Project Abstract:

United Northeast Neighbors is an organization that would collectively work with elected officials and governmental agencies to identify critical issues and develop alternative solutions in addressing public safety in Northeast Philadelphia. We would also assist and support in the implementation those solutions to ensure the quality of public safety was improving for all residents of Northeast Philadelphia. **Is this a fantasy dream or could this vision become a reality?** My project is to discover if this vision can be transformed into a realistic and viable model. A model in which community leaders could use to ensure the quality standards of public safety in their communities will not be compromised. It could be a uniform process that allows organizations to demonstrate their conviction, courage and commitment toward the pursuit of achieving community goals. This project has offered me an opportunity to infuse past leadership experiences with newly acquired skills that I have received from New Hampshire College. I believe that these skills will assist me in creating an organizational process to positively stimulate community economic development.

Definition Of the Problem:

My project encompasses the northeast section of Philadelphia. A typical working class community where four hundred and eighty thousand people, out of 1.4 million Philadelphians live, work and pray. The quality of life has become questioned and challenged by the residents, businesses and community leaders. The primary cause for the change in the quality of life is mostly attribute to the lost good jobs in
the city and Delaware Valley region. This situation has become compounded because Philadelphia is having problems maintaining the level of city services while its tax base erodes. For families that decided to stay, they saw their lifestyle change. They found themselves pursuing second jobs, so their families could stay at the minimum standard of living that they were accustomed to. Other families became displaced and are now depend on city and state social services. Unfortunately, other families decided to sustain their lifestyle by becoming part of Philadelphia’s informal economy. Presently, more Philadelphians are beginning to use an under-ground market. The greater usage of an informal economy, in combination with the increase in drug activities and youth violence has revealed that Philadelphia’s criminal justice system is failing. In light of this escalating situation I have developed the following assessment of the community’s problems.

**Problem Statement:**

If no solution is found, then Northeast Philadelphia communities’ quality of life will continue to deteriorate to a level where their families and businesses will leave the city, which in turn, will destroy the economic base of Philadelphia.

Forty percent of the tax base is derived from Northeast Philadelphia, while only one-third of the city’s residents live in that area. The residents in the Northeast section do not need or require the level of social services as other sections of the city. If the northeast section continues to loose residents and businesses, it will ultimately become an area that will not be able to generated the needed tax base to support the level of city services that are presently being provided throughout the city.
Project Goals and Objectives:

My goal was to establish a northeast organization that would protect and ensure that the public safety of Northeast Philadelphia residents. It would be a nonprofit organization, composed of existing northeast organizations. My desire was to have this organization fully operational by December 1, 1996.

The primary objective would be to identify issues and elements that presently hinder the quality of public safety in the various communities of Northeast Philadelphia. These concerns would be presented to our elected officials, so together we could develop responsible solutions. Our initial format is one of collaboration. If this style is not respected, than other options will be pursued to bring these issues to a conscious level.

There are two other objectives that this organization will try to achieve. The organization will become a training center for the development of present and future leaders in Northeast Philadelphia. United Northeast Neighbors (UNN) will provide a number of programs for its members and individuals who reside in Northeast Philadelphia. By enhancing our leaders' organizational skills, the organization will be able to assist community leaders to develop their organizations into a stronger and more effective group when addressing communities concerns.

Finally, the organization, UNN will be recognized as a central informational hub for community, social and governmental information. Our organization can establish a mechanism to convey and collect information that would be important for other northeast organization. A lack of information has always been an area of concern with
northeast organizations, since the initial development of Northeast Philadelphia in the 1950's. Trying to seek a place to retrieve pertinent and accurate information to address community issues has been very frustrating to many community leaders in the northeast.

Methods and Results

Objective #1:

Table: To establish and develop a United Northeast, nonprofit organization that will be composed from Northeast organizations by December 1, 1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Results:</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Establish a board and officers</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Target Date - March 31, 1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Steps Required</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Schedule a meeting to discuss formalizing the organization</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Hold nominations and elections</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected Results:</strong></td>
<td>Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Establish By-laws</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Target Date - April 30, 1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Steps Required</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Form By-laws committee, 3 to 5 members</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Develop draft of By-laws</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Vote and approve By-laws</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective #2:

To establish a working relationship with all four City Council Districts and the seven Council-at-Large members by July 1, 1996 for the primary purpose of addressing public safety in Northeast Philadelphia.

Expected Results

1. Establish a City Council action committee (Target date, March 15, 1996)  
   Completed

   **Action Steps Required**

   a. Appoint and request members to the City Council Committee  
      Completed

   b. Identify a committee chairperson  
      Completed

   c. Identify support staff from the Partnership  
      Completed

   d. Create a vision, goals and objectives of the committee  
      * Partially Completed

      * The committee is presently in the process of completing this action step.

   Close to Completion

   **Action Steps Required**

   a. Review Federal, State and City funding of Public Safety  
      * Partially Completed

      * The entire process of how funding will be delivered is changing from a state and federal perspective.

   b. Meet with council members for clarification  
      Completed

   c. Schedule committee members to speak during budget hearings  
      Completed

   d. Schedule meetings to discuss funding with State and federal legislators  
      Completed
Objective #3:

To identify and offer community leadership training programs to Northeast community leaders by September 1, 1996.

Expected Results

1. Assess Organization for training needs:
   (Target Date - April 1, 1996)
   
   **Completed**

   **Action Steps Required**

   a. Develop a training need assessment survey and distribute at March eleventh’s meeting
   
   **Completed**

   b. Compile survey data and disseminate responses to membership needs by March twenty-first
   
   **Completed**

2. Identify the Community leadership programs being offered in the region
   (Target Date - May 1, 1996)
   
   **Completed**

   **Action Steps Required**

   a. Find a Community leadership School
   
   **Completed**

3. Identify a location for training
   (Target Date - May 15, 1996)
   
   **Completed**

   **Action Steps Required**

   a. Find a location for Training
   
   **Completed**
**Action Taken to Meet these Objectives:**

A formal survey was not needed to identify initial training needs of the organization's members. The first requested training programs were grant writing and fund raising. UNN is presently contracting with Philadelphia's Community School Organization and Karant and Associate to do some of the training for UNN. We have made arrangements with Graduate Hospital, Parkview division to allow our organization to use their conference rooms, free of charge, for the training.

We also initiated a Community Organizational Accounting program in September. This course was contracted and facilitated by an alumni of New Hampshire College CED program, Holly Pester. In November, we will also be running a program that defines the basic elements of effective negotiation. This is essential for today's community leader when addressing and resolving issues in a community.
## Project Objective #4:

To organize and host a Northeast regional retreat to address public safety and community issues by October 1, 1996.

### Expected Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expected Results</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Appoint an activity committee and chairperson</td>
<td>Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Target Date - March 1, 1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action Steps Required**

- a. Identify a committee chairperson                                             | Completed |
- b. Identify members for the committee                                            | Completed |

2. Assess membership’s needs and issues for the retreat                           | N/A      |
| (Target Date - April 1, 1996)                                                   |          |

**Action Steps Required**

- a. Develop a needs assessment tool                                                | N/A      |
- b. Administer the assessment                                                      | N/A      |
- c. Evaluate findings and report back to the membership                           | N/A      |

* These steps were not necessary because I was able to perform informal interviews and group discussion to determine the needs and discussions for the retreat.
Expected Results:  

3. Identify facility for hosting a Northeast Retreat  
(Target Date - May 1, 1996)  

**Action Steps Required**  

a. Compile list of available Northeast Facilities  
Completed  

b. Determine cost factors involved  
Completed  

c. Identify funding status  
Completed  

d. Identify three most feasible facilities  
Completed  

e. Present findings to membership for consensus  
Completed  

f. Identify caterer  
Completed  

4. Develop marketing plan for the retreat  
(Target Date - May 15, 1996)  

**Action Steps Required**  

a. Identify workshops and presenters for retreat  
Completed  

b. Invited and confirm facilitators and presenters  
Completed  

c. Compile list of invites  
Completed  

d. Initiate mailing  
Completed  

5. Finalize presentations and workshops  
(Target Date - June 15, 1996)  

**Action Step Required**  

a. Identify presentation for the retreat  
Completed
Expected Results:

6. Finalize attendees list
   (Target Date - September 1, 1996)

   Action Step Required
   a. Determine number of attendees

   Action Taken to Meet these Objectives:

   The retreat was held on Sunday, April 28, 1996 at the Doubletree Club Hotel in
Northeast Philadelphia. This place was selected for the following reasons:

1. It is centrally located in northeast Philadelphia.
2. The cost per attendee, ($31.50) was within our budget.
3. One of the few places that was available for rent in the month of April.

   Members of the organization believe that it was in our best interest to utilize the
retreat to formalize the organization. Voting on the By-laws and electing officers
occurred during the retreat. We also discussed strategic planning for the coming year.
Our facilitators were Susan Karant and Horace Small of Karant Associates. We had
over twenty organizations in attendance that participated during the retreat.
Analysis/Conclusion/Recommendations:

After reflecting on my project experience, I have been able to identify three (3) essential elements that leaders must take into consideration. They are perception, process in relation to time and social and organizational politics. Though I will address each element individually, they have the ability to affect each other, which in turn can create a synergistic or caustic environment for your organization. Learning how to maintain a proper balance between each of these elements is integral to the longevity of a community organization.

Perception

It is an element that is critical in creating the foundation of a community organization. How people view you and your organization will determine if they’re going to share time and resources with you. Their perception of you at best is conditional. A leader must constantly stay focused and communicate the organization’s mission to the members. In retrospect, you are always in competition for individuals’ time and resources. Unfortunately, in today’s society people are so involved and engaged with other community activities, such as church, school and sports that the pool of potential community leaders has diminished. Most of the leaders that I have been involved with are also involved with at least one or more other organizations in their community. This situation makes it critical that a leader of the organization stays focused on its goals and objectives, so its members don’t become frustrated and disengage from the organization.
A mistake that I made in the area of perception was assuming that community leaders brought a basic level of skill and ability to the organization. I realized very quickly how wrong this perception was. Unfortunately, the term "community leader" is used very loosely in today’s society. It is a term that individuals use to establish a perception of credibility within and outside their community. In reality, it does not indicate anything; not competence, courage, conviction or even commitment. Many of the community leaders that I have had the pleasure to work with have been fine and upstanding citizens. Though there has been a number of them that have acquire the title of community leader through "self proclamation" or "out of default" election. A leader can not assume that others have the skills and talents to contribute toward the goals of an organization. An informal skill assessment needs to be performed to determine the individuals’ skill and ability. This needs to occur prior to delegating a critical task, which will have a substantial impact in accomplishing goals and objective of an organization. A leader may have to spend additional time consulting with their members initially to ensure that they understand what is needed and how to successfully perform the task that they have been asked to do. This will ensure that individuals will know how to accomplish tasks. It will also develop organizational ownership, personal recognition and self-esteem. These are the task by-products that create the cohesion for people to stay engaged in voluntary organizations.
Process in Relation to Time

This second element focuses on how people and organizations adjust to the process of change. Before I share my observation of this element in reference to UNN I need to state certain premises about this element that I had prior to this project.

I. People & cultures have the ability to make changes in a society to survive (Cultural Relativism.)

II. Though people and organizational cultures change, the rate of change will vary.

III. Individuals will feel uncertain and uncomfortable during the paradigm shift.

IV. If an organization loses direction during the period of change, its members will want to return back to the way it was originally.

This was quite an interesting element in the development of UNN. There were varying levels of motivation between the organizations. This was mostly due to where the organization was geographically located in Northeast Philadelphia. The farther south the organizations were located, the higher need for concern to address the issue of public safety. Whereas, the groups located in the far northeast sympathize with the other organization, but voice more of a conservative approach in addressing public safety issues.

Throughout this project, I have been criticized internally and externally for including the entire Northeast section of Philadelphia into this organization. Mostly because of the contrasting perspectives that community leaders have toward their own level and quality of public safety occurring in their neighborhoods. As president of UNN I believe that I have created a process that would balance the varying
motivations, so our members are not using their limited energy and resources internally to protect their own position, but to accomplish the goals of the organization collectively. I am not sure yet how well I have done with this balancing element, but I do know, we are still moving forward in making UNN a recognized organization that is focused on addressing public safety.

Some organizations have resigned from UNN because we were moving too slow, while a few other organizations thought we were moving too fast. We were perceived by those groups as being radical. Balancing this process may be slower than you are accustomed to. Finding a level and rate that each member will be satisfied with is not easy. This level may vary from issue to issue and from organization to organization. As a leader, you have to search for commonality, one which all organizations can understand and relate to. With UNN, I was able to develop justification for the far northeast organizations to become more engaged with the communities that reside in the southern section of Northeast Philadelphia. It was in the best interest of those far northeast organizations to address the issue of public safety now, since the direction of deterioration was moving toward their communities.

With the organizations in the southern section of Northeast Philadelphia, I had to define the importance of not becoming frustrated with the rate of the progress. They believed that UNN wasn’t moving and acting as fast as they perceived we should be moving. I was able to convince them that it was in their best interest to stay as part of an united effort. There a number of examples of where an individual organization had tried to address community issues with their local officials, only to
be placated or ignored. I share with them the value of a collective process in relation to long term success. It is a process that ensures that community issues are not ignored or forgotten by our elected officials. History demonstrates over and over again that grass-root community issues will only be addressed when the average citizen is willing to join together for the common good of all; strength is in the numbers. Finding the right process in relation to rate is something that will always be a challenge to community leaders when trying to address issues collectively.

**Social and Organizational Politics**

This element is the most precarious of all to understand and utilize effectively in accomplishing the goals of an organization. Though I believe, I have developed good skills into understanding this element, I realize from this experience that I am still only a student and therefore have much to learn and understand. Metaphorically, it is an animal that is constantly evolving into different images and styles, that anytime, can fatally attract and destroy you and your organization. It can also become an essential leveraging tool which can make the difference between success and failure.

To participate in a political environment, one must understanding the basic principles of politics. The initial principle is that anyone can be a politician in a political game, but it doesn't mean they will be good or understand what is happening. The word politician is defined in my American Heritage Dictionary as "One who seeks personal or partisan gain, often by cunning or dishonest means." There were other traditional definitions for the word, but I felt this one reflected today's politician fairly accurately.
Another principle states that there is always a reason for a person’s motivation. Their motivation may be money, esteem, greed, conviction, values or they could be just crazy. Do not ever underestimate the later one. These individuals can disguise themselves very well, but become the most treacherous politician of them all. They will destroy themselves at any cost, just to destroy you and your organization. There is no rhyme or reason for their methods and motives.

Once you are able to determine an individual’s motive, you need to determine how to utilize their motivation to support the goals of the organization. In many cases, their motives may reflect the same goals of the organization. If so, you will be able to create a win-win situation, in which each person or organization is able to receive what they need. This principle can relate to either the person who is internal or external to the organization.

I personally find it harder to understand the politicians who are internal to the organization because they usually portray a desire to accomplish one type of goal, but eventually demonstrate a totally different motive and behavior. We, as leaders will always have personal objectives, but this does not mean that we can not suppress and control those objectives while working with other leaders toward common goals for all. I usually try to learn something about their past methods and actions, so I can develop an understanding of what motivates them. As humans, we are basically creatures of habit. This method will assist you in determining individuals motivation.
I can speak on this element from first hand experience. In the process of developing a position in reference to funding public safety issues I became a victim of politics as president of UNN. Not only was the organization politically sabotaged by external forces, but we were also used internally by a few of our own members for personal gain; an agenda that I didn’t realize was occurring until it was too late. Externally, a number of state politicians perceive the organization as getting too powerful than what they were accustomed to. Every time there has been an attempt to develop a united force to address public safety issues in Northeast Philadelphia it has been under minded. UNN is the third attempt at achieving a vision of creating a united organization.

I thought that I had the political element figured out and under control. My initiative was to develop a sense of partnership with the elected officials, so UNN would not be seen as a threat, but as an organization which could be a conduit to the community. Initially, we were received very positively by the elected officials, but I believe we started to be viewed as growing too powerful too fast by a few of the key political leaders in Philadelphia. This became obvious during a scheduled meeting in which we were going to discuss the impact of the proposed state budget will have on public safety in Northeast Philadelphia. With a number of state elected officials already confirmed to attend, we began to notice that they collectively and covertly decided not to be a part of this forum. Even the ones that did confirm their attendance withdrew their confirmations. We were undermined by the state politicians from a bi-partisan perspective. I eventually was able to find out that they were told
that we were going to attack and berate them on issues other than public safety. This perception was communicated to me internally and externally by the organization.

From the external perspective, I was able to discover which politician undermined us. Internally, I was also able to discover which members betrayed the organization. Unfortunately, I did not realize initially that a few of our members were using UNN for their personal gain. This did not become evident until we were politically undermined.

A few of our members are also affiliated with public school initiatives. Though affiliated, they are also members of town watches and civic associations. It is not uncommon to see community leaders involved with one or more organizations in their community. I made a conscience effort to communicate the mission of the organization a considerable number of times to ensure that each member understood what UNN mission was all about. Even though they stated their support of UNN, in reality, they were using us to leverage their personal public school initiatives. This was not exposed until we scheduled the meeting with the state elected officials to discuss the budget and public safety. In retrospect, it was my own members that caused the external political forces to undermine the organization.

A few of these "sharks" are still associating with the organization, while some of them have not returned since the fiasco. Those few remaining organizations that undermined UNN don't know that I know what they have done to the organization. I haven't decided what to do with them, but they will never get an opportunity to undermine me or UNN again.
In conclusion, United Northeast Neighbors Inc. has been a successful project. I have been able to organize a number of Northeast organizations into focusing on one specific issue, public safety. It would not have been possible without having the support of a few key Northeast leaders supporting the concept of a united northeast organization. No one person is able to establish or create greatness without the support and dedication of others. Even Christ needed disciples to assist him to doing GOD's work in the world; why would we be any different.

I see United Northeast Neighbors making great strides in the future. Our Organizational foundation is strong and our conviction in the pursuit of improving public safety in Northeast Philadelphia is unconditional. 1997 is going to be the great year of change in our city and throughout this fine nation. UNN will be apart of that change. I hope that we become the win-win model for this change. A model that will provide a process that communities and local government can use to transition toward community economic development.