# The Neighborhood Response Team

## Community Based Conflict Resolution To Promote Civic Engagement Through Restorative Community Justice

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The Neighborhood Response Team: Community Based Conflict Resolution To Promote
Civic Engagement Through Restorative Community Justice
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A special thanks to Assistant City Attorney, Kenneth Schatz for listening to endless hours of explanation about why I believe sustainable programs are developed by direct community-based participation and is the key to building a strong working relationship between the residents of Burlington and their government.

**I dedicate this project in memory of my mother,**

**Anne Kirby Shanky**

**She would be so proud of this accomplishment.**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

This project responds to a community perception that the quality of life in the City of Burlington Vermont is deteriorating and how residents overly depend on city departments, particularly the Code Enforcement Office and Burlington Police Department, to resolve their quality of life complaints. It examines the potential for community residents and municipal government to cooperatively participate in a community mediation project and – change their perceptions based on a new reality.

With the support of The Municipal Code Enforcement Office, the Community Justice Center and the Community Support Program, this project engages volunteer community "peacemakers" to proactively problem-solve disputes that tear at the social fabric of their neighborhood. The Neighborhood Response Team is a cadre of volunteer community members recruited and trained to facilitate dialogue between disputants, affected neighbors, and the community-at-large. Community residents are the heart and soul of the Neighborhood Response Team.

The Neighborhood Response Team project targets two populations; the city population in general and specifically, one low-income neighborhood in the Old North End of Burlington. Through participatory action, the project attempts to build social capital; to engage residents in a process to identify and resolve problems, build relationships and create a sense of community ownership. Therefore, the project employs best practices suggested in community development to strengthen engagement; to enable a productive, cooperative, and positive outcome based relationship between citizenry and government.

To effectively implement and evaluate the project, recommendations for project development are based on meetings with: The Victim Justice Project, The Burlington Police Department, Burlington Housing Authority, community mediators, The Public Safety Project, The Community Support Program, The Department of Corrections, The City Attorney's Office, and the Municipal Code Enforcement Office. The initial findings of the Neighborhood Response Team reflect upon and present the discoveries, the developments and the challenges we embrace to refine this project to strengthen our concept of community. This Bureau of Justice Assistance partially funds this project.

Situated in the northwest corner of Chittenden County, the City of Burlington Vermont borders the eastern shore of Lake Champlain. Home to 40,000 residents who live in seven city wards, Burlington is the largest city in the wealthiest, and fastest growing county in the State of Vermont (CEDO/Census 2000). The downtown area comprises the three most densely populated City wards and is a HUD designated enterprise and community renewal zone.

Historically a working class section of the city, this area is called the Old North End. Today, approximately 20,000 low-income residents reside in this section of the city. Burlington rates among "the top ten most desirable cities in which to live," (burlington website) however, statistics make clear that "Burlington residents suffer from a disproportionate level of poverty and youth unemployment" (CEDO, 6).

Within city limits, all age groups have limited opportunity for meaningful employment and a livable wage. The adjusted median income for a low-income family of four is $26,650 (HUD). The socio-economic trends for the City indicate that 31% of households are headed by a single family member, 17.6% do not have high school diplomas, 27% of families receive welfare - 11% of the adults and 19.1% of the children live in poverty (CED0 & Burlington School District ).

These enduring socio-economic problems contribute to a 26.6% juvenile delinquency case-filing rate in the county (Vermont Juvenile Justice Source Book). Most of these offenses occur within city limits and the above statistics would indicate that a substantial number of these youth reside in the Old North End of Burlington.

Overall, three contributing factors impact the current socio-economic profile of the Old North End:

- 23% net population migration increase between 1980 and 1990. (during this period demand for Police service increased 25%), (CRS, 3).
- An overall decline in manufacturing and employment opportunities within city limits coupled with limited means of transportation to employment in outlying areas
- A crisis in affordable housing; 60% of available housing are rental units (CRS,1).

Racially, the city is 97.2% white (Census 2000). During the past ten years, the city has seen a rise in Vietnamese, Bosnian, and Russian ethnic groups; 8% of Burlington students speak English as a second language. There are twenty-seven different languages spoken among this population (Burlington School District Report, 3)

Burlington's mayor is a founding member of the Progressive Party and the party has maintained a political majority in the city council for eleven years. Community and economic development is largely within the purview of the city's Community and Economic Development Office. Under the auspices of the city's Public Safety Project, the volunteer AmeriCorps* Vista program organizes Neighborhood Planning and Street Associations. It is through these quasi-political groups that the city disseminates Community Development Block Grants for community building and public safety purposes.

In terms of Public Safety, 4,730 crimes occurred in the City of Burlington during 1999 – 69% of the complaints filed are misdemeanor offenses and considered quality of life offenses (Vermont Crime Report, 1). During this period only 18% of incident based calls from Old North End residents to the police resulted in arrests (BPD Annual Report, 7). Not surprisingly in the Old North End, 66% of the residents consider crime the most pressing issue. During the past five years, 32% of this community perceived a decrease in safety, physical deterioration of the neighborhood and less interpersonal interaction occurring among neighbors (UVM, CPOC Survey). The Municipal Code Enforcement Office data for January through March of 2002 reports 47% of complaints originating from the Old North End (Code database). Old North End residents rate as number one, their hopes and dreams for a "greater sense of community and neighborliness among residents" (COPC, 2).

The Vermont Department of Public Safety Crime Report (2000) reports that city based incidents account, in most cases, for 30% to 50% of the crimes committed in the county.

**BACKGROUND**

The broadly stated, conceptual need for the Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) was the outcome of a series of community-based focus groups. Not coincidentally, the Community Justice Center, the City Attorney's Office, and the Municipal Code Enforcement Office also expressed the need for a means to respond to citizen's concerns about the perceived decline in the community quality of life. To realize a partnership between community vision and municipal necessity, The Bureau of Justice Administration awarded a Community Prosecution Grant to the City Attorney's Office ($150,000) to fund, in part, the NRT; a restorative justice project in community mediation.

The initial steering committee included the Department of Corrections, community members, the City Attorneys Office, the Community Support Program (CSP, - an adjunct to the Burlington Police Department), and the Community Justice Center (CJC). The purpose of this group; to discuss special interests, establish program definition, organization relationships, and develop policy and protocol. A collaboration between the Code Office, CSP, and the CJC formed to programmatically develop, manage and evaluate this community based project. The special interests of each steering committee member incorporated into the program are:

**The Department of Corrections:** To train community members in restorative justice philosophy and embrace practices that include offender accountability to- and reparation for, harm inflicted on a victim and the community.

**The City Attorney's Office:** That restorative justice practice diverts cases away from traditional judicial proceedings; to provide the community with a speedy alternative response by the community for criminal behaviors

**The Municipal Code Enforcement Office:** That community members actively participate to resolve neighborhood conflicts that may have a legal basis but no realistic legal remedy; to provide alternative solutions for chronic complaints that overburden the capability of the department

**The Community Justice Center:** That community members respond to community conflict in their neighborhood through their participation in the design and delivery of a program that is community based, community driven, and accountable as a community restorative justice program

**The Community Support Program:** To provide necessary mediation training and skill development to community mediators

**Community Members:** Impart a community perspective for all aspects of program discussions and express their perspective on program objectives, i.e., for community inclusion and training.

Aside from administrative development, the operational roles for the collaborative supervisory team is as follows:

**Ray O'Connor, Chief Code Enforcement Officer:** Identifies and generates appropriate cases for NRT referral

**Brooke Hadwen, Coordinator of Community Support:** Develops training, facilitates community mediators and supervise cases

**Barbara Leslie, Program Developer, Community Justice Center:** Coordinate program development and facilitate program implementation, i.e. recruitment, training coordination, program evaluation & reporting, and supervise community mediators

Initially, the supervisory team perceived the NRT as a cooperatively owned effort and collaboration by the supervisory team. They deemed important the potential of this project to demonstrate inter-departmental partnerships as a model of bureaucratic efficacy. My role shifted slightly to one of facilitative leadership when it became apparent that accountability to the evaluation components to involve community were not being fulfilled; mediators were not facilitating cases to the extent possible. My understanding of the background changed considerably when, midway through the project, I realized that Municipal Code and Community Support were not aware that the CJC received federal grant funding for this project. This was a bump in the road.

NRT, as Burlington's community mediation program, falls into a national model of community dispute resolution known as composite programs, i.e., a blend of justice system based and community based case referral sources (NIJ, 24). The National Institute of Justice's "Survey of Issues and Practices of Community Dispute Resolution

Programs and Public Policy" notes that government or non-profit agencies fund for composite, or "mixed", programs (21). As such, programs similar to the NRT identify support through diverse funding stream, i.e." city, county, state funds, foundations, United Way, consulting and training fees," as well as court referral fees. Annual budgets "range from "$63,900 in Chapel Hill to $419,000 in New York City" (41).

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The municipal enforcement systems, the Municipal Code Enforcement Office and the Burlington Police Department, do not have the resources to respond or provide lasting solutions to low-level civil and criminal offenses that occur in the Old North End (ONE). Last year, the two departments received more than 2,500 complaint reports from residents (BPD Strategic Plan). Residents perceive the departments' inability to respond to the high number of calls as an ineffectual delivery of city services and a contributing factor to their unsafe neighborhoods. Furthermore, residents feel that "their voices are not heard; they are ignored and neglected by the City because they are poor" (Interview, Carla Barnes).

Many of the incidents reported to these municipal departments reflect ongoing neighbor-to-neighbor disputes. When enforcement agencies do not respond to low-level criminal or civil offenses, neighbor-to-neighbor disputes ferment and people tend to isolate themselves from one another. These disputes are often the result of socio-economic marginalization; resulting from poverty and lack of education. Essentially, neighbors evoke in one another anti-social behaviors that have a basis in law. However, enforcement agencies do not necessarily feel that the circumstances merit prosecution. Due to the lack of a meaningful response or remedy, residents eventually refrain from calling enforcement agencies. They assume – or have learned, that there will be no meaningful response to their calls from municipal departments. Hence, the social equivalence of the "broken windows theory" further deteriorates the fabric of the community.

From the municipal perspective, the police force is not only small it is understaffed. To consider how to efficiently allocate resources, both financial and human, is a high priority for the Department. In the aftermath of the World Trade Center

tragedy on September 11, 2001, the Department must now simultaneously assign five officers to the airport. In terms of budget and people power, the overtime officers accrue is a cost burden for the Burlington Police Department. Together, these circumstances currently prevent the Department from being more responsive to citizen's needs. Similarly, the Municipal Code Enforcement Office is understaffed and undergoing organization restructure. The Code Office would prefer to allocate resources for routine city inspections and concentrate enforcement efforts to legally align slumlords to resolve issues regarding their "problem properties." [1]

## GOAL STATEMENT

The NRT project bases it's goals on four general assumptions:
1. Community based conflict resolution programs will help to improve the quality of life in city neighborhoods
2. The concept of community is strengthened when residents design and implement community based dispute resolution programs
3. Civic engagement is realized when municipal departments collaborate to provide citizens with support to organize community, technical assistance for training and strategic supervision to deliver programs
4. Citizens experience a sense of satisfaction with government when they work cooperatively with municipal departments

In a recently published "Civic Engagement Plan for the City of Burlington, author John Davis states that "a formal system of civic engagement is most successful and most sustainable when it builds upon informal networks of helping and socializing within neighborhoods" (Davis, 2). In keeping with the overall vision embraced by the City, the notion to employ restorative justice and community mediation to mitigate neighborhood conflict will naturally strengthen those "informal networks of helping and socializing" (2). The specific goal is to:

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[1] The problem properties group includes the Vermont Landlord Tenant Association, The Burlington Police Department, and the Municipal Code Enforcement Office, They meet to discuss and remedy blighted properties in the Old North End.

- Engage residents in partnership with municipal departments to improve the quality of community life and - to revitalize the concept of neighbor.

Since the project operates under a general assumption that "municipal agencies can do a better job of serving, protecting and improving residential neighborhoods when the residents themselves are actually involved" (Davis, 2), the specific goal is to:

- Provide residents with training and support to dialogue with disputing parties, identify and respond to disputant's needs, and to facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor agreements.

Because the notion of civic engagement is to "supplement and support" municipal services, the project design will employ suggested best practices in sustainable community development while embracing the overarching principles of restorative justice. Therefore, the specific goal is to:

- Engage citizens in program design, implementation and evaluation. Under the guiding principles of restorative justice, residents shape the scope of the project and stylize their approach based on an assessment of their needs.

The refined working hypotheses resulted in an attempt to clarify the goals and create objectives upon which to build program and facilitator protocols:

1. If community members are involved in the design and implementation of municipal community mediation programs
   then,
   there will be a greater level of resident participation,

2. If community members participate in community mediation programs
   then,
   they will improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods,

3. If citizens receive technical training and support from municipal departments
   then,
   civic engagement in municipal government will be successful and,

4. If residents are civilly engaged with municipal government to deliver services
   then,
   residents will feel greater satisfaction with city government.

**Goals for a TARGET POPULATION:**

The NRT project implementation was always intended to be city-wide. From the perspective of building community, the original steering committee and supervisory team discussed the value added to the program and the overall goal of training mediators who lived in the neighborhood where they facilitated NRT cases. Therefore, the goals of project implementation did not significantly change from the inception of the project, however, phasing in a specific community to development the program (versus city- wide) and the choice of neighborhood did.  After an interview with Paul Dettmen, Director of Burlington Housing Authority, about one prospective housing project (Riverside Drive), I ultimately decided to work in another Burlington Housing Authority project at Franklin Square.  I chose the latter site based on  the following reasons:

1. There is tension between newly arrived ethnic groups and long time residents
2. There was an active resident council that is now disbanded
3. Resident participation in community meetings is low
4. The public safety volunteer experiences difficulty to organize residents
5. The HUD resident manager has a good working relationship with most residents in the project.

Together these factors present a ripe environment to explore project implementation.

The two previously considered sites, the Murray/Johnson/Monroe Street area and the Riverside Public Housing Project presented initial appeal; however, the areas have a litigious history with either landlords or the city.  Overall, the complex issues at the two sites are beyond the conceptual parameters and program sophistication of the NRT at this time.

As the project progressed, the complexity of city-wide issues soon paled next to the resistance encountered with city actors to actualize community involvement in the project– on any level.  Early on, it became apparent in the initial phases of the project could it not be implemented within a specific neighborhood. Because of institutional resistance, a city wide "pilot" would have to take precedence to serve as a guide to

engage government actors to involve community and enable the project to succeed –
on any level, at all.

In many respects, the project took on a necessary, additional dimension and
subtlety changed as each phase of the project was defined, based on evaluations, to
move towards more inclusive community involvement. The reasons why, in a
participatory democracy, citizens and government are disengaged from the cooperative
purpose of building civil society and, how successful are government efforts to re-invent
its relationship with community became the overriding, yet underlying theme of this
project.

A new program needs assessment for continued development of the Pilot Project
was completed. The results indicated the need to refocus the originally stated goals of
the project underscore the relative relationship between community and government –
as well as governments accountability to program evaluation. These goals developed as
expressed through a series of interviews with participating community members, a
newly formed NRT working partners group[2] and the supervisory team.

**Original OBJECTIVES:**

To meet the originally stated goals of the NRT project, the objectives were:
1.　　To recruit community residents as community mediators for the NRT
2.　　To train community members in restorative justice principles and methods of
　　　conflict resolution
3.　　To form a supervisory team to administer and supervise the NRT project
4.　　To specify and evaluate project protocols during a pilot project phase
5.　　To assign, during the pilot project phase, community mediators to at least 12
　　　cases that are referred through the Municipal Code Enforcement Office

During the implementation of the Pilot Project phase, organization and
commitment of time by the supervisory team surfaced as an issue and concern for

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[2] In conjunction with the supervisory team, the NRT working partners group included: The Burlington
Housing Authority, The Public Safety Project, The Victim Justice Project, and The Burlington Police
Department.

project development.  Ongoing discussions during weekly meetings highlighted the appropriate role of NRT as a community-based program.  It became apparent that the nature of cases referred fell into two categories; long term and short- term intervention. "A quick community response" (stated as an NRT goal) was not achievable for cases that require long-term intervention. The CSP supervisor referred to these cases as "high maintenance." These cases tended to involve residents with significant mental health issues or involved quasi-legal boundaries that presented a limited point of entry for community mediators. Therefore, the cases deemed most appropriate for  NRT presented as having no expectation of legal intervention and the ability to be resolved in the short term.

From the standpoint of involving community, there were significant difficulties involved with delegating authority to or supervising community mediators. To achieve program goals we discussed the possibility of creating different approaches to work more indirectly with mediators, i.e., to let them take more of an initiative with the understanding that supervising community members requires a different approach to work – that it is a balancing act.  The CSP supervisor expressed that balancing supervision of community members with the overall responsibilities of her work were constrained by time.

The CSP supervisor felt that community facilitators were at risk of retribution through their involvement in cases. The issue then became one of deciding at what point of intervention the community facilitators could intervene to ensure their safety. Furthermore, there was a need to document – from the perspective of the community mediator, their perception of personal safety performing this service in the neighborhood.

# Neighborhood Response Team
## Program Development - Needs Assessment
### September 2001

I

| Observation | Source of Information | Means of gathering information | Comments | Suggested Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Function of NRT supervisory team | NRT supervisor team | Self-evaluation of NRT supervisory team | Mostly case strategy & case updates at meetings; realizing NRT process | Separate case mgmt mtgs From program strategy mtgs |
| NRT cases included:<br>• Defined code violations,<br>• Lifestyle conflicts- code related,<br>• chronic complaints- MH disabled | NRT supervisor team | NRT case review | referral response & process to be clarified; original objective was multiple code violations | Separate CODE from Community intervention Initiatives/ programs, i.e. CS |
| Method of NRT intervention<br>• Informal negotiated settlement<br>• Comm. Group Conferences<br>• Restorative Justice Panel | NRT sup. Team | • Action plan<br>• Action plan<br>• Action plan/Rep. Agrmnt | • # referrals<br>• # referrals<br>• # referrals | Continue to refine & develop Address resource limitations Use "action plan" as nec. It i "just another tool". |
| Confusion between CSP & NRT cases | CODE, CSP, CJC | Review of cases that were referred to NRT facilitators | Discuss role of NRT w/in CSP; clarify referral process | NRT as sub-set of CSP. Strengthen vertical ref. Sys. |
| Utilizing trained community facilitators | NRT supervisor team | Review of NRT case facilitators | Three of six trained community members involved | More research on mortality Rate of vol. Cultivate comm Participation concept |
| Trained community facilitators did not fully participate | CJC | # of people who signed up & participated in training | All trainees should sign "in-service" contract of participation for one year | Coordinate response to Case management |
| Community members request support for community organizing | Community members | Comments made to supervisors during NRT Case intervention | 2-3 locations referred to PSP for street organizing | Each. Dept. ID's staff to a Attend meetings PSP supports NRT |
| Community Group Conferences (CGC) are minimal | NRT supervisor team | Case management discussions | CGC conferences occurred when departmental support provided | Create & Incorporate intervention strategies |

5

| Observation | Source of Information | Means of gathering information | Comments | Suggested Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Systems development and administration | NRT super. Team | Code | Uniform systems for case identification; case file; summary sheet | Develop database. Explore website dev. Facilitator admin on floppy A |
| Communication with facilitators | NRT supervisory team | Mail, email, meetings | Difficult to pull together in timely fashion given other work responsibilities | Webpage communication Dev. & use email as comm. Tool. |
| NRT facilitator surveys not completed | CJC | NRT supervisor meetings | Facilitators/supervisors to CGC | |
| No new NRT recruits from program involvement | CJC | NRT supervisor meetings | Need participant surveys for further contact | Wider program collaboratio Greater outreach, more case |
| NRT action plans | CSP | Case results | not formally written verbal agreements work | Use only as needed. |
| NRT case referrals | CODE | Code office, CSP | Case referral paperwork Added admin. responsibility | Central location to do case Assessment & referral |
| Case follow up after intervention | NRT supervisor team | data base record of contacts | Database system was suggested | Case specific; drop f/up Call requirement |
| participant survey for non- CGC interventions | CJC | Review of NRT protocol | None existed - Participant survey created | |
| Distribution of NRT brochure by code officers | Code | Review of protocol | too soon to hand out | |
| Cases that involved escalated Code enforcement response | Code | Repeat phone calls or case follow up | No reported cases needed Enforcement response | |
| Code refers cases to CSP as desired | Code | CSP | # of cases referred to CSP directly from Code | |
| Repeat / chronic phone calls decreased | Code | NRT supervisory meetings | Case intervention has effects | |
| NRT facilitators do case review | Code | NRT facilitators | Supervisory team can analyze time spent on cases | |
| NRT facilitators in same geographic area as case | NRT team | Direct referrals from PSP, NPAs, neighbors, etc | Build "NRT web" in given zone. Challenge to maintain neutrality | |
| Neighbors express fears of retaliation for NRT involvement | CSP | Individual comments by community members | Need to create safety in participation | |

16

| Observation | Source of Information | Means of gathering information | Comments | Suggested Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consider "mapping community network" | NRT supervisory team | Evaluation of NRT protocol and process | Aid NRT facilitators by collaborating more closely with PSP for neighbor connection; present NRT to NPAs etc. | |
| Fine tune/revise survey and action agreement forms for program evaluations | Code | Reviewing relevance of questions during evaluation of pilot program | simplify process; sharing admin. Responsibilities & NRT facilitator involvement | |
| Possible duplication of services; case referrals involving Section 8; | CSP | Awareness of other conflict resolution models in or by community agencies | Meeting with PSP, BHA, Victim justice project to discuss enhancing collaborative approach to NRT. | |
| NRT as community building tool | NRT supervisory team | Realization of work involved to involve/inform neighbors In NRT process | Explore relationship with PSP for NRT- CGC support | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

17

**Revised GOALS: January – June 2002**

1. Reduce reliance on limited city resources and provide support for community members to resolve neighbor to neighbor disputes that arise from legal, civil, and personal conflicts that undermine quality of residential life

2. Encourage and build collaborative relationships between municipal programs to provide a comprehensive response to avoid duplication of direct – and indirect services

3. Involve and support Public Safety Project's efforts to further engage resident participation as a resource and referral for community organizing

4. Realize a productive, cooperative, and positive outcome based partnership between citizenry and government entities

5. Generate more cases from Code and Community

**Revised OBJECTIVES: January – June 2002**

1. Community networking to build locally based NRT
   - Network with neighbors administer needs assessment survey
   - Provide survey results to neighbors and bring a together focus group to narrow NRT issues and responses
   - Provide conflict resolution training as leadership development skill to enable community members to facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor disputes
   - Bring key neighbors onto NRT steering committee
   - Facilitate community meetings to promote and involve the targeted community in all phases program development and implementation
2. To develop municipal/community protocol and policy development
3. Develop case referral system with Code

**Expected OUTCOMES: January – June 2002**

1. Approximately 40 case referrals from Code/ BPD to NRT
2. All cases facilitated by trained community members

3. Field support from the Community Support Program & Public Safety Project
4. Establish working relationship with Public Safety Project
5. NRT needs assessment of Franklin Square completed

## PROJECT PRODUCT

It is somewhat difficult to imagine what completion of this project would look like since the objective of community-based mediation is one that should grow throughout the community and become an established community resource over time. I imagine the potential for the NRT similar to the San Francisco Community Boards; a model that is now 20 years in the making and utilizing more than 300 community mediators to resolve community conflicts (www.cpn.org). Although I might be surprised, I do not envision the NRT as a city managed project; I think it will find sustainability with closer ties to the community. Perhaps the NRT will remain a composite program and find benefit through a sustainable and diverse funding stream.

In the short term however (between April and June), I expect to devote most of my energy to establishing a stronger referral network, generating cases from city departments, and working with currently trained facilitators.

At this point in the project, I hoped that a full needs assessment of Franklin Square would be completed, a meeting with residents interested in forming a program would occur, and training for residents completed. This point would represent a natural – and successful completion of the original program goals. If the concept of a community designed program assumes community interest and proves community ownership, then neighbors would have the capability to resolve cases among themselves or work directly with municipal departments without an intermediary. The completion of this project would occur when a specific neighborhood community established their community mediation network.

The potential of a community mediation network to resolve community-based conflicts is as yet, an unrealized opportunity for Burlington residents to resolve nuisance behaviors that diminish their quality of life. This project serves the larger goal to move

responsibility that is misplaced on municipal departments and fill a gap in services that community defines as their own. The role of municipal government to work with the community to identify, support, and share a concept of building community is important if the desire for partnership is true. If the present goals and objectives of the NRT remain in tact and government actors loosen control of the process, they will likely find in the NRT, a path to relieve overburdened municipal departments as well as attain their goal to increase civic engagement in the city.

**OUTPUTS**

The first concrete outputs of the project guide the operational and administrative aspects of the project. There are three guiding documents. The first two are the NRT project protocols and the community mediator protocols. The third, the pilot project evaluation, is an indicator of success to incorporate restorative justice practices in the project.

**Neighborhood Response Team**
**Project Protocols**

1.  **Organization**
    a.  It is the responsibility of the CODE office to coordinate collaborative relationships with CSP and CJC. Code can refer at least two cases per month during the pilot project to supervisors based on caseload and types of cases. Code will follow up on all cases.
    b.  The Community Support Program, a division of the BPD, actively supervises community members who are NRT members and works in conjunction with Code and CJC to select cases, provide training, review protocols and link program objectives.
    c.  The Community Justice Center will implement NRT pilot efforts recruiting 6 – 10 NRT community members, identify trainers and deliver training in group conferencing and community conflict resolution, produce report on results of pilot project and program at years end. The CJC explores links to CSP and Public Safety Project as referral resources and establish program objectives to meet that end, and participate with CSP and NRT to network with the Neighborhood Planning Associations. Code may refer two cases per month to the CJC restorative justice panels.

2.  **Inter-department Relationships and Responsibilities**
    a.  All community facilitators use standard introduction

- I am a member of the community and I am trained to resolve neighborhood conflicts and I volunteer my time to help settle disputes in my neighborhood. The CSP and the CJC support me to facilitate an action plan on behalf of the Municipal Code Enforcement Office that will help improve our relationships as neighbors.

b.    NRT  "Team supervisors"
- Chief Code Enforcement Officer
    - Determine appropriateness of referral from CEO's
    - Provide informational brochure to CEO for on-site referrals
    - Forward referrals to CSP and CJC
    - Ongoing recruitment of community volunteers
    - Code Enforcement Officers inform disputants of possible NRT referral
    - Brochure information handed out by CEO to disputants
        - Explains referral process + steps
        - This process is voluntary
        - This is an option to an enforcement response
    - Provide supervisors with completed referral sheets
    - Provide supervisors with complaint/property history when appropriate
    - Provide supervisors with necessary Reporting and program Evaluation forms.
    - Represent CEO at all action plan meetings
    - Ongoing recruitment of community volunteers
- Community Support Program – strategy & on site supervision (as needed)
    - Will choose and contact teams
    - Can, at discretion of CSP, return cases to MCEO
    - Will facilitate cases directly - as desired or necessary
    - CSP provides complete case packets for facilitators
    - Ongoing recruitment of community volunteers
- Community Justice Center – strategy & on site supervision (as needed)
    - Will choose and contact teams
    - Can, at discretion of CJC, return cases to MCEO
    - CJC provides complete case packets for facilitators
    - Ongoing recruitment of community volunteers
    - Continue to facilitate inter-department program development for neighborhood Conflict Resolution initiatives.

3.    **Enforcement responses to complaints and violations - General Guidelines**

Any of the suggested methods outlined below that serve the interests of the parties is considered the most appropriate.  Adaptability and creativity by the NRT facilitator is essential to the success of reaching an agreement.

a. All failed Conflict Resolution methods or agreements may result in escalated enforcement responses at discretion of Municipal Code Office.
b. First Violations are civil, second violations considered criminal
c. Code directly prosecutes minor ticketed offenses and refers more serious cases to City Attorney's office.
d. Municipal Code Office can refer cases directly to CSP as needed.

4. **NRT Facilitation Method #1**
   a. Informal negotiated settlement
      - Generally occurs only between 2 parties or households
      - Agreement is informal and not enforceable; a good faith neighbor agreement

      ➢ Voluntary Process; Minor complaint calls; potential violation has occurred
      ➢ There may be no affected parties involved
      ➢ Code office may deem too minor to ticket
      ➢ Most desirable point of intervention for Facilitators is prevention.

5. **NRT Facilitation Method #2**
   a. Community Group Conferences;
      - Disputants; includes affected parties
      - Voluntary participation; agreement is informal
      - Non-compliance with agreement may result in enforcement action
      - 
      ➢ Modified group process – at discretion of facilitator
      ➢ Scripted Community Group Conference - at discretion of facilitator
      ➢ "Circle" conference – at discretion of facilitator

6. **NRT Facilitation Method #3**
   a. Restorative Justice Panel ("diverted" from court by Code)
      - NRT facilitation as been unsuccessful or parties refuse to meet
      - Final opportunity to meet with community before being cited to court
      - Agreement is formal and enforceable
      - Code Officer attends RJP meeting
      - Coder Officer monitors agreement


   b. Post-adjudicated (court ordered participation in RJP)
      - Code recommends participation in Restorative Justice process
      - # of CBA hours determined by RJP – not to exceed 30 hours
      - Donation to Neighborhood association in lieu of fine (Court or CEO determines amount of fine)
      - Agreement is formal and enforceable
      - CEO attends RJP meeting
      - CEO monitors compliance

# Neighborhood Response Team
## Facilitator Protocol

**Referral**

Get the referral and case packet from Supervisor.
- Case Packet contains
  Name of the parties, phone numbers, addresses
- Discuss basic history of dispute
  What has been done and what was the result
- What is goal of interaction?

**Intake Interview**

Contact the disputants
- Introduce yourself
- Explain the process briefly
- Set up a time to have a conversation at their convenience

Explain the facilitation process and restorative goals
- What can be done and benefits of negotiated agreement?
- What are the benefits of this process to them and community?

Explain the role of the facilitator
- Neutral third party as a voluntary community facilitator
- Stay impartial and supportive of the parties in action plan process

Encourage people to use the process explain how dispute resolution will strengthen relationships and the community. Be creative
Success depends upon the willingness of the people involved to participate and honor the agreement.

Identify the interested parties
- Who else is an affected party not mentioned in case packet?
- Who should be involved? What community organizations may be interested/ involved/ or affected by the dispute? Do you want to involve them?

Listen to the disputants find out what the issues are
- Use communication skills to draw out information
- What are the positions and interests? What does each party want?
- What are the real issues?
- What is the benefit to the individual to hold that position?
- What is the common ground?
- Allow parties to express their emotions.
- Identify, acknowledge and address extreme positions
- Ask if parties are willing to meet with each other.
- Repeat the Intake process as needed

**Supervision and Strategy**

Contact supervisor
- Debrief events to date
- Share information gathered with CEO, supervisors and others
  - These are not secret meetings
  - Determine what resources could be useful
  - Strategize and plan
    - Be realistic about limitation of process and people
    - Be clear about facilitator role
    - Refer cases back to MCEO or CSP
  - Decide type of Conflict Resolution method to be used

**The Meeting**

Plan a meeting at disputants' convenience
- Do what works. Time and place, ideally somewhere in the neighborhood but definitely somewhere people feel safe.
- CJC, MCEO and CSP always location options.
- Contact location and make sure they can accommodate the meeting, Are there enough chairs?
- Notify all parties involved about meeting times, dates, place etc.

Facilitating the Meeting
- Acknowledge people's willingness to attend
  - Welcome and Set Tone
- Explain the process and goal of the meeting
- Set ground rules
  - Use appropriate language
  - Discuss the behavior not the person
  - Treat people with respect

- Listening skills and facilitation skills used
  - Make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak
  - Ask questions that bring out information
  - Address inappropriate actions and words

**The Action Plan**

Help people to work towards agreement.
- Brainstorm Solutions What is going to work?
- Listen and remain open to good solutions
- Guide group towards fair and reasonable decisions
- Respect what people want
- Be aware of the Code/legal aspects of agreement
- Create time line for implementation of agreement. Can it be phased in?
- Reality Check
- Be specific

Check for agreement between parties
Write up the Action Plan using simple and clear language and have
       All Parties sign it.
- Hand out Participant Survey and collect before leaving
- Meeting Closure
  - Thank people for hard work and participation
  - Inform them of next steps

Send copies of the agreement to all parties present and MCEO

**Process Closure**
Debrief with Supervisor
- Fill out facilitators report form and discuss with supervisor
- What worked?
- What didn't work?

Check back with people after one week.
- Check for compliance with agreement.
- Is the agreement working? If not, why not?
- If it is working, encourage people to keep it up!
- MCEO are responsible for the long term monitoring of Action Plan

DOC Evaluation Results
October 1, 2001

## Strategic Outcome: Complainants needs are addressed

| Process Indicators | Results | Corrective Action |
|---|---|---|
| Complainants contacted within 7 days | Yes | Contact could be initiated by NRT facilitators |
| Volunteer Facilitators rec'd training | Yes | Formal training in basic mediation by Woodbury College |
| Complainants participated in completing Restorative Action Plan | Yes/No | Document complainant participation in process |
| All respondents were issued a Action Plan | No | Informal negotiations need agreement to be written and mailed<br>CGC need to have written agreement and mailed |
| Group meetings adhered to RJ principles | Yes/No | More group meetings are needed to assess process |
| Compliance w/ Action plans- contacted w/in 5 days | Maybe | Need formal documentation of contact and conversations |
| Code Contacts complainants @ 30 – 90 days | Maybe | Need formal documentation of contact and conversations<br>Eliminate this criteria for return calls/follow-up |
| **Outcome Indicators** | **Results** | **Corrective Action** |
| Respondents acknowledged impact of their behavior upon complainant/community/ street | No | Need to formally documents<br>- or process reflected this outcome. More CGCs would yield these results |
| Complainants expressed satisfaction w/ NRT | No | Participant surveys need to be distributed at CGCs or filled out in presence of NRT facilitator in case of informal negotiation |

## Strategic Outcome: Communities are involved

| Process Indicators | Results | Corrective Action |
|---|---|---|
| Community members facilitate dispute resolution process | No | A streamlined case referral process to delegate cases and supervision to community facilitators |
| All identified parties are contacted w/in 15 days | Yes | |
| Protocols with CEO, CSP & CJC in place | Yes | Review case referral process; centralize operations or create support system for individual departments |
| **Outcome Indicators** | **Results** | **Corrective Action** |
| Facilitators expresses satisfaction w/ NRT involvement | Yes & No | Mental Health cases proved difficult; establish working relationship with MH resources for referrals &/or collaboration, involve facilitators to access more fully |

## Strategic Outcome:  Respondents are responsible

| Process Indicators | Results | Corrective Action |
|---|---|---|
| Facilitators trained in RJ principles | Yes | |
| RJ Action plans developed w/in 45 days | Unknown | Document restorative action plans |
| Respondents participate to develop action plan, thus accepting responsibility for behavior | Unknown | Action plans need to be documented |
| Respondents completed the action plan w/in required timeframe | Unknown | Document action plans |
| **Outcome Indicators** | **Results** | **Corrective Action** |
| Respondents acknowledge impact of behavior On community/ complainant/ street | Unknown | Need to involve community facilitators; fill out facilitator report form at end of case |


## Strategic Outcome:  Neighborhoods are restored

| Process Indicators | Results | Corrective Action |
|---|---|---|
| Parties involved given brochure; apprised of program design and goals | No | Hand out brochures to all participants in NRT program |
| Disputant participated in Restorative Process | Yes/No | Clearly identify & relate what is restorative about NRT; reflect on participant survey |
| **Outcome Indicators** | **Results** | **Corrective Action** |
| Appreciable reduction in # of repeat complaints | Yes | Objectively reflect in database |

**EXPECTED OUTPUTS**: January 2002 – June 2002

- Develop a community network to build locally based NRT
- Visit with neighbors in the identified locale to create needs assessment survey
- Provide survey results to neighbors and bring a together focus group to narrow NRT issues and responses
- Provide conflict resolution training as leadership development skill to enable community members to facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor disputes
- Involve interested neighbors in the NRT steering committee
- Facilitate community meetings to promote and involve the targeted community in all phases program development and implementation

At this stage of program development the expected output is to resume coordination with the supervisory team to evaluate the NRT program. The essence of our work will be to refine and enhance a community based approach that will empower citizens to deliver conflict resolution services within their immediate neighborhood. To achieve this my role will be to:

- Assess the buy-in of the existing supervisory team to participate in this project
- Create an agenda for weekly supervisory meetings throughout the project period
- Assume primary responsibility for coordination of project implementation, reporting, evaluation
- Design a new community networking and program activity approach based on evaluations of existing NRT program
- Identify a diverse steering committee for the project
- Create a strategic outcome plan for the project with process indicators, measures, results and mid course corrections (as needed) for the project
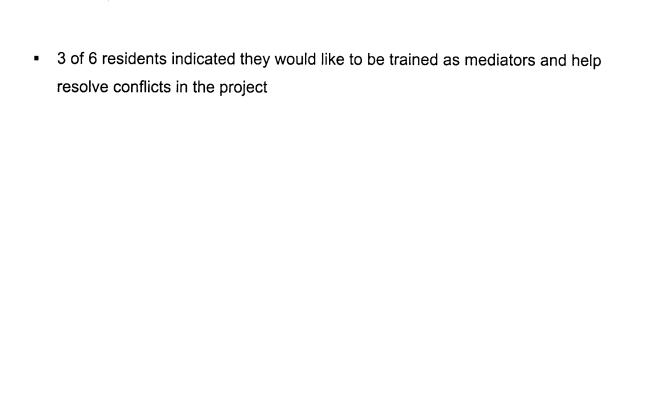- Coordinate conflict training workshop for community NRT members

## ACTUAL OUTPUTS

After a series of meetings with a community mediator from the Old North End, the Public Safety Project (PSP) supervisors, and the Community Support Program, we partnered together the community mediator with the PSP volunteer working in Franklin Square to conduct a needs assessment survey in the housing project. We designed a needs assessment survey (see inputs) to ascertain the types of community conflict, general interest in the program, and willingness to participate in conflict resolution training. Because the community mediator was going to be out of the country for 6 weeks, I accompanied the PSP on two occasions to begin the survey process.

My direct involvement with the PSP had a two-fold advantage. First, our working together gave her a greater understanding of the scope of the NRT, the interview process, and a sense of how to work together with the community mediator. Secondly, this strategy attempted to directly involve – and empower, a community mediator with an interest in resolving community conflict, to directly participate in the growth of the NRT project in her neighborhood.

In the absence of the community mediator, I conducted with the Public Safety volunteer, a needs assessment of 10% of the residents (six households). The survey confirmed the results of my research. Residents experience a high level of multi-cultural conflict between neighbors, feel their economic status limits their ability to participate in choices that involve them, that neighborhood youth are a source of conflict between adults, and that neutral intervention in conflicting situations would improve their quality of life in the project.

The results of the needs assessment further indicated that:
- 5 of 6 residents experienced direct conflict with neighbors or management
- 3 of 6 residents did not call management to negotiate neighbor conflicts
- 2 of 3 residents that requested intervention did not resolve the conflict
- 6 of 6 residents indicated that they would participate in community based conflict mediated by a neighbor
- 6 of 6 residents indicated that resolving conflict would make the project a better place to live

- 3 of 6 residents indicated they would like to be trained as mediators and help resolve conflicts in the project

**INPUTS**

**Participant Satisfaction Report**

## Neighborhood Response Team
## Program Evaluation
## Participant Survey

Please, take a moment to share your thoughts with us about your experience in the Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) program.
Your Name:
Nature of case:
Name of person you worked with:
Date:

Please circle supervisors, volunteers, or both as they apply to your experience.

1.    NRT supervisors and/or volunteers responded to my problem in a timely manner.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

2.    NRT supervisors and/or volunteers offered sound suggestions to help me resolve my problem.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

3.    My problem was resolved with the help of the NRT supervisor and/or volunteer.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

4.    I feel like I have a better understanding of my neighbor's point of view and feelings.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

5.    I am satisfied with how the problem I had was resolved.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

6.    I feel like I can talk directly to my neighbor if the same problem arises again.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

7.    Because of my experience with the NRT I feel like I can talk directly to my neighbor if a different problem comes up.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

8.    I feel like I need the ongoing support of the NRT to resolve my problems with neighbors.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

9.    I feel like the NRT is a good service for the community
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

10.    I would like to volunteer as a NRT member in my neighborhood.
**Strongly Agree        Mostly Agree        Agree        Mildly Agree        Disagree**

Please take a moment to share your thoughts about your experience in this program with us.
Name:
Nature of case:
Date:

1.     **I feel like this Restorative Action Plan meeting was well planned.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

2.     **I think the facilitator(s) fostered trust and cooperation to establish rapport with the group.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

3.     **I feel like the Restorative Action Plan fairly addressed the issues important to me.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

4.     **I gained an understanding of other people's feelings, concerns and points of view.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

5.     **I feel like I had the opportunity to express my feelings, concerns and point of view.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

7.     I feel like I will have a better relationship with my neighbor because of this meeting.

**Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree**

8.     **I am satisfied with the outcome of the action plan meeting.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

9.     **I would use the Neighborhood Response Team facilitation process again.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

10.     **I would like to be trained as a Neighborhood Response Team facilitator.**

Strongly Agree          Mostly Agree          Agree          Mildly Agree          Disagree

(Please use the back of this sheet to share additional thoughts with us)

| | | Questions |
|---|---|---|
| **YES** | **NO** | |
| | | 1. Have you ever been in a disagreement with your neighbor, landlord – or someone on your street? |
| | | 2. How many times during the past year did you call your property manager or a city service to help solve this problem? |
| | | 3. If you called, was the problem solved? |
| | | 4. If a community member wanted to have a conversation with you and your neighbor(s) to fix the problem, do you think it would make your street a better place to live? |
| | | 5. If your neighbor was trained to help resolve a problem in your neighborhood, would you participate in the conversation? |
| | | 6. If you were trained, do you think you'd like to help solve problems between neighbors on your street or neighborhood? |

**Training Community Mediators**  (see appendices for training materials)

Between January and March 2001, the supervisory team recruited and trained ten community members as the first NRT mediators. The supervisory team, with the assistant city attorney, conducted a NRT program orientation to our "new community mediators" to present an overview the NRT project's goals and objectives. Over the course of 6 weeks, we conducted three, three hour training sessions in basic conflict resolution.  Each of those members had a least one case each for the pilot project study.

In September, we recruited another six people and conducted a second training in anticipation of assigning more cases and implementing neighborhood specific responses to conflict. We did not have a group orientation for the second round of mediators, Instead, I conducted individual interviews and orientation.

**METHODS OF MONITORING**

## NEIGHBORHOOD RESPONSE TEAM

### Facilitator Report Form

DATE          _____
CASE#        _____
SESSION      _____

*Complete after facilitation; exchange and use base for debriefing)*

Party #1
(complainant)_____
Facilitator (self) _____
Party #2
(respondent)_____
Facilitator _____
Others present (witnesses, affected parties, interpreters)

_____

_____

_____

Code Enforcement Officer: _____

No Show: P1_____     P2_____
Time spent: Session_____hrs. _____mins._____
Continuation date _____ Debriefing _____
Process used: informal negotiation_____ Group Conference _____ Circle Process _____
RJP _____
*(explain further – if necessary)*

1. OUTCOME: No Action Plan: _____ Referral: _____
   Notes/Comments
   Action Plan: Final____ Interim_____ Written____
2. Nature of Case: Simple_____ Complex _____ Special Circumstances
   *(explain in space provided)*
3. Your Judgement of the Action Plan

| | Adequate | Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. mutually agreed | | | |
| 2. Workability | | | |
| 3. Durability | | | |

   4.Completeness

   Disputant behavior that enabled process*
4. _____ Focused on issues      _____ Articulated concerns
   _____ Agreed on issues      _____ Cooperative
   _____ Wanting/willing to settle     _____ Could see other's concerns
           * ☐ Party #2 clearly identified as violator/offender

5.  Disputant Behavior that made process difficult  (P1, P2, or Both)

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ Abusive, intimidating behavior | _____ Blaming others |
| _____ Uncontrollable hostility | _____ Focus on past |
| _____ Language Difficulties | _____ Fixed position |
| _____ Cultural/Value Difference | _____ Hidden Agenda |
| _____ Confused/overwhelmed | _____ Stuck in feelings |
| _____ Not sure/didn't want to meet | _____ Mistrust of others |
| _____ Not ready to meet | _____ Influenced by others |
| _____ Uncommunicative | _____ Other |
| _____ Unrealistic demands | _____ Other |

6.  Your behavior that facilitated the meeting

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ Established rapport | _____ Guided to good agreement |
| _____ Listened/reflected feelings | _____ Made process clear |
| _____ Did not judge or advise | _____ Asked appropriate questions |
| _____ Handled confidentiality | _____ Fostered trust, cooperation |
| _____ summarized, reframed well | _____ Explored readiness |
| _____ Used language well | _____ Had necessary knowledge |
| _____ Understood issues | _____ Separate positions/interests |
| _____ Organized information | _____ Handled problems |
| _____ Elicited, tested opinions | _____ Kept focus on task |

*(Complete the following after debriefing)*

7.  Co-Facilitator Interaction:

| | Worked Well | Discussed/ worked out | Difficulties |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Style/approach | | | |
| 2.  Analysis/planning | | | |
| 3.  Work sharing | | | |
| 4.  Co-Facilitator support | | | |

8.  What I learned from the debriefing (what I would do differently next time, want to work on, etc)

9. Desire to discuss issues in this case with supervisors:
As soon as possible; best times to reach me are_____
When you can get to it _____
As a case example (to use in training sessions) on the subject of_____

NOTES/COMMENTS: *Especially regarding process of pilot project (please make suggestions)*
Revised: 3/7/01. Adapted from the Mediators Handbook.

**Additional Methods of Monitoring:**

From April 2001 through September, the supervisory team met almost weekly to conduct case review, strategy, and assignment. During this time, we were able to make small adjustments to the project to help keep it on track. Since the time period of our pilot project was only three months, the evaluation process for this project was essentially ongoing.

**Neighborhood Response Team Project Results**

**Evaluation Summary**

**Quantitative Results:**
- 16 cases discussed during supervisory/strategy meetings
- 12 cases have direct intervention; 9 cases are resolved, 3 were still in process
- 3 community volunteers directly facilitated 3 cases
- 6 cases facilitated by the code office or community support program
- 5 action plans rendered in response to complaints

**Quantitative analysis of cases:**
- Five cases were a mixture of lifestyle conflicts and code related issues
- Four cases were clearly defined code regulation issues
- Three cases were life style conflicts that did not involve any ordinance violation
- Two cases were landlord tenant issues
- Four cases involved section eight tenants
- Six cases occurred in the Old North End
- Four cases involved people with mental health issues
- three cases referred, by neighbor request, to the Public Safety Project for further community organizing

**Qualitative analysis of cases:**
The types of cases referred by Code to NRT were not violation specific. They fell into three main categories.
- Clearly defined Code regulation issues that have a high probability of resolution,

- Lifestyle conflicts that revolve around code regulations, often gentrification issues, that are not easily enforceable and do not have a reasonable expectation of a short term resolution and,
- Chronic complainants; represented by people with developmental challenges or psychiatric disabilities. These cases generally needed ongoing support.

**Cases are multi-dimensional**

The NRT pilot project responded to city residents in dispute over municipal code violations that affected their personal and neighborhood quality of life. After responding to the cases presented to the supervisory team, we found that complaint calls were often multi-dimensional and, cooperation with municipal programs and city organizations contributed to a resolution. All the cases were behavior based and, though sometimes complex, they did not necessarily merit legal prosecution. Because all cases were initiated in response to a dispute between neighbors, the NRT revealed itself as a natural "hub" to register and respond to a variety of complaints.

**Wide variety of issues**

For example, the pilot project responded to conflict involving differentiating lifestyles between a homeowner and HUD "section eight" housing tenant, a tenant-landlord-property management dispute, a "grassroots" tenant association and perceived zoning violations, noise complaints that led to community organizing, and concern about waste by-products in a backyard pen of a large domesticated - pig.

**Citizens as mediators**

The pilot program partially met the objective to supervise trained community "peacemakers" to facilitate neighbor-to-neighbor disputes. Evaluation results indicated that the process of case selection, supervision, and referrals to community facilitators would benefit from program focus. The recommendation of the NRT supervisory team is threefold:
- To commit to the NRT as a resident responsive, community based program,
- To accept a wider variety of case referrals and,

- To centralize program operations

**Centralized case management**

This evaluation underscored the importance of the supervisor-facilitator relationship. The NRT supervisors stressed the responsibility they felt to produce community satisfaction and to feel "comfortable with the capability of trained facilitators." Feedback from community facilitators indicated that early case intervention and initial contact with disputants would help to keep the "story fresh, establish rapport, and trust with community residents." The alternative dispute resolution skills that are required of NRT facilitators to build community through neighbor-to-neighbor conflict mitigation, coupled with the level of supervisory communication desired by NRT facilitators, supports the notion of centralized case management to strengthen NRT facilitator response support systems.

**Stakeholder Analysis: The Community Intervention Team**

In response to citizen calls, the Municipal Code Office, Community Support Program, and Community Justice Center (NRT supervisory team) successfully collaborated with other community programs to respond to complaints. During a NRT feedback and brainstorming session, the Victim Justice Project, Burlington Housing Authority, the Public Safety Project, and the Burlington Police Department, felt it would be a group benefit to participate in a quarterly "community intervention team" to reinforce working relationships, stay abreast of program developments, and address challenging cases. For example, because of NRT intervention, three opportunities for community organizing were presented to – and followed through by, the Public Safety Project. It is also apparent there is a supporting role Public Safety Project can offer to inform residents about NRT community group conferences.

**SWOT Analysis**

An evaluation the NRT program reveals that the strengths of this program; the willingness of residents to participate in training and service delivery of a municipal program is threatened by government's reticence to commit to community based

program design and implementation. Since the Federal grant money runs out at the end of June, and the City is not yet committed to funding the project, a lack of continued funding threatens the future of the NRT. As a program, the NRT presents an opportunity to reduce resident reliance on city services while it supports community to build social capital. However, the reluctance of city actors to delegate authority to community members weakens the opportunity for residents to become less reliant on city services. As designed, the NRT is a community enhancement project designed to build improve public safety and build social capital in their neighborhood. It's major weakness is that, as a matter of program policy, the City is not committed to the project.

## Evaluation of Project Protocol and Operations
## April through September 2001

1.  **Community members trained as NRT facilitators**:
    - Fifteen community members were trained in Restorative Justice principles and conflict resolution
    - 95% trained found the training excellent or very effective
    - 87% found the presentation of learning materials excellent or very effective
    - 100% found the training relevant to their expectations of NRT community intervention
    - 100% understood the objective of the NRT
    - 60% had an understanding of Restorative Justice & their role in community
    - 90% felt prepared to facilitate disputes after the training

2.  **Community members facilitate NRT process**:
    - Four trained residents facilitated two cases, (one dropped out)
    - Two facilitators began NRT a case but did not complete the process
    - Three facilitators have not yet been involved in a complete case
    - Seven trained community members were available to facilitate cases
    - Eight did not/could not participate in NRT after training

3. **Communities are involved:**
   - All identified parties were contacted within 15 days of complaint
   - 13 community members participated in one community group conference
   - 5 community members participated in one community group conference
   - Facilitators expressed satisfaction with support and conferences

4. **Complainants needs are addressed:**
   - All complainants were called within seven days of initial phone call
   - All complainants participated in completing restorative action plan
   - All respondents were not issued an action plan
   - Group conferences adhered to restorative principles
   - It is unknown if respondents acknowledged impact of their behavior
   - It is unknown if complainants expressed satisfaction with NRT

5. **Respondents are responsible**
   - All verbal action plans were developed within 45 days
   - Unknown if respondents participated in developing action plan
   - Respondents completed the verbal action plans  (No repeat complaint calls)
   - Respondents completed the action plan within the timeframe (No legal actions taken)

6. **Neighborhoods are restored**
   - Parties involved were not given an NRT brochure apprising program design & goals
   - Parties were verbally indoctrinated to NRT program design & goals
   - Disputants participated in Restorative process
   - There was an appreciable reduction in the number of repeat complaint calls to Code

7. **NRT Administration**
   - Code, CSP, & CJC collaboratively manage and develop project
   - Uniform system for case identification, filing, database, summary sheet
   - Collecting/collating surveys and other evaluative documentation
   - NRT public relations/awareness

- Cases referred to NRT by Code office
- Case referrals to NRT facilitators
- Coordination of NRT project with existing community resources


## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Community members trained as NRT facilitators:**

   *Recommendations*
   - This October and November 7  community members and 5 Public Safety Project Vista volunteers will be certified by Woodbury College to practice Basic Mediation
   - Discuss Restorative Justice principles, relevant to program goals, individually when recruiting & reinforce conceptually during training
   - Refer trainees to cases more quickly
   - Focus/reinforce role playing for next training on results from facilitator survey

2. **Community members facilitate NRT process:**

   *Recommendations*
   - Provide trained facilitators with cases
   - A streamlined case referral process
   - Screen prospective trainees carefully & provide trainees with clear expectations of program participation;
   - Involve facilitators in program strategy meetings; maintain open communication
   - Facilitators are first point of contact with disputants
   - Draw in available resources to outreach for community group conferences
   - Consider case referral to facilitators who live in the area of the dispute if appropriate

3. **Communities are involved:**

   *Recommendations*
   - Establish referral resource for Mental Health disability clients

- Establish available resources for outreach support for community group conferences
- Establish coordinated "community intervention team", i.e. CSP, PSP, CODE, CJC, VSP, BHA, BPD to share case information at quarterly meetings to strengthen facilitator support & minimize duplication of services

4.  **Complainants needs are addressed:**

    *Recommendations*
    - Not all action plans were written; some were verbal. Written action plans seen as "just a tool"
    - Write action plan for Community Group Conferences
    - Informal negotiations; a written action plan is not always necessary
    - Mail written action plans to all involved parties
    - More CGC need to be held to assess if restorative principles were adhered to
    - Formal documentation of restorative principles/goals needed on facilitator report
    - Distribute & collect participant surveys at NRT conferences/negotiations

5.  **Respondents are responsible**

    *Recommendations*
    - Document action plans; amend facilitator survey report to reflect restorative goals
    - Continue to provide "enforcement" support to encourage respondents to participate

6.  **Neighborhoods are restored**

    *Recommendations*
    - Revise & distribute NRT brochure to reflect any changes in program design & goals for Phase II
    - Objectively reflect reduction of repeat calls in database

7.  **NRT Administration**

    *Recommendations*
    - Consider centralized "hub" for case coordination
    - Separate discussions about case management from program development

- NRT can be resource for CSP; strengthen intervention strategies
- Develop database system for cases
- Reduce program paperwork; Distribute paperwork on floppy disc; utilize email, web pages
- Develop NRT web page; redesign & hand out NRT brochures, present program at neighborhood meetings/community forums, i.e., church groups, etc...
- Create broader access to NRT through a variety of channels
- Focus professional resources to ensure NRT as a community based, volunteer project
- Continue development of NRT as collaborative project

**Personal Reflections/ Professional Recommendations**

If I did this program over again what would be different.... well, I may do this program over again and this is what would be different. I believe, and the process of this project reinforces for me, that the position of strength in building relationships between citizens and government is from an intermediary position. I do not think that in order to be successful that the NRT has to begin as a grassroots movement but I am convinced that participatory research in program design and implementation is crucial to sustainability of a project.

Therefore, I would distance project design, implementation and evaluation from government actors early in the process and create a project that is more aligned, or in balance, with community input. I questioned, more than once, if this project would have been easier to accomplish if I had worked more independently of government. But I realized that to do so would change significantly the scope of this inquiry. I believe that research that delves into the intricate relationships of building democratic practices within democratic systems is essential.

If I had the opportunity to do this project over again I would do more in-depth exploratory research before committing myself to this –or perhaps any, particular topic. The reality is that it does not take much time to get a project operational once the foundation pieces are in place. In retrospect, knowing what I do now, I would incorporate funding development in to the overall scheme of the project. The National

Institute of Justice's survey of community dispute resolution programs identified "composite programs", such as the NRT, "tend to have offices outside of justice system building in houses, storefronts, office building, and other locations to provide an independent identity (NIJ, 28)". With this aspect of project development in place I would now find a small dank storefront in the Old North End of Burlington and hang a shingle, written in 27 different languages, in the window that said, "welcome to the community mediation network." From this place, I would begin anew, a community's project.

## RESEARCH

This project employed a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods during different phases of the project's development. I believe that the overall project proposal would broadly state my approach as participatory action research but I believe the essence of this project – if carried out over a longer period of time would be categorized more correctly as a combination of participatory action and quasi-experimental research.

In the beginning of the project, I depended heavily on exploratory research to inform the scope of my inquiry and substantiate the general impressions conveyed by the community in previous focus group sessions about public safety issues. The general scope of exploratory research included: 1) State of Vermont, county and city crime statistic reports, 2) All available City of Burlington Police Department information, and 3) Conversations with community members.

In order to understand the dynamics of poverty in Burlington, I relied on State, City, and Federal data sources (especially HUD and Department of Labor) to inform my arguments for program design and implementation, particularly The City of Burlington's Community and Economic Consolidation Plan for 2000-2002.

I conducted secondary research relying on the quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted the UVM Center for Rural Studies, Community Outreach Partnership Center of the Old North End to assess the attitudes and beliefs held by community members who live in this sector. The interviews and surveys conducted by Lynne Bond and her students were an invaluable contribution to the project and

substantiated my personal impressions of and professional experience working in the Old North End.

To inform the development of the Project itself, I employed different aspects of participatory action research; focus groups, needs assessment and participant interviews, surveys, collaborative techniques, negotiation, and "shoulder to shoulder" work with community members to inform the development of the NRT. The immediate results of this research were incorporated into the design of the project itself. The results provided a basis for analysis with which to make recommendations for the next phases of project goals and objectives. Overall, the results of these types of research continuously guided the approach to the development of this project.

Prospective BUDGET

This budget represents the finances needed to establish and sustain the NRT as intermediary community based organization in the North End of Burlington. With the exception of Technical Assistance staff, the NRT would be governed and driven by community members.

## Income
Grants

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Foundation (3 year general operating) | 150,000.00 | |
| Agency of Human Services (SRS & DOC) | 25,000.00 | |
| City of Burlington | 15,000.00 | |
| Vermont Refugee Resettlement | 10,000.00 | |

Fee for Service

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Burlington Landlord Association | 7,500.00 | |
| Chittenden County District Court | 35,000.00 | |
| Training and Education Presentations | 10,000.00 | |
| TOTAL | | $ 252,500.00 |

## Expenses
Fixed Expenses

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Salaries (2 Full Time) | 80,000.00 | |
| Utilities and Phone | 5,000.00 | |
| Furnishings | 2,000.00 | |
| Insurance | 1,200.00 | |
| Non-profit incorporating & Admin Fees | 1,000.00 | |
| Rent (lease to purchase) | 12,000.00 | |

Variable Expenses

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Office Supplies | 3,000.00 | |
| Print and Mail | 2,000.00 | |
| Trainings | 3.000.00 | |
| Car and Travel | 1,500.00 | |
| Continuing Education (SNHU) | 2,000.00 | |
| Food | 7,300.00 | |
| TOTAL | | $ 120,000.00 |

# Neighborhood Response Team
## Project Implementation Plan
**Phase I Pilot Project  4/01 – 10/01**
**Phase II Project          10/01 – 3/02**

| Activities | Apr 01 | May 01 | Jun 01 | July 01 | Aug 01 | Sep 01 | Oct 01 | Nov 01 | Dec 01 | Jan 02 | Feb 02 | Mar 02 | Resources Needed | Person Responsible |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Development** Protocol Review Policy Review Team Collaboration Steering committee Systems/Administration | NRT Code | Sup. | Team | | X X → → | X X | X X X CIT X CJC | | X | | | X X → X → | Community Intervention Team Steering Committee | NRT Superv. Team CJC/CSP/CODE CIT CJC/ CSP |
| **Program Evaluation:** Interagency Surveys Participant Surveys Facilitator Surveys | | | | | | X X X | X X | X X X | X X | X X | X X X | X X | Evaluation criteria Develop email access Develop email access | Code, CSP,CJC CJC CJC |
| **Case Development:** Case Evaluation Case Referrals Case Supervision Case Admin | NRT Code | → → → | | | → → → | X | CJC CIT CJC | → → → | | | | → → → | Maintaining contact and Relationship with Facilitators; develop referral network; handout brochures | CIT CIT CSP, CJC CJC, Code |
| **Facilitator Development** Recruitment Training Case assignment Case Support Case Referrals | NRT CJC NRT NRT | → → → → | | | → → → → | X | CIT C CJC CSP | X | | | | → → → → | Dev. public relations netwk Woodbury College/DOC/ Local training effort Create availability w. CIT Assign to specific Neiborhood area | CIT CJC CJC CIT, PSP, CSP CJC, PSP, CSP |
| **Community Development Community Meetings** Section 8 NPAs - Street Assoc. | | | | | | | X X X | → → → | | | | | Inform area agencies Schedule Meetings | CSP, CJC, PSP, Code PSP, CSP, Code, CJC |

CSP= Community Support Program; PSP= Public Safety Project; CJC= Community Justice Center; NRT= NRT supervisory Team; CIT= Community Intervention Team (new steering committee); Code= Municipal Code Enforcement Office.

## COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

The NRT project primarily used communication technology for case management, indirect mediator supervision, and case development through a shared database with the Municipal Code Office. Certainly, the Internet was a primary reference resource for data, literature review, and research on related projects throughout the world.

## CONCLUSION

The Neighborhood Response Team (NRT) project is a vehicle to explore the evolving concept of restorative justice and community mediation to develop community and build cooperative partnerships between citizens and municipal agencies. As such, it is an exercise in building social capital within neighborhoods to increase civic activity and responsibility to positively influence the quality of life in the City of Burlington. The NRT, as a government program, has the responsibility to "encourage citizens to respond actively to problems that concern them; and, through such responses, to build – or rebuild a civil society a society in which ordinary citizens trust each other, organize voluntarily to achieve common ends, expect local government to respond to their needs, and participate generally in the public life of the community" (Civic Society Building, 19).

The NRT straddles the fence as a government sponsored project and a community based project – and perhaps, suffers for it. "Justice system based programs… are generally interested in improving citizen satisfaction with the justice system" and although mediation may be an alternative to court, participation is not voluntary (McGillis, 31). On the other side, community based programs, in addition to justice system referrals, "seek to obtain a significant portion of their cases directly through walk-ins… and they maintain a very strong community based philosophy embracing "community development and empowerment" (32).

As a "composite" community mediation project, NRT has the capacity to add community depth to existing restorative justice programs. Thus far, the city adapts to a restorative justice framework designed to shift the paradigm from traditional to community justice without true community participation. Current restorative justice

practices may positively effect the public perception of community safety, but they do not necessarily promote the concept of a strengthened community that reflects a quality of life similarly shared by people living in proximity to one another. In a federal evaluation of neighborhood restorative justice centers in 1997, McGillis states the following in regard to restorative justice programs as practiced in Burlington. "Since impacted residents have not actively participated in creating a specific municipal plan, the program design, or implementing specific cases in these programs in the community, the sustainability and effectiveness remains unclear. It is difficult for citizens to distinguish whether program goals are ultimately serving government, serving community, or imparting an understanding of how they may benefit both."

As a city-wide project, the NRT is a comprehensive community initiative and, as Lizbeth Schoor (1998) states in her book, "Common Purpose", there is a theory about why the NRT should work. Kay Prannis (1995) states that restorative justice is an empowerment model, one grounded in community commitment and not possible without community ownership and support. John Davis echoes this sentiment calling for action in civic engagement plans practices that are sustainable when ""residents are involved in shaping municipal plans, setting municipal priorities, and helping to deliver municipal services." Davis envisions success when initiatives "build upon informal networks of helping and socializing within neighborhoods." (Davis, p.2)

As a conduit to resolve conflicts between neighbors that are referred from municipal departments, the NRT is "explicitly concerned with the patterns of relations and institutions that effectively operate at a neighborhood level" (Clear, 27). The challenge to create a successful community mediation program in NRT lays in the willingness for government to provide the necessary leadership that can impart the vision while resisting the urge to usurp power to guide the program model. Democratic governance plays a direct role in building community capacity to manage conflict in the community and success "depends on their responsiveness...to mediate conflict by hearing, channeling, and mediating the multiple citizen demands that modern societies express through civil and political associations" (Political Institutions, 17)

In the context of the NRT, community mediation implies horizontal links between residents, stakeholders, and city departments. Horizontal links, rather than hierarchical

relationships, foster community involvement and, in this case, the primary tool to evoke community participation is to develop networks and trust-building strategies with institutional leaders (Gittell et al. 1999). To actualize success, implementation of the NRT requires civic action. In turn, civic action requires community mobilization in order to develop the "norms, trust, and networks" (8) for community mediation practices to take hold and thus, ensure neighborhood safety and improved perception of the quality of life in the City.

The research for this project strongly suggests that directly strengthening resident's involvement in NRT program design to empower mobilization around issues they identify as important will naturally propel civic engagement. The NRT program, as systematic approach to engage citizen participation to help develop municipal plans through program design and community-based implementation will help to dispel the impression that municipal structures foster constituent disenfranchisement.

As a program, the NRT "is consistent with the community justice perspective... that supports comprehensive community initiatives which address many different neighborhood problems at once, focusing as much on coordination and collaboration as on much as on individual program development." (23). Although the NRT has a quiet demeanor and so to speak, "hasn't got off the ground" the project has enormous potential in that it is part of a much larger "community justice movement" and "reflects a radical departure from past criminal justice activity" (24).

The Community Justice Center, current home to the NRT, recently relocated from a central downtown storefront location to a second floor city administrative building. The move coincided with a decision to change the status of the CJC from a "quasi-city department" to a "division" of the CEDO office. Funding for the Community Support Program ends mid-April and funding for NRT ends at the end of June.

NRT program initiatives to work with the Public Safety Project in Franklin Square – or any other geographic location in the city are on hold while the Director of CEDO decides what program policy and approach the city embrace. The NRT continues to generate and develop cases through the Code Enforcement Office.

The territory and impetus for any community organizing efforts are under the purview of the Assistant Director of Community Development. Currently, NRT

community -based initiatives are thought confusing to the community and there is sensitivity about program objectives "stepping all over each other." In keeping with the challenges that other community justice initiatives face, from the perspective of the project development, "what has not occurred is a systematic, overarching conceptualization of community justice that exploits its full potential both in design and implementation" (25) to benefit all city initiatives.

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