There are other forms of capital, including financial, that provide access to dollars and the credit markets, particularly for the most disadvantaged. There is also environmental capital, which refers to a community’s natural resources, including water, land, air, wildlife, and vegetation (Green and Haines, 2002, pp. 139–179). While all forms of capital must be considered, the primary focus of this chapter is human, physical, social, and civic capital.

Our understanding of capital investments takes on new meaning as we weigh the benefits of a variety of capital investments to the overall well-being of a community, its people, and its economy. Robert Putnam’s groundbreaking book (1993) on Italian communities titled Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy, provided convincing evidence on the long-term benefits of large stores of social capital. What we are continuing to learn is the interrelationship between various forms of capital and the interchangeability of the forms with the purpose.

As Table 2.1 shows, certain forms of capital can be isolated around traditional definitions. Roads and bridges are clearly physical capital, but are libraries and schools? Certainly, these are buildings, but they have larger applications in the community. They can be safe meeting places for people; they can anchor a community in social and civic ways as well as educational ones; they can connect people in new ways. Public transportation connects people to jobs but also to each other.

The challenges in considering capital investments are twofold: first, a community must decide what kinds of investments it must make. This requires choices driven by necessity, desire, and public will. It might be necessary to repair a bridge with the money set aside for a new community center, for example. Public safety could demand the choice. Second, another perspective that is becoming clearer is that we have to think about how all our investments interrelate and support the overall goal of a stronger, more prosperous community. That is where the balanced community portfolio is important. Capital investments done wisely and strategically reinforce each
Stages of Community Work

Creating venues for joint work is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor. Certain circumstances require different methods of working together. Table 3.1 shows the stages of collaborative community work. Community efforts of any description work if, and only if, there is a sense that they will accomplish something bigger than the collective parts and if the parties involved and those in the larger community think the process is fair and inclusive.

How Community Efforts Can Work Better

Community processes have characteristics all their own, but generally there are three phases that groups must address: defining the problem, deciding on strategy, and taking action. These are rarely linear and are not easy to predict in terms of time, or distinct blocks (Gray, 1989, p. 5).

Problem definition requires that the group come to agreement on the problem or the opportunity that they are addressing. This “cards-on-the-table” stage is the critical period where relationships and trust are built and ways of working agreed on. Other stakeholders are identified. It is critical that this early work create a clear view of the “big picture” and the commitment required. The second stage includes data gathering, goal setting, and overall organization of the process: how it will work, who will do what, the expectations both from and of members, and how the group will proceed. Finally, the group has to act. This stage can cause groups the most consternation because it requires moving from talk to action. This period could require a different structure or a change in the working group. A new group or subcommittee may be charged with monitoring the progress and the process. Gray’s phases have three clear messages: pay attention to process; involve and communicate with a broad range of stakeholders; and be clear up front about expectations and commitments (Gray, 1989, pp. 86, 88–89).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common purpose or mission</th>
<th>Goal: achievement of operation for organization</th>
<th>Creation of new structure</th>
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<tr>
<td>Environment performance</td>
<td>Goal: better organizational performance</td>
<td>Noncompetitive activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular task</td>
<td>Goal: better efficiency in a particular task</td>
<td>Access to one another's turf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Channel</td>
<td>Goal: communication among parties</td>
<td>Access to one another's turf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear communication</td>
<td>Goal: communication among parties</td>
<td>Access to one another's turf</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Goal: more knowledge of existing activities</td>
<td>Clear communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive strategic</td>
<td>Goal: more knowledge of existing activities</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources, and responsibility</td>
<td>Authority defined, Authority retained</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shared authority, risk,</td>
<td>Authority defined, Authority retained</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information exchange</td>
<td>Information exchange</td>
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<td>Physical Capital</td>
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**Table 2.1: Types of Community Investments**

*Note: For an expanded discussion of these forms of community capital investments, see Green and Haines, 2002, pp. 81-100 (human capital)*
Too many community efforts fail or never get off the ground because of several very familiar reasons. Perhaps the one best known is turf. People are afraid to join in, let go, and commit to activities over which they have limited control. Organizations often want to maintain their independence and keep their profile and good works high on the community’s funding agenda. Joint work does not relieve an organization of its individual responsibilities or authority, but it does often create structures where the ultimate goal is a problem to be solved, not organizational survival. These efforts provide opportunities for people in jobs, agencies, and neighborhood groups to rethink how their organizational boundaries overlap and how they might be expanded to accomplish even more. Turf becomes less important as sustainable outcomes, economic vitality, and results take its place.

A second reason community efforts fail is that the fault lines of race, gender, socioeconomic difference, and age are issues that divide communities. All too often, fault lines define the dynamics of any community effort. Community groups must know this, deal with it as a group, and move on. Although years of injustice or exclusion cannot be ignored, the new effort can build a forum and an opportunity for people from throughout the community to build trust, form relationships, and focus on issues of common concern. An example of this process in action took place at a community forum on youth violence in a small city. The discussion was held on the campus of a historically black college. As various participants began to speak about their fears and concerns for their children, the color dividers came down. It was clear from the discussion and exchange that everybody in the room was concerned about the safety of all young people; the concern was color-blind. The issue was about children—all children—not one race or the other.

A third barrier to working together is the “been there, done that, won’t work” mentality that exists everywhere. It is particularly prevalent if a community has had a history of false starts or setbacks on prior collaborative ventures. In those cases, it is important to step
back, know the pitfalls, and hear the various opinions on the cause. A community must build on the knowledge of prior efforts but not be strangled by them. Also it is likely that the big issues in a community have been big issues for a while. It is also likely that there have been (or may currently be) ongoing efforts. With overlap almost ensured from one effort to another, groups must not only address the similarity but also acknowledge the new approach and the new people—the what and who that are making this effort different.

Community efforts are supported greatly by a community structure for change. This must be a stable but fluid organizing structure that allows the joint work to go forward, that provides supports and vehicles for getting new people involved, and that provides a system of accountability. Usually, these organizations operate with paid staff, volunteers, and an advisory group or board.

Finally, groups must be willing to spend ample time on the process of working together. When high energy “can-do” people get in the same room, there is a tendency and considerable pressure to “just do something.” Too-quick responses can be fraught with mistakes and missteps. No one is suggesting indefinite discussion, but there is a need for a structure to help groups define issues and their various solutions before leaping to a particular remedy.

**Working Together Is a Necessity, Not a Luxury**

A clear message from research and practice is that working together is not optional anymore. As demands for services exceed available resources, we must think of ways to maximize time, money, and effort. Working together is one of the most effective ways to do it. We all like to think that we can do this or that alone. The reality is that the issues we must address, like affordable housing, living-wage jobs, and healthy families, require that we join forces. Getting a man on the moon required teamwork, an integration of knowledge, an investment of resources, and a clear vision of the goal. We should accept no less in our community work.
The asset-mapping process requires different data-gathering techniques depending on whether the assets are found in individuals, citizen associations, or local institutions (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993, pp. 14–18). To map individual capacities, citizens are asked to verbally respond to a series of questions or in some cases complete the questionnaire themselves. The questions center on four main areas:

1. **Skill information**, the first section, asks about the skills people have learned at home, in the community, or at the workplace.

2. **Community skills**, the second section, asks what kind of work people have done in the community and what kind they would be willing to do.

3. **Enterprising interests**, the third section, asks about where people have considered starting a business or if they are presently involved in a business.

4. **Priority skills**, the last section, deals with personal information, asking citizens to say what they are best at doing.

In order to create an asset map of local associations and organizations, Kretzmann and McKnight (pp. 109–119) suggest newspapers, directories, and other printed sources; word of mouth or suggestions from citizens; and telephone surveys. What does the local association map provide? It essentially gives an inventory of all the many organizations, from study clubs to political organizations to artistic groups. There are many informal groups in every community, so it requires digging deep to find all of them. What this map does not tell you is what the organizations really do and what programs they offer. This can provide a mother lode of extremely valuable information for building community resources and making connections among and between groups and individuals.

For those people who say, “There is nothing here in my community,” a listing of organizations that are permanently placed in a
development, and it hemmed them in. "It was the road, the river, and the rock gorge." One of the reasons that Chimney Rock was so interested in the Small Towns Revitalization Project is because it needed a way to minimize the impact of the river. Six months into the revitalization process, the river reared its angry head and washed away a good portion of the town. As the rebuilding process was under way, the planning group began to think about the river as an asset, not a nuisance. When the number of visitors to Chimney Rock Park increased by 220 percent after it was transformed into a nature-based tourist venue, the village of Chimney Rock decided to pursue a nature-based approach in an attempt to entice all the new park visitors to the community. The planning group decided to build their revitalization efforts around a nature-based eco-tourism and actually bring people to the river. The committee used the river boulders to make picnic tables, they cleared brush and made pocket parks, and they created a two-mile creek walk. The problem, unfortunately, was that the town's retail revenue declined dramatically. The people drawn to eco-tourism did not want to buy rubber snakes. The change in attitude toward the river changed the town: souvenir shops became hiking stores and outdoor clothing shops; handmade crafts were reintroduced to Main Street; and town restaurants built patios overlooking the river, offered picnic baskets for tourists, and changed their color scheme from pink and purple to sage green and taupe. Business became oriented to the river—now Chimney Rock's biggest asset.

Lessons Learned: Look to the People Around You

The small-town renewal process includes eight factors that the towns and HandMade in America have identified as critical to successful renewal (Hunter and McGill, 1999):

- Self-help and accountability—helping communities help themselves
- Citizen leadership
• Building on the heritage, resources, desires, hopes and aspirations of the community
• Involvement of the whole community
• Incremental learning
• Going at the pace of the community
• Sharing stories to help citizens begin to hear and talk to one another
• Creating new and enduring partnerships

The extensive work of HandMade in America and its partners throughout the region has touched on every area that affects long-term sustainability in any kind of community—those with mountains or with asphalt. They have worked on issues such as health care for craftspeople, access to affordable capital, and job training. But most of all, they have worked from a mission that emanates from an enduring belief in people and their innate abilities and assets to create and sustain the spiritual, cultural, and community life of the region.

Neighborhood-Based Organizations

Neighborhood-based organizations are organized in a variety of forms and structures. They are sometimes supported by the city, have formal budgets to spend, and are part of a community-wide network. They can also be informal or strictly volunteer driven. Since the sixties, most cities and towns have given thought to the importance of neighborhoods individually and collectively to the health and well-being of the whole community. Neighborhood associations tend to be the most formal of neighborhood-based organizations. They are “civic organizations oriented toward maintaining and improving the quality of life in a geographically delimited residential area” (Logan and Rabrenovic, 1990, p. 68). Begun in the
Lessons Learned: Sharing a Past and a Future

Downtown revitalization and preservation are not one-size-fits-all, and they don’t often lend themselves to textbook analysis. Rather, says M. J. Brodie, president of the Baltimore Development Corporation, “Questions of urban development challenge traditional methods of planning and implementation, requiring new, sometimes radical—meaning ‘from the root’—ideas, combining seemingly opposite or unrelated concepts into new paradigms, into synthesis of thought and action” (Brodie, 1997). Seven principles flow from this observation:

1. There must be an understandable physical vision—large enough to excite the imagination of all the participants, but structured enough that it can be achieved in the increments that realities of time and funding usually dictate.

2. The vision must be grounded in the authentic character of the place (its history, climate, terrain, cultural values) and informed by an articulated set of goals for the future—goals that describe what the city wants to be.

3. To implement the vision (the plan), a partnership must be formed between the public and private sectors, each sector bringing its skills to the process, to produce a better result than either could have achieved alone.

4. The public sector, through redeveloping the city’s infrastructure (transportation, utilities, public open spaces), must set the stage for private investment.

5. A high level of quality must be set for design and construction (major redevelopment is often a once-in-a-generation opportunity!), in both public and private projects.

6. Methods must be developed to broaden the base of the redevelopment project, and to obtain not only cooperation but also enthusiasm from those involved.
7. A structure for implementation must be created that combines responsibility with necessary authority, that is results oriented and accountable to the citizens, and that is capable of guiding the process over an extended period of time (Brodie, 1997).

Downtown revitalization and historic preservation are never an easy sell, but they can be done. Often the hardest step is the first one. In these cases, communities of different sizes and situations illustrate how Main Street or a museum or a historical district can be the key to a new community development strategy. In very different venues and under widely divergent circumstances, these cities all made decisions that built on values, history, and location. In each case, the revitalization itself was a secondary result of the larger accomplishment of citizen reinvestment—in one another and in the place where they live.

These five illustrations weave a powerful story of partnership, citizen action, imagination, and honesty. Maybe that’s what historic preservation really is at its core. In each case, the motivation for restoration went beyond economic development. The goal and the outcome were bigger than that. The key to these examples is that there was a vision of something beyond the buildings themselves. It had to do with learning but also with remembering and respecting.

Getting Started in Your Community

What can your community learn from these illustrations? The first thing is to recognize the importance of certain places, buildings, and areas to the people who live there. Where are the familiar local places that stir fond memories? As mentioned earlier, it can be a theater, a prominent home, or a place of worship. Second, it is equally important to think imaginatively about a modern use. In Asheville, one of its distinguished department stores is now a downtown hotel.
office in 1975, the city of Charleston was 16.7 square miles; today it is 90 square miles through annexation. Twenty years ago, the city was struggling with its downtown, balancing a military economy with a private one, and trying to create one community from a history of racial separation. Today it is a thriving example of what creative leadership can accomplish.

Perhaps Mayor Riley’s greatest legacy will be his commitment to racial harmony and social progress. After his election in 1975, he worked aggressively to get more African Americans into leadership positions in the city and in the community. According to Bernie Mazyck, president and CEO of the South Carolina Community Development Corporation Association, the election of Joseph Riley as mayor was a major decision that has affected Charleston. “He brought a sense of fairness and justice to the community and made it clear that Charleston will only succeed if all the citizens have a chance to participate in the process.”

The turning points for communities often center on events, values, or opportunities. In the case of Charleston, Riley’s leadership has led them to address three:

1. Commitment to affirmatively and aggressively opening the government to everybody. (The practical application of this was to address racial challenges immediately and establish councils in neighborhoods throughout the city so government could listen better to citizens.)

2. Commitment to historic preservation.

3. Commitment to strategic planning and its follow-through.

Each of these strategies has been critical to Riley’s leadership over the last quarter of a century. Racial harmony and progress were addressed head-on by the mayor in his first term and ever since. He brought the first African Americans into city government as department heads and hired Chief Reuben Greenberg, an African American, to head the police department. Further, Riley knew that
Inventing a Brighter Future

I define innovation as removing barriers to doing what comes naturally, the common sense solutions to our problems.

Paul Light

Ideas and inventions encompass things that are mechanical, social, and civic. Real inventions require a real leap of knowledge, writes Dyson (2001) in his history of inventions. Civic inventions must ultimately improve a particular problem or the way we work. Doing something better or more efficiently can often promise the same results, but only quicker! The previous chapters focused on the experience and knowledge gained from the smart decisions of more than twenty communities. The challenge is how to apply this strategic way of thinking in all communities—how to invent a way of making smart decisions that is “based on a leap of imagination” (Dyson, p. 2). Ultimately, inventions are about the future. As Charles Kettering described the difference between most people and inventors, “Most people are interested in where they come from. Inventors are interested in where they are going” (1982, p. 72).
Framing the Issues

All inventions start with a knowledge of what's already out there. They are built on the hard work and tested experience of others. The key to inventing is to assimilate the pieces and parts of the success and apply them to other situations. The case illustrations in preceding chapters provide an excellent view on "what's already out there" (Dyson, 2001, p. 2).

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize the lessons learned from the seven leverage points that can invent new structures and processes for community decision making. Invention is a critical final piece to the leverage process. Ultimately, every community has to invent what will work for its circumstances. There are no cookie-cutter approaches to systemic change. The recipe for community success rests on the ability to invent the structure, process, and leadership to make long-term change. The preceding chapters show the steps to invent new ways to work together for positive results.

Investing Right the First Time

The community investment strategy suggested in Chapter Two turns on the premise that smart investments pay big dividends in the long term. We looked at dropout prevention as one issue that needs attention and has enormous potential for individual and community return on investment. Keeping a young person in school is a good lifetime investment. Not investing can have disastrous effects down the road.

At the same time, we learned from other chapters that experience has shown that we must be concerned with multiple investment "opportunities." We cannot neglect the physical infrastructure of school buildings, highways, sewers, and bridges—necessary investments, although not glamorous ones. This is where deliberation and leadership come into play. We have to have mechanisms to decide the priorities and the people needed—elected, volunteer, nonprofit, and corporate—to see that these priorities are met. The
Investment challenge does not begin and end with one set of decisions, as important as that might be. As we saw in several communities, the initial investment decision led to a range of other issues that had to be addressed.

One of the smartest community decisions of the last century had exactly that dilemma. In Minneapolis, the Board of Trade established an independent park commission in the late nineteenth century to preserve and protect parkland and green space. The board believed that securing land then for what they called “the finest and most beautiful system of public parks and Boulevards of any city in America” would add many millions to the future value of real estate in the city (Speltz, cited in Garvin, 1996, p. 64). Despite objections from the city council that the commission lacked accountability and oversight, the voters approved the creation of the commission.

Minneapolis was smart because it established the parks commission, which led to the development of an exquisite park system, but they were really smart because they understood that the building of the park was just the start of the expenses. (Think of the original price of a home and then its upkeep over its lifetime!) Minneapolis took into account the broader implications and requirements of its investment and provided the system an income stream, an elected administrative structure, and the legal power to ensure that the parks are maintained (Garvin, 1996, p. 69).

The original investment has paid off. There are six thousand acres in the system: one acre of parkland for every sixty-six citizens, every home within six blocks of a park. The property and land values of park-adjacent neighborhoods and downtown property have shown enormous increases. Every nickel spent on the parks and green space yields a twenty-fold return (Koerner, 1998). But not as important, the commission has mechanisms to support, preserve, and enhance the original investment.

Investments, even smart ones, need ancillary decisions. The ramifications of one decision often result in the need for shifting other strategies. In the case of dropout prevention, discussed in Chapter Two, it is clear that a one-size-fits-all dropout program will
not do the job. The advice given by the school systems in Cedar Rapids and Dallas was a multifaceted approach: an alternative school, access to computer-based learning, additional teachers and counselors, targeted outreach to students and parents, and faculty development. Smart investment decisions require an understanding of the choices necessary, reached by evaluating the expected costs and benefits of the whole investment. The invention we need for community investments considers balance, immediacy, long-term return, necessary auxiliary investments, and risk management.

**Working Together**

If 90 percent of Americans believe that working together to solve community problems is the best approach, we better listen and we better learn how. The divisiveness of partisan politics and the bureaucratic maze of public policy implementation have made Americans leery of entering the arena of community problem solving. The lines in the sand and the sheer hassle of participating leave people wary and at home.

The challenges that every community faces, even very successful communities, require that we understand better how to work across boundaries. Several very helpful books give specific instructions on how to build community processes that make working together possible and achievable. David Chrislip’s *Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook* (2002) gives step-by-step instructions on ways to build collaborations in a community. His framework for collaboration is very helpful in understanding how to structure the process so that it will work. Russell Linden’s book *Working Across Boundaries* (2002) spells out the why and the how of collaboration. Linden’s discussion of the challenges of collaboration adds realism to the complexity of the process. Even though the “how-to” part of working together is critically important, the hardest part to accomplish is the “want to.” It is easier and quicker not to work with other people or other organizations. “I just want to get it done,” some folks lament. The problem is whether the “it” is the real problem to be
tressed. Some of the most intractable problems are disguised as
nothing else. Further, they cannot be affected by one person or
the single organization. The challenge for aspiring collaborative
efforts is to create a picture of the possibilities for the stakeholders
involved. It is not enough to articulate the vision in goals and
objectives. People must "see," in a sense, the possible and probable
income.

The banding together of citizens in Asheville during the eighties
to stop the destruction of downtown buildings created a different
on of the community. But working together is about stopping
ings and starting things too. Colquitt volunteers worked together
tart Swamp Gravy. Business leaders in Tupelo worked together to
ate an economic and community development plan that defied all
n. Certainly, Chattanooga proved that working together can
ange the future. As approaches to common work are created, peo-
ust remember that the currency of ideas galvanizes groups where
rocess alone cannot. A successful invention for working together
ust include an issue that counts, a process that is respected, inclu-
hat is real, and tangible results.

Building on Community Strengths

hen I first heard John McKnight describe asset-based community
development at a meeting at the Kettering Foundation over a decade
ago, I was struck by the commonsense aspect of the whole notion. If
people are treated as if they have nothing to contribute—assets—
then they are not likely to feel as if they can contribute. It was a
everful breakthrough in my own thinking, so much so that I still
ve my notes from the meeting. However, tucked deep in the
esses of my mind was a question: Was this simply a vehicle for
ouraging the discouraged, or was it a dramatically different way
tink and act about the poor and disadvantaged and the neigh-
bhoods where they live? I am firmly in the latter camp. Asset-based
munity development may be the most important "invention" in
comm community building field in decades. There are stories of hope
and aspiration in places and neighborhoods that had even written themselves off as lost causes. When individuals not only have been encouraged but also recognize themselves as a critical variable in the problem-solving process—and not the problem—change happens.

The wonderful work in western North Carolina to help a dozen small towns (many with only one stop light) recognize their assets and be proud of where they live is a clear example of beginning where you are, knowing what you value, and using your assets. The same is true in Denver, where Lower Downtown was an eyesore of viaducts, parking lots, and vacant buildings, and now it is thriving with development, redevelopment, and a future. It was an asset waiting to be found.

Assets are in every person and in every neighborhood. Is this a process for optimists only? No. Asset-based community development is a commonsense way to unlock talents in people, places, and neighborhoods long forgotten. It saves money, saves people, and saves communities. Communities need to invent ways not only to identify assets but also to use them. This requires that we reimagine our way of working and relating to one another.

Practicing Democracy

The notion that public dialogue can solve problems makes perfect sense to community builders. In fact, they know that most smart decisions are built on some form of conversation. We are only beginning to fully grasp the impact on social capital that this kind of dialogue can have. Years of work by the Kettering Foundation and the Study Circles Resource Center shows time and again that dialogue leads communities to different ways of interacting, different relationships, and often different decisions. If we were to analyze each of the case illustrations across all the chapters, we would surely find dialogue in one form or another. None of the smart decisions discussed in the book were made unilaterally. People had to come along, had to be included. When George McLean launched the idea of Rural
Invent a Brighter Future

Community Development Councils in the region around Tupelo, Mississippi, he knew that he couldn’t ramrod the idea through. He met with every opinion leader in the rural areas, and in a pamphlet given to every family in the region he wrote:

It is unfortunately true that in many parts of America the people have stopped coming together; discussing their mutual problems; assuming their responsibilities; and taking necessary group action. Such practices constitute the essence of democracy and unless we return to these fundamentals, we shall further endanger our democratic freedom. Maybe we can’t revive such practices “in the nation”—but we can make a start in our local community. (cited in Grisham, pp. 90–91)

That is the essence of the kinds of inventions that we must have in our communities—a way to have meaningful dialogue as part of everyday life and work.

The conversations in Jacksonville, Hampton, Owensboro, and Wilmington are illustrations of the formalized dialogue process. As they have shown, it is not all just talk; it is connecting, building relationships, and then acting. The invention for embedding community dialogue must include a “starter” issue, but ultimately the dialogue must result in tangible outcomes for its full value to be realized. Communities that can talk together make better decisions.

Preserving the Past

Compared with many societies in the world, America is in its infancy. Many of our oldest buildings are only a few hundred years old, as compared with thousands of years old elsewhere. Nonetheless, we have a past on which to build and learn from. As we saw in the case examples, physical structures can be enormous anchors in
communities for restoration and rebuilding. The saving of the mill buildings in Lowell has created an attractive downtown for sure, but it has also ensured that the city holds onto its artistic, economic, and cultural beginnings.

However, the future can also rest on the events or the history of a place, and not necessarily be tied to something physical. The invention that is needed to preserve the past has more to do with reclaiming it than it does with restoring it. That is not to say that the preservation of buildings is not important—of course, it is. The larger challenge, however, is to reclaim the history and development of a region, just as Birmingham has staked claim to its racial history through the Civil Rights Institute.

Conversations arise quite often in communities about the justification of preserving a house or a building in lieu of taking on a new project. This is a key decision time for communities. The structure cannot be brought back once it is gone, but often the promise of economic development is hard to say no to. In places where they have said no, however, there is little regret. The folks in Colquitt will likely say that having the old cotton warehouse as the renovated Cotton Hall for their performances is a great addition to their work. The past can help create the future.

The elements for the invention that are needed to create the future are probably right before your eyes. Look around. What places, businesses, homes, even trees, define the community? How can those places—like the river in Chimney Rock, the art deco buildings in Asheville, or the part of the city in Lower Downtown Denver—create new possibilities for the future?

Growing Leaders

Leadership is an elusive term. It can be a noun, as in “We need good leadership,” or it can be an adjective, as in “She has leadership potential.” More often than not, it means one person or a group of people who know what to do and how to achieve a successful outcome. We tend to remember generals who won the critical battles
more than those who lost them or great corporate titans that made money rather than those who squandered it.

Our thinking about leadership has evolved from depending on one person or a few people to solve all our problems to realizing that if you want something done, it will take many people. Research Triangle Institute and Park would never have become a reality without key leadership from many organizations, institutions, and individuals.

The responsibility and the outcomes for our communities have rested on shoulders on which to rest. What am I really saying here? First, leadership cannot depend on just a few, yet we still need people in traditional places of influence with integrity, ideas, and the willingness to stick their necks out for a good decision. Mayor Riley in Charleston has made all the difference. Second, we need people in communities to lead neighborhoods, religious organizations, schools, and the shop floor. We need the high road and the long view from our leaders. Finally, we need ways to prepare people to act and react in new ways. We need an invention to grow more leaders.

My grandmother was a quilter. The quilt she made for me three decades ago was a bow-tie design, made from the dresses, shirts, and vests that had belonged to me and to a host of relatives. I remember her saying that she was "piecing a quilt top" from variegated and seemingly dissimilar materials. Inventing a strategy for leadership, like quilting, is a complex process that takes an appreciation of sources that often can be overlooked. Quilts can be a metaphor for community leadership patterns. There is a place for the preeminent design or color, but it wouldn't be a quilt without all the pieces (Pew Partnership for Civic Change, 2002).

As the examples in Chapter Seven demonstrate, we need leaders from all sectors of the community—not placeholders but effective leaders. We need to spend time finding, recruiting, and working with them. Getting good people with honest, inclusive ideas to take on leadership roles of any sort requires that others support their efforts. Too often, when the tough decisions are made—such as taxes, economic development, or budget priorities—we lose our
confidence in them and in ourselves. We revert to our need for short-term answers. The time has come to realize that everybody has to be held accountable and responsible for our collective results.

This leads to a question: How can we get more people at the table—what's the invention? The invention is a broad view of leadership preparation. Our goal must be for everyone who wants leadership training to have it. Some say it can't be done. People in Mississippi, South Dakota, West Virginia, and forty other states think otherwise. Organizations within those states have made commitments to provide leadership training to all the citizens who want it through a program called LeadershipPlenty. The leadership invention we need is one that focuses on the skills for taking action, is available to everyone, and reflects the community.

Lessons Learned: Inventing a Brighter Future

The centennial of the invention of flight occurred in 2003. There were celebrations of the evolution of flight from Dayton, to Kitty Hawk, to Washington, D.C. The remarkable thing about the Wright brothers' contraption was that it actually flew. The pieces actually worked in tandem. Applied separately, the leverage points discussed in this book will make a modicum of improvement. Applied together, they have enormous possibilities to change the future for communities. Like the Wright brothers' plane, the pieces fit together.

In his book To Conquer the Air, James Tobin (2003) writes of the dogged determination of Wilbur Wright to solve the mysteries of flight. He believed with his heart and mind that airplane flight was possible. That kind of determination is what fuels this book. I believe that communities can be stronger and more successful for everyone if they make smart decisions. We need not accept the conditions and circumstances handed to us. Together we have the intellect, energy, and will to make our communities work better.
Smart communities are smart because they have made tough decisions, included more people in the process, and built on their ideas. They did what had to be done, no matter the obstacles. They had vision and persistence. The communities profiled in this book have shown these qualities over and over.

Am I an optimist about communities? You bet. What drives my belief in the framework for smart decisions is the even bigger possibilities. As Wilbur Wright once said to his sister, “My imagination pictures things more vividly than my eyes” (Tobin, 2003, p. 2). We must imagine our communities as places of hope, responsibility, and quality. This will make our possibilities for the future soar.