

**PRATT INSTITUTE  
CENTER FOR COMMUNITY AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT (PICCED)**

**Mission, History and Recent Activities  
May 1996**

The Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development (PICCED) has been in service to the community for over thirty years. It was established in 1963 to create a partnership between Pratt Institute's Department of City and Regional Planning and local organizations that were struggling to address issues of urban deterioration and poverty. PICCED grew out of the Institute's belief that an integral part of its mission as an urban university was to provide community-based organizations in low-income neighborhoods throughout New York City with access to the technical resources of its faculty, staff, and students.

As the oldest university-based advocacy planning organization in the country, PICCED's mission is to build the capacity of low- and moderate-income communities to develop innovative solutions to the physical, social, and economic challenges facing them. It carries out this mission through three interrelated program areas:

- technical assistance (including planning and architectural services)
- training and education
- public policy analysis and advocacy

Since 1975, when the Pratt Planning and Architectural Collaborative (PPAC) was formed, the Pratt Center has been providing comprehensive architectural services to community groups that otherwise would not have access to the professional services needed to develop low-income housing, day care centers, primary health care facilities, arts and cultural centers, and alternative public schools.

#### **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Over the past 30 years, PICCED's comprehensive technical assistance services have been an invaluable resource to community-based organizations with limited budgets and staff expertise. Without access to the professional services offered by the Pratt Center, hundreds of innovative projects may not have been realized. In the past ten years, PICCED staff have been responsible for the planning, design and construction of affordable housing and community facilities worth over \$70 million.

Recently, PICCED has been providing technical assistance to:

- the East New York Urban Youth Corps and Housing Works, Inc. to develop the first residential and day treatment facility in Brooklyn for homeless adults with AIDS and HIV-related illnesses;
- the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation in Brooklyn to develop a playground for local youth in a 20,000 square foot vacant lot that will result from the demolition of an abandoned and physically hazardous public school building;
- the Saint Nicholas Neighborhood Preservation Corporation to develop a 23-unit special-needs housing project for mentally ill persons in Williamsburg, Brooklyn;
- residents in the South Bronx and South Brooklyn to devise and implement comprehensive community development plans to address the lack of decent, affordable housing, recreational opportunities for youth, and public and private investment in their respective areas;
- coalitions of parents, educators, and community-based development organizations in the Bronx and Brooklyn to secure and rehabilitate facilities for alternative public schools;
- a multi-site child care development program being sponsored by the Local Initiative Support Corporation, that has recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its first site;
- arts and cultural organizations in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn to secure and develop facilities to operate their programs; and,
- 15 neighborhood groups located throughout New York City that have been awarded development financing from the Primary Care Development Corporation to establish community-controlled primary health care centers.

## **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

PICCED also has an extensive record in offering training and education programs to residents of low-income neighborhoods who are seeking to actively participate in the development of their communities. Our programs are designed to meet the needs of people with diverse backgrounds and disparate levels of formal academic preparation.

For over ten years, we have offered the Pratt Community Economic Development Internship, a one-year program for the staff of nonprofit, community-based organizations and public agencies currently engaged in planning and implementing housing and economic development initiatives. As the primary source of training in community economic development in the tri-state region, the Internship has become a door of opportunity for populations (particularly minorities and women) that have been traditionally underrepresented in the field of urban planning. Affiliated with the Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment, the Internship enables its graduates to earn up to 30 credits of advanced standing in the Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning. Through this program, Pratt is not only able to increase the number of minorities and women who hold degrees in urban planning, but it is able to expand the cadre of skilled development professionals in the New York City area with a commitment to improving the physical, social, and economic conditions of low- and moderate-income urban communities. To date, the Internship has provided intensive training to over 275 community leaders throughout the region.

PICCED also designs and conducts other training programs upon request from other organizations. This past year, we created a community economic development curriculum and training materials for a national training series sponsored by the federal Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. This initiative was developed to prompt neighborhood-based groups and city-wide agencies throughout the country to engage in dialogue and create partnerships that will use community economic development strategies to help reduce the factors that lead to substance abuse in low-income communities. PICCED has provided training to nonprofit-public partnerships in over six states.

## POLICY ANALYSIS AND ADVOCACY

PICCED's work in policy analysis and advocacy serves both to extend and support grassroots efforts to bring about change. Some of our work has resulted in more equitable policies for the disposition of city-owned property, inclusionary zoning standards, and the replication of a mutual housing association model. The Pratt Center's **Community Development Corporation (CDC) Oral History Project** is a recent example of our efforts to educate the broader public on the history, philosophy, achievements and challenges of the community development movement. A major part of this project was the production of a documentary entitled *Building Hope*, which had its first national broadcast on PBS in April of 1994.

In addition to the documentary film, PICCED has produced and published case studies on the CDCs interviewed for the Oral History Project. These written profiles outline the issues that prompted the formation of the CDCs, and highlight the strategies, operations, and projects that these organizations adopted to address adverse social and economic conditions in their communities. A package containing 15 written profiles was published in June 1995 and distributed throughout the country this past Fall to over 500 community development practitioners, intermediaries, foundations, public agencies and officials, universities, and students. The CDC Oral History Project has become an invaluable outreach and training resource for the community development field. Over the past year, PICCED has received hundreds of requests for information about community development and the Oral History Project from individuals and organizations in various national and international locations.

Another example of our work in public policy advocacy involved informing and mobilizing New York City residents around the "Contract with America" and related budget reductions and program changes at every level of government. Last Spring, we joined other community development, housing, and advocacy organizations to create a city-wide ad hoc coalition called the **Emergency Committee on Housing, Community Development, and Homelessness**. Through the Emergency Committee, we were able to inform the public and our elected officials of the potentially devastating impacts that proposed legislative and budgetary changes would have on the quality of life in our neighborhoods. As part of this effort, PICCED served as coordinator and editor of the Emergency Committee's newsletter. Some 4,000 copies of the newsletter were produced and distributed throughout the city with the support of a special project grant from the Taconic Foundation. We also coordinated public forums in Brooklyn and Manhattan to provide residents, community-based organizations, community advocates, and public and elected officials with an opportunity to exchange their perspectives on the proposed changes in housing, welfare, social services, education, and other issues that will have an adverse impact on the low- and moderate-income neighborhoods of the city.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRATT STUDENTS**

Because PICCED is associated with a number of the Institute's academic programs, it has been instrumental in providing Pratt students with opportunities to apply what is learned in the classroom to actual projects. Through its unique structure, PICCED links the faculty, students and resources of the Institute with individual neighborhood-based groups seeking to advance the community development process. In performing the planning, architectural and training services requested by neighborhood organizations, the Pratt Center provides opportunities for Pratt students to receive on-the-job training. Students working at the Center are eligible to receive academic credit and, under certain circumstances, compensation for 15-20 hours per week from non-academic sources of funding.

Most importantly, undergraduate and graduate students at the Center are exposed to various aspects of the community development process, including housing finance and development; real estate financial analysis and packaging; architectural design for new construction and rehabilitation; planning and impact analysis; strategic planning and organizational development; and analysis of federal and local housing policy. As a result of their experience with PICCED's community-based projects, many graduates of Pratt's planning and architectural programs are recognized as socially responsible professionals with a commitment to making their expertise available to the community. Pratt graduates with PICCED experience typically have a higher rate of job placement because of their practical training.

## **A SUSTAINED COMMITMENT**

Through the work of PICCED, Pratt Institute has been able to sustain its commitment to serve as a resource to low- and moderate-income communities throughout New York City. Because of PICCED's extensive experience in addressing some of the most pressing and severe issues affecting New York City and its residents, community organizations throughout the country and abroad often approach us for insight and direction as they search for innovative and effective community development strategies. At the request of the Ford Foundation, PICCED has been working with other institutions of higher education to replicate the structure and programs of the Pratt Center. With PICCED's assistance, the first community development center located within a Historically Black College or University opened in February 1995 at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia. Currently, PICCED is also working with the faculty and staff of the Johnson C. Smith College in North Carolina and with the faculty and staff of the University of Detroit-Mercy College in Detroit, Michigan to establish similar community development centers.

As government agencies at all levels have come to depend on the unique blend of first-hand knowledge and long-term commitment found only in community-based organizations, PICCED's services and programs have become increasingly important to their success. Recognized as a leading community development resource center, PICCED has been able to sustain its various services and programs with an assortment of non-academic sources of funding, including private foundation grants, contracts with local, state, and federal governments, and private sector loans and contributions.