

1 **Intentional Community Development**  
2 *Moving Our Field from Good to Great by Knowing What We're Doing*  
3 *Charles Buki, Principal czb*  
4  
5

6 Thank you for inviting me. I am delighted to be here with you at Urban Forum  
7 II delivering this keynote.  
8

9 I spent six hours in the neighborhoods yesterday, looking over places I've been  
10 familiar with – in West and North Philly – on and off again for the past 25 years.  
11 I went to Strawberry Mansion and Swamp Poodle and Mantua and Spring  
12 Garden and along Girard and Ridge and Lancaster. I hoped to discover that  
13 things were better. Though that would mean I'd have to requote this keynote, it  
14 was my deepest hope to see healthier neighborhoods in these parts of this great  
15 city.  
16

17 I did not. North and West Philly are as disconnected as ever. Richard Allen is  
18 gone and so is Cambridge but the work is at the wrong scale. Investments are  
19 diffuse. The interventions are illegible.  
20

21 So my comments are unchanged.  
22

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23  
24 I am flattered to be here.

- 25 ○ Today, with you all, at a time when our field is under assault from  
26 the Visigoths who don't care about our cities.
- 27 ○ The Visigoths who don't have a high regard for our values and our  
28 issues and who most of all don't understand the challenges we  
29 community developers face as we attempt to address:
  - 30 ■ the housing needs of low income families,
  - 31 ■ the needs we all have to live in safe and nurturing  
32 neighborhoods, regardless of income
  - 33 ■ the complexity of trying to address the former without  
34 sacrificing the latter..... and
  - 35 ■ the importance of being a part of a community that has  
36 vibrant commercial corridors that are supported by and in  
37 turn support the residents of the surrounding  
38 neighborhoods.
- 39 - I had breakfast two weeks ago with a lobbyist for our field who said that  
40 even when compared to the government shutdown in 1995, today the  
41 climate is worse. HOPE VI has been shelved. CDFI is under assault. The  
42 Home Loan Bank as well as Fannie and Freddie may soon be under  
43 Treasury oversight. If Reagan and Stockman spoke in nasty tones but  
44 governed somewhat moderately ( all things are relative of course), this  
45 lobbyist told me that the current administration is speaking modestly but  
46 governing harshly. CDBG received the lowest score ever from OMB.  
47 Indeed the Barbarians are at the gate.  
48

49 Now in light of this frontal assault on our already meager resources, as the  
50 starve-the-beast strategy takes hold, we find ourselves once more at a  
51 crossroads.  
52

53 Among other hard choices our field must make, sooner or later we're going to  
54 have to decide whether to continue doing things the way we've been doing  
55 them, or change.

- 1 - In the simplest sense, the argument for doing more of the same would be  
2 an agreement that what we do now and have done and the way we've  
3 been doing it makes sense, produces results we want, and so is worthy of  
4 reinvestment and continuation.  
5 - And, conversely, the argument for change would be the recognition that  
6 things maybe aren't quite so great.  
7

8 The risks of self examination of course are not minor. When the enemy publicly  
9 stated that they "don't want to abolish government but simply want to reduce it  
10 to the size where they can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the  
11 bathtub," we have to be cautious in our self critique; our very existence may boil  
12 down to the costs and benefits of airing our dirty laundry.  
13

14 And so there you have it. On one hand are the costs and benefits of open  
15 dialogue where our cards are on the public table alongside the lists of our  
16 accomplishments and failures. On the other are the costs and benefits of  
17 looking the other way.  
18

19 Given my own view that our field of community development is good but not  
20 great and that the problems we face require us to be great, my vote is for, and  
21 the essence of my comments today are about full disclosure.  
22

23 So up front let me say that some of the themes and issues in my comments  
24 today are going to be easier for some of you than others, and part of my job  
25 here today is to try to ripen the issues I am putting before you so that even if  
26 you disagree with them, they become worthy of your deep consideration.  
27

28 I view my task as communicating to you – visionary professionals who have  
29 already drawn the conclusion that all the housing in the world will not alone  
30 revitalize the neighborhoods we care about – one view at least of the big picture  
31 and how your commercial revitalization goals fit into it.  
32  
33

1 First let me say that it is my deep conviction that our field is a good field.

2  
3 Collectively we are thousands of community-based organizations, and dozens of  
4 regional and national intermediaries. We are public agencies and foundations  
5 and tens of thousands of dedicated, well-meaning staffers of planning  
6 departments, policy tanks, and neighborhood groups.

7  
8 In many respects our field represents the best of America. We are a field  
9 populated by incredibly dedicated and talented people who everyday harness  
10 that dedication and talent to the betterment of society. We are driven by the  
11 conviction that we can make a difference, that we can make things better. And  
12 we have made a difference and things are better. We are not in this for money,  
13 or fame, but instead for something larger.

14  
15 Whatever else may be true, we are tethered to one another by our shared  
16 commitment to a common set of ideals which we put to the test daily as we  
17 work on difficult problems on behalf of millions of low-income households and  
18 thousands of derascinated neighborhoods.

19  
20 The very fact that the problems we work on are timeless and seemingly  
21 intractable speaks volumes about the nature of these challenges, challenges that  
22 defy easy answers, and which by definition require society to make some pretty  
23 significant wholesale changes. We have addressed serious problems in the  
24 roughly 40 years since our inception as a field, and in many cases have made  
25 remarkable progress.

- 26
- 27 - Hundreds of thousands of housing units have been created that low-  
28 income households can afford, units neither the private sector nor  
29 government had an interest or a capacity to develop.
  - 30 - Home ownership opportunities for low-income households have  
31 increased dramatically.
  - 32 - Thousands of communities have representation in some form through the  
33 advocacy of a growing and in many cases robust network of community-  
34 based organizations.
  - 35 - A sophisticated, interconnected system of local organizations working  
36 with national sponsorship and regional ties now exists to try to solve  
37 housing and other problems of low-income people.
  - 38 - It is by standing on the shoulders of the Mike Sverdoffs and Gino Baronis  
39 and Gale Cincottas and Don Terners that our good field can see far  
40 enough to consider seriously what it might mean to become great.

41  
42 In short and in sum, we've accomplished much, and learned much. We know a  
43 few things.

44  
45 ----- END INTRODUCTION -----  
46  
47

----- BEGIN TRANSITION -----

1  
2  
3 But is being good, good enough? Especially when we know a thing or two?  
4

5 Not according to Senator Bill Bradley and his McKinsey colleagues who  
6 concluded that we must challenge current operating practices and notions to  
7 become more effective. Nor to the Economist which recently argued in favor of  
8 greater scrutiny of NGOs. Nor to Mark Kramer and Michael Porter at Harvard  
9 who wrote in a recent HBR, effectively, that just because you benchmark  
10 doesn't mean you have any idea what to do with the information.  
11

12 In my view, the answer to the question of whether being good is good enough is  
13 an unqualified no, for these and other reasons. Our ranks are filled with people  
14 who work everyday in the spirit of Bobby Kennedy's "why not?" vision. Our  
15 foundation was laid by people who did not accept the status quo.  
16

17 Just because today our status quo is better than it was when the modern  
18 community development era began does not mean it is good enough. Are things  
19 better in the South Bronx than before Ed Logue went in against the advice of  
20 the New York Times? Yes. Are things as good as they can be? I don't think so.  
21

22 To accept the status quo in our field today – if not always of the conditions we  
23 face than of our response system - would be to deny the reality of our need to  
24 improve. Such a denial would be to act in a way wholly inconsistent with the  
25 core values that established this field in the first place.  
26

27 Are we as good a field as we can be? Should we accept the status quo today?  
28

29 In my view, no. Not even close.  
30

31 Hartford, CT today looks like it has for forty years – poor, decrepit, dangerous,  
32 forbidding. Just like North Philly and Camden and Trenton and South Central  
33 and West Oakland. Is this our fault? No. Have we made enough of the right  
34 difference? Not likely.  
35

36 We have more programs but not better communities.  
37

38 We have more housing but not better communities.  
39

40 We have more grocery stores but not better communities.  
41

42 We have more CDCs but not better communities.  
43

44 As a colleague of mine who has worked in Chicago for 30 years recently said, "we  
45 set out to do something. To open up capital markets to underserved  
46 communities. We did it. Now what?"  
47

48 Indeed.  
49

50 I applaud those of you who have stepped up to the challenge of taking on the  
51 work of commercial corridor revitalization in distressed communities, especially  
52 those of you who know by virtue of experience that affordable housing  
53 production alone cannot revitalize neighborhoods. At the same time I want to  
54 remind you that had we done affordable housing the right way for the past 25

1 years, we might not now be compelled to shift focus and redouble our efforts in  
2 another milieu.

3  
4 You are here in part because you recognize that we have problems to solve that  
5 are well beyond what we tend to reduce our field of community development  
6 down to, which is the single-minded pursuit of more units of housing affordable  
7 to low-income households.

8  
9 You are here in part because you recognize that our commercial corridors are  
10 hollowed out strips that remain far more hospitable to pawn shops and liquor  
11 stores and nail salons and check cashing outlets than movie theaters and grocers  
12 and restaurants and clothing stores.

13  
14 You are here in part because you recognize that our neighborhoods, though no  
15 longer weighted down with the heavy burdens of crack as they once were, still  
16 remain too mean, too unsafe, too unkempt, too uncared for.

17  
18 You are here because you recognize that one child in five is undernourished  
19 during the critical stages of development and you are frustrated with repeatedly  
20 asking "is it no wonder that one if five can't perform in school?"

21  
22 You are here because you recognize that our communities are as isolated as  
23 ever, cut off from the greater prosperity, cut off racially, cut off culturally.

24  
25 You are here because you see that vibrant commercial spaces are physical  
26 opportunities for communities to be rewoven, and reconnected, and learning  
27 how to do it is important.

28  
29 These recognitions are hallmarks of good.

### 30 31 PAUSE

32  
33 But to become great, to live up to our creed of not accepting the status quo, we  
34 must look at our overall community development system and see if it is in  
35 alignment with the problems we face today.

36  
37 When we look hard at ourselves and our field we find:

- 38
- 39 - We tend to underwrite organizational development activities that create  
40 and maintain organizations that aren't really tackling debilitating  
41 isolation, in spite of good intentions
  - 42  
43 - We tend to underwrite activities that sadly and not infrequently cement  
44 race- can class-based settlement patterns through uncoordinated efforts  
45 under the general banner of community development, in spite of good  
46 intentions
  - 47  
48 - We tend to see in our neighborhoods not community health challenges  
49 but an argument in favor of building more affordable housing, even  
50 though doing so makes your jobs as commercial revitalization directors  
51 and main street managers far more difficult.
  - 52  
53 - We tend to pursue commercial remixing goals without fully  
54 understanding the competitive essence of retail or without fully coming

1 to terms with the need to change the composition of our trade area if we  
2 are to create commercial vibrancy.  
3  
4 - We have a history of glomming onto the next next thing not because it is  
5 the right problem to solve but because doing so helps remake the  
6 necessary funding arguments to foundations and to congress. This  
7 undermines the credibility of our claim that it is right to fix commercial  
8 corridors and that we know what we're doing and that our work should  
9 be financed.

10  
11 Moving from good to great requires precision in problem identification, to be  
12 sure. But it also requires a process that credibly moves from problem i.d. to  
13 program response to goal setting. For too long our field has adopted the more is  
14 better mantra. You are here in part because you know our field must retool  
15 itself. Housing *and* commercial revitalization. Low income *and* moderate  
16 income housing. And saying this and doing it are two different things  
17

### 18 PAUSE

19  
20 So focused as a field have we been on the more is better issue that we have  
21 showed too much willingness to make Faustian bargains that in my view  
22 frequently result in net losses. Bargains that would get us something even when  
23 we weren't sure of the costs, implications, ripple effects, or unintended  
24 consequences, were understandable in the era of the Bikerdikes and Bedford  
25 Stuyvesants. Then we had no data. We had no models. We had no money. By  
26 comparison we didn't know *anything*.  
27

28 This is not true today – we know a lot – and because we know a lot we have a  
29 responsibility to act wisely, a responsibility we have not always lived up to.  
30

- 31 - Starved for production monies by the time the Stockman cuts made their  
32 way down to our neighborhoods, we did not so much as say "boo" about  
33 the 1986 Tax Reform Act. In the process, our field embraced the  
34 argument on the grounds that it was the only game in town.  
35
- 36 - We have spent nearly 20 years building a house of cards around the low-  
37 income housing tax credit, to the point where the preservation of the  
38 national equity syndication infrastructure and the CDCs that became  
39 dependent on developers fees has become an end in and of itself. Along  
40 the way, in my view, the customer ceased to be the low-income family  
41 trying to make a go of it, and instead the customer became the funder.  
42
- 43 - When we needed the sex up our activities, we embraced Margaret  
44 Thatcher's Enterprise Zones. They came out of Stuart Butler's shop at the  
45 Heritage Foundation and they didn't work in Manchester or Glasgow but  
46 we embraced them anyway. We became timid as a field, settling for the  
47 1990 National Affordable Housing Act and the legislative support it  
48 established to create a kazillion undercapitalized underperforming  
49 CHDOs. Not only did we capitulate to Jack Kemp's HUD, we shut down  
50 internal criticism of the rapid expansion of the CDC network from 2,000  
51 to 4,000 organizations even though less than 10 percent of the  
52 organizations were effectively accounting for 80 percent of the  
53 production.  
54

- 1 - When it became clear that the house of tax credit project cards was  
2 trading neighborhoods for units, we shifted our language. When  
3 challenged on this most basic front, apologists adulated all things local.  
4 If the CDC aspired to do it, it was alright. If the local CHDO's mission was  
5 neighborhoods but needed operational dollars so did a few tax credit  
6 deals to generate fees, so be it, overlooking the fact that not every local  
7 desire makes sense.  
8
- 9 - Asked what one of the great characteristics of our field is, a somewhat  
10 prominent lobbyist for our field told me two weeks ago, with a straight  
11 face, that is our field's unwillingness to listen to professionals.  
12
- 13 - When rental housing wasn't sexy, home ownership development became  
14 the flavor of the day, as at various times has CDFI, transitional housing,  
15 and now commercial corridor revitalization.  
16
- 17 - When it became increasingly clear but decreasingly spoken about that  
18 housing production goals were not always in sync with neighborhood  
19 revitalization goals, we built Sandtown-Winchester in Baltimore and  
20 threw in the towel in the fight for 1:1 replacement as HOPE VI took hold.  
21 We mistakenly blamed architecture for the problems that result when  
22 15,000 low-income, low-education, single parent, head-of-households are  
23 warehoused and isolated. At to those communities we added more low-  
24 income housing.  
25
- 26 - When Nicholas Lemann in the NYTs asked in 1994 if community  
27 development works and if the Clinton proposal to create EZs and ECs was  
28 any good, the response from Vice President Gore's office and our industry  
29 was pathetic. We pointed to the number of organizations out there and  
30 the numbers of units produced; in spite of the fact that the question  
31 Lemann posed was whether all the organizations and units actually made  
32 communities any better. In effect our field was asked, "what difference  
33 have you made?" and we responded by saying more of the same is better.  
34

35 It isn't. And for your commercial revitalization efforts to be meaningful, the  
36 right lessons from all this must surface.  
37

- 38 - The lesson here is not that home ownership isn't a worthy goal with  
39 important multipliers. It can be. The lesson is not that Shorebank isn't a  
40 worthy model for other communities to emulate as a way to get venture  
41 capital into neighborhoods. It can be. The lesson is not that transitional  
42 housing isn't a worthy response, per se, to the scourge of homelessness.  
43 It can be. The lesson is not that our commercial corridors don't need to be  
44 revitalized. Or that many efforts of many types on many fronts need to  
45 occur. They must.  
46
- 47 - The first lesson our field badly needs to take note of is that our measures  
48 need to be part of a more cohesive whole that is strategically linked.  
49 Without a binding strategy to connect these and other complementary  
50 efforts, at best our work will yield activities undertaken by institutions  
51 that eventually and inevitably will orient their work toward institutional  
52 preservation instead of community change.  
53
- 54 - The second lesson our field needs to take note of is to pay closer attention  
55 to dissent and disagreement; especially when it comes from within. Not



----- BEGIN CONCLUSIONS -----

1  
2  
3 Where to begin?

4  
5 In my view, the axiom "what you measure is what you get" is a good place to  
6 start.

7  
8 Where now we measure units – and are fast on our way to measuring numbers  
9 of jobs created and amount of square footage developed – our field must  
10 measure quality of life indicators – neighborhood health indicators. If we  
11 measure the health of a neighborhood, we will be measured by the health of the  
12 neighborhoods we have a hand in stimulating. If we measure neighborhood  
13 health, unit production will not go away as an output. Rather it will  
14 transformed from an end in and of itself to a tool.

15  
16 By embracing a shift in what we measure, we can become more intentional  
17 about what we do – we can engage in what I call intentional community  
18 development, consistently asking "what's working?" and "what's not?"

19  
20 Are we intentional about our community development now? I don't believe so.  
21 We have a tendency as a field to think that good intentions equal good  
22 outcomes. Because we care and the Visigoths don't, our intentions will suffice.

23  
24  
25  
26 This is not at all true. Being intentional in our community development work is  
27 not the same as having good intentions. Being intentional means knowing what  
28 we're doing, knowing what problems exist that we are aiming to address,  
29 knowing which tools to use, how and where and under what conditions to use  
30 those tools, how to measure not activities as we do now, but outcomes and  
31 impacts. You are here because you intend to revitalize main streets and  
32 commercial centers. You are here because you aspire to breathe live into places  
33 that can become central parts of vibrant communities. But you must match  
34 your intentions with the right approach if you want the right outcome.

35  
36 We have not done enough of that in our history as community developers, so it  
37 is important to look at our history and see how to adapt.

----- PAUSE -----

38  
39  
40  
41 The need for our field to become intentional is a need I have witnessed daily for  
42 more than 15 years in a variety of forms. I have seen organizations do what  
43 funders want not what communities need. I have seen funders do what is sexy,  
44 not what organizations need. I have seen public agencies spread their limited  
45 resources instead of focusing them. I have seen housing dressed up as  
46 neighborhood revitalization and now I am seeing commercial corridor  
47 revitalization aspirations potentially decoupled from the essential, and harder  
48 work of creating healthy communities.

49  
50 This may all seem a bit tangential to your work but because it is a part of a  
51 system, it is central.

52  
53  
54 Unless we are going to do away with a market economy, we must be intentional  
55 about creating neighborhoods of choice and come to terms with the harsher

1 realities of what happens when a market economy comes in contact with a  
2 market political system.

- 3
- 4 - We must be intentional about generating neighborhood health. We must
- 5 become skilled at identifying the adaptive challenges our cities face.
- 6 - We must obtain a strong understanding of which tools to use when, and
- 7 how to use them.
- 8 - The field that has repeatedly chosen housing over neighborhoods but for
- 9 political and practical reasons has tried to cloak such choices in language
- 10 and programs that imply that we are revitalizing neighborhoods is the
- 11 same field now runs the risk of lurching towards commercial corridor
- 12 revitalization as the next best thing.

13

14 Great, indeed, is a different kettle of fish than good.

----- PAUSE -----

I see three fundamental signature qualities of being good.

First, a community development field that is good means well. It is well-intentioned. It aims to do good things. Without being well-intentioned there is little if anything to differentiate us from the private sector that has no conscience.

Second, a community development field that is good tries really hard. It works hard to solve problems. It is committed and demonstrates a high level of dedication. Lacking enough dedication, we would have waived the white flag a long time ago.

Third, a community development field that is good is persistent. It keeps at it. It is determined. It stays the course. It is not a fair weather friend. Without persistence, problems don't get worked over thoroughly enough.

When you're good, which we are, we make progress but not as much as possible. Success is frequently defined by the situation we have today compared to the situation when we found it. Our field is good, which means we learn by doing. We are activity focused and we measure outputs. All of this is good but it is not all there is.

When you're great, **by contrast**, you have all the attributes of being good, but you also possess three crucial qualities that differentiate you.

**A great community development field is self-examining and self-correcting because it is relentlessly, self-critical.** It becomes second nature to be self-critical. Great means more than tolerating dissent from within, it means soliciting it, listening to it, stroking it for clues about the tasks being avoided, values being compromised, aspirations being unmet, and new challenges on the horizon that may not be seen by a status quo with blind spots born from the institutional need for self preservation.

**Second, a great community development is flexible. It adapts.** This is a nuanced point. At first glance our field may appear to have been adapting all along, first tackling the shortage of production money in the mid 1980s with the creation of syndication organizations, later modifying organizations to respond to the challenge of homelessness, later still retooling with money for retail activities, and so on. I regard these shifts not as indications of flexibility and adaptive capacity but rather examples of misidentifying the problem and following up with use of the wrong tools. If the problem to be solved is homelessness and the approach that has merit is transitional housing, and you have staff on board that understand the problem and the response, then undertaking a new activity like transitional housing that might not initially be part of your mission can make sense and illustrate the right kind of flexibility. On the other hand, if you aren't sure homelessness in your neighborhood is a problem or even if it is you have no experience with transitional housing and yet apply for transitional housing dollars in order to keep your organization afloat, your efforts may illustrate a shift for the wrong reasons. The point here is not so much to you individual Main Street managers so much as to our field as whole: let's be sure commercial corridor revitalization is the right problem and that we have the right tools and are getting ready to unleash those tools for the right reasons, not just because its sexy to do so, or might generate fees. Let's be sure we don't build a whole

1 infrastructure and absorb an enormous learning curve within one CDC here and  
2 there to redo just one 150,000 square foot shopping center in the middle of a  
3 anemic trade area.

4  
5 **Third, a great community development field continually exercises leadership.** It  
6 focuses on the tasks at hand, to be sure, but it pushes the larger society to clarify  
7 its values, to prioritize, to make hard choices that invariably may disappoint  
8 some. A great community development field itself grows the adaptive capacity  
9 of the larger society by ripening issues like racism as a component of consumer  
10 preference in the housing market, drawing attention to the inequities of  
11 settlement patterns, and forcing society to reconcile competing values like  
12 competition and choice and capital and consequence, a reconciliation that  
13 cannot by definition make everyone happy. It doesn't succumb to the pressure  
14 to have answers because it knows leadership is not so much about showing the  
15 way as pushing others to clarify values, make hard choices, prioritize, and adapt.

16  
17 Great community development – intentional community development, instead  
18 of learning by doing, does what it knows how to do, avoids unintentional  
19 consequences, keeps the customer in sight, is market oriented, flexible, and  
20 above all, asks and asks again key questions.

- 21
- 22 1. What problem are you trying to solve?
- 23 2. Is it the right problem?
- 24 3. How do you know?
- 25 4. What tools are you using?
- 26 5. Are they the right tools?
- 27 6. Do we know how to use them?
- 28 7. What are the outcomes we're producing?
- 29

30 Great community development, in the face of doing all this, never neglects the  
31 task as hand. And your task, the task at the center of your Urban Forum, is  
32 commercial revitalization.

33  
34 So I would ask you:

- 35
- 36 1. What problem are you trying to solve? Are you trying to clean up a  
37 decrepit strip? Are you trying to bring in services to an underserved  
38 community? Are you trying to get rid of liquor stores? Be very very very  
39 specific. What problem are you trying to solve?
- 40 2. Is it the right problem? Is your problem the liquor store who sells singles  
41 or the buyers who buy them and then trash the neighborhood? Is your  
42 problem the lack of a good grocery store or the fact that a good grocery  
43 store is but five minutes away?
- 44 3. How do you know? What is your source of data? Have you done the  
45 point of sale surveys? Have you obtained the right market analysis?  
46 Have to surveyed the competitive retail surroundings?
- 47 4. What tools are you using? Are you relying on generalized desire for  
48 different stores as the equivalent of an analysis that tells you that more  
49 square footage is supportable?
- 50 5. Are the tools you're using the right ones? Are you buying market studies  
51 without knowing how to shape them? Are you having the data properly  
52 analyzed? Are you using demographic data but not evaluating it  
53 alongside a land use plan?
- 54 6. Do you know how to do an inventory of the business in your community?  
55 Do you know how to calculate a trade area? How to grow your trade

1 area? What the consequences of changing your trade area might be? Or  
2 what the consequences of failing to change the composition of your trade  
3 area might be? What will all this do to your organization?  
4 7. What are trying to achieve? Are you willing to see the liquor store go but  
5 in the process lose the barber? Or are you trying to lose the pawn shop  
6 and get a getter grocery store and keep the barber and do it all with the  
7 same composition of people in your community?  
8

9 In closing, let me urge you to adopt your own standards for what constitutes  
10 great community development to you. But let me also give you a framework for  
11 doing so.  
12

13 Whatever great community development means to you, your work must result  
14 in healthy – not merely healthier than they once were – communities. Your  
15 work must result in creating neighborhoods that can compete for investments,  
16 that is neighborhoods of choice. Whether your work is rental housing or job  
17 training or commercial corridor revitalization or home ownership development,  
18 your work must measurably contribute to a greater whole – the greater whole  
19 being genuine community health so that the neighborhoods you are working in  
20 become places where it makes sense to invest.  
21

22 Our system needs to move from good to great, we can, and your participation in  
23 this meeting on the role of commercial revitalization is indicative of our  
24 potential.  
25

26 Ultimately, no one can tell you how to become great. But this much is true, if  
27 you want to move from being applauded for being good to being genuinely  
28 valuable by virtue of being great, you have to power to do so.  
29

30 It often begins with a measure of dissent and intentionality and as one of my  
31 mentors often said and wrote, takes no more than starting with a thoughtful  
32 series of questions, so long as they are the right questions.  
33

34 ----- PAUSE -----  
35

36 I can't tell you how to be great. I can tell you that you have it in you to become  
37 great, because you are already good, at times very good, and the seeds for great  
38 are contained within your dedication to craft and values, one of which is your  
39 unwillingness to mutely accept the status quo.  
40

41 Great means legacy. The HOME program is not worthy of a legacy. The Low  
42 Income Housing Tax Credit is not worthy of a legacy. The whole up until now is  
43 not worthy of a legacy. Make your work great.  
44