

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative began in 1985 with what I view as the most essential smart growth principal, community stakeholder collaboration. This principal, of community stakeholder collaboration fosters public support and enthusiasm. Without the support and enthusiasm of the residents that will be living, working and playing in the space, there cannot be a successful product. "Growth can create great places to live, work and play—if it responds to a community's own sense of how and where it wants to grow. Communities have different needs and will emphasize some smart growth principals over others" ([www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)). Seattle's High Point redevelopment initiative is another development that realized the importance of resident involvement and enthusiasm. The following essay is a summary and comparison of how these two communities on the east and west shores of this country were able to collaborate with its residents. This collaboration vastly improved the quality of each neighborhood for both the residents and the surrounding neighbors of each community.

"Sometimes older, low or moderate income neighborhoods exhibit greater continuity and stronger bonds - a stronger sense of what we call community. As a result, they can sometimes be the source of extraordinary achievements in urban revitalization" (Benfield). This has been the case with the Dudley Street neighborhood, which is located just 2 miles from downtown Boston. It seems strange, that being in such close proximity to Boston, the per capita income is half that of Boston (Benfield). In addition to the typical problems that some inner city neighborhoods may have, there were also some unusual challenges Dudley Street would have to develop solutions for, in order to make their redevelopment a successful one. As a result of the falling property values, landlords destroyed their buildings in an effort to collect insurance money (Walljasper). These careless acts killed several people as well as created vacant lots that eventually were used for illegal dumping; one of Dudley's largest problems. In spite of all these problems which the neighborhood of Dudley Street faced, walking down the street, "you also saw giggling kids walking home from school, old ladies tending flower patches in their side yards and neighbors chatting over fences" (Walljasper). To me, all of that says hope. The people of Dudley Street were holding out for help and, most importantly, an answer. The residents loved their home, and wanted to improve the quality of life for their fellow residents and generations to come.

In 1984, the Riley Foundation decided they were going to make a large donation to the area of, and around, Dudley Street. For the residents of this community, this donation wasn't their ideal or an acceptable solution. Along with this donation came a 23-member committee. Of these 23 members, only three were also members of the Dudley Street community (Benfield). Dudley Street residents didn't understand how only three members of their community would be able to effectively express all of the needs of this revitalization project. Community members convinced the Riley Foundation to form the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). This group was given the unique opportunity to lead their community and selected social service organizations in creating the vision of Dudley Street's future. The "Vision" that DSNI created was one that "emphasized community spirit as much as affordable housing" (Benfield). This was the start of what became "one of the nation's most dynamic grassroots organizations" (Bruner Foundation).

Community involvement is paired with affordable housing at the core of this initiative. From these core ideas stems additional smart growth principals. Fostering Distinctive Attractive Communities With a Strong Sense of Place, this principal calls for the initiative to foster the development in a direction which is cohesive with the community's values. This ensures that it provides a home for generations to come (smartgrowth.org.) This principal is really only possible with community involvement. DSNI is able to make sure this occurs through the energetic vision they had created at the start of the organization.

Provide a Variety of Transportation: Part of DSNI's focus in the development process was to have "walk able neighborhoods"; they also worked with the Massachusetts Bay Transit organization to reopen a local train stop.

Preserve open Space, Natural Beauty: DSNI applied for Urban Development corporation title so that they would be able to reclaim vacant lots under "eminent domain". As of today, DSNI has transformed about half of the vacant lots into homes, gardens and public spaces. DSNI put into place youth programs in the existing parks and open areas in the Dudley community. This helped to remove illegal and dangerous activities that had taken over the open spaces (Benfield).

Take Advantage of Compact building: Two of Dudley's first housing communities, Winthrop Estates and Stafford Heights, were made up of compact lots that included narrow streets to keep traffic at a safe speed, as well as front porches to encourage interaction within the community (Benfield).

As a result of the enthusiasm and spirit the people of Dudley street posses, they were able to turn their dilapidating community into one of great success for generations to come. This has been a slow, but very successful grass roots movement that will continue to grow. It is amazing to read about this community which was falling apart 40 years ago, just to see that now, it has been named "one of the nation's ten most promising urban neighborhoods for affordable home ownership and capital investment" (Benfield).



Dudley St-Before

[www.BrunerFoundation.org](http://www.BrunerFoundation.org)



Dudley st- After

[www.BrunerFoundation.org](http://www.BrunerFoundation.org)

Seattle's High Point community was a low income housing area in west Seattle. Originally built in the 1940's to house shipyard workers, up until recently it was tarnished by violence and crime. High Point was an area that non-residents made every effort to avoid. The community of High Point was "visually isolated" by curvilinear streets that did not line up with the rest of West Seattle's grid-like structure, as well as "barrack like housing" that was an obvious difference from the surrounding west Seattle homes. High Point became a community that is now part of the HOPE VI (Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere) program. HOPE VI is a program that is funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development ([www.seattlehousingauthority/development](http://www.seattlehousingauthority/development)). Upon the enforcement of this new program, Seattle received funding for four redevelopment projects. In many areas, the HOPE VI program has enabled an upgrade in the quality of the housing opportunities, but has also caused a decrease in the number. Seattle has guaranteed that this will not be the case in their developments ([www.seattlehousingauthority/development](http://www.seattlehousingauthority/development)). Many of the criteria that HOPE VI expects from communities built through the program overlap with smart growth principals.

The High Point redevelopment project had planned goals that incorporated various different stakeholders in the project. The successful combination of these goals is what made it an inspiring project. The Seattle Housings Authority, Seattle Public Utilities,

Neighborhood House (the voice of the community) was the main stakeholders in this project(RDA application). Each stakeholder had varying concerns, ranging from community involvement to green buildings. These concerns lead to the one common goal of a successful new development.



High Point- Before  
[www.eehome.net](http://www.eehome.net)



High Point -After  
[www.highpoint.com](http://www.highpoint.com)

The successful combination of these concerns and ideas is shown through the redeveloped High Point Community. This new community responds to the concerns of its stakeholders with many smart growth principals, such as the following:

Encourage Community Stakeholder collaboration- This was facilitated through monthly design meetings in which the community was invited to and involved with. Surveys were also distributed to West Seattle's residents to learn what their hopes for High Point were. The design teams also worked with the youth of High Point to sponsor adopting and preserving the mature trees of the community, and the High School students participated in creating a documentary on the redevelopment process of High Point (RBA Application).

Foster distinctive and attractive communities with a strong sense of place- A new library and health center was built, as well as a rehabilitated elementary school and community center (RBA Application).

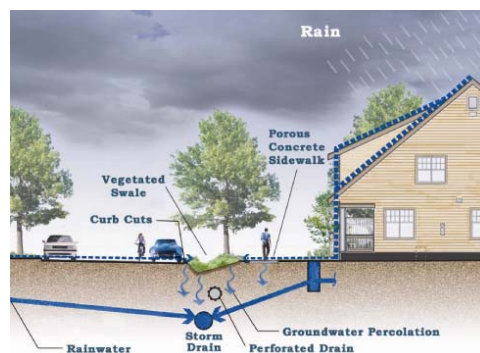
Preserve Open Space, and natural beauty- At the center of the development, there is a Five-acre commons park ([www.thehighpoint.com](http://www.thehighpoint.com)).

Strengthen Direct Development Toward Existing Communities- Existing curvilinear roads were replaced with new roads, which line up with the existing grid of neighboring communities. Existing "barrack-like" housing was replaced with mixed-use mixed income housing that resembles neighboring communities. (RBA application).

Range of Housing Opportunists- A variety of economic classes are buying and renting homes in a “patchwork” like layout (RBA Application).

Take Advantage of Compact Building Design- The new buildings in the High Point community range from two to three stories, which are encouraging the community to grow vertically instead of horizontally, like the original 1 story “barrack-like” housing. High Point redevelopment doubled density while improving the appeal of the community (RBA Application).

In addition to using these smart growth principals, the SHA and SPU concern of “Respecting Nature at Every Stage of the Development” (RBA application) was also greatly considered. SPU pushed the Natural Drainage System to help protect the Long Fellow Creek, and ensure the flow of clean water. This new drainage system also had a positive effect on the transportation system of High Point. The new drainage system helped to guide street widths and formats in a way that encouraged walking, bicycling and slower traffic patterns. It also provides additional green spaces for the community. This is the “Largest Natural Drainage System” to be completed in the US (RBA Application). Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) also had preserving the natural environment in mind when redeveloping this community. The homes that were constructed all had sustainable and energy efficient aspects to them, as well as some community buildings built with LEED certification as a goal.



High Points Water System

[www.seattle.gov](http://www.seattle.gov)

DSNI and Seattle’s High Point community are two examples of run-down communities that were in desperate need of redevelopment. Both projects had the same goals of providing a community-driven, safe urban development with affordable housing choices for all. These community projects have both succeeded with this objective, but have found this success in different ways. The Dudley Street initiative was, and still is, a grass roots initiative, one that will continue on for years to come. This

initiative has been a slow one; "By setting achievable goals, DSNI kept the level of participation high even though the bigger things, like getting the dumps out of Dudley Street and providing affordable housing, were slow in coming" (Walljasper). This approach was able to keep enthusiasm with small victories, without forgetting the final goal. The Seattle High Point community project was run much quicker. This was a two-phase project run by government organizations with a large amount of community input, instead of a slower project run by the community. I believe both models were a great success and I strongly feel it was a direct result of the common thread of community efforts, which ran effectively through the duration of both projects.

## Citations

Benfield, F.Kaid Solving Sprawl New York, N.Y.: Natural Resources Defense Council, 2001

E&E Publishing, [www.eenews.net](http://www.eenews.net)

Seattle's High Point Redevelopment Application for Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence, December 2006

Seattle's Government, [www.seattle.gov/](http://www.seattle.gov/)

Seattle Housing Authority, [www.sha.org](http://www.sha.org)

Smart Growth, [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, [www.dsni.org](http://www.dsni.org)

The High Point Neighborhood, [www.thehighpoint.com](http://www.thehighpoint.com)

Walljasper, Jay "When Activists Win: The Renaissance of Dudley Street" [The Nation](#)  
March 3, 1997