Looking Back at City Venture Corporation

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In This Issue

City Venture Corporation .......... 1
Wage Justice ..................... 9
More Working Papers ............. 10
New CURA Publications .......... 10
Youth in Iron Mining Districts ... 11
Deepening Dilemmas on the Duschee ......................... 15
CURA Publications Order Form ... 16

This summer CURA published the final report of a project begun a decade ago: *City Venture Corporation: An Experiment in Urban Development Through Public/Private Partnership*. City Venture was the brainchild of William Norris, founder and until recently president of Control Data Corporation. Norris firmly believed that a private corporation could solve the problems of decaying inner cities and make a profit at the same time. City Venture Corporation was his attempt to prove this. CURA began monitoring the City Venture program in 1980 with intensive on-site visits for two years and annual updates thereafter.

The examination revolved around four key issues: City Venture’s profit orientation, its holistic approach, its composition and style, and its effectiveness. What follows is excerpted from the text of CURA’s final report, mostly from the concluding chapter. The report details the City Venture experience in seven cities: Toledo, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, St. Paul, Baltimore, Charleston, and Benton Harbor. For readers interested in the full picture, copies of the report are available free-of-charge and may be ordered on the publications order form at the end of this *CURA Reporter*.

—The Editor
Praised or condemned, copied or avoided, the City Venture Corporation (CVC) was, it may be argued, the nation’s most well-publicized example of a public-private partnership for urban redevelopment. Founded in 1978 as an off-shoot of Control Data Corporation, City Venture sought to use the expertise of its then fifteen consortium members—businesses, churches, and community organizations—to solve urban problems and to make a profit at the same time.

Since 1968, Control Data had sited plants in distressed inner-city areas and had concerned itself with employee welfare by providing such benefits as day care, counseling, and flexible hours. In addition, Control Data, at first primarily a research, development, and manufacturing firm of large-scale scientific computers, increasingly moved into software development and technical assistance operations. Control Data services and software for business development, education, health care, and energy conservation all became part of the CVC program. This is not to diminish the potential contributions of the other shareholders. Each consortium member offered technology and management expertise. The work of Bertrand Goldberg Associates in housing and the Dayton Hudson Corporation in neighborhood assistance are examples of this expertise.

The element that perhaps most distinguished CVC from previous public-private partnerships was the corporation’s emphasis on the management of community development as profitable. William Norris brought to City Venture his philosophy that “we view the major, unmet needs of society as opportunities to pursue profitable business. This is, after all, the basic reason for the existence of business.”

To distinguish its approach from other efforts to address urban problems, CVC emphasized that its leadership was rooted in the private sector and that the corporation’s investors, while seeking a profit, were willing to accept a longer-than-normal term return on investment. CVC’s intent was not to invest its own capital but to amplify the impact of federal resources by “packaging public programs with private resources” and developing a “private delivery system based on entrepreneurship.” Its own revenues were to come from fees for initiating, planning, and managing a cooperative effort between various levels of government, business, labor, religious institutions, foundations, and community residents. In short, CVC was neither developer nor consultant; it packaged and managed existing resources on a for-profit basis, and job creation was the heart of City Venture’s strategy.

Between 1978 and 1983, City Venture Corporation courted eighteen cities with project proposals, winning contracts in fifteen. It met with neither unmitigated success nor unmitigated failure in its efforts to revitalize urban neighborhoods. From city to city, however, wide variations are apparent in City Venture’s ability to organize an effective partnership with local actors and to successfully marshal the resources necessary to carry out its program.

The corporation was most successful in Toledo, where it joined a partnership of public and private entities that eventually invested $60 million in Warren Sherman, vastly affecting that neighborhood’s physical and economic situation. Its biggest failure was, unquestionably, in Benton Harbor, where CVC failed to generate sufficient support from either the public or private sectors to fund the implementation of its program. In each of the other cities, struggles developed over funding, and competition arose with local city and community organizations, hindering the progress and limiting the success of CVC’s activities. These wide-ranging experiences raise the obvious question: What were the ingredients in CVC’s success or failure?

Holism

From the outset, CVC claimed that social problems could yield profit-making opportunities and that this goal was best pursued via a holistic strategy. What CVC meant by holism was never actually defined, but it is possible to discern some ways in which CVC considered itself holistic. One sense is operational. The sheer range of services, products, and approaches suggested in initial CVC statements implied that it was not simply interested in economic development or human services alone. In this sense, holism was little different from the more traditional language of comprehensive planning.

There is also a philosophical sense to holism that is a general characteristic of the private sector approach to urban problems. It is simply this: help for the “whole person” begins with a job generated by the private

Cover photo: Control Data’s Business and Technology Center (BTC) in Toledo. Bricks in the courtyard were pavers from 13th Street. City Venture hired neighborhood people to move them when that street was being repaved.
sector. In its early projects, CVC attempted to surround those jobs with a network of human services in order to enhance the "climate of employability."

Holism is also a part of the entrepreneurial strategy that formed a second philosophical foundation for CVC: it is possible to make money in the pursuit of social betterment. The philosophy applies to the range of Control Data products and services involved in CVC projects—particularly, PLATO and the Business and Technology Centers (BTCs)—and to contractual fees for CVC's services. CVC did not make a quick return on its capital investment, but this was in keeping with Norris's notion of patient capital.

The Public-Private Partnership

Along with holism, the concept of the public-private partnership was closely associated with the CVC program. Instead of a triangular partnership between city government, a neighborhood, and CVC, it was more common for separate partnerships to be formed between CVC and the city and its development agency, and CVC and the neighborhood. As conceived by CVC, these partnerships raise a range of questions.

It is not out of place to ask if there are advantages to private sector involvement. Can the private for-profit sector be more successful than the public sector in making distressed and non-marketable pieces of real estate targets for economic development? Is it better to provide adequate levels of human services? The answer is a resounding "it depends." Ironically, City Venture's success depended most of all on the cooperation of the city's economic and community development units that, in theory, it sought to supplant. It should be noted from the outset, of course, that real estate has become distressed and non-marketable precisely because of a history of private sector disinvestment and inattention.

What the private sector presumably brings to an area is a different set of tools and orientations: a desire to turn a profit, marketing and accounting skills, and most importantly, the ability to mobilize large amounts of capital. In addition, fewer questions are raised about "why this neighborhood and not that" if the matter is left to the private sector.

Based on CVC's experience, it appears that there is nothing inherently unique about the private sector's management skills that give it an advantage over the public sector.

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*PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations) was a computerized teaching system that spanned a variety of subjects from basic skills training to accounting and finance. Business and Technology Centers were incubators for small businesses. They offered office or production space along with built-in maintenance, receptionist, security, conference rooms, and access to a variety of other business and clerical services and to PLATO.

City Venture entered Philadelphia with proposals for a full range of holistic programs. Negotiations began in 1979 after a local businessman had contacted William Norris. City politics slowed the development of plans, but eventually, a five-year plan emerged for the area near Fairmont Park in West Philadelphia. Housing in this neighborhood was mostly row housing like that shown here. The city saw a need for fill-in housing on scattered vacant lots and for rehabilitation of existing housing. CVC's plan for a large-scale new housing development ran contrary to city policy and never materialized, but a number of activities were created in Philadelphia: among them were a Fair Break Learning Center, a child care center, a job bank, and seed capital funds for local business ventures.
Benton Harbor was a city in need of massive assistance. In 1980, City Venture was brought in at the suggestion of the local Chamber of Commerce. CVC proposed an ambitious holistic program. Part of the proposal was for the area north of Main Street, pictured here, where a newly created industrial park would generate 1,000 to 1,500 new jobs. Dilapidated buildings would be demolished. A seed and venture capital fund, rent subsidies, development of new business prospects, and a Control Data Business and Technology Center (BTC) would foster a new business climate. By 1982 CVC began implementing its plan, but local support, on which the project depended, never did materialize. The local business community was waiting for the city government to put its house in order, and the city government was waiting for support from the business community in order to do so. Caught in the middle, City Venture was immobilized and left Benton Harbor in early 1983.

In certain cases, CVC critical management skills were great, and the shining example is Toledo. In others, CVC came in for constant criticism for not living up to its advertised expertise. As it turned out, the essence of the public-private partnership was the ability to be a skillful, self-interested negotiator.

CVC did perform a catalytic role in getting groups together, in attracting public funds, in raising a neighborhood’s visibility, and in removing some of the barriers to development. In this, CVC can be said to have been successful, whether it became a full partner in subsequent development or remained an observer.

Initial concerns that CVC as catalyst would become CVC as decision maker were allayed when the specter of government-by-contract never materialized. The question of whether it is good public policy for the public sector to hand over decision-making power on the use of public resources to the private for-profit sector was never seriously debated. At first, City Venture wanted unfettered development rights to an area and devised a system of funding that would have given complete discretion over the use of funds to CVC. But in every city, questions arose over this program, or its implications, and City Venture never ended up with that kind of power. The public sector never did hand over decision-making power.

Aspects of private control did occur in cities where CVC obtained contracts. CVC was always invited to a city. A city’s initial acceptance of CVC may have led to an illusion of CVC’s strength, but it is an understatement to say that CVC was closely watched.

The reluctance of the public sector to turn over control of an area, and the desire of City Venture to have it in the first place, indicate some inherent differences. In practical terms, the goals of the two sectors differed. Corporations want to manage areas in order to make money; governments want to manage areas for the general good. The corporate model suggests the need to control extraneous factors and to concentrate closely on product development; government, in the interests of promoting the general welfare, often seeks to make extraneous issues explicit and discussable. For example, CVC’s statements about holism and partnership implied to many that CVC wanted the neighborhood to enter equally into the decision-making process. This generally did not occur, and part of the evolution of City Venture was that it had to become more fully explicit about its intentions for an area.

CVC’s initial concept was blurry: it was difficult for anyone to know exactly what CVC would do and to whom exactly it was accountable. Initially it was not accountable, as many private sector operations are to a group of expectant stockholders; therefore, CVC could take some risks and did not seek immediate profits. Yet profit was a long-term goal. As CVC moved into operation changes were necessary in its approach, in its marketing, and in the response of the local community to its efforts.

CVC in Operation

Many things changed in the way CVC did business after its inception, including the content of its programs, its organizational and management style, and its overarching philosophy. In its later statements the CVC language of holism was dropped. Urban design considerations disappeared first: plans after Minneapolis, Toledo, and Baltimore did not include them. Housing faded next; only in Toledo was an significant housing program undertaken. Finally, human services in a formal sense faded, even within project areas where programs had already begun.

City Venture generally moved away from target neighborhoods to citywide programs. It might be said that with the exception of Toledo, CVC’s local project offices never had high visibility or great internal corporate decision-making power. Negotiations were most often conducted by
representatives from CVC’s Minneapolis headquarters. Neighborhood offices did add legitimacy, however, and helped maintain rudimentary ties between CVC and its target neighborhood.

A variety of factors led to this change. Most local actors expected delivery on CVC’s many commitments: when few were delivered, CVC ran into criticism. Part of the problem was related to the initial CVC model. Early statements and proposals contained a degree of boasting. Claims were often simply seen as marketing ploys: to “solve” society’s unmet needs or to “create” 1,500 jobs in five years. For holism to be more than an assortment of programs and services it had to be stitched together by a master tailor into a larger fabric. CVC failed to fulfill this role.

In addition, City Venture did not have the luxury of etching its programs on an empty neighborhood slate. Conflicts with local and city organizations flared up almost immediately in Baltimore and Philadelphia, resulting in the eclipse of CVC housing programs. Conflict occurred not only over competition for scarce resources and for program responsibility, but over simple input into the CVC process—the public policy issues mentioned above.

To the extent that CVC admitted to flaws in its initial model, it is an admission of the defects of that model combined with a dose of pragmatism. The model, in seeking too broad a role with too little accountability, was neither pragmatic nor workable as advertised. In some respects, CVC’s blurring of public and private sector responsibilities was what provoked problems; later statements were more forthrightly corporate.

Roles within the Partnership

We can better expand on the points concerning CVC’s operations by examining the structural and functional relationships between CVC and the various actors included in the public-private partnerships. Being a partner implies different things to different actors, and in some situations even the notion of partnership is inappropriate. There is far more to the notion of partnerships than simply acting in concert. And there is much to be gained in looking at complexity encountered by CVC—the outsider—when it entered a local situation.

First, let us look at CVC’s own role, or roles, which we might characterize as broker, catalyst, and planner. As a broker, CVC sought to magnify existing resources by putting the right resources, whether human or technical, to the problem. Most often, CVC was not able to act effectively in this way because of its limited local power base. Here again, Toledo is the exception. CVC was a better broker in Toledo because of the power and skill of the local project office and because of the degree of the local community’s receptivity to CVC.

CVC often referred to its ability to match appropriate resources to specific problems, but in considering the evidence, it is worth asking whether CVC’s plans were ever swayed by the source of money available or, rather, if the existence of certain resources determined their application. Some have thought this was the case with the Fair Break program, where CVC and Control Data offered an alternative to local Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) programs and depended on CETA money. With the reduction of that money, the Fair Break programs lost precedence in CVC plans. It is also possible to think of this in a general way in regard to CVC’s contract fees. There appeared to be little relationship between the level of CVC service and the contract amount. It seemed that specific contract amounts were subject to local political variations and that, by the

Symbolic of the transformation that occurred in Toledo is this fence outside St. Vincent’s Hospital. Before City Venture entered the scene, the hospital had blockaded itself from the severely depressed neighborhood it stood in by erecting a ten foot concrete block wall. The collaboration fostered by CVC between hospital and neighborhood finally allowed most of the wall to be torn down and replaced by this wrought iron fence. In Toledo, City Venture realized its goal of making social investment profitable. Initiated into the city in 1979 by the president of Toledo’s largest bank, who also chaired the city’s economic planning council, CVC chose the Warren Sherman neighborhood, just west of downtown for its project area. The economic development strategy proposed by CVC had job creation at its center. The neighborhood was already committed to comparable goals and supported CVC. Nearly $60 million had been committed to Warren Sherman by the time CVC left in 1983.

*Fair Break taught specific job-related skills and included the use of PLATO.*
time of the second contract, CVC most often had to reduce its asking price.

CVC not only claimed to assemble available resources, but to leverage new private commitments. This is crucial, since what set CVC apart from local public purpose developers like the Philadelphia Industrial Development Commission, Baltimore Economic Development Corporation, and Toledo Economic Planning Council, was its potential informal access to Fortune 500 firms. However, it was not markedly successful in attracting new business development.

As a planner, CVC had a varied role. Its Toledo plan was adopted as the neighborhood’s urban renewal plan. But in other cities, CVC plans were derived from previous local efforts. This made life difficult for CVC at times, because again, there were questions about its delivering what it promised.

Often, CVC plans indicated that the most appropriate solution to social problems were Control Data products and services. We alluded earlier to CVC being less a consortium in practice than on paper, and, in fact, its fortunes were very closely tied to Control Data’s. Why, then, was CVC a separate entity rather than a division of CDC, like Rural Venture? This issue concerned Control Data on one hand and the other stockholders in City Venture on the other. The relationship was actually a convenient one for Control Data. City Venture delivered Control Data into areas where it otherwise would not have been and found markets that Control Data otherwise would not have had. In addition, City Venture’s separate status emphasized its experimental nature, though it is debatable whether this was part of the original conception or a subsequent evolution. Regardless, in creating CVC as a separate entity, Control Data was not gambling fully with its prestige, as such, in seeking out these very different markets, and the separation helped protect Control Data from a certain amount of financial risk as well.

Let us also examine CVC’s relationship with other area actors. The early CVC proposals stressed making specific neighborhoods targets for economic development, thereby implying a relationship with the neighborhood organizations. Important policy questions arise here. Was there any way to work out an equal partnership between CVC and neighborhoods that had been on the bottom of the economic and political spectrum? Could they ever understand each other?

CVC’s preferred role was to see the neighborhoods as consumers of its services and as reactors to its proposals. Having a neighborhood as an equal partner was not one of CVC’s goals. It is important to note that all of the neighborhoods CVC entered were previously organized, with the exception of Minneapolis, where the Elliot Park organization only covered part of the project area and a coalition of organizations was formed after CVC arrived. In Toledo,
Minneapolis, and Baltimore, the CVC projects followed other major downtown projects and entered local political climates where neighborhoods had been included in development projects. Where neighborhoods were not organized or were poorly organized, CVC attempted to do something about it. This effort backfired in Minneapolis, where the neighborhood coalition felt that there was no real partnership. But in Warren Sherman in Toledo and West Parkside in Philadelphia, where neighborhood leaders eventually became CVC employees, the attitude was to get the jobs for the neighborhood first and ask procedural questions later.

If, in terms of process, equality was not gained for the neighborhoods by CVC’s presence, how successful was CVC in attracting investment into the areas? CVC itself was not a very great catalyst for investment. An exception to this was, again, Toledo, where in addition to getting jobs commitments, CVC was also supported by the city’s major bank and its energetic CEO. An effort to get this kind of support in Philadelphia and Charleston was thwarted. In Baltimore, Commercial Credit was a significant presence, though this company was, of course, a Control Data subsidiary. In Charleston, City Venture’s plans triggered a great deal of interest in one of the city’s most blighted neighborhoods, though the funding came primarily from the public sector. And one of the major reasons that the project did not continue in Benton Harbor was CVC’s inability to convince the locally based Whirlpool Corporation to become involved.

On the other hand, in concert with the local public and quasi-public sector, CVC helped to remove many of the psychological, if not physical, barriers to development. To a city, City Venture represented a sizable expenditure on a given area of town and usually signaled further public and private investment for the area. In this sense, the neighborhood rose on the city’s agenda and benefited not only from increased capacity to further its own development, but also from greater visibility in city politics.

What about the quasi-public sector? These are the agencies with which CVC most often worked, and whether by design or by accident, the cities CVC operated in contain some of the most sophisticated development agencies in the country: the Baltimore Economic Development Corporation, Philadelphia Industrial Development Commission, Port Authority of St. Paul, the old Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and the Toledo Economic Planning Council. These agencies made a great deal of difference to CVC’s success. In these cities CVC became something of an adjunct to a locally run project rather than the lead actor. The exception is perhaps Toledo, where the economic planning council was just getting started as CVC entered town. In the other cities, CVC ran into problems because of its hard sell and its implied denigration of local abilities.

One instructive conclusion is that CVC was more marketable and attractive in smaller size cities such as Toledo and Charleston, that had less well-developed planning, economic development, and social service agencies. In the larger cities like Baltimore and Philadelphia, CVC was limited to its role as industrial real estate consultant.

We might summarize the discussion about partnership by questioning the term partnership itself: is it the right term to describe the way the various actors interacted, or is what we are looking at more along the lines of a traditional negotiated agreement? On the one hand, partnership is apt; the initial function of the project advisory boards in getting a broad range of people to talk to each other; the attempt to package the resources of both the public and private sectors; and the obvious public relations value of the term for both the city, neighborhood, and CVC, are indicative of this point of view.

On the other hand, in operational terms, we have not witnessed so much a partnership as business as usual, which often requires negotiation to achieve a sort of consensus on the broad issues. If true partnerships may be said to have resulted from CVC’s efforts, they developed in specific programs—for example, where CVC and St. Vincent’s Hospital worked to bring a health clinic to Warren Sherman or where CVC and the city of Benton Harbor worked out a Project Pride clean-up campaign. These small partnerships left lasting imprints on the neighborhood, which the consistent talk about partnerships in a large sense never did.

Stakeholder Analysis

In the City Venture partnership, each of the partners was also a stakeholder, with something to gain and something to lose if the project did not succeed. The financial burden was borne unevenly, partially by Control Data in its investment in the BTCs, but mostly by the city or other public entity that financed the CVC contracts. City Venture, itself, did not risk a large financial investment in order to leverage the other sources of funds. Nor was the corporation necessarily beholden to its stockholders to produce a profit from the venture. The cities had many options for investing their community and economic development funds; their risk in funding CVC was to gamble that this approach would be at least as successful as alternative investments would be. The target neighborhoods were at risk of losing valuable and scarce public investment if CVC’s programs did not produce concrete benefits for the neighborhood.

In return for these risks, each of the stakeholders had goals that it hoped to achieve by participating in the partnership. Figure 1 illustrates the primary goals of each stakeholder. Strong similarities are apparent between Control Data and City Venture’s goals, delaying the supposedly distant relationship between CVC and its parent corporation. CVC wished to prove that social investment could be profitable and to successfully market its tools of economic development. Since the tools that it was marketing were primarily Control Data products, CVC’s goals for profit and marketing are directly correlated to Control Data’s goals for profit and marketing. For example, Control Data was in the business of building BTCs, with or without City Venture’s assistance. CVC’s strategy involved getting the city to buy the BTC by financing its construction (or renovation) using UDAG (Urban Development Action Grant), industrial

Figure 1. Primary Goals of Each Group Participating In the Public-Private Partnership
City Venture entered Charleston in 1980 as the result of efforts by a local businessman who wanted to salvage the East Side neighborhood, one of the most blighted in the city. The key element in proposals for Charleston was jobs. The vacant American Tobacco Company, pictured here, was purchased and renovated to become a BTC. The success of the BTC created a halo effect in the neighborhood, drawing in more public and private investment. The project's influence even extended beyond the neighborhood. Charleston now has several business incubators similar to the BTC.

bond, or other industrial development monies. Similarly, CVC sold PLATO to cities as part of the job training package, using CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act) or Jobs Training Partnership Act funds to pay the costs.

To the extent that CVC marketed concrete products, it succeeded fairly well, although any profits from the sale of BTCSs or PLATO software went directly to Control Data rather than CVC. However, when CVC stepped into the arena of holistic planning, which is program-oriented rather than product-oriented, the flaw in the CVC concept became quite evident. CVC claimed that it had the critical management skill to orchestrate a comprehensive community revitalization plan. That claim was grounded in the diverse consortium membership that stood behind CVC and in William Norris's philosophy that private enterprise was equally or more capable than the public sector in addressing social issues. Neither footing proved to be very firm: the consortium membership, other than Control Data, played no active role in the CVC projects other than providing the initial capitalization. The success of each project depended on the expertise of the CVC staff.

The concept and model proposed by CVC demanded that CVC become integrated into the local power structure and gain legitimacy within it. Perhaps CVC underestimated the difficulty of achieving this goal, particularly in the larger cities. William Norris could easily gain an entree into the CEO power structure, but the onus of working within that structure fell on the shoulders of the project staff. The requirement that local CVC staff clear their decisions with the Minneapolis home office further diminished the project staff’s ability to operate. Thus, the much touted superior expertise of the private sector was inhibited by being inexperienced in operating in the public, political arena.

The goals brought to the partnership by the city and the neighborhood were similarly related in that the neighborhood was the beneficiary of the city's goodwill. The partnership with City Venture did not require that the city modify its community development goals; it merely changed the means of attaining them. As outlined in Figure 1, the city's goals were to invest in high-risk areas, affect disadvantaged city residents positively, and in the process, create a degree of neighborhood trust and involvement. The target neighborhood participated in this effort in pursuit of its own goals: jobs, job training, and an improved physical environment.

Both stakeholders had a range of other means available for pursuing these goals. Accepting CVC as a partner in this effort meant acknowledging that CVC brought
something unique or useful to the local situation. In most cases, the most desirable aspect of CVC was Control Data, the parent corporation and a Fortune 500 company with a reputation for building business incubators and other job-producing enterprises in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Beyond this, CVC’s holistic program raised eyebrows or created conflict, but nowhere was it perceived as the primary objective in inviting CVC to the city. The greater the overlap with existing programs, the greater the conflict, as in Baltimore. By contrast, the more empty the local slate, the more successfully could CVC graft its program to the local scene.

**Conclusions about the City Venture Experiment**

City Venture abandoned its pursuit of a holistic method of improving neighborhood economic development and human services delivery. This was to have been a significantly new private sector approach to urban revitalization. Why was it set aside? Was there a problem with the initial concept or did factors external to CVC inevitably alter its approach?

To these essential questions, the answer appears to be: Though a worthy ideal, holism as advertised by CVC was unworkable when exposed to reality. Why?

Originally, CVC sought to develop the “climate of employability” by surrounding neighborhood residents with a variety of job-creation and job-retention programs. Holism, in this sense, was dropped as City Venture sought to work more strictly in the area of economic development. In addition, there was a move away from making specific neighborhoods targets for development and toward operating in the city at large. The reasons for these changes are many and complex.

There were operational problems with the model itself. Much of the rhetoric turns on the private sector’s better management skills, but City Venture did not demonstrate greater skills than the public sector. The model also required wide-ranging control over an area’s funding and development rights, a control which was never granted to CVC. Finally, the model rested on a consortium approach to development, but, in practice, only Control Data was active in CVC efforts.

In practice, the model ran into trouble partly because CVC was so good at marketing it. Local actors quickly found that CVC had difficulty translating strategic goals into specific programs. CVC’s local project directors found the expectations raised by corporate promises difficult to fulfill. These were crucial problems, since CVC programs strongly depended on local cooperation. CVC programs often duplicated local efforts. Public-private partnerships as conceived on a large scale thus became less important than the small partnerships that were formed to solve specific problems.

Ultimately, the decision about whether CVC was worthwhile was a local political decision that hinged on context as well as performance and other factors, such as whether a Control Data plant followed in City Venture’s wake. The assessment of worth required a time frame longer than contract arrangements and longer than the political process was accustomed to dealing with when evaluating a program. In Charleston, where CVC presented minimal overlap with existing programs, the city agreed that it got more than its money’s worth, and despite the million-dollar price tag for the CVC contracts, it was cheaper than hiring city personnel to accomplish the same tasks. In more highly segmented settings, where the community was more complex both politically and administratively, it is questionable whether an outside entity like CVC could ever have orchestrated a local partnership more effectively than the local actors themselves.

Thomas Anding, associate director of CURA, led CURA staff on the City Venture project. Three of the staff were graduate students at the time of the project: Bouman, Smith, and Stadum. Mark Bouman is now an associate professor at Chicago State University where he teaches geography. Rebecca Smith is a former assistant professor of geography at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, now an entrepreneur on Cape Cod. Beverly Stadum is an assistant professor at St. Cloud State University where she teaches social work and women’s history. Edward Duren, Jr., former coordinator of minority programs for CURA and director of the W. Harry Davis Foundation, is now a private consultant in St. Paul. Barbara Lukermann is a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and a member of the graduate planning faculty at the Institute. Warner Shippee is CURA’s coordinator for housing studies. He is a past executive director of the St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority and has held numerous positions in public and nonprofit agencies concerned with housing and community development.

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**Wage Justice Wins Award**

In 1984, one of CURA’s interactive research grants allowed Sara Evans and Barbara Nelson to begin what became known as the Minnesota Comparable Worth Research Project. Their book—*Wage Justice: Comparable Worth and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform*—was published last year by the University of Chicago Press. This fall it has been given top honors by the national Policy Studies Organization as the best policy studies book published in 1989. Besides CURA and the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs at the University of Minnesota, who jointly sponsored and award the interactive research grants, a number of other organizations helped fund the comparable worth project. At the University of Minnesota, funding came from the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, the Center for Conflict and Change, and the Graduate School. Outside the University, the project was supported by the Northwest Area Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences, and the W.K. Kellogg National Fellowship Program.