The Case for a Place-Based Approach to Community Change

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SETTING THE CONTEXT

United Way of Olmsted County (UWOC) knows its donors, volunteers, advocates, and partners support research-based strategies that can help our community close achievement gaps. This summary is based on national research and local context, community partnerships, and grantmaking. This paper serves as background and research for the purpose of informing decision-making. It does not constitute any recommended course of action. It is also intended to be used as a resource in the greater community of Olmsted County and is offered up to interested parties to read, redistribute, and modify for their own purposes.

UWOC language, conceptual framework, and implementation model is heavily influenced by the federal Promise Neighborhood program. This program issues 3-5 year implementation grants to support eligible organizations in carrying out their plans to create a continuum of solutions that will significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in the target neighborhood. ("US Department of Education," 2017)

INTRODUCTION

Community-wide, there are a number of significant gaps by race in health, income, and education outcomes. While only 6.5% of white eleventh graders in Olmsted County describe their health as fair or poor, 15% of Native American, 13% of Hispanic, and 10% of Asians do so ("Minnesota Department of Education," 2016a). Homelessness, unemployment, and housing instability disproportionately affect black and African American community members. While United Way works to address a number of these disparities through its community supports work, much of its focus in targeted program (of which place-based work is a component) is on the academic achievement gap.

In 2016, the on-time graduation rate for White students in Olmsted County was 87% while it sat at 77% for students of color ("Minnesota Department of Education," 2017a). Despite narrowing the gap in recent years, our students of color experience worse outcomes than white students in terms of test scores, health, and college-enrollment. In 2017, 46% students of color in Olmsted County read at grade level in third grade, as compared to 70% of white students in Olmsted County ("Minnesota Department of Education," 2017b). Students across the races are similarly optimistic about their future: 73% of white students, 70% of black students, 70% of Hispanic students, and 66% of Asian eleventh graders in Olmsted County report that they plan to attend a four year college ("Minnesota Department of Education," 2016b). And while approximately 72% of white Rochester graduates do enroll in a 4 year university in the year following high school, only 51% of minority Rochester graduates do so ("Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System," 2017).

Our community is divided geographically by race and income, with low-income residences and families clustered in neighborhoods in the Southeast and Northwest parts of Rochester. These areas of town overlap significantly where the plurality is nonwhite, resulting in neighborhoods that are significantly poorer and less white than others. With a public school system based on the concept of neighborhood schools, differences across schools in academic outcomes such as graduation rates, test scores, and discipline records are, in large part, equivalent to differences across neighborhoods, race, and income (see maps on pages 5 and 6; for a full exposition on predictors at the neighborhood level, please reference UWOC document "Mapping Predictors of Academic Outcomes onto Rochester, MN," available upon request.

We know that place matters: research and experience shows that families and students do better when they live in strong communities ("Center for

the Study of Social Policy," 2017). Strong communities are marked by the opportunities they afford their residents – economic mobility, employment security, and self-advocacy. Yet challenges such as poverty, unemployment, housing instability, and education levels tend to concentrate in areas negatively impacted by a history of disinvestment and require intentional, location-specific efforts in order to be adequately addressed (Taylor, Brown, Wechsler, & Bochnovic, 2014). Place-based approaches allow for targeted investments in neighborhoods experiencing the highest need, ensuring that all neighborhoods become the kinds of places that allow children and families to reach their full potential.

Since 2000, Olmsted County's population has grown by 22%, with a 108% increase in the number of people of color who call the county home ("Compass Points 2016: City of Rochester/Olmsted County," 2016). Overall, 60% of the population growth since then has been persons of color, with 97% of our net migration being international ("Compass Points 2016: City of Rochester/Olmsted County," 2016). The baby boomers continue to age out of the workforce three times faster than the workforce population grows (Wheeler, 2013).   Soon, 30-40% of our internal labor force growth is projected to be comprised of individuals coming from minority, low-income, and international families (Wheeler, 2013). It is in our community's best interest to adequately prepare the youth of today to become our workforce of tomorrow. Closing the achievement gap now can help ensure that our community remains a great place to live and work for future generations, and working at the neighborhood level can be a powerful lever in doing so.

PLACE-BASED EFFORTS HAVE FOUR MAIN CONSIDERATIONS DRIVEN BY IMPACT:

- Provide services that clients can access without a personal vehicle or public transportation

- Address barriers that are shared by residents of a given neighborhood – i.e., ensure that services provided are driven by authentic demand and work as meaningful levers to reach improved outcomes, delivered in a way that is adapted to fit cultural norms in the neighborhood

- Provide services in a concentrated way to those hardest to reach – i.e., provide a higher chance of creating a cultural shift than providing services in a scatter-shot approach
  - In a white paper produced by the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), the authors stress the idea of a neighborhood tipping point – a threshold beyond which a cultural shift occurs away from destructive patterns and towards constructive goals. HCZ sets this threshold at about 65% - that is, to enact lasting changes in outcomes, the collective programs offered by a place-based effort must reach about 65% of the total number of children in the area served (Harlem Children's Zone, 2009)

- Increase social capital of a given neighborhood – i.e., increase the number of connections between residents, the value of those connections, and the neighborhood's collective ability to self-advocate
  - Initiatives that are externally-designed and funder-driven can unwittingly reinforce existing power dynamics or open up neighborhood rifts if their implementation structures and processes are poorly designed. Lead organizations can become gatekeepers and in the case of programmatic failure, can create future disinvestment in the neighborhood. Properly-implemented place-based work can overcome many of these challenges by including community members at all stages of the process (Brown & Fiester, 2014)
  - Incorporating resident voice (often that of parents) can change the way that residents interact with community stakeholders and services. Organizations may adjust business practices to be more inclusive and meet residents where they are (First 5 LA, 2013)
  - Many projects offer leadership training for residents, particularly the leaders of tenant and neighborhood associations. Residents are often recruited to serve on advisory boards for the place-based effort. By promoting residents to take these leadership

positions, neighborhood and individual capacity increases (Harlem Children's Zone, 2009)

- o The social return on investment in Minneapolis's Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) is $6.12 for every dollar invested, with a net benefit to society of $167,467 per participant. The return on taxpayer investment is $2.74 for every dollar invested (Diaz, Gehrig, Shelton, & Warren, 2015)

DATA COLLECTION

While in recent years there has been widespread energy and investment in improving data collection and analysis practices in the nonprofit and human services fields, place-based work is uniquely poised to make efficacious use of these practices. Within a given place-based effort, data collection and analysis practices can be developed to achieve three main ends: demonstrate impact, inform responsive targeting practices, and inform strategy.

> **RESULTS:** Most place-based approaches have turned their vision into a high-level 'result' (in RBA language) or 'statement of wellbeing' and progress towards the desired result by achieving measurable indicators (Brown & Fiester, 2014).While long-term outcomes such as improved graduation rates or increased incomes take a number of years to achieve, short-term or interim outputs and outcomes may help indicate whether the work is on-track to achieve its desired result. These interim outputs and outcomes can also be used to demonstrate the impact of the work in communications pieces.

> Using a results framework allows the local community to set targets for achievement, creating incentives to identify and characterize the populations that need to be reached and served in order to achieve, ultimately, community-wide and population-level changes for children. Attention to closing gaps ensure that place-based efforts create targeted opportunities and supports for the children and families that face compounded barriers to reaching their full potential. These gaps may be between neighborhood children and the state or broader school district, or between children of different backgrounds within the neighborhood (Jean-Louis, Farrow, Schorr, Bell, & Fernandez Smith, 2010).

> **LEARNING WHILE DOING:** In addition to indicators demonstrating social change, place-based projects may have 'Learn While Doing' projects incorporated into their design. These are small-scale projects undertaken at the beginning of a place-based effort. The aim is to produce early, tangible benefits that contribute to the neighborhood's longer-term desired result. In theory, residents see this early, successful project result in meaningful impact and they then become personally engaged in the work. This simultaneously should increase neighborhood capacity and inform project design. In reality, operationalizing Learn While Doing projects is often problematic, particularly if the neighborhood is required to select a long-term result before deciding on a Learn While Doing project. If selecting the long-term result takes longer than anticipated (which is common), the Learn While Doing project ends up launching too late to fully serve as

either a capacity-building opportunity or a demonstration project (Brown & Fiester, 2014).

QUALITATIVE UNDERSTANDING: At least as important as generating local-level quantitative data is the ability to elevate the 'story behind the data.' By understanding what residents and stakeholders know and believe about why some aspect of the community is the way it is, the team can work to demystify what it means to use data and to increase investment in a data-informed change process (Brown & Fiester, 2014). Initial and ongoing analysis of race, class and power dynamics and their impact on current neighborhood conditions can help inform the nature and timing of capacity-building strategies (Taylor et al., 2014).

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: Using a results framework allows comparison of progress among interventions, over time, and across sites, making it possible to select the programs and strategies that are most likely to produce positive outcomes in a specific context (Jean-Louis et al., 2010). In some place-based efforts, stakeholders work to establish shared understanding of data and outcomes by undertaking an annual analysis within each strategy area and hosting a 'results roundtable' to facilitate co-learning between stakeholders. Within this process, the neighborhood services coordinator and partners can make strategy and program adjustments that grow from continuous improvement insight (Abanu et al., 2017).

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF OVERALL PROGRAM

PARTNERSHIP: Place-based approaches connect the work of individual organizations through a shared agenda and a set of metrics that will be used to gauge progress and hold organizations accountable. Having a core set of results for community change rallies the broadest possible cross-section of community members around goals that no single organization can achieve by itself. Results explicitly promote common purpose, support collaboration, and provide a guide for decision-making. When linked with a set of indicators that objectively measure progress toward these shared goals, a results-based system provides a powerful strategy for community change (Anderson Moore et al., 2009). The strength of the partnership between the various stakeholders in place-based efforts will often determine the success of the overall project, as results cannot be achieved in isolation. Most place-based efforts are designed to address barriers faced by children (generally academic), and therefore work to partner with the key stakeholders influencing children's outcomes.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP: One of the key activators for the work is the genuine engagement of residents, as they are the constituency that makes up and is served by each of the key stakeholders. Ideally, residents are leaders and owners of the work, using data to inform the design and implementation of the project. With time and capacity-building, the neighborhood partnership is increasingly able to align and target existing resources and leverage new resources for the neighborhood (Brown & Fiester, 2014). This is in sharp contrast to service-centered work, where residents are typically viewed as clients or periodic participants, rather than active owners.

CAPACITY BUILDING: When done correctly, a place-based approach can be used as a vehicle to cultivate human resources. By establishing spaces where residents and stakeholders with different backgrounds and perspectives can learn and work together in service of shared results (Taylor et al., 2014), neighborhoods can increase their collective efficacy as they develop social cohesion and a willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good. Engaging stakeholders in developing learning agenda and vehicles for cross-site learning cultivates ownership of the learning process and increases the likelihood that results will be useful, relevant and credible for potential users (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010).

LEARNING COMMUNITY: The process of breaking down silos while capturing and sharing knowledge is central to place-based work (Department of Education, 2012). A learning community is developed between parents, schools, and the community. It is important that an active and vital learning community draw upon both expert and public knowledge. A learning

program dominated by experts undervalues the wisdom of experience and context and can stifle self-directed learning, while total reliance on public knowledge limits a group's growth through exposure to stimulating outside experts who can challenge the group to think critically about their ideas (Hamilton et al., 2005). In addition to incorporating the two kinds of knowledge, an effective place-based effort incorporates a multicultural approach to learning which honors different ways of knowing, and recognizes that groups have different learning questions (Reinelt, Yamashiro-Omi, & Meehan, 2010). Place-based work's structure is often designed to maximize the effort's ability to draw on informal knowledge and co-learning, setting it in stark contrast to more traditional ways of work which is typically top-down and built on expert knowledge.

RESULTS-DRIVEN: A final feature of place-based work is that it typically is results-driven: the focus is on achieving a core set of results for children and families in the service neighborhood. These overarching results drive the planning, design, start-up activities, program implementation, and evaluation of the individual sites and the overall initiative (Jean-Louis et al., 2010). To see effecting change in the community, evidence-based interventions are strongly favored. Strong evidence means evidence from studies with designs that can support causal conclusions (i.e., studies with high internal validity), and studies that, in total, include enough of the range of participants and settings to support scaling up to the State, regional, or national level (i.e., studies with high external validity) ("Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) FY 2016," 2016). While the use of evidence-based interventions is not unique to place-based work, the fact that the work itself is a portfolio of interventions that can be modified based on results makes it more likely that positive community change will happen.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Place matters greatly to a child's educational outcomes: barriers to academic success – such as poverty, student mobility, and single-parent homes - tend to concentrate in certain neighborhoods. Working in a targeted way in these neighborhoods is anticipated to have a greater lever on closing the achievement gap than supporting community-wide educational supports.

Place-based efforts have four main considerations driven by impact: increasing access to supports, addressing neighborhood-specific barriers, providing services in a concentrated way to those who are hardest to reach and/or have the highest level of need, and increasing social capital of the neighborhood.

Place-based efforts have three main communication and resource development advantages: the ability to demonstrate program impact, the ability to demonstrate that program makes change 'in-place' rather than via gentrification or displacement, and the ability to demonstrate targeting ability.

Nearly all of these benefits come from data collection and learning practices common to place-based work: focusing on high-level results, demonstrating dosage effects, leveraging the ability to have control and treatment groups, engaging in learning while doing projects, engaging residents in order to learn from 'the story behind the data', and developing continuous improvement processes.

Additional key characteristics of the overall program that increase sustainability: diverse partnerships, local ownership, capacity building for residents, development of a learning community, and results-driven.

Next steps for this project involve further investigation into the best practices around place-based work: how to identify candidate neighborhoods and direct the work towards high-level results while remaining community-driven; details of what the neighborhood selection process looks like; the key characteristics of candidate neighborhoods; the key characteristics of a successful lead agency or funder; the key characteristics of an ideal neighborhood services coordinator; the nature of cross-sector partnership; the stages of the development grant; partnership and data norms; and local considerations.

SOURCES

Abanu, V., Cummings, D., Galloway, A., Halley, M., Haulcy, D., Heng, C., … Turner, S. (2017, January). NAZ: Effective Collaboration. Retrieved from http://northsideachievement.org/naz-partner/i/00ResultsPlanEffectiveCollaboration-.pdf

Anderson Moore, K., Murphey, D., Emig, C., Hamilton, K., Hadley, A., & Sidorowicz, K. (2009). *Results and Indicators for Children: An Analysis to Inform Discussions About Promise Neighborhoods*. Child Trends. Retrieved from http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Child_Trends-2009_11_06_FR_PromiseNeigh_0.pdf

Brown, P., & Fiester, L. (2014). *The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program: Findings from Flint, Fresno, Memphis, and Milwaukee* (Formative Assessment). Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from https://www.bja.gov/Publications/CSSP-BNCP-Formative-Assessment.pdf

Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2017). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from https://www.cssp.org/community/neighborhood-investment/place-based-initiatives

Compass Points 2016: City of Rochester/Olmsted County. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.mncompass.org/_pdfs/compass-points-2016-rochester-olmsted-county.pdf

Department of Education. (2012). *Impact in Place: A Progress Report on the Department of Education's Place-Based Strategy* (Progress Report). Washington, DC.

Diaz, J. Y., Gehrig, S., Shelton, E., & Warren, C. (2015). *Prospective Return on Investment of the Northside Achievement Zone* (Cost-Benefit Study). St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Publications/Studies/Northside%20Achievement%20Zone/Prospective%20Return%20on%20Investment%20of%20the%20Northside%20Achievement%20Zone.pdf

First 5 LA. (2013). *Best Start Building Stronger Families Implementation FAQs* (Reference). Los Angeles, CA. Retrieved from http://www.first5la.org/bsla/uploads/BSF-Framework-FAQs_091813_English.pdf

Hamilton, R., Brown, P., Chaskin, R., Fiester, L., Richman, H., Sojourner, A., & Weber, J. (2005). *Learning for Community Change: Core Components of Foundations that Learn* (Discussion Paper). Chicago, IL: Chaping Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago. Retrieved from http://www.chapinhall.org/sites/default/files/old_reports/276.pdf

Harlem Children's Zone. (2009). *Whatever It Takes: A White Paper on the Harlem Children's Zone* (White Paper). New York, New York. Retrieved from https://hcz.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/HCZ-White-Paper.pdf

Jean-Louis, B., Farrow, F., Schorr, L., Bell, J., & Fernandez Smith, K. (2010). *Focusing on Results in Promise Neighborhoods*. Harlem Children's Zone, PolicyLink, The Center for the Study of Social Policy, Child Trends. Retrieved from http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/focusing-on-results-in-promise-neighborhoods.pdf

Kubisch, A. C., Auspos, P., Brown, P., & Dewar, T. (2010). *Voices from the Field III: Lessons and Challenges from Two Decades of Community Change Efforts*. The Aspen Institute. Retrieved from https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/images/rcc/VoicesfromtheFieldIII.pdf

Minnesota Department of Education. (2016a). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=242

Minnesota Department of Education. (2016b). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=242

Minnesota Department of Education. (2017a). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=2

Minnesota Department of Education. (2017b). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from http://w20.education.state.mn.us/MDEAnalytics/DataTopic.jsp?TOPICID=1

Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System. (2017). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from http://sleds.mn.gov/#collegeActivity/orgId--053501000__groupType--district__collegeActivityCOHORTID--2015__categories--race_4__p--1; http://sleds.mn.gov/#collegeActivity/orgId--053501000__groupType--district__collegeActivityCOHORTID--2015__categories--race_@__p--1

Promise Neighborhoods Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) FY 2016. (2016). US Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/faq.html

Reinelt, C., Yamashiro-Omi, D., & Meehan, D. (2010). Learning-Circle Partnerships and the Evaluation of a Boundary-Crossing Leadership Initiative in Health. *The Foundation Review*, *2*(1), 40–52. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4087/FOUNDATIONREVIEW-D-10-00002

LIVE UNITED

United Way
of Olmsted County
uwolmsted.org

United
Way

Taylor, C., Brown, P., Wechsler, L., & Bochnovic, M. (2014). *Working Across Differences in Race, Class, and Power: Building Neighborhood Capacity Program Practice Brief* (Practice Brief). Washington, DC: The Center for the Study of Social Policy. Retrieved from https://www.cssp.org/community/neighborhood-investment/place-based-initiatives/body/Race-Class-Power.pdf

US Department of Education. (2017, July 27). Retrieved October 17, 2017, from https://www2.ed.gov/programs/promiseneighborhoods/index.html

Wheeler, P. (2013, December). *The Future is Gaining On Us*. Powerpoint, Rochester Olmsted Planning Department. Retrieved from https://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/yourgovernment/demographics/Documents/The%20Future%20is%20Gaining%20On%20Us.pdf