

FOUNDER STATEMENT

In a 2007 speech, Melinda Gates published a letter explaining what motivated her and her husband:

“We knew what we stood for: that all lives have equal value – that starving children in African and Indian slums are just as precious as your children or mine, that families struggling in American cities matter just as much as families in safe suburban neighborhoods. Ultimately all people, no matter where they live, deserve a chance to live a healthy, productive life.”

I agree with Melinda. TACC strives to create safe, healthy productive neighborhoods. We live in a great nation, which has known economic prosperity like no other in history, but we still have desperate slums in every major city. We can eliminate these places that breed homelessness and crime. We don't need new resources, but to direct public and private resources to focus on areas of concentrated poverty.

With the program support of our Mayors, Governors, the President, Congress, and the many philanthropists – we can cure inner city poverty. How? Not by improving education and day care, not by job training and creating job opportunities, not by making the streets and the transit safe, not by creating new safe commercial areas or by building more attractive housing or focusing on diversity. It is not by making any of these efforts alone; it is by doing them all, at the same time, focused on distressed neighborhoods.

- 46.2 million people in the U.S. live in poverty
- The number of people in the U.S. living poverty has doubled since the early 1970s
- The U.S. has less than 5% of the world's population, but more than 25% of the world's prisoners (2.3 million)

The first years of any effort are dedicated to planning with community partners and developing a common understanding of how a community will change. Then the resources from every segment of our society must be mobilized, including Federal, state and local governments, and enlightened foundations (like the Gates Foundation), who have demonstrated their commitment to the poorest of the poor in our own country and around the world. But the most essential players will be the suffering people of these neighborhoods, who will lead their own neighbors to embrace these efforts for themselves and their children.

It can be done – but only in partnership with the people who now live in these distressed communities. Initiatives must grow from their resident's experience and resident knowledge. Policy makers and implementers must listen to communities and be responsive; it is the only way to empower real partnerships that harness focused investment.

I am not advocating a novel approach. It has been done successfully on a limited but effective scale. Neighborhoods have been turned-around from areas of desperation to communities of hope and strength. There are private, for-profit, and not-for-profit organizations that have worked seamlessly in concert in many major cities in America. We must learn from the best of those successful projects and repeat the activities neighborhood by neighborhood.

Melinda Gates is right. “Ultimately all people, no matter where they live, deserve a healthy, productive life.”

Joseph E Corcoran
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The American City Coalition, Founder

~ TACC supports sustainable strategies for neighborhood revitalization programs. ~