

investment summary

Making Connections White Center/Seattle

For nearly a decade, the Annie E. Casey Foundation has worked with a broad range of partners in White Center/Seattle to demonstrate through the *Making Connections* initiative that when families are strong, outcomes for even the most disadvantaged children will substantially improve.

JULY 2009

Our work in White Center/Seattle and in other sites across the country seeks to help:

- *Families work, earn, and save their way toward self-sufficiency; and*
- *Ensure that their young children are healthy, prepared to succeed in school, and read proficiently by the end of third grade.*

These goals advance a “two-generation” approach—promoting family economic success while simultaneously ensuring that children get a good start in life and at school. Casey’s investments in White Center/Seattle are demonstrating how to achieve these results by strengthening capacity to connect families in this community—home to more than 30,000 residents, including African American and multiple Asian, Hispanic, African, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander immigrant families—to jobs, assets, quality early education, and opportunities for civic engagement and leadership.

Moving forward, White Center/Seattle’s strong focus on using data for learning and accountability, combined with residents, community organizations, public agencies, and funders aligned to advance a “People, Place, and Opportunity” agenda as the best way to achieve better results for children and families, has positioned *Making Connections* to accelerate influence on workforce, education, and social service systems and secure resources to scale up and sustain this work.

A PLATFORM FOR SUCCESS

Through *Making Connections*, broad-based community capacity to mobilize, invest in, and sustain new ways of creating opportunity for children and families has been built and deepened in White Center. This drive to create a vibrant “new normal” has resulted in the following accomplishments:

- *Support for authentic resident engagement and leadership as central to family strengthening and*

Making Connections
White Center/Seattle
Local Management Partner

White Center Community Development

Association (WCCDA) In 2001, White Center’s residents united to stop the decline of their community. They founded the WCCDA to preserve and revitalize one of the most culturally diverse neighborhoods in Seattle. Today, WCCDA pursues three lines of business—family development, neighborhood revitalization, and community building—and works across all sectors to attract new investment, promote economic self-sufficiency, and strengthen White Center’s social and civic fabric.

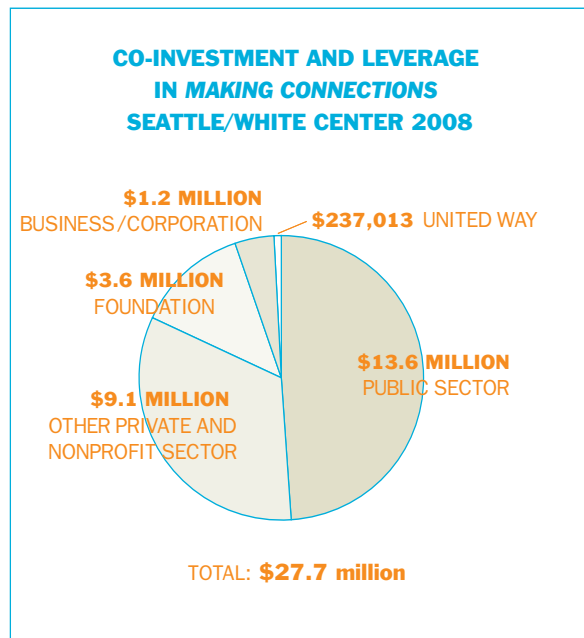
With the support of *Making Connections*, the WCCDA has steadily grown capacity to engage public/private sector stakeholders and resident leaders in result-driven strategic planning, use of good data, regional and state-level policy advocacy, and robust civic engagement.

community revitalization efforts. *Making Connections* has helped support and strengthen the inherent leadership and advocacy skills of the community's diverse population. Starting with formation of a Resident Leadership Council and a series of community summits, *Making Connections* has helped mobilize diverse voices and leadership in White Center, including the formation of a multi-lingual cadre of Trusted Advocates—who now play a crucial role in a range of community change efforts. This work supports social networks and community building as crucial to strengthening families isolated by poverty, language, and cultural barriers.

- *Durable and aligned partnerships.* *Making Connections* convened early on a group of major stakeholders—including Boeing Corporation, United Way of King County, Highline Public Schools, the Department of Social and Health Services, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the King County Housing Authority, and Trusted Advocates—whose support of this work has helped build credibility and leverage substantial resources for the initiative and the community.

- *Early attention to school success.* Community summits placed a priority on assuring that more children succeed in school, and helped mobilize residents behind a school construction bond issue. Support from the Casey Foundation and *Making Connections* for the Community Schools Collaborative helped make White Center Heights Elementary, opened in 2003, the community's first full-fledged community school. In 2005, following two years of improved fourth grade reading and math scores at White Center Heights, the model was expanded to three other elementary schools and now is applied at the middle and high school levels.

- *Strong partnership with the White Center Early Learning Initiative (WCELI).* In part because of the community capacity built by *Making Connections* and local partners, White Center was selected as one of two demonstration sites for the state's eight-year, \$80 million Thrive by Five school readiness campaign supported by the Gates Foundation and other funders. More than 500 residents attended forums and engaged in initiative planning to assure that WCELI is accountable to the community and results in better academic outcomes for children.



- *Leveraging Food Stamp Employment and Training (FSET) funding to strengthen job training and placement efforts.* *Making Connections* played a key role in Washington state's developing and implementing FSET, which has leveraged more than \$8 million in funding during the past three years and made community-based organizations and community colleges key partners in the effort, so that residents get the training and related supports they need.

- *Establishment of a countywide EITC Campaign.* Since starting in White Center in 2002, the number of people who have used free tax preparation and asset building services offered through the campaign—now spearheaded by the United Way of King County—has grown from about 1,000 that year to nearly 14,000 in 2009—returning more than \$6 million in refunds, including \$2 million to White Center alone—thanks to partnerships with community-based organizations that deepened outreach to low-income families.

A TRACK RECORD OF RESULTS

This platform of trusted resident leaders, aligned institutional partners, influential demonstrations of effective strategies, and use of good data to measure

progress has helped achieve significant results for children and families in White Center/Seattle:

More Families Have Increased Earnings, Income, and Assets

Making Connections White Center/Seattle has worked with community and institutional partners, including CBOs, community colleges, intermediaries such as the Seattle Jobs Initiative—which was started by the Foundation in the 1990s—state officials, King County Housing Authority, and residents to assure that:

More residents are connected to jobs. Since 2005, *Making Connections* has helped place nearly 1,650 residents into jobs through pipelines to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, regional construction and building trades, health care, and other employers—including more than 860 placements in 2007–08 despite sharp declines in the state and national economy. Strong partnerships with Airport Jobs, health-related Vocational English as a Second Language (VESL) programs offered through Neighborhood House, and FSET have been key to success.

More residents are getting jobs that provide benefits. The percentage of White Center residents placed in jobs that offer health benefits has increased from 60 percent in 2007 to 68 percent in 2008.

RESULT	2007	2008
Residents from the initiative neighborhoods placed in jobs	487	375
Percentage of jobs placements offering health benefits	60	68

More residents are increasing their savings and buying homes. The White Center Asset Building Coalition was launched in 2004 to help families increase savings, reduce debt, use the EITC, and access affordable housing. Since then, the coalition—which includes the United Way of King County, YWCA, WCCDA, and Boeing Employee

PROMOTING FAMILY ECONOMIC SUCCESS: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

- *Expand jobs pipelines through increased FSET funding and partnership with the Skill Up initiative.* WCCDA and workforce partners aim to connect 1,100 White Center residents to airport, health care, construction/green, and other jobs by 2011, with up to 60 percent offering health benefits and with one year retention rates of 65 to 70 percent. In terms of scale and sustainability, the WCCDA and its workforce partners are promoting the expansion of FSET, anticipated to reach \$6.5 million in 2010; the adoption of pipeline on-ramps and bridges through Skill Up Washington, a regional workforce funders collaborative; and the use of ARRA funds to prepare residents for green jobs.
- *Leverage additional funds to create green jobs and promote neighborhood revitalization.* *Making Connections* will work to target ARRA funds to workforce pipeline and other employment and training strategies—particularly those that prepare workers for green jobs and secure public/private funding for 150 new units of affordable housing and small business assistance.
- *Continue expansion of asset building strategies.* *Making Connections* will support efforts by the United Way of King County, BECU, and the YWCA Learning Center/Express Credit Union to expand the EITC campaign and strategies to help more families access mainstream financial products.

Credit Union (BECU), which received a Casey Mission Related Deposit in 2004 and has opened an express branch in White Center—has helped 5,261 White Center residents open and add to savings accounts. *Making Connections* also has supported affordable housing strategies that helped nearly 100 residents purchase homes.

PROMOTING SUCCESS IN EARLY GRADES: PRIORITY STRATEGIES FOR 2009–11

With Highline Public Schools, the Community Schools Collaborative, WCELI, Public Health Seattle King County, and other partners, *Making Connections* will work to:

- *Accelerate progress toward third grade reading success at Mount View Elementary through intensive literacy and health interventions.*

Making Connections will support intensive literacy interventions—including monitored individual reading success plans—and strategies to assure that all children in grades K-3 have health insurance, a medical home, developmental screenings, and follow up, to increase third grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) reading scores to 65 percent proficiency in 2009, 73 percent in 2010, and 79 percent in 2011.

- *Increase the number of children and families participating in early learning experiences, and who are assessed as ready for school. Through WCELI's Educare Learning Center—set to open at Greenbridge in 2010—and increased support for Family, Friend, and Neighbor child care providers, nearly 1,500 children will be enrolled or participating in early education and quality preschool activities by the end of 2011. This effort also will help achieve *Making Connections'* goal of assuring that 49 percent of children entering kindergarten at Mount View Elementary are assessed as ready.*

Making Connections will work with Highline Public Schools and other partners to expand successful early grade success strategies to at least two other elementary schools during the next three years.

More Children Are Healthy and Prepared to Succeed in School

To help assure success in early grades, *Making Connections* has worked with Highline Public Schools, Mount View Elementary—the focus school for early grade success strategies—and White Center Heights Elementary to establish the Family Connections program. This strategy builds on the multi-lingual and cross-cultural outreach of Family Advocates and Parent Ambassadors to help parents access early literacy programs, health services, job training and asset building supports, social networks, and opportunities for civic engagement. This and other efforts have helped assure that:

More children and families are taking part in early learning activities. Multi-cultural summer pre-K programs now supported by the WCELI and Highline Public Schools have helped nearly 600 children and their parents participate in activities that promote literacy and other learning skills.

More children are assessed as ready for kindergarten. Increased parent engagement and improved access to early learning activities have helped increase the percentage of students at Mount View Elementary scoring proficient on kindergarten readiness tests from 21 percent in 2005 to 31 percent in 2008.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE

White Center is moving aggressively toward a civic revitalization that few would have thought possible a decade ago. The WCCDA, the *Making Connections* Partners Group, resident leaders, and committed partners from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors have worked together to shape not just a new normal, but a new way of doing business. WCCDA's Strength of Place Initiative is led by a family-centered vision of community redevelopment that will create new businesses and more affordable housing, goods, and services. The "White Center Way" is about the authentic engagement of residents as leaders and partners, leading with results, good data, and smart advocacy to leverage new resources, intentionally building capacity to transform neighborhoods and lives.