

Center for Neighborhoods 2001 Annual Report



Bridging the
Neighborhood Movement

MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Neighborhoods, founded in 1994, serves as a catalyst and a resource to promote and encourage ideas, alliances, policies, and actions that strengthen the livability and vitality of neighborhoods.

Our goal is to strengthen cities and the region by deepening civic dialogue at the neighborhood level, where shared goals can be set between public and private interests, and where people can actively participate in making their communities better.

Taking Action through Convening, Policy and Support



CONVENING

The Center promotes civic involvement and community partnerships by creating shared learning environments, bringing diverse interests together to reflect on critical issues, and identifying opportunities for action and advocacy.

The events that support this work include:

- Annual State of the Neighborhoods Address
- Neighborhood Leadership Breakfast Series
- Roundtable dialogues
- Citywide events and forums

SUPPORT

The Center provides technical support in targeted areas of need for neighborhoods and community leaders, enhancing their work to improve civic livability and vitality. Topical workshops are also provided, bringing neighborhood and technical organizations together to identify resources and information for the purpose of strengthening grassroots efforts.

POLICY

The Center establishes forums for addressing policy issues critical to the health of neighborhoods. These efforts are enhanced through the coordination of research, analysis and public comment that informs policy recommendations.

I confess that in America I saw more than America;
I sought the image of democracy itself, with its inclinations,
its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in order to learn
what we have to fear or hope from its progress.

—Alexis de Tocqueville

A Look Back at 2001

State of the Neighborhoods Address: Defining the Neighborhood Movement

The Sixth Annual State of the Neighborhoods Address, held on July 31, 2001, reminded an audience of over 200 representatives of neighborhood and community organizations, government and foundations in Minneapolis and St. Paul that the heart and soul of American democracy still lies at the neighborhood level. George Latimer, former St. Paul mayor, provided the keynote in which he lamented that city, regional and state government leaders still haven't "learned the lessons that the key to public policy is built block by block." This year's Address coined the term 'Neighborhood Movement' and called for a platform of common values and goals that will drive the future of neighborhood work, allowing leaders to identify and articulate what they will need to succeed, and to ignite the imagination of what can be achieved together. Neighborhoods in both cities share an important moment to raise public support for our sector of work, to define the value that neighborhood-based organizations bring to the broader realm of community development, citywide goals, and regional stability.

The Center called for a coalition of neighborhood leaders and organizations to further define the values and goals of the movement, position the work in a proactive (rather than reactionary) way, and create a long term vision that will lead us to where we want to be in ten years.



The Address defined the future of the neighborhood movement to hinge on three key areas:

- 1. Ensure broader participation that:*
 - Is more culturally inclusive
 - Facilitates institutional partnerships to focus on community goals
 - Addresses organizational structure and leadership development
 - Reinvigorates the importance of community building and the creation of social capital
- 2. Promote funding and support to various scales of collaboration within neighborhood work*
- 3. Develop measures for successful citizen participation to demonstrate accountability and increase public trust*

VALUES

The following values and beliefs guide the Center's work:

• Broad-based citizen participation and involvement

We believe it is important to increase the number of citizens participating in public discussions and decision-making, and therefore important to create and support inclusive, respectful community-based environments that empower citizens to learn and work together across boundaries of race, socioeconomic class, and neighborhood.

• Social justice and equity

We believe neighborhood-based organizing and development have the potential to facilitate the networks, education, and changes required to create a more just and equitable society, one in which every child in the city has the opportunity and choices s/he needs.

• Facilitative leadership and governance

We believe the best public decisions draw upon and strengthen community members' capacities, values, and resources, and therefore that public officials and staff should play a facilitative rather than directive role in public decision-making; and that key city services and policies should be neighborhood-based.

• Neighborhood scale

Working at a neighborhood scale holds a rich and powerful potential for effective, efficient, and multi-disciplinary systems of economic and social support, public decision-making, and accountability.

Neighborhood Leadership Breakfast Series

In partnership with the League of Women Voters of Minneapolis, and co-sponsored by KFAI Radio and the Walker Art Center, the Center hosts the Neighborhood Leadership Breakfast Series, designed to celebrate and engage our local community leaders. The 2001 series featured the following people and topics:

Matthew Ramadan – “Leadership: The Art of Problem Solving”

Osman Sahardeed – “Embracing Differences”

Lyndale Youth Leadership Initiative – “Youth Taking the Lead”

Caren Dewar – “Leadership that Thinks Locally and Acts Regionally”

Dr. Carol Johnson – “Educational Leadership: Helping Teachers Succeed”

Rip Rapson – “Creating Connections in Multiple Dimensions”

Watch for our 2002 series!

Historic Preservation Roundtable

In May of 2001 the Center partnered with the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota to host a roundtable on historic preservation efforts in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Case studies were presented from the neighborhoods of Loring Park, Longfellow, and Upper Swede Hollow, and resource organizations were available to provide a range of technical information to assist neighborhood efforts. The session provided a valuable exchange between community and technical organizations on how to best accomplish historic preservation goals.

Commercial Corridors Institute

The Commercial Corridors Institute completed the last of its four part series of workshops in February 2001. Workshop topics included:

Corridor viability: Strategic market analysis and re/development (February 2000)

Corridor livability: Making the avenue pleasant and convenient (May 2000)

Corridor “imageability”: Improving perceptions & realities of safety & service (September 2000)

Corridor ability: Organizing and coordinating the avenue’s many interests (February 2001)

A summary of this series of workshops is underway, and will be available soon.

The institute created a valuable learning environment that brought representatives from ten major commercial corridor revitalization projects in Minneapolis and St. Paul together to share ideas on what has made their efforts successful. In addition to the benefits of networking, participants recognized the opportunity to organize themselves around key issues that impact their work.

In 2002 the Institute will turn its attention to policies, such as county and state road standards, which are viewed as obstacles to the success of commercial corridor revitalization efforts.

The Commercial Corridors Institute was developed and coordinated in partnership with Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), the Minneapolis Planning Department, St. Paul Planning and Economic Development, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Public Art Policy Initiative

What makes a city memorable? While a strong economy, clean air and natural resources rank high, many people choose to live, work, play or visit a place for its cultural ambience. Walk through the teeming streets of unforgettable cities like San Francisco, Boston, Brussels or Seattle and you are greeted with sights and sounds that leave an indelible impression. The arts build our sense of civic pride and enrich the quality of our lives.

The Public Art Policy Initiative emerged from the growing enthusiasm in Minneapolis for using public art as a means for community building and creating identity. Public art was moving to the forefront of many community revitalization efforts in the city and county, but the public sector still lacked the awareness, staffing and policies to effectively harness its potential. In partnership with Forecast Public Artworks, Intermedia Arts, and the Minneapolis Office of Cultural Affairs, the Center led the effort to bridge a conversation between the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County to define public policies to guide public sector support of public art. A task force was created, consisting of city and county officials and staff (including Minneapolis Parks, Schools, and Libraries), artists, and community representatives, to inform and advance public art policy recommendations for both the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County to consider. Community-wide dialogues were integrated into the process to provide opportunities for the broader public to share ideas and comment on proposed recommendations.

The final report and recommendations from the project will be available in January 2002.

Affordable Housing Technical Assistance

In February 2001 the second phase of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program was launched, earmarking a \$16 million reserve fund for affordable housing strategies over the next four years. To help neighborhoods plan for and meet affordable housing goals, and to track the housing options that were being considered within NRP planning efforts, the Center created the Affordable Housing Technical Assistance Program. Key activities included:

- Mapping out the various neighborhood planning efforts to preserve or create affordable housing,
- Analyzing affordable housing development activity (and who was being served), contrasting the efforts of Minneapolis and St. Paul,
- Developing a handbook to provide neighborhoods with the tools to be an effective negotiating partner when working with housing developers,
- Fostering strategic relationships between neighborhoods and technical assistance organizations, and
- Compiling a resource guide that lists affordable housing technical assistance providers.

Technical organizations and agencies assisting the effort include: Twin Cities LISC, the Minneapolis Consortium of Community Developers, the Family Housing Fund, MICAH, Family and Children's Services' Jobs and Affordable Housing Campaign, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, MCDA, NRP, the Minneapolis Planning Department, and the City Coordinator's Office.

As the future of NRP became uncertain in 2001, planning efforts at the neighborhood level have waned. The project is currently on hold until more information is known about how to assist neighborhoods in their efforts to address affordable housing needs. This effort will continue in 2002.

Restorative Justice Evaluation

The purpose of the project is to provide data on the effectiveness of restorative justice. In 2001 a team of representatives from seven restorative justice programs worked with evaluation expert Steven Mayer Ph.D. (senior consultant of the Effective Communities Project) to design an evaluation process that would collect outcome data for individual clients ("cases") handled by a variety of restorative justice programs. By engaging neighborhood-based groups in evaluation, we will stimulate a culture of learning and program improvement, which in turn strengthens the neighborhood group's capacity.

The seven local neighborhood-based restorative justice projects will proceed to implement the evaluation tool in 2002 and 2003, using the results to improve their work and to document the impact of their programs to key funders and governmental partners. Other urban, suburban and rural communities who are considering starting restorative justice projects of their own will be able to learn about the various models of community-based restorative justice, and their impacts.

Exploring Methods and Models of Inclusive Organizations

Over the past ten years, Minneapolis and St. Paul have seen dramatic changes in the racial and ethnic composition of our urban neighborhoods. Many new immigrant populations such as Southeast Asian, East African, and Hispanic and Latino communities have located in sections of our cities, further diversifying the cultural backgrounds and language barriers. Neighborhood and community-based organizations have been largely unsuccessful in drawing these minority and immigrant populations into their work.

As our neighborhoods become more diverse, racial divides exist on almost every block. To build healthy communities, it is critical that we learn to bridge our differences and celebrate the richness of diversity through community-building strategies. In addition, neighborhood organizations have expressed frustration in attracting renters and low-income residents into their work. They are hungry for information on how to effectively engage renters and low-income residents in neighborhood planning and activities. How do organizations build long-term, sustainable involvement by residents of all incomes?

The purpose of this initiative is to learn from local efforts that are effectively involving low-income residents, renters, communities of color and new immigrants, and identify how those efforts can be supported and integrated into neighborhood-scale planning and revitalization.

The seven Restorative Justice program partners include:

Central City Neighborhood Partnership Restorative Justice Program (Minneapolis)

BIHA Women in Action, Northside Community Circles (Minneapolis)

Powderhorn Park Restorative Justice Program (Minneapolis)

Dispute Resolution Center (St. Paul)

Legal Rights Center, Inc. (Minneapolis)

Walker Community United Methodist Church Neighbor to Neighbor Program (Minneapolis)

SUFT / Peacemaking Circle Project (St. Paul)

Ahead in 2002

The first phase of this project will collect success stories from local and national community groups in four key areas:

- Organizing strategies that involve and engage under-represented groups,
- Organizational structures that elicit broad community participation,
- Leadership development methods that strengthen a collective voice and capacity for shared action, and
- Collaboration methods that strengthen relationships between diverse interest groups.

Technical Assistance Program

In 2001 the Center made the difficult decision to discontinue the Technical Assistance Program, designed to help neighborhoods recognize, choose and use the technical assistance they need. Serving as a resource and information hub, Sean Gosiewski, Technical Assistance Coordinator, assisted neighborhood staff and volunteers in their efforts to strengthen their organizations and projects. The decision to discontinue the work stemmed largely from the growing awareness that the landscape of neighborhood work could change dramatically over the next couple years. Neighborhood-based organizations will need to determine their own destiny. Scarce resources for community development suggest that some hard choices will need to be made in both Minneapolis and St. Paul for how neighborhood-based organizations will be sustained.

In response, the Center will focus its efforts to demonstrate why neighborhood organizations are critical to the well being of the cities of which they are apart. We continue to support the efforts of organizations that provide technical support and assistance, and plan to maintain our Neighborhood Resource Guide (Sean's pride and joy) as a "first call for help" to guide neighborhoods to the assistance they need.

Communications Initiative

2001 marked the year that the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods acknowledged its broader role in the Twin Cities, becoming the Center for Neighborhoods.

In 2002, our communication efforts will revolve around:

- Strengthening our organizational identity, and
- Creating effective communications products for the organization.

To accomplish these goals the Center will be stepping up its efforts to create a quarterly newsletter, revamp the web site for greater access to the activities and information provided by the organization, utilize an email broadcast system to post information on upcoming events and action alerts, and facilitate a more focused and informed media strategy to better promote the work of the neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Futures

The Center's convening work in 2002 will focus on building an educational and organizing campaign that joins Minneapolis and St. Paul together to explore the role of neighborhood organizations and ways to improve ongoing support for their work. Neighborhood Futures will draw upon analysis and strategic focus to strengthen public trust and ignite the imagination of what can be accomplished at the neighborhood level.

Congratulations to the neighborhood organizations who were recipients of the **Center's Small Grant Program for 2001:**

- Nokomis East Neighborhood Association
- Standish Erickson Neighborhood Association
- Bancroft Neighborhood Association
- Lyndale Neighborhood Association
- District 6 Planning Council

Neighborhood Environmental Sustainability Conference – January 26, 2002

What can a neighborhood-based organization do to impact water quality, enhance recycling efforts, diminish air and noise pollution, or create a community garden? In January the Center will host a conference to connect Minneapolis and St. Paul neighborhoods to resources and information on how to impact these and other environmental issues. Six workshops will feature neighborhood case studies that depict successful project ideas, and information by environmental resource groups and funders that are available to support neighborhood efforts. Topics will include:

- Watershed protection
- Community gardening, urban agriculture and forestry
- Solid and toxic waste reduction
- Traffic calming / transportation alternatives
- Safe, healthy and energy-efficient Buildings, and
- Working with Industries for Win / Win Solutions.

Pedestrian Safety and Traffic Calming – Policy Initiative and Demonstration Project

The underlying values that dictate most transportation policy and road standards in our region reflect a propensity to value vehicular safety and moving traffic quickly over pedestrian access and traffic calming. This initiative is designed to challenge those priorities, to consider new alliances in support of policies that strengthen pedestrian safety and traffic calming, and offer a more balanced approach to resolving transportation 'tensions.' The Center will be working in partnership with St. Paul's Capital City Traffic Calming Alliance (CCTCA), Transit for Livable Communities, and Minnesota Bicycle and Pedestrian Alliance.

2001 Donors to the Center for Neighborhoods

We gratefully acknowledge and thank the following individuals, corporations, organizations, and foundations that made gifts to the Center in 2001. Your gifts make a difference.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of our donor records. If our report contains errors or omissions, please contact us so that we may extend our apologies and correct our records.

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- Programs and activities
- Calendar of events
- Publications
- Neighborhood Resource Guide

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