



An interesting thing happened on the way to year 2020. And it all started because of a problem with meetings.

Over the past few years, several vibrant community conversations were creating a critical mass for change. Many different groups were working to address various issues in various ways, with varying results. And the leaders of several different organizations found themselves participating in an increasing number of those meetings, repeatedly discussing the same things with slightly different groups of people.

We organized a meeting to discuss this problem with meetings. All of these collaborative efforts and initiatives needed and deserved our support, all held the promise of improving lives. But we did not have the resources to support them all. This slowed their progress, frustrating some of their members to break off and form new collaborative efforts and convene even more meetings to address the same issues.

We agreed that many of these initiatives were achieving impressive results. But when it came to the really big issues, we were losing ground. Too many families were living in poverty and strife, with too little job growth. Too many kids were not entering college, nor even finishing high school. Our safe, quiet streets were increasingly punctuated with gunfire.

Our experience with collaborative efforts had taught us some useful lessons. So as we continued to meet to discuss the problem with meetings, our conversation drilled down to a few core truths, values and objectives. We agreed:

- we are all responsible for building our community. It will be as good as we make it; because we are facing some huge challenges and want large-scale improvements, it's going to take a lot of us.
- our resources, and results, are maximized when we all work together. Aligning and coordinating and consolidating all these groups is necessary to achieve the change we want. And our processes must be open, transparent and democratic.
- the best way to achieve change at this scale is to organize under a broad, overarching and shared goal. All voices are welcome in that conversation, as we then develop specific strategies to achieve those goals, identify lead organizations and roles for all other participants, and hold each other accountable for meeting our objectives.
- this is dangerous work. It will be hard, slow, and frustrating. We will have setbacks, make enemies, and endure a whole lot of critics. But it is also necessary work, because our fates are all linked and intertwined by community. When our neighbors and coworkers and the strangers across town do better, we all do a little better too. When they hurt, we hurt.
- now is a critical time. We have a very real opportunity to succeed, and we have the resources. Collective impact works.

So we got to work. We analyzed the strategic plans of all sorts of institutions, organizations and groups. We identified seven broad goals which were consistently identified in those strategic plans, and vetted these goals and our proposed structure in several open community forums. We were joined by a lot of community members who enthusiastically came on board and got to work. We have defined the community that we will build over the next few years. Welcome to Jackson 2020.