Bringing back
the settlement house

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In St. Louis, in a poor black neighborhood of housing projects, brick rowhouses, and vacant lots north of downtown and aside the Mississippi, residents have access to a network of help that money can't buy. Money, in fact, is not accepted. To obtain assistance—someone to fix a car, watch a baby, move furniture, or stay with an infirm parent—residents must themselves contribute a service of their own to the “resource exchange.” Residents who aren’t well enough to make “deposits,” but who may well need to make withdrawals, can gain credits when volunteers from suburban churches and synagogues contribute labor in their name. It is a system that involves more than 4,000 people, 70 percent with annual incomes below $10,000. They keep track of their “balance” through a computer network with its own ATM-style cards, good at ter-

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minals at local stores, designed with the help of volunteer computer industry consultants.

The most noteworthy aspect of the Member Organized Resource Exchange (MORE) is not the idea itself but the context from which it arose. Developed without public funds and designed by a board of directors on which poor residents sit with suburban volunteers, MORE is run by Grace Hill Neighborhood Services, which organizes activities as diverse as exercise classes, an adult education center, and a summer camp, sometimes under contract to government, sometimes not. Loosely affiliated with the Episcopal Church, Grace Hill Neighborhood Services—most often called simply "Grace Hill"—dates from 1902 and refers to itself as a settlement house. It is a surviving member of a movement that was once a major part of the American approach to improving the prospects of the poor and life in poor neighborhoods, but that is today largely considered in historical terms to the extent it is recalled at all.

Known best for its role in the successful assimilation of Eastern European immigrants from 1890 to 1930, the social-settlement movement has survived, albeit in reduced form. In 1913, a publication called the *Handbook of Settlements* listed some 413 settlements in thirty-two states; helping the poor and poor neighborhoods was a high-profile cause that attracted both money and volunteers from the ranks of the affluent. The movement leaders included such prominent settlement figures as Jane Addams of Chicago's Hull House, who won the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize, Lillian Wald of New York's Henry Street Settlement, and pioneering sociologist Robert Woods of Boston's South End House. All believed that settlements—also known today as neighborhood or community centers—should be fixtures of American life. Today, however, the term "settlement" has become obscure and survivors are spread thin: United Neighborhood Houses of New York, one of three remaining city-based settlement federations, estimates there are now 300 settlements nationwide in eighty cities.

On one level, settlements fit well with current social-welfare trends. They often combine public and private funds, as well as professionals and volunteers; their activities are designed at the neighborhood level, in keeping with the trend toward decentralizing social services; and they are a private, nonprofit, audited
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means of providing the kind of neighborhood amenities that can reduce the sense of distance between rich and poor. Yet in many ways settlements provide an alternative to current social policy. Unlike categorical social-welfare programs—job training, mental-health counseling, drug and alcohol treatment, and so forth—the settlement exists neither to treat specific ills nor to serve only those identified as troubled. It aspires instead to be a recreational, educational, and cultural institution, a community living room or gym.

According to settlement-movement theory, anyone in a neighborhood—not merely the AFDC-eligible or those in a "target population"—should be able to use the settlement. Members of problem groups might use it simply because they live nearby; they will be helped through participation in community life, goes the argument, rather than by direct counseling. It is true that those settlements that have survived have had to become adept grant-seekers and nonprofit "service providers" to those with identifiable problems. This helps finance their core activities (recreation, tutoring, social clubs), for which there is generally no state support. But traditionally (as social-work historian Malcolm Bush has noted), settlements have focused on treating the poor as citizens, not clients.

**Historical perspectives**

To the extent the settlement movement has been examined at all in recent years, it has been misunderstood even by those who praise it. The movement began when a handful of nineteenth-century idealists emulated the British example of affluent volunteers taking up residence ("settling") in poor neighborhoods. Historians of the movement have emphasized its contribution to Progressive-era and New Deal reforms, ranging from the organizing rights of labor (Hull House sheltered Eugene Debs in the wake of the 1894 Pullman Strike), child-labor legislation, improved factory conditions, welfare "pensions" for single mothers, so-called model tenements and, ultimately, public housing. Settlements not only were effective advocates of such efforts but pioneered the systematic investigation of the conditions of the poor. (*Poverty*, the landmark 1902 treatise by Robert Hunter, then head resident of New York's University Settlement, is a classic of the genre.) Historians also note that settlements exposed many who went on
to prominent political service (Harry Hopkins, Eleanor Roosevelt) to the difficulties of life in poor city neighborhoods.

Such praise portrays settlements as a kind of enlightened precursor of the welfare state. It implies that they have outlived their usefulness, and suggests that they should either fade away or adopt the overriding goal of lobbying for new public anti-poverty initiatives. Indeed, one of the few histories of settlements in the modern era, Judith Trollander’s *Professionalism and Social Change*, takes as one of its major themes the unfortunate decline of settlements’ “reform mission.”

Other observers take settlements as they have evolved within the context of the contemporary social-welfare system to be the settlement model as originally conceived. Since settlements often have tended to become nonprofit providers of a variety of programs under one roof, authors Peter Edelman and Beryl Radin view them as vehicles for the improved coordination of services like teenage-pregnancy prevention, prenatal care, and family mental-health counseling. “A settlement house,” they write, “is a multiservice center by another name.”

**Building community**

But this emphasis on delivery of services and the promotion of reform overlooks core aspects of the historic settlement movement. These characteristics persist today, albeit with less visibility, and might be of great benefit should they again gain currency. Historically, the purposes of the settlement movement reflected desire both to assist the poor and to bind the social classes in a common purpose. For Jane Addams, the movement’s visionary and theoretician, it represented a way to hold American democracy together at a time, not entirely unlike our own, when newcomers without knowledge of democratic institutions flooded the cities. Settlements were to bring the affluent and the poor in contact with one another by attracting idealistic, college-aged, upper-middle-class youths to settle in poor neighborhoods or, at least, to volunteer some time. Addams was under no illusion that benefits would all flow in one direction. She herself identified with those potential settlement volunteers whose sense of “uselessness hangs heavily upon them” and who sought an outlet for idealism. But the settlement pioneers did not shrink
from the belief that the poor would gain from contact with those of greater privilege.

"The American settlement," wrote Addams in an 1899 paper for the American Academy of Social Science, "has represented not so much a sense of duty of the privileged toward the unprivileged ... as a desire to equalize through social effort those results which superior opportunity may have given the possessor." As it grew, the settlement movement sought such "equalization" in two ways. First, it attempted to expand the horizons of the poor (particularly poor children) as a precondition for upward mobility. Second, it tried to design activities and use the influence of settlement leaders to improve the conditions of daily life in poor districts.

The settlement interest in reform grew out of direct involvement in neighborhood life: Long before she sought pensions for single mothers, Addams agitated for improved garbage pickup on Chicago's West Side (to the point of running for garbage inspector herself). Settlement leaders' interest in reform should not, however, mask the extensive daily offerings of settlements. The settlements were a major presence in their neighborhoods, calling on contributions from large numbers of volunteers and, in time, core groups of paid staff. Much, though far from all, of their work focused on children and youth. Settlements provided activities of the sort that nineteenth-century social-welfare pioneer Charles Loring Brace, founder of New York's Children's Aid Society, was fond of calling "formative not reformative." Settlements brought organized arts, crafts, and music to poor children. At Hull House, Benny Goodman got his first clarinet.

Settlement leaders were not shy about seeking to transmit middle-class values. In Philadelphia, the offerings of the College Settlement Association (so named because it drew volunteers from elite Eastern colleges) commonly included a "penny provident bank," to encourage children to save and "hero clubs," in which members would discuss the lives of great persons who had risen from humble circumstances and other heroes of American history.

The settlement houses provided structure and activities for large numbers of people in poor neighborhoods. In a single week in January 1904, 1,680 children and teenagers made use of Pittsburgh's Kingsley House. Many young people belonged to
settlement social clubs with a strong sense of group identity. Even today, club members from Boston’s West End House, many in their seventies and eighties, continue to stage regular reunions. Nor has this tradition been confined to white ethnic immigrant groups. In Boston, one-time members of a settlement-house boys club in the Roxbury black ghetto stage reunions as well. Former members of the “Exquisites” include Carl McCall, who would go on to become president of the New York City Board of Education. (He is remembered by club leaders as a truant who frequented a local pool hall before joining the settlement-house club.)

Although settlement activities were designed to serve a geographically bounded area, activities were not confined to the immediate neighborhood, both in terms of who took an interest in them and where they took place. At Kingsley House, thirteen residents were assisted in 1904 by no fewer than eighty “non-resident volunteers.” So popular was the idea of direct involvement in the lives of the poor through such institutions that the College Settlement Association, with settlements in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, had to turn some volunteers away. In the summer, thanks to its own endowment and the financial support of more than 900 individual donors, Kingsley sent children and their parents for a week of summer camp—which the settlement called its “country home.” Settlements tried their hand at adult education as well, staging evening lectures meant to popularize academic disciplines. All in all, this was the settlement movement’s golden age, a time when improving day-to-day life in poor neighborhoods was a cause with a high profile among the well-to-do, when settlements were well known beyond the neighborhoods they served, and when affluent volunteers served both as residents and as board members.

Settlement leaders were by no means unaware that some of those who appeared at the door were troubled, or that ignorance or bad habits held them back. It was not the settlement way, however, to define its neighbors in terms of their problems and seek to enroll them in programs organized around various forms of dysfunction. The settlement approach, rather, was indirect. In “A Function of the Social Settlement,” Jane Addams recalls how Hull House dealt with a group of Italian women with “underdeveloped” children:
It has been possible to teach some of these women to feed their children oatmeal instead of tea-soaked bread, but it has been done, not by statement at all but by a series of gay little Sunday morning breakfasts given to a group of them in a Hull House nursery. A nutritious diet was thus substituted for an inferior one by a social method. Knowledge was applied but scarcely as the statistician would have applied it.

The professionalization of compassion

With the rise of the professional social worker in the 1920s the settlement approach began to lose favor. In a revealing illustration accompanying her 1930 essay “Possibilities of the Art of Helping,” Mary Richmond, generally credited with pioneering social work as a profession, overtly casts the settlement movement as a precursor of psychiatric and family-welfare social work. In that essay, Richmond mapped what has, in many ways, become the contemporary system of individual assistance for the poor. “Poverty,” she wrote,
is not a political or even a social status, to be abolished or rescinded by an amendment to the Constitution or by a presidential proclamation. You cannot ‘lay the axe to its root’ because it has a thousand roots. It is like some noxious weed, which can be eradicated in time with patient labor, but only after cultivating and enriching the soil in which it now grows. Prevention is another of those words which has been much abused. Who that is familiar with the history of the tuberculosis campaigns in this country can ever place ‘prevention’ and ‘cure’ in antithesis to each other again? The two processes interplay at every turn, and cure, in and of itself, is a form of prevention, for we learn how to prevent by honestly trying to cure. In other words, prevention is one of the end results of a series of processes which include research, individual treatment, public education, legislation and then back to the administrative adaptations which make the intent of legislation real again in the individual case [emphasis added].

The logic of Richmond’s analysis gives rise to a profession of social-work specialists, each with an understanding of the various roots of poverty, with a calling to individual treatment in fields designated by legislation and supported by research. Such an approach does not necessarily compete with the settlement house model; in practice, however, the settlement style, with its use of volunteers and emphasis on group activities and recreation, would
pale in contrast to a paid, credentialed, apparently scientific helping profession. Beginning in the 1930s, settlement residents and volunteers were replaced by treatment professionals. And just as the advent of income-support programs, whatever their merits, undermined private charity and mutual-relief efforts, so too did the rise of the social-work professional undermine the settlement as envisioned by Addams, Wald, et. al., notwithstanding the value of individual counseling in many circumstances. As Judith Trollander has written,

the new professionals saw themselves and their work differently. They usually declined to live in the settlement house. They tended to think of the house neighbors as clients, in effect telling them, 'We're helping you because we have M.S.W.'s, not because we're your neighbors.' In place of spontaneity and being available around the clock, they made appointments and treatment plans. Instead of seeking to do with the neighborhood, they sought to do for the neighborhood.

Settlements lost their community focus to the point that, as noted by Herbert Gans in The Urban Villagers, a Boston settlement did not oppose the leveling of the city's West End for an urban renewal program of luxury high-rises. Nor did the 1960s War on Poverty, with its emphasis on the involvement of the poor in running organizations to improve poor neighborhoods, signal a settlement revival. The theoreticians of the community-action program saw it instead as a vehicle through which the poor could be organized to confront the powers-that-be, a sharp contrast to the model of inter-class cooperation and transmission of middle-class values to the poor that the settlement represented.

The settlement legacy

The most impressive and telling aspect of American settlements, then, may be the fact that the movement has survived at all. Many individual settlements, of course, have not, and only a few settlement-style institutions have been established in the post-New Deal era. (Some are remnants of the War on Poverty's community-action programs; at least one, Cleveland's Harvard Community Services Center, was a spontaneous invention of its lower-middle-class black neighborhood.) Many settlement houses founded around the turn of the century have managed to persist by adapting to the changed social-policy environment. The ad-
venture of government-funded child care and senior citizen meals programs, for instance, virtually ensures that during the morning hours all settlements will include such programs. Similarly, many settlements now use state funds to run drug-treatment and mental-health programs. Although settlements traditionally were not sources of charity, today’s settlements often serve as distributors of surplus food or agents for emergency fuel assistance.

Still, despite the changes that have come with the last sixty years of social policy, contemporary settlements are not wholly different from those of Jane Addams’s era. Many classic characteristics of the settlement movement endure:

Settlements appeal to a broad cross-section of citizens—not only those with specific problems—within a geographically defined area. Notwithstanding the general push for government social policy toward programs defined around problems, settlements continue to offer their neighborhoods activities that help the healthy remain so. A review of the activities offered by fourteen settlements in eleven cities finds that no settlement defines more than half its programs in terms of specific problems or problem populations. Thus the Morristown, New Jersey, Neighborhood House offers not just anti-drug programs but a “homework” club open to all. Omaha’s Social Settlement Association offers not just “professional counseling” but “friendship” clubs for groups ranging from “latchkey children” to adults. The Harvard Community Services Center in Cleveland not only offers a program for teen parents but provides meeting space to the local Republican (!) ward committee and sponsors social clubs for youths from specific streets. The Friendly House in Worcester, Massachusetts, is available for weddings. Settlements also often offer physical facilities (gymnasiums, meeting rooms, and auditoriums).

There is some evidence that the settlement ethic of helping the community at large is strong enough that even a high percentage of government funding does not deter interest in offering programs for those who are not in a specific “target population.” Thus, although Grace Hill in St. Louis receives more than 80 percent of its funds from government sources—primarily for activities atypical for a settlement, such as operation of a community health center and management of a public housing project—it nonetheless developed, without public funds, the “resource
exchange” program for its community at large. My review of programs offered by the thirty-six settlement houses of New York City found that only 84 of 410 programs (20 percent) appear to be problem-based, even though the settlements as a group receive 80 percent of their funds from various levels of government. (Of course, a settlement may run a few large problem-based and grant-funded programs, supplemented by many more small programs open to all.)

Settlements, to a significant extent, represent a privately funded stream of U.S. social policy. Although settlements in some cities rely heavily on government, many receive virtually no public funds. The average level of government support for settlements in the eleven cities I surveyed was 33.4 percent. The source of private funds is significant as well. In most cases, a settlement’s major source of funding is the local United Way and is thus a reflection of a community consensus that such institutions are of value. In addition, settlements typically charge modest fees for programs (e.g., a season’s pass for use of a basketball court, or a materials fee for an art class) and thus must pass a sort of market test in their immediate neighborhood as well.

Settlements have boards of directors that link residents of poor neighborhoods with representatives of the general metropolitan area. The time has passed when wealthy benefactors comprised the sole membership and funding source for settlements. (One settlement official calls this the “Lady Bountiful” era.) The demand for “maximum feasible participation” of the poor, engendered by the War on Poverty, has led to neighborhood representation on settlement boards. At the same time, however, persons of means have remained involved. Mrs. Felix Rohatyn serves as board chairman of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association in New York, Cyrus Vance is a board member of East Harlem’s Union Settlement, and Nancy Bush Ellis, sister of George Bush, is a board member of Boston’s United South End Settlements. Settlement boards do not link only the very rich and the very poor, however. More commonly, middle-class professionals serve on boards. The Social Settlement of Omaha counts the neighborhood school principal as its board chairman; Cleveland’s Harvard Community Services Center board includes a local judge. Moreover, settlements frequently have institutional relationships with local businesses, churches, and foundations.
## A recent calendar of events at Cleveland's Harvard Community Services Center

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### Key
- AARP-IRS = Income Tax for Senior Citizens
- ICC = Inner Church Council
- ECST = East Cleveland Straight Talk
- KKASHIFF = High School Fashion Show Rehearsal
- WRAAA = Western Reserve Agency on Aging
- CAREB = Cleveland Area Real Estate Brokers
- CSU = Central State University
- NAREA = National Association of Real Estate Appraisers
- NABSW = National Association of Black Social Workers
Louisville Central Community Centers receives contributions from major local employers—Humana Hospital, Kroger Stores, and United Parcel Service—as well as a local dry cleaner and the New Zion Baptist Church.

Churches often use settlements as a kind of secular arm. The Friends Neighborhood Guild in North Philadelphia continues to rely both on Quaker funds and Quaker meeting donations of labor and materials. At the Loring-Nicollet-Bethlehem Community Center in Minneapolis, fourteen of thirty-three board members serve as representatives of eight different churches.

Links to the general community are even more evident in those few instances when a city's settlements form a federation, through which they exchange program ideas and may jointly raise funds. Thus, the Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association, a federation of twenty-seven settlements and neighborhood centers (the terms are often used interchangeably), has attracted financial support from one of the city's major employers, BP America.

Although they now have both administrative and program staffs, settlements continue to use significant numbers of volunteers. Virtually all settlements make some use of volunteers; many have a paid staff member whose task it is to coordinate volunteer labor. Bridgeport's Hall Neighborhood House names a volunteer of the year. At Cleveland's Harvard Community Services Center, high school students from a wealthy adjoining suburb volunteer as tutors. At Central Community House in Columbus, nine black law students from Capital University volunteer in the after-school program. At Boston's West End House, college students run after-school art classes—hanging impressionist prints to be studied by the mixed group of black, Hispanic, and Asian children who frequent the house daily. For many settlements, volunteers are a significant source of labor. The Loring-Nicollet-Bethlehem Community Center in Minneapolis valued its 1990 volunteer help at $15,000 and made use of 438 volunteers.

Do settlements work?

Almost by definition, it is difficult to assess the value of such efforts. In this, settlements are again out of step with the trend in American social policy toward merging social-welfare initiatives and social science. One can quantify the number of welfare
mothers who, after a training program, are able to join the work force, but there are no obvious ways to quantify the meaning of after-school recreation for teenagers. Often, one falls back on anecdote and impression. For instance, the director of Friendly House in Worcester, Massachusetts, believes that the outlook of the unemployed adults who play on the house softball team has changed since a local physician became a regular member. Officials at the Greater Cleveland Neighborhood Centers Association are convinced that that city's Collinwood Community Services Center, situated on a tense racial dividing line, has, by offering a neutral site for meetings, prevented race-related incidents from becoming more serious. The director of Boston's Lena Park Community Center proudly notes that rival gang members from nearby housing projects use the center's gym without incident; the center serves as a safe haven in the neighborhood.

Moreover, there is reason beyond anecdote to believe that traditional settlement programs have value. Educators Shirley Brice Heath and Milbrey Wallin McLaughlin have, in assessing the characteristics of successful youth programs, described something akin to the traditional settlement philosophy. "What makes the enterprises that succeed different from those that fail to attract and hold the interest of teenagers? ... What they have in common is their diversity and their insistence that members feel that they belong to an intimate group.... [They] envelop teens in a socializing community that holds them responsible for their own actions." Settlements, like Boys and Girls Clubs, are still willing to use recreation as a draw to pull youths into just such "socializing communities." (As Angel Ortiz-Soto of Philadelphia's Dixon House has observed, "Kids are not going to pound down the door to be taught social skills.") John Kixmiller of Brooklyn's Sunset Park Family Life Center directs an extensive group-based after-school arts and recreation program held in a neighborhood middle school, in which neighborhood teenagers go on to become leaders of groups for younger children. He echoes Heath and McLaughlin in asserting that there is value to what he views as the neglected art of "group work."

"The group," writes Kixmiller, provides a cohesive matrix, a step removed from the original family, to help work the tasks of maturation. The skill of the workers goes into building a group that reflects the personal meaning of its
members. Creative projects, athletics, social relations, a deepening relationship with authority ... are all pieces of the personal meaning in the inner life of group members.

Kixmiller is apt to stop basketball games to ask players what exactly provoked a near-fight and how it might be avoided. Philadelphia's Ortiz-Soto notes that even mundane projects, like asking team members to find a way to obtain new uniforms, have great value. "If the players decide they want new uniforms," Ortiz-Soto has observed, "they will have to learn to organize themselves, plan fund-raising activities and carry them out."

The power of such groups is such in some settlement clubs that, in the case of Boston's West End House, not only do "alumni" gather for reunions but they have become the chief benefactors of a new generation of poor children, erecting a new gym and pool complex in a neighborhood not even their own.

**New approaches**

In addition to traditional recreational and cultural offerings, settlement houses continue to incubate original approaches both to helping poor individuals and to improving life in poorer neighborhoods. In response to the NCAA's academic requirements for athletic eligibility, Boston's Lena Park Community Center has forged a relationship with the Stanley Kaplan SAT coaching firm to tutor both athletes and non-athletes. The LEAP (Linking Educators, Athletes, and Parents) program strives specifically to place its graduates at historically black schools in the South, and leads a popular bus tour to these schools each spring. In Queens, the Forest Hills Community House sends "outreach workers" to known neighborhood gang "hot spots," seeking to draw those on the street into the settlement; through its Neighborhood Intergenerational Chore and Escort Service it hires teenagers to provide household help for the elderly. In a neighborhood in which teenagers are apt to be black and the elderly white, the effort reduces fear among those who have watched the area change.

Beyond specific programs and activities, the idea of a revival or expansion of the settlement movement can be broadly attractive to those who may otherwise be sharply split on social policy issues. (It is worth noting that the United Neighborhood House of New York, the New York settlement federation, has success-
fully sought funds from sources spanning the ideological spectrum, including both the liberal Ford Foundation and the conservative DeWitt Wallace Foundation.) Those who believe that the prospects for upward mobility of the poor can be enhanced by acculturation—by introduction to middle-class norms—can find value in clubs and tutoring. Others, who believe the prospects for bringing the poor into the economic mainstream are bleak notwithstanding individual effort, are alive to the ways in which settlements can at least make life in poor neighborhoods safer and more pleasant. If there is a cultural assumption that unites these diverse efforts—and links today’s settlements with those of the past—it is the implicit belief that, notwithstanding the development of the welfare state, those with middle-class means and values should disseminate those values in society through direct, personal involvement.

This does not imply that settlements in minority neighborhoods will necessarily have white staff and volunteers. Many contemporary settlements are led by blacks in black neighborhoods, for instance. A board of directors that draws from the neighborhood as well as from the city at large affirms the sense that settlements are community institutions. Such boards are, moreover, inherently non-confrontational: Members have the interest of the settlement in common and work together on specific projects. Thus, at Grace Hill in St. Louis, McDonnell Douglas executives work alongside former welfare mothers to plan the MORE project. In some ways, such encounters are at the heart of the settlement idea. Personal contact across the economic classes provides the poor with access to the network of casual connections from which they are generally isolated, as well as a sense that others have an interest in their situation. One can imagine an encounter at the settlement leading to a summer job for someone’s son, perhaps even a college recommendation. Food stamps, drug treatment, and job-training programs do not do the same work of forging some sense of community across geographic and economic lines.

**Prospects for a settlement revival**

What, then, are the obstacles to a settlement house revival? Is there a government role to be played? Perhaps the greatest obstacle to reviving settlements is society’s tendency to devalue
their common sense approach. In a 1988 newsletter of the Philadelphia Federation of Settlements, for instance, Claire Berkowitz cited as conventional wisdom the idea that recreation programs are "frivoulous." Such a view, she wrote, is "inhibiting and dangerous to the provision of social services in our neighborhoods." The tendency to undervalue recreational and cultural programs manifests itself in the difficulty settlements have in attracting what they call "core support"—financial support for their central administration and non-categorical activities. There has never been a federal "Settlement House Support Act" or anything akin to it. Settlements have survived by embracing some categorical programs, adopting government-funded programs (e.g., day care) consonant with the settlement approach, and by finding private funds to support recreational and cultural programs, as well as original, non-categorical ideas like the MORE exchange. Settlements have been handicapped, however, even in the competition for private charity dollars. As locally based causes, they have been included in city-wide United Way drives. Settlements as a form have thus receded behind generic United Way appeals. The settlement ideal, in which those of means play a direct role in poor neighborhoods, has taken a back seat to causes that have a higher public profile, such as the environment or disease research.

It may be, then, that the first step toward expanding or stabilizing existing settlements must come from more aggressive fundraising outside the United Way umbrella. Settlement federations in Cleveland and New York have successfully raised corporate and foundation funds which they, in turn, disburse to members. Local United Way chapters and settlements themselves should seek to put the settlement back in the public eye as an institution whose name is widely known and whose mission is understood. A 1950 Minneapolis advertisement, featuring engaging pictures of children and families, cut to the heart of the matter. "What Happens in Settlements?" it asked. The answer: "Camps, Athletics, Club Activities, Special Interest Groups, Old Age Programs, Nursery School. Product: Healthier, Happier People and Better Neighborhoods."

There are, however, any number of poorer neighborhoods that lack any settlement-like institution. Can new settlements be started today? Two stories suggest that it is possible but
difficult—and that initial capital investment is the most difficult hurdle. Cleveland's Harvard Community Services Center was opened in 1968 when residents of the surrounding lower-middle-class black neighborhood were able to obtain a campus-like group of buildings that had formerly housed a convent. With the gift of the solid brick buildings, the community board was able to obtain foundation and grant funding to operate; the Center also obtained a federal grant to add a large auditorium. Today, the Center has become so central to the community that a new police substation was opened in a Center building. In Boston, the West End House was able to build a cheerful new $1.6 million gymnasium/swimming pool/club-rooms complex in the city's Allston-Brighton neighborhood but only with the help of a windfall it realized when its previous quarters in a valuable location were purchased by a major hospital. The $400,000 from the sale of real estate was matched by $400,000 from "alumni," as well as $40,000 raised in a door-to-door campaign in the neighborhood. Today, some ninety kids a day use the club after school and on Saturday, whether for basketball, homework, or community service.

The government's role

The Cleveland and Boston stories both reflect community demand for settlement activities—and the key role of happy coincidences in allowing new settlement complexes to be created. In contrast, there are also many settlements whose quarters are limited and dilapidated. (Boston's Lena Park Community Center, for example, has had to shut down parts of its athletic facilities for lack of capital improvement funds.) These conditions may argue for a government role in providing capital grants to build, expand, or renovate settlement facilities. (One could imagine surplus schools serving the purpose.) As Mickey Kaus observes in *The End of Equality*, good public facilities—whether parks, swimming pools, or gyms—can reduce the sense of impoverishment experienced by the poor. The isolation of the poor would be reduced even more should such facilities exist in the settlement-house context. In the case of new settlements, it would seem best to award grants to groups with a demonstrated ability to raise funds from other sources. Such groups should also have boards of directors that combine residents of poor neighbor-
hoods with representatives of a city's political, business, and cultural leadership.

It is tempting to call for legislation to revive the settlement movement. It would be a mistake, however, for government, at whatever level, to wholly fund settlements, new or old, on its own, as it did with the community-action and Model Cities programs of the 1960s. The advent of government operating funds for settlements might well drive out private charitable support, along with all the beneficial community relationships that settlements engender.

It may be possible, though, to direct incremental public funds to settlements without a major new legislative initiative and without driving away private donors. Some current federal programs might, by simply mentioning settlements as potential recipients of funds, allow for settlements to extend their reach. The National and Community Service Act (for which $77 million was appropriated in 1991) might, for instance, allow settlements to gain staff for specific projects, or short-term programs, from the ranks of "youth corps" members (aged sixteen to twenty-five) supported by the $5,000 annual stipends for which the Act provides. (Boston's City Year program, a model for such youth corps, currently operates two after-school programs in low-income neighborhoods.) The Act currently provides for corps members to work in such locales as "hospitals, libraries, day care centers and nonprofit social service organizations." Although settlements seem to fall within this rubric, amendment of the Act to specifically mention and define settlement houses could be a significant step in bringing the term back into general conversation. The same could be true for the Community Development Block Grant program, which could be a vehicle for directing capital-improvement monies and some operating funds to settlements. One could imagine small grants to a revived United Neighborhood Centers of America organization—perhaps, in the immigrant-era tradition, to develop national citizenship programs to complement offerings targeted at specific ethnic groups.

A bridge between the classes

No matter what new sources of public support might come to the aid of the settlement movement, however, it is unlikely that it will return in its purest form—i.e., as a set of general
centers for community life that do not include special programs for target populations. The bias in favor of problem-based programs is great in professional schools of social work. Too great a share of the revenue of too many settlements today is based in such programs to imagine them being pushed out en masse. This is not necessarily unwelcome, but it is problematic if settlement directors themselves devalue their institutions' recreational and cultural mission. As long as there is not a preponderance of therapeutic programs at a settlement—which presents the risk that the settlement will be stigmatized in the neighborhood—it may well be beneficial for those seeking help with specific problems also to be part of community life in general, where the focus is not on problems alone. Should new settlements spring up, however, they need not incorporate therapeutic programs in order to be of help to those with specific difficulties. The director of Boston's West End House—which offers only recreational and educational programs—nonetheless sits on a board of neighborhood social service "providers" and makes referrals for children and families.

Thus, revival of the settlement ideal does not imply a specific mix of programs. Rather, it would recognize that there is a need for a vehicle to link the social classes and to offer neighborhood amenities for the poor in ways that income redistribution and therapeutic programs by themselves do not.

Settlements offer an historically proven way of bringing some of the resources of the affluent to bear on poor neighborhoods, of providing organization in disorganized communities. The settlement house is not the only such vehicle one could imagine—nor the only institution that, historically, has met such needs. Traditional, but similarly devalued programs such as the Police Athletic League, answer some of the same needs, as do the social programs of churches. YMCA/YWCAs, Catholic Youth Organization activities, and Boys and Girls Clubs share many of the attributes of settlements and deserve similar consideration as being more than marginal contributors to creating and preserving a social fabric in troubled neighborhoods.

There may be a growing recognition, outside the remnants of the settlement movement, of the need to find ways to take on such a task beyond categorical programs for the poorest and most troubled. Jimmy Carter, for instance, has recently pro-
posed an entirely new institution—the Atlanta Project—to link the affluent and the poor of Atlanta. "We ought to be helping," Carter has said, "but not in a supercilious, 'I'm better than you' attitude." In similar circumstances, for similar reasons, the settlement movement developed a century ago as just such a bridge between the classes. Rediscovered, it could serve this goal again.