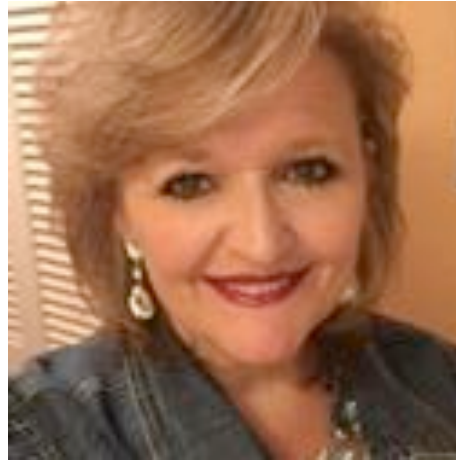


# Organizational Capacity Building Through Empowerment Planning: Lessons from East St Louis, Memphis, and Sicily



# Session Participants

- Vicke Forby Kimmel  
CEO, EPDC, (ESL, IL)
- Katherine L. Pennington  
Associate Professor  
University of Memphis
- Antonio Raciti  
Assistant Professor  
University of Memphis
- Kenneth Reardon  
Professor  
UMass Boston



# Checking Your Biases at the Curb!

Please take a minute to complete the following sentence (5 times)

East St. Louis, Illinois is: \_\_\_\_\_ ?

East St. Louis, Illinois is: \_\_\_\_\_ ?

East St. Louis, Illinois is: \_\_\_\_\_ ?

East St. Louis, Illinois is: \_\_\_\_\_ ?

East St. Louis, Illinois is: \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Is it realistic that any place accurately described by these negative statements could possibly have endured to the powerful economic, political, and cultural forces that have affected it since 1812?

How do we structure a research, planning, and design process that will discover the hidden strengths of this place? What methods, techniques, tools, and instruments are available to us?

# People Data Techniques

- **Check your Biases at the Curb Exercise!**
- Social history interviews (youth and seniors; past progressive actions)
- Asset mapping
- Visioning exercise
- Shoot your neighborhood, not your neighbors (Cameras Not Guns!)
- Door to door survey (residential canvass)
- Movers and shakers interviews
- Focus groups
- Neighborhood summit
  - Blue Sky Brainstorming
  - Resident Site Planning
  - Mayor for The Day
- **Collective Sketching Exercise: Rip Van Winkle is Alive and Well in the Smart Growth Movement – REALLY!!!**
- Action planning teams

# East St. Louis, Illinois



# From All-American City to Beirut by the River

- In 1959, ESL was designated an All-American City by NML and Look Magazine
- Between 1960 and 1980, the city's lost 3/4s of its businesses – 12,000 well-paid industrial jobs
- By 1990, unemployment was 31%, poverty was 42% , and ESL had the highest violent crime rate in the US
- Prompting a HUD Official to refer to ESL as “America’s Soweto”





# Just Another “Rust Belt City”

- Devastated by a combination of deindustrialization, suburbanization, and public and private disinvestment
- Whose residents suffered from what William J. Wilson called a new and more virulent form of American poverty
- Dominant urban policy approach towards severely distressed communities was Roger Starr’s “urban triage” or “planned shrinkage” – withdrawing resources from communities thought to represent “terminal cases” of urban decline (Necropolis)



**“Wherever human beings are  
concerned, trend is not destiny.”**

***Rene Dubos***

# Birth of the East St Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP)

- Emerson Park women decided to transform the area surrounding their children's child care center – Result: Shugue Park
- Undertook the development of a comprehensive plan that won an AICP National Award but generated no local investment
- Residents and students launch volunteer cleanup of illegal dump sites without funding
- Moved on to organize volunteer scrape-up, paint-up of elders' homes
- Established a linked deposit program to support moderate rehab of "at risk" homes



# Building Upon Initial Successes

- Formed a Habitat-like “infill housing” initiative
- Established the ESL Farmers Market
- Secured an extension of the Metrolink into East St. Louis
- Completed the Parsons Place Development Project
- Established Youth Build Charter School and Neighborhood College
- Re-opened the Katherine Dunham Centers for Arts and Humanities



# Citizen Participation Techniques

- Formed a representative Steering Committee of local stakeholders
- Initiated an aggressive community media campaign
- Undertook several physical conditions surveys
- Conducted movers and shakers interviews
- Pursued door to door interviews with residents
- Organized monthly data analysis meetings
- Culminating in a well-attended Neighborhood Summit



# Social Inventions for Citizen Participation/Empowerment

Adoption of “Ready, Fire, Aim” approach to community planning – undertaking meaningful action projects throughout the planning process to overcome residents’ skepticism regarding the possibilities of change



**Paint-up, scrape-up work weekends**



**Construction of Illinois Avenue Playground**



**Development of the ESL Farmers Market**



# Establishment of the ESL Neighborhood College

- We are not even the flea on the tail of this dog – *Richard Settle, EPDC*
- We want similar training as your graduate students are receiving
- Decision to create the neighborhood college
- 200 ESL residents complete 8 non-credit courses on the fundamentals of bottom-up, bottom-sideways planning
- Classes cover community organizing, non-profit management, grantsmanship, resident-led crime prevention



**First class on direct action  
organizing – 15 expected, 35 attend.**

# Key Outcomes of this Social Invention

- \$40 million in improvements
- Ended population and income losses
- Encouraged organizing in other East St. Louis neighborhoods
- Popularized “empowerment approach” to resident-led revitalization planning
- Led to successful replication in other severely distressed urban communities
- Provided a transformative professional education for hundreds of planning and design students who have gone on to become key “opinion leaders” in the fields of affordable housing and community development



# South Memphis, Tennessee



# South Memphis: The South's First Garden City?



# What Happened to South Memphis?

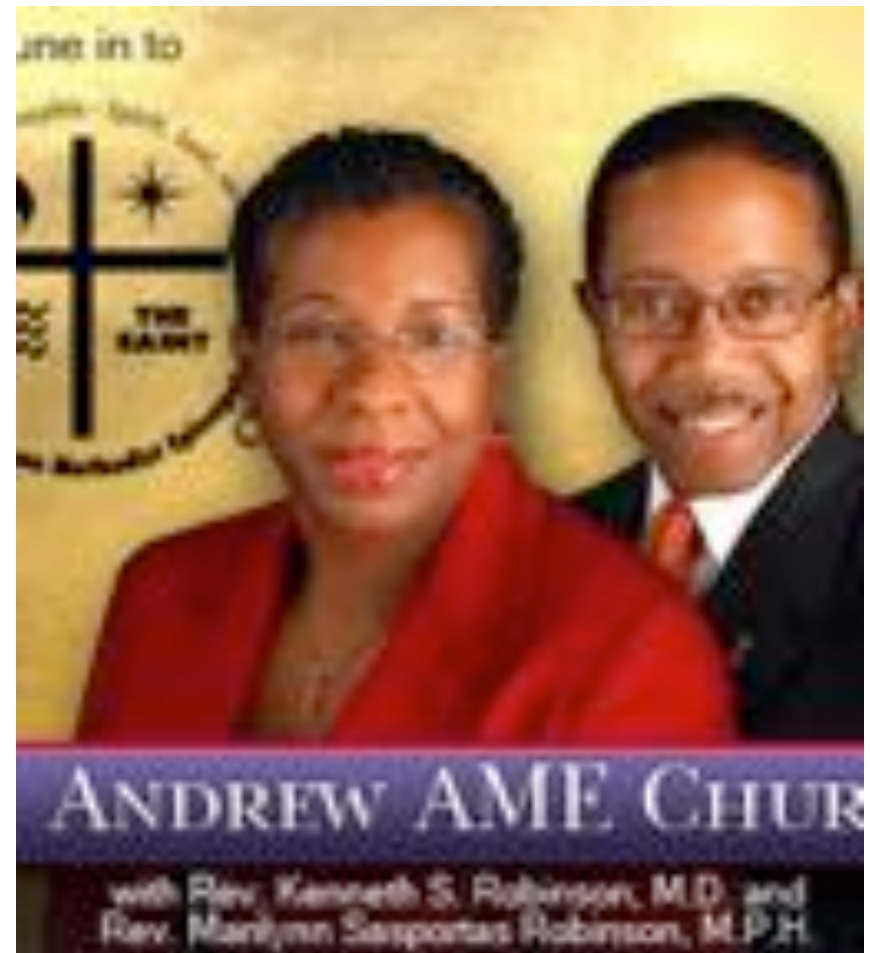


# South Memphis Circa 1990

- Unemployment approaching 30%
- Poverty exceeding 60%
- Vacant properties at 30%
- Abandoned industrial, commercial, and residential buildings at 25%
- Highest school suspension and expulsion rate in the city (43% of high school students finish)
- High violent crime rate
- Extraordinary upswing in citizen organizing: open spaces, youth, housing. etc.
- Increasingly engaged African American faith communities
- Growing connections between local community and nearby universities
- Rich cultural life: STAX – Otis, Isaac, Sam and Dave, Rufus, Karla, Mavis, Booker T.; and Hi-Records – Willie Mitchell and Reverend Al Green

# St. Andrews AME & the Reverend Robinsons

- Resurrected Ernestine Rivers Child Center
- Created a Family Life Center: health, wellness, education and jobs
- Established Circles of Success Learning Academy
- Organized The WORKS Inc. CDC – Counseling, Rehab, Construction, ED



# Success, YES! Moving the Dial, No!

- Significant economic and community development successes
- Congregations grows from 150 to 1700
- National recognition
- Still, overall community conditions continued to deteriorate
- The pastors felt the need to increase the scale of the church's efforts



Photo by Heather Had  
ong at Mosholu Monte  
st annex.



# Determining the Need - Mixed Methods

Patrick Geddes (Father of Modern Town Planning)

“Survey Before Plan”

- Oral history
- Archival research
- Demographic analysis
- Community mapping
- Neighborhood documentation
- Physical conditions surveys
- Movers and shakers interviews
- Focus groups
- Resident interviews
- Listening posts
- Community visioning
- Neighborhood summit

All used to gather data and build the base

Survey gives S. Memphis neighbors a voice in future revitalization efforts  
By Linda Moore, Memphis Commercial Appeal  
Sunday, March 22, 2009



# Overall Development Goal

Transforming South Memphis into the region's premier neighborhood of choice by dramatically improving the overall quality of life through a resident-led and managed comprehensive community development strategy

# Specific Development Objectives

- Improve access to **primary health care** services (No local providers, 60% uninsured)
- Insure access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate **foods** (No full service market for 3 miles)
- Expand quality **housing** options, especially for low-income renters (Recent emphasis has been on home ownership)

# Development Objectives II

- Expand **living wage employment and entrepreneurial opportunities** for local residents (\$156 m in HOPE VI, < 20 jobs)
- Support resident efforts to reduce the incidence of **violent street crime** (Address lack of treatment, jobs, and re-entry programs)
- Enhance the **beauty**, safety, and functionality of the public realm to encourage investment
- Promote **alternative transportation** options for local residents

# The Peoples' Plan for Building a More Vibrant, Sustainable and Just South Memphis

- Involved nearly 1,000 residents
- Endorsed by more than two dozen local institutions
- Won State APA Award for Excellence
- City Council voted 13 to 0 passage of the plan
- Adopted as city-wide best practice



# Health and Wellness Initiatives

Immediate Projects - Year 1 and 2	Intermediate Projects - Year 3 and 4	Long Term Projects - Year 5, 6, and 7
<p><b>Summer Sports Leagues</b> Collaborate with Memphis City parks Commissions, youth recreation organizations, local schools, community churches and area corporate and community philanthropists to establish a major new summer basketball league for South Memphis boys, girls, men and women at Southside Park-Memphis' own Rucker League!</p>	<p><b>Substance Abuse Treatment Initiative</b> Develop a new substance abuse prevention, interventions, and treatment program in the community designed to address the most serious addiction problems confronting South Memphis residents. The Community's extensive network of faith-based organizations will be used to educate local residents on the basics of addiction and treatment.</p>	<p><b>Primary Health Care Clinic</b> Mobilize students, faculty, and staff from the city and region's hospitals and clinics to work together to establish a cooperatively managed primary care facility in South Memphis offering medical, dental, and psychological services on a sliding scale.</p>
<p><b>Human Services Directory</b> Prepare a comprehensive directory of human service programs available to South Memphis children and families. This directory would be available online and in hard copy. The directory will be updated, on a regular basis, by graduate students from The University of Memphis' Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning.</p>	<p><b>Farmers Market Project</b> Conspire with local farmers, public health officials, and economic development specialists to create a high-quality retail vendor food market to provide local residents and workers with access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods. The farmers market would also be used as a venue for public health events.</p>	<p><b>Community Health Insurance Project</b> Establish a low-cost health insurance program to complement the coverage made available through Tennessee Care along the lines of Tompkins County Health Care Plan that provides a wide range of coverage for basic services for families at a cost of \$165.</p>
<p><b>Neighborhood Wellness Campaign</b> Initiate a community-based health and wellness program in which peer health advisors instruct local residents on topics related to diet, exercise, family planning, parenting, conflict resolution, and other topics central to creating healthy children, families, and communities. Behavioral shifts towards healthy living will be supported by the organization of mutual support networks. Improvements in the health referral system will be carried out.</p>	<p><b>Healthy South Memphis on the Move</b> Recruit, schedule, and market the public health education, screening, and direct service activities of the city and region's largest health care providers by bringing their mobile health clinics to the site of the soon-to-be-established farmers market site on a regular basis. Increase the number of local residents referred to and seen by local health providers on a regular basis as a cost effective alternative to the use of local emergency rooms.</p>	<p><b>Café Reconcile in Memphis</b> Collaborate with local chefs, eateries, and the U of M Hospitality School to establish a healthy eating outlet serving tasteful food at reasonable prices that will employ and train individuals recently released from jail and prison who, following an intensive three month period, can be employed by other fine dining restaurants. This program is based upon a very successful eatery in the Midtown section of New Orleans.</p>

## Immediate Year 1 & 2

### Human Services Directory

Prepare a comprehensive directory of human service programs available to South Memphis Children and families. The directory would be available online and in hard copy. The directory will be updated, on a regular basis, by the graduate students from The University of Memphis' Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning.

## Intermediate Year 3 & 4

### Farmers Market Project

Conspire with local farmers, public health officials, and economic development specialists to create a high-quality retail vendor food market to provide local residents and workers with access to high quality, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods. The Farmers Market would also be used as a venue for public health events.

## Long Term Years 4-7

### Community Health Insurance Project

Establish a low-cost health insurance program to compliment the coverage made available through Tennessee Care along the lone of Tompkins County Health Care Plan that provides a wide range of coverage for basic services for families at a cost of \$165.

# The South Memphis Farmers Market





# South Memphis Farmers Market Key Collaborators and Partners

## Initial Consultations

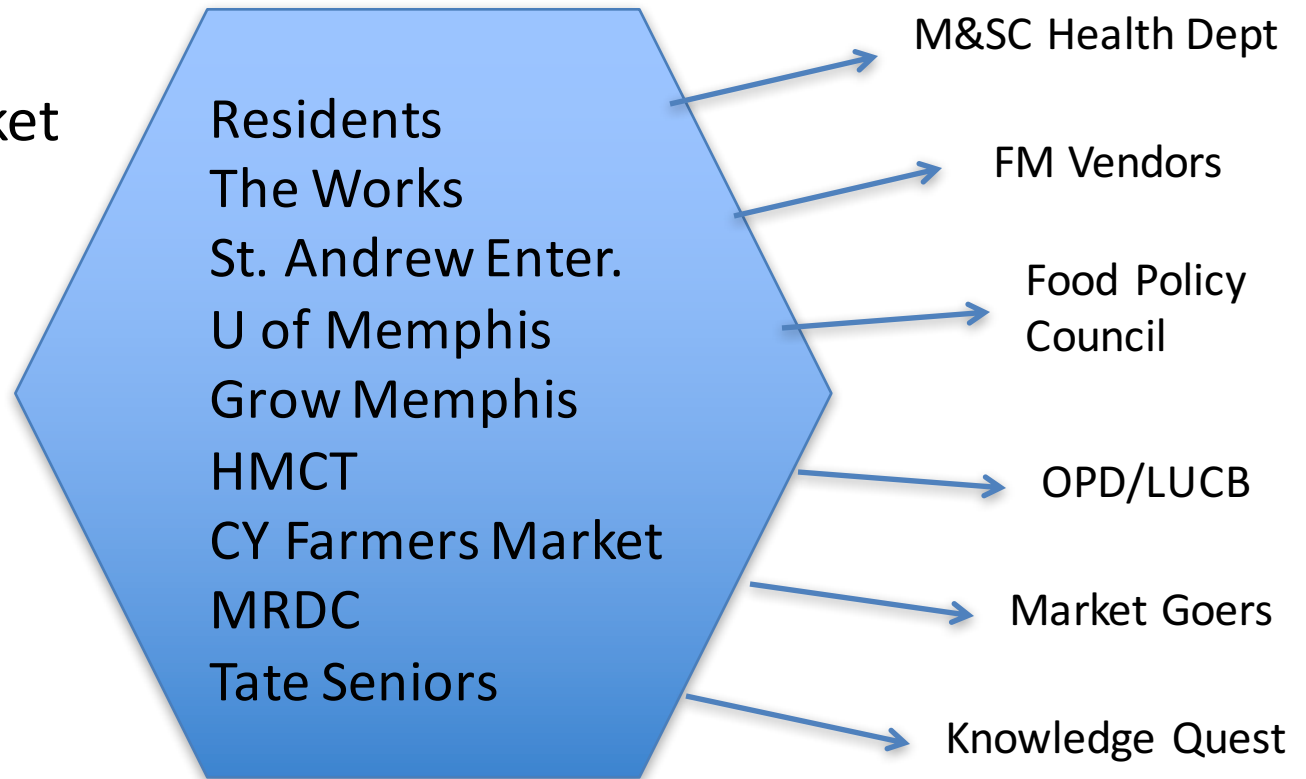
Ag Extension  
CY Farmers Market  
Downtown FM  
Grow Memphis  
MLGW  
MRDC  
St. Andrew AME  
The Works CDC  
U of Memphis

## FM Advisory Brd.

Residents  
The Works  
St. Andrew Enter.  
U of Memphis  
Grow Memphis  
HMCT  
CY Farmers Market  
MRDC  
Tate Seniors

## Co-Conspirators

M&SC Health Dept  
FM Vendors  
Food Policy Council  
OPD/LUCB  
Market Goers  
Knowledge Quest



# Farmers Market Steering Committee

The People and Organizations that made the SoMe Market happen

Sponsoring Organization(s)

Representatives of an established  
Farmers Market

Residents

Representatives from local non-  
profits and churches

Representative of Food Policy  
Council

Representative of Healthy  
Memphis Common Table



# Community Impact of the Farmers Market

- Improvement of a highly visible location
- Increased community pride
- Creation of a safe public space
- Increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables
- Enhanced awareness of the nutritional importance of fresh foods
- Demand for additional food-related resources (A grocery - now!)
- Greater recognition of SoMe RAP



# Building Upon the Market!

## Other Developments

South Parkway East Improvement Project (Approved for Spring '11)



Urban Art Commission - South Memphis Community-Builders Walk! (\$85,000)



From Illegal Stripping to Legal Scavenging - Tire Reclamation

Attracting a Local Primary Care Facility

Grocery Store Development Initiative



# More Recent Developments!

## New Developments

Funding for new building for Ernestine Rivers – 50 to 120 child.

Freeing of space to allow Circles of Success Charter School to add 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades

Adoption of South Memphis Park by Grizzlies and AutoZone

Grocery store development initiative, incubator space

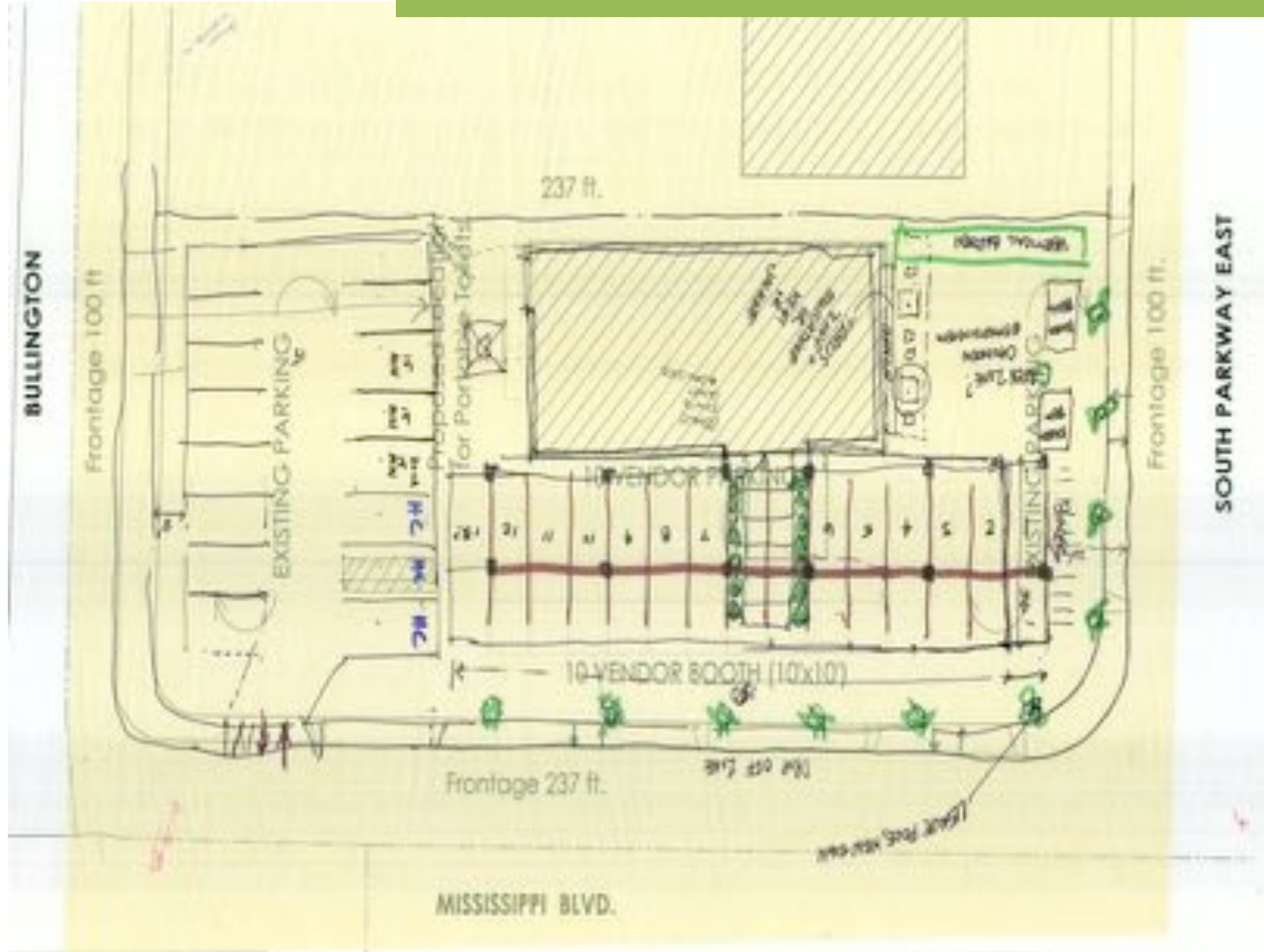
New rails to trails project connecting neighborhood to MRT



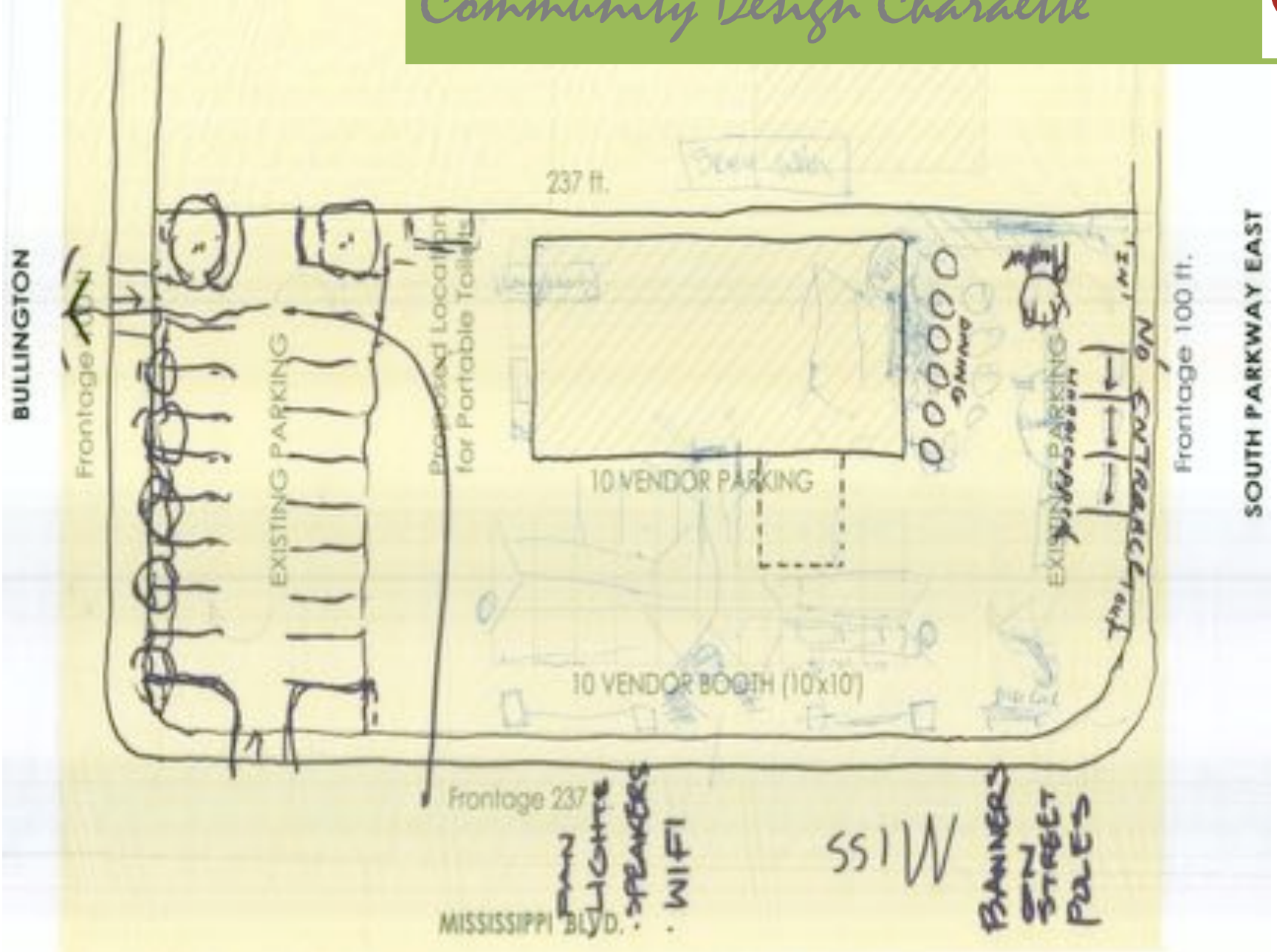
# Building on the Market



# Community Design Charaette



# Community Design Charaette





# Community Design Charaette



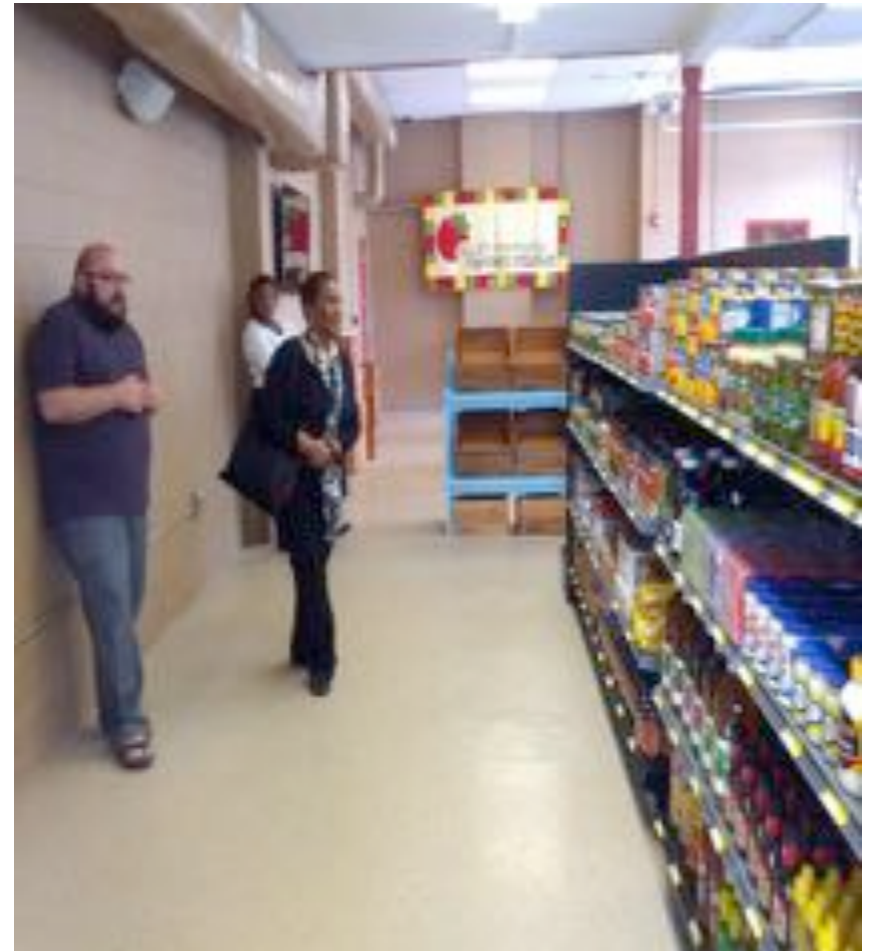
# The Green Grocer



# *The SMFM Green Grocer*



# Inside the Green Grocer



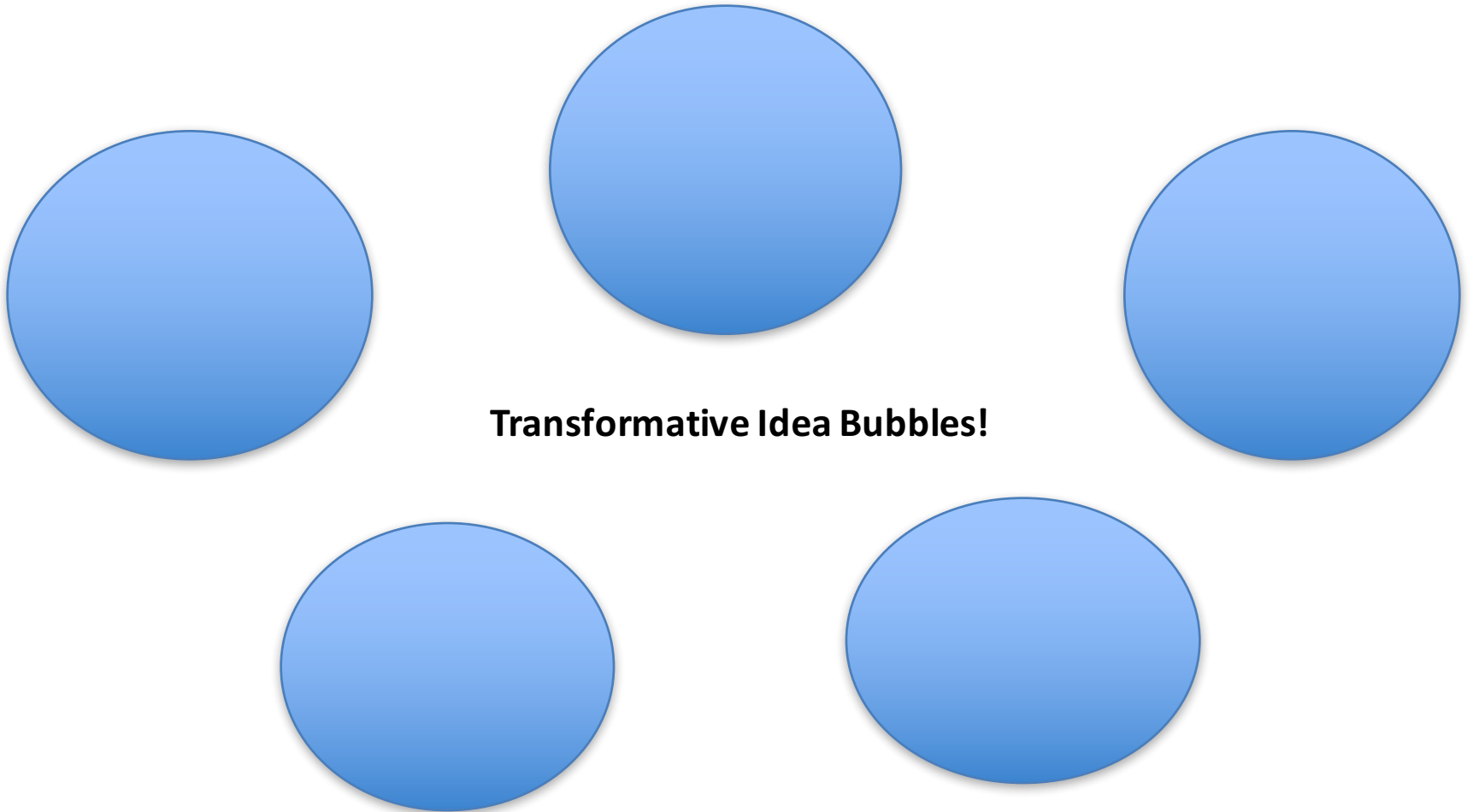
# *Demonstration Kitchen*



# Community Visioning and Sketching Exercise (Guided Visualization)

- Assume an anatomically correct position!
- Please close your eyes!
- You are getting tired!
- Like Rip Van Winkle the Years Are Flying By: 3 years, 5 years, 10 years, 15 years!
- Your community has become everything you and yours neighbors have ever hoped for!
- In your mind's eye, step out on your porch and do a 360 degree scan of the NEW SMART GROWTH VERSION OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD
- Focus on the image (people, place, interaction that makes your heart race and your face smile!) Take a mental photo and be prepared to share it!

# Gallery of Transformative Ideas/Potential Signature Projects



**Transformative Idea Bubbles!**

# Sharing and Building our Vision



I envision a beautiful food store?



On this corner!



On every corner!



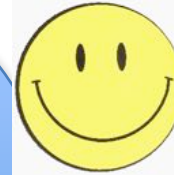
# Prioritizing the Projects



**Transformative Idea Bubbles!**



# The People Decide – After Touring the Transformation Gallery



**Transformative Idea Bubbles!**









**Simeto River  
Watershed**

**Catania**

Free reconstruction of the 'Mendolito city' (Lamagna 2007)



Dionigian Greek Wall, Adrano



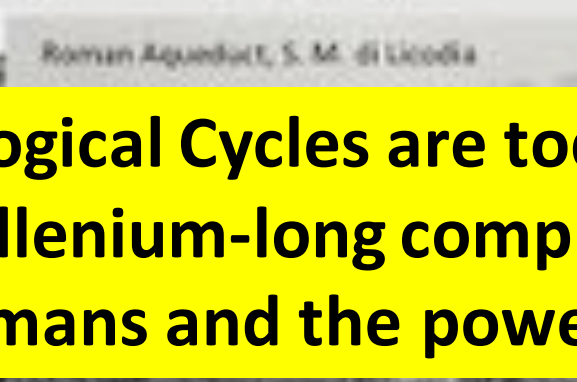
The Biscari aqueduct in a 1871 painting



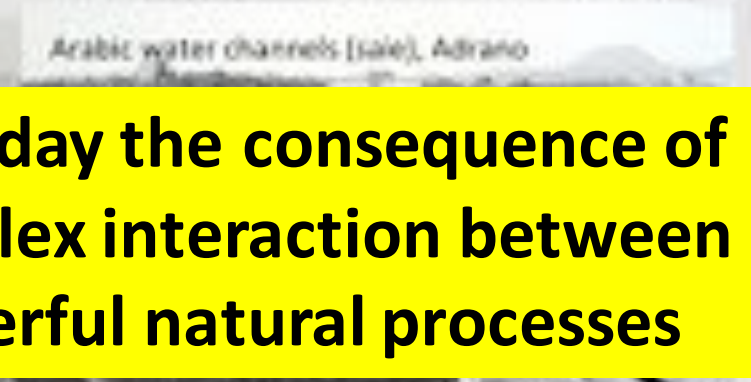
Lavaic Neolithic Tomb, Adrano



Roman Aqueduct, S. M. di Licodia



Arabic water channels (saie), Adrano



**Ecological Cycles are today the consequence of 5-millennium-long complex interaction between humans and the powerful natural processes**

1991-1994 EU Directives (91/156 CEE, 91/689 CEE, 94/62 CE)

Ask "Regions" to change their waste management approach

**WASTE → RESOURCE**



Governor Salvatore Cuffaro  
EU special commissioner for the "waste emergency"

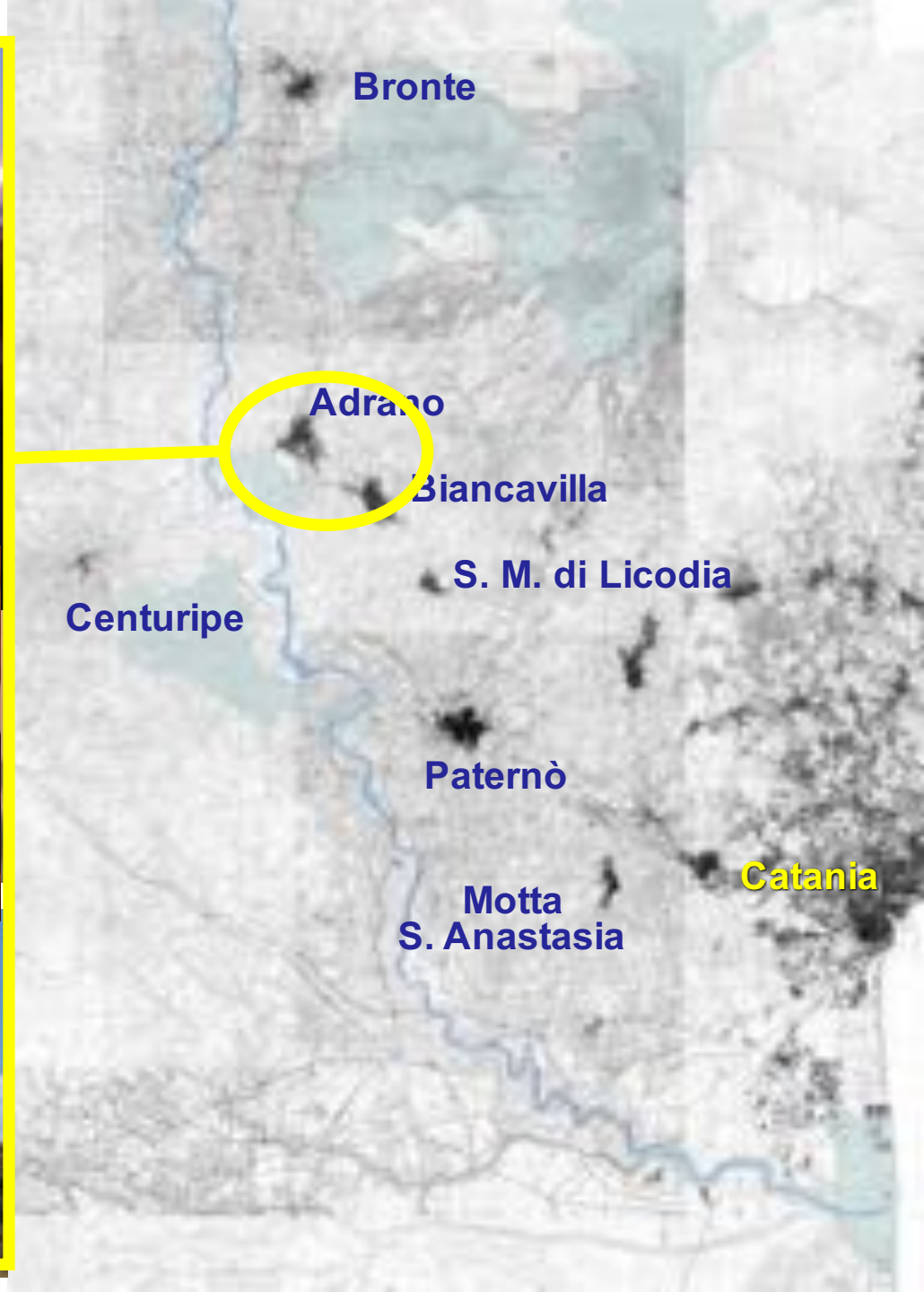
## 2002 WASTE MANAGEMENT REGIONAL PLAN

Call for tender for 4 privately-owned  
waste-to-energy facilities









The March of 5000 in Adrano



Informal Mobilization



Coalition for the Sustainable Development of the Simeto Valley



Formal Organizations



**Successful Anti-incinerator Campaign**

**Not just legal action but broader community organizing and political strategy**

# vivisimeto

2006  
16-17-18 GIUGNO

## SI al Parco Fluviale del Simeto



## NO al termovalorizzatore

PROGRAMMA

venerdì 16

### No to the incinerator

Restauri presso il parco di Palmarosa - visita guidata nel sito archeologico di Muro Leone presso il "Castello del Simeto" - Cava Simeto, SP 137 / Palermo  
Convegno "La gestione sostenibile del fiume: aspetti socio, ambientali e sanitari" con il Prof. Paolo Corrado, presso l'aula Magna del Dipartimento di Scienze Chimiche (Università di Catania)

sabato 17

Convegno "La Valle del Simeto - un sistema integrato di parchi per lo sviluppo sostenibile del territorio" presso il "Castello del Simeto" - Cava Simeto, SP 137 / Palermo  
Degustazione di prodotti stagionali a colpi della valle del Simeto presso la "Masseria San Marco" - Cava Simeto, SP 137 / Palermo  
Spettacolo "Simeto Pulita" - Restauri presso la "Cava delle Anzole" - Cava Simeto, SP 138 / Palermo  
Musica dal vivo, commedia e prosa in un'aula presso la "Cava delle Anzole" - Cava Simeto, SP 138 / Palermo

domenica 18

Restauri presso il parco di Palmarosa - visita guidata nel sito archeologico di Muro Leone  
di Castellana, giochi di piazza sportiva, spettacoli in movimento alla cascata lungo il mare del Simeto, visita del fiume a piedi, giochi di cortile, comparsa, raduno di caccia fluviale  
Spettacolo sulla riva del fiume  
Poi via sulla riva del fiume con musica, canti, ballate e animazione per bambini

COMITATIVI VICI

casale

il simetonascenti222@tin.it

LE ASSOCIAZIONI

COOPERATIVE

www.simetonascenti.org

per informazioni

www.simetonascenti.org

tel. 393 3000011

“The reason why somebody can decide to build an incinerator on our river is because there there is not a better vision of the future”

# 10-year-long Community-University Partnership



# Collective Reflective Practices

The "Casa delle Acque" fall retreat  
November 2010

**Stakeholders**  
Support the local  
economy through  
policy design



**Community members**  
Historic preservation  
Environmental issues



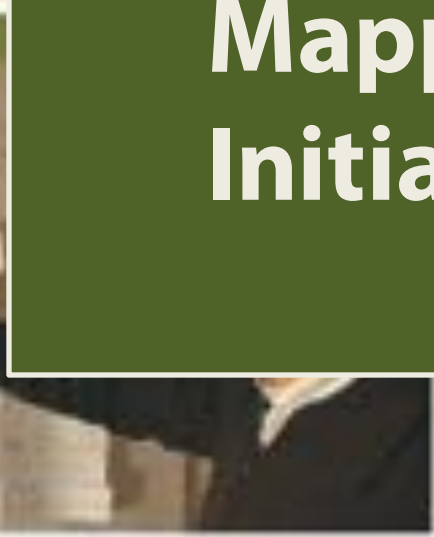
**Researchers**  
What strategy  
makes the most  
sense?

**Grass-roots groups**  
Improving the area  
Strengthen the sense of  
community





# Community Mapping Initiative





**The large  
collective maps**





## Mapping activities have been carried out:

- ✓ In 10 different locations, in the **countryside** and in **4 small towns** along the river;
- ✓ improving the tools used each time;
- ✓ involving more than **500 individuals**; among them: representatives of **22 community groups** and non-profit associations and **City Officials** from three of the four small towns.





Community meetings



Individual Interviews

# Progetto di Mappatura di Comunità





# Community Mapping Initiative



# HOW?

Produce "papers" more difficult for local politicians to ignore

Final product: much more than a simple map

Help the community know and then love their place

Community mapping = educational campaign

## Community Mapping Initiative

The follow-up projects are identified as part of something bigger

Create a portfolio of community projects ready to be funded by EU (with and without institutional partnerships)

Enlarge the base supporting the partnership

Networking and involving other association in the steering committee of the initiative

# Mappa di Comunità

## della Valle del Simeto

- 000
- ACQUARO
- BRUGIO
- MAGGIORA
- STABONE
- REGGIOVA
- SAVIGLIANO
- POZZO
- SONGENTE
- MILANO
- CIOTTA
- 010
- ARCHEOLOGICO
- DIETI
- MARAFIOLA
- ROBERTO

**LA VALLE DEL SIMETO**  
La valle del Simeto è un territorio ricco di storia e cultura. È un luogo dove la natura si fonde con l'opera dell'uomo, creando un paesaggio unico e suggestivo. Le sue acque, ricche in minerali, hanno dato origine a numerose sorgenti e fontane, che hanno permesso lo sviluppo di insediamenti umani e attività agricole. La valle è stata teatro di importanti avvenimenti storici e ha dato il suo contributo alla civiltà siciliana.

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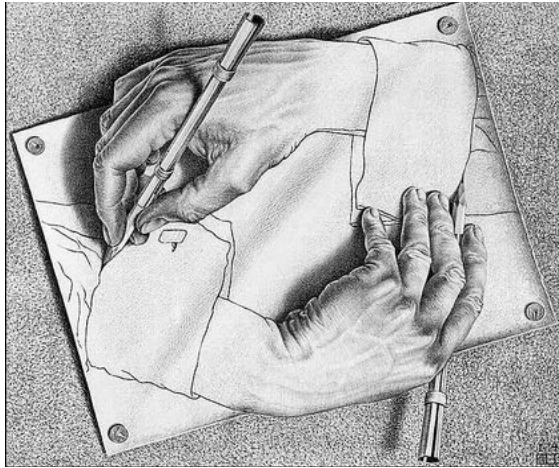
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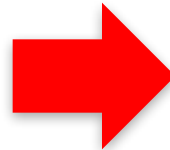
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# The Design Contribution



**Landscape Architecture**

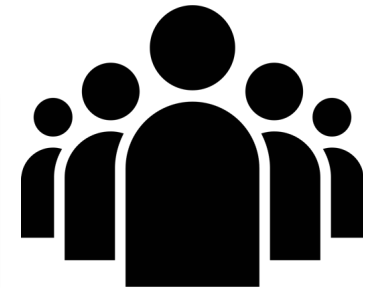
**Community Design**



**COMMUNITY/UNIVERSITY  
PARTNERSHIP**

**LONG-TERM  
RECIPROCITY**

- ✓ **Implementing pilot projects included in the community map**
- ✓ **Expand possibilities for local firms and designers**
- ✓ **Make it "happen"!**





Comitato **Salute Ambiente**  
CIVICO Adrano onlus

# Adrano



# Paternò

# The Community Design Experience in “contrada Nicoló”, Paternò



# Co-creation of design proposal for a riparian garden





# Final draft of the design

PP-IM-IVER-1-11 SIMETO 2011  
COSTRUIAMO UNA RETE PER CONTRADA NICOLO'



## Come ci immaginiamo questo luogo?

Alcuni spunti per progettare il progetto e lavorare dove

Zona in regime di deposito del Fiume

Zona in regime di erosione del Fiume



Tutti insieme abbiamo cominciato a realizzare il nostro progetto...

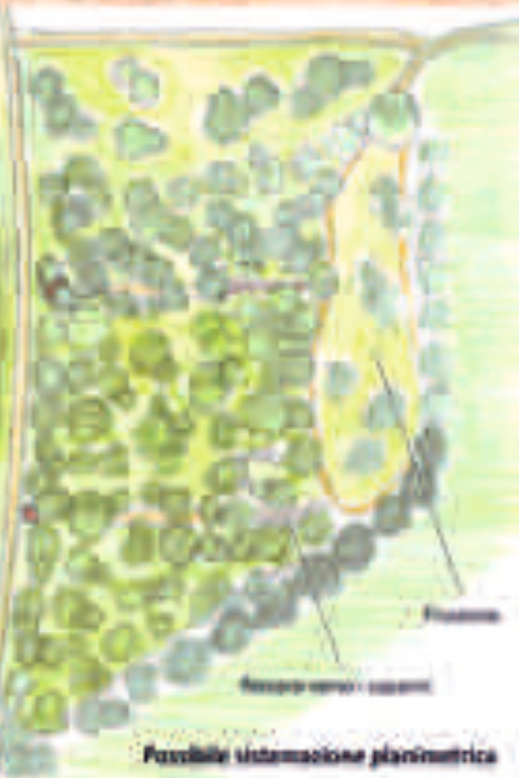


### ?...Nuove idee

Lasciate i vostri commenti

Capanno di osservazione per il bird watching

Passaggio  
Sottopassaggio



Possibile sistemazione planimetrica

Inspired by a  
**NEW** model of  
“development”



**VERSO UN PATTO PER IL FIUME S  
TRA ISTITUZIONI E COMUNITA'**

dicembre 2009-maggio 2010

materiali elaborati nell'ambito del progetto  
MAPPARE LA COMUNITA' DEL SIMETO

promosso da



**VALORI, PROGETTI E PRIORITÀ CONDIVISI  
NELLA VALLE DEL SIMETO**

**Allegato B al Patto di Fiume Simeto**

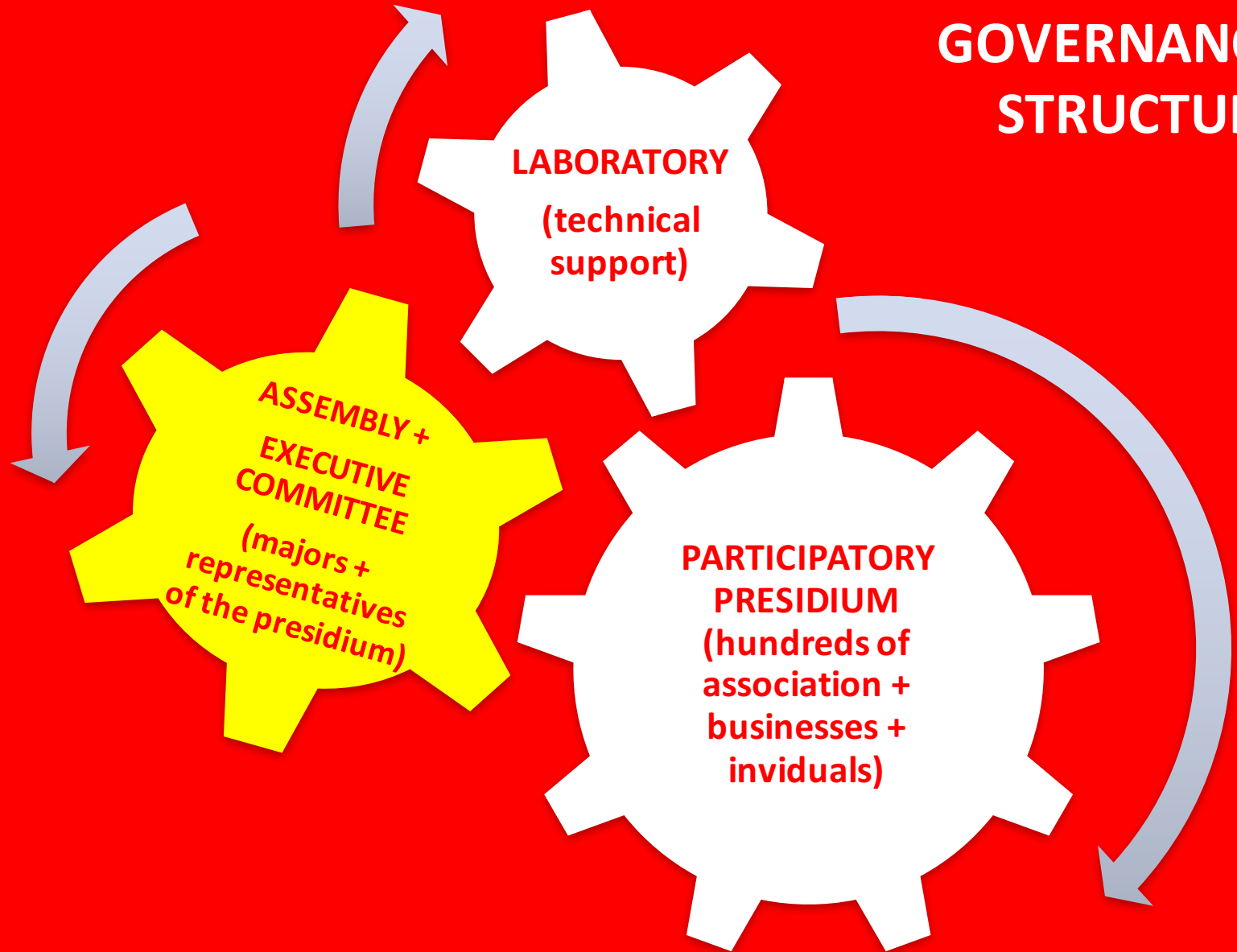
Presentato alla comunità per revisioni e integrazioni il 23/1/2014 - Aggiornato dal gruppo di Ricerca dell'Università degli Studi di Catania il 10/10/2014



SICILIA 2014 | 2020

**PATTO** DI FIUME SIMETO

# PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE





**Revolutionary  
Governance  
Structure**



**“THE SIMETO RIVER  
AGREEMENT”  
General Legal Framework**

**Signed on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

# Simeto River Agreement

## Implementation Strategies

### **MOBILITY**

Accessibility/ Security / Connection  
/ Enhancement of existing  
structures / Sustainability

### **CULTURE**

Historic-Environmental Assets/ Public  
Spaces / Historic Centers / Identity

### **AGRICULTURE**

Agro-District / CSA / Training and  
Education / Ethics

### **WASTE**

Zero-Waste Strategies / Growing  
Strategy for Municipal Management /  
Participant Observatory

### **WATER**

Participatory Observatory +  
Regional Management Authorities



City & Regional Planning Department  
Anthropology Department  
The University of Memphis

present

In Partnership with



Università  
"Statale"  
"Grazioplene"



Parto di  
Fluore  
Sicuro

# WELCOME TO SICILY!

## study abroad program

### June 6-18, 2017



Set in the beautiful Sicuro Valley, in Eastern Sicily, UoM students and faculty will engage with Sicuro residents and officials in an action-research process aimed at revitalizing a declining a historic community through advanced community development strategies. The main challenge is to preserve the existing cultural richness and authenticity while addressing economic and population decline.

In this class we will use various research activities (ethnographic research, spatial analysis, historical research, etc.) to contribute to a participatory community process that is committed to environmental sustainability and social justice.

This engaged learning experience is part of an ongoing collaboration between the University of Memphis and the Sicuro Community, within the framework of an internationally recognized economic development plan for the Sicuro Valley, called the **SICURO RIVER AGREEMENT**. Within the broad framework offered by this Agreement, the class offers students the opportunity to link economic sustainability with socio-cultural and eco-environmental dimensions of development.

Students are eligible for **3 credits** via credit by exam.

The **cost** is \$3,500 + airfare (option: \$1,000-1,200) + \$60 credits by exam fee - Scholarships are available up to \$2,000.

**To Apply** go to <http://www.memphis.edu/abroad/> click on "find a program" - search for "Environmental Planning" - click "Apply Now"

At the end of your application for the program, you can apply for the **Study Abroad Scholarship** (at <http://www.memphis.edu/abroad/>) and click on "Scholarship". **The deadline for applying and requesting a scholarship is March 1st.**

For **more info** contact the instructor:  
Dr. Antonio Rucit ([arucit@memphis.edu](mailto:arucit@memphis.edu))  
Dr. Laura Soria ([lsoria@memphis.edu](mailto:lsoria@memphis.edu))  
Dr. Katherine Lambert Pennington ([kpenn@memphis.edu](mailto:kpenn@memphis.edu))

To discuss **Summer Financial Aid**, Contact the Study Abroad Financial Aid Officer, Joanna Dodson ([jdodson@memphis.edu](mailto:jdodson@memphis.edu) / 401 Wilder Tower)

