

Cool Cities Growth Initiative

<p>Initiative Name</p>	<p>Council for World-Class Communities</p>
<p>Description of Initiative</p>	<p>The Council for World-Class Communities (CWCC) is a non-profit volunteer organization formed in January 2001 and incorporated in October 2002. The Council was the outgrowth of years of concern raised by various community leaders and organizations regarding diversity. A cohesive, inclusive community is seen by many Southwest Michigan residents as crucial to enhancing individual opportunity for all of the region's residents and, with that, the collective economic and social growth of the region.</p> <p>The CWCC mission is to create a region where Southwest Michigan residents view differences among themselves as strengths that open opportunities for everyone to grow and participate fully, rather than seeing differences as threats or obstacles. The CWCC vision is to create a set of interdependent, world-class communities where diversity and inclusion are the foundation, and no one is left behind. The CWCC consists of eight domains, or primary areas of interest, where people can work on projects aligned with business, communities of faith, community outreach, economic development, education and learning, government, health and wellness, and youth/young adult. There also are alliance teams working on arts and culture, effective public transportation, diversified housing, fostering an environment of value and respect and creating prepared, hopeful youth as well as lifelong learning opportunities. Membership in these groups is free and open to the public.</p> <p>The CWCC's major programs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bridges to Digital Excellence (BDE), a five-phased technology program that, among other things, provides refurbished computers and software to technology-disadvantaged families in Southwest Michigan. The program enlists the help of four volunteer high school interns and one paid high school intern who work as the technical support staff under the direction of the CWCC's technology education manager. Later phases of the program also focus on providing adult literacy training, software training, hardware training and employment placement assistance ➤ Homeownership Institute (HOI), a joint housing resource center of the CWCC and Cornerstone Alliance. The institute will work with area lenders, builders, realtors and counselors to help provide for the rehabilitation, purchase and construction of homes ➤ Community-Wide Diversity Training, which is open to any member of our communities and trains residents to deliver a comprehensive eight-module diversity-with-inclusion curriculum within their organizations ➤ Law-Enforcement Diversity Training, a specialized curriculum designed to help law-enforcement officers improve their relationships with each other and with the residents they are sworn to protect <p>In addition, the CWCC performs many other services in our communities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sponsoring a workshop for parents and educators that addressed the importance of early childhood development – socialization and verbal interaction – and how it contributes to the success of children in life ➤ Supporting the 2003 Small Business Symposium, which was designed to encourage minority ownership and the revitalization of Benton Harbor ➤ Donating books to Benton Harbor High School and Benton Harbor Charter School ➤ Supporting the asset-building initiative that surveyed more than 9,000 Berrien County students in grades six through 12 to gauge 40 developmental assets. These experiences and/or qualities, like family support or cultural competence, have been proven to help young people be successful in life ➤ Participating in a coalition that formed the Benton Harbor Youth Works program, which created 250 summer jobs for youth and funded a recreation program for Benton Harbor residents ➤ Sponsoring a free health fair for area residents in conjunction with national "Take a Loved One to

	<p>the Doctor Day"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting the Michigan Minority Health Partnership in its efforts to produce a brochure for doctors and patients about how to make doctors' visits most beneficial for both stakeholder groups ➤ Supporting the Behavior Risk Assessment Survey, the results of which offer insights into the issues that affect the delivery of health services ➤ Supporting an outreach and education effort to help residents, especially senior citizens, reduce their risk of being injured by a fall ➤ Partnering with Healthy Berrien Consortium to host informational dialogues between health care consumers, practitioners and state/national legislators ➤ Starting a "Listening to Your Voice" line in the aftermath of civil unrest in Benton Harbor in June 2003. Volunteers, including professional social workers and counselors, helped residents cope with their feelings and even helped discourage callers from participating in the violence 				
Action Type		Build New	X	Expanding Existing	Attract From Elsewhere
Timing	<p>Although the CWCC hired its president and executive director in October 2002, community volunteers had been working to advance various CWCC programs and initiatives since the Council's founding in January 2001.</p> <p>The CWCC is designed to be a community development organization that continues its work in Southwest Michigan for years to come.</p>				
Champions	<p>1) Mark Mitchell CWCC President and Executive Director mark@cwcconline.org 269-934-9286</p> <p>2) Cidni Sanders CWCC Communications Manager cidni@cwcconline.org 269-925-0171</p>				
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CWCC Strategic Framework ➤ CWCC Community Assessment ➤ U.S. Census Bureau ➤ Twin Cities Demographics – Profiles of the City of Benton Harbor and the City of St. Joseph prepared by the Berrien County Economic Development Department ➤ Quality of Life and Diversity in the Benton Harbor Metropolitan Area: Findings and Suggestions in Attracting Professional Workers 				
Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Resident surveys ➤ Town hall meetings ➤ Feedback forums ➤ Online survey ➤ Number of participants ➤ Number of potential participants (related to BDE, CWDT, LEDT, HOI, other programs) ➤ Information quality (user rankings by BDE, CWDT, LEDT, HOI program participants and subject matter experts) ➤ Beta testing ➤ Participant feedback ➤ Process efficiency ➤ Knowledge use ➤ Transactions processed ➤ Technical support calls/repairs ➤ Success stories and/or anecdotes 				

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Staff morale ➤ Staff learning ➤ Academic progress ➤ Job placement ➤ Homeownership rates
Model or Case Study References	<p>Sustainable Racine's goals focus on education, regional planning, neighborhood development, downtown revitalization and economic development. Its community activities and involvement include the New Central City Grocery, Neighborhood Partnership Fund and Uptown Business Association.</p>
Alternative Strategies	
Synergy with Other Initiatives	<p>The CWCC has long said it cannot accomplish the vision of our residents by working alone. The Council has partnered with numerous residents, businesses and organizations in a variety of capacities over the years. The CWCC's first project, Bridges to Our Future: Linking People and Communities, was designed specifically to increase collaboration and cooperation among area entities as well as to increase exposure about the good things that were occurring independently and often in "pockets" of our communities. In 2003 alone, the CWCC partnered with more than 500 residents and more than 200 businesses and organizations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Whirlpool Corporation ➤ Cornerstone Alliance Economic Development Agency ➤ The United Way of Southwest Michigan ➤ The Area Agency on Aging ➤ The Red Cross ➤ Benton Harbor Area Schools ➤ Berrien County Intermediate School District ➤ St. Joseph Public Schools ➤ City of Benton Harbor ➤ City of St. Joseph ➤ Benton Harbor Police Department ➤ Berrien County Sheriff's Department ➤ Lake Michigan College ➤ Andrews University ➤ Berrien Community Foundation ➤ Michigan Works ➤ Benton Harbor Tech Center
Marketability or Buy-in Potential	<p>The formation of the CWCC was the outgrowth of years of concern raised by various community leaders and organizations in dealing with diversity. A cohesive, inclusive community is seen by many area residents as crucial to enhancing individual opportunity for all of the region's residents and, with that, the collective economic and social growth of the area.</p> <p>As the CWCC recruited board members and volunteers, the CWCC's five founders remained open to various adjustments that needed to be made in the scope of the organization. For example, the original name of the CWCC was the Council for a World-Class Community. However, due to the fact that the greater Benton Harbor-St. Joseph area consists of no less than nine interdependent municipalities, it was suggested that the name be changed to the Council for World-Class Communities.</p> <p>In addition, the domains and the vision of the CWCC are based on feedback from more than 2,000 people who live or work in Southwest Michigan provided during our information-gathering phase. The health and wellness domain as well as the youth/young adult domain were added due to the public's desire for interest groups devoted solely to these issues. (Both domains previously existed as committees within larger domains.) The CWCC vision was fine-tuned during a weekend retreat attended by more than 60 people. Every word in the vision had to be agreed upon in order for it to be</p>

	<p>“adopted” as the official vision of the CWCC.</p> <p>David Whitwam, chairman of the CWCC board, also is the retiring chairman and CEO of Whirlpool Corporation. It was Whitwam’s speech at a November 2000 that led to the CWCC being founded. Whirlpool has been a major funder and resource for the CWCC and, undoubtedly, this unwavering support has been a big selling point for some businesses, organizations and residents.</p> <p>There is a proven business case for diversity that has been helpful for some businesses and organizations.</p> <p>Diversity initiatives and education have been shown to help organizations and businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain a competitive advantage ➤ Improve new employee recruitment ➤ Improve client relations ➤ Reduce turnover ➤ Enhance company image ➤ Increase innovation ➤ Increase access to new markets and enhance understanding of their diverse clients’ needs <p>Diversity initiatives and education also can help employees and residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase productivity ➤ Increase creativity ➤ Decrease interpersonal conflict among employees ➤ Increase job satisfaction ➤ Increase morale ➤ Improve interaction with colleagues and clients of diverse backgrounds <p>Also, many people recognize that diversity-with-inclusion efforts in our communities are simply “the right thing to do.” Based on our region’s history and increasing diversity, our future depends on our ability to work together across differences.</p>
<p>Risk Factors</p>	<p>There is a lot of work to be done in our communities. And much of what people face whenever building collaboration is the issue of trust. Benton Harbor and St. Joseph – the Twin Cities that seem more like total strangers in many respects. Benton Harbor is primarily black, struggling economically, tackling high unemployment, and suffering from a low tax base. St. Joseph is primarily white, doing well economically, enjoying low unemployment, and benefiting from a high tax base. It’s easy to understand why the residents of one community might be suspicious of the motives of their neighboring residents. People either think that those more fortunate are making charity cases of those less fortunate, or that those less fortunate are trying to take everything from those more fortunate.</p> <p>But that’s not what residents are trying to do, and that’s not what the CWCC is trying to do. We want our residents to work together to increase opportunities for the economic prosperity for all people. The CWCC discovered many people had the desire to effect change in our communities but, for a variety of reasons, were unable to do so. Among our key findings were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ These communities are rich in assets that can support the transition to world-class ➤ Many people were willing to seek solutions and to make the effort successful, but were not united around a strategy ➤ A bias toward “going it alone” was holding back all communities ➤ Economic disparity and poverty among groups were amplifying issues of racism ➤ Infrastructure necessary for effective economic growth was lacking ➤ Fear of failing youth was a unifying concern ➤ Schools were not meeting the needs of a broad spectrum of students ➤ The promise of the City of Benton Harbor was unfulfilled <p>The CWCC founders knew that any effort we began in our communities must take these factors into consideration. It has been our goal to remain mindful of these issues in designing and implementing CWCC programs, events and partnerships in our communities.</p>

<p>Supporting Documentation</p>	<p>The CWCC Web site, www.cwcconline.org, contains news releases, historical information, newsletters, links, program information, domain information, and the CWCC's data feedback report. For information on the BDE program, visit www.pointclickachieve.org.</p>
<p>Success Factors</p>	<p>The CWCC has engaged residents from a variety of ages, cultures, fields of expertise, and educational backgrounds. This diverse volunteer base as well as our ability to collaborate with other area groups has been a key contributor to our success to-date.</p> <p>The CWCC also credits its "breakthrough foundation" with helping to address area issues. Traditionally, communities across America that have tried to deal with issues of diversity, biases, prejudice and economic disparity have followed one of two paths: dealing with the diversity and "isms" issues that divide communities and people or dealing with the unequal economic opportunities of disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>The problem with one or the other (action plans without inclusive behaviors and goals, or a focus on removing the "isms" and barriers without action plans to change disparity of opportunities) is that neither leads to a path of real systemic change.</p> <p>From the beginning, the CWCC has believed strongly that our communities must deal with both paths in order to progress, and we must attack them in an integrated and seamless way.</p>
<p>Tactic and Action Plan</p>	<p>In January of 2001, three important decisions were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The communities-wide organization that would be created to take this work forward would be named the Council for World-Class Communities. ➤ An additional 20-25 diverse community members would be needed to form the Board of Directors. ➤ There was a need for an outside resource and consulting firm to assist with the transformational effort. Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group was selected to complete an extensive assessment within our communities to determine how residents defined "world-class communities," and the barriers that existed that could prevent the achievement of that vision, as well as factors that would assist us in our journey. <p>During the next 10 months, more than 2,000 people were interviewed through 237 focus groups and individual interviews. In addition, written surveys were completed by 1,466 of these participants. The residents of all of our communities provided the following definition of what characteristics a world-class community would possess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An environment where all people are valued and respected ➤ Safety ➤ Prepared and hopeful youth ➤ Strong school systems that work for everyone ➤ New and growing businesses with a broad spectrum of jobs ➤ A rich variety of arts, culture and leisure opportunities ➤ Diversified housing ➤ Healthy and credible local government ➤ A full range of high quality health care ➤ Strong citizen leadership ➤ Effective public transportation. <p>It was determined that, in order to achieve this future state, we would need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Leave no one behind ➤ Honor and support the success for growth, schools and families ➤ Develop personal effectiveness in building inclusive and diverse communities ➤ Increase leadership, ownership and involvement of people in their communities ➤ Strengthen local government ➤ Forge connections across communities ➤ Move from surviving to thriving as interdependent communities <p>As a result of the 11 major themes that resulted from the surveys, the following domains were created: business, communities of faith, community outreach, economic development, education and learning</p>

	<p>and government. Health and wellness and youth/young adult were added later. The CWCC utilized the Future Search Network to facilitate nine separate Future Search Conferences with more than 500 people engaged in two-and-a-half day visioning sessions so that the domains could create their own mission statements to support the CWCC mission and vision. In addition to the work the domains carry out separately, there are some areas in which they work together. The visioning process, as well as early identification of priority areas for focus, created clearly identifiable communities-wide goals, issues and action plans. These communities-wide project areas turned out to be bigger than any one domain and will require cross-domain membership as well as significantly broader community representation.</p> <p>These communities-wide cross-domain alliance areas are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ An environment where all people are valued and respected (This will serve as the foundation for all of our work.) ➤ Prepared and hopeful youth ... and education systems and lifelong learning opportunities that work for everyone ➤ New and growing businesses with a broad spectrum of employment opportunities for our citizens and economic growth for our communities ➤ A rich variety of arts, culture and leisure activities ➤ Diversified housing ➤ Effective regional public transportation <p>Each CWCC domain or alliance team was charged to establish a broad-based mission; identify and prioritize goals that, when executed, would achieve the mission, identify and prioritize a set of action plans for each goals and establish a set of measurements to assess progress against the goals and action plans.</p> <p>The role of the CWCC includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establishing the standards that must be achieved and the steps that must be accomplished if we are to create a set of interdependent, world-class communities where diversity and inclusion are the foundation and no one is left behind. ➤ To serve as the catalyst for systemic change and transformation across all of our communities ➤ To provide the learning experiences and dialogues across our communities so that we have the skills necessary to build inclusive communities and break down biases and barriers ➤ To effectively play the role of bringing people, programs, governmental entities and other organizations together in a partnership format in order to exponentially leverage the efforts required to achieve our communities' vision ➤ To assure that all of our work is inclusive, where all voices are heard and our work continuously focuses on breaking down barriers and biases ➤ To build an environment where we all rise above special interests or single community interest in order to focus our energies and resources on the vision that has been established ➤ To continually measure our progress and the effectiveness of ours and the communities' efforts and activities ➤ To continuously build the dedication, commitment and skills to stay the course – no matter what obstacles or challenges we face – as we, together, create a set of interdependent, world-class communities where diversity and inclusion are the foundation and no one is left behind.
<p>Notes</p>	<p>To receive additional materials, please contact Mark Mitchell or Cidni Sanders.</p>