

# Changing the Community Development Game: An Increasing Focus on Regions and Markets

*Directions and strategies for  
local community development partnerships*

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Improving the quality of communities and taking advantage of opportunities to make them more competitive requires broadening the strategies than have been followed in recent decades. Efforts now need to focus outward as well as inward, addressing not just the symptoms but also the causes of community decline. Although community developers should continue placing priority on the needs of lower-income families, they will also need to set their sites on investments that attract a more diverse mix of residents, businesses and jobs into the communities in which they work. And they will need to increase their emphasis on programs that help community members build assets. Underlying this shift is a growing appreciation of the principle that healthy communities are diverse places that offer a broad range of options - in housing, employment and recreation - for families with varied backgrounds and levels of income.

Along with these strategic shifts, there is an emerging understanding that the way community development work is done will also need to change. Building on past accomplishments and achieving greater scale and impact will require that community developers acquire new skills and expanding the arenas in which they work. Professionals and activists accustomed to working mostly on issues affecting in individual neighborhoods will need to be more actively engaged with private investors, politicians and public officials whose interests may be different but nonetheless complementary. They will need to spend more time understanding and influencing the broader regional plans and policies that ultimately shape what is possible at the individual community level.

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