includes conflict (Friedland, 2001; Yankelovich, 1999; Wellman, 1979). The integrative learning Follett described is similar to the generative learning that Peter Senge (1995) claimed is essential for learning organizations, one that expands the capacity of individuals and groups.

“Communities that may have relatively high levels of civic structure may still fail to become ‘learning communities’ if they fail to take advantage of the collective intelligence that emerges from the integrative process” (Morse, 2006a, p. 72). Morse
warned that communities (in fact, most communities) faced “disintegration” as forums of interaction and learning were no longer natural or regular. Similarly Cunningham (2008) observed that communities fell short on the “culturing” component and that none achieved a permanent “renewal engine.” The weakness that Cunningham observed may be addressed by Postulate 6.

The awareness that community learning is both process and structure becomes evident when looking at Postulate 6. The process itself has structure, that is order, rules and/or a facilitator in order to assure that the process enables groups of people to interact effectively. However, no matter how much “process” goes on in a community and even if policies, procedures, customs and language reflect a common learning, the community may not reach postulate 6, i.e., become a learning community. How does a community know if it has reached the level of a learning community? “At the community level, when, within the structure of community, “space’ is made for the community process, the community can be called a learning community. In other words, a learning community has a well-developed community structure that has institutionalized the practice of community learning, thus facilitating a sustained community process.” (Morse, 2004, p. 100-101)

Sue Kilpatrick (2000) addressed the question: What makes an effective learning community? She looked at community on three levels: regions, which are made up of communities (macro perspective); individuals living in those communities (micro perspective), and whole communities such as towns or cities (meso perspective). “Regions with strong networks between enterprises, community organizations, and public organizations are best able to restructure and adapt” (p. 2). She provided analysis on
factors influencing the growth and decline of regional economies that demonstrated a positive connection to building the collective learning capacity of the region (p. 2). Kilpatrick’s (2000) conclusion was “regions need to be helped to develop learning networks,” and policies should ensure “sufficient resources to build the capacity of communities to learn, adapt, and change” (p. 7).

Echoing Senge’s (1994) definition of a learning organization, a learning community would be one that is “continually expanding its capacity to create its future” (p. 14). Kilpatrick et al. (2003) at the University of Tasmania considered the “ideal learning community for the twenty-first century” as defined in the following way:

Learning communities are made up of people who share a common purpose. They collaborate to draw on individual strengths, respect a variety of perspectives, and actively promote learning opportunities. The outcomes are the creation of a vibrant, synergistic environment, enhanced potential for all members, and the possibility that new knowledge will be created. (p. 10)

**Conclusion**

The literature as it relates to the conceptual and theoretical framework of community learning is interdisciplinary, drawing from social constructivist learning theory, organizational development, and community development and renewal. The concept is emerging, with a few scattered studies directly related to the concept of community learning. Asking the question of how communities educate themselves for change draws this concept into focus as learning becomes the lens through which we examine community change. In Morse’s (2006a) six postulates, community learning moves from individual to group to community field, embedded in the structures of the community.
Ideas grow into shared meanings and values, which are strengthened through the participatory and integrative community process. Relationships extend through the linkages and web of the community social structure through institutions and networks in various social fields. The learning by individuals and groups is then “embedded” and “fed-forward” into the structure of the community and takes shape in different artifacts and policies. If the process continues, the community has the potential of becoming a learning community that has a well-developed community infrastructure for learning and interaction that maintains and strengthens the forums for interaction on the community level. “A learning component is necessary as the collective intelligence of the community, combined with the mobilizing potential of civic structure, enables renewal and change” (Morse, 2006a, p. 73).
CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGY

We only know what we experience. Edmund Husserl

Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological underpinnings of the research for this study. A phenomenological research design was chosen because it grounds the research in the lived experiences of people involved in the phenomenon under study. The phenomenon under study is the creation of Chattanooga Venture, an organization started in 1984 to involve the public in creating a vision for Chattanooga. The central research question for the research was: What was the experience of creating Chattanooga Venture from those who lived it?

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the method of inquiry (Groenewald, 2004). The second section describes the elements of the research design (Moustakas, 1994), and the third section includes a section on trustworthiness and presents the positionality of the researcher (Creswell, 2007).

Methodological assumptions

A phenomenological study is focused on the question: “What is the meaning, structure and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon?” (Patton, 2002, p.
104). The inquiry focuses “in-depth on the meaning of a particular aspect of experience, assuming that through dialogue and reflection the quintessential meaning of the experience will be reviewed” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 72). Van Manen (1990) described the purpose of phenomenology from another perspective: “The purposes of phenomenological inquiry are description, interpretation, and critical self-reflection into the ‘world as world’ (p. 72).

Phenomenology was developed in reaction to more conventional research methods with a purely scientific and objective explanation of reality (Patton, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher, is credited as “the fountainhead of phenomenology in the twentieth century” (Vandenberg, 1997, p. 11). In post-World War II when Europe’s cultural ideologies in turmoil, Husserl found the traditional positivist approach, with its emphasis on facts and objectivism, out-of-date and inadequate (Groenewald, 2004). “The positivist, or conventional paradigm of inquiry, asserted that inquiry was value-free, that is free from the influence of personal, social or cultural norms” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 161). In this context, Husserl explored “the lived world” and the direct experience of those who lived it; as the slogan came to be known, “Back to the things themselves!” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26).

Husserl’s basic assumption was that we could only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness (Patton, 2002). Phenomenological inquiry, therefore, is well suited as a methodological approach for social constructivist learning theory because the emphasis is on subjective experience. Social constructivist learning theory asserts that individuals construct their own meaning and build concepts from experiences and ideas in interaction with other people.

According to Patton (2002), foundational questions in constructivism are: How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, “truths,” explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviors and for those with whom they interact? The foundational question for phenomenology is: The emphasis is on interpretation (Creswell, 2007). The purpose of phenomenological research is to explore how people “make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

Creswell (2007) suggested there are three reasons to conduct a qualitative study: to fill a void in the literature, establish a new line of thinking, or to assess an issue with a group of people who have been understudied.

The purpose of qualitative studies is “not the discovery of new elements as in natural scientific study but rather the heightening of awareness for experience which has been forgotten and overlooked. By heightening awareness and creating dialogue, it is hoped research can lead to better understanding of the way things appear to someone else and through that insight lead to improvements in practice. (Barritt, 1986, p. 20, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 102)

Based on those purposes stated above, the intention of this study is to heighten awareness of an experience that has been forgotten or overlooked based on the experiences of those who lived it, to create dialogue as a result of the study, to promote a better understanding of how things happen in communities, and to contribute insight into the process of change that may lead to improvements in practice.
The Research Design

Moustakas (1994) laid out the steps of a phenomenological study that have been further developed by others (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004). Moustakas’ (1994) procedural steps for a phenomenological study, as presented by Creswell (1998), are as follows:

- Determine the research questions
- Bracket one’s own experiences within the study
- Specify the broad theoretical assumptions behind the study
- Collect data related to the topic
- Conduct related interviews and surveys
- Ascertaining clusters of meaning and themes from the interviews/data
- Write a textural description based on the significant themes
- Write a composite description that captures the essence of the experience as it relates to the theoretical assumptions

The explication of my research design follows the Moustakas (1994) outline recommended above. This chapter describes how I focused the research, identified relevant data, selected the participants, and conducted the interviews. I discuss each of Moustakas’ procedural steps below.

Determining the Research Question

The first step in narrowing my topic was to select a community that had undergone significant change. Chattanooga was my preference, but I did not make that choice without testing it. First I did a literature review on Chattanooga, and the literature showed a significant number of articles and books describing Chattanooga’s process of change, but none of them analyzed the process from the perspective of learning. I determined from the literature review that Chattanooga would provide sufficient research material adequate for my topic.
Having determined that Chattanooga was the location for study, I began to narrow my question, the time frame, and the topic. At first I was looking at Chattanooga over a thirty-year period, from 1983-2012. There were many learning activities in Chattanooga over that time; however, as I began to explore the literature, I found these activities described as learning in community and not the same as community learning. When I discovered the concept of community learning, I had a new challenge, one that was much more complex, yet exciting.

Community learning is a key concept in understanding how local areas can increase their capacity (Morse, 2006a). When community learning became the focus of my study, I needed to narrow my scope to determine which activity or which time period to research. Again, the literature pointed the way. Gene Bunnell (2002), a planner and author, featured Chattanooga in his book, Making Places Special, concluding:

The positive changes that have occurred in Chattanooga did not just happen by chance. They came about because people came together and planned: first to identify and agree on what kind of city they wanted Chattanooga to be, and then to decide how best to achieve that desired outcome. (p. 141)

Bunnell (2002) identified Chattanooga Venture, as the “vehicle for bringing the community together” (p. 94) in the 1980s.

Storm Cunningham (2008) described a renewal engine as an organization that combines the three functions of visioning, culturing and partnering. He described Chattanooga Venture as the “world’s first renewal engine” (p. 247) and claimed Chattanooga Venture was “responsible for one of the most dramatic revitalization stories on the planet” (p. 241). Finding Chattanooga Venture identified as both vehicle and
**Bracketing One’s Experience**

The idea that any research can truly be objective has been challenged, with Eisner (1991) firmly stating that one cannot separate his views of reality from the object of his study, no matter what preventive measures one puts in place. And, furthermore, it is the role of the inquirer to put his experience, insight and intelligence to service. Borg and Gall (1983) admit they use the researcher’s individual experience and perspective “as a tool for exploring phenomena” (p. 34). In fact, Eisner (1991) described the value of the researcher’s own perspective, or self, which he defined as “the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it” (p. 34).

Wolcott (1992) stated most frankly that “bias is essential” (p. 7). He distinguished between “good bias” and “bad bias” by asserting that good bias helps to “formulate” the research; whereas, bad bias “interferes with the reporting or reporter” (p. 7). The important thing, as Merriam (1988) clarified, is for there to be confidence in the research, in the way it was conducted and reported, that it produces “valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 198).

*Bracketing* is a term used in phenomenological research. “Bracketing is a process of setting aside one’s beliefs, feelings and perceptions to be more open or faithful to the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 269). Yet there is some confusion over what bracketing means. Patton (1990) described bracketing as *epoché*, a phrase in which the researcher eliminates or clarifies his own “prejudices, viewpoints, or assumptions regarding the phenomenon under investigation” (Katz, 1987). Groenewald (2004) noted two forms of
bracketing, one internal to the researcher, self-understanding and reflection, and the other, external, or entering into the life view of the subject as an “experiencing interpreter” (p. 13). He claimed “the interview was reciprocal: both the researcher and research subject are engaged in the dialogue” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 13).

Either way, phenomenology acknowledges the presence of the researcher in the research process, encourages self-reflection, and seeks to find an openness that allows the researcher to “understand the world from the subjects’ point-of-view [and] to unfold meaning of people’s experiences” (Kvale, 1996, p. 2). I describe my personal position later in researcher positionality.

Theoretical Assumptions

It has been my observation that every major social movement is grounded in some process of community-based learning. For example, the civil rights movement organized voter education workshops (Adams, 1975), the women’s movement started with consciousness raising groups (Peavy, 1986), the environmental movement held workshops on energy, waste and consumption (Ferguson, 1976), and the food movement required learning about changes in how people eat, shop and grow food (Case & Taylor, 1979; Brennan & Evans, 2012). Independent programs of social learning grew from small groups and personal behavioral changes to organizations, then to laws and policy changes, and eventually became courses recognized in college and universities as Black Studies, Women’s Studies, Environmental Sciences and Sustainability, and Alternative Agriculture. Learning played its role in social change and gradually became institutionalized.
As I explored the literature related to this study, I observed that learning and change are on-going processes of human interaction. There are three areas of general broad theoretical understanding that underpin this study. The first thread is learning theory, explaining how we learn and grow and how we interact with other people and the world. The second thread is organizational learning. The need for an understanding of organizational learning grew from a desire for businesses or working groups to be productive, adapt, and innovate. The third line of theoretical assumption is the field of community development. The approach of planners has become more participatory and the emphasis of major studies has been on renewal; therefore, the process of community renewal is seen as a learning process (Bunnell, 2002). These three threads of thought form the theoretical assumptions behind this study.

**Data Collection**

The primary sources for organizational documents and newspaper clippings on Chattanooga Venture were these listed below:

The Chattanooga Venture Archives: Chattanooga Venture’s organizational documents are archived at the Chattanooga Public Library. The files were donated by the organization to the library for archival purposes. The description of Chattanooga Venture from the archive is:

Local citizens created Chattanooga Venture in 1984 as a method for local citizens to become involved in planning Chattanooga’s future. Its mission called for citizen involvement in public decision making and community projects. The group worked with both public and private sectors and with a variety of organizations and individuals. Venture was governed by a board of sixty people from government, business, and community associations and managed by a staff of eight. Lyndhurst Foundation grants provided operating funds. Project funding came from both private and public sources. Venture’s first initiative, called “Vision 2000” used public
input to create 34 community wide goals and then used community meetings and task forces to carry them out. In 1993, Venture initiated "Revision 2000" to assess Vision 2000 and plan for future growth. The goals were divided into arenas such as work, play, people, places, government and future alternatives. Chattanooga Venture discontinued operations in 1996. (Chattanooga Venture Records, Biographical Data)

The Tom Hebert Minutes: Tom Hebert kept records of the meetings of the Options Study Group in the period when there was no organization or staff to keep minutes. These records are valuable documents pertaining to the creation of Chattanooga Venture. The records are kept in the Chattanooga Venture archive at the Chattanooga Public Library.

The Lyndhurst Foundation archive: The Lyndhurst Foundation records are archived at the Southern Historical Archive at the University of North Carolina, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The foundation’s records were important to this study, not just for the documents on Chattanooga Venture, but for background on the events leading up to the Chattanooga Venture.

Chattanooga Public Library Clippings Files: Newspaper clippings are an invaluable resource for researchers on communities. Clippings from both The Chattanooga Times and the Chattanooga News Free Press are archived at the Chattanooga Public Library.

Conducting Interviews

Because phenomenological research is based on lived experience, interviews are primary sources of data. Guba and Lincoln (1981) and Maxwell (2005) insisted that there were “no cookbook techniques” for interviewing; the purpose of the interview has to dictate the method.
Interviewees for my study included 20 people. A list of the informants is included in Appendix A. Gender breakdown was 8 females and 12 males. Racial make-up was 6 African American and 14 Caucasian. The roles that these people played at the time of the creation of Chattanooga Venture fell into the following categories: government, 5 (1 city, 2 county, 2 federal—TVA); religion, 1; education, 1; foundation, 1; arts, 1; media, 1; and volunteer or non-profits, 6. The people interviewed were between the ages of 56 and 90, indicating that they were 26 to 60 at the time of the event.

I used two different sources for interviews, the Chattanooga History Center’s archival transcripts from interviews conducted in 2011, and informational interviews that I conducted in 2012-13.

The Chattanooga History Center (CHC) Archives: I used 12 transcripts from the Chattanooga History Center. Some of the CHC interviewees provide in-depth descriptions of Chattanooga Venture’s creation. Others were not directly involved in the creation of Chattanooga Venture, but they describe conditions existing before and at the time of the study. The CHC conducted interviews in 2011 in preparation for the exhibits.

I conducted informational interviews with 12 people. Four of my subjects were also interviewed by the History Center. I used purposive sampling in choosing informants (Maxwell, 2005). In selecting participants who had a special knowledge or familiarity with the situation (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), I chose people whose names appeared on the documents with a specific relationship to the topic. Most of the participants were accessible or convenient (Borg and Gall, 1983) by their residency in Chattanooga, but two of the subjects lived out of town. The interviews were conducted in person or by
Follow-up questions or clarification of facts was made through emails and phone calls. I conducted the interviews between August 2012 and January 2013.

I used a semi-structured interview, meaning I had some questions prepared but allowed the informant to shape the conversation (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004). My interview/research procedure is described below:

1. In preparation for each interview, I reviewed the documents related to that person’s involvement and wrote questions. Each interview was specifically designed for that person.
2. I explained the purpose of the interview, the nature of the study, and obtained agreement for participation as well as for non-confidentiality. I explained that real names would be used and the identity of the informant would be known. In all cases participants agreed.
3. I audio-taped each interview, including those by phone.
4. Each person described his experience in his own words. Sometimes I asked the interviewee to comment on the documents or newspaper clippings to gain insight from the person’s experience, to verify accuracy of reports, or to jog the memory.
5. I listened to the recordings, usually more than once, made notes, and transcribed verbatim sections that would be used in the study (Groenewald, 2004). I did not transcribe the interviews in full and therefore, did not send a transcription to the interviewee for verification. I called the interviewee for clarification or further discussion, if needed. I had more than one interview with some informants.
6. I allowed for participants to withdraw from the study at any time. No one did. I also allowed for them to “go off-record.” This option was used on several occasions.
7. The use of real names in this study was necessary because the story can’t be told without the individuals involved, and it would be a difficult to disguise or hide identities. But most importantly, the individuals, the positions they held, the roles they played demonstrate the dynamics of community and, therefore, it is important to identify them, their positions, and their relationship to each other.

**Clusters of Meaning and Themes**

I followed the data analysis methods recommended by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007), identifying key words and concepts that emerged in each interview and themes that were shared across the interviews. *Horizontalization* is a step recommended
by Moustakas (1994) in which the significant statements related to the topic are listed and
given equal value. When reviewed, the statements form “clusters of meaning,” or units of
common meaning or overlapping significance (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007)
recommended Moustakas’ (1994) approach which, as he summarized, “includes the
researcher bringing personal experiences into the study, the recording of significant
statements and meanings, and the development of descriptions to arrive at the essences of
the experiences” (p. 236).

_Textural Description Based on Themes_

I analyzed the data and determined five themes or clusters of meaning that
aggregated the ideas and experiences. The themes came from words or meanings drawn
from the interviews of those who lived the experience. Using these themes, I wrote a
textural description of the “storyline” (Creswell, 2007). Three sources of data were used
in telling the story: the interviews, documents, and newspaper articles. Multiple sources
not only offer validity to the storyline but provide depth of understanding as well. The
research is presented in a narrative format that is both chronological and thematic. The
detailed or “thick” description is a characteristic of qualitative research that helps to
ensure trustworthiness and validity (Groenewald, 2004).

_Composite Description Relating to Theoretical Assumptions_

The theoretical assumptions described earlier are used in the analysis of the
research in the concluding chapter. The 4-I Framework of Crossan, Lane and White
(1999) and the Six Postulates of Community Learning proposed by Ricardo Morse
(2006a) provide two systems of analysis from the lens of learning. There is a distinction
between the research questions related to the theoretical assumptions and the interview questions (Groenewald, 2004). The questions used in the interviews were open-ended and related specifically to the informant’s experience. The questions used in the theoretical analysis were theoretical ones that I used in applying the conceptual framework to the field of study. The final analysis integrates theoretical assumptions with the data from the research in a “creative synthesis” (Creswell, 2007) showing patterns and relationships.

**Ensuring Trustworthiness**

Shenton (2004) recommended a multipronged approach to ensuring trustworthiness. I have used the following strategies for ensuring trustworthiness as recommended by Shenton (2004):

- Triangulation of sources to reduce effect of researcher bias
- Inclusion of researcher’s positionality
- In-depth methodological description to allow study to be repeated
- Thick description of phenomenon under study
- Verification against historical accounts at the time
- Use of researcher’s reflective commentary
- Third party reflection for progressive subjectivity

Triangulation is used by qualitative researchers to establish trustworthiness. According to Maxwell (2005) triangulation “reduces the risk that your conclusion will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating” (p. 93).

My study is based on three sources: newspaper accounts, organizational documents, and personal interviews. The first two sources were produced at the time in which the story took place. The interviews were conducted 30 years later, make use of
memory and recall, and provide reflection. Some of the organizational documents also consist of interviews that were conducted at the time of the study and, therefore, provide a contemporary view that could be used to validate the later interviews.

In addition the story that emerges from the study is compared to or tested against historical accounts by participants at the time, a kind of cross-validation as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (2000). The cross-validation of multiple sources used in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1 Cross-validation of Data Collection with Self as Inquirer](image)

Shenton (2004) recommended that the researcher’s own “reflective commentary” (p. 68) be used to monitor and evaluate the project as it develops. I used a proprioceptive reflection method (Metcalf & Simon, 2002) on a regular basis to reflect on my progress and on the story as it was emerging. These reflections, in essence journal writings, were essential in guiding the project by providing what Shenton called “progressive subjectivity” as the study progressed.
In addition, a third party reflection on the study also provided a progressive reflection. I asked three of the key subjects to serve as a steering or reflection committee. The three subjects were Mai Bell Hurley, Rick Montague and Stroud Watson. We met as a group at the beginning of the study to give it direction, in the middle to review progress, and again at the end, primarily as a way for me to test if my observations were consistent and confirmable with their experiences. Their insight and reflections were key to the study, although the conclusions and conceptual framework were entirely my own work.

Even use of a multipronged approach to trustworthiness does not assure that the researcher’s position is eliminated. Quite the contrary, as many qualitative advocates would attest (Eisner, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Wolcott, 1992; and Gronewald, 2004). The researcher’s point of view is a tool, or in other words, the intelligence, through which the data are filtered and refined into something that adds value to mere fact.

In phenomenological research, the presence of the researcher is recognized as part of the process: “Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise” (Groenewald, 2004, p. 7). Husserl (1970) described two perspectives involved in phenomenological research: that of the people who experienced the phenomenon and that of the researcher who shares a great interest in the phenomenon. However, Creswell (2007) recommended that the researcher keep a balance between objectivity and subjectivity. Patton (2002) suggested that the researcher first reflect on the meaning of the experience for oneself, then turn outward to the descriptions of what people experience. A phenomenological study “requires that the researcher approach the

**Researcher Positionality**

I was both participant and observer. Guba and Lincoln (1981) defined the position of participant-observer as one in which the inquirer plays two roles, that is as a member of the group who has a stake in the outcomes, but also as an observer who has accountability or responsibility outside the context being observed. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981) the participant-observer “maximizes the inquirer’s ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, interests, unconscious behaviors, customs, and the like” (p. 193); that is, he grasps the tacit knowledge inherent in the situation and may be able to provide more relevant data about specific situations and events than a strictly outside observer.

In Figure 1, the researcher is pictured in the center as Self as Inquirer or as Participant/Observer. This figure is intended to demonstrate the cross-validation of data collection, but it also illustrates the positionality of the researcher. The researcher is central. My positionality in the research is that of inquirer. I was the filter through which the information passed, and in passing, it gained meaning and took shape.

Several times during the course of my study, I have reflected on my own life experiences and have found a thread running through my life that brought me to this study in the first place. My training as a teacher quickly moved from the classroom to non-profits, educating the public on broad social issues. My work took a community focus when I moved back to Chattanooga. I see myself as a “community educator,”
although there is no category for that kind of profession. A passion for the topic drives my interest in the study, and I use that passion and interest as the motivator for this study.

I describe my role in the text of the study at the end of each chapter, as Researcher Positionality. At the time of the events described in this study, I was not able to be directly involved. The distance defined that position as both participant and observer.

I worked for the Lyndhurst Foundation from 1985-1990, after the events described in this study, when Chattanooga was realigning itself and grappling with many new possibilities. I became Executive Director of Chattanooga Venture in 1990 when Chattanooga was wrestling with all the programs and projects that were underway. Chattanooga Venture conducted ReVision 2000 in 1993. A survey determined that 85% of the goals of Vision 2000 had been fully or partially accomplished in the period since Vision 2000 in 1984.

Creswell (2007) said that one reason to do a study is to heighten awareness of an experience that has been overlooked. Chattanooga’s revitalization has not been overlooked at all, in fact, it has been the topic of many articles, chapters in books, and even more than one coffee table book, describing Chattanooga’s change as a renaissance. Many cities have come to Chattanooga to hear how it was done. I have heard many presentations and have had a turn at it myself.

The important part of the process, in my mind, was often overlooked… like clearing a field. You remove the rocks in order to open the field for settlement. The field provides the space where crops are grown, homes are built, or the village emerges; in other words, it creates an opening for what is to come. The very act of clearing represents the anticipation, hopefulness, desire, faith, as well as doubt and fears of all those who
cleared the field. The process is not just one of labor, but also one of aspiration for something that isn’t yet present…which we call vision. Vision is something we generate together through actions that aspire for the future.

The act of clearing the field is forgotten when the crops grow and the settlement emerges. Likewise the community process, the ideas generated, the interactions, conflicts, and creativity are forgotten when buildings are built. Our attention turns to what is visible and tangible.

Community learning happens all the time. Its how we go forward. It’s how civilization goes forward together rather than separately. How did we learn to plant seeds rather than hunting for food? We learn collectively and keep learning. Learning changes everything.

**Limitations**

Using a phenomenological research design limited sources to ones that represented the lived experience. In other words, I did not use, except for a few exceptions, the literature that has been written *about* Chattanooga’s experience, analyses, or explanations that are written from a later date. The number of people interviewed was constrained by time and other limiting factors. Many more people were involved and could provide insights. The time frame of the study is narrow and ends with the creation of Chattanooga Venture. Even Vision 2000 is not covered. A longer-term study needs to be done. Document search was limited to that which was archived. Many more sources need to be found and researched.

The greatest limitation, in my mind, is that absence of a collective reflection. On the whole, group or collective reflection is not part of a phenomenological model.
Because community learning is a collective activity and because the creation of Chattanooga Venture was a collaborative endeavor, it calls for a collective reflection. How does one explore the questions, not only what have individuals learned, but what has the community learned? I was not able to conduct such a process for the purpose of this study, but have not ruled out the possibility in the future.
We became a place that people wanted to leave. Mai Bell Hurley

Introduction

Beginning with this chapter, I present the findings from the research on the creation of Chattanooga Venture in 1984. Starting with this chapter through Chapter IX, I tell the story based on “the lived experience,” without analytical interpretation. An analysis from the perspective of community learning begins with Chapter X after the story has been told.

There are three sources for the study: personal interviews, newspaper articles, and organizational documents. There are two different sets of interviews, informational interviews that I conducted in 2012 and archival transcriptions from interviews conducted by the Chattanooga History Center in 2011. Both sets of interviewees signed a non-confidentiality clause allowing their real names to be used. The informed consent form is included in Appendix A. Participants interviewed by the Chattanooga History Center will be identified with an in-text citation from an archival document. The personal communications that I had with the participants will appear as informational data and will not be individually cited in the text. A full list of participants is included in Appendix.

The story is organized into five sections or chapters. Each chapter describes and explores a theme that emerged from the data. The chapters are organized chronologically
as well as thematically. They begin with the conditions that existed in the 1980s and conclude with the creation of Chattanooga Venture. The chapters are as follows:

   **CHAPTER V:** CRISIS (early 1980s) — falling into despair
   **CHAPTER VI:** READINESS (1981-83) — willing to try
   **CHAPTER VII:** LEADERSHIP (1983) — willing to learn
   **CHAPTER VIII:** OPPENNESS (1984) — willing to include
   **CHAPTER IX:** STRUCTURE (1984) — positioning for change

Chapter V, CRISIS, describes the political, economic, social, and cultural conditions that defined the experience of people in Chattanooga in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The informants for this chapter are men and women, black and white, who represent about a 30-year age span of the adult population. Some of them were born here, some moved here as adults, and some were newcomers. Some held positions of leadership, some were managers or administrators, and others were people in the community who may or may not have been directly involved in the creation of Chattanooga Venture, but whose observations are pertinent to the context in which the story takes place. People are introduced intermittently throughout the chapters as each person comes to play a role or contributes to a situation. I acknowledge that this study does not give adequate credit to the work done by these and many others, nor does it include all the people who played a part.

**Hopelessness and Despair**

Although the word crisis itself is seldom spoken, a sense of desperation, hopelessness, or low self-esteem is reflected in almost every statement describing the conditions that existed in Chattanooga in the early 1980s. It had been more than ten years since Walter Cronkite had called Chattanooga the most polluted city in the nation on
national news, and the air pollution that had dominated Chattanooga’s identity in earlier years had been mitigated by this time, but the subsequent consequences of industrial closings were evident. Therefore, it was not bad air but rather the political, economic and social divisions that rankled Chattanooga as it transitioned from manufacturing to a service economy.

What it felt like to live in Chattanooga in the early 1980s is evidenced in the following statements. The word “discouraged” was frequently used in the interviews to describe how people felt. The speakers below are identified by the position held at the time.

It was Saturday morning and I was driving across the Market Street Bridge. The wind was blowing some leaves and debris around. No one was on the street except a few homeless. I looked at this and thought we are going down the tubes! I had little children and I thought there’s not going to be any jobs here for them. That image stuck in my mind. We are dead.

-Jeanine Alday, county human services administrator

I came on a Trailways bus through the mountains, and when I saw the city, I thought…this is a place that could use some improvement.

-Harry Tate, newly arrived TVA employee

We felt very discouraged. We felt you could do something someplace else, but you couldn’t do it in Chattanooga… You couldn’t accomplish anything. We really felt we were down on our luck.

-Mai Bell Hurley, community volunteer

But the thing about Chattanooga that bothered me as a newcomer was that people never said they were from Chattanooga. If you asked them where they were from, they would tell you they were from Hixson or Red Bank, or Signal Mountain. There was no sense of community. I don’t think Chattanooga had a…a real identity.
This city was too little to be a big city and too big to be a country town. So it was just a big country town.

-Johnny Holloway, Operation Push

People were kind of depressed and downcast about the future of Chattanooga…. I think the community was so far down that it was sort of the laughing stock of other midsized communities, certainly in the south…

-Ron Littlefield, city economic development administrator

The city had a kind of giant inferiority complex…You had an entire population that felt that they were being basically…they had no influence on things that happened to them.

-Ruth Holmberg, publisher Chattanooga Times

People were very discouraged. They were down on Chattanooga. It was hard…. I thought it is a rotten shame for a beautiful city.

-Dalton Roberts, county executive

It was just a sense that everything was sorry. Like anything that was going to be done in Chattanooga was going to be done on the cheap. It’s not going to look very good and it’s not going to work very well…. Aspiration was really low. Imagination non-existent. Sense of the future, no one had one.

-Rick Montague, foundation director

The comments above express the emotional and psychological toll of the era: “down the tubes,” “down on our luck,” and “downcast” indicated that things were down in Chattanooga.” It was not a time for looking up. Chattanooga felt “dead.” It made people feel bad: “couldn’t accomplish anything,” “a rotten shame,” “everything was sorry.” The spirit of the community was broken.
Economic Downturn

In the late 1970s and early 80s, headline stories in the newspapers announced plant closings and massive lay-offs regularly in the steel and textile industries dominant in the Chattanooga area. In the fall of 1981 The Chattanooga Times did a three-part series on the city’s future prospects for economic development. According to a forecast released by Chase Econometrics, Chattanooga was predicted to be “the slowest growing major city in the entire South during the 1980s” (Flessner, 1981).

Ron Littlefield, the economic advisor to the mayor, attributed the cause of the economic downturn to the loss of manufacturing: “In the mid-1980’s, when even though we had cleaned up our air quite a bit, we were hemorrhaging jobs because we were losing a lot of those old industries” (R. Littlefield, 2011).

It was not one type of industry and not just one reason: families selling out, globalization, mergers, or energy issues played a part as Mai Bell Hurley pointed out:

I mean the community had lost a lot of industry. We had textiles that left. We had family-owned businesses that were bought out by larger companies. We had offshore competition. One of our largest employers then was Combustion Engineering, and they were making vessels for nuclear power, and nuclear power at that point had fallen in disfavor. (M. B. Hurley, 2011)

The county executive Dalton Roberts considered the loss of jobs as the major cause of discouragement: “So we lost, best I remember, about 17,000 jobs…. losing a lot of jobs. Very discouraged. People were very discouraged. They were down on Chattanooga. It was hard…” (D. Roberts, 2011).

Some people, including Hamilton County administrator Jeanine Alday, described it as an economic transition that the American economy was going through, the same as
what other manufacturing cities were experiencing: “We were transitioning from manufacturing to service industry and we needed to bring back living wage jobs.”

Johnny Holloway, coordinator for Operation Push, said the African American community was adversely affected by the industrial closings, not only because of layoffs but because manufacturing had provided good paying jobs for an emerging black middle class.

This was an industrial factory and foundry town and the jobs were plentiful for people who wanted that kind of work. And the pay was very decent and people were able to live here in the city of Chattanooga, kind of comfortably. (J. Holloway, 2011)

The downward trend was evident not just to long-time residents but also to people who had just arrived. Dr. Fred Obear came to Chattanooga in 1981 to be interviewed for the job as chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He arrived at night and stayed in a downtown hotel.

When I woke the next morning, I realized that there was a lot of unfinished business in Chattanooga…as I walked around the downtown area, there were a lot of empty lots. There were abandoned buildings. The riverfront was not developed, and it was a city that I quickly learned had kind of a low self-esteem. (F. Obear, 2011)

He diplomatically assessed that “the man-made part of it was not quite in line with what nature had given it.” It was an understatement when later as chancellor. Dr. Obear described Chattanooga of that time as “not a destination city.” Mai Bell Hurley, a lifetime resident, put it more bluntly, “We became a place people wanted to leave” (M. B. Hurley, 2011).

Not only was white flight, the movement away from inner cities to surrounding areas, already underway, but blacks as well as whites, were moving out of the city. It was
called “bright flight,” that is, young people, both white and black, leaving for education, then staying in other cities. Clark White had graduated from all black Howard High School in 1966 and had left and not come back. “The idea was to get as much education, finish high school, but get out of here. This was not a town to come back to if your skin was dark” (C. White, 2011). He earned a doctorate, was teaching at Temple University, and by the early 1980s he was consulting on NBC’s documentary, “America: Black and White.”

But a more recent graduate, Maria Noel, had returned home after college. Maria was born in 1956 soon after Brown v. Board of Education overturned the segregation laws. As she matriculated through school, de-segregation took place in increasing degrees, and she graduated from the integrated City High School. She didn’t intend to come back, either, but returned in 1981 and found it unpromising for blacks, for women, and for young adults: “You didn’t have young people, whether it was African American or not, you didn’t have young people involved in anything. You didn’t have many women involved in anything.”

Racial Divisions

When the African American community wanted to change the name of Ninth Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, the city commission would not even second the motion. John Franklin, the one black commissioner, made the motion, and it went week to week with no second. Ninth Street was the heart of the black business district, referred to as Chattanooga’s Beale Street or Harlem (Lake, 1942). As Revered Robert Keesee, pastor of St. Paul A.M.E. Church, said, the time was right to rename Ninth Street: “All of the cities in Tennessee had named streets or buildings for Dr. King, in
memory of him. And here we were with a major thoroughfare right up town. And we wanted it to be M. L. King Boulevard” (R. Keesee, 2011).

Downtown merchants and property owners resisted the name change, claiming it would affect business. When white commissioner Paul Clarke called the renaming of Ninth Street to M. L. King Jr. Blvd. a “no win situation” (Wilcox, March 21, 1981), the black community pressed the matter further.

Johnny Holloway was the coordinator for Operation Push in Chattanooga. Jesse Jackson’s organization had chapters in cities around the country, and usually pastors filled the coordinator’s position, but Holloway was an engineer and worked for TVA. He described Operation Push as a “social service organization dealing with social, political and educational issues.” The Rainbow Push Coalition in Chattanooga included five groups called the “Community Coalition,” consisting of the Minister’s Union, Operation Push, Unity Group, Action Coordinating Council, and the Nation of Islam.

The coalition and other community groups decided to print up their own signs and rename it (“Coalition to Rename today,” 1981). Reverend Keesee recalled that day:

And we started pushing forward. And I'll never forget it…we decided we were going to demonstrate. We came downtown here, the park right downtown here. One Saturday morning, I made a speech in the park. It was approximately 250 or 300 of us. In fact we had made some bumper stickers, and after I made my speech, we took our ladders and marched down Ninth Street. Took the bumper sticker and pasted it over Ninth Street that said, M.L. King Boulevard, hoping we would get arrested. But the police just watched us. (R. Keesee, 2011)

Holloway felt there was no trust between the races: “Everything that people had promised in the past had failed. They didn’t keep their promises.” Issues the African American community addressed dealt with layoffs, unfair housing practices, poor schools, police brutality, unwarranted arrests, and the many ways in which poor people
were treated poorly. Holloway and the coalition were prepared to respond; “We had pickets in our car all the time. When we found out somebody felt they weren’t being treated right, weren’t getting equal pay, we’d put out our pickets and go to work.” Holloway was referring mostly to the 1960s and 70s when the “race riots and boycotts and picketing and all that” were in the headlines, sometimes putting Chattanooga in the national news. Holloway described himself as “a very patient, persistent, and pushy person. You just have to know which one of those p’s to use at the right time.” (J. Holloway, 2011).

The sense of discouragement that was at work in Chattanooga did not come about from one event or even one year. It was slow in coming and found its way into different parts of the community. As Reverend Keesee expressed, people in the African American community were dealing with many issues that were inadequately addressed.

Well, we were having problems with – with the police department here in the city –especially, how they were treating, especially, young black men. We addressed it on numerous occasions. And then we had some problems with the people who lived in the housing projects--they were being mistreated. (R. Keesee, 2011)

A few years earlier, the city commission had instituted a “roving city hall” to hear people’s complaints in the neighborhoods and according to Rev. David Beebe, a white minister at Pilgrim Congregational church, “No one came…people did not believe they’d be listened to” (Longo, 1981, p. 45).

**Political Divisions**

It was hard to address issues when the city was divided on many fronts: black and blewhite, rich and poor, labor and management, city and county.
The divisions between city and county governments in the early 1980s affected not just the government, but the residents as well. A description of the political divisions in the early 1980s was provided by Maria Noel. She learned from her parents to always put your best foot forward. Maria’s father Roy Noel was a business owner on Ninth Street and an educator; her mother was a teacher, and they lived in Alton Park, a middle class black neighborhood. Maria described the political divisions and how they affected almost every aspect of the community, from schools, police service, and competition for funds, to personal attitudes, prejudices, and where you lived.

There was Chattanooga and there was Hamilton County. The county didn’t support anything the city did because they felt Chattanooga got all the money. Even elected officials were fighting among themselves. It was not a community where we coordinated things or did things together. You had different social services competing for the same federal dollars. You had governments that didn’t communicate with each other. You had neighborhoods that didn’t communicate with each other. You had two different schools systems. If you had any kind of money, you sent your kids to private schools, and most of the people in leadership sent their kids to private schools. The public schools, based on where you lived, suffered. You had labor-management issues and strikes. You didn’t have neighborhood groups or neighborhood representation. You had a police department and a sheriff’s department, and they didn’t work together. The sheriff’s department wasn’t welcome in the African American community. You had gerrymandering … Chattanooga was a mess. It was! That’s the best way to put it.

With two local governments, inefficiency and duplication of services were faulted for some of the persistent problems, but the Metro initiative for a unified government would be defeated in 1984.

Dalton Roberts, the county executive, summed up the problem with the leadership of the community in the 1980s. He described a divided leadership, not just by city and county divisions, but more broadly, that no leadership was stepping up to the plate, bringing people together and trying to solve problems: “The political forces were
divided--there was no leadership coming together to look at all of our problems and say what are we going to do…I think the community lacked a focus and a cohesion of forces” (D. Roberts, 2011). The divisions went much deeper than political territories.

**Bad Labor Image**

Two reports written in the early 1980s bore out these same social, economic, and political divisions expressed in the interviews. Both of these reports were based on interviews with people at the time, and therefore, bear the immediacy and authenticity of how people at the time felt about Chattanooga.

The Battelle Corporation prepared a study for the Chattanooga Area Economic Development Council in 1983. The Battelle report (Minshall & Moody, 1983) interviewed business leaders both in Chattanooga and outside Chattanooga with the purpose of presenting to the Economic Development Council issues that affected the image of Chattanooga and the reasons that companies were disinclined to invest in the area. The report identified significant factors affecting the image of Chattanooga in the early 1980s.

One of the weaknesses identified by the Battelle study was Chattanooga’s image related to labor:

Perhaps the single greatest weakness associated with the Chattanooga area is the reputation that its labor force has for being highly unionized, and being extremely militant. The area's image as being a 'hotbed' of disruptive type union activity is extremely prevalent (and damaging) within the Chattanooga area, and perhaps because of this--spreads far beyond the city limits themselves. The concept of image is very important in this context. (Minshall & Moody, 1983, p.7)
The Battelle report went on to say that the labor problem had actually mitigated and the image as a “hotbed of union hostility” was primarily based on the past and not of reality at the moment, but the image was persistent, not only in the minds of local business leaders but also in the reputation of the city.

To a large extent the image of Chattanooga is much worse in this regard than the actual situation. Still, it is clear that community leaders have not done an adequate job in reversing this image, and what is especially unfortunate—the perpetuation of this problem seems to be carried forth by local citizens and decision makers…. Direct and concerted action would be required here, and that new and innovative mechanisms need to be implemented to improve communications between labor and management. (Minshall & Moody, 1983, p. 43)

**Power Structure**

Another image problem that the Battelle report identified had to do with social divisions and control over decision-making.

Finally at least some people feel relatively isolated in Chattanooga, and suggest that in many cases most decisions involving the community are made by a relatively small group of people from suburban locations--and it is not entirely clear that the typical Chattanooga resident has a significant voice in the decisions made in regard to the community. (Minshall & Moody, 1983, p. 10)

Negative feelings toward something commonly referred to as “the power structure” surfaced in many interviews. As Ron Littlefield said in our interview, “Chattanooga had a pervasive feeling that a power structure was controlling things.”

The sense of power and separation was reinforced by the geography of the area. The city sits in a valley alongside the Tennessee River surrounded by mountains and ridges. The higher income residents tended to live in higher elevations, most notably Lookout Mountain or Signal Mountain, which the Battelle report referred to as suburbs,
but in reality, Lookout Mountain and Signal Mountain were incorporated townships in the county. The prevailing assumption was the owners of the industries lived on Lookout Mountain and ate lunch at the Mountain City Club when they came downtown. “People felt, whether it was true or not, that a few men meeting in the restrooms of the Mountain City Club made all the decisions” (M. B. Hurley, 2011).

According to the interviews, “the guys at the Mountain City Club” wanted to “keep unions minimal” and keep “big companies out,” that was, to keep out competition from larger department stores, insurance companies, or manufacturers competing with those already in town. There was “a desire for Chattanooga to be a separate island, apart from the dynamics of the world. There were people who were vehemently anti-union, anti-black, and elitist” (R. Montague, 2011). The result, as the Battelle report indicated, was a closed town, closed to investment from the outside, but also closed to the contribution of local citizens.

The Chattanooga Times conducted a survey about the power structure and reported the results on October 25, 1983, in order “to put some names and faces to the area’s so-called power structure” (Casteel, 1983). Bill Casteel, the author and a frequent satiric columnist in the Times, claimed that the results of the survey “proved to be near carbon copy” of earlier polls, indicating no change in who was perceived as influential and powerful. Scottie Probasco, a local banker, made the top of the list with County Executive Dalton Roberts pushing close behind. The one change, Casteel noted, was the rise of C.B. Robinson, an African American state representative, as third on the list. Jack Lupton, of Coca-Cola bottling fortune, was “the runaway winner in the ‘most power’ division,” according to Casteel.
But regardless of the opinions of the *Times*’ readers, Dalton Roberts’ comment quoted earlier, that “the political forces were divided” described the leadership as non-cohesive, unfocused, and not coming together to solve problems (D. Roberts, 2011). What he described sounded more like a power vacuum than a power structure. Perhaps the reality of the power structure had more weight in the former industrial era of Chattanooga’s history, but was waning by the early 1980s.

**Lack of Connection**

Another report on Chattanooga was requested by the Lyndhurst Foundation in 1980. The Lyndhurst Foundation, formerly known as the Memorial Welfare Foundation, changed its name and its mission in 1978 after the founder and donor, Cartter Lupton died. His son, John T. “Jack” Lupton, had to decide what to do with the foundation, which grew, upon his father’s death, “from about $35 million to $85 million” according to Rick Montague, who was hired as executive director of the new foundation. Jack Lupton, whose inherited wealth came from Coca-Cola bottling companies and who was identified in the *Times* article above as “most powerful,” was considering what to do with the new challenge. When the foundation came into his hands, he knew he wanted to do something different: “…and with that opportunity Jack Lupton said, ‘all right, we’re going to throw out what we used to do. We don’t know what we are going to do, but …we have two years to think about it’” (R. Montague, 2011).

According to Rick Montague, his son-in-law whom he hired to help figure out what to do, the board of the foundation had a different take on Chattanooga’s crisis:

We did not feel that things were awful or in crisis. We felt—rightly or wrongly—that things simply could/should be better. We felt that Chattanooga was a backwater. That local experts weren't very expert. That
we were out of the mainstream, probably by design. I would argue that much of this was the direct result of anonymous philanthropy, which I argue gives rise to paranoia and power structure analysis. Jack, from the outset, was interested in injecting new energy and new ideas from new people.

Anonymous philanthropy, which was the norm for philanthropy at the time, was the act of giving money away anonymously, often to charitable recipients (church, hospital, university, etc.) who usually received it annually and knew from whom it came despite the cloak of anonymity. It meant that decisions about charitable money were made in private and kept within certain circles. It did not encourage transparency, not did it allow for others outside that circle to apply. If, indeed, that custom contributed to a paranoid sense of the power structure, as Montague claimed, it was about to change at one foundation. But first the foundation needed more information about Chattanooga before changing course.

The Lyndhurst Foundation commissioned a study aimed at providing a profile of problems and opportunities in the city as perceived by the local citizens. The study looked at economic development, the relationship between public and private leadership, the role of community and neighborhood groups, interface and communication between citizens and City Hall, the vitality of downtown, and the need for recreational and cultural opportunities. Led by Gianni Longo, a consultant from New York, a team of architects and urban planners conducted the research with the help of local zoning and arts consultants, and a group of students from the University of Tennessee. They conducted interviews with local leaders, architects, merchants and random citizens, as well as people at the university and in the press.

Longo’s *Perceptions of Chattanooga 1980* revealed an alienated community:
Chattanooga appears to be a city with a double personality, on the one hand it is favorably perceived by its residents. Housing costs are relatively low, traffic problems are minimal, and the climate is favorable with winters, which are not too cold, and summers, which are not too hot.… The other side of the story, however, reflects a very different city, one which is plagued with problems which have curtailed its development.… In fact, it has faced critical resistance on the part of businesses and corporations seeking relocating headquarters, and thus remains in many respects an “undiscovered resource.” Citizens cite several factors in their attempts to explain the reason for the city’s apparent lack of appeal….(Longo, 1980)

According to the Longo report, it was not the lack of leadership but the lack of connection with community that was at the root of the problem: “The inability of local leaders to respond to historical and contextual changes in the community seems to lie at the root of many of the city’s problems….” Defining this lack of connection, Longo described what citizens and leaders conveyed to him through interviews:

It became apparent that there is a noticeable lack of communication between the city’s leadership and the citizens at large, particularly members of the poorer strata of society and blacks, who are conscious of an unstable relationship between people of different social and economic status as well as different races. There is a sense of powerlessness, a lack of receptivity to their needs and problems, and a feeling that the powers that be reflect entrenched local interests rather than taking into account the broad needs of the community. (Longo, 1980)

**Failure to Progress**

Concern for the lack of progress in the city was pervasive. Both those successful and those who felt left behind were dissatisfied. Clark White pointed out the need for both a race and class analysis to understand the failure of progress in Chattanooga. It was not merely a division in race and class, but a pervasive feeling of a lack of vitality and unwillingness to take initiative to move forward that cut across the community. Tommie Brown, the first African-American tenured professor at UTC and later Tennessee state
representative, said: “So over the years, the docile black community just sort of sat here and so the progress has been partly—lack of it—partly the white community’s problem as well as the black community’s problem” (T. Brown, 2011). The point was that neither black nor white would take the responsibility to progress, because, in order for the community to progress, any initiative would have to include the other side.

The interviewees for the Longo report in 1980 expressed a pervasive dissatisfaction with the lack of progress:

From a number of interviews within the community, it became clear that there is an underlying dissatisfaction with Chattanooga’s failure to progress, and that this feeling exists as it does among successful business people in the community as it does among the less successful citizens. Generally, people seem to perceive these issues as having a direct adverse impact on the city’s vitality, and recognize that it brings along with it economic stagnation and a lack of civic pride, ultimately resulting in a lack of participation in the decision-making process and a deterioration of the physical environment. (Longo, 1980)

The inevitable blame that usually accrued to the power structure was reflected differently, however, depending on one’s position:

One fact of Chattanooga life which is frequently cited is that the city is run by a few individuals and families, whose decisions reflect their personal interests. … It was apparent that those who functioned within the inner circle regarded it with complacency while those who were excluded from it tended to view it as a form of conspiratorial controversy over the city. This second group made repeated allegations that a few families control the Chamber of Commerce, which has the undivided attention of the city leadership to the exclusion of all other interests. (Longo, 1980)

The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, as the organization of business leaders, found itself caught in the middle. Some people associated the Chamber itself as part of the power structure, yet the Chamber often found it didn’t have the support or active involvement of the larger company owners. Their membership was based on smaller employees, mostly those with less than twenty-five employees (Epley, 1983). The
Chamber wanted the support of the larger companies and, in general, saw access to resources as a good thing. Therefore, the Chamber found itself caught in the middle when trying to deal with the negative image associated with the power structure.

The association of the Chamber of Commerce with the “few families” and the city’s leadership is important to note at this point. “The poorer strata” saw the Chamber as tarnished with the same brush as the power structure, in most cases, one and the same, and, therefore, a kind of “conspiracy” to control decisions. The Chamber saw itself often at the center of trying to solve economic problems. One such example had occurred in trying to cleanup the air. The city faced the problem by bringing together a united front consisting of the city, the county, the Chamber of Commerce, the business community, and individual leading citizens in a cleanup effort, resulting in the Air Pollution Control Board. The Longo report (1980) noted that it was precisely this kind of partnership between public and private sectors that had proven to be the key to revitalization efforts in a number of cities, but in Chattanooga that same kind of effort was rare and was not always perceived positively.

Longo’s report (1980) identified the causes of the crisis in Chattanooga not as unique to the city but as deeply embedded. The “incapacity to communicate” was at the core for race, class, and also age groups. These social divisions reflected a long history and had few signs of abating:

It appears that the real crisis of Chattanooga’s leadership derives from its inability to open the door to younger people and new ideas. The kind of alliance, which worked in the past, is no longer adequate, and is in fact faced with an operative crisis, which is not unique to Chattanooga but reflects a much broader history of developments. At this stage, it is no longer simply a matter of a jockeying for power among elected officials and a few influential citizens. The real issue is the incapacity of city officials to communicate with citizens at large, the community and the
neighborhoods. (Longo, 1980)

The report identified only one neighborhood that had an association, with two others in process of being organized. The lack of neighborhood organizations belied the lack of representation of citizens in city government. If no office in the government represented districts, then neighborhood organizations had no one representing their interests in city government. All commissioners were elected “at large” by the population as a whole. The commission form of city government reinforced racial lines by assuring that the majority whites controlled elections. Only one African American had won office and that was John Franklin, the Commissioner of Education.

**Impervious System**

The conclusion of the Longo report and its summary pointed out that although dissatisfaction was pervasive, there was no clear focus on the need for or the direction of change. The problem lay in an apparent “imperviousness” for give and take between the many divisions of the community:

In conclusion, the results of our interviews for this project show that many of Chattanooga’s problems can be traced to weaknesses in its leadership, which depends upon a semi-closed system impervious to the necessity for give and take among all segments of the community in regard to changes that affect all of the people. Although change is gradually occurring, the general sense of frustration apparent among Chattanooga’s citizens indicates that it seems to be occurring too slowly. What the city needs now is a more vociferous, open dialog about what the community is, what it should aspire to, and how it can bring about change. Despite denials from a few of those interviewed, it is nonetheless evident that the powers which will influence the ultimate fate of the city have yet to be convinced that a more vibrant community and a healthier economy will benefit them as well as the city of Chattanooga itself. (Longo, 1980)
Part of the reason for the failure to progress and the imperviousness of the system was the lack of access on the part of citizens to decision-making mechanisms. There were no open forum for discussion and no established channels for communication, such as neighborhood organizations. This made it unlikely that the government would seek or easily find civic involvement in anything of common interest:

From interviews conducted in Chattanooga, it has become apparent that the city lacks a mechanism for citizen involvement in the planning process. Nor is there a network of neighborhood organizations working on a continuous basis. The city also does not seem to have any mechanism through which skilled volunteers (retired businessmen, women, young professionals) can be effectively used.... As a result, some of the more active minds in the community are cut off from the decision making process. And frustration among the community leadership boils up in issue-oriented actions. (Longo, 1980)

**Summary**

By August 1980, Gianni Longo, with a team of professionals and volunteers from the community, had studied Chattanooga for 7 months and talked to citizens of all socio-economic backgrounds. He concluded that Chattanooga was at a “turning point” in its history: “The city faces the prospect of profound social changes which are a byproduct of increased citizen awareness, as well as the need to correct already existing imbalances deriving from poverty and racial conflict.” Three years later the Battelle study reinforced many of the same themes (Minshall & Moody, 1983).

**Table 1**

**Conditions of the Crisis Situation in Chattanooga in 1980s**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political</th>
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<tr>
<td>Political divisiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of communication with citizens</td>
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<td>Commission form of government</td>
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Semi-closed system
Lack of neighborhood organizations or identity

Economic
- Plant closings and lay-offs
- Slowest growth in South predicted
- Transition from manufacturing
- Bad labor image
- Closed town

Decision making
- Power structure
- Lack of participation
- Feeling of “conspiracy” to control decision
- Impervious system
- Lack a mechanism for citizen involvement

Social
- Young people leave
- No trust between the races
- Unpromising for women
- Social and geographic divisions
- Isolation and alienation

Cultural
- Lack of vitality
- Lack of progress
- Lack of civic pride
- Not open to new ideas

According to both the Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983) and the Longo report (1980), the leadership in Chattanooga was “a closed system,” “impervious” to change, resulting in “frustration” and “isolation” and a sense of powerlessness among the citizenry. Being a “top-down-run city,” resistance to change added to the feeling of hopelessness and despair that gripped Chattanooga in the early 1980s. Political divisiveness, economic distress, racial tensions, and social disconnection added to the sense of powerlessness. The failure to progress was fueled by those divisions that created pervasive dissatisfaction and discouragement.
Researcher Positioning Statement: Crisis

Growing up in Chattanooga, I was a member of family that stressed values of education and community, both through individual involvement and through starting two schools. By the time I finished high school, however, I couldn’t see a future for myself or a place to live those values in Chattanooga. Like many young people, I felt alienated by a town divided against itself—divided by race and class and also by religion and geography. I saw no hope for change as I left for college never intending to move back.

I taught English in Japan, worked in New York, and moved to San Francisco. In 1974 when the OPEC oil embargo caused a crisis in world food supplies, I was working at an organization that wanted to find a way to respond to the crisis long-term. We began with education—a workshop to change eating habits to be healthier, safer, and more sustainable. The workshop led to a group working together over the next few years. We started a new organization, hosted conferences, then formed a state-wide coalition. Those efforts led to a direct marketing bill to establish farmers’ markets across the state. In other words, we went from new ideas (healthier, safer, more sustainable food) to policy enactment (Direct Marketing Bill) and structural change (community farmers markets) in about five years. The markets, in turn, continued to educate and build community around them. This experience showed me that education and community could be effective in creating change, but I still wasn’t thinking about returning to Chattanooga, not yet.
CHAPTER VI

READINESS

Until we see sunrises and see possibilities, we don’t change ourselves.
-Dalton Roberts

Introduction

The second theme to emerge from the data was Readiness, suggesting the mindset that helped to make the transition. When things reached a nadir of despair, something had to change, but, indeed, it is hard to pinpoint the starting point. Chattanooga Venture did not emerge from a vacuum, but rather grew from the ideas and concepts generated by the events that preceded it. These antecedents played an important role in creating a sense of readiness and anticipation for the changes that were about to come.

Two major things contributed to the sense of readiness. The first was a shift in leadership. All the major leadership positions changed in a few years from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, positioning new people to respond to the need for change. The second contribution to the sense of readiness was a series of programs or activities that for the purposes of this paper, I term learning events. Although not described as such at the time, they constituted different forms of civic education and public engagement, creating an atmosphere of informing and inviting, quite in contrast to the lack of connection and the impervious system described in the previous chapter.

From the research, I have identified eight learning events taking place between 1980 and 1984 that contributed to the creation of Chattanooga Venture (see Appendix B).
A learning event is an activity or program with the intent of increasing public awareness. Each of these learning events introduced new ideas and built connections locally. The audience was usually the general public. In most cases the learning event intended to reach both citizens and the leadership of the community, both in terms of individuals and in terms of organizations or networks.

These events set the stage for Chattanooga Venture in several significant ways. The first was introducing new ideas, usually ideas that had roots outside of Chattanooga, that were aligned with post-industrial economic strategies or with changing social demographics and concepts of community leadership. The events built relationships between people and groups. All but one of the events were funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation, in part or in full, but different sponsors or co-sponsors hosted the events, thus involving a growing list of governmental agencies, businesses, and civic organizations. Most significantly, the events found new ways to articulate and make conscious an analysis of problems and solutions, thus increasing public awareness that change was possible.

The focus of this study is the creation of Chattanooga Venture and these events emerged from the study as significant in setting the stage for the creation of Chattanooga Venture. Therefore, the study does not claim to be a thorough examination of each of these events or an evaluation of them. Neither were the interviews intended to examine these events, rather these events emerged from the interviewees’ comments and, therefore, became a part of the study. The significance or results of the events are not fully examined, due to the time frame of the study ending in 1984 and the focus on the creation of Chattanooga Venture. However, some longer-term significances are
suggested. Further study is recommended for any or all of the events. A summary of each event is included in Appendix.

**Anticipation**

The desire for change was beginning to take hold as positions of leadership changed hands and new ideas emerged. A sense of anticipation grew as people began to connect, talk and envision new possibilities. The following quotes from the interviews demonstrate the feeling of anticipation and sense of readiness for change that began to emerge in the early 1980s.

None of this was intentional. It was serendipitous. But when people know something is going to happen, when something comes from nothing, it has a power. We wanted people to feel that we can get things done and we can get them done at a very high standard.

-Rick Montague, Lyndhurst Foundation

I knew what I wanted to do—I wanted to build communities. They have to be designed. They don’t just happen. If they just happen they become mediocre at best and sometimes failures.

-Stroud Watson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

I also knew the only way to change it was to start moving some dominoes, you know? You can’t move twenty dominoes at once but you can always move one. And it’s touching another one, and it touches another one and the first thing you know, you’ve got a chain reaction that’s just beautiful.

-County Executive Dalton Roberts

Good things are reactions to bad things.

-Mai Bell Hurley, Community volunteer

I realized that if any change was going to occur, it had to involve us. We had to be a part of that…of the development of the city and changing the
attitudes of people about it, if we could find something to brag about rather than things to complain about.

-Chancellor Fred Obear, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Why did I want to be mayor? To get something done in this city.

-Mayor Gene Roberts

We felt like we needed to reinvent Chattanooga. We felt like we needed to go back to the drawing board because it was changing. The old ways were going out, and we knew new ways were coming in, and we wanted to understand what was happening and to have an influence on the new Chattanooga and what we would become.

-Sally Robinson, Arts and Education Council

We’d had too many disappointments in the past trying to bridge the divides in the community. We were hesitant to get involved…but when you see something different and new come along—you need to look at it and take a chance with it.”

-Johnny Halloway, Coordinator, Operation PUSH

That was a term that had to be explained over and over and over again. What does it mean—quality of life? And it was something that no one had considered in Chattanooga before.

-Pat Wilcox, editorial writer, Chattanooga Times

**Leadership Shift**

In the years leading up to the creation of Chattanooga Venture, major leadership positions in the city changed hands: the mayor, the county executive, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, the chancellor of the university, and the executive director of Allied Arts. This major leadership shift in the midst of a downturn contributed to a sense of readiness, if not a willingness to do something. New leaders were not beholden to past
decisions and they wanted to be part of making things better. Some of them were hired or elected with change in mind, but still the daunting questions remained – what could be done and who would start?

In the study, many different people are introduced. In order to reduce confusion by introducing too many at once, I introduce them gradually as their role enters the storyline. At this point, I introduce Dalton Roberts, Gene Roberts and Rick Montague. Their roles as mayor, county executive, and foundation director meant they could not ignore each other and had to figure out how to work together. The first two roles, mayor and county executive, had traditionally been at odds with each other. The third one, a foundation executive with a new mandate and a community focus, was an unknown entity and seemed to be trespassing on other people’s territory. Not only did they not know each other, they came from different backgrounds and had different networks, but they had something in common—a desire to make things better in Chattanooga. There were no rules about how this would work. In their interviews with the Chattanooga History Center, each of them mentioned an experience in their early adulthood that had a formative affect on their eventual involvement with the community.

Dalton Roberts was first elected Hamilton County Executive in 1978. He was born in Alabama and moved soon after birth to Chattanooga, growing up in a community he described as one of those friendly-helpful-to-each-other kinds of neighborhoods. It was at the end of Missionary Ridge where a natural spring provided a watering place during the Civil War and afterwards, called Watering Trough. He had a life in public service, working first for the city in education, then Manpower director, and then he went to the county. He attributed his life in public service to his early experiences in the
Jaycees. He worked hard on trying to improve the image of Chattanooga with the Jaycees, where he and others created the Billy Braggart campaign to get people to brag about things in Chattanooga at a time there wasn’t much to brag about. He was a musician and singer as well (D. Roberts, 2011).

Dalton Roberts won his second term as County Executive in 1982. It was a hotly contested election with an opposing candidate from Lookout Mountain, and Rick Montague described the sentiment among the opposition as, “If Dalton wins, it’s ‘Katie bar the door!’” (R. Montague, 2011).

Alday worked directly under Dalton, part of his management team, as the Hamilton County Administrator of Human Services. As a working woman with young children, she wanted a place her children could grow up, find a job and raise their families. She described Dalton Roberts as “the smartest person I’ve ever known.” He was a “results-oriented person” who took risks and “pushed the envelope all the time.” “I saw him as a person who forced change,” she said, and that suited her for she knew things had to change.

Gene Roberts was elected mayor of Chattanooga in the spring of 1983. He had grown up near 10th Street in a community called “Onion Bottom,” where he said he and other kids, both black and white, played in a dump and walked on the train tracks. He served with the Navy during the Korean War, came back and graduated from University of Chattanooga. His first job was a newspaper reporter for The Chattanooga Times. His experience of covering crime and seeing what most people don’t see, was formative in his understanding of the city. He ran for and was elected Commissioner of Fire and Police, then was appointed by Governor Lamar Alexander to head up the Tennessee
Safety Department. After a stint with the FBI, he returned to Chattanooga to run for mayor in 1983 because he wanted to “get something done,” that was “to clean the city up.” Soon after taking office, Mayor Gene Roberts contacted the County Executive.

I got in touch with Dalton after I was elected. He was working in the county at the time. And I said to him, ‘Dalton, let’s get going. Let’s get something going to rejuvenate this city.’ And he said, ‘I’m right in there.’ (G. Roberts, 2011)

Indeed, Dalton was not only “right in there,” he was way ahead of Gene. (Since the mayor and county executive shared the same last name, they referred to each other and most people referred to them by first names. In this study their first names will occasionally be used as well. No lack of respect or improper reference is intended. And, likewise, to keep the text consistent, I use first names for the other informants as well, except in cases where it is inappropriate or causes confusion.)

Rick Montague became director of the Lyndhurst Foundation about the same time that Dalton was first elected. Rick described himself as “a product of private grammar school, private high school, and Lookout Mountain [which] was dominantly white.” He described Chattanooga at the time he returned home from college in 1968: “Chattanooga, by the time I was a young adult, was a very polarized city. The divisions weren’t just racial. They were geographic, very class conscious, a sense of them versus us on all fronts” (R. Montague, 2011).

He taught at the Baylor School, a private school for boys at the time, and, as a volunteer, sought other opportunities to know the city.

I was the assistant scoutmaster down on what we now call M.L. King Boulevard, but at that time it was Ninth Street…. That was really the first time that I began to look at the city differently, feel the city very differently, particularly through the eyes of the kids in our troop, visiting in their homes to convince their parents their kids needed to go to scout
He felt the same way about being on the board of the Boys Club. He felt they were getting to know boys and gaining trust.

People like me need to know kids like that, and that was another great blessing, blessing to my life, for me to understand what they encountered at school, what they encountered with healthcare, what they encountered with a general sense of what their promise and what their future could be, and how you can see that change over time. You know, you want to expand that to - - to the whole community. (R. Montague, 2011)

In the spring of 1977, Rick was asked by his father-in-law, Jack Lupton, to help him figure out what to do with the family foundation, the Memorial Welfare Foundation, that was described in the previous chapter. Rick was hired with the charge to do things differently, to be aggressive, imaginative, bold, and innovative.

So the mandate that came from the chairman of the board was newness, creativity, energy, thoughtfulness, risk-taking. He used to love to say, ‘If we’re succeeding at everything we do, then we haven’t been taking enough risk.’ So we went into this with the idea that we were going to be risk-takers… and we were going to all learn together. (R. Montague, 2011)

The foundation changed its name to the Lyndhurst Foundation, and Rick hired Jack Murrah, a fellow teacher at the Baylor School. Rick described a letter that Jack Lupton, as Chairman of the Board, wrote that said, in essence, things could be done better in Chattanooga, and in order to find out how to do it better, he wanted Rick and Jack to “take advantage of the wonderful minds that are working on similar problems throughout the country and the wonderful minds we have in Chattanooga as well.” Rick and Jack Murrah listened, traveled, read, and met people. At first, he said, “We were feeling our way,” but by learning from models in the South and in the nation, early “light switches”
went on that led to ideas and connections with certain people that became part of the mix that helped create the readiness for the transition (R. Montague, 2011).

Searching for new ideas, Rick Montague attended the national Council on Foundations annual meeting held in Seattle. On every seat was a copy of a little book called, *Learning from Seattle*, by Gianni Longo and Roberto Brambilla (1979). When Rick returned home, he called Gianni Longo and “struck up a relationship.” The relationship with Gianni Longo resulted in the Longo report (1980), which was introduced in the previous chapter, as part of an initial grant with the Lyndhurst Foundation. Gianni was one of the out-of-town consultants that, in turn, struck up a relationship with Chattanooga in the next decade. He was directly instrumental in two of the learning events described in this chapter and in the creation of Chattanooga Venture; therefore, I will introduce him with more detail than I did in the last chapter.

Gianni Longo is a native of Italy, with a lifetime career in the U.S., residing in New York City. He graduated from the University of Venice with degrees in architecture and urban planning, and was co-founder of the Institute for Environmental Action in New York. He had received two international fellowships for studies on urban conservation in the cities of Rome and Venice. He was an accomplished photographer. *Learning from Seattle* was one in a series of books called the “Learning From” series, featuring lessons and best practices of various cities on ways to improve the built environment.

**Learning Events**

As participants in this study talked about what was important to them in the lead up to the creation of Chattanooga Venture, they identified an event or several events that
stood out. The significance of these events emerged from the interviewees and was reinforced by the documents, and in some cases by newspaper articles. The data, particularly from the interviewees, brought out their significance as antecedents to the creation of Chattanooga Venture.

Based on the data, I describe eight learning events that took place in Chattanooga between 1980 and 1984 that contributed to the creation of Chattanooga Venture (Appendix B). At the time they were not called *learning events*. They were not necessarily connected, and certainly were not considered a “series of events” as I describe them here. Instead they had more the feel of what Stroud Watson described as “stuff:” “There was always stuff going on.” The stuff he referred to took the form of people coming to town, talks, exhibits, panels of experts, and interactions of various kinds talking about the future of the city.

A learning event is any activity or program that engenders learning on the part of the participants. In this study, a learning event differs from a traditional educational program in that it is community-based with an intention to stimulate change. In most cases, the process is interactive rather than didactic, but the nature of the interaction varies considerably. The formats of the events described in this study range from a publication, a series of musical performances, student exhibits, one-day conferences, a trip to another city, a three-year-long public planning process, and a small study group.

Since seven of the eight events were funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation, I find it necessary to address a perception that may emerge in retrospect that these were intentional strategies by the foundation to move the public in a certain direction. The events were sponsored and co-sponsored by different groups and provided an opportunity
for both the foundation and the community to learn together. In an email to a Harvard researcher on February 7, 2013, Rick Montague clarified the original intent in this way:

> We were learning as we went. We did not know the path. We didn’t set out to find a path or to create one. We were learning. We invited others—many—to learn with us, through us, for us, and to teach us. I think that people sensed that we were sincere in our invitation for their energy, help, ideas and goodwill. In retrospect it could have all become a big mess, but instead, I think it/we/our community and city created something magic that none of us could have imagined alone or as a small group.

Participants in this study identified different events as personally significant. The documents and newspaper articles provided another slant on these events as significant in the life of the community at the time. But what is noticed through the data is that new words emerged in the community vernacular. The language began to change. As new words and concepts were introduced, a spirit of optimism and anticipation grew noticeably over the course of the three to four years in which these learning events occurred.

I introduce each event in this chapter and in succeeding chapters. I present specific information about each event: Name of event, date, type of event, description, sponsors, and the ideas that were generated by the event. I suggest what kind of outreach it had in terms of attendance or media coverage. Important questions for each event relate to its outreach: Was it open to the public, did it reach out to diverse groups or organizations in the community, did it ask for any response or feedback? A rubric for each event is included in the Appendix.
The Institute of Environmental Action was retained by the City of Chattanooga in 1981 on a grant from the Lyndhurst Foundation to conduct a program aimed at (1) increasing citizen awareness and participation in the decision-making process and (2) stimulating urban vitality in the downtown. Gianni Longo met regularly with the city’s director of planning, T.D. Harden, and his staff member, Harold Walters. Longo recommended two actions: the publication of a “community awareness manual” and a series of free musical performances downtown.

The community awareness manual turned into a 3-color, 54-page magazine, called Chattanooga in Motion, with pictures and illustrations and quotes from people describing the community and creating images of what Chattanooga was and could be. The magazine was sponsored by the City of Chattanooga and was funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation. “We knew that Chattanooga wasn’t in motion, but Gianni [Longo] chose that title to say, ‘We’re all in this together. We want you to be part of whatever it is we’re doing, we want you to know about it’” (R. Montague, 2011). According to Rick, the magazine set the tone of informing and inviting: “We want you to be informed and we want your input.”

Chattanooga in Motion (Longo, Brambilla, & Tatge, 1981) is an artifact of civic education. Its purpose was to increase citizen awareness and stimulate individual and collective action. It quoted from interviews with people in the community about their concerns as well as their aspirations. The opening page spoke directly to the prevailing sense of despair and discouragement by describing the purpose of the magazine as a civic tool:
It is also a tool intended to deepen public awareness of the part played by individual citizens, functioning sometimes alone and sometimes collectively, in shaping the destiny of their city. Such awareness is a foundation for action, a means for building participation in the decision-making process and for establishing creative, constructive involvement. It is an effective antidote to polarization and destruction. (Longo et al., 1981, p. 1)

Primary concepts introduced through Chattanooga in Motion were:

- Individuals can make a difference and take action
- The image of the city should be changed from within, not cosmetic improvements
- A vibrant downtown is essential to a vibrant community.
- Decision-making should be more open and participatory
- Vitality stimulates economic development
- Art, culture and the physical environment play a role in attracting businesses
  - Civic Involvement
  - Open Planning Process
  - Positive Public Attitude

Terms that might sound like clichés were not in common use in Chattanooga’s vocabulary at the time. For example, citizen involvement had to be defined. It was defined in the magazine as “a process by which people gain control over the decisions which affect their lives.” Citizen involvement was the way toward community decision-making, another concept that was shrouded in negative attitudes toward the power structure. The power structure was redefined in light of the kind of partnership that public and private leadership needed to exhibit, that is, “partnership that has brought to fruition plans which neither the private sector nor the city could handle alone.” And it refocused attention on the potential of neighborhoods as a source of identity, involvement, and pride. Some of the terms and concepts introduced in the magazine were:

- public participation
- public/private leadership balance
- public awareness
- civic education
- an open planning process
- positive public image
- cooperative efforts
- diverse cultural resources
- civic pride
- community change

It encouraged people to act, to talk to each other, to write letters to the editor, and to answer a survey. Recommended actions included:

- An Active Downtown
- Fairs and festivals
- Creative historical renovations
- Neighborhood organizations
- Community planning storefront

The core message of *Chattanooga in Motion* (Longo, et al., 1981) was vital cities attract economic investment. To increase vitality, the city had to invest in the arts, in cultural activities for the residents, and in the natural and physical environment. Arts and cultural resources, as well as natural assets, including the built environment, were considered central to economic development rather than fringe fixtures:

Today it has gradually become clear that economic development strategy can no longer afford to discount the importance of factors such as art, culture, and the quality of the physical environment, since these elements play a considerable role in the city’s ability to attract new business. (Longo et al., 1981)

Distribution of the magazine was a challenge. The intent was to “reach everyone,” but the cost of mailing it was prohibitive. Gianni Longo suggested including it in the distribution of the Sunday newspaper. The two daily newspapers distributed only one paper on Sunday and, therefore, it had the largest circulation in the area. 80,000 copies were distributed through the newspaper (McAfee, 1981) on June 30, 1981, and 5000
through the public schools. Local TV covered it, and the paper carried a story quoting Gianni Longo as to its purpose:

“Basically we’re trying to create a vital city that citizens can be proud of,” Longo said. Pride of place was the first intention, then economic development followed: “Large corporations find it difficult to relocate without a vital city because their employees won’t relocate there.” (McAfee, 1981)

The magazine was accompanied by a workbook for children called Nosin’ Around by, Jim and Liz Aplin, local artists who created history maps and a children’s section. The idea of the workbook and the magazine was to appeal to people of all ages. The hope, according to Rick Montague, was to create wonder: “…imagine, if you are out there…and this show up on your doorstep…. If people think something’s going on, they might want to get involved” (R. Montague, 2011). Involvement, curiosity, imagination were hoped-for by-products of publishing Chattanooga in Motion.

**Five Nights in Chattanooga**

The second learning event designed by Gianni Longo and the Institute of Environmental Action was also sponsored by the City of Chattanooga and funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation. In order to accomplish the second goal—stimulating urban vitality in the downtown—Gianni Longo recommended a series of free musical performances downtown. The magazine Chattanooga in Motion encouraged and promoted the idea of an active downtown and urban vitality, but the musical concerts in the heart of downtown Chattanooga in the summer of 1981 put the idea to the test. Chattanooga had a lot to learn from this experience, and many people identified “Five Nights” as the beginning of change (R. Montague, 2011).
In the summer of 1981, the “heart” of downtown was the 900 block where Market Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and Broad Street came together, and it was not much more than a block of rubble. The old businesses had been cleared off and the block sat vacant. It was a metaphor in itself that the heart of the city had undergone surgery with no replacement. Furthermore, downtown at night was considered dangerous, but in point of fact, it was empty. Dalton Roberts described the emptiness of downtown after everyone went their separate ways quite vividly: “You could just set a cannon up anywhere on the street there after 5:00 and shoot down Broad Street or Market Street and you wouldn’t hit a soul” (D. Roberts, 2011).

In addition there was fear of a race riot. A riot had broken out in June 1981 at Memorial Auditorium when a performer cancelled and people couldn’t get their money back. While the African American community was in the throes of trying to change the name of Ninth Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, demonstrations, protests, and prayer breakfasts were a regular thing. The city commission meetings were held on Tuesday nights, and on June 14, 1981, Commissioner Paul Clarke reversed his stand and seconded John Franklin’s motion.

A unanimous vote of the commission changed the name of Ninth Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd that night. The Chattanooga Times reported it the next morning as a “surprise move” (Wilcox, June 15, 1981). The renaming of Ninth Street and the “surprise move” that was recorded in the paper is a longer story than I can tell in this paper, but it is a story that should be told and is a subject for further study. It is significant for this study because of the impact it had on black/white relations, attitudes toward downtown, and progress in the city in general.
The Five Nights in Chattanooga concerts were planned for consecutive Tuesday nights starting July 14, 1981. The feelings were so tense that on the day of the first event, a former mayor accosted Rick Montague. According to Rick, the former mayor saw him and “grabbed me by the lapels and said, ‘The city of Chattanooga is going to blow up tonight and I am going to hold you personally responsible’” (R. Montague, 2011).

The objective of this series of five evening concerts in Chattanooga during the summer of 1981 was simply to invite people to come downtown and experience “entertainment and social interaction” (Longo et al., 1981). The series was planned to attract a broad spectrum of the population, and big-name acts were selected to appeal to different audiences of the general public: B.B. King (blues), Bill Monroe (bluegrass), Don McLean (folk-rock singer of Miss American Pie), Sarah Vaughn (jazz and gospel), and Hank Williams, Jr. (country).

But Five Nights in Chattanooga was more than entertainment. The series was a form of civic education that had an intention of transformation. Baltimore, Maryland, was cited in Chattanooga in Motion for having done a similar thing. A music festival downtown had transformed people’s attitudes toward the area that later became the Charles Center and the heart of Baltimore’s revitalization. Five Nights in Chattanooga had been introduced in Chattanooga in Motion:

The series draws its inspiration from a number of American cities which have used music and arts to create a better, more positive image of the city, to change people’s attitudes and allay fears about a particular area during off-hours, to stimulate local economy, and, in general, to promote community participation. (Longo et al., 1981, p.37)

The big name acts attracted, as intended, “a diversified public.” Black and white came. Young and old came, grandparents and children. The vacant lot had no seats of any
kind, so people brought their own lawn chairs, sat on the street curbs, or just stood around. The atmosphere encouraged mingling. It had the feeling of hanging out for a summer evening with music. Stroud Watson said he heard reports later of the unique interracial nature of the event: “For the first time, it was reported to me, both the black and white community stood on the same street corner with each other.” Standing on the street corner had been considered vagrancy, but for this one night a week for five weeks, it was the mode of interaction.

The crowds grew for each concert, and the fear subsided. Even city officials grew in support.

By the time Hank Williams was here, that whole area was packed. I think they estimated 16,000 people [that night]. People were hanging off of buildings and out of buildings all the way around there. (R. Montague, 2011).

A month after Ninth Street was renamed Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, on that same street on a vacant lot in the middle of downtown, B. B King performed to an audience of black and white, young and old, rich and poor, whoever wanted to be there, whoever showed up on that hot summer night.

One newspaper reported it was “unlike any event downtown Chattanooga has ever seen,” and as Gianni Longo hoped, it proved that people could gather downtown in a safe way with a festive spirit. According to Longo, even the attitude of the police changed. The total attendance over the five concerts was 45,000 (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, 1980). The spirit of the community lifted; tensions eased; and an unconscious sense of hopefulness began to weasel its way into dark corners of doubt. After *Five Nights*, people said, “Something’s going on in Chattanooga” (R. Montague, 2011).
Images of the City

Starting in the spring and summer of 1982, a series of exhibits created by architectural students from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville surprisingly gave Chattanoogans a fresh new look at the possibilities for the city. The idea of using architectural students was inspired by a group of medical students from Vanderbilt University, called The Student Health Coalition, who set up health fairs in rural areas in the South. In the process of planning the health fairs, the students followed certain community organizing principles that “actually had some residual value after the health fairs left” (R. Montague, 2011), a fact that caught Rick Montague’s attention as something that could be replicated in other fields. Rick served on the advisory board to the school of architecture at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, and he and Jack Murrah approached the dean of the School of Architecture with an idea to fund some architectural students to spend time in Chattanooga, calling their outpost locally a “Remote Design Studio.” The University of Tennessee agreed to try the idea, but the Knoxville-based university lacked a professor who was willing to lead such a project in Chattanooga and it failed.

Then a person named Stroud Watson came on the scene. Tennessee was not on Stroud Watson’s list of places to live. He was an American architect who had spent eight years working in England as part of a team of architects and planners building a new city from the ground up. Milton Keynes was one of Britain’s “new towns,” a movement started in the 1960s to build new cities to manage the population growth and take the pressure off London suburbs. Stroud had studied under Louis Kahn, Ian McCarg, and David Crane at the University of Pennsylvania, had taught at the University of Arizona,
and was working in St. Lucia with the British Overseas Development Corporation at the
time that he was recruited to be a part of the urban design team at Milton Keynes.
When Stroud left Milton Keynes, he wanted to do two things. He wanted to teach at a
university that integrated architecture with urban design in a community and he wanted to
work with and for a community that wanted urban design as a fundamental building
block of the community. From Louis Kahn he felt the responsibility to build cities that
are “understandable, memorable, and loved by people.” From Milton-Keynes, Stroud said
he had learned what had to go into “the quality of place—how a city works and feels,
how to build up pride in a place.”

Stroud Watson wanted to apply what he knew both at a university through
students and in a community. He believed strongly that you had to design cities or they’d
get worse and worse until eventually no one would want to live there. He was looking for
a place to settle and he talked to twenty universities across the U.S. Not a single one saw
working with a community as a priority. No community mentioned it either, until he
came to Chattanooga. When Stroud talked to the Roy McKnight, the dean of the School
of Architecture at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, he told him to talk to Rick
Montague in Chattanooga. The first time they met, Rick said, “You’re on!” Stroud got
the teaching job at UT in Knoxville, and the Lyndhurst Foundation contracted with the
School of Architecture for Stroud to spend one third of his time in Chattanooga at the
Remote Design Studio.

When he first met Rick Montague, Stroud recalled that Rick was concerned that
young people left the community. Rick’s wish was for Chattanooga to be a good enough
city that they would stay and help build the city. Stroud knew he had the background to
make that happen. He knew how to build a community from the ground up as well as from the remnants already there. He knew how to build pride in a place. Rick described Stroud as “a fabulous teacher. Stroud could teach me eight lessons in 45 seconds.” He observed many situations where difficult ideas had to be introduced. Stroud could do it in a way that anyone, “even Jack Lupton and Dalton Roberts…anyone” could listen and then say, “I’ve never thought about that. Now I see it. I couldn’t see it before.” According to Rick, Stroud’s impromptu urban design lessons were direct, succinct, and clear.

As a professor at the School of Architecture at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Stroud Watson taught his students the principles of urban design, then brought them to Chattanooga to apply those principles. The students taught the people in Chattanooga. The first exhibit of architectural students, took place in the abandoned S&W cafeteria on Market Street in the spring of 1982. The exhibit was called “Images of the City,” echoing the title of Kevin Lynch’s (1960) groundbreaking book, *Image of the City*, which analyzed how people understand their surroundings:

> Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings. The sequence of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences….Every citizen has had long associations with some part of his city, and his image is soaked in memories and meaning. (p. ii)

The focus of the first exhibits was on the downtown and the purpose was to project a “more active, balanced and beautiful city.” The students worked with certain principles:

- no one-way streets
- pedestrian friendly
- access to the river
- variety of downtown activities
- clearly defined edges
The students’ work was displayed in architectural models and drawings in an abandoned restaurant on Market Street. The press hardly mentioned it, only a paragraph. Recruiting “anybody we could get to come,” Stroud noted that when the students kept count of the visitors they realized many of them were homeless just seeking some air conditioning. But some architects came. The mayor came. And people wandered in and out, sometimes filling out a questionnaire.

The second student exhibit of students’ work received a better reception in July 1982. The Chattanooga News Free Press (Galletta, 1982) gave it full-page coverage with photos of the models as well as the students, leaders, and community participants hobnobbing with each other. TV featured the exhibit, and leaders were called on to comment. Altogether 5000 people came to see the exhibit that summer, and 2000 questionnaires were filled out.

Jack Murrah of the Lyndhurst Foundation, supporting the project through the Remote Design Studio, said he hoped the exhibit would stimulate “thinking and actions,” not just for the downtown area, but for “making the city more vital” (Galletta, 1982). The intention was to create an atmosphere of something happening, of new ideas being generated, and new possibilities envisioned. The students were learning, but they were also stimulating the community to think bolder. Stroud Watson took advantage of the opportunity to educate his architectural students and the community at the same time.

The students were given certain principles to guide their work. These principles were urban design concepts that Stroud Watson hoped would seep into the community’s awareness:

- The public realm is for everyone
- Downtown is the community’s living room
- Your place reflects your aspirations
- Physical revitalization is connected to economic revitalization
- Public access and private investment go together
- If you make a great place, people will come and people will invest
- High standards are worth the cost

Civic space, public realm, revitalization, and even the term urban design were not common in the local vernacular. The students, in essence, taught the community how to look at the city as a design project, rather than as just pieces. They mapped the city and its historic features with the intent to build on it in the future. Emphasizing excellence, alone, was a mind stretcher for Chattanooga. If your standards are low, your expectations lag; Stroud Watson was trying to stretch the understanding of issues that affected one’s quality of life. Diversity, accessibility, and freedom of choice were Stroud Watson’s words. If a river goes through your town, do you have access to it? Is it accessible to everyone? Do people have the freedom to choose where to walk or fish, eat or enjoy?

Jack Murrah identified the audience of Images of the City as architects, city planners, and private citizens (Galletta, 1982). The local architects were responsible for the design of buildings and landscapes; city planners were responsible for the planning process, setting policies, and the implementation of plans, and private citizens drove the process because they elected the government leaders who hired the planners. In other words, the target audience was the city as a whole.

According to Stroud Watson, the best thing about the student exhibits was that they weren’t threatening. People didn’t expect much from students and weren’t threatened by their suggestions. Overtime Stroud described the learning that took place: “Some learning is osmosis. It just gets in there.” But the physical environment reinforces learning: “When physical change happens in a place, you can see and use it. People
began to think about, care about, and do something about their immediate environment…because that’s what people do, people care about where they are.”

One exhibit followed another. Every semester the students exhibited their work. “How do stamina, effort, and courage get disseminated into the community?” Stroud asked. “It’s like a mantra, you just keep saying, “We can do that; we can do that!” He knew over time that people had learned when they got behind things, when they started supporting things and being more knowledgeable. He could walk into a meeting and people were saying the things he used to say or that the students said in their presentations.

But in 1982 it seemed like dreams. Jan Galletta’s article in the newspaper was titled, “A Brave New Dream for Chattanooga,” and she ended the article saying, “See it especially as a dreamer, poised on the verge of a brave new vision.” She said the exhibit was not to be missed “by any who are interested in Chattanooga’s days ahead.” Indeed it was about the future. She invited architects, planners and citizens who are “excited by the ripe potential of Chattanooga’s future” (Galletta, 1982). Her language echoed the book *Brave New World*, which along with George Orwell’s *1984*, had been a prophet of doom of the time currently being lived. What was being “dreamed” and envisioned at the students’ exhibit was at polar ends of the images portrayed in those books harboring Cold War fears of authoritarianism and alienation. In these exhibits, ordinary people, represented by the students and participants, were envisioning soaring new possibilities of the future.
Not everyone found it easy to imagine the future. Sally Robinson came to Chattanooga from North Carolina in 1970 when she married Sam Robinson, a Chattanooga lawyer and later County Commissioner. She lived on Signal Mountain and landed the job as Executive Director of the Adult Education Council (later changed to Arts and Education Council), an active group of young adults who planned events to enliven the cultural options in the city. In the early 1980s her group felt the sense of something happening and “broached” the subject of a conference on “The Future,” but Sally said they had trouble defining it. “What is the future? Where is it? How do you get there from here? Can you create your own? I mean, there’s no toolbox for doing that, is there?” (S. Robinson, 2011)

The sense of wanting something to happen and not knowing how to do it was pervasive. As a result, Sally said, the conference on the future “never really got off the ground. We were never able to really get that notion articulated well enough.” (S. Robinson, 2011)

But Sally had another opportunity to imagine the future; it was a public planning process that took three years and hundreds of people. Initially it focused on Moccasin Bend, a six hundred acre piece of land that jutted out into the Tennessee River in the shape of a foot. Moccasin Bend had witnessed human habitation for over 12,000 years, and its many archeological riches had been already mined, lost, or stored. The area was partially used, poorly planned, and long overdue for attention. At the urging of the Urban Land Institute, the city and the county appointed a task force in 1982 to look at what should or could happen there, called the Moccasin Bend Task Force.
County Executive Roberts appointed Sally Robinson to the Moccasin Bend Task Force, and asked Rick Montague to chair it. The task force asked Stroud Watson to be the adviser. Very early on, Stroud said, “It’s ridiculous to look at Moccasin Bend in isolation. Moccasin Bend should be looked at from the river, from the Chickamauga Dam all the way to the [Marion] county line.” With that broader vision in mind, the task force hired Carr, Lynch Associates of Cambridge, and Massachusetts, to work with them in thinking out a comprehensive plan for the riverfront. Kevin Lynch, the principle planner, had just died before the work in Chattanooga began, and his partner, Steve Carr, became the planner for Chattanooga.

Several principles guided the work of the Moccasin Bend Task Force:

- to be open and involve the public
- to hold high standards for development
- to see the river as central to the community’s existence, its history and its future

The river had been used as an industrial site and a dump, often overlooked, its banks overgrown or inaccessible. The planning process turned attention back to the river both as “an amenity and a source of economic strength for the entire community” (Moccasin Bend group to hear, 1984). For Rick Montague, chairman of the task force, is was an opportunity to create “a new image for Chattanooga that was based on our relationship to the physical environment that we can all feel proud of. We wanted to create new places that were free from our history where black, white, mountain, valley, and all people can come and feel it is their place” (R. Montague, 2011).

Sally Robinson saw their task to identify “what the future would look like.” What the Arts and Education Council had lacked when it tried to plan a conference on the
future was a mechanism to involve people the way the Moccasin Bend Task Force was able to do:

Suddenly we had a lot of citizens speaking about what they wanted their riverfront to look like; that they wanted a national park where Moccasin Bend was, and not another factory; that they wanted more parks and…recreation and quality of life, and those were the things that the Moccasin Bend Task Force dealt with. (S. Robinson, 2011)

The Moccasin Bend Task Force started in 1982 and held meetings with community groups and open to the public throughout the community for three years. Steve Carr’s planning process was based on public participation. Public participation was a buzzword in planning circles, but Chattanooga was not familiar with it. To make it happen, Carr brought Imani Kazana, a member of his planning team, “a young, unmarried, black woman who basically said to us, ‘This thing will only succeed if you reach out to all the community. And if you involve particular initiatives that get to the minority communities. And that’s what my [Kazana’s] job is to do’” (R. Montague, 2011). The task force responded to Kazana’s insistence on openness and inclusion and hired a local person to work with her, and they carried out a process that Rick later described as “highly open—aggressively so.”

What Rick meant by an aggressively open process was one that reached out to people and listened to their comments and then incorporated their ideas into the conceptual plans. “As the plan evolved, we shared the evolving plans with people in neighborhoods all over the county, people from all incomes, races, neighborhoods, different aspirations, different expectations…” (R. Montague, 2011). Over the course of the project, the Moccasin Bend Task Force conducted more than 65 public meetings in schools, churches, and neighborhoods, as well as regular big public meetings at the
downtown library. The meetings asked people for their concerns and ideas. “Some of those might be in a housing project. Some of those might be at a garden club on Lookout Mountain…. In these meetings sometimes we were imparting information. Sometimes we were answering questions. And many times we were getting ideas from people.”

Rick recalled a specific occasion at one public meeting:

I’ll never forget a group down on M. L. King [Blvd.], the M. L. King Business Association, and, a woman said, ‘I would love a place where my child could get to the river.’ Because at that time, you had to cross private property or TVA had easements that were not publicly open. You’d just…you could feel that need that people wanted to reconnect with each other and with…particularly with the river. (R. Montague, 2011)

The Moccasin Bend Task Force was committed to public participation, to open planning, to responding to what the public contributed. Each time Steve Carr came to Chattanooga, his draft of the emerging plans reflected what people had said at earlier meetings. People began to see that their input made a difference. Conflicts and controversies were aired openly in the meetings and in the press. “We had citizens from all over the city. We had property owners, investors, workers… We had everybody on board and excited before it was over, because it began to have an energy – a feeling of destiny” (S. Robinson, 2011). The size of the crowds grew and the public officials began to take note. It would be their job to determine how public funds would be spent. Sally Robinson knew their challenge was going to be hard:

What the task force wanted to do was create a place for the people who live and work in Chattanooga, who are the citizens and who are the taxpayers…if we weren’t careful we could end up as a tourist town, and we didn’t want that. We wanted to be a town that the people who live and work here and pay taxes were proud to be Chattanoogans and they would stay here and reinvent themselves with new jobs and new businesses, and our economy would grow and we would be the best Chattanooga possible. (S. Robinson, 2011)
Chief points learned and promoted by the Moccasin Bend Task Force were:

- Accessibility — The riverfront is open and accessible to everyone.
- Participation — If the public is involved, the public will own it.
- Diversity of uses — Residential, commercial, and recreational uses can work together.
- High standards — High quality development increases pride and attracts investment.
- Better Place — Making a better place for the people who live here creates a better image and also attracts tourists and investment.

Over the course of three years, the public continued to engage in what Stroud Watson called “a steady diet” of visioning, planning, and participating. They received feedback from “master teacher” Steve Carr that the river was a public asset and that with a plan it could generate renewal. The repetition of these ideas and the participatory nature of the planning had a significant role in building readiness and anticipation. It was the first time Chattanooga had experienced an open, highly participatory planning process. The river became the center of focus for the community and a mix of uses all had a place in the plan. The plan was based on making the riverfront accessible and making the city a better place to live, but the process, not just the product of the planning, was credited for having a transformative impact on attitudes, willingness to connect, and sense of readiness for change.

Quality of Life Conference

The term quality of life entered the community’s lexicon with a one-day conference co-sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce on May 25, 1983, called “Quality of Life: The Competitive Edge.” It was a non-polarizing concept that harkened to the well being of individuals as well as a community. In contrast to standard of living, which was an income-based measure of a community, quality of life included broader factors...
that made a place livable—the physical setting, social conditions, arts and culture, recreation, and the built environment.

Pat Wilcox, a native of Chattanooga and an editorial writer at *The Chattanooga Times*, remembered the newness of this phrase:

> There was a meeting here on quality of life that was actually the first time that I knew that anyone else was interested. A lot of people came. That was a term that had to be explained over and over and over again. What does it mean—quality of life? And it was something that no one had considered in Chattanooga before. They had thought, you know, you had your cops and your fire department and you pick up the garbage and you know (laughter), but to think that maybe it would be a worthwhile investment to make this a really nice place to live was a new idea.

Partners for Livable Places co-sponsored the conference with the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce. “Partners,” for short, (later changed name to Partners for Livable Communities) is a national non-profit located in Washington D.C. driven by the vision of Robert McNulty. McNulty worked in cities across the country convincing leaders that enhancing “the quality of life” for local residents could better attain economic development. The organization’s program, called “Economic of Amenities,” was an economic development strategy based on livability (McNulty, et al., 1985). Livable places were ones with a high quality of life and that included the natural and built environment, social stability and equity, cultural entertainment and recreational opportunities. Investment in quality of life, McNulty argued, generated new business investment and economic prosperity.

Robert McNulty was one of those people that Rick Montague had “struck up a relationship” with after Rick returned from Seattle. Rick was attracted to Gianni Longo and Robert McNulty “because they were in networks that seemed energetic” (R. Montague, 2011). By involving them in Chattanooga, he hoped Chattanooga could
become part of those networks and gain insights into the process of change. The Lyndhurst Foundation supported Partners For Livable Places and the Quality of Life conference as a way of connecting Chattanooga to the broader network of cities “making real progress” for change (Jacobson, 1984). No doubt, at that time, Chattanooga did not yet appear on those lists of cities.

Partners for Livable Places partnered not only with the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce but also with a long list of other organizations listed as co-sponsors on the conference brochure. The associate sponsors included community organizations, city and county, local foundations, and non-profit organizations such as Allied Arts and the Chattanooga Board of Realtors. The sponsorship of these groups increased the audience and also increased the impact of the message. Over 300 people attended, but more importantly, partnering was the way to build support long-term. If the community decided to improve its quality of life, many partners were going to be needed. Knowing that partnerships were essential to revitalize a community, Partners built that awareness into the strategy of the conference.

According to the conference brochure, improvements in the quality of life, such as cultural and natural assets, would bring the following benefits to the community: “increase our community’s residential growth, enhance its tourism, preserve and enrich its natural resources, and boost it ability to attract new business investment for decades to come” (Quality of Life Conference, 1983). Some of the ideas that the Quality of Life conference promoted were:

- Making the city a better place for local residents makes it a better place for companies to invest.
- Arts and culture, recreation, and the built environment support economic development.
Public-private partnerships are a resource for revitalizing cities.

The conference sub-title, “The Competitive Edge,” implied that in order for Chattanooga to have a leg up on attracting investment in the area and thus increasing jobs and economic development, the city needed to look at factors that would give it an edge over other cities.

Issues addressed by the conference workshops included “Nature in the City, “Waterfront Development,” “Rebuilding Downtown Center,” and “Aesthetic Quality.” Other cities provided a model for “greening” their cities, using cultural assets to enliven downtowns, and building partners for renewal. Richmond, Indianapolis, Baltimore, Dallas, Memphis, Jacksonville, and Denver were featured. Common themes from these other cities were:

- Building community pride
- Bringing nature into the city
- Riverfront development
- Balancing tourism, recreation, and industry
- Animating central business districts
- Quality standards
- Landscaping and design
- Public and private partnerships
- Reducing visual pollution
- Public art

The Quality of Life Conference played a significant part in creating the sense of readiness in Chattanooga. Quality of life became the operative phrase in Chattanooga in the coming years. It embraced natural and cultural assets as well as social equity. The area’s natural beauty had long been admired and promoted, but terms like environmental improvement had a negative connation in an industrial and manufacturing town. Quality of life embraced the natural beauty and gave a motivation for embracing other aspects of
the outdoor world without the negative connotation and, in addition, became a motivator for economic development. No one could argue against a good quality of life. And no part of the community could be left out. Quality of life joined the other phrases—public participation, public realm, public-private partnerships—in the journey to becoming a “public” place. The thought that the public realm, for example, belonged to everyone was followed by an awareness that it was the responsibility of everyone as well: “For a population, in general, to care about the public realm—an expression I never knew until I heard it from Stroud Watson—that we had this collective responsibility for the public realm—I mean, you know, that’s enough to get you our of bed every day” (R. Montague, 2001).

Summary

The stage has been set. The sense of readiness, the anticipation, and the desire to do something has been sparked by a series of active learning events over a period of time. The style and format of learning was different for each one: a magazine, a series of music concerts downtown, student architectural exhibits, a public planning process, and a one-day conference. These kinds of things were taking place consistently and steadily. As Stroud Watson said, “These things kept spinning off each other.” New words entered the dialogue and didn’t drop out. They kept being repeated, as they spun off each other, constantly visioning, planning, informing, and inviting people to be involved. The community was welcomed and invited. New ideas were spinning around as people were connecting with each other in new ways and meeting people from in-town and from other cities. The media covered the events over time with increasing interest. Now what was
needed was a workable model or as, Sally Robinson asked for, a “toolbox” for creating the future.

**Researcher Positioning Statement: Readiness**

A readiness for change was happening in me as well. I moved back to the South and went to graduate school at the University of Alabama, going to Chattanooga in the summer of 1981 just to visit—or so I thought. I arrived on the eve of Five Nights in Chattanooga--free musical concerts downtown. B.B. King performed in the open air on a sultry summer night with the most diverse audience I’d ever witnessed in my hometown…black and white, young and old, rich and poor…toddlers sat in their grandparents’ laps while teenagers huddled in bunches. People brought their own lawn chairs or sat on the street curbs. I sat on the curb and there, with my feet in the gutter, I met two new friends, one black, one white, and realized this town was changing. Little did I know how much it was going to change, or that I would change as well.

Soon after I moved back, I met the man I married a year later. I got involved in all the things going on. I went to the student architectural exhibits and the Quality of Life Conference and began thinking about things and meeting lots of people. Then Rick Montague asked me to work with the Moccasin Bend Task Force and organize the public participation part. I set up meetings in different neighborhoods and held large open sessions that grew in size as the plans grew. The meetings were inclusive, diverse, and open. There was plenty of tension over this new plan, and the media portrayed the conflict openly. The Moccasin Bend Task Force was my first stepping out, learning about engaging the public in Chattanooga.
CHAPTER VII
LEADERSHIP

It started with Indianapolis. Jeannine Alday

Introduction

By the fall of 1983 tensions were mounting. The old ways were being blown away, new ideas were swirling around, but no one was sure how to go about making something happen. The idea of an open, community-wide process to bring together the community and create a new vision was hardly even imaginable. Who would do it? What organization could manage it or had credibility with the community? Would people trust the process or be willing to participate? And what about the results? Who would carry them forward? The trip to Indianapolis served as a catalyst for these questions.

In describing the creation of Chattanooga Venture, Jeannine Alday, Hamilton County human services administrator, had no doubts, “It started with Indianapolis.” For Ron Littlefield, the city economic adviser, the trip to Indianapolis was “the beginning of almost everything.” Going to Indianapolis not only brought “a change in attitude,” but, even more importantly, it provided the essential element: “a model for what we wanted to do.”

The Leadership Visit to Indianapolis in September 1983 was co sponsored by the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and Partners for Livable Places. The Chamber of Commerce was already engaged in a merged economic development strategy with the
city and the county governments. Together, the city, the county and the Chamber of Commerce were the leadership organizations that represented the political and economic interests of the community.

**The Chamber of Commerce**

The Chamber of Commerce was the major civic organization concerned primarily with economic development. It was a key player in the leadership of the city and had already played a role in the readiness for change. The Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983), mentioned in CRISIS, was conducted for the Economic Development Council, the merged effort under the Chamber’s wing. The study identified key issues of political and social divisions at the heart of Chattanooga’s image problems—the bad labor image and the alienation of certain racial and social divisions. In addition, the Chamber had co-sponsored the Quality of Life conference in May 1983 with Partners for Livable Places with the support of the Lyndhurst Foundation, described in READINESS. But the ideas generated by the conference—investing in cultural and natural assets—were not ones the Chamber actually promoted; indeed, the Chamber’s approach was in the same vein that most American cities approached economic development, primarily by recruiting manufacturing or industrial investment.

Responding to the industrial downturn in 1979, the Chamber of Commerce had joined with the city and county to merge all three of their formerly separate economic development efforts into one, called the Chattanooga Area Economic Development Council, and raised $1 million in private funds to support the effort. The goal was to recruit business investment and improve Chattanooga’s image. After three years and
“mostly anemic results” (Flessner, 1982), the economic development effort was forced to try something different.

When Ron Littlefield grew up in Lafayette, Georgia, he thought of Chattanooga as the “big city.” He came to Chattanooga with his wife Lanis in 1968, after graduating from Auburn University with a degree in planning. Ron served as economic development director for the city under Mayor Pat Rose. When the city and county merged efforts under the Chamber of Commerce in March 1982, Ron became the General Manager of the Economic Development Council and tried to assert new energy into the effort.

Merging three economic development programs and paying them all from their former separate payrolls did not necessarily create a united effort. Ron Littlefield was quoted in the Chattanooga News Free Press on May 9, 1982:

All the painful struggles and agony we’ve gone through are like the Tower of Babel (where God confused the languages of those wanting to build a tower to heaven) except that we all speak the same language, but don’t communicate, can’t come to terms with how we want to do the job. (Epley, 1982)

Even though the article described him as someone who liked “inventiveness and problem solving,” Ron felt challenged by the difficulties of the merger:

Mr. Littlefield says his job is to get the various sides to understand each other and work together, but he feels he also has to tackle a harder and more dangerous job than that of mere translator—putting his neck on the chopping block for things he believes in. (Epley, 1982)

Ron wanted to try some “new tools” and to “do things we haven’t done before,” but it wasn’t going so well. He felt Chattanooga’s image still needed “quite a bit” of work, but the New York-based consulting firm helping with the image problem was let go. To rally a more collaborative effort in July 1982, Ron announced the creation of four task forces (Flessner, 1982). The mission of the task forces would be future growth and
image enhancement. The task force idea was Ron’s attempt to organize the people climbing the Tower of Babel.

A year later, The Chamber hired Dave Major to head the Chamber as executive vice-president. As evidence that the concept of quality of life was taking hold in Chattanooga, Dave Major announced in the paper on September 7, 1983, “we need less commercial and more quality-of-life advertising” (Epley, 1983). Although Mr. Major had not been in Chattanooga in May at the time of the Quality of Life conference, the term was apparently bandied around, even if its full meaning wasn’t embraced. If the community’s number one problem was a negative self-image, Dave Major’s approach to solving the problem, in the Chamber tradition, was to do more and better advertising.

But his traditional approach and his lack of understanding of the community left Mr. Major “open to criticism,” such as the complaints he faced in a public meeting in Piney Woods, reported in the same article. A Piney Woods resident, an area in South Chattanooga located near manufacturing and chemical plants, complained that the Air Pollution Control Board had not responded to repeated complaints about the quality of air in the neighborhood: “Did the Chamber of Commerce convince you that your industrial profits are more important than the health of our children…the health of our workers?” the resident asked (Epley, 1983). More and better advertising would not make this “image problem” go away.

Soon after the hiring of Dave Major, Ron Littlefield found his ideas and, indeed, his neck once again on the chopping block. It wasn’t long before Ron and his new boss were headed for a collision course, but before that happened, the Chamber led the Leadership Visit to Indianapolis.
Again, just like the Quality of Life Conference, the co-sponsors for the trip were the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and Partners for Livable Places. Intercity visits were a chief strategy of Partners because they were not only excellent learning tools, but networking tools as well, and Robert McNulty, the executive director, was a consummate networker. Rick Montague, the funder of the contract with Partners, described McNulty in somewhat cynical, but also very practical terms: “He had a network of good people and good places and if you paid him enough money, he’d take you someplace.”

Ron Littlefield and former Mayor Pat Rose had already participated in one of McNulty’s trips, called “Learning from Europe” (Rose plans Europe tour for study, 1982). In 1982, McNulty led a trip of leaders from various cities in the U.S. to Europe, planned in conjunction with the German Marshall Fund of the United States, a non-profit located in Washington D.C. that fostered transatlantic relations. The trip was partially funded by the Lyndhurst Foundation. Pat Rose, Ron Littlefield, and Rick Montague were the participants from Chattanooga; the other travelers were mayors and leaders from other cities such as Memphis, Pittsburgh, and Richmond. The mayor of Indianapolis, William Hudnutt, headed the group of leaders from American cities learning from Europe.

Mayor Pat Rose and Ron Littlefield liked what they heard from Mayor Hudnutt about Indianapolis and decided to attend a conference in Indianapolis shortly thereafter. Ron was so excited by what he learned in Indianapolis that he tried to talk the Chamber into planning a trip to Indianapolis a year before the one that took place, but “they weren’t all that excited about it,” according to his later recounting. McNulty, however,
was successful in convincing the Chamber to sponsor a trip to Indianapolis in 1983, and the trip was already in the works when Dave Major was hired.

When Ron first started working at the Chamber on the merged city-county economic development effort, he realized their biggest challenge was to change Chattanoogans’ attitudes, that is, not the outsiders’ perceptions of Chattanooga but the insiders’ feelings about their own city. Because he and former Mayor Pat Rose had gone to Indianapolis for a conference, he knew that Indianapolis had been successful in changing local attitudes; therefore, it was a good place to start.

Leadership Visit to Indianapolis

Indianapolis, Indiana, had been a city down on its heels, fondly called, “Indiana-NO-place.” Local residents referred to it as, “a stop light in a cornfield,” but this Midwestern town had pulled itself out of oblivion into a lively, thriving metropolitan city. The challenge for Chattanooga’s leaders was to find out how it had turned itself around and what drove the change in Indianapolis.

Partners for Livable Places chose Indianapolis for Chattanooga’s first trip because it demonstrated well the concepts that Partners fostered. The “economics of amenities” program was an economic development strategy that promoted quality of life, cultural and natural assets, and social equity (McNulty, Jacobsen, & Penne, 1985). The deputy mayor from Indianapolis had spoken at the Quality of Life conference about their accomplishments through public-private partnerships, and now Chattanoogans were going to see for themselves.

The “new civics” was a leadership concept promoted by Partners for Livable Places. It claimed there were new stakeholders in economic development beyond the old
urban establishments meeting in the proverbial smoke-filled rooms. New civics promoted collaboration and partnerships of government, civic organizations, citizens groups, and the private sector. New civics involved visioning and goal setting and community philanthropy, but most of all it tried to promote the idea that private sector involvement was a matter of enlightened self-interest (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983).

The Chattanooga Chamber billed the trip as part of their leadership program and sent an invitation to local government, business and civic leaders. According to the Chamber’s invitation materials, people from Indianapolis and Chattanooga had “worked and learned together in two previous settings,” referring to the Learning from Europe trip in 1981 and at the Quality of Life conference in May 1983. The purpose of the trip was stated: “to acquaint you as Chattanooga’s decision makers with the means and methods other cities are using to creatively and successfully manage their resources and community assets for increased economic vitality” (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983). A report on the trip described the purpose:

…to see what the people of Indianapolis have done to revitalize their city and attract new industry to the area. Leaders in these two cities face many of the same problems in our age of change. Indianapolis has made significant progress in several areas where Chattanooga wishes to follow, especially in the areas of community involvement and economic development. This trip allowed the leaders of both cities to work in a spirit of cooperation, sharing concerns about community issues and finding solutions to mutual problems. (Chamber of Commerce, 1983)

The briefing materials, sent to participants in advance of the trip, described Indianapolis as the 12th largest city in the U.S. with a population of 1.2 million. It had a consolidated city and county government headed by Mayor William Hudnutt. Traditionally an auto manufacturing town, it had been hit by the economic downturn and was diversifying into insurance, finance, medical research and pharmaceuticals, and had
recently decided to become a national center for amateur sports. The reason for Chattanooga’s interest was not the shared problems but Indianapolis’ way of addressing them: “The city has been successful in surmounting many of its problems through a unique combination of citizen, business and corporate involvement” (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983). Indianapolis was a model for public engagement and public-private partnerships that the new civics promoted.

The Chamber did its own research and determined that Indianapolis was a good place to start the leadership trips. The trip was described in the Chamber’s documents as an opportunity for Chattanooga’s leaders to “jointly reflect” on the problems and solutions for the Chattanooga area: “Our hope is that the visit will facilitate a better knowledge and understanding among participants both in your individual professional activities and in your commonly-held responsibilities as community leaders in moving Chattanooga forward” (emphasis added). This statement implied that knowledge and learning were a part of the process of moving Chattanooga forward and that the results of the learning would be applied both individually and collectively to the one responsibility they held in common, namely, the Chattanooga community.

The trip took place September 25-27, 1983. The 47 who went on the trip represented city and county governments, the regional economic and planning agencies, business leaders, and representatives of some law or architectural firms, and the major non-profits, Allied Arts and the United Way. The Chamber had five people, including Dave Major, the new Executive Vice-President, and Ron Littlefield, general manager of the Area Economic Development Council.
County Executive Dalton Roberts didn’t go on the trip. Jeannine Alday said he didn’t like to travel, but Hamilton County government was well represented by four people who were the administrators of Human Services, Health, Public Works, and Finance, plus the chair of the county commission, Brenda Bailey.

Mayor Gene Roberts, elected only six months earlier, led the city delegation along with the sole African American city commissioner, John Franklin, Commissioner of Education. Other African American leaders on the trip were Claudie Clark of Coca-Cola, Wanza Lee of the Private Industry Council, Jerome Page of the Urban League, and Howard Roddy, head of the county Health Department.

Mai Bell Hurley was on this trip as the volunteer leadership of Allied Arts, the umbrella organization that raised money for arts agencies. She claimed that the people on the trip were not representing organizations, but were there because they were “active.” Active meant that an individual had a personal level of involvement and commitment, and was not just representing an organization. In her mind, “Leadership came from institutions, but the institutions didn’t drive the effort.” In other words, when the Chamber put together a leadership visit the people who went held positions of leadership, but when it came down to getting something done, it was not the institutions that drove the effort, but rather the individuals.

Tom Hebert was one of those who drove the effort after Indianapolis. He worked in the Office of Power at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the federal electric power and regional economic development authority. In 1979 TVA had initiated a division of Conservation and Energy Management that brought people from around the country with alternative energy skills, and Tom Hebert was brought to Chattanooga as
part of that initiative. He founded TVA’s Energy Conservation and Solar Institute which was located in a new building on Martin Luther King Blvd. The institute trained energy advisers, and Tom supervised the community outreach. In fact, he considered himself the “in-town representative” of TVA. According to TVA’s personality profile, he was an “Expressive Driver,” which meant he was “predisposed to get things done.” As Tom said, he wasn’t your typical TVA engineer, “I was a drama major, for God’s sake.”

GIPC: Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee

A follow-up report cited economic development and public/private partnerships as key learnings from Indianapolis, but what struck Jeannine Alday as the lesson behind the other lessons was community involvement: “The real focus of Indianapolis was citizen involvement and the renaissance of a community—how to mobilize and get input from the community. How to know what their hopes and dreams were—the vision.” This was important to her because she saw Chattanooga as being “in the process of developing a vision.” Her feeling was that Chattanooga had to grab hold of something or it was “going down the tubes.”

Ron Littlefield and Tom Hebert grabbed hold of GIPC (Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, pronounced “gypsy”) as the way Indianapolis had mobilized input from the community that resulted in most of the major changes. The leaders from Indianapolis told the Chattanooga leaders how GIPC was able to “identify and anticipate the needs and concerns of the community and to develop long-term programs to meet those needs.” Many of the improvements in Indianapolis were attributed to GIPC, such as the development of a regional transportation system, expansion of the arts and cultural facilities, revitalization of Indianapolis’ downtown, the creation of UNI-GOV for
consolidated government, the development of the largest city park in the country, and residential financing and neighborhood improvements. The wide range of activities came about because of citizen involvement and the idea that economic development was part of a larger context of making the city a good place to live (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983).

The Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, GIPC, was a model for public involvement. It was, in essence, a large advisory board to the Mayor, but it was a non-profit organization with a director and a board. It described itself as the “result of the combined efforts of city leaders, private developers, neighborhood groups, and other citizens.” It was a bi-partisan effort with a diverse board of 60 people, appointed by the mayor annually. The board formed task forces to address issues or respond to needs. The needs might be brought by the mayor for consideration or be developed by the group, but, either way, a task force would form with diverse community stakeholders to seek solutions (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983).

GIPC was described as “the common thread” in many of the stories of success in Indianapolis and, therefore, stood out to some of the Chattanoogans on the trip:

A common thread running through the many success stories in Indianapolis was an organization known as the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. Made up of a cross-section of community leadership tied directly to the Mayor, this organization was credited with playing a catalytic role in practically all of the projects which resulted in the transformation of Indianapolis during the past decade. (Hurley, 1984)

Mai Bell Hurley felt “a sense of anticipation at work.” She knew people on the trip already felt “something was going to happen.” Tom Hebert felt the same thing: “We were all primed for something because of things that had happened. Things were on the move.” About half way through the trip, according to Tom, “people were getting excited…there
was a sense that something could happen in Chattanooga.” For him, GIPC was the “mechanism” that could make it happen.

    Tom was attracted to GIPC “because it was efficient, annually renewable, cheap to operate, and close to political power.” Its purpose was “to prod, to propose, to plan and to pass-off,” or as Tom Hebert said:

    It was emphasized to us in Indianapolis that they [GIPC] were the city’s prod, to think the unpleasant and work with the awkward. When something irregular needs work in Indianapolis, the mayor can easily waft it over to GIPC to assemble a task force, and efforts can also start in the committee itself.

Organizationally, this was, in Tom’s way of seeing it, the way “to pick up the ball and get a lot done.”

    Mai Bell remembered a conversation that took place between Rick, Stroud, and herself. Rick remembered it differently, he said Stroud wasn’t there but Robert Seals was. At any rate, over beers in Monument Square, the conversation turned to what to do on return to Chattanooga. They wanted to go back to Chattanooga and “get something started. GIPC inspired it, but we felt it would be different in Chattanooga.” They agreed GIPC was a model that could be improved upon, according to Rick, “for a variety of reasons.” Rick’s desire was to “institutionalize the sense of openness, inclusiveness, invitation, education, conversation, integration…[of GIPC, but also that he had experienced in the Moccasin Bend Task Force]. And so, as we sat around the table, the idea that this was to be an adjunct of the mayor’s office was not a winning idea.”

    During the conversation at Monument Square in Indianapolis, they called it “Step Two.” The next step upon returning home would be to continue talking, continue working, and figure out what would work in Chattanooga the way GIPC had worked in
Indianapolis. One thing was clear, it would not be in the mayor’s office, but everything thing else was up for grabs.

Tom Hebert was excited and wanted to be sure that something happened when they returned to Chattanooga. He went to Dave Major and asked if the Chamber was going to do any follow-up when they got back, and Dave Major replied, according to Tom, “He hadn’t planned on doing that.” Tom took this to mean the Chamber “really didn’t want anything to happen.” Rallying to the cause, Tom drew on his self-described skills of “jarring things loose and getting things going.” He ran into Rick before the next session, told him the Chamber wasn’t going to do anything, and asked Rick, “What should we do?” Rick took him over to the edge of the auditorium and pointed to someone in the seated audience. “’See that woman down there?’ Rick said. ‘That’s Mai Bell Hurley. Talk to her.’” Reflecting later, Tom said, “That’s when Chattanooga Venture started.” The relationship to Mai Bell was, for him, the beginning of what happened next.

Ron Littlefield described the whole trip as full of things that were “a model of what we wanted to do,” and GIPC was one of them. “World Class” was a term he heard frequently in Indianapolis; “the fact that they had a vision for doing world-class things became a model for us. We decided to steal ideas from Indianapolis.” Littlefield admitted to stealing ideas from Indianapolis, but he asserted, “We didn’t follow their model—we did our own thing.”

The Lyndhurst Foundation hosted the dinner the last night in Indianapolis. Mayor Gene Roberts was getting ready to speak, and someone said, “Wait a minute.” Jeannine Alday described it as an “uncomfortable moment.” She said that up to this point, “the community had not stepped up before.” But someone was stepping up.
It was Rick Montague. Rick didn’t mean to be rude, but Lyndhurst was hosting the dinner and he thought it appropriate to set the tone.

I got up to speak, but since I was the host of the dinner I took it upon myself, so that set the tone for making sure that it [what happened on return] didn’t fall under the mayor’s office. And we shouldn’t forget, too, that there was a city government and a county government and for us to be effective going forward it would be inappropriate and shortsighted to be part of the mayor’s office or part of the county executive’s office. I just wanted to make sure that whatever the plans were, that we needed to do the same kinds of thing that we had done.

Gene Roberts had come into office in the spring of 1983, right in the middle of many things taking place: the Images of the City student exhibits had been going repeatedly every semester, the Moccasin Bend Task Force was well into its three-year planning process. “The train left the station three years ago,” was Rick’s attitude toward Gene.

The essence of what Rick said at the last dinner in Indianapolis was:

We are going to do something. This is the first step—we have taken a great look here at what Indianapolis is doing. It has all these great examples. The second step will be…we’re not sure what…but, but we are going to go back and do something even better. We are just getting started. Welcome, Mayor.

For Jeannine this was the moment in which the ground shifted. “The idea that we are going to take ownership of this was a new idea.” Rick’s comments were indication to her that the community was stepping forward to take ownership of change. “The mayor might have been surprised; I don’t know—he might have been relieved,” but what they saw in Indianapolis made them realize they could take ownership. “There were business leaders, education leaders, government leaders and they all had something at stake. They had to grab hold of the future of the community and move it forward.”
The trip to Indianapolis was a galvanizing experience for Tom Hebert and, in his view, for everyone who went. He called the trip an “adventure,” “a team building exercise,” “joint learning enterprise,” and a “concentrated learning program.” They had gone to Indianapolis as separate “leaders” but they came back as “informed, caring citizens.” They were “transfigured,” in his terms, into citizens and that meant caring for and taking action on behalf of their shared community.

Not everyone on the trip felt the same way. Ron said Dave Major thought the whole thing was “crazy.” Ron doubted that Dave Major would be involved in making anything happen after the trip or that he would give Ron any support for doing so. The markers for their collision course were coming into view.

The 1983 annual report of the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce described the Indianapolis trip:

The visit to Indianapolis encouraged leaders in government, education, and business to unite in developing ways to make Chattanooga the most exciting area in the South. Almost 50 participants paid their own way to learn how one city used volunteer initiative to attract new business and improve services for their citizens. The group continues to meet and plan strategies to widen the scope of input into this community-wide process. (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983)

The last sentence indicates that the group continued to meet after returning from Indianapolis. In those continuing meetings, described in the next chapter, the idea for Chattanooga Venture evolved, but it took a great deal of effort and more “concentrated learning,” as Tom Hebert described it, before this happened.
Lessons Learned

Tom Hebert was determined to keep things moving after Indianapolis. He had already ascertained that Dave Major wasn’t going to take the lead because the Chamber already had an economic development plan under its wing. Gene Roberts also already had a plan in the works, although he neglected to mention it in Indianapolis. Harold Walters of the Planning Commission staff had sent Hebert an early draft of a general plan with a public participation component. The plan had been in the works for some time, and the public participation component had been the influence of Gianni Longo working with T.D. Harden and Harold Walters since 1981. They had developed the plan with the mayor, and Gene was getting used to the idea, especially after what he had seen in Indianapolis, but hadn’t yet announced it. Even though it included language about public participation, Tom Hebert had little hope that a plan led by the planning agency would truly engage the public.

T. D. Harden, the planning director who would be in charge of administering the General Plan, was considered a “professional” who “had no imagination or taste” and was well “trained in back room politics.” Stroud Watson accused Harden of “cigar-smoke decision making,” referring to the oft-referenced power structure meeting at the Mountain City Club or its equivalent in any city where the old establishment met in private to decide the fate of the city. This was a world where the professionals, like Harden, “kept your things very tight and played by the rules.” Harden “never made a single decision that didn’t have cigar smoke on it,” according to Stroud Watson.

Gianni Longo had worked with T. D. Harden and Harold Walters for two years trying to introduce the idea of public participation and finally gave up, calling Harden “an
obstructionist.” When Harden used the planning commission’s lack of approval as an excuse for why he couldn’t initiate or even support something, Mai Bell admonished him, “You ought to lead rather than follow the planning commission.” No one knew how the planning commission worked, she noted, so he could use it freely as an excuse for why he wouldn’t do things.

After returning from Indianapolis, a quick follow-up meeting was held in a downtown meeting room of the Provident Insurance Company. Tom Hebert, who wanted to make something happen, felt that Mayor Roberts was “patronizing” him when the Mayor told him he had a plan and “not to worry.” Tom stood up at the meeting; he felt buoyed by the sense of agreement in the room. He turned to Jerome Page, the Executive Director of the Urban League, and asked him to pick a date. Jerome suggested October 19. Tom invited everyone to a meeting that day and told the mayor: “We’ll figure out what we learned from Indianapolis and we’ll come up with a little report. Then we will disband.” But disbanding wasn’t really Tom’s intention: ”I think I saw clearly more than anyone else about the end events—where we were going. I had to keep the group together.”

At the October 19, 1983, meeting, Tom brought easels and markers. “I knew someone had to stand up with a pad of paper, an easel and magic markers and get the group thinking out loud.” Tom had learned interactive methods of conducting meetings from a book, How to Make Meetings Work, by Doyle and Straus (1976) that he called “my bible.” He wrote down on the wall sheets everything that anyone said and later typed up the comments as Lessons Learned in Indianapolis.
The Lessons Learned in Indianapolis were divided into 6 categories: General Lessons, Partnership, Planning, Financial, Business Sector, and Government. The positive and forward-looking attitudes evidenced in Indianapolis made the biggest impression on the Chattanoogans who longed for the same. Two reasons for the positive attitudes made the top of the list; the first was citizen participation. People in Indianapolis emphasized the importance of “broad cross-sectional representation,” followed by a boldness to implement. The implementation of projects was accomplished through partnerships, notably public/private partnerships, which meant not just business and government, but also citizens groups and neighborhood groups and active volunteers, when the tasks called for different stakeholders. The language captured in Lessons Learned in Indianapolis reflects the input from the group as Tom Hebert captured it. A synopsis is presented in Table 2.

Many of the lessons learned in Indianapolis reinforced themes introduced in Chattanooga in Motion, or in the student exhibits, or at the Quality of Life conference, but seeing them in practice, talking with people with experience, and observing the results city-wide grounded these ideas in reality. In almost every category concepts emerged that included participation of different segments of the community. Phrases appeared that emphasized openness: “large group of people,” “get everyone around the table,” “all must buy-in,” “community as a whole,” “cooperation,” “consensus for change must precede action,” “small communities included,” and “coalition of effort.” What they pointed to was an “open planning process.”
Table 1

Synopsis of Lessons Learned in Indianapolis, October 19, 1983

General Lessons
Large group of people can achieve a community goal
Get everyone around the table
Cities can change their personalities
Establish an identity.
Set an agenda for action: all must buy into it, get consensus and work together over a long period of time.

Partnership
The community as a whole has the right to decide
Government and private sector cooperation is necessary
Provide mechanisms for public-private cooperation
Consensus for change must precede action
A coalition of effort: UNI-GOV, civic leadership, private sector, and a balance between downtown and neighborhoods

Planning
Know how to implement
Open planning process with full community participation
Have an organization with long-term credibility and independence
Small communities were included

Financial
Importance of foundation money as a catalyst
Tax abatement attracts new business
Have “deal-making tools,” i.e. tax abatement and tax increment financing

Business Sector
Did not ignore needs of existing businesses
Industrial development was not priority: analyzed and established the best-suited priorities
Concentrated on small to medium-sized businesses
Developers work harder in their hometown

Government
Consolidated government functions well
Some neighborhoods took out ads for themselves
High degree of state-level cooperation
Mayor asks GIPC for specific issue task forces

The chief lesson learned in Indianapolis was: Participation from all segments of the community was necessary to create the cultural shift that made the work of accomplishing change possible.
Financial lessons learned included the catalytic role of foundations as well as the usefulness of “deal-making tools,” like tax abatement and tax increment financing. Emphasis was given to supporting existing businesses and to seeking the “best suited priorities” rather than trying to rebuild the industrial base. Indianapolis’ positive experience with consolidated government was not lost on the attendees, but the Metro initiative for a unified government in Chattanooga and Hamilton County went down in defeat in the fall of 1984.

Much of the discussion in the follow-up meeting centered on GIPC, the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. Many of the initiatives accomplished in Indianapolis had their origin in task forces under GIPC’s auspices. As a representative body under the mayor’s office, GIPC put together a task force of citizens to solve problems or find cooperative ways to make something happen. This approach had greater chances of creating a win/win solution than taking a majority vote or making top-down decisions as often happened in Chattanooga.

Tom Hebert kept his promise of providing a small report to the mayor, but reflecting on their experiences in Indianapolis did more than create a small report. If that had been the end of it, probably nothing would have happened, but the learning process didn’t stop there. First it kept the group together long enough for the relationships to meld; then the group convinced the Chamber to oversee a continuing process in order to study other cities and figure out what Chattanooga could do.

Allied Arts

Like the Chamber of Commerce, Allied Arts was a major civic organization that represented the leadership of the city. Its focus was on the cultural assets of the city with
an acknowledged connection to the role the arts played in economic development: “Our culture cannot flourish without civic pride and a strong economic base. In turn, economic growth is stimulated by a culture which encourages the richness of life and human experience” (Allied Arts, 1983).

In the early 1980s the Allied Arts board saw the need for change and for strong leadership in that change. The board contracted with Halsey North of New York and under a consultant’s guidance, they reorganized and initiated a $6 million campaign for the arts. Their campaign for quality in the arts took place about the same time as the Quality of Life conference that emphasized the value of cultural assets. As a result of the campaign, Allied Arts was positioning itself to take the lead.

The board of Allied Arts reflected the decision-makers of major local companies, such as Paul Brock of the Brock Candy Company; Olan Mills of Olan Mills, Inc., Carey Hanlin of Provident Life and Accident Insurance Company, James D. Kennedy of Cherokee Warehouses; Rody Davenport of Krystal Company; Dan Frierson of Dixie Yarns, Bill Holmberg of The Chattanooga Times; Merv Pregulman of Siskin Steel, and Scott Probasco of the American National Bank. At the time, all of these companies were locally owned and operated, most of them by the families that started them.

To manage the campaign, they hired a 32-year old promising fundraiser from Birmingham, Roberta Webb (later Roberta Webb Miles) as Allied Arts’ executive director (McDonald, 1982). Roberta was excited about moving to Chattanooga. To her, the timing was perfect because Chattanooga was “moving from an industrial city to a progressive community.” Her sentiments demonstrated that the spirit of the community was on the rise. She saw her job as “harnessing the good will of a lot of people to get
something done.” By the time she settled in the new job, she felt a “can-do attitude” in the community and a spirit of “let’s do something to shake it up.”

Roberta Webb might have been hesitant to accept such a job without the leadership on the Allied Arts board. This board reflected the nature of community leadership at the time, all white, well-to-do males, mostly heads of successful companies. Roberta described it as “strictly business-based,” which for fund raising purposes was “outstanding.” There were only two women on the board, and they had “moved up” by playing active roles as volunteers for arts organizations and organizing arts events and activities. Those two women were Mai Bell Hurley and Lynn Woodworth. Ruth Holmberg, a major funder of the arts, was not on the board, but her husband Bill Holmberg was. Not unexpectedly, there were no African American members of the board, no art practitioners, and no young people.

Roberta considered Allied Arts “the catalyst for change” because strong community leaders were on her board. The board of Allied Arts began to position itself at the center, and according to Roberta, Mai Bell Hurley was “instrumental” in moving Allied Arts to the center. “Mai Bell had her hands on everything” and saw to it that “everything centered around quality of life.”

By the fall of 1983, the Allied Arts board submitted a grant request to the Lyndhurst Foundation that demonstrated how it was positioning itself for an emergent role in the community process:

The Board of Directors of Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga adopted a proposal to broaden its mission to encompass quality-of-life issues which affect Greater Chattanooga. The strength of the Allied Arts as an institution and the peerage of the Allied Arts Board make the Allied Arts an appropriate body to examine and promote on a continuing basis the community’s well-being and to influence the manner by which its natural,
cultural, and physical assets are developed and conserved. (Allied Arts, 1983)

*Arts Mean Business Conference*

On October 26, 1983, the Allied Arts of Greater Chattanooga co-sponsored with Partners for Livable Places a one-day conference called Arts Mean Business at the Hunter Museum of Art. Local newspapers and television covered the event. The format of the Arts Mean Business conference was similar to the Quality of Life conference, that is, morning workshops, followed by a lunch speaker and afternoon workshops, but it highlighted different projects and featured different cities. Perhaps more significantly, it was a way for Allied Arts to assert its leadership role, to invite more community co-sponsors, and attract a broader audience. Thirty local organizations co-sponsored the conference including arts and civic organizations, educational institutions, public agencies, and others—both increasing the audience and building support. (See APPENDIX)

The purpose of the conference, according to Roberta Webb, was “to look at the economic side of the arts—how arts provide jobs and why business should invest in the arts.” The letter of invitation from Paul Brock and Carey Hanlin to attend the conference noted “the interrelationships between the arts, economic development, and a community’s quality of life” (Allied Arts, 1983). A broad vision was being tapped, one that echoed the same themes as the Quality of Life conference and the trip to Indianapolis, all three events co-sponsored by Partners For Livable Places. In the Arts Mean Business Conference, the arts and cultural assets took center stage as a contributor to quality of life and economic development.
Mai Bell Hurley saw the conference as a way to expose the community to ideas and research being done in other cities related to the arts and the economy. The panel discussions highlighted models from Winston-Salem and Charlotte, San Antonio and Galveston, Baltimore and Minneapolis, Denver, Seattle, Chicago. Des Moines, St. Louis, Alexandria, Louisville, Milwaukee, Memphis, Jacksonville, Richmond, and Washington D.C. The speakers were picked from Partners’ network that had “practical solutions to common problems.” Some of the primary ideas promoted in the Arts Mean Business conference included (Allied Arts, 1983):

- The arts can stimulate community spirit, civic involvement, tourism, and economic vitality.
- The arts are “big business” in other cities
- The arts can revitalize a floundering downtown
- The arts can generate community pride and sense of identity
- Arts and cultural assets are an essential part of economic development

Some of the common strategies or ideas found successful in other cities included:

- public art
- spaces as art
- greening the city
- live/work spaces for artists
- downtown cultural activities
- cultural facilities as anchors
- cultural strategies for economic development

In sum, the conference emphasized that the community’s ability to attract economic investment relied on its investment in its cultural assets, and many of the cultural assets overlapped with the natural and built environment. The speakers from other cities also addressed outreach and social equity, building and attracting “a larger spectrum of the community including business, educational institutions and the public in general” (Allied Arts, 1983).
Allied Arts surpassed its goal for $6 million (Slack, 1984). No doubt the members of the Allied Arts board had caught the winds of change. No doubt the board saw a direct connection between the arts and economic development. The brochure for their campaign, in fact, carried language similar to the quality of life themes of art and economic development. For those who contributed to the campaign, the campaign literature claimed the “returns on your investment” would be: Quality, community image, corporate recruitment, tourism, and community enrichment—ideas that echo themes in the Arts Mean Business conference (Allied Arts, 1983).

But, despite the expanded awareness and the community goals, the members of the Allied Arts board still developed the cultural assets as they defined them. As a result, the funds for the campaign went primarily to support the Hunter Museum and the Symphony and Opera Association. The campaign strengthened the board’s ability to keep these major programs solvent at the same time that it promoted cultural development for the city as a whole. The point is that Allied Arts’ mission was to build the arts, and the leadership of the organization had their own priorities on how that mission was defined. Despite its expanded role, Allied Arts was still in a limited position based on its own mission; it was not able to take on a community-wide process, if that was needed, or to create a vision for the community as a whole beyond the arts.

**City/County Leadership**

Mayor Gene Roberts had been in office since April 1983, had welcomed people to the Quality of Life conference in May, and led city leaders to Indianapolis in September. Throughout that time, his planning staff had been working quietly on plans for a General Plan, but in November, word of his “secret” Plan 2000 leaked to the paper.
County Executive Dalton Roberts was asked about the Mayor’s plan following a speech to the Pachyderm Club. He claimed he knew “little more about that plan than the average man on the street” (Frank, 1983). Dalton, furthermore, was “unconvinced” it was needed, and he challenged the tactics: “If they (city government) think that they can establish community consensus without the full involvement of all local governments…” (Kopper, 1983). The old-style bickering between the two local governments was still in full gear.

The Mayor claimed the idea for the plan “grew out of a Chamber of Commerce-sponsored trip to Indianapolis earlier this year by several community leaders” (Frank, 1983). The Hamilton County delegation who went on the trip wanted to come up with their own way “to do it here,” according to Jeannine Alday, the head of Hamilton County Human Services who attended the trip to Indianapolis. She considered it typical political one-up-manship on the part of the Mayor: “One entity can’t declare a partnership.”

In the meantime, as anticipated, Ron Littlefield was fired or quit as general manager of the Chamber’s merged economic development effort. In the newspaper he cited “differences in style, method, and philosophy” (Flessner, 1983) with the Chamber’s executive vice-president David Major, but Ron’s later assessment was terse: “He was a jerk.” Still on the city payroll, Littlefield went to work in a back room at the mayor’s office.

Assisting Mayor Roberts now, Ron Littlefield tried to clear up this “rub with Dalton” by sending out a memo to the people who went on the trip to Indianapolis and other local officials calling the mayor’s Plan 2000 not a plan, but a process. He made the mistake of characterizing it to Bill Casteel, the satirist for The Chattanooga Times, as a
plan to have a plan. “That was just too delicious to Bill. He considered that the ultimate in ‘do-nothing’ and made a joke of it.”

The Mayor’s Plan 2000, which the planning director T. D. Harden and his assistant Harold Walters had worked on, reflected earlier conversations with Gianni Longo. Gianni had tried to convince them of the value of including public participation in the city’s General Plan and had given them a list of cities that had been successful, including Goals for Dallas. Gianni felt he made little headway and was no longer meeting with the planning agency by the fall of 1983: “Even if they had included it [public participation] in the planning, it would never have worked because it wouldn’t be implemented.”

Summary

The Chamber of Commerce and Allied Arts were the two civic leadership organizations that addressed the issues of change in the early 1980s. But both of these organizations had their own missions—the Chamber in economic development and Allied Arts in the arts—and their own strategies for fulfilling their missions. The merged effort under the Chamber’s leadership was not having the economic impact it needed. Despite Allied Arts’ efforts to expand the role of the arts, the organization was limited by its mission and its board. If the community needed a broader vision and wider participation, neither of these organizations had the mandate, the staff, nor the representation, to take it on.

Likewise, the city and the county governments were divided and their leaders were often at odds with each other. Therefore, the major leaders and the leadership
organizations in the city all fell short, despite concerted efforts, changes in leadership, and a sense of readiness.

Both the Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983) and the Longo report (1980) characterized the leadership in Chattanooga as “a closed system,” “impervious” to change, resulting in “frustration” and “isolation” and a sense of powerlessness among the citizenry. Those characteristics may have been changing as positions of leadership changed hands, but still a way to involve the public and breakdown the alienation expressed in interviews at the time was not clear:

[M]any of Chattanooga’s problems can be traced to weaknesses in its leadership, which depends upon a semi-closed system impervious to the necessity for give and take among all segments of the community in regard to changes that affect all of the people. (Longo, 1980)

By the end of 1983, the question still remained: What was needed for give and take of all segments of the community? If the community remained divided and distrustful, was there an existing organization able to bridge those divisions and create that give and take? If something with a much deeper impact and broader outreach was needed, who would lead it?

**Researcher Positioning Statement: Leadership**

When the Chamber of Commerce announced it was taking leaders to Indianapolis to see how the lessons in Indianapolis might apply to Chattanooga, I was working as public relations director at the library. The director of the library did not think it was important enough for her to go and was not interested in sending me to represent the library either; therefore, the library was not involved, as it should have been, in discussions about making Chattanooga a better place.
When the participants returned from Indianapolis, it seemed to have created a big impact on people and ideas were buzzing around. I attended the Arts Means Business conference that soon followed. But I was beginning to pull away at this point because it was getting close to the time to have my own birth pains.
CHAPTER VIII
OPENNESS

The idea that the door was open… Rick Montague

Introduction

Although there was a shift in leadership and a sense of readiness was in play, the city decision-making process in Chattanooga remained a closed system. The Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983) and the Longo report (1980) had called for more open dialog about how to bring about change. For some of those who had taken the trip to Indianapolis, it was clear that something needed to happen in Chattanooga, but it wasn’t clear what. Indianapolis showed that cities could change. The collaborative process of reflecting on the “Lessons Learned from Indianapolis” reinforced that a consensus building process necessitated openness.

The concept of openness meant different things to different people. On the whole, it described a desire to be more inclusive, to involve more people, and to create a more participatory decision-making process. To Jeannine Alday, it meant being truthful, up-front and genuine: She recognized that there were differences of opinion but, to her, “that was part of being open and honest—the differences can be a positive force.” To Tom Hebert, as group facilitator, it meant that meetings were open and the discussions transparent. To Rick Montague, “the idea that the door was open” meant access and opportunity, particularly to those who had not had access or opportunity. Mai Bell Hurley
feared that after Indianapolis the group would narrow and be seen as elitist. When a study
group formed, she insisted that the meetings be open to people who had not gone to
Indianapolis.

Table 3 Consultants for Learning Events, 1981-1983

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Consultant</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td>Chattanooga in Motion</td>
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<td>Institute for Environmental Action</td>
<td>New York NY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Five Nights In Chattanooga</td>
<td>Gianni Longo</td>
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<td>Images of the City</td>
<td>Stroud Watson</td>
<td>University of Tennessee School of Architecture</td>
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<td>Moccasin Bend Task Force</td>
<td>Steve Carr</td>
<td>Carr, Lynch Associates</td>
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<td>Robert McNulty</td>
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<td>Options Study Group</td>
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The Options Study Group

Up to this time, all of the learning events I have described were influenced,
organized, or led by out-of-town consultants. The ideas generated and promoted came
from people, groups, or processes outside of Chattanooga. Although they provided a
stimulus for new ways of thinking and a useful mirror for Chattanoogans to look at
themselves, the ideas and concepts were coming from the outside. However, this was not
the case for the Options Study Group, described in this chapter. The events, the consultants, and the sponsoring organizations are outlined in Table 3 above.

These learning events, over a period of three years from 1981 to 1983, were generating new thinking about Chattanooga’s possibilities. In addition, these events were building new relationships and strengthening connections among people in Chattanooga, and at the same time connecting the people in Chattanooga to networks of people around the country doing similar things in other cities. Consequently, the lessons learned from these experiences needed to be grounded in and applied to the local experience. The opportunity for an internally driven learning process came in the follow-up to Indianapolis.

Harold Ruck had gone to Indianapolis and, as current president of the Chamber of Commerce, chaired the follow-up committee. He had come to Chattanooga in 1951 as an insurance actuary and had worked his way up to president of the locally owned Volunteer State Life Insurance Company. Since he personally believed that “getting people to talk to one another” was one of the best ways to “come up with rational solutions that benefit the whole community” (Epley, 1984), he responded to the Indianapolis group’s desire to continue meeting by creating three committees. The Communications Committee was headed by Mike Bishop, the Planning Inventory Committee by Tom McCallie, and the Options Study Group by T.D. Harden and Mai Bell Hurley.

The Options Study Group, or sometimes called the Options Committee, was assigned the task of determining options for Chattanooga’s next step. This is the committee where the people that had met in Monument Square in Indianapolis focused their energy. What could be learned from other cities? Were there other models like
GIPC? Mai Bell Hurley stated it simply: “GIPC inspired us, but we felt it would be different in Chattanooga. Our follow-up was to keep this group meeting and to invite others, then to study other cities.”

The Options Study Group was the first attempt at what Tom Hebert called self-education: “First we had to learn, deeply, the mechanics of local change. Indianapolis was just one lesson in that civic education,” he said. “So we went beyond Indianapolis, learned to work together and invented something new for Chattanooga.”

Jeannine Alday attended almost all the meetings of the Options Study Group and reported the progress to County Executive Dalton Roberts. She felt a sense that the group was “breaking new ground,” and even a sense of history at work: “Everybody knew these were historical moments and it would forever positively change the community. I felt we were on the verge of something really good happening.” Her motivation had not changed from that expressed by her in CRISIS: “We had to or this city would be totally dead.” The idea of studying what other cities had done to transform themselves made sense to her: “You don’t need to re-invent the wheel—why not learn from cities that have addressed the same issues we need to address.”

A document in the Chattanooga Venture Records, dated October 12, 1983, may describe the nature of the group at this time. Ron Littlefield identified the document as one that came out of the group process during the follow-up to Indianapolis, but no one else recognized it. It is titled a “Statement of Purpose for an Ad Hoc Community Improvement Partnership” and reads:

We are the beginnings of a voluntary citizens partnership, seeking to further promote Chattanooga area social, economic and political improvements. We are striving
to develop a broad, open process for community communication, achieving consensus and participation in decision-making and action. Our goal is to encourage the whole community to move forward in harmony toward a permanent climate of progress in which all people can participate. This ad hoc group expects to dissolve when the structures for the new developmental process take hold. (Chattanooga Venture Records)

The statement indicated that participation in the group was voluntary and citizen-based, meaning independent of government or other organizational efforts. Its purpose was to promote Chattanooga as a whole with a broad mandate of social, economic and political considerations. It clearly addressed the need for consensus building and participation in decision-making. Even though these collaborative efforts were assumed to contribute to a “permanent climate of progress,” the statement did not anticipate that this group itself was permanent; instead it was described as an “ad-hoc group” that expected to dissolve when the structures for the new process were in place. As it turned out, this statement adequately described the Options Study Group.

The first recorded minutes of the Options Study Group are dated December 12, 1983, but there is indication, even in these minutes, that the committee had met earlier. The final meeting of the Options Committee was February 27, 1984. The group met weekly on Thursday afternoons at 3:30 at the Remote Design Studio, Stroud Watson’s office, on Vine Street.

That section of Vine Street in the early 1980s had a “civic atmosphere,” according to Tom Hebert. He liked the fact that on one end of the street was Stroud’s design laboratory, and on the other was a bar, and in the middle was the Vine Street Market, a new restaurant with a lively lunch scene that was becoming the happening place. The
area was beginning to exhibit Stroud’s sense of “places that work,” places that engendered interaction and conviviality.

Stroud was not always present at the meetings, but his office provided a kind of open, civic space for the group to meet and work. Stroud’s presence and his studio lent the group a sense of connection to the larger picture of changing the city. As Rick Montague said, Stroud was not directly involved, but “we met in the Design Studio, and occasionally he’d have something to say because of his insight into cities, and he’d lob something over into the meeting.”

Mai Bell Hurley set the tone of openness in the first meeting where minutes were recorded, December 12, 1983. Present were fifteen people, some had gone to Indianapolis and some had not. Mai Bell acknowledged that the “group keeps getting stronger with new participants,” indicating that the group had met before, and she encouraged others to invite more to future meetings. The group discussed how to get labor representatives. Bill Evans, a member of the electrical workers union and the current labor representative at United Way, was identified and was later invited. Evans attended the remainder of the meetings (Options Study Group Minutes).

African American participation in the Options Study Group included those who had gone to Indianapolis. Claudie Clark was well recognized in the community, a local person who provided diversity opportunities, sponsorships and scholarships through his job at Coca Cola. Jerome Page had been brought to town recently from a national search for the executive director’s position at the Urban League. He was often in attendance at community activities that required Black leadership. Howard Roddy was head of the Hamilton County Health Department and one of the county representatives in the group.
John Franklin, the city commissioner, came only to the last meeting when the next step needed approval. When asked to comment on African American participation at this stage of Chattanooga Venture’s development, Johnny Halloway, the coordinator of Operation Push, said it was typical in Chattanooga that a few people of color would be chosen at different times who “whites thought could speak for all of us.”

Most of the people in the Options Study Group had jobs that allowed their participation, if not directly encouraging it, then at least by permitting work time to be taken for it. The employers represented by the participants in the Options Study Group were the city and county governments, the planning commission, the Chamber of Commerce, TVA, *The Chattanooga Times*, the Lyndhurst Foundation, Urban League, Allied Arts, United Way, Electric Power Board, plus a banker, an architect, an accountant, and such.

Roberta Webb described the Options Study Group as a “convivial group—they enjoyed being together, but I don’t know if they’d ever been brought together before.” She was new in town and sensed correctly that many of these people didn’t know each other or certainly hadn’t been brought together before to work on something that would change the way the community worked.

Roberta was there to represent Allied Arts: “I was there because if the arts were going to continue to flourish, they had to buy into the bigger vision.” She realized that the others might have felt the same way she did, both a personal interest and an associational allegiance: “Whether these people are there because of their intrinsic values and interests or representing a group, it doesn’t matter. It’s the combination—of bringing these entities together.”
The size of the group varied each week from the initial 15 to 38 at the final meeting on February 27, 1984. There was a core of people who continued through the whole process and others who came and went. Pat Wilcox described it as a “busload,” more than just a few, but always changing; some got on the bus, then got off, and others got on. The core (determined by recorded attendance at more than half the meetings) consisted of Jeannine Alday, Ann Aiken, Brenda Bailey, Bill Evans, T. D. Harden, Tom Hebert, Bill Holmberg, Mai Bell Hurley, Catherine Koskos, Ron Littlefield, Jerome Page, Robert Seals, Gary Stansell, Harold Walters, Roberta Webb, and Pat Wilcox.

Mai Bell Hurley chaired the meetings, and Tom Hebert acted as recorder. Hebert brought not only easels and magic markers to record the meetings but also the sacraments of conviviality, wine and cheese. He wanted a convivial atmosphere to enhance the interactive mood of the meetings. “If a group is not convivial or having fun, it’s not going to work,” he said. He learned this from developing USO clubs in Vietnam when he was director of the USO in Saigon.

Despite his insistence on conviviality, Tom Hebert took these meetings quite seriously. He had overseen the creation and design of new organizations before, and he believed that the first words and the first acts were important. “What we wanted at the end we had to have at the beginning. We had to get the first words right.” He called it the kerygma or seed. “I wanted to be sure the words were recorded right and the spirit was [captured].” He knew the group had to learn together: “We had to keep up the spirit of learning that had happened in Indianapolis…. If you pick a template through learning, it’s going to be more powerful.”
According to Tom Hebert, studying other cities gave them “a way to learn what to do, to gather more people, and to get buy-in.” In order to create buy-in, he wanted a collaborative, creative process where those who came felt they were in charge of creating their own agenda and their own outcome. Tom acted as recorder and wrote the comments on wall sheets: “The wall sheets went up on the walls as a record of what everybody was thinking. Everyone could look up and see what was recorded and correct it.” If Tom wanted to say something as a participant, he comically “changed hats,” pretending to take off one hat and put on another, to represent that he was changing roles from facilitator to participant.

T.D. Harden was the official co-chair of the Options Study Group with Mai Bell. He came regularly and asked his staff at the planning commission to come up with a list of cities that had conducted consensus building or community goal-setting processes. Harold Walters presented profiles of twelve cities to the group. Participants also suggested other cities.

The goal was to investigate successful models in other cities and learn what worked and what didn’t work. Tom said he would yell out a city on the list: “Who wants to take Richmond and call the director of Richmond Renaissance?” Someone would volunteer, and then call, ask questions, get a package of materials in the mail, and make a report to the group. Two or three cities were covered each week, as depicted in Table 8.2.
Table 4  Cities Studied by Options Study Group, 1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteer</th>
<th>City Studied</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Lesson Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann Aiken</td>
<td>Tucson</td>
<td>Tucson Tomorrow</td>
<td>Get action quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Baxter</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>Charles Center</td>
<td>Build something as result</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Stansell</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>Richmond Renaissance</td>
<td>intentionally black and white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Seals</td>
<td>Wichita Falls</td>
<td>Goals for Wichita Falls</td>
<td>“raced to end of barrel and fell to ground”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hebert</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>Goals for Wichita Falls</td>
<td>left no organization in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Holmberg</td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td>like Goals for Dallas</td>
<td>done by professional planning staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mai Bell Hurley</td>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>Past, Present and Future</td>
<td>resulted in “Investment Portfolio”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Montague</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>private sector involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeannine Alday</td>
<td>Milwaukee</td>
<td>Goals for Milwaukee</td>
<td>implementation organization in place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda Bailey</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>Goals for Dallas</td>
<td>community involved in 12 task forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroud Watson</td>
<td>Indianapolis</td>
<td>GIPC</td>
<td>labor &amp; management involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

T. D. Harden said he was impressed with the level of volunteer commitment when he gave a report to the Indianapolis Leadership Group at the Chamber on January 24, 1984: “These members have done quite a bit of research and have contacted individuals in those cities, at the member’s personal expense” (Chattanooga Venture Records).

Expenses that individuals incurred consisted of long distance phone calls and postage.

The process of learning together on a totally volunteer basis must have been very satisfying because halfway through the process, a question appeared in the minutes:

“How can we institutionalize the open and positive process of this committee?”
openness was represented both by the voluntary participation as well as by the process that allowed for self-direction. The group directed the process and changed it as needed.

In the wrap-up, the group reflected on what they had learned by summarizing the lessons from each city. Mai Bell suggested presenting the summary of the cities in these categories:

- Who initiated the process?
- How did it reach out to the public?
- How were the goals implemented?
- What was the organizational structure?
- What were the good ideas?
- Who paid for the process?
- How were consultants used?
- What were the specific lessons for Chattanooga?

On February 8, 1984, the group listed the results under each of the categories above and listed on the wall sheets their summary of lessons learned.

The top priority of lessons learned from the other cities was public involvement. City after city concluded that building a constituency was essential for accomplishing a citywide initiative. With diverse representation, the city was able to take on bigger and bolder plans. Other cities learned that bigger, bolder plans captured the community’s imagination and had better chances of success than small ones. Some cities emphasized the hard work involved, the amount of time it took, and the value of having an organization with “good staff” to pull it off.

One of the chief lessons concerned after the goal-setting process was over—an organization needed to be in place to implement the goals: “The notion of a separate ‘partnership’ organization lasting beyond any public planning process continues to be implicit.” Without such a partnership organization, cities, like Wichita Falls, reported
what was known as, “the cannon ball syndrome”—that is, they “raced to the end of the barrel and it fell to the ground” (Options Study Group Minutes).

Table 5 Options Study Group: Summary of Lessons from Other Cities, 1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involve all—constituency building is essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set parameters of what is possible; what plan can result in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get divergent views on any board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take on BIG projects (it’s possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of unique qualities of city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vested interests can make a profit (okay)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on City: innovator, enhancer, mediator, broker, conservator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need good staff work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicating with a broad spectrum of the community was important. After each of the Options Study Group meetings, Tom Hebert dictated the comments from the wall sheets, and his secretary typed up his dictations. Tom mailed these minutes each week to the 47 who went to Indianapolis and to others who were interested, adding to the list as they went along. Distributing the minutes created the feeling “that something was happening, confidence was building, and the numbers were growing,” according to Tom. By keeping a large number of people informed about the meetings, Tom sensed a “spirit of optimism” spilling out into the community.

**Partners for Economic Progress**

At the same time that optimism was spilling out, conflict was popping up as well. As early as January 5, 1984, Mai Bell Hurley informed the Options Study Group of her conversation with Mayor Gene Roberts. She had learned that the mayor and the Chamber were forming a new city/county/public/private economic development entity, called
Partners for Economic Progress (PEP), and they were considering hiring the San Francisco-based, business-oriented, strategic planning firm, Arthur Anderson & Company. As Mai Bell explained in a later interview, the Arthur Anderson approach was “the kind of planning you would expect the Chamber to do,” and it was not the approach the Options Study Group found successful in other cities. The merged effort was moving ahead under the Chamber’s leadership, and the Options Study Group was being ignored because, as Mai Bell said, they were considered “reactive.”

To demonstrate that he wasn’t ignoring her efforts, Gene Roberts invited Mai Bell to attend a presentation by the Arthur Anderson group scheduled in February and present her group’s organizational plan. But at this point, the Options Study Group had no organizational plan. They had started by learning from other cities and had not begun recommending what an organizational plan should look like. In fact, in the January 5, 1984 minutes, they light-heartedly referred to the potential organization as “The Great Chattanooga Bridge Company.” Bridging seemed to be an appropriate metaphor for partnering across the community, but they hadn’t developed the concept. With the mayor’s invitation and the sense of pressure from the Chamber’s new effort, the group decided to put “pencil and straight edge” to paper and draft a plan. A few people volunteered to meet and report back the next week.

At the meeting the next week, January 12, 1984, Mai Bell confidently reported a “sense of where we’re going,” and Ron Littlefield presented a tentative organizational chart. But Harold Walters, of the planning agency, countered Ron’s plan with an alternate schematic. “Similarities and differences were noted, “ according to the Options Study
Group Minutes, but Ron Littlefield interpreted Walters’ alternative schematic as an indication that the planning agency considered them a “competing thing.”

By mid-January Jeannine Alday reported that Dalton and Gene had looked over the draft organizational chart that the Options Study Group was coming up with and “had questions” about how it linked to economic development. “People didn’t understand how it could be different from this thing that the city, the county and the Chamber were putting together. People kept asking, Why not put your eggs in *that* basket?” according to Ron Littlefield.

Mai Bell invited the mayor to the study group’s next meeting. Mayor Gene Roberts attended on January 26, 1984, the same day that Michael Carroll, a guest from Indianapolis, introduced by Stroud Watson, addressed the group and reinforced some lessons from Indianapolis. He emphasized that consensus building takes time and consideration of everyone at the table is important, but the chief lesson that Michael Carroll shared that was pertinent to the moment was “city leadership is most important to work out the partnership” (Options Study Group Minutes).

As Mr. Carroll was rushed off to the airport, Mayor Roberts assured the group that he liked the group’s organizational plan. He even described it as “most likely to be the foundation for the City’s future progress” (Options Study Group Minutes), but he still wanted the group to hear Arthur Anderson’s presentation that the Chamber was sponsoring. Unfortunately, his assurances weren’t enough to quell the group’s rising anxiety.

Arthur Anderson had been the consultant to San Francisco’s process. Rick Montague had to be out-of-town the day of his report on San Francisco, so he wrote it
out. Ron Littlefield delivered Rick’s report – a small group in the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce had the idea of “using business strategic planning techniques to analyze the city’s future and develop solutions to a few of the major problems facing the city.” The problems chosen were those that were “important to the business community,” and the planning process was a strictly private-sector initiative that refused to deal with issues over which they had no control, particularly issues like crime or social welfare. Arthur Anderson & Co. was hired for $450,000 to carry out this business-oriented strategic planning process in San Francisco (Chattanooga Venture Records).

Rick wrote that he liked the Arthur Anderson concept because it had “credibility” with corporate investors who ought to be investing in Chattanooga, but the study group members panned it because “no community people [were] involved” (Options Study Group Minutes). The process was seen as credible to the business community but suspect by the public. The Options Committee feared that with local suspicion of the “power structure,” people in Chattanooga might be “highly resistant to such a plan” (Chattanooga Venture Records).

In short, Arthur Anderson represented a strictly private sector approach to planning, and the Options Study Group was trying to find a community-based approach that was open to the public. They were not opposed to private sector involvement, in fact they endorsed it, but they wanted to build the confidence of the city and that required engaging the public. Furthermore, they feared that if this new organization, PEP, had the endorsement of the mayor and the county executive and most of the business community, the shear weight of it might bulldoze any other organizational plans out of existence.
Their anxieties were confirmed when J. B. Collins, the senior reporter who covered City Hall for the *Chattanooga News Free Press*, announced that PEP already had acquired or completed:

- Professional consultants (from out-of-state)
- Interviews with “selected community leaders from the public and private sectors”
- Local fundraising drive for $1.5 million
- Total budget of 3.75 million
- Six counties in area-wide effort
- Professional staff
- Campaign to attract business and industry
- Annual budget of $750,000
- Major effort to market and promote the area
- Improvement of labor-management relations
- Board of trustees to represent the investors (Collins, March 4, 1984)

Mr. Collins also released the names of the 36 corporate leaders who had been interviewed as supporting the Chamber plan. All the names listed were white men who owned or headed major banks and businesses, plus the mayor and county executive, the head of the Chamber and the heads of two major foundations. The only exception to the all male proponents was one woman, the owner and publisher of *The Chattanooga Times*, Ruth Holmberg, who was very supportive of the Venture concept. Her husband, Bill Holmberg, was a core member of the Options Study Group.

The Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce was an established and accepted civic entity, and the plan the Chamber proposed followed the traditional and expected procedures for an economic development strategic planning process. To the people in the Options Study Group, it was a David and Goliath situation—with the added problem that David didn’t actually exist. As a result, the group channeled their anxiety into speeding up the draft for the partnership organization.
At the February 8th meeting of the Options Committee, Ron Littlefield presented an organizational plan that described the future organization, the Chattanooga Venture Committee (CVC), as an independent 501-c-3 organization. The organization now had a name: Chattanooga Venture Committee. And it had a program—Ron described its first project as “a community-wide Vision 2000 planning process.”

The minutes of the meeting stated that a “spirited discussion” followed, and the meeting ended with a “tough discussion”—the group felt strongly that the city’s economic effort, represented by PEP and the Chamber, and this consensus process, represented by the Chattanooga Venture Committee and Vision 2000, should work together: “The sense was they should be closely linked with the former being much informed by the latter” (Options Study Group Minutes). In other words, the visioning process should inform the economic planning process.

The members of the Options Study Group were committed to what they had learned from other cities’ experiences—that open community participation built a strong base for bold initiatives and that the public visioning should inform and, therefore, precede the economic development planning. In order to do this in Chattanooga, an organization needed to be in place to invite participation from the community. The group knew that their yet-unformed partnership organization had no leverage against the magnitude of the Chamber’s public-private effort with millions of dollars already committed. How could this as-yet-non-existent community effort resist the bulldozer effect of the Chamber’s $3.75 million economic development initiative?
The Coordinating Council

“Something was happening we didn’t like. We knew we had to do something,” Tom Hebert said of the meeting the next day. On February 9, 1984, a meeting took place between some of those in the Options Study Group and the leaders of the economic development effort. As the meeting broke up, the members of the Options Study Group who were present caucused about what to do. “It was the feeling of everyone in the room that something’s got to happen. We had to go official and Rick was the only one who could go official,” Tom Hebert said.

An idea emerged that was clearly needed now. The members of the Options Study Group persuaded Rick to write a letter proposing it. Later that day, on February 9, 1984, Rick Montague wrote a letter to the mayor and county executive with copies to Harold Ruck and Dave Major, at the Chamber, and to T.D. Harden, director of planning:

In conversation as the meeting was breaking up, I think that we stumbled upon a “flow chart” and leadership configuration which answered Dave Major’s needs and Mai Bell’s needs. I kind of appointed myself to write to you to urge that you slow down the economic development Plan 2000 process long enough and hard enough to realize the benefits and opportunities presented here. (Montague, 1984)

As Rick explained later, the group wanted the two initiatives “the Venture related stuff and the Chamber stuff” to work “hand in glove instead of competing with each other.” The work of the Options Study Group, represented by Mai Bell Hurley in the letter, and the economic development plan, represented by Dave Major in the letter, seemed to be a lager heads. In order to be collaborative instead of competitive, there needed to be a third body in place. Rick went on to say in the letter:

I don’t think that economic development without wide community vision, participation and leadership will work…. Unless these two arms embrace each other, trust each other, listen to each other and balance each other, the
$3.5 million effort at economic development will be (another) failure. (Montague, 1984)

In order to achieve this balance, Rick’s letter introduced a new idea, a “leadership configuration” that would coordinate between the two organizations, PEP and Venture. “Instead of making one of these bodies superior to the other, it was proposed that both report equally to a very small ‘super board.’” This super board, which Rick’s letter recommended, would consist of seven people:

- The Mayor
- County Executive
- Head of PEP
- Head of Chattanooga Venture Committee
- Three corporate heads

These were not to be just any three corporate heads but “the three most powerful corporate chairmen in the city who are known for their broad vision and experience, effectiveness, trust, openness and ability to listen” (Montague, 1984).

In describing the importance of what was being proposed at this juncture, Mai Bell Hurley admitted it was a power play. She explained that Dave Major was opposed to Chattanooga Venture: “Perhaps the Chamber saw itself as the generator of change and didn’t want to share the spotlight.” In order to overcome that opposition and to create a place for another organization, a third body needed to be in place “to coordinate between PEP and Venture.” That third body, or super board, became known as the Coordinating Council.

Mai Bell knew that the three corporate leaders they chose to be on the Coordinating Council would have to have clout greater than what PEP already had. In her mind, they would “bring leadership to bear and look toward the greater good” and they
“would not have a limited point of view.” What that meant was they would tip the balance enough so that the Chattanooga Venture Committee could come into existence.

Ron Littlefield had previous conflicts with Dave Major, but he was trying to look beyond that: “We didn’t want to get in a fight with PEP.” It was, in Ron’s mind, “a delicate balance between people who already had power and people who felt they had no power at all.” He could have been referring to Venture as an unformed entity that had no power or to the role that Venture would play in bringing people without power to the table, but at any rate, he felt that the Coordinating Council was necessary to give the Chattanooga Venture Committee some credibility. “We just wanted to be sure we had some structure and we had people in position who had some clout,” Ron said.

The three private sector men they chose for the Coordinating Council, indeed, had clout. All three of them were heads of locally based companies with national profiles. Jack Lupton was the largest Coca-Cola bottler in the world; Olan Mills was known as “the nation’s photographer.” Carey Hanlin was the CEO of the Provident Life Insurance Company, the largest employer and corporate landowner downtown. Not only did these three men represent major private enterprises, but of the three only Carey Hanlin was listed with PEP. These were the kind of private sector leaders that “the Chamber would like to get involved but they would never come on their own,” Rick Montague explained.

To bring these three “big hitters,” as Rick called them, to the table would give the Chattanooga Venture Committee credibility, and would slow down the process enough to allow Venture to get organized. The idea was accepted. Rick approached Jack Lupton, the chairman of the board of the Lyndhurst Foundation; Mai Bell asked Carey Hanlin; and together they invited Olan Mills.
Positioning Venture

Instead of slowing things down, the emergence of this new leadership configuration resulted in a rapid succession of events. Harold Ruck cancelled the Arthur Anderson presentation, and a standing-room-only size crowd showed up for the next Options Study Group meeting on February 15, 1984.

Mai Bell Hurley opened the meeting to a round of applause. Both Dalton Roberts and Dave Major attended the meeting. Dave Major described the Chamber’s new Partners for Economic Progress as complimentary to the Chattanooga Venture Committee. While PEP had primarily an economic thrust, he assured the group that the PEP effort would be concerned with quality of life issues. T. D. Harden described the Coordinating Council and suggested it be incorporated into the organizational chart. Dalton Roberts, before leaving the meeting for another, stated, “The Venture Committee is on the right track; things are going to merge all right; my staff is doing terrific on this project” (Options Study Group Minutes). He was referring, of course, to Jeannine Alday as his staff, but also the other county representatives involved.

Jerome Page of the Urban League raised the issue of closure with the larger Indianapolis Leadership group. The minutes reported “a good deal of heavy-duty, win-win seeking” before they agreed to ask Harold Ruck to bring the whole leadership group back together to approve the new “concept summary.” Ron agreed to draft a new organizational chart and send it ahead before the meeting (Options Study Group Minutes).

Ron Littlefield prepared the organizational chart, shown in Appendix C. If you have two or three pieces of metal and you want to join them together, you need
something more than glue. They won’t hold together unless they are welded, or they may need a piece of rebar or a metal strip welded to both pieces. The bar gives the strength to hold together or balance the separate pieces. The two organizations in the chart are Partners for Economic Progress (PEP) and the Chattanooga Venture Committee (CVC), and a third one, the Planning Commission. They are “welded” together by the Coordinating Council (CC), which is drawn, like glue, connecting each one. But the Coordinating Council is also drawn at the top, like a bar. It consisted of three private sector members, the City and County, and then the heads of PEP and CVC. (In this chart the word Roundtable was used in reference to the Coordinating Council, but that name was soon dropped.)

Creating the Coordinating Council not only positioned Chattanooga Venture in the community structure as an equal partner to PEP but it allowed the time and support necessary for Venture to get up to speed.

The Final Meeting

Harold Ruck, president of the Chamber, called for a final meeting of the Indianapolis Leadership group at the Civic Forum on February 27, 1984. The meeting was open to those who had gone on the trip as well as those who had participated in the Options Study Group. Mr. Ruck asked Mai Bell Hurley to present the findings of her committee.

Mai Bell explained the goal of the Options Study Group was to investigate the various consensus-building models and recommend a structure for Chattanooga. She described the study process and the cities they had studied. She identified the topics they had covered and the issues considered. She ended by referring to the Chamber’s Battelle
study (Minshall & Moody, 1983) that had focused on the city’s bad image. “We could be able to change that image and improve our city, but all the people will have to be a part of the change process” (Options Study Group Minutes). By emphasizing, “all the people will have to be a part,” Mai Bell made it clear that openness to the community distinguished the work of the study group.

Mai Bell referred to the new structure, called the Chattanooga Venture Committee, and the theme of openness that undergirded it: “The Chattanooga Options Study Group has developed an approach to a new public/private/partnership organization that the community can make work, if it buys into the change process, accepts responsibility, and keeps open and honest” (Options Study Group Minutes). She was asking a lot. She was asking them to trust something they did not know—to buy into a new change process, one that was open to the public.

Then Mai Bell called on Ron Littlefield to present the organizational chart of the Chattanooga Venture Committee. Ron described the new organization as a “vehicle” and a “mechanism” to move Chattanooga forward. Its origin, he said, lay in the inspiration of GIPC during the Indianapolis trip, but because of the work of the study group, “it is very different, shaped to Chattanooga’s needs” (Option Study Group Minutes).

Mayor Gene Roberts spoke saying that both he and Dalton were asking the Chattanooga Venture Steering Committee to be formed under their sponsorship. John Franklin spoke up and urged the group to continue to expand so that it would not be exclusive. Jerome Page, Executive Director of the Urban League, moved that the Options Study Group become the steering committee charged with establishing the Chattanooga Venture Committee. The vote was unanimous for the motion as stated:
The Indianapolis Study Group hereby disbands so that interim Steering Committee can be formed under the leadership of Mai Bell Hurley. This steering committee should include all interested citizens who would like to be involved. (Options Study Group Minutes)

The Chattanooga Venture Committee was approved to move forward and organize a new partnership organization; the Chamber of Commerce would continue to organize PEP, and the Coordinating Committee would coordinate between them. The work of the Options Study Group was completed.

The proponents for openness had done their work. Now the hard work of structuring the new organization lay ahead.

The description of Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000, presented at the meeting of the Indianapolis Leadership Group at the Civic Forum on February 27, 1984, is included in Appendix.

The Emerging Leader

At this point, Mai Bell Hurley has clearly emerged as the leader of the effort. Once described as the “Great Chattanooga Bridge Company,” the effort had found someone who could bridge the citizens and the leaders of the community. According to Tom Hebert, “Without Mai Bell, there would have been no Chattanooga Venture.”

Pat Wilcox, who participated in the Option Committee meetings, said that Mai Bell was perceived as the leader of Chattanooga Venture. “If I had to pick one person she would be it. She has a self-effacing way about her, but she was clearly the leader at a time when not many women were.”

Roberta Webb Miles saw Mai Bell’s role as pivotal. She had observed her also at Allied Arts board meetings: “Mai Bell’s leadership style was highly effective at that
time.” She was “very effective in tapping into the traditional male power structure. She had an intuition of knowing when to press, when to pull back; she used humor very effectively.”

Mai Bell Hurley had grown up in Chattanooga when the city was at its worst, the most polluted and the most divided. She attended Girls Preparatory School, and then two years at University of Chattanooga before transferring to the University of North Carolina, the earliest that out-of-state girls could enter. Her first job out of college was as a reporter for the Chattanooga News Free Press in the early 1950s. At a time when women were usually assigned to the Society page, Mai Bell asked to work on the City Desk. She was given the assignment of writing obituaries, and when she proved herself there, she was allowed to cover fires. It was a very competitive environment, she said, but eventually she became a staff writer working with the top writers like J. B. Collins and Julius Parker. She was exposed to many different parts of the city, different issues, and different people. At the newspaper, she was an observer of the community; when she left, she became a participant.

She left the paper when she married and had her first child. After that she seldom worked for pay and began her career as a community volunteer. Her husband, Bern Hurley, was an executive at Provident Insurance, and they were both active in the community. She worked primarily in capacities possible for women--in education, the arts, and child welfare, working her way into the chairmanship of local boards, then state and national boards.

Rick Montague described Mai Bell:

Probably the most capable individual, at that time, was Mai Bell Hurley. Those of us who know her can say she knew everything there was to know
about the symphony and the Hunter Museum and Allied Arts. She was the past chairman of the Child Welfare League of America. She was major force in her church and its influence on inner city ministry and probably three or four other things where she was the star. In other words, [there were] not many avenues, at that time, where she could exude the kind of influence that she was capable of exuding.

Her activities up to that time spanned a wide range of the community. She had served as chairman or president of the Adult Education Council, the Chattanooga Hamilton County Public Library, Family and Children’s Services, First Centenary United Methodist Church, Chattanooga Psychiatric Clinic, Chattanooga Symphony, United Way, Urban League, Downtown General Hospital, and First Tennessee Bank. The significance of these involvements went beyond just a resume list but constituted a wide range of issues and concerns in the community from children’s needs, racial issues, mental health, community services, cultural programming, and medical care. But most significantly, all of these boards involved people who were concerned with and involved in the community, and these relationships shaped Mai Bell’s life in the community.

The director of Family and Children Services nominated Mai Bell to serve on Child Welfare League of America and the Council for Accreditation of America and another state agency. She also served on the Tennessee Arts Commission and Tennessee Advisory Council on Human Resources.

Deeply involved on the local, state, and national levels, she saw the cuts that were coming in the early 1980s: “At this time, the feds were moving things to the states, and the states were moving projects to the cities. I think we thought that if the cities were going to have responsibility for so much, they better get their act together.” Her insight into national and state policies, no doubt, motivated her to find solutions within
Chattanooga at the same time others were becoming increasingly concerned about the crisis at home.

Mai Bell often referred to herself as “a housewife from North Chattanooga.” At that time, she said, people didn’t identify with areas; neighborhoods had no recognition. She usually said it with a diminutive laugh, but indeed it is hard to find a title for Mai Bell. “Community volunteer” didn’t seem to capture it. She called herself once “a civic worker” or one of those “civic types.”

Tom Hebert realized he was dealing with someone with senatorial capabilities. “She is a very powerful person and she should have been a Senator from Tennessee…. She had a magnetism, appealing sense of humor and was able to draw people in. You could needle her and she’d needle you back.”

Rick Montague claimed Mai Bell was the best at thinking out what to do next:

Mai Bell was great at the question, always was, always will be, OK, now what do you want to do on Monday morning? Because I would be more inclined to think of a great idea that involved a lot of people and who knows what…when…we don’t know what would happen because there are always wiser heads around me to make sure that the energy got channeled (R. Montague, 2011).

Roberta Webb Miles saw Mai Bell as a person who “had studied the community and knew effective groupings of people.” Those relationships and connections contributed to Mai Bell’s ability to invite people, keep an open atmosphere, and build trust and commitment—but also to get results and make something happen.

Mai Bell saw herself as a collaborator. She pulled people together and she kept them focused: “When someone would be upset or going in different directions, I knew how to steer them back and focus the attention.” But her strongest asset was getting the attention and support of almost anyone that was needed. Rick went with her on many
occasions, and he observed, “any time she asked a corporate executive to do something, they always said yes, and they rarely were skeptical.”

Mai Bell Hurley had served on agencies that dealt with child welfare and human services, the arts and education, and she had been or boards with the highest crust of the community. She knew both ends of the spectrum, rich and poor, those in need and those who needed to give. She knew the staff and directors of agencies, she knew the volunteers and board chairs of non-profits and the CEOs of most companies. She had learned to work with the mayor and county executive. She respected men in authority and yet stood at their elbow to whisper advice. Her skills were honed from years of work in the trenches, now the time had come to call in the chits.

**Researcher Positioning Statement: Openness**

I was not involved in the Options Study Group. I gave birth to my first child on February 5, 1984, a wonderful, bright little girl. It was a glorious and exciting time, full of anticipation and hopefulness for our new family and for the city.
CHAPTER IX
STRUCTURE

There had to be a funnel for the ideas. Pat Wilcox

Introduction

The theme of STRUCTURE explores the next phase as the new organization emerged. This chapter looks at the structural elements involved in Chattanooga Venture’s creation. Earlier chapters examined the process in which the community learned many new ideas through a series of learning events and opportunities. Following the Leadership Visit to Indianapolis, the Options Study Group studied how other cities had turned themselves around. Then came a bigger task—that was, to build a framework for an organization that would involve more people in decision-making and consensus building for the future of Chattanooga.

This chapter will examine two aspects of structure: 1) creating the organizational structure for Chattanooga Venture; 2) positioning Chattanooga Venture in the structure of the community. What were the ideas, the concepts, and the actions that led to the creation of Chattanooga Venture based on the lived experiences of those involved? How was Chattanooga Venture positioned into the structure of the community when it was started? The end of this chapter will launch Chattanooga Venture launched as an independent non-profit organization.
Pre-Announcement

The morning paper on February 28, 1984, the day after the meeting at the Civic Forum described in the last chapter, anticipated what Ron Littlefield would say to the Kiwanis Club later that day. In the highly competitive world of two locally owned newspapers, the morning paper snagged the lead by interviewing the speaker before he spoke. That way, when the afternoon paper carried the story of his speech, it already seemed like old news.

However, the story in the morning paper garbled Ron’s message and pitted the new organization against the Chamber: “The new city-county ‘consensus-building organization’ he’s trying to create here will have a much broader focus than the Chamber of Commerce’s current economic development program, Ron Littlefield will tell the Downtown Kiwanis Club today” (Frank, 1984).

Even before the organization was out of the box, it was couched in competitive terms with the Chamber of Commerce, i.e., “broader in focus” as if it were beyond the bounds of both business and government. Its purpose as a “consensus-building organization” was put in quotes, indicating a phrase Ron used but didn’t define. Its broad reach was characterized as “practically any issue the community faces” (Frank, 1984).

As demonstrated by the following quote, Ron’s statement made this new organization look unfocused, if not downright ridiculous (ellipses originally included):

“Our intent is to involve enough people, and to define the issues carefully enough, that we can … come up with a specific agenda, not just…with some kind of high-sounding recommendation that’s very general and cannot really be measured, but to come up with a specific agenda of what this community should do to address that issue, whatever it may be,” he said. (Frank, 1984)
Despite his good intention to include “everyone who wants to be included,” Ron was not prepared to include them. When the reporter asked how people could get involved if they were interested, Ron stumbled, “I guess if somebody out there wants to become involved, they ought to get in touch with me,” Littlefield said. ‘We’re in the process of building a mailing list, and right now I’m the keeper of the list” (Frank, 1984).

This pre-speech story clearly pointed out the problem Chattanooga Venture faced—it sounded flakey. And besides being hard to describe, there wasn’t anything there—no organization, no office, no staff, and no telephone. To Ron’s credit, he did the best he could, given the fact that the organization had only the day before been given the go ahead to start forming.

The article in *The Chattanooga Times* the following day, February 29, 1984, after he had given his talk to Kiwanis, did a better job of describing the fledgling organization. The paper now referred to Ron Littlefield as the director of Chattanooga Venture (Committee omitted) and Mai Bell Hurley as the chairman of the board. These titles gave the appearance of an organizational structure at least but, in reality, there was none. At the end of the meeting at the Civic Forum, Gene Roberts had approached Mai Bell and asked if she would hire Ron. “Gene offered him to Venture,” Mai Bell said, but in actuality, there was no organization yet to hire him.

A second article appearing February 29, 1984, described the task of the new organization more coherently:

“We’re trying to put together a **structure** that will involve a **cross-section of the community** and will address important areas of community life,” he said. “The central idea is to create a **consensus-building organization** that can build a **coalition** behind solutions to particular problems. With a
carefully planned approach to community problems **developed by members of all sectors of the community**, I think our government and business leaders should be better able to **implement** new programs and **solutions** to problems.” (Times staff report, 1984, emphasis added)

Referring to “the new planning committee” rather than to a new organization made it easier to understand that the organization “is being fleshed out” and would be “unveiled” later. Ron referred to nearly fifty people who had been meeting in recent months to “organize a planning organization.” This phrase echoed an earlier one when he said the mayor was **planning to have a plan**. Now Ron was **organizing an organization**. Fortunately, Bill Casteel, the *Times* satirist, didn’t make a joke of it, and, in actuality, it was an accurate phrase.

J.B. Collins, who covered City Hall for the *Chattanooga News Free Press*, also ribbed Ron and the fledgling initiative in an article entitled “Plan 2000 Loosely Wrapped, Unveiled Early” (Collins, March 3, 1984). The term *Plan 2000* was leftover from the Mayor’s former plan that caused Ron trouble once before with the press. Collins indicated it was a “premature ‘unveiling’ of a secret plan,” which would be released “very soon” in a joint announcement by the mayor and county executive. He said the “joint” aspect of the announcement was “supposed to take care of the political problem of who would get the credit for the plan.” Worst of all, Collins implied it was some kind of magic formula: “He [Ron] said success will be achieved through the people banding together, not just a few people, but many people.” Then after apparent questioning, Ron retorted: “It’s not mysterious, not magic!” (Collins, March 3, 1984).

Littlefield’s source of optimism --“Our people can make it happen…all the people…everyone working together” (Collins, March 3, 1984) – seemed a farfetched claim in a town riddled with divisions. And Collins intended to make it seem so.
These pre-announcements demonstrated the problem with understanding what Venture was, why it was needed, and accepting the new entity with any seriousness. Without being positioned in the community, the new initiative was ungrounded and wishful, at best, and very likely to sink on its own.

**Chattanooga Venture Committee**

On March 1, 1984, Mai Bell Hurley sent out a memorandum to all the members of the Options Study Group and the other Indianapolis Leadership committees inviting them to serve on the new Steering Committee. Mai Bell joined Ron in the back room at the mayor’s office. There was no stationery yet for the new effort, so the memo was on plain paper with the new name, “Chattanooga Venture Committee” typed at the top of the page in large letters.

The stated purpose of the steering committee was “to advise in the development of the form and the strategy required to launch a true consensus building organization.” In other words, they were now entering the structural phase of creating an organization. Mai Bell made it clear in the invitational memorandum that her mandate came from the elected officials:

> I consider it to be absolutely essential that we have been legitimatized by these influential public officials, who are the only two individuals in the region to be selected for leadership roles by all of the people. I would not have been willing to continue without their sanction. I thank them for it. (CVC Minutes, Memorandum, March 1, 1984)

Then, Mai Bell expressed her “joy and hope” for this opportunity to work together “to put meat on the bones the very exciting skeleton we have created thus far.”
skeleton, as she described it, was the as-yet-non-existent body of Chattanooga Venture. The next few weeks and months witnessed a rapid group effort to materialize this body.

The specific tasks mentioned in the memo were public relations, membership, by-laws, governance, as well goals and issues development, but it was clear from the outset that the purpose of the eventual organization was public participation: “I see our role not to do the work of the Venture Committee but to continue the design of a framework which will provide an opportunity for all of those who wish to participate to do their work well” (emphasis added). Mai Bell clearly kept the focus at this stage on creating a structure so others could participate effectively at the next phase. She ended the memorandum by once again thanking Mayor Roberts and County Executive Roberts “for having the confidence in us to ask us to continue.”

The first meeting of the CVC Steering Committee was held a week later, Thursday, March 8, 1984, at 3:30 in the afternoon at the Remote Design Studio. The pattern that had been set by the Options Study Group did not miss a beat. The weekly meetings continued, but the structure of the meeting changed considerably. Twenty-three people attended the first meeting, half of them from the Options Study Group and half from either the Indianapolis trip or people who had not been on the trip. Claudie Clark, Jerome Page, John Franklin and Howard Roddy represented the African American community and all four had been on the trip to Indianapolis and two had been regulars at the Option Study Group. Bill Evans was the only labor representative, and he had also been involved in the Options Study Group.

The purpose of the first Steering Committee meeting was to begin the process of structuring the new organization. Ron Littlefield laid out eight committees. By the end of
the meeting, every committee had members and a chair and a date to report back to the
steering committee. A total of fifty-five names were listed as participants on the
committees.

Ron sent out a notice after the meeting to all these people and emphasized
openness to anyone who wanted to be involved. He was emphasizing what Mai Bell had
indicated—that the purpose of the meetings was to create a structure that set the stage for
more participation later. A date was set for each sub-committee to report back to the
Steering Committee. Table 6 lists the organizational committees, tasks and chairpersons.
Appendix E gives s full schedule of the Steering Committee and sub-committees.

Table 6   Organizational Committees of the Chattanooga Venture Steering Committee,
1984

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date to report</th>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Chairperson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>public relations</td>
<td>Ann Aiken, architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>board, membership</td>
<td>Rick Montague, foundation director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>charter, by-laws</td>
<td>Brian Mickles, attorney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Current</td>
<td>current issues</td>
<td>T.D. Harden, city planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initiatives</td>
<td></td>
<td>director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>how to use resources</td>
<td>Claudie Clark, Coca Cola executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>Vision 2000</td>
<td>public participation</td>
<td>Jeannine Alday, county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>effective meetings</td>
<td>Tom Hebert, TVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Storefront</td>
<td>space/location/design</td>
<td>Robert Seals, architect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chattanooga Venture Committee (CVC) Minutes, March 8, 1984

March 8, 1984, was the last time Tom Hebert kept the minutes. From this point on
Ron Littlefield took charge of the meetings. Ron had little interest in wall sheets, he
didn’t care much for wine and cheese at the meetings, either, and he didn’t want Tom
facilitating. Tom chaired the Training Committee and said he stayed involved for some
time, but he felt things went down hill at this point, which he described as “the apogee of my run.”

Gianni Longo served as adviser to the new organization. Rick had introduced him to Mai Bell after Indianapolis. Gianni was still on contract with the Lyndhurst Foundation but was no longer working with the planning agency. Mai Bell invited him to work with the Chattanooga Venture Committee. Gianni described this period as “the perfect storm”—working with a group with the desire for change and having the financial support to make it happen. He came to town frequently during this phase, staying for a week or more at a time, attending meetings and working particularly with the Communications, Vision 2000, and Storefront sub-committees.

Membership

As chair of the Membership Sub-Committee, Rick Montague sent out a letter to his committee on March 2, 1984. In order to be ready to report on March 29 as assigned, he scheduled a two-and-a-half-hour lunch and working session on March 16. Their assignment he said was both board membership and general membership of the organization. Questions that the committee would address: Should we attract a representative membership? What is a useful and meaningful role for members? How should the board be selected?

In reporting to the Steering Committee on March 29, 1984, Rick said the sub-committee recommended that the process of recruiting members be “open, educational, and inviting” and should “place no limits on membership.” Both passive membership (receiving newsletters) and active membership (taking part on committees or task forces) should be welcomed. The committee wanted the membership to be open but not so open.
that it was “meaningless,” or so closed as to be “elitist.” It was agreed that members did not “represent a group,” and groups could have as many members as they wished.

In succeeding meetings, this discussion grew until the concept of membership fees was altogether eliminated and the membership became open to anyone who participated for any reason, even just being on the mailing list. There were many ways to keep the membership “vital, informed and involved,” including participation in Vision 2000 or serving on a task force. For this reason, the other sub-committees’ work, especially Vision 2000 and Communications, were essential to membership development (CVC Minutes, March 29, 1984).

Board membership was another matter. The sub-committee’s report on March 29, 1984, stated that the board be “broadly representative of the community,” and broad representation was defined as “involving individuals from all socio-economic levels, professions, minority groups, geographic divisions, etc.” Jerome Page of the Urban League kept a focus on “balance,” and Mai Bell Hurley expressed an intention of using the numerous people who expressed an interested in Venture by “utilizing individuals who can represent factions on the Board.” (CVC Minutes, April 17, 1984).

On their first attempt at structuring the board, the Membership sub-committee suggested a board of forty-five members. Of those, fifteen would come from the current Venture Steering Committee, fifteen appointed by the Coordinating Council, and fifteen elected by the membership. But holding elections from the membership would delay selection and, therefore, delay participation for several months until a membership was in place. This idea of delaying the board selection until elections did not sit well with the Governance committee, which recommended getting the structure in place soon.
Communications

Ann Aiken, an architect and principal with the Franklin Design Group, chaired the Communications Sub-Committee. She had attended the trip to Indianapolis and was a core member of the Options Study Group. She believed that a city’s image was a direct outgrowth of what people believed that image to be; therefore, the hardest problem that faced the Communications Sub-Committee was selling Chattanooga to Chattanoogans:

A city’s image is the direct outgrowth of what its people believe that image is. The public’s perception of Chattanooga and the media’s coverage of life in this area do not necessarily reflect the “real” image of life in the Chattanooga area, or the possibilities for growth, which could become a reality. Our problem is selling Chattanooga on Chattanoogans to begin the personal commitment, which will result in concrete improvements in our lives. (CVC Minutes, [handwritten notes], n.d.)

Pat Wilcox served on the Communications Sub-Committee. Pat was on the editorial board for The Chattanooga Times, and was no stranger to city politics. Her father had worked at City Hall and she was well versed in the city’s issues. She did not see her role as reporting for the paper; instead, she spent most of her time in the Options Study Group as an observer and learner, but by the time the organization was creating its structure and interpreting itself to the public, she felt committed to and drawn into the mission. As a professional writer, Pat took a major role in writing the brochure expressing the intent and purpose of the new organization.

The Communications Sub-Committee initially described Venture as “a public awareness and citizen recruitment campaign” that was “incubated and hatched” by an “informal and ever-growing group” (CVC Minutes, March 15, 1984). At first they called members “shareholders.” They grew as they invited participation keeping the planning process open:
Members of this informal steering committee are seeking shareholders now and wish to talk and listen to as many interested citizens as possible about the Chattanooga Venture. If you or your neighbors or your community interest group would like to participate in such a give and take on Chattanooga Venture, please call us. (CVC Minutes, March 29, 1984).

The Communications sub-committee set an aggressive schedule, meeting more often than once a week. By the end of the first month, the Communications Sub-Committee had begun working on these things before launching:

- Letterhead
- Post office box
- Survey questionnaire
- Brochure outlining purpose of organization
- Mail-in membership card
- Speakers/Listeners Bureau for reaching community groups
- Live television program with call-in
- Newspaper ad with mail-in questionnaire
- Calendar of events
- Small poster

The Storefront

Robert Seals, an independent architect, who had gone on the trip to Indianapolis and had participated in the Options Study Group, headed the Storefront Sub-Committee. The other members of the Storefront Committee had various interests or experience in real estate, design, and construction. Stroud Watson and Gianni Longo served as consultants and advisers to the group. The Remote Design Studio on Vine Street, under Stroud’s management, already modeled some of the functions of a community storefront. Gianni Longo had suggested a “planning storefront” in Chattanooga in Motion as “an informal outlet for citizens to express their views and ideas, and to contribute to the realization of specific plans. It will also become a place in which the city itself can display its most recent projects and achievements” (Longo, 1980). He recommended the
planning storefront be centrally located, and the committee began looking for a location downtown.

Initial thoughts about the storefront ranged “from a temporary and movable structure to be located on the city-owned 900 block of Market Street, to simply occupying an available storefront somewhere between 6th and 9th Streets on Market or Broad” (CVC Minutes, March 23, 1984). The committee held an all-day planning session for the storefront on Friday, March 30, 1984.

The movable structure gained momentum for a while. The movable structure was conceived of as a 30-foot cube, supported by an exterior steel frame, office and gallery space inside and three levels of balconies. It was to be temporarily located on the 900 block of Market St. and could be disassembled on site. Stroud stressed the importance of quality. The new structure would represent the new thinking, and adherence to excellence was one of the new standards.

But the moveable cube was found to have insurance liability issues and the idea had to be abandoned. Instead, the old Ross Hotel on Georgia Avenue became the focus of the sub-committee’s attention.

**Governance**

The Governance Sub-Committee was headed by Brian Mickles who had neither gone to Indianapolis nor been involved in the Options Study Group. He was a young lawyer who knew non-profit law and was willing to help. His committee recommended that Venture become a non-profit organization and attempt to obtain a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status from the state of Tennessee as soon as possible. The Governance Sub-Committee recommended that the entire board be in place when Venture was
incorporated rather than delaying for six months or more until elections of board members could take place. The Steering Committee approved their recommendations and asked that guidelines for balance on the board be written into the by-laws and that policies be developed for the nominating committee (CVC Minutes, April 19, 1984).

Vision 2000

Jeannine Alday chaired the Vision 2000 sub-Committee. Jeannine had been a strong supporter since the beginning, attended the Indianapolis trip and was a core member of the Options Study Group. Dalton Roberts at the Civic Forum had praised her on February 27 for her work in coordinating with the county.

Vision 2000 was the name used by Chattanooga Venture Committee as the public participation process that would identify the critical issues facing the community. It was considered to be a “rigorous and carefully organized process”, but no one had a clue how to go about it. There were no models to draw on in Chattanooga’s experience and many differing experiences from other cities. Jeannine’s sub-committee struggled with the question: who sets the agenda and how? If they wanted the community to set the agenda for the future, they had to design a process to do that. Their initial thoughts were to collaborate with the Communications Sub-Committee on the survey and questionnaire as a way of soliciting input from the community about strengths and weaknesses.

By April 12, 1984, the Vision 2000 sub-committee had honed in on the ultimate question for the visioning: “What kind of city do we want Chattanooga to be?” They divided the “challenge agenda” into five categories. These categories would define the issues, and the issues would define the task forces. The task forces, in turn, would
recommend strategies for dealing with problems. Gianni Longo encouraged simple, direct words for each category that fell into these five areas:

- **PEOPLE**—human resources (Living and Learning)
- **PLACES**—our environment (Preserving and Developing)
- **JOBS**—the economy (Growing and Changing)
- **FUN**—leisure, recreation and parks (Enjoying and Doing)
- **GOVERNMENT**—public resources (Leading and Serving)

Originally, the group conceived of Vision 2000 as a series of task forces to identify the issues and struggle to find alternative solutions. The work of the task forces would be done in 6 months time. The task forces would have members from the community and the membership representing “differing points-of-view” related to the issues. But eventually, Vision 2000 became brainstorming sessions on the five topics above, and the task forces formed after the visioning in order to accomplish the goals.

**Brochure**

The brochure of Chattanooga Venture was considered the essential mechanism to communicate the purpose and recruit participation. The text was prepared by a sub-committee of the Communications Sub-Committee and draft copies sent to the Mayor and County Executive to look for anything that was “objectionable.” The committee also asked for review by people who were “unfamiliar with Chattanooga Venture” and held a day-long work session to write the final draft.

The decision was to make the brochure itself interactive by including a mail-in survey as well as a membership sign-up card. The same survey and sign-up form would be replicated in a newspaper ad so that a broader, general public would receive it. The
survey was an initial way of soliciting input about what people liked and disliked about the community.

Pat Wilcox was centrally involved in producing the brochure and described the experience as a collaborative one:

There was a lot of discussion about what questions we would ask. Of course I took notes during all of that, then came up with a draft, but it was strictly a draft and there was a lot of discussion of that. As I recall there were a number of things changed. For the better…because it became more focused, more powerful in a sense. Cut out all the extraneous words. Get to the point. It was a good…it was a process, you know. It wasn’t just an assignment you go off and do.

Pat described Gianni Longo’s his role as “keeping people moving.” He was more of a “cheerleader, instigator, herder” and less of an editor or writer. He took the final draft and designed the brochure at his office, submitting it to the group for review and approval before being printed. The process moved quickly, and the brochure was printed in time for the May 22 press conference.

“Chattanooga Venture heralds a new day in the way decisions will be made. A new day of community-based leadership for Chattanooga. ...”

For Pat Wilcox this statement was very personal. She wanted people to feel the newness of this endeavor:

I really felt that Chattanooga Venture offered a significant change for Chattanooga. I wanted to emphasize this was not just incremental--this was new. In writing here and for the [news] paper, I tried to emphasize that this was something different.

“We have the future in minds: Your mind, the minds of your neighbors, the ideas of your friends and the enthusiasm of your co-workers.”
The committee wanted to attract people and not just the best minds, but the best thoughts of everyone: “Yes,” said Pat, “we can put our heads together, in the old cliché, and come up with something really good…the best thing to do.”

What is Chattanooga Venture?

- An open association of citizens
- A partnership of all interests in the community
- A channel for exchanging information
- A means for focusing the collective energy of the community
- A tool for solving problems and setting directions for the future

This description of the organization moved from an open association to a tool for action. Pat Wilcox felt strongly about every word, every phrase, all carefully chosen and worked by the group:

Of course, open was the operative word. Again we were saying, Come. You can be a part of this. Let’s get together and put all our energy together and we can do something…. It was beating the drum…Come…Share …Share your ideas…Share your voice.

What will Chattanooga Venture do?

- Establish a permanent process of citizen involvement in decision-making
- Provide an open forum for citizens’ ideas
- Mediate conflicts
- Initiate community improvement projects
- Promote opportunity

After reading the above list during my interview with Pat Wilcox in 2012, she responded:

This becomes a little disappointing, I don’t know how many people shared my view on that, but I expected it to be a permanent thing. It didn’t turn out that way…[but] it had a long-lasting effect.” And as for mediating conflicts…”I don’t know why we talked about that. I don’t know why it became one of the bullets. I don’t recall it ever being done.
After the text was agreed upon and the brochure was printed, Pat said the group sent it out “with a wish and a prayer” for a good reception. “I didn’t know [how it would be received]. There was such deep-seated sense of distrust and alienation but I was hopeful.” That hopefulness echoed Mai Bell’s repeated phrase, “hopeful and helpful,” which also became part of the drumbeat.

The initial brochure is an artifact for Chattanooga Venture. It articulates many of the themes and intentions of the organization’s early planning and it represents the collective process by which it was developed. A copy of the brochure is included in Appendix.

Coordination

Collaboration between the sub-committees soon became urgent. The chairs of the sub-committees found many overlapping issues between communications, membership, storefront, and Vision 2000.

Plans changed as they went along. For example, the 30-ft moveable cube as a storefront idea was abandoned. The call-in component of the TV program was too expensive to produce. Without the call-in, the TV station was afraid it would be just another public service television program. Vision 2000 needed to be well structured, but if the agenda were too rigid, it would hamper participation. And the size of the board began to increase. Coordinating, communicating and working together required meetings of the chairs between the meetings of the sub-committees, and regular meetings of the overall steering committee.

By April 2, 1984, Mai Bell said 85 people were already actively involved in the Steering Committee and the committees. Not all of them could be on the board, but there
should be a place for everyone who wanted to be involved. The sub-committees asked:

How could all the people who had expressed interest in Venture be utilized in some way?

Bill Wallace of TV Channel 9, who agreed to host the television program, conducted a local study for the TV station. He reported to the Steering Committee that the study described people in Chattanooga as cliquish, tribal, and alienated; it concluded that Chattanooga promoted a bad image about itself, there were no places to go and nothing to do for young people; and people generally resisted new ideas and had no sense of self-governance (CVC Minutes, May 15, 1984). His statements about Chattanooga reinforced what had been reported in the Longo report (1980) and the Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983). Furthermore, the 1984 edition of the Rand McNally Places Rated Almanac ranked Chattanooga 143 in a list of 277 American cities in overall areas studies. Knoxville, by comparison, was ranked 11. The need for change had not changed.

With the text finalized, Pat Wilcox presented a mock-up the brochure to the Steering Committee on April 19. The old downtown Ross Hotel was chosen for the storefront and renovation began. The television program was scheduled with man on the street interviews instead of a live call-in. May 22 was set for the date for the announcement. Invitations to Steering Committee members were sent to attend the press conference.

Coordinating Council

The agreement had been struck to make the announcement of PEP, Chattanooga Venture, and the Coordinating Council at the same time. As the day of the announcement approached, the role of the Coordinating Council became more apparent. First of all, it gave Venture credibility while it was in formation. Secondly, by juxtaposing PEP and
Venture and announcing them at the same time gave Venture a way to define its purpose in terms of economic development. Instead of appearing to be a “magical and mysterious” thing or a vague and obscure bundle of good intentions, it had a specific role and equal footing to PEP. Most importantly, Venture was launched with the support and backing of both the elected officials and three major corporate leaders.

The Coordinating Council met for the first time on April 23, 1984. The group consisted of Mayor Roberts, County Executive Roberts, Harold Ruck (for the Chamber and PEP), Mai Bell Hurley (for Venture), and the three corporate heads, Jack Lupton, Olan Mills, and Carey Hanlin. They set the date for the announcement on May 22, 1984. In preparation for the announcement, Jack Lupton asked that the Coordinating Council not be drawn in an organizational chart as it had been before. Instead of being pictured “over” PEP and Chattanooga Venture, he preferred for it to be drawn parallel, so that it would not appear as elitist or in control (CVC Minutes, Coordinating Council, April 23, 1984).

In this same vein of partnership, the members of the Coordinating Council described their role in relation to PEP and CVC in these terms: “to listen and react to the needs of the community as expressed through these new bodies.” In other words, they defined the role of “coordinating” not in terms of directing or controlling, but rather as listening and responding. In this way, the Coordinating Council would be concerned about the broader needs of the community as expressed by these two bodies.

The Coordinating Council made recommendations to Venture for “balance” on its board and membership. Dalton and Gene were sensitive to the racial divides in the community, and Lupton, Mills, and Hanlin had been involved in the earlier discussions.
with African American leaders to change the name of Ninth Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Therefore, they warned against token representation but, instead, encouraged Venture to have at least ten black representatives in order to have different points of view. There was also mention of having equal representation of Republicans and Democrats, at least in terms of the local elected leaders who served on the board.

According to the minutes of the meeting, Jack Lupton’s last comment was “Don’t let us off the hook.” Mai Bell thought he just talked like that sometimes, but Rick said he was fully committed by this time or, at least for the moment, “He meant it when he said it.”

**Announcement**

The announcement that appeared in the morning paper on, 1984, pictured PEP and Chattanooga Venture as parallel with the Coordinating Council below the two organizations. The headline read “Citizen participation is what will make this economic development plan different” (Flessner, 1984). The themes of both organizations, Venture’s public participation and PEP’s economic development, were merged at least in the headline, if not in reality.

Mayor Gene Roberts opened the press conference by introducing the people sitting with him: Mai Bell Hurley of Venture; Hal Ruck, representing the Chamber and PEP; Jack Lupton of the Lupton Company, Carey Hanlin of Provident, and Olan Mills of Olan Mills Inc. The mayor said, “All these individuals have a role to play…but all citizens have a role to play…that’s why we are launching this new organization today.” His invitation was warm and inclusive.
The mayor’s remarks, as well as the headlines, emphasized public participation as a component of economic development. “I can’t think of anything more important in this community than the seeds of growth we are planting with these programs,” Gene Roberts said. Quoting Mai Bell Hurley, the article positioned Chattanooga Venture in contrast to the image that had held Chattanooga back—“that a few people make all the decisions. Chattanooga Venture provides an avenue for any citizen to become involved with community issues that they think are important” (Flessner, 1984).

Mayor Roberts described the board of Venture as “a balanced group of more than 45 individuals to represent this community,” and then added “more, perhaps hundreds, more will be involved in committees and task forces.” He said the names of the board members of Venture would be released later, but he introduced some who were present.

*The Chattanooga Times* article acknowledged more than 100 community volunteers had been involved over the past eight months. The number, perhaps reflecting the optimism of the planners rather than an actual number, included both the Options Study Group and the Chattanooga Venture Committee and sub-committees. But the important number was in the future: “Chattanooga Venture hope[s] to involve more that 2000 people in at least one of the dozens of task forces Venture plans to establish to examine particular issues” (Flessner, 1984).

Gene Roberts acknowledged the members of the Coordinating Council who were present:

We have asked these three distinguished corporate executives to join us in forming a coordinating council—to help government and private enterprise to work more effectively together and to listen, to aid and to advise as PEP and Venture go forward. They agreed and we are proud to have these particular individuals on our team—making a public commitment to progress. (CVC Minutes, Mayor’s prepared remarks, May
The mayor distinguished the three groups in this way:

PEP
To sell
To fine tune the business environment

Venture
Quality control
To enable more people to become part of the solution
To seek improvement in all dimensions of our community and unity of purpose
To protect and enhance our quality of life

Coordinating Council
To listen
To aid
To advise

Gene Roberts described PEP as the “sales effort” and Venture as “quality control” (Flessner, 1984), ideas on which Ron Littlefield had apparently advised the mayor because Ron described PEP as in charge of selling Chattanooga and Venture responsible for “product development,” meaning, in his words, “to make Chattanooga a better product to sell.”

Jeannine Alday had another way to describe their difference: PEP was focused on economic progress, and Venture was focused on “the community as a whole” such as the arts, education, and quality of life. She thought that PEP could do “part of it,” but Chattanooga Venture was “the first time it was all pulled together.” She felt the coordinating council was necessary because it was “always an effort to keep public and private sectors on the same page.”

By being present at the announcement, the Coordinating Council played a significant role in Venture’s coming on the scene. It brought leverage of money and
power that forced the much larger, more established Chamber of Commerce to “partner” with, at least in public, the smaller, new kid on the block. It welded together two competing efforts into a collaborative acknowledgement of the need for both. It allowed the language of public participation and community involvement to be taken seriously and given equal footing with economic development. It allowed enough time for Venture to get organized and have a board and agenda before the two programs were announced together. And it brought the leadership of the community, both public leaders and private leaders, to the same table.

But, on the other hand, making this announcement with the Coordinating Council also caused confusion and mistrust by reinforcing in some people’s minds the old image of the power structure at work again. It was ironic that the announcement of Chattanooga Venture, which intended to include all segments of the community, should be posed with headshots of six white men, the political and business leaders at the time. The irony was not lost on Johnny Holloway who was quoted in a Chattanooga Times editorial by Pat Wilcox that he was disturbed by the lack of Black participation on the Coordinating Council. Holloway’s feeling was—“You cannot plan something for a group unless that group is represented in the planning” (J. Holloway, 2012).

Pat Wilcox felt that the Coordinating Council was getting too much attention and that people were focusing on it as if it were Venture. She found the work of Venture to be very different. The Coordinating Council was to her “a practical matter.” At the beginning, at least, “It was important to say that we weren’t just out here in dreamland. We had been endorsed by public and private sectors, that there was a commitment to the idea that this was the way to go.” Their commitment didn’t release people from the
responsibility of participating; to her way of thinking, it was just the opposite; it was an endorsement “that we had to do it.” But still, the image fed old fears of the power structure.

After only two or three meetings, the Coordinating Council found that its task was already changing. Not long into the process, it became evident that another entity needed to be in place modeled after the public private partnerships, like those in Indianapolis. The Coordinating Council became a public/private partnership, called the RiverCity Company, with the same people on board, plus two additions: Lamar Partridge, an African American businessman, and Bill Evans, as the labor representative. The RiverCity Company worked with the city and the county and private developers to implement the plans that emerged for the riverfront and downtown. Mai Bell Hurley served on both boards and saw RiverCity Company as the embodiment of the ideas of the Coordinating Council. From her unique position, she admitted that “if you want to implement ideas or ‘visions’ it is smart to have the presence of the government and corporate leaders on hand.” (M. B. Hurley, 2012)

Structure of Chattanooga Venture

The organizational structure of Chattanooga Venture grew out of the work of these sub-committees taking place between March and May 1984. The structure of the board and the composition of the staff reflected a very different kind of organization than any that existed in Chattanooga up to that time.

The announcement in the newspaper said the mayor and county executive “designated” the board. Mai Bell Hurley emphasized that this meant that the community’s leadership endorsed Venture’s board. Mai Bell was clear about the reason
for this political endorsement: “We weren’t leaders. If you have the two major political forces behind you, you have a better chance of success.” But assuredly the leadership did not start at the top: “We convinced them it was a good idea and they decided to be part of it.”

A statement by the Communications Sub-Committee said:

A critical element in making this system work for Chattanooga is the endorsement of Venture from the top of both the public and private sectors. Those with the means and influence to drive the process of implementing development or problem-solving proposals have committed themselves to the concept that an open and fair decision-making process is essential to our future. They (the public and private leaders) are looking to Venture for community-based leadership in setting directions and solving problems for this community. (CVC Minutes, early draft of brochure, 1984)

The letters of invitation to serve on the board came from Dalton Roberts, Gene Roberts, and Mai Bell Hurley on May 23, 1984. The letter described the organization as “a new framework for community participation” and “a new conduit” for those who wanted to see a better future. These metaphors of framework and conduit clearly reflected that the purpose of the structure of the organization was to prepare for larger participation ahead:

Chattanooga Venture is a new framework for community participation and leadership, a new conduit for the energies of those who remain hopeful for a better future…. The work of Chattanooga Venture will be consensus building…. developing strategies on which a majority of our people can agree, so that Chattanooga can move forward on the critical issues that will determine our destiny. (CVC Minutes, letter of invitation, May 23, 1984)

Board

Initially the board of directors of Chattanooga Venture was intended to have at least 45 members, but when the process was completed, the board numbered 60. The first
organizational meeting of the board was held on August 9, 1984, when they met to approve the by-laws and elect officers. “That was the difference in Venture,” Ron said, “We had 60 people on the board—which is outrageous!” Or as Mai Bell said, “Nobody will tell you you should have 60 people on a board.” But against all standard advice, they put together the list:

We had people from all walks of life, people who did not particularly like each other. At that time, if you had the head of the Teamsters Union and a captain of industry (that he normally sat across the negotiating table in a very contentious fashion) had them sitting down across the table…and people from other walks of life—Republicans, Democrats, black, white—whatever—any way we could divide ourselves. We had all these people in that 60 people, and they came to the conclusion that the one thing that we shared in common was this community. And so while we could fuss about other details, the one thing that we had to agree on was that this community had to advance. (R. Littlefield, 2011)

Mai Bell gave her version of how the board list came together:

He [Ron] and I in the backroom of the mayor’s office put together a list of sixty people and got Gene Roberts and Dalton Roberts to bless it. Now people remember things differently. They may remember that they came up with the list, and that’s okay with me if they do. My life has been spent whispering in the ears of people who had the power to execute. So if they want the credit it’s fine with me. (M. B. Hurley, 2011).

Mai Bell described the board list as a “very complicated mix of neighborhood people, faith-based people, corporate leaders, and…” but her real filtering mechanism was more practical: “We wanted people at the table who were hopeful and helpful.” That phrase of Mai Bell’s, hopeful and helpful, became a mantra in the early days of Venture.

A look at the Executive Committee alone indicated this was not your ordinary board in Chattanooga. A woman was chair, and the three vice-chairs were an African American pastor, a labor organizer, and a white businessman who usually didn’t appear
on board lists. Of the nine executive committee members, three were black, one Jewish, three women, one labor, and two rich white men.

The Board of Directors of Chattanooga Venture was in stark contrast to the list of names that PEP had published earlier (Collins, March 4, 1984). It was in stark contrast to any board that existed in the city. There were no highly integrated boards at that time, not just in terms of race, but also in gender, in educational and socio-economic background, in religion, and labor.

The Chattanooga Venture board had 14 African Americans, with a range of professions and backgrounds, including doctors, pastors, educators, corporate employees, as well as a mechanic shop owner and a social worker. The labor representatives numbered five, the electrical workers, the building trades, the Teamsters, the machinists, and the sheet metal workers union. The initial board had eleven women, far outnumbering women on most other civic boards at the time.

Even Johnny Holloway, who had criticized the Coordinating Council for lack of African American representation, referred to those involved with developing Venture as a “pretty good cross-section of people.” Pat Wilcox described the mix on the board as “terribly needed…very important.” Maria Noel captured her feelings at the time of the announcement of Chattanooga Venture and its board:

It had never been done. No board had ever been done like that. Chattanooga Venture—its board, its staff, its philosophy—in every respect was a paradigm shift for Chattanooga. You [might have] had a board before with maybe one African American on it, you know. You may have one person but you didn’t have several.
Staff

“Venture had four staff people. Four. And everybody else was a volunteer,” said Ron Littlefield, emphasizing what he considered a cost-effective and efficient organization. Ron was hired as director and officially confirmed by the board at the August 9, 1984 organizational meeting. He brought Karen McMahan from the Chamber of Commerce to be the program coordinator, and Delores Draper was hired as assistant coordinator.

Maria Noel was working at the state office of Minority Business Enterprises when she heard from her father that “they were hiring people for this new initiative.” She applied and soon interviewed with Mai Bell and Ron and others. When she got the job at Venture, she didn’t really understand what the organization was all about. “It was a new and unique community-focused initiative. I had no idea what it was going to be. It was just a job!” she said, but she came to it with a sense of excitement: “No one knew what was going to happen. We were young—for us nothing like this had ever happened.” She was initially hired to be administrative assistant, but when the storefront opened and volunteers came streaming in, “they realized I was good with people, so I was appointed to deal with volunteers.” Her skills were called on in many ways; even her writing skills were put to task on the newsletter.

The original staff of Chattanooga Venture consisted of one man and three women, two Whites and two Blacks, and all under 40. The message was that Chattanooga Venture was young, representative of diversity, and something new in the community.
Funding

Mai Bell Hurley recalled asking Rick Montague one day, standing outside of Stroud’s office, if he thought the Lyndhurst Foundation would fund this new organization. “We could never have done what we did if we had to go out and raise money,” she said years later. Mai Bell and Ron Littlefield prepared a grant request and sent it to the Lyndhurst Foundation on May 2, 1984, with the proviso that the tax-exempt status would be applied for shortly. In the cover letter of the grant request, Mai Bell emphasized the collaborative effort of structuring Chattanooga Venture:

This plan is the product of weeks of work by dozens of area individuals who have studied efforts in many other cities. The proposed organization and strategic planning process will involve literally hundreds of citizens in addressing the basic problems and possibilities of Chattanooga. We sincerely believe that this expanded public involvement will make a difference. (Hurley, cover letter to the Lyndhurst Foundation, May 2, 1984)

The original grant request for Chattanooga Venture is one of the artifacts of the organization. It was an expression of the intent and aspirations of the organization’s planners. The structure of the organization is described in specific terms to allow for greater public participation:

The organizational structure of Chattanooga Venture has been designed to permit layers of citizens’ involvement that permit the analysis of issues ranging from the very general to the very specific. Issues and policy recommendations will be refined and strengthened as they flow from the grass-roots task force level and proceed through the differing points-of-view offered by other committees and boards.

Chattanooga Venture was designed to be a non-profit organization with a board representative of different constituencies in order to involve those constituencies in the community process. “The ideal board member will be one with a wide range of interests and experience or one who so uniquely characterizes what could be called an ‘under
represented constituency’ that his/her voice should be heard in community deliberations.”

Further description of the ideal board member included a “broad background of community participation,” “open to the points-of-view of others,” and a willingness to participate on committees and task forces. The proposal anticipated five working committees (Futures, Diplomacy, Membership, Public Relations, and Implementation), three standing committees (Financial, Executive and Nominating), and several task forces (growing from Vision 2000 agenda). The proposal anticipated that Chattanooga Venture would include a membership of 2000 members, but at the time of writing the proposal, the nature of the membership had not been fully determined. The proposed organizational chart for the Chattanooga Venture Board of Directors is included in Appendix.

The positioning of Chattanooga Venture in the community structure was described in the proposal. The organization would be complementary to the economic development strategy proposed by the Chamber of Commerce. The role of Chattanooga Venture was “product development” and “quality control” in order “to build a city in which people will want to live, work, play, invest, rear their children, and retire.”

The total amount budgeted for the operation was $165,800 for four staff members’ salary and start-up costs. Another grant request of $60,000 was made later in the year for the renovation and furnishing of the storefront at the old Ross Hotel. The total Lyndhurst commitment to Chattanooga Venture in the first year was $225,800.

In their recommendation to the board, Rick Montague and Jack Murrah made the comment that this proposal establishing Chattanooga Venture was the “culmination of nearly all our previous programs designed to increase the sense of optimism, harmony,
and openness in the city” (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, Chattanooga Venture recommendation to the board, 1984).

Jack Lupton penned a letter to Mai Bell Hurley on June 7, 1984, acknowledging that he was “remiss” in not writing sooner, and that he had several things to discuss and would “broach” them first in the letter. He repeated what he had said publicly: “I am very excited about the limitless possibilities” (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, letter, June 7, 1984).

The editorial in The Chattanooga Times on May 22, 1984, announced the announcement before it happened:

This morning will bring the official unveiling of something called Chattanooga Venture. It will be the formal beginning of an open process of citizen involvement in community decision-making.... Chattanooga Venture is an open invitation to people from all walks of life, all areas of our community, all ethnic and socio-economic groups to participate in determining the course of change in Chattanooga.... This is a new day, and the sound you hear is opportunity knocking. (The Chattanooga Times editorial, May 22, 1984)

What Happened Next

August 9, 1984: The 60-member Board of Directors of Chattanooga Venture met for the first organizational meeting. A draft of the by-laws of incorporation was presented. The officers and a nine-person executive committee were elected. Mai Bell Hurley was chosen as chairman of the board. A motion was made and passed to hire Ron Littlefield as executive director. Vision 2000 was announced as the first initiative of Chattanooga Venture. Fred Obear, Chancellor of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, was selected as chairman of Vision 2000. Obear announced the six areas that would be covered in Vision 2000: Government, People, Places, Play, Work and Future Alternatives.
Aug 16, 1984: An open house was held at the newly-renovated Ross Hotel on Georgia Avenue near the center of downtown as the storefront offices for Chattanooga Venture and a community planning center.

September 25, 1984. Kickoff for Vision 2000 was held in conjunction with a speaker series, Dialogue ’84, co-sponsored with Allied Arts. The first speaker, William “Holly” Whyte, an urban design critic, spoke to a standing room only crowd at the Hunter Museum.


**Summary**

The political, economic, and cultural nadir that Chattanooga faced, amidst social division and mistrust in the early 1980s, created a crisis situation that demanded change and led to a turning point in the city’s history. The feeling of hopelessness and despair that gripped Chattanooga were the by-products of political divisiveness, economic distress, racial tensions, and social disconnection. The belief that a “power structure” or a few privileged individuals made all the decisions contributed to frustration, isolation, a sense of powerlessness, lack of participation, low civic pride, and resistance to progress. Chattanooga was an unlikely place for new ideas to prosper or for the future to have any promise.
Readiness for change was stimulated by a shift in leadership, the catalytic role of a local foundation, and the participatory nature of a series of learning events. These learning opportunities allowed residents to determine their values, hear new concepts of development and revitalization, and learn what other cities were doing to bring about change. A leadership visit to one of those cities reinforced approaches that promoted partnerships, collaboration, and consensus building. Following that trip, participants were determined that a process needed to be open to the whole community in order to overcome the divisiveness and tensions of the past. In a small, but open, study group, they developed a plan based on what they had learned from other cities.

No existing organization in Chattanooga had the mission, the board, or the structure to involve the public in setting a new course for the city. Something new had to be invented. The new organizational structure and its positioning in the community were the results of a collaborative process over several months. The eventual structure of Chattanooga Venture was not like anything that had existed before: a diversely-representative board of 60 people, a staff equally black and white, an office in a downtown storefront open to the public, and a call to the whole community to come and share their voices in the community’s future. The organization itself had to be positioned in the structure of the community and endorsed by the top political and economic leaders. With support and backing of citizens and leaders, the new organization was launched as an open, interactive framework for future public participation. The creation of Chattanooga Venture grew from the learning events that preceded it and from the collaborative efforts of people seeking to create a platform for change.
Researcher Positioning Statement: Structure

I remember one day calling Ron Littlefield to ask if I could come to one of the organizing meetings in the spring of 1984, but when the time came for the meeting that afternoon, I couldn’t make it. I didn’t have a babysitter and both the baby and I were exhausted. I made it to the April 19 Steering Committee meeting, but on the whole, I was not involved in, but greatly anticipating, what this new venture was becoming.

When Roberta Webb asked me to organize Dialogue ’84, a speaker series to kick-off Vision 2000, I quickly agreed. Pulling together a committee, we set to work in the spring of 1984, planning the events as more than a speakers’ series but as organizing opportunities for diverse elements of the community. This experience built on what I had learned from working with the Moccasin Bend Task Force. Ideas grow by involving people. People want to be heard. People want to connect. Those early instilled values of education and community had found a place to thrive.
CHAPTER X
ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

We need this creative cauldron going all the time. Dalton Roberts

Introduction

The analysis in this chapter applies learning theory to Chattanooga’s process of change described in the previous chapters. Community learning defines how new knowledge is created on the local level and then is fed-forward to the community structure. The description of creating community-level knowledge is examined from the perspective of the 4-I framework of Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) and from Morse’s (2004, 2006a, 2006b) six postulates of community learning. This chapter describes and explores Chattanooga’s experience through the lens of community learning. I draw conclusions at the end about community learning.

Summary of Themes

Five themes were explored in Chapter V-IX: Crisis, Readiness, Leadership, Openness, and Structure. A summary of the themes and the learning events associated with those themes is presented in Table 7.
Table 7  Themes and Learning Events, Chattanooga, 1980-84

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>CRISIS</td>
<td>Longo Report</td>
<td>Study: Analysis of conditions</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battelle Report</td>
<td>Study: Causes of poor image</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>READINESS</td>
<td>Chattanooga in Motion</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
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<td>Five Nights in Chattanooga Musical</td>
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<td>Images of the City</td>
<td>student architectural exhibits</td>
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<td>Moccasin Bend Task Force</td>
<td>public planning process</td>
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<td>Indianapolis Trip</td>
<td>inter-city visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arts Mean Business</td>
<td>one-day conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>OPENNESS</td>
<td>Options Study Group</td>
<td>study group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>Chattanooga Venture Committee</td>
<td>organizational sub-committees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is crisis necessary for community change to occur? Chattanooga’s experience was clearly spurred by the economic, political, and cultural crisis of the early 1980s. As Stroud Watson said, “Bad things motivate people to do things better.” According to Storm Cunningham (2008) and Moore and Brooks (2000), a crisis is considered necessary to prompt action. But Gianni Longo offered a different perspective. His experience of working with many cities taught him that a crisis is not the best time for a city to take action. The best time to take action, according to Longo, is when the city has the resources and the will to make something happen, not when it is in crisis.

However, from the perspective of a learning-based model of change, disequilibrium facilitates the drive for resolution. Cognitive dissonance occurs when one’s expectations are not confirmed (Festinger, 1957). Community cognitive conflict,
then, occurs when community issues confront or contradict people’s thinking or expectations. Conflict can create disequilibrium, and disequilibrium can be motivating. The crisis or the conflict creates the conditions for cooperation as Edelstein (1992) described: “Cognitive conflict is frequently, if not always, nested in interactional conflict, and social conflict generates cognitive conflict—the signal and function of collaboration” (p. 169). Therefore, from a learning perspective, crisis may not be necessary for change, but disequilibrium on the community level is a motivating factor for learning-based change.

**Application of the 4-I framework**

Community learning concepts are built on an understanding of organizational learning (Morse, 2006a). Crossan, Lane and White (1999) researched organizations in which renewal was the focus of organizational learning and proposed four processes that linked the individual, the group, and the organization in a multi-level approach, called the 4-I framework. The four processes of the 4-I framework, as described in Chapter II, are *intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing*.

When applied to the story of creating Chattanooga Venture, the 4-I framework offers a way to analyze it as a community learning process. Learning begins with individuals, then moves to the group level as meaning is shared, and then becomes “institutionalized” or manifested in the organization in different ways, as routines, customs, strategies, policies, or other “artifacts,” specific documents or models (Hedberg, 1981; Srivastava, 1983). The feed-forward and feedback analysis of community learning is based on the premise that community learning is multi-level: individual, group, organization, and community. There is flow and tension between the levels: “Feed-
forward relates to exploration. It is the transference of learning from individuals and groups to the learning that becomes embedded—or institutionalized—in the form of systems, structures, strategies, and procedures. (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 524).

Applying the 4-I framework demonstrates how these four related processes occurred in Chattanooga’s process of change.

Intuiting. New leaders emerged in the early 1980s who intuited possibilities, many of them expressing a desire for change. Intuiting is the preconscious recognition of possibilities (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999). Citizens, some scattered or isolated at the time, also expressed a desire to connect with others, to create the future, or to keep Chattanooga from going down the tubes. The Lyndhurst Foundation intuited that change was possible and without knowing the exact way sensed that the “good minds” both inside and outside Chattanooga had a role to play. The “energetic networks” of Gianni Longo and Robert McNulty in Partners for Livable Places provided networks of people and ideas that stimulated those minds in Chattanooga, awakening the ability “to discern and comprehend something new, for which there was no prior explanation” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 526)

Five Nights in Chattanooga stimulated an intuitive understanding that blacks and whites would enjoy music together, that cultural expression was unifying, and that Chattanooga could be a lively place. Some people spoke of Five Nights as the beginning of knowing that something could happen. The intuition was sparked.

Interpreting. The learning events discussed in this study present different models of interpreting new ideas. Interpreting is explaining an idea to oneself and others (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999). The process of learning many new concepts of
economic and community development made the unconscious intuition conscious and stirred a sense of readiness for change among individuals. From a learning perspective, it involved hearing new ideas, seeing patterns, making connections between things, discerning similarities and differences both in terms of what was and what could be (Wadsworth, 2004). In Piagetian terms, it was a process of assimilating new information and accommodating it to the reality of the situation.

*Chattanooga in Motion* presented the ideas in written format with the intention of arousing a sense of anticipation of possibilities. The magazine was distributed widely through the Sunday newspaper (circulation 80,000), but there is no way to determine its impact. The Quality of Life and Arts Mean Business conferences as well as the Images of the City exhibits were interactive interpretations through exhibits, panels, and presentations that stimulated conversations among participants and presenters. They provided ways to interpret new information through interaction with others. The interaction took place both with people from other cities presenting new ideas but also with local citizens and other participants. The conferences attendees numbered 300 and 350. The Images of the City had 5000 visitors for one exhibit; the interaction took place at the opening reception, through conversations, and through the media coverage which, in turn, interpreted the meaning and significance of the events.

Integration. The process of integration is both an individual and group experience, similar to accommodation in Piaget’s schema, as described in Chapter II, (Wadsworth, 2004). It is the process by which the individual learning is developed into shared meaning with others in a group, as in the integrative group process described by Mary Parker Follett (1918/1998). One applies the ideas to one’s experiences, and then within the
context of the group, meaning is developed both individually and as a group (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999).

The Leadership Visit to Indianapolis had elements of both interpreting and integrating. When the group experienced the reality of a city, shared meaning grew, and individuals in the group began to imagine application of these ideas to Chattanooga—this is the reason Indianapolis was described as “the beginning of everything” and certainly the beginning of Chattanooga Venture. On the trip to Indianapolis, a number of people developed a collective and shared meaning about how change could take place in Chattanooga, because they had begun to integrate the new concepts of economic development and community participation. As a result, they began to take ownership of the process.

The Options Study Group best exemplified the process of integration. The group consciously studied other cities; individuals took assignments, wrote up the results, and gave reports, and, then, the group reflected together on lessons learned. The process was facilitated with “interactional methods” (Doyle & Straus, 1976) that allowed for a self-directed, participatory process. The process of integration resulted in a collective product, an artifact describing Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000, which is included in Appendix D. Through the integrative process of learning and interaction, the group increasingly felt a sense of efficacy and empowerment.

Institutionalization. The process of institutionalization is embedding ideas into the systems, structures, procedures and strategies, and it sets community learning apart from individual or group learning. In communities, individuals change positions over time. In order for the learning not to leave with the individuals, the learning must become
embedded in the policies, systems, structures, or other practices both on an organizational level and on a community level, thereby guiding the actions of individuals not originally involved in the learning process. Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) described organizational learning: “Prior learning becomes embedded in the organization and begins to guide the actions and learning of organizational members” (p. 529).

Rick Montague wanted the experience of the Moccasin Bend Task Force to become permanent, or at least accessible to more people over a longer term. He said the purpose of Chattanooga Venture was “to institutionalize everything that the Moccasin Bend Task Force had done—which was relentless testing with the public, listening to the public, working with great people to see that a concrete project gets built…a large number of tangible goals” (R. Montague, 2011). His statement demonstrated that Chattanooga Venture was intended to be the institutionalization of the community process that had gone before it.

The Chattanooga Venture Committee, the work of overlapping sub-committees institutionalized the learning that had taken place previously. The learning had taken place by individuals through the various learning events and had been integrated in the Options Study Group into a plan of action. The institutionalization of the prior learning took shape in the creation of a new organization, the citizen committees, the affiliation patterns, the development of new leaders, and the open channels of communication (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999) resulting from the Chattanooga Venture Committee process (Appendix E). Those structural changes reflected the ideas of diversity, participation, citizen leadership, and community decision-making that were designed to overcome the impervious and closed system of the past. Chattanooga Venture is an
institutionalization of the ideas as a new organization. The Chattanooga Venture brochure (Appendix F) is an organizational artifact of the institutionalization of the ideas shared in the group process (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999).

**Application of Morse’s Six Postulates**

In this section, I apply the six postulates of community learning as laid out by Ricardo Morse (2004, 2006a, 2006b) to Chattanooga’s experience. The explanation of the theoretical framework for each postulate is included in Chapter III. The postulates were developed to examine the process of participatory governance and are based on organizational learning theory, whole systems change, and community-field analysis.

By applying Morse’s six postulates of community learning to Chattanooga’s experience, what insights do we gain both to the process and the outcome? To what degree did the process of creating Chattanooga Venture embody principles of community learning? Were the ideas generated by the community process fed-forward and embedded in the structure of Chattanooga Venture? Were the ideas fed-forward and embedded on the level of the community structure? Did the creation of Chattanooga Venture generate, or intend to generate, a learning community?

**Postulate 1: IDEAS**

*The community process creates new, collective knowledge in the form of shared meanings or collective ideas.*

Questions:

- What was the “community process?”
- What new ideas or collective knowledge emerged from the community process?
The first postulate emphasizes the generative learning process (Senge, 1994) that takes place within a community as new ideas are shared. The learning process happens through individuals first: “A basic assumption is that insight and innovative ideas occur to individuals—not organizations. However, knowledge generated by the individual does not come to bear on the organization independently. Ideas are shared, actions taken, and common meaning developed “ (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 524). Table 8 summarizes the community process as described by the eight learning events taking place in Chattanooga from 1981-84.

Table 8  The Community Process through Learning Events, Chattanooga, 1981-84

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chattanooga In Motion</td>
<td>Publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 3-color, 54-page magazine with photos, illustrations, and text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community awareness manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distributed in the Sunday paper and through the schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Nights In Chattanooga</td>
<td>Musical concerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series of open-air, free musical performances with big-name acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Heart of downtown on five consecutive Tuesday nights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images Of The City</td>
<td>Student Architectural Exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series of exhibits and presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open to the public, public reception, and media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Of Life Conference</td>
<td>One-day conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Featuring speakers from other cities, national experts, interactive sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open to the public and media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Moccasin Bend Task Force          | ▪ Public planning process  
▪ A three-year long public planning process envisioning the 22 mile river corridor  
▪ Consultant-led, highly participatory, under auspices of city-county-citizen task force |
| Leadership Trip To Indianapolis   | ▪ Three-day inter-city visit  
▪ Leaders and active citizens in public and private sectors  
▪ Visits sites, meet people, discuss among participants |
| Arts Mean Business Conference     | ▪ One-day conference  
▪ Morning workshops, lunch speaker, afternoon workshops  
▪ Open to the public, media coverage |
| Options Study Group               | ▪ Small study group  
▪ A self-directed, collaborative study group  
▪ Met weekly, studied other cities, made reports, reflected on lessons learned, led to organizational plan |

What were the ideas generated by the community process? Examining the documents of each event, newspaper accounts, and what people said provided the information to determine the ideas presented in each learning event. Table 9 illustrates the ideas that were generated by each event. A rubric of each event is included in Appendix B.

Table 9 summarizes the ideas generated by the learning events that comprised the community process in Chattanooga in the early 1980s. What began as new ideas from other cities and national experts became interpreted and integrated into the experience of people in Chattanooga. The process of interpreting and integrating new ideas through action and exploration generated shared meanings. The shared meanings and new knowledge that emerged from the process came to bear on the creation of Chattanooga Venture.
Table 9  Ideas Generated by the Community Process, Chattanooga, 1981-84

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chattanooga In Motion                | Citizen involvement  
Open planning process  
Urban vitality  
Downtown activities  
Neighborhood identity  
Positive image  
Cultural and natural assets |
| Five Nights In Chattanooga           | Downtown is for everyone  
Downtown is safe  
City center  
Music unites |
| Images Of The City                   | Public realm  
Quality of place  
Built environment  
Physical revitalization  
Downtown for everyone  
High standards  
Access to river |
| Quality Of Life Conference           | Economics of amenities  
Bring nature into the city  
Arts and cultural assets  
Waterfront development  
Quality standards  
Public private partnerships |
| Moccasin Bend Task Force             | The river was a public asset  
New image for Chattanooga  
High standards of development  
Openness and accessibility  
Public input  
Diversity of uses  
Better place for residents  
Public and private investment |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Trip To Indianapolis</td>
<td>Economic development based on quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public-private partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The new civics in leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community consensus for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GIPC—an organization to involve the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts Mean Business Conference</td>
<td>Arts generate civic pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts are big business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arts can revitalize downtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural strategies for economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places as art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Options Study Group</td>
<td>Best strategies for Chattanooga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning from other cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a broad based constituency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bolder plans work better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnership organization is needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The general trend of those ideas fell into three categories. One was efficacy or empowerment, that is, individuals can make a difference, communities can work together, and cities can change their identities. This positive reinforcement was demonstrated by success stories in other places. These success stories were told in the Quality of Life Conference, on the trip to Indianapolis, and again at the Arts Mean Business conference, and were reinforced by the lessons learned from other cities in the Options Study Group. Efficacy had to be acted on in order to take effect, but the idea that a community can change itself was a new and empowering idea. It became instilled gradually as people took action. As Jeannine Alday said in Indianapolis “The idea that we are going to take ownership of this was a new idea.”

The second trend reflected a change in strategic thinking about cities—that cities with vitality are in a better place to attract economic investment and generate economic productivity and innovation. Strategies for enhancing vitality included investing in
natural and cultural resources as a way of building vitality: 1. Greening the downtown, bringing nature into the city, enhancing the sense of place and the natural environment. 2. Appreciating and valuing the unique cultural assets, supporting local artists and attracting artists to the city, and hosting festivals and events centered on the arts. Music was used as the catalytic element in Five Nights in Chattanooga. These two ideas—that of enhancing the natural and cultural assets—were emphasized in Chattanooga In Motion, Images of the City, the Moccasin Bend Task Force, Quality of Life Conference, the trip to Indianapolis and in the Arts Mean Business Conference.

The third, and equally as important, trend was one of establishing high standards of development. Developing the city with high standards of design, connectivity, and accessibility was a new idea. The idea that quality standards enhanced community pride and attracted quality investment was emphasized over and over in Images of the City, Moccasin Bend Task Force, Quality of Life Conference, Arts Mean Business, in Indianapolis and from the other cities studied in the Options Study Group.

All three of these ways of thinking, that were reinforced through the different learning events, were not intrinsic to Chattanooga. They came from outside sources, from consultants, national organizations, and the experiences of other cities. These ideas or ways of thinking took root in Chattanooga through repetition and exposure to many different models and through the interactive community process, making the ideas locally embraced and subsequently applied, but not embraced by all and not applied without effort and compromise.

The most powerful new idea that emerged from the eight learning events was the one that promoted participation, that is, involving the public, including all segments of
the community, inviting people to the table. This new idea was part of the *new civics*, or the post-industrial thinking about leadership and decision-making. New civics realigned leadership to reflect changes in post-industrial economies with more diverse representation including ways in which government, business, non-profit organizations, and citizens could collaborate. This new idea of participation and involvement was not understood or warmly embraced by everyone, particularly those at both ends of the spectrum—those who held the reins of decision-making and those who felt completely left out.

Chattanooga was not unique in having a divided city or a disempowered public. Cities across the United States were just beginning to open up, to try new ways of involving the public and surmounting problems through a unique combination of citizen, business and corporate involvement (Holman, et al., 2007; Kessler & O’Connor, 2001; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001). Those new ideas of leadership and participation were emerging, but each community had to find its own way of making it happen.

The advance materials for the trip to Indianapolis expressed a desire for the kind of learning that would improve skills in one’s profession and in community efforts; in other words, it’s purpose was to enhance capacity individually and collectively: “Our hope is that the visit will facilitate a better knowledge and understanding among participants both in your individual professional activities and in your commonly-held responsibilities as community leaders in moving Chattanooga forward” (Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce, 1983). Even with good intentions, as described in Chapter VII, the Chamber of Commerce was not positioned to apply these new ideas.
What people in Chattanooga learned from these other cities was that an organization needed to be in place to make a community-wide visioning and goal-setting process happen as well as to implement the results. The process of generating new goals for the city would be aided by having an organization whose mission and purpose was to do just that. The creation of such an organization demonstrates an overall theme of this study—that as learning is fed-forward to the community level it becomes embedded in the structures of the community.

In the early 1980s leading up to the creation of Chattanooga Venture, eight learning events took place that generated new ideas. The purpose throughout was for people to engage with each other to learn—first, with people from other cities and experts in different fields, but secondly and most importantly, with each other. The ideas overlapped and connected to each other, representing concepts that had contemporary relevance to revitalizing cities in the post-industrial era.

Postulate 2: PROCESS

*Structured process of dialogue and deliberation facilitate the community process.*

Questions:

- How did a structured process facilitate community interaction and learning?

- How was this process different from educating the public?

The terms *dialogue and deliberation* are specific terms (Isaacs, 2000) used to describe ways in which the individuals in a community assimilate and accommodate new information together (Wadsworth, 2004) or as ways they interpret and integrate new
ideas into shared meanings (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999). The key concept contained in dialogue and deliberation, from a learning perspective, is interaction—the social nature of learning, the process of developing shared meanings and understanding (Senge, 1994; Isaacs, 2000; Bandura, 2001; Follett, 1930).

William Isaacs (2000) emphasized that dialogue is rarely done and, therefore, requires facilitation. His emphasis was on purposive lines of communication involved in listening and talking, but the ultimate purpose, according to Bridger and Luloff (1999) is on developing relationships particularly across interest lines. There are many interactive techniques to facilitate group process and collaborative decision-making (Holman et al., 2007) that Booher (2004) describes: “Together these processes point to the emergence of a new approach to governance, one that is more deliberative and democratic than traditional forms of public participation” (p. 32).

The Options Study Group most clearly resembled a process of dialogue and deliberation. The work of the group was described in the grant request to the Lyndhurst Foundation for the creation of Chattanooga Venture as happening after the trip to Indianapolis. “Returning to Chattanooga, the group recruited many more citizens and proceeded to systemically study the successes—and shortcomings of similar projects in … other cities.” That study resulted in the initial plan for the new organization: “After weeks of further debate, design, restructuring and refinement, the result is Chattanooga Venture” (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, Chattanooga Venture grant request, p. ii).

Stroud Watson described the community process as one that brought awareness of possibilities and then became part of the dialogue: “When plans got on the table, we tended not to let them disappear…[they] became part of the dialogue.” Each idea was
connected to the next idea, until, as Stroud said, “these things kept spinning off each other.” Mai Bell Hurley stated the process more succinctly: “Ideas came out of conversations.”

The most important thing learned, according to Tom Hebert, was “the power of getting people around a table.” The table represented the equalizer, that everyone came together on equal ground and could be a part of the dialogue, part of creating the solutions. Wall sheets also served as an equalizer. Hebert used wall sheets and markers so that everyone could see, react to, and be part of the collective thinking. His facilitation of the Option Study Group according to the interactive principles of Doyle and Straus (1976) enabled the group to integrate their thinking: “Integration is coherent, collective action. For coherence to evolve, shared understanding by members of the group is required” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 528.)

How was this community learning process different from educating the public? Many communities want to educate the public and, therefore, include an educational component, such as a speaker, or panel, or visual presentation, but they miss the interactive nature of the learning process. In the educational situations, the audience is passive, listening only, rather than being actively engaged in the co-creation of knowledge. Interaction is the key to distinguishing community learning from community education. Interaction is the chief nature of a social constructivist learning process.

Gianni Longo was wary of programs that intended to educate the public. Most of them were what he called “top down,” that is, someone had the knowledge and the public had the void that needed to be filled. He had tried educational campaigns himself and they fell like “a rock in a well.” On the other hand, he recognized the need for baseline
information. Longo’s report, *Perceptions of Chattanooga, 1980*, was not intended to be an educational tool for the public, but rather a baseline study of where the community was starting from to inform and prepare for the work ahead.

*Chattanooga in Motion*, on the other hand, was a printed educational effort. It was envisioned as “a tool intended to deepen public awareness of the part played by individual citizens” (Longo et al., 1981). It was the first attempt at visualizing the city’s future in different ways, but it was not didactic; that is, it did not just tell people what the future should be. Some ideas from other cities were shared, but they were grounded by the interviews, comments, and experiences of local people. Rick Montague’s hope was that it would create wonder, stir the imagination, make people want to be part of something that might be happening and, thus, make it happen.

Even though the magazine promoted and encouraged individual and collective action by requesting responses in the form of questionnaires and letters to the editor, it was still a one-way communication. Even with its broad distribution—80,000 copies in the local Sunday newspaper—it was limited in its ability to generate interaction. It was part of informing and inviting.

Recognizing this limitation, Longo followed the publication immediately with a direct experience, Five Nights in Chattanooga. What the magazine suggested popped into being with five consecutive live musical concerts in the heart of downtown. The magazine posed the possibility of being a lively town, but Five Nights in Chattanooga offered the experience of being with diverse people and enjoying music in what was previously considered a dangerous part of town. The magazine, on the other hand, put Five Nights in context—not just an isolated and bizarre event, but part of a new way of
conceiving of and experiencing Chattanooga. For many people, and for the city’s consciousness, it was reported, Five Nights in Chattanooga had a transforming effect.

Gianni Longo’s explanation of the difference between an attempt to educate the public and one that intends to engage the public in community learning is summarized in this statement, which Longo repeated:

Tell me and I will forget.
Show me and I will remember.
Involve me and I will understand.

Postulate 3: RELATIONSHIPS

The community process creates, maintains, or strengthens the relationships which constitute the social structure of community.

Questions:

- How did the creation of Chattanooga Venture create, maintain, or strengthen relationships?

- In what ways did those relationships reflect the social structure of the community?

Postulate 3 emphasizes the role of relationships in community learning. Relationships, in turn, became the connective tissue across the community, both individually and institutionally. “Managing change through learning has highlighted the importance of relationships between people and the formal and informal infrastructure of communities” (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 4). Morse (2006a) noted that the “community “ in community learning is built from the relationships that become the interactive structure of the community. Peirce and Johnson (1997) concluded, “There is no magic structure—just people and relationships” (p. 64).
Roberta Webb was new in town but accurately sensed that the people involved in the Options Study Group had not been brought together before. Pat Wilcox admitted she didn’t know many of the people involved because her associations were mostly in government or journalism. Jeanine Alday worked for the county and had never met Stroud Watson and many of the others involved. Tom Hebert described when he first met Mai Bell on the trip to Indianapolis, and he considered that relationship the beginning of his involvement in creating Chattanooga Venture.

Rick Montague was the one who introduced Tom Hebert to Mai Bell Hurley. He also introduced Mai Bell to Gianni Longo, and Gianni to Stroud Watson, who in turn, was “introduced to people who counted.” In fact, Rick was the connector with both inside and outside people, in the way that Malcolm Gladwell’s (2000) *The Tipping Point* described the change agent as the one who connects people. The relationships with inside and outside people was an important part of the Chattanooga process:

> The individuals who make up a community must regain trust in each other as well as trusting specialists who have knowledge which could be helpful. A return to democratic participation, civic engagement, and the creation of active relationships capable of sustaining and fostering trust and collaboration is necessary. (Lane & Dorfman, 1997, p.5)

Rick “struck up a relationship” that brought Gianni Longo, Robert McNulty, and Stroud Watson to town, and they, in turn, generated most of the early learning events. They were not ordinary consultants who come to town and left. They built connections with people and between people. Maria Noel commented that Gianni Longo was different from other consultants, because he believed that Chattanoogans could come up with their own ideas. In other words, his relationship with the community was empowering and was built of relationships.
Since the Lyndhurst Foundation contracted with these consultants, the foundation, itself, served as connector. But these choices were not just any choices, these were ones which had “energetic networks,” that is their power came from relationships and networks, and as a result of building a relationship with them, Rick hoped for Chattanooga to become part of those networks. Those connections and relationships with people outside the community began to happen through the Quality of Life Conference, the Arts Mean Business Conference, and the Leadership Trip to Indianapolis. In the Options Study Group, the participants made their own connections with people in other cities, thus gaining in confidence as they connected both inside and outside the community.

Mai Bell Hurley described the people who went to Indianapolis as “active.” Lane and Dorfman (1997) describe active relationships as ones that reach across or beyond one’s role.

Community is composed of social networks which form the community infrastructure. Relationships among people with the same roles are passive; relationships that cross role boundaries are active. Communities that exhibit active relationships have the greatest potential for sustainable community action and renewal. (Lane & Dorfman, 1997, abstract)

Typical professional peer relationships are passive and don’t build the capacity of the community across boundaries. An active community process mixes people across boundaries, brings people together frequently in different arrangements, and develops new lines of communication which in turn strengthen the web of interaction throughout the community (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). Building on the concept of boundary-crossers, John Parr and Bruce Adams stated that relationship building across boundaries needed to be learned and required hard work to keep it going. They developed the Parr/Adams
matrix for maximizing civic capacity that can be used as a checklist to determine participation: individuals, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, business, and government (Peirce & Johnson, 1997).

The lack of connection between the government and the people of the community, identified as a weakness in Chattanooga by the Longo report (1980) and the Battelle study (Minshall & Moody, 1983), had to be addressed through relationships. The participation of people from labor unions and from the African American community was essential because without the diversity the integrative group process necessary for community learning does not take place. But other connections were necessary for the mix as well. For example, people in government (city, county, and federal employees and people elected to office) developed relationships with community people, civic leaders, and corporate people. One participant found it so rare that he described it as “the first time in modern history” when he observed “bureaucrats” (government employees), citizens, and corporate leaders talking to each other.

The process itself grew through relationships. Rick Montague observed that “a lot of very effective women were involved” at a time when most things were dominated by males. Women tended to be connectors, to use relationships to build community. People brought people they knew. This is partly the way the Chattanooga Venture Committee built to a hundred people in a short time. One participant observed: “There was a committee, or a sub-committee, you had people bring in friends or people they think will be effective in addressing a problem. So it is an incredible networking that is going on.”

Granovetter (1973) defined “strong ties” as circles of friends and family and “weak ties” as social networking. Putnam (2000) looked at how these ties, which he
called “bonding ties” and “bridging ties,” build social capital, that is, how they increase the worth and capacity of a community. Bonding ties accrue to the value of the individual, and bridging ties accrue to the value of the collective, or the community. Therefore, interactions which build both bonding and bridging ties, increase the capacity and worth of both individuals and the community. Morse (2006a) emphasized the benefits that accrue to both the individuals and to the group when interactive learning takes place.

Gianni Longo attributed Chattanooga’s success, in part, to “Mai Bell’s rolodex.” Gianni was using rolodex metaphorically to describe her relationships and knowledge of the community: “She was able to draw from the knowledge she had of the community, the people necessary to make it happen.” Roberta Webb described Mai Bell’s way of putting people together: “She had studied the community to know effective groupings of people.” Mai Bell’s connections, both formal and informal, built a base of trust and commitment. She could see the transition that was taking place in the community, according to Roberta, and seize on that energy. When people became involved they felt the energy and it, in turn, attracted more people. The effective groupings of people, as Roberta called it, was an indication of the dynamic synergy that the process was creating.

From Gianni Longo’s perspective, the relationships energized the community. Many communities try; some fail and some succeed, but in Chattanooga, according to Gianni Longo, the visioning process succeeded “because it energized the community in terms of relationships and networks and all that good stuff.”

Stroud Watson had no authority in terms of power over departments or governing bodies. His only influence was through persuasion. The power of persuasion is built on
trust and trust is built through relationships. Later, when Miller Plaza, the Tennessee Aquarium, and the RiverPark were built, people could see the physical structures and be persuaded. Stroud said that when physical (structural) change happens in a place, it sets up an understanding that we are linked, that we are connected; the physical link creates a mental link, an identity of place. But in the early stages, Stroud had to build trust through relationships: “Engendering a nature in a community that the first thing they want to do is to make things better is probably the most important thing you can do because that then requires an energy change, an effort change, as well as an understanding.”

On the whole, the experiences in Chattanooga of assimilating and accommodating new ideas and concepts were social in nature; that is, they involved interaction with other people. Social cognitive learning theory emphasizes human agency, i.e., efficacy, both individually and collectively (Bandura, 2001). If people accommodate new concepts by applying them to their shared situations, then as a result, a shared meaning emerges (Vygotsky, 1978; Isaacs, 2001). As learning takes place individually and collectively, a sense of empowerment begins to build (Lane & Dorfman, 1997; Morse, 2006a).

Postulate 4: LINKAGES

A model of community as the structure of interinstitutional relations focuses the attention of researchers and community participants on the linkages across community institutions and social fields.

Question:

- In what ways did the creation of Chattanooga Venture generate linkages across community institutions and social fields?
Morse (2006a) made it clear that “focusing solely on the creative process of dialogue fails to explain how a community might learn” (p. 65). In order for community learning to take place, there has to be a “larger collectivity”—and that collectivity is attained through connectivity, through the links across the community. Kilpatrick’s (2000) “principle of interconnectivity” promotes interaction across individual, group and community levels, stating that relationships between people and groups are instrumental in sharing ideas. Morton’s (2003) *civic structure*, Wilkinson’s (1999) *community field*, and Lane and Dorfman’s (1997) *web*, emphasize the networks of connections among individuals, institutions and groups as the way in which learning occurs and is distributed in a community (Morse, 2006a).

Lane and Dorfman (1997) used the image of the web for the interconnectedness of individuals, groups, and institutions; the interconnected fibers of the community grow denser as the interconnected relationships multiply. In order for the community web to become more dense, people needed to connect across boundaries, or outside their roles or positions. Boundary crossing builds a stronger web. “Community develops as the community field develops” (Morse, 2006a, p. 53).

When I asked participants in the study to describe the community field in Chattanooga in the early 1980s, the answers were vague and uncertain. They found it hard to identify or describe a community field, even when I defined it, and no two answers were the same. Non-profits were mentioned, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Allied Arts, but not with any sense that they connected across the community. The city and county governments were considered at odds with each other. There weren’t enough neighborhood organizations to speak of. Churches were mentioned, but it was
noted that in some ways they separated more than brought together. Schools, the same. As Pat Wilcox summed it up, “We didn’t have that kind of well-woven field that was visible, that people were broadly, consciously aware of.”

Johnny Holloway said, “I kind of looked at all the different organizations that was here in Chattanooga, and I didn’t see any of them that was speaking to the issues from a grassroots perspective.” For that reason, he and others formed the “Community Coalition,” groups that represented the concerns of the African American community. Pat Wilcox pointed out that the African American community was in some ways more interconnected than the white community, but there were few bridges across the divide. In trying to bridge the divide, Johnny Holloway pointed out that there were few institutions in the African American community that had the resources to function in that capacity. He saw representation as important, but it seldom represented the community as a whole. The Urban League was intended to be an institution that bridged the divide, but usually representation fell on individuals, religious leaders, or positions of employment. The connective tissue, the web of interconnectedness, was weak in a fragmented community.

Pat Wilcox felt that the effort to create Chattanooga Venture did not have much diversity at first; it had to be built in the absence of a connective community web. “Everybody was out there. But we didn’t have the feeling that everybody was working together.” Therefore, the Chattanooga Venture brochure that she helped write emphasized openness, “an open association of citizens,” “partnership of all interests,” in an invitational tone, “We are saying, ‘Come, you can be a part of this.’” To Pat Wilcox the
audience was the entire community, “particularly the people who you didn’t see around, who weren’t involved.”

Stroud Watson noted that the process of producing the learning events also strengthened the linkages in the community. The linkages were strengthened by having different organizations co-sponsor the programs. That meant different people endorsed them, took responsibility for them, publicized them, and attended. As an organization, each co-sponsor publically supported the ideas, and could, overtime, consider applying those ideas to their own organization. According to Stroud, Chattanooga became “a richer, more diverse, more satisfying place to be and, therefore, was more likely to weather the changes, like a forest.”

The sponsors for the Quality of Life conference were the Chamber of Commerce and Partners for Livable Places. By sponsoring with a local leadership organization, Partners for Livable Places modeled the practice of partnering. The co-sponsors for the event included 20 organizations. Those organizations represented four of the six on the Parr/Adams matrix for maximizing civic capacity: non-profit organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, and government. It did not include individual sponsors or businesses; however, businesses were represented in the Chamber’s sponsorship. And individuals attended the conference.

The Arts Mean Business conference had 30 co-sponsors and again included all of the Parr/Adams matrix except for individuals and business. Businesses were represented on the board of Allied Arts, the sponsor, and individuals attended the conference. In this way, both conferences linked across the social fields of the community, according to the Parr/Adams matrix for maximizing civic capacity (Peirce & Johnson, 1997).
The individuals who participated in the Options Study Group came because of their own interest as “active” individuals, but some of them also represented the interest of their employers or administration. The list of employers represented in the Options Study Group correspond with the players on the Parr/Adams matrix in this way:

- Government: city and county governments, the planning commission, and TVA
- Business: Chamber of Commerce, Chattanooga Times, Electric Power Board
- Philanthropic: Lyndhurst Foundation
- Non-profit: Urban League, Allied Arts, United Way
- Individuals: a banker, an architect, an accountant
- Education is the one field that was missing.

Interaction builds social capital (Putnam, 2000). When social capital is both built and used in learning interactions, Kilpatrick (2000) described two kinds of resources people bring: knowledge resources and identity resources. Knowledge resources are embedded in someone who knows who, where, and when to get things done locally; identity resources are the ability and willingness to act for the benefit of the community. “Learning interactions can build or strengthen knowledge and identity resources, and so build social capital, the quality of the social capital that is built depends on the quality of the knowledge and identity resources used in the interaction” (Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 4).

Gianni described Mai Bell Hurley as having “the knowledge of the community to get the right people involved to make it work.” Mai Bell Hurley put to use both her knowledge and identity resources to link across the community when she and others developed the initial Chattanooga Venture board of directors.

Mai Bell Hurley described the board of Chattanooga Venture as “a very complicated mix.” She was not using something as simple as the Parr/Adams checklist, but she was checking and cross-checking many different concerns and needs in the
complex dynamic of the community. The complex task of weighing the balance of the community resulted in a 60-member board. This board was unique in the community’s experience. It stood out for its diversity of representation of blacks, union members, women, and people all across the social spectrum of the community. The Chattanooga Venture board had 14 African Americans who came from many different backgrounds, including doctors, pastors, educators, corporate employees, as well as a mechanic shop owner and a social worker. Five different labor unions were represented on the Venture Board including, the electrical workers, the building trades, the Teamsters, the machinists, and the sheet metal workers.

The 60-member board of Chattanooga Venture included all six of the Parr/Adams matrix: individuals, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, philanthropic organizations, businesses, and government. In this way, Chattanooga Venture built into its structure the principles of interconnectivity (Kilpatrick, 2000) and the potential of maximizing civic capacity on a local level (Peirce & Johnson, 1997). The linkages involved in the social matrix of the Chattanooga Venture board had the potential of developing relationships across traditional barriers and across the social structure of the community (Bridger & Luloff, 1990). The task, then, was to build connection and trust among the board members and between the board and the community. The web of relationships, linked organizationally and institutionally, was set in place to strengthen the fiber of the community web.

The Chattanooga Venture board represented diversity and cross-boundary relationships (Peirce & Johnson, 1997). The board integrated people from different social fields (Sharp, 2001) with different histories (Kilpatrick, 2000) representing different
positions or institutional affiliations across the community field (Wilkinson, 1991/1999). Chattanooga Venture created a setting for active relationships (Lane & Dorfman, 1997). The Chattanooga Venture board was evidence that the ideas generated in the community process were fed-forward to the level of the structure of the organization. This begins the discussion of Postulate 5.

Postulate 5:

Community learning occurs as knowledge created through the community process is fed-forward to the level of the community structure or field. A community has learned when this collective knowledge is institutionalized across the community structure, or rather, is embedded across the web of community institutions.

Questions:

- What evidence is there that the ideas generated by the community process were fed-forward and embedded into Chattanooga Venture’s structure?

- What evidence is there that the collective knowledge was institutionalized across the community structure?

Earlier I showed how the Options Study Group’s process of “debate, design, restructuring and refinement” resulted in the proposal for Chattanooga Venture. This illustrated how the ideas learned from other cities, through a deliberative group process, resulted in the creation of a new organization.

The discussion above about the Chattanooga Venture board is also evidence. These two examples demonstrate that the ideas generated in the community process were fed-forward and embedded in the structure of Chattanooga Venture.
However, Postulate 5 raises a deeper issue. The community learning must be fed forward, not just on the organizational level, but on the community level. If the process “fails to make impacts across the community structure, it has fallen short of community learning. It is when the knowledge is institutionalized across the community’s structure that community learning has occurred” (Morse, 2006a, p. 68). Therefore, more evidence is needed to determine if the collective knowledge was institutionalized in or across the community structure.

The interactive process of creating Chattanooga Venture demonstrates the close relationship of process and structure:

It is the structure of the community that makes a process of community learning possible, while at the same time it is the community process (occurring in dialogue and other forms of communicative action) that builds community structure. (Morse, 2006a, p. 68)

I am going to go back and walk through part of the process in order to provide a summative picture of how new knowledge is created and how that knowledge is fed-forward to the community level, based on Chattanooga’a experience.

People in Chattanooga assimilated and accommodated (interpreted and integrated) new ideas and concepts (Table 9) in a variety of learning opportunities, usually in interactive settings (Table 8). A sense of anticipation and hopefulness began to emerge as people gained efficacy, both individually and collectively (Bandura, 2001).

The Leadership Visit to Indianapolis, consisting of 47 leaders from across the community, intended to “facilitate a better knowledge and understanding among participants” and then to apply that knowledge and understanding to “commonly-held responsibilities as community leaders in moving Chattanooga forward” (Chamber of
Commerce, 1983). The collective process of learning together was intended to create both individual and collective action.

The trip was described as “a concentrated learning program” and “team building exercise.” Hebert described the change that took place as a result of the experience together by saying that they returned not just as “informed leaders” but also as “informed, caring citizens.” He was using the term *citizen* to describe both an individual and collective sense of responsibility to the community, i.e. increased efficacy and agency.

The sense of taking responsibility was demonstrated by Jeannine Alday’s memory of the moment when someone “stepped up.” The act of stepping up was both an individual and a collective act; as she described it, “The community had not stepped up before.” When Rick Montague said at the last dinner in Indianapolis, “We are going to do something…we’re not sure what…but we are going to go back and do something even better,” he was empowered by the collective learning that had taken place and the shared sense of possibilities.

Likewise the creation of the Options Study Group was an act of “stepping up” and taking ownership, an act of collective empowerment. The Options Study Group took on the task of figuring out what should happen next, despite the lack of interest or the other directions already taken by the Chamber of Commerce and the mayor’s office. The Options Study Group was open, invited people from different backgrounds, and grew as it progressed.

The process, at first, involved absorbing new information, defining terms, and finding common themes, meaning, and value as they related the information from other cities to Chattanooga’s experience. New terms were introduced. Pat Wilcox described
how the term *quality of life* had to be examined over and over. The very idea of making Chattanooga a good place to live was new to her thinking. *Quality of life* and many other new phrases—*quality of place, urban design, public participation, revitalization*—were all new concepts that had to be comprehended as they became part of the local lexicon.

Tom Hebert facilitated the process as a social learning experience (Doyle & Straus, 1976) with personal engagement and integrative group interaction (Follett, 1918/1998). It was more than just individual learning in a group, but was learning as a group, or as Kasl and Marsick (1997) described the collective process: “the group itself as a learner” (p. 250).

The group process attracted more people as the exploration continued. The participants in the Options Study Group interacted with more people, created more conversations and interactions that, in turn, provoked assimilation and accommodation of new ideas and concepts among a broader range of people. The lessons learned from the Options Study Group represented new knowledge collectively produced, or “jointly constructed knowledge” which was “more than the sum of individual experiences because of the interactive nature of the knowledge construction process” (Peters & Armstrong, 1998, p. 76).

At this point, we begin to see something different happen. The Options Study Group experienced conflict. Conflict, or disequilibrium, can generate new learning (Wadsworth 2004; Festinger, 1957). The conflict the Options Study Group experienced with the Chamber of Commerce and the plans to create PEP caused disequilibrium.

The conflict motivated the group members to put their ideas on paper and draft their plans for an organizational structure. If the exploration causes disequilibrium, the
exploration continues but is focused on making sense of (assimilating) that which produced the disequilibration. This is the construction of knowledge” (Wadsworth, 2004, p. 149).

Tom Hebert described the moment in a meeting on February 8, 1984, when the disequilibrium came to a point where it had to be resolved. The disequilibration, or the act of resolving the disequilibration, resulted in a letter. The letter presented an approach that would resolve the conflict and create a balanced way for both ideas to proceed by introducing a third entity, the Coordinating Council. From a learning perspective, it involved seeing connections between things, similarities and differences, both what was and what could be: “What once would have taken much deliberation and planning becomes the obvious thing to do” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 526).

Rick Montague’s letter to the mayor and county executive on February 9, 1984 (Montague, 1984) introduced the concept of the Coordinating Council. The letter was an example of what Mary Follett (1930) described as “coaction.” The group was empowered in the way Follett (1930) referred to as a process that integrates different, often conflicting, social interests, “not just to develop power in the individual, but also in the productive power of the collective life, that is in organizations and communities” (p. 49). The Coordinating Council itself represented “power with, not power over” (p. 49). The members of Coordinating Council asked not to have the organization drawn “over” PEP and Chattanooga Venture but to be represented parallel with their role defined as listening, learning, and advising. These are activities of co-learning (Follett, 1930).

The significance of the Coordinating Council was it realigned the community field. It altered the community field in such a way to allow Chattanooga Venture, a new
organization with community-wide intentions, to find a “space” to function in balance with existing organizations. The re-structuring of the community field enabled the new organization to become embedded in the community, and therefore, to have the potential of having an impact across the community web.

The creation of the Coordinating Council was the construction of a new idea to resolve disequilibrium. The new construction was possible because of the efficacy generated by the interactive nature of the collective learning, and it represented the degree to which the group achieved a synergistic dynamic through their interaction. “Perceived collective efficacy is an emergent group-level property, not simply the sum of the efficacy beliefs of individual members” (Bandura, 2001, p. 14). Although the letter was written by one person, it represented group-level efficacy. This collective efficacy was attained through the process and nature of the group-level learning and interaction that had taken place, primarily through the Options Study Group, but also through the preceding events that precipitated the Options Study Group’s role in the community process. This level of coherent action comes thorough continual conversation, dialog, and through shared practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Isaacs, 1993). “This shared meaning can cause those who have participated to more or less spontaneously make mutual adjustments to their actions” (Crossan, Lane, & White, 1999, p. 528).

This synopsis illustrates the process of generating new knowledge and increased efficacy on a community-level, or in this case, on a group-level, resulting in a structured solution with a community-level benefit. It moves from learning new ideas, interacting with more people, applying ideas to the immediate situation, facing and resolving conflict, generating a new idea on a group-level, to initiating a change in the structure of
the community field (Wilkinson, 1991/1999; Follett, 1930). “The answer to how to develop community is to look back to the conception of the community field itself. Community develops as the community fields develops” (Morse, 2006a, p. 53).

The ideas resulted in the creation of two new organizations, Chattanooga Venture and the Coordinating Council, and one community-level process, Vision 2000. The artifacts representing these are in Appendix F and G.

The Chattanooga Venture Committee did not proceed until it had the support and endorsement of the Mayor and County Executive, as well as the go ahead from the Leadership committee represented by the group that went to Indianapolis and others. The support and endorsement of people who represented the community structure were essential to the initiation of an organization that intended to reach beyond its own boundaries to have an impact on the community as a whole.

The purpose of the organization was to create a platform for greater public participation. That work had not yet been done. Vision 2000 was designed to extend across the community field and to involve the community in generating new ideas and setting new goals for the future. It should be clear from this study already, that the success of Vision 2000 was going to be dependent on Chattanooga Venture positioning itself and being accepted in the broader community field.

There is not enough evidence to answer the question that Postulate 5 poses. Chattanooga Venture was positioning itself in the community field and definitely can be said to have altered the community field with its creation and that of the Coordinating Council, but it cannot be said that the collective knowledge was institutionalized across the community structure or was embedded across the web of community institutions. To
answer that question would require a broader scope than the limits of this study. A longitudinal study with more organizations would have to be done, but that question is a worthwhile one and that study would be a worthwhile study.

Postulate 6:
A “learning community” has a well-developed community structure that has institutionalized the practice of community learning, thus facilitating a sustained community process. Such communities are said to be taking advantage of the “collective intelligence.” They have created ongoing “forums for interaction,” or space for the community process at the level of the community structure or field.

Questions:

- Did Chattanooga Venture institutionalize the practice of community learning?
- Did Chattanooga Venture generate, or intend to generate, an ongoing “learning community” or a sustained community process?

In the process leading to the creation of Chattanooga Venture, we have described and explored evidence of new ideas generated by the community process, the presence of active relationships linking across traditional boundaries, and the institutionalization of collective knowledge into an organizational structure. At this point, a dedicated group with a growing number of people with broad representation had established the rudiments of an organization which embedded collective knowledge in its structure, with the stated purpose of creating a platform for greater participation in the future. However, Postulate 6 pushes the concept further. To demonstrate that a learning community has been achieved, the practice of community learning must have been institutionalized.
If we use Smith’s (2001) definition, we could easily conclude that the Chattanooga Venture Committee was a learning community: people interacting with each other to affect change in a locality.

Senge (1994) defined a learning organization as one that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future. This study is limited in time and, therefore, cannot employ the word “continually,” but it can state that at the inception, Chattanooga Venture was created to expand Chattanooga’s capacity to create its future. Collective knowledge from the community process affirmed that broader participation was needed to envision Chattanooga’s future. Community involvement was repeatedly endorsed by other cities as key to generating buy-in and commitment to bold ideas. No other organization existed to be able to manage broad-based community involvement. The creation of Chattanooga Venture was the institutionalization of that collective intelligence.

Kilpatrick et al. (2003) with a team of researchers in Tasmania described a learning community in a way that aptly applies to the Chattanooga Venture Committee and the Options Study Group:

Learning communities are made up of people who share a common purpose. They collaborate to draw on individual strengths, respect a variety of perspectives, and actively promote learning opportunities. The outcomes are the creation of a vibrant, synergistic environment, enhanced potential for all members, and the possibility that new knowledge will be created. (p. 10)

One of the artifacts describing the process at the time is the initial grant request from Chattanooga Venture to the Lyndhurst Foundation. This proposal is an excellent statement of community learning in practice. The “concepts, ideas, and proposals” it is referring to are those in the grant request, i.e. Chattanooga Venture:
Above all else, it should be noted that the following concepts, ideas, and proposals did not spring fully developed from the mind of any single individual, nor do they reflect the collective wisdom and brief labor of any small group of people. These suggestions are, instead, a product of the very process they describe: the results of a carefully and methodically followed consensus building program involving dozens of individuals and many weeks of effort. (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, Chattanooga Venture grant request, May 2, 1984)

The above statement demonstrates the interrelationship between process and outcome. The process of creating a structure to promote community process was created by an interactive process of collective learning. The statement is referring to the work of the Options Study Group, but also to the community process as described in Table 8.

Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000 were envisioned—at the time they were conceived—as the next step in the community process:

Chattanooga Venture and Vision 2000 are intended to serve as the next logical step in a process which has included many Lyndhurst supported efforts in recent years: Five Nights in Chattanooga and Chattanooga in Motion by the Institute for Environmental Action; the Remote Design Studio of the U.T. School of Architecture; the Quality of Life work by Partners for Livable Places; the Moccasin Bend Task Force; Allied Arts and others. All have helped to pave the way for greater public education and greater public motivation. (Lyndhurst Foundation Records, Chattanooga Venture grant request, May 2, 1984)

Another artifact of the process is the Chattanooga Venture News, the newsletter written to accompany Vision 2000 in the fall 1984. The article describing the history of how Chattanooga Venture was created, written by Pat Wilcox, is included in Appendix G. The title, “Citizens Changing Ideas into Action,” inspired the title of this study because it exemplifies a natural expression of community learning. The article ends by pointing to Vision 2000 as an extension of the community process: “The process used in
structuring Chattanooga Venture will be the process used now in setting community goals through Vision 2000” (Wilcox, 1984, p. 8).

This statement, made in the fall 1984, was evidence that the people involved in creating Chattanooga Venture intended it to be a foundation on which future community process would take place. Vision 2000 would be the first, followed by task forces and committees, to accomplish the community goals generated by Vision 2000. The intent echoes what was expressed in the brochure (Appendix F) describing Chattanooga Venture as a “channel for exchanging information,” “a tool for solving problems,” “an open forum of citizens’ ideas,” a means for “focusing the collective energy of the community,” and “a permanent process of citizen involvement in decision-making.” These were, of course, idealistic statements of intent at the inception.

There is not enough evidence in this study to determine how they were actually carried out, but based on this evidence expressed at the inception, one could conclude that Chattanooga Venture intended to be what Postulate 6 proposed: a well-developed community structure that would institutionalize the practice of community learning, thus facilitating a sustained community process.

If the word “community” in Postulate 6 refers to the community as a whole, i.e. Chattanooga, then the question becomes: Did Chattanooga become a learning community? This study does not go far enough to determine an answer to that question, but it can be assumed that no matter how successful the process was, there were still segments of the community that were left out. All that we can claim under the limitations of this study is that in the early 1980s people in Chattanooga generated a community learning process in which new ideas were fed-forward and embedded in an organizational
structure. That organizational structure was able to take advantage of the “collective intelligence” of the people involved. It created “forums for interaction” (Vision 2000) and “space for community process” (the storefront) that opened the process for greater numbers of people. The intention is stated of keeping the process going.

In this way, the creation of Chattanooga Venture can be called a community learning process; it generated a learning community among those that participated, and it created the platform for an on-going, broad-based, community learning process.

**Conclusions about Community Learning**

Community learning is an underdeveloped concept that is grounded in many different fields and is emerging as a driver of community renewal (Moore & Brooks, 2000; Morse, 2006a). It addresses the questions of how to make change happen in a community and how to develop the capacity of a group of people in a place (Kilpatrick, 2000; Peirce & Johnson, 1997; Laudeman, 2013). If human resources are the key factor in economic development, community learning looks at how to energize and expand not just the capacity of individuals but also the capacity of the community. “Community learning suggests that communities as social collectivities can learn” (Morse, 2006, p. 50).

According to a constructivist model of learning, each person creates his own meaning from experience, and his actions are motivated by what is meaningful to him. By acting together on shared values, people create shared meanings and aspirations. Collaborative learning has a ripple effect through relationships, informal associations, formal networks, and linkages across the community (Wilkinson, 1991/1999; Follett,
Community learning is both a process and a product. People engage with each other in activities and actions, which require learning, and the result of that activity and learning is expanded capacity of the individuals and the group. That expanded capacity is community learning. Community learning is both an activity and a result of the activity. If the activities continue, or if they are institutionalized as practices in the way of working together or in organizational structures and policies, then the group can call themselves a learning community. A learning community is both a process and a group. It is a group of people who incorporate practices of learning and interaction continually.

Thus community learning occurs in this context where citizens interact through different “modes of association” (Follett, 1918/1998) and create new ideas and meanings. It is through the communicative [inter]action that occurs in these relations that new knowledge is created, and thus learning occurs. This mutual learning, a creative force, can be a tremendous asset to communities if it can occur and be utilized at that level. Thus, as learning is integrated at the community level, a phenomenon we call community learning is said to occur. Community learning is a key variable in understanding community capacity and is viewed normatively as a process through which communities achieve strategic renewal and success. (Morse, 2004, p. 68)

The research for the study is based on the lived experiences of people in Chattanooga, Tennessee, creating an organization whose purpose was to create a platform for greater community involvement. The combination of visioning and planning that came from the public process, in turn, created goals that when they were acted on and built became the engines that further drove development (Bunnell, 2002). When physical structures that were the result of community goals came into existence (the Tennessee Aquarium, the Tennessee RiverPark, Miller Plaza, and other buildings and walkways),
people focused on them and didn’t see the public process that made them happen. When buildings and structures were built, people focused on the final result and lost sight of the fact that those structures resulted from the involvement of people and the processes of learning and interaction. As a result, those processes of learning and interaction became invisible.

It needs to be recognized that in examining a community, all these domains will be visible to a greater or lesser extent as outcomes of a great deal of ‘undercover’ activity, except that it must be realized that the undercover activity—the process (learning) activities as we are recognizing them to be—are the oil between the cogs. (Falk & Harrison, 1998, pp. 611-12)

This metaphor of oil between the cogs is particularly apt for a vehicle of change (Bunnell, 2002) or a renewal engine (Cunningham, 2008). The oil is not what you see when you look at a vehicle or the work that the engine accomplished, but without the oil, things would not have gone as well or may have come to a grinding halt as the machine faltered altogether. Keeping the engine of community development or community renewal going is dependent on maintenance of a good, healthy, and well-maintained supply of oil between the cogs. (Falk & Harrison, 1998; Cunningham, 2008).

For Dalton Roberts, the county executive, it came down to the spirit of people: “The more I talk to everyone the more I realize it’s about revitalizing the spirit and energy of people. It’s not just building buildings, It’s not just transforming the waterfront. It’s transforming the way people think about themselves” (R. Dalton, 2011). The change experienced internally is as significant as the change that takes place externally.

There are two components of learning often confused with each other, one is the process of learning and the other is the outcomes of that process. The learning process may include concerns about acquisition of information, instruction, cognition, learning
styles, texts or sources, prior learning, online learning, etc. Learning outcomes are considered observable or measurable and, therefore, become an object of interest to researchers.

If one looks for evidence that a community has learned, what evidence does one look for? According to Morse (2006a), the collective intelligence (new knowledge and skills) must be fed-forward (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999) and embedded in the structures of the community. The ripple effect of the interconnectivity must be connected with indicators of community learning (Falk & Harrison, 1998). The indicators are evidence that community learning has been fed-forward and embedded in the structures of the community.

I suggest six categories of indicators as ways in which community learning can be evidenced in the community structure. Research beyond the scope of this study would be necessary to document these indicators:

1. Language (new words, phrases, and concepts; how people talk about the community, how people tell the story)
2. Policies (official policy or practices, ways of relating and working that engage people in decision-making, visioning, planning)
3. Organizations (new organizations or changes in existing organizations to be more inclusive or participatory)
4. Physical Structures (buildings, parks, walkways that promote access and openness)
5. Celebrations (festivals, ceremonies, rituals that bring people together across boundaries and acknowledge contributions)
6. Leadership patterns (training programs, collaborative efforts, many ways to develop leaders)

In summary, community learning is both commonplace and emergent. It is the most basic way that humans interact. Humans are social animals, they live in groups, and they evolve because they learn. They learn both individually and collectively. They learn by talking to each other, thus language is universal; they learn by interacting, observing.
communicating, solving problems, reflecting, and applying what was learned to a
different situation. That is the commonplace part. The emergent part is a concept. The
concept of community learning is nascent. It is emerging in many different fields of study
but has not been the subject of enough research to have a fully developed understanding.
This study intends to fill that gap, to add a body of research to the examination of the
phenomenon of community learning.

This study has implications both for theory and for practice. It develops the
theoretical understanding of the concept by drawing from its different conceptual roots,
both in learning theory and community development. The research examines a past
experience of one community and draws conclusions of a theoretical nature that can be
applied in other situations.

If I had to find a formula for my conclusions about community learning, I would
start with: Learning + Connection.

If I stopped there, I would be on the track toward defining community learning.
Building relationships. Connecting people. Bridging divides. Bringing people together in
a context where interactive or co-learning is taking place. Solving problems. Creating
things. Generating ideas. “The construction of knowledge within this relationship is joint
knowledge construction, and is also more than the sum of individual members’
knowledge,” or in other words, 1 + 1 = 3” (Peters & Armstrong, 1998, p. 76).

Constructing knowledge jointly creates more than the sum of its parts. Mary
Parker Follett described as early as 1918 the power of the integrative group process. And
Ricardo Morse (2006a) called integrations on the community level the creative,
integrative community process. Community learning is, quite simply, learning and
connection among people living in an area. This happens informally when people bump into each other and share information about something they like or just heard, for example. But if it happens on another level, that is the level of collective action, which links a web of relationships and builds something in the social interest, new ideas of what is possible and desirable come into being. And that’s called vision. So the equation grows:

\[
\text{Learning + Connection} = \text{Vision}
\]

With a little boost, learning and connection create a shared vision of what could be and the desire for what could be drives change:

\[
\text{Learning + Connection = Vision} \rightarrow \text{Change}
\]

Wanting what one envisions provides the focus and energy for learning. If we act on that vision, we build our capacity, both individually and together. That’s generative learning (Senge, 1994) and it builds social capital (Putnam, 2000) because it builds connections and trust. The interrelationship between learning, connection, and vision is at the core of community learning (Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

\[
\text{Learning + Connection = Vision} \rightarrow \text{Change (Community)}
\]

Learning plus connection equals vision. Vision not only drives change but it also builds community. It has a multiplier effect. You could say, learning builds community and community builds learning. It not only builds community in the relationship sense but it also builds value by increasing our capacity (Bandura, 2001). We are worth more. Our community is worth more. We have generated value.

\[
\text{Learning + Connection = Vision} \rightarrow \text{Change (Community)} = \text{Value}
\]
Learning plus connection equals vision. Vision drives change and generates community, which enhances our value, both individually and collectively. Community learning is the basis for an economic and community development strategy that should continue to reap benefits as long as it’s in practice.

Conflict is part of the learning process. It generates disequilibration, the process of resolving disequilibrium. Conflict motivates change. New ideas will result, preferably unifying ones. There are always forces of opposition and powers of dissolution. People have different ideas. People don’t want to change the way things are. People will wear you down. In other words, the need to connect and learn are always there. As soon as one thing’s done, there’s another and so forth. Community learning requires on-going vigilance.

Cunningham (2008) said that the “culturing” component was often left out or not done well. Culturing involves learning and connection. It’s bringing people together to imagine what could be and generate the focus and energy to get it done. The culturing component get short shrift because it’s too hard to do it all the time, especially when no one is in charge of it. If it’s no one’s job, no one wakes up on Monday morning thinking about community learning.

But what if someone did wake up on Monday morning and came up with plans to get people connected and learning? Not just one person in a community, but many. What if these people worked in business, government, non-profits, education, and in many groups across the web of the community. They would be like public-relations people, but instead of relating to the media and putting a “good spin” on things, they would relate to
people and groups in a community and create the ideas and connections to “spin things off each other,” as Stroud Watson described the process in Chattanooga.

This study suggests the need for community learning practitioners. This new professional field might attract “connectors” (Gladwell, 2000) or it might provide an opportunity to train people in the theory and practice of community learning. In order to develop this field of professional studies, we need more people performing research in the field.

Recommendations for Further Research

I recommend participatory action research take place between universities and communities. This research would focus on many fields and, therefore, would be interdisciplinary. The areas in Chattanooga where participatory action research could be applied include the following.

• Research needs to continue where this study leaves off. Since this study stops with the creation of Chattanooga Venture, it does not cover Vision 2000 and what resulted from it. A survey of the Vision 2000 goals was conducted in 1993 for ReVision 2000 to determine what had been accomplished in 8 years. This survey needs to be updated and further research done on the changes in Chattanooga over thirty years, including economic data.

• Change in the form of city government from commission to council. How did it come about and what were the results.
• Chamber of Commerce: How the Chamber changed leadership, sponsored intercity visits, initiated Leadership Chattanooga, and changed economic development strategies.


• The greening of Chattanooga. The trails and walkways. The outdoor initiatives. How did the greening of Chattanooga contribute to economic development.


• RiverCity Company. The Coordinating Council. The role it played and the role it now plays. A visual presentation. Lessons learned in a public private partnership.

• Internet and Broadband in Chattanooga. The changes in learning and connection due to the internet. Gig City. Opportunities in technology.

• A Longitudinal Study of Chattanooga. Experiences of community learning from the 1980s till today. What changes in the community field and community leadership have taken place. Can we trace or document
community participation over time? What was “the Chattanooga Way” and how did that terminology come about?

Research on other communities.

• Compare and contrast two cities: one that used community learning processes and one that didn’t.

• Every community has issues where participatory action research would build an exploratory bond between the university and the community. This link would develop and expand the capacity of both.

Limitations of the Study

When I started on this study I intended to cover a much longer period of time. I initially thought it would be possible to cover the 30 years since Vision 2000. I particularly wanted to get into the age of the internet and possibly compare and contrast how things were done then and now. But as I began to interview people and research the materials, I found the topic narrowed to a specific time. I initially intended to cover Vision 2000 as well, but the research pushed my focus back in time to the early 80s instead of forward. The antecedents to Chattanooga Venture were important in describing the community process. Therefore, the study is limited in scope and time frame and ends with the creation of Chattanooga Venture.

Many more people were involved in the creation of Chattanooga Venture. People who were not involved might also be able to provide a different point of view. Document search was limited to that which was archived. A few people gave me things they had in their possession, reminding me that a lot of history is kept in boxes in
basements or attics (mine included). There needs to be an organized effort to collect the materials related to Chattanooga’s renaissance while the sources are still available.

Throughout this study, I wanted to ask more people for lessons learned. What did you learn from these experiences? What do you think the community learned? Because of the collective nature of Chattanooga Venture, it begs for a collective reflection. As I said earlier, the greatest limitation, in my mind, is that absence of a collective reflection. By the very nature of studying collectively-constructed knowledge, there ought to be a way to reflect on it collectively. Every person will have a different story and different meaning. People applied the lessons in different ways. I think a collective reflection would give us an opportunity to see what people in the community learned from the process, not just for the lessons learned, but also for the meaning and significance of the events in people’s lives as well as to the life of the community.
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APPENDIX A

LIST OF INFORMANTS

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
## LIST OF INFORMANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>CHC</th>
<th>EMC</th>
<th>Black/White</th>
<th>Male/Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jeannine Alday</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommie Brown</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Hebert</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Holloway</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Holmberg</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mai Bell Hurley</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revered E. Keesee</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ron Littlefield</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gianni Longo</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Montague</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maria Noel</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fred Obear</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalton Roberts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gene Roberts</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally Robinson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harry Tate</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stroud Watson</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clark White</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Wilcox</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberta Webb (Miles)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>W</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHC (CHATTANOOGA HISTORY CENTER archival transcripts, 2011)

EMC (interviewed by Eleanor M. Cooper, 2012-2013)
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY LEARNING.
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to describe and explore community learning in the founding of Chattanooga Venture. The study will cover the first year of Chattanooga Venture from fall 1983 through fall 1984.

The researcher is conducting this interview as part of research for a dissertation required for the EdD degree at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. This study has been approved by the University Institutional Review Board.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

You will be asked to participate in an interview about your involvement in the Chattanooga community during the time covered in the study, particularly as it relates to the first year of Chattanooga Venture.

Time required:

The interview should last approximately one hour.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks to participation. The benefits are strictly personal and social.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation.

Confidentiality:
This study does not grant confidentiality. Participants in this study give permission for their identities to be known and for their real names to be used in the study, if needed.

**Voluntary participation:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

**Right to withdraw from the study:**

You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

**Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:**

Graduate Student researcher: Eleanor M. Cooper  
423-624-1215 elecooper2@gmail.com

Faculty adviser: James Tucker, McKee Chair of Learning, College of Health, Education and Professional Studies. 423-425-5261 James-tucker@utc.edu

**Agreement:**

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description. I understand that my identity will not be confidential and give my consent for the researcher to use my name or the information imparted in the dissertation or any subsequent publications. I understand that the materials from this study may be included as part of the Chattanooga Venture archive at the Chattanooga Public Library or the Chattanooga History Center and I give my consent for my materials to be included in the archive.

Participant: __________________________ Date: ________________

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Bart Weathington, Chair of the Institutional Review Board, at 423-425-4289. Additional contact information is available at [www.utc.edu/irb](http://www.utc.edu/irb)
APPENDIX B

THE LEARNING EVENTS
Name of event: Chattanooga in Motion
Date: June 30, 1981
Type of event: A publication
Description: A 3-color, 54-page magazine with photos, illustrations, and text. “community awareness manual”
Sponsor: City of Chattanooga; the Institute for Environmental Action, New York
Funder: Lyndhurst Foundation
Purpose: “a tool intended to deepen public awareness of the part played by individual citizens.” 1) increasing citizen awareness and participation; 2) Stimulating urban vitality
Ideas generated: Individuals can make a difference and take action; The image of the city should be changed from within, not cosmetic improvements; A vibrant downtown is essential to a vibrant community. Decision-making should be more open and participatory; Vitality stimulates economic development; Art, culture and the physical environment play a role in attracting businesses; Neighborhood organizations increase identity and participation; Civic Involvement; Open Planning Process; Positive Public Attitude
Recommended actions: An Active Downtown; Fairs and festivals; Creative historical renovation; Neighborhood organizations; Community planning storefront
Was it open to the public? Yes
How many were distributed: 80,000 copies in the Sunday newspaper, 5,000 to schools
Participant types: Did it have representatives of each: individuals, non-profits, education, philanthropic, business, government. The content included information from all of these. Only government and philanthropic were involved in producing it. Interviewees were primarily from community and business. But all 6 categories were mentioned in the magazine as important players in the community.
Any response forms? Survey forms were included. Letters to the editor were encouraged.
Media coverage: 80,000 copies were inserted in the Sunday paper; 5,000 distributed in schools. Newspaper articles and TV covered it in advance.
Results or Follow-up: Unknown number of surveys returned; letters to editor written. It became an important artifact of the process. Many of the ideas in the magazine were carried out.
**FIVE NIGHTS IN CHATTANOOGA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of event</th>
<th>Five Nights in Chattanooga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Tuesday evenings, July 14 through August 11, 1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of event</td>
<td>Musical concerts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Outdoor musical concerts in the heart of downtown on five consecutive Tuesday nights in the summer of 1981. Featured big name acts in five genres designed to attract different segments of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>The Lyndhurst Foundation and the City of Chattanooga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funders</td>
<td>Lyndhurst Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas generated</td>
<td>Downtown is for a place for everyone; Downtown is safe; Sense of city center; Music unites all segments of the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was it open to the public? Yes

How many attended: 45,000

Types of participants: Only philanthropic and government planned the event. It is hard to determine who participated, but everyone was there as individuals, not representatives of groups.

Any response forms? None

Media coverage: Several local newspaper, radio, TV coverage

Results or Follow-up: Newspaper reported as: “unlike any event downtown Chattanooga has ever seen.” Downtown was considered safe place to gather for festivity; Changed attitude of police; Changed mood of the city; Contributed to festive mood when the name of Ninth Street was changed to Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.; Led in 1982 to Riverbend Festival; Led to many arts and music festivals downtown such as Nightfall.
IMAGES OF THE CITY

Name of event: Images of the City
Date: Spring and summer 1982, then every semester after that for 2 years.
Type of event: EXHIBIT
Description: UTK architecture students under Stroud Watson presented models of the downtown and riverfront, based on specific urban design principles, promoting new images for the city. An opening reception and student presentations accompanied the exhibits.
Sponsors: UTK School of Architecture, the Remote Design Studio, and City of Chattanooga
Funders: Lyndhurst Foundation
Ideas generated: The public realm: “the living room of the city is for everyone.”
“More active, balanced and beautiful city”; Downtown is the community’s living room; Physical revitalization is connected to economic revitalization; Public access and private investment go together; If you make a great place, people will come and people will invest; High standards are worth the cost
Was it open to the public? Yes
How many attended: 5000 (to one event)
Participant types: The target audience was architects, city planners and private citizens—but it was open to the city as a whole
Any response forms? 3000 surveys filled out (at one event)
Media coverage: Initially ignored, then given full page coverage with photographs in local newspaper. Also covered by radio, local TV.
Results or Follow-up: Led to establishing the Downtown and Riverfront Design Studio in the regional planning office. Led to Miller Park plans and guidelines; influenced ideas in downtown and riverfront. Tennessee River Walk; Night Fall and downtown activities; street landscaping for pedestrians; downtown housing; access to Arts District. Pedestrian, bikeways, pathways corridors.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>QUALITY OF LIFE CONFERENCE</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Name of event:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Date:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Type of event:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sponsors:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funders:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ideas generated:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Was it open to the public?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How many attended:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant types:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any response forms?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Media coverage:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Results or Follow-up:</strong></td>
</tr>
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## MOCCASIN BEND TASK FORCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of event:</th>
<th>Moccasin Bend Task Force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>1982-1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of event:</td>
<td>Public Planning Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>A three-year public planning process led by a city/county appointed task force that involved the public in envisioning the 22-mile river corridor. Led by planning firm of Carr, Lynch Associates from Cambridge, MA. Emphasized public participation and hosted 65 meetings through the county in neighborhoods, churches, schools and other community places. Concluded with largest public event to that date, over 1000 people in the new Trade Center, February 1985.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors:</td>
<td>The County Executive, the City Mayor, and the regional planning commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funders:</td>
<td>City, county and Lyndhurst Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas generated:</td>
<td>New image for Chattanooga; Accessibility — The riverfront is open and accessible to everyone; Participation — If the public is involved, the public will own it. Diversity of uses — Residential, commercial, and recreational uses can work together. High standards — High quality development increases pride and attracts investment. Better Place — Making a better place for the people who live here creates a better image and also attracts tourists and investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was it open to the public?</td>
<td>Yes. It was an open public planning, highly participatory process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many attended:</td>
<td>65 meetings throughout the county. Over 1000 people attended the final presentation demonstrating high level of public interest and involvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant types:</td>
<td>individuals, non-profits, education, philanthropic, business, government — were involved in the planning and in the attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any response forms:</td>
<td>There were many ways to give response, both written and spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media coverage:</td>
<td>Tremendous media coverage in all venues, newspapers, radio, TV, magazines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results or Follow-up:</td>
<td>The river became the center of focus for the community and a mix of uses all had a place in the plan. The plan was based on making the riverfront accessible and making the city a better place to live. It resulted in the Tennessee RiverPark Master Plan; The Tennessee Riverwalk; The Tennessee Aquarium; Ross’s Landing; Coolidge Park; And many other riverfront developments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDIANAPOLIS LEADERSHIP VISIT

Name of event: Indianapolis Leadership Visit
Date: September 25-27, 1983
Type of event: INTERCITY VISIT
Description: Three-day trip to another city
Sponsors: Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and Partners for Livable Places
Funders: Lyndhurst Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, and participants
Ideas generated: Participation of all segments of the community; Bold ideas attract investment; Public-private partnerships; Economics of Amenity: Economic development strategy that promotes quality of life; New Civics: realign leadership to reflect changes in post-industrial economy, more diverse: government, business, non-profit organizations, and citizens collaborate; GIPC—the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee organization of a cross-section of community leadership tied directly to Mayor’s office; 60 member diverse board; task forces on issues initiates projects; seek partnerships
Was it open to the public? No
How many attended: 47 leaders
Participant types: Leaders from all six areas: individuals, non-profits, education, philanthropic, business, government.
Any response forms? Follow-up meeting produced “Lessons Learned from Indianapolis”
Media coverage: Local newspaper
Results or Follow-up: Trip to Indianapolis is credited as the beginning of “everything” including Chattanooga Venture. Group continued to meet after the trip and studied other cities. GIPC served as model for Chattanooga Venture. Chamber continued InterCity Visits for many years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of event:</th>
<th>Arts Mean Business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>October 26, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of event:</td>
<td>One day conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description:</td>
<td>One-day conference on the interrelationship of the arts, economic development, and quality of life, with morning and afternoon workshops, lunch and speaker. Presentations from other cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors:</td>
<td>Allied Arts and Partners for Livable Places; including more than 30 local co-sponsors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funders:</td>
<td>Lyndhurst Foundation, participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas generated:</td>
<td>The arts can stimulate community spirit, civic involvement, tourism, and economic vitality; The arts are “big business” in other cities; The arts can revitalize a floundering downtown; The arts can generate community pride and sense of identity; Public art; Places as Art; Open spaces and greening the city; Live/work spaces for artists; Cultural strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was it open to the public?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many attended:</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant types:</td>
<td>Thirty associate sponsors of the event included non-profits, education, philanthropic and government. Business was represented on the Allied Arts board. Many interested individuals attended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any response forms?:</td>
<td>Questionnaires /evaluation forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media coverage:</td>
<td>Local newspaper and television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results or Follow-up:</td>
<td>The Allied Arts board expanded its mission to encompass quality of life issues and raised $6 million to support the arts; Dialogue ’84, a series of workshops on the natural, cultural and physical assets of Chattanooga and the future of the city; Association of Visual Artists, The Four Bridges Festival, Riverbend Festival, and other arts festivals and events emerged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OPTIONS STUDY GROUP

Name of event: Options Study Group
Date: December 12, 1983 to February 27, 1984
Type of event: Small study group
Description: Open group meeting weekly to study other cities and develop an organizational plan for Chattanooga
Sponsors: Chamber of Commerce, Indianapolis Leadership Committee
Funders: None
Ideas generated: Other cities are successful in turning themselves around when they involve the public and have bold initiatives. A partnership organization is needed to involve the public in setting goals for the city; The partnership organization needs to be positioned in the structure of the community.

Was it open to the public? Yes, but was also by invitation
How many attended: Between 15-38
Participant types: Did it have representatives of each: yes individuals, non-profits, education, philanthropic, business, government.
Any response forms or results: Minutes of the meetings; Organizational chart created at the end
Media coverage: None; Updates with minutes sent out to growing mailing list
Results or Follow-up: Resulted in the Chattanooga Venture Steering Committee; Resulted in creation of the Coordinating Council; Led directly to the creation of Chattanooga Venture
APPENDIX C

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR CHATTANOOGA VENTURE, PEP,

AND THE COORDINATING COUNCIL
APPENDIX D
DESCRIPTION OF CHATTANOOGA VENTURE AND VISION 2000,
FEBRUARY 27, 1984
PROPOSAL FOR A CONSENSUS BUILDING/STRATEGIC
GOALS PROGRAM FOR GREATER CHATTANOOGA

Chattanooga is a community rich in history, bright in promise. As an industrial center, the global forces of social and economic change of the recent decade have permanently altered the fabric of the city. An age of dramatic and painful transition is underway and the future holds both challenge and opportunity.

Like many other communities, Chattanooga often has difficulty analyzing specific problems, proposing reasonable solutions, and pursuing an effective course of action to achieve the greatest benefit. The problems are large and the means to remedy difficulties are limited. The complexity of the political process results in a lack of consensus on many issues and the opportunity to move forward with confidence and determination is sometimes lost as issues become factionalized. Action is paralyzed by controversy. Energy which could be spent on a solution is wasted in a fruitless tug-of-war between well meaning opponents.

Chattanooga is facing a wide spectrum of issues which will require the involvement of the area's finest minds. Fortunately, it is believed that the community is blessed with a deep reservoir of untapped leadership talent which can provide new and innovative ideas to create an environment of progress, restore a demand for excellence, and promote an image of excitement and adventure.

To provide an organized framework for the greater Chattanooga community come to grips with the future, the following actions are proposed:

1. Organization of a broad-based consensus building entity to address crucial issues, to examine alternatives, to provide an effective forum for public debate, to find a new niche for Chattanooga and to propose courses of action which the community--both public and private--can diligently pursue with the assurance that all options have been thoroughly and realistically examined. This new entity must involve a balanced crosssection of the population--without domination by any special interest other than the general betterment of the community--but with adequate representation from all local governments, from the private business community, from organized (and nonorganized) labor, from minority groups, and other elements. The consensus-building entity shall have a large board of directors of 35-50 members, and a large and open membership so as to assure access to the policy/advisory decision making process by the total community. It is suggested that this new entity be known as the Chattanooga Venture Committee.

2. Undertaking of a rigorous and carefully organized process to select the few most critical issues currently facing the community, to submit these issues to careful technical examination and scrutiny by community leadership, and to propose realistic and effective action to move Chattanooga to the forefront--capitalizing on the opportunities of the changing world situations. This process will be the initial thrust of the Chattanooga Venture Committee and will set the pattern for dealing with issues and controversies as they arise in coming years. It is intended that this initial process will follow the recognized outline for business strategic planning so as to assure a product which will have the confidence of both public and private interests. The proposed title for this specific program is **Vision 2000**.
APPENDIX E

CHATTANOOGA VENTURE COMMITTEE –SCHEDULE OF SUB-COMMITTEES,

MARCH-MAY, 1984
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>COMMITTEE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1</td>
<td>Memo sent</td>
<td>Invitation to serve on Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>8 sub-committees formed, schedule set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Recruitment activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>report from Communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Membership Com.</td>
<td>size, recruitment, role of members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 16</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Sub-Committee Chairs</td>
<td>reports; how to select board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Vision 2000 Com.</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Speakers Bureau, script for speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Joint: Communications,</td>
<td>Discuss script for speech; prepare reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Membership and Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Steering Committee (30)</td>
<td>Board selection; reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 30</td>
<td>Storefront Com.</td>
<td>all day mtg on storefront; plan cherrette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>all day session on brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Sub-Committee Chairs</td>
<td>purpose, timeline, structure of board, agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“What kind of community do we want to be?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>revise draft of brochure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 4</td>
<td>Governance Com.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 5</td>
<td>Vision 2000 Com.</td>
<td>Challenge agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9</td>
<td>Storefront Com.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 11</td>
<td>Brochure Draft</td>
<td>Sent to Dalton and Gene for editions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12</td>
<td>Steering Committee (27)</td>
<td>reports; storefront; task forces; V2 agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Sub-Committee Chairs</td>
<td>recommend incorporation; complexity of V2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 19</td>
<td>Steering Committee (25)</td>
<td>balance on board; mock-up of brochure; storefront issues; structure*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decisions to date*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Coordinating Council</td>
<td>set May 22 as announcement; board balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>Executive Committee (chairs) CC, TV, storefront design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>Governance Com.</td>
<td>approval of proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Grant Request</td>
<td>Proposal sent to Lyndhurst Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE</td>
<td>COMMITTEE</td>
<td>CONTENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>Public Relations (formerly Communications) video; text for brochure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 10</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>TV show, call-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Brochure sent to Printer</td>
<td>ready to hand-out on May 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>May 22 announcement; Bill Wallace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Allied Arts approves Dialogue ’84 co-sponsorship with CV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15</td>
<td>Invitations sent to attend press conference on May 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Announcement</td>
<td>Press conference with CC, PEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Board invitations sent</td>
<td>letters sent inviting board membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24</td>
<td>Public Relations Com.</td>
<td>letterhead, logo, calendar—see list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 31</td>
<td>Dialogue 84 Committee</td>
<td>Planning fall program/kickoff of V2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chattanooga Venture Brochure

What do we want our community to become?
Chattanooga Venture heralds a new day in the way decisions will be made. A new day of community-based leadership for Chattanooga. Chattanooga Venture is a community challenge to seize the future and direct the path of change. For the shape of Chattanooga's tomorrow will be determined by the decisions we make today.

Share your ideas with this Venture in developing a vision of what this community should be and what we must do to reach that goal. Share your voice. Define solutions to problems, dispel negative attitudes, and bridge divisions of the past. Take pride in your home; accept the challenge of meaningful community involvement. Become a Venture Member.

We have the future in minds: Your mind, the minds of your neighbors, the ideas of your friends and the enthusiasm of your co-workers.

What is Chattanooga Venture?
• An open association of citizens
• A partnership of all interests in the community
• A channel for exchanging information
• A means for focusing the collective energy of the community
• A tool for solving problems and setting directions for the future

Chattanooga Venture was created by a group who recognized the need for citizens input in the decision-making process. After several months of studying how other American cities have moved forward by building a consensus among their citizens, this group created a framework for community action which is uniquely Chattanoogan.

Chattanooga Venture has been endorsed by both public and private sectors, firmly committed to the idea that an open and fair decision-making process is essential to our future.

The initiative has to come from us.
Become a Venture Member and help build the future on this new foundation.

What will Chattanooga Venture do?
• Establish a permanent process of citizen involvement in decision-making
• Provide an open forum for citizens’ ideas
• Mediate conflicts
• Initiate community improvement projects
• Promote opportunity

Chattanooga Venture will organize task forces to study and hold public hearings on issues of all types. These working groups are open to anyone interested in participating.
Venture will bring opposing interests together to air differences and seek amicable solutions.

Venture will provide a community sounding board for new ideas and mechanism for prodding those who can translate good ideas into action.

Become a Venture Member. Together we can solve our problems and get our community on the move.

**Why should you become a Venture Member?**

- Because you can make a difference and are willing to work for it
- Because you have ideas to share and dreams you want to see become reality
- Because you can invigorate the decision making process
- Because you can strengthen the sense of community identity and pride
- Because you value the community’s quality of life
- Because you believe quality of life is essential to a prosperous economy
- Because you love Chattanooga and believe it can have a bright future

Chattanooga Venture is a permanent avenue of citizen participation. It will develop and change as the community dictates. Its vitality depends on the willingness of individuals from all parts of our community to participate.

Become a Venture Member. The enclosed card is your invitation to get informed, get involved and invest yourself in building the future of your community. It will cost you nothing but your time, talent and ideas.

Share your voice in the Venture.

**Vision 2000**

Chattanooga Venture’s first major project is Vision 2000, a process to set goals for a better future.

Vision 200 task forces will study issues in the following categories:

- People: Human resources – living and learning
- Places: Our environment – preserving and developing
- Work: The economy – growing and changing
- Play: Leisure/recreation/the arts – enjoying and doing
- Government: Public resources – leading and serving

Issues will be added as citizens bring their ideas into the process. Vision 2000 task forces will identify areas of opportunity and recommend strategies for dealing with problems.

Become a Venture Member. Turn talk into action.
APPENDIX G

Citizens changing ideas into action
By Pat Wilcox

The shape of Chattanooga Venture is the work of a group of citizens who met together week after week last fall and winter, exploring ideas on how to build a nonpolitical, citizens organization dedicated to getting this community together – and really on the move again.

The group was diverse, but united in their confidence in Chattanooga and hopefulness for its future. And in their belief that they were not alone, that a lot of other people in this community have ideas about what we ought to be doing and where our real potential lies and would welcome an invitation to the table where decisions about the future will be made.

The goal was to structure an organization that would bring all those citizens and all those ideas to an open forum where the people can decide together by consensus, what our direction ought to be and what specific things need to be done to get moving in that direction.

The people who grappled weekly with the “how” of structuring such an organization came from business and labor, from the public and private sector; they were male and female, black and white; they were volunteers and professionals, workers and retired people. Many had participated in the Quality of Life conference last year, and in other meetings where the talk had been of how it pays off in economic progress to make your city a more lively and attractive place, a better place to live and work. And they had seen some things changing, some things succeeding that people might once have said would not work in Chattanooga; they felt as sense of fresh opportunity. Some had traveled to Indianapolis last fall and wanted to put to work here some of the lessons learned there.

That people working together can change and strengthen their community and make it a better place to live. That a sense of common purpose and a “can do” attitude can power progress. And that that sense of confidence and direction can come from building agreement on specific goals through a broadly representative citizens group.

So when the travelers returned, they decided to stay together, to draw other people into the process and to figure how to create a consensus-building organization here. The
discussions began – and grew involving scores of people over the months. The process was exploratory and creative. Other cities that had tried community-based strategic planning were studied. And options for Chattanooga were discussed freely and at length; decisions were made by general agreement.

Along the way this idea for an entirely open process of citizen involvement in setting the agenda for the community’s future was endorsed by leaders of both the public and private sectors. And so a structure was devised that completed an energy circuit, so to speak – connecting the creative ideas and the collective wisdom of the people to the traditional sources of power for getting things done.

The process used in structuring Chattanooga Venture will be the process used now in setting community goals through Vision 2000. The foundation has been laid, and it’s sound. But the exciting part lies before us. What shape shall the future take?

Pat Wilcox was the associate editor of The Chattanooga Times and a volunteer and member of the board of directors at Chattanooga Venture. This article appeared in the first edition of the organization’s newsletter, The Chattanooga Venture News, September 1984.
VITAE

Eleanor McCallie Cooper is a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, who graduated from Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, with a B.A. in English. After college, she taught English in Japan and was a U.S. guide at the World’s Fair, Expo ’70, in Osaka. She worked for Dr. Caleb Gattegno at Educational Solutions in New York. At the Northern California office of the American Friends Service Committee, she was co-director of the Simple Living Program. She co-founded and was Executive Director of Earthwork: Center for Rural Studies in San Francisco and was a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee to the Director of the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

Ms. Cooper earned an M.A. in American Studies from The University of Alabama. Her research focused on the impact of technological changes on farm families and communities on Sand Mountain in Northern Alabama from 1945 to 1979.

She was Associate, then Vice President, of the Lyndhurst Foundation (1985-1990). She served as Executive Director of Chattanooga Venture during ReVision 2000 (1990-1993).


Ms. Cooper has been the Chattanooga coordinator for the Marshall Memorial Fellowship, a program of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, since 1997.