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## Community-University Engagement: The East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center

by Thomas M. Scott, George Latimer, and Thomas O'Connell

As presidents of colleges and universities, both private and public, large and small, two-year and four-year, we challenge higher education to re-examine its public purposes and its commitments to the democratic ideal. . . . We also challenge higher education to become engaged, through actions and teaching, with its communities.

These are the opening words of the "Fourth of July Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education," signed two years ago by more than one hundred university and college presidents across the country, including those at Macalester College, Metropolitan State University, and the University of Minnesota. They express the importance of colleges and universities reconnecting with and better serving the communities that support them, and helping to lead the reinvigoration and renewal of our democracy.



photos by Steve Schneider



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The impetus for the “civic responsibility of higher education” movement comes from several sources. On one hand, colleges and universities depend on external financial support from taxpayers, donors, alumni, and students, and these supporters increasingly question the relevance of higher education to the well-being of their communities. Why can’t or don’t our colleges and universities play a more important role in solving the problems we face? Where has higher education been as we have watched the quality of our democratic institutions and processes disintegrate during the past few decades? Doesn’t higher education have a responsibility to prepare those who will be charged in the coming decades with making these institutions and processes work?

On the other hand, colleges and universities are increasingly aware of the value of engaging their students and faculty in community-based projects, both as a way of enhancing the educational experience of students, and as a means of strengthening the research products of students and faculty. Institutions of higher education are increasingly undertaking a broad range of initiatives to strengthen community-university partnerships to serve both these ends. This national trend includes such programs as the National Campus Compact and the University of Minnesota’s Civic Engagement Task Force, as well as the growing interest in action research and service learning on many campuses.

Examples of community-university engagement at Macalester College include research on senior housing opportunities conducted with the Rondo Land Trust in the historic African American community in St. Paul, as well as an exhaustive survey of the building

conditions and space available along Payne Avenue, the commercial artery of an old blue-collar neighborhood in St. Paul. Community engagement is a core component of Metropolitan State University’s mission as an urban university, and is manifested in more than 30 partnerships with neighborhood groups, community development organizations, social service agencies, and urban schools in its East Side campus neighborhood and throughout Minneapolis and St. Paul. At the University of Minnesota, the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization program, the Phillips Lead Collaborative in Minneapolis, and the Regional Sustainable Partnerships program in several regions of Greater Minnesota are all examples of the University’s growing involvement in community life.

The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program and the East Side COPC projects described in this special double issue of the *CURA Reporter* are another example of how the University of Minnesota—with its partners at Macalester College and Metropolitan State University—has tried to put into practice the philosophy of higher education institutions actively engaged with their communities. The COPC program—funded initially in 1998 by a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and subsequently with resources from local foundations and the three collaborating institutions—has brought faculty, staff, and students from these three institutions to the east side of St. Paul. The concerns of that community include housing, jobs, education, and the differential ways these issues intersect with race, poverty, and ethnicity.

The critical element in the COPC program, however, goes beyond the

collaboration among the three higher education institutions and beyond the idea of community-university engagement. As important as it is for higher education institutions to engage actively with their communities, the real secret to long-term success—as the articles in this issue explain—is engagement with communities as full partners in the collaboration process. The East Side community and its residents and groups have played an active role in COPC projects from the beginning, and have been full partners in shaping the projects and participating in their implementation. Ensuring such genuine partnerships requires significant effort on the part of universities and colleges, as well as communities. Each has to learn about the others’ “cultures” and expectations. Each has to appreciate what can and cannot be done. Each has to develop fuller understandings of what it means to be partners in the truest sense. It is our hope that sharing knowledge about the St. Paul East Side COPC program will help encourage other communities and higher education institutions to learn from the experiences of those involved, and to take up the challenge of civic engagement through community-university partnerships.

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## Editor’s Note

This special double issue of the *CURA Reporter* is devoted to the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC). The work that provided the basis for this publication was supported by funding under an award with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The authors are solely responsible for the statements, interpretations, and opinions contained in this publication; they do not necessarily reflect the views of CURA, the U.S. government, the East Side community, or the East Side COPC partnership.

## Correction

Jeffrey L. Miller’s article “Reusing Brownfields: Obstacles and Opportunities for Inner-Ring Suburbs,” which appeared in the October 2001 issue of the *CURA Reporter*, contains inaccurate information regarding eligibility for the regional tax-base sharing (fiscal disparities) program. The footnote that appears on page 4 and the footnote to Table 3 on page 5 incorrectly state that cities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area with populations of less than 9,000 are ineli-

gible for the fiscal disparities program. With the exception of Sunfish Lake, which excludes commercial-industrial development, all metro area cities are eligible for this program. Miller’s article referenced regional tax-base sharing statistics from the Citizens League’s *Minnesota Journal*, which selectively analyzes cities with populations above 9,000. Our thanks to several readers for pointing out this error.

# Growing Partnerships: An Overview of St. Paul's East Side COPC

by John Poupart and Frederick W. Smith

The East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC, pronounced *COP-see*) combines federal funds and local partners in a new community development strategy. Since 1998, the East Side COPC has linked the resources and needs of three institutions of higher education with the needs and resources of community groups and residents on St. Paul's East Side. The East Side COPC is an example of both the federal government's and higher education's renewed interest in locally driven community development. This special double issue of the *CURA Reporter*, which is devoted to the East Side COPC program, examines this new form of community partnership from a variety of perspectives. This article offers a brief history of the East Side COPC and the East Side community to provide a context for the articles that follow.

## The HUD COPC Program

The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program, begun in 1992, is a program of the Office of University Partnerships of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The overall purpose of COPC is to involve colleges and universities in locally driven community development. The primary strategy used by COPC is to provide, on a competitive basis, funds to pay higher education students, faculty, and staff for work on community-designed development projects. To date, more than 125 grants have been awarded throughout the country to vocational and technical colleges, community colleges, state colleges and universities, and research universities and private institutions, both large and small.

In September 1998, a COPC grant of \$400,000 (the maximum possible) was awarded to three educational partners: Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; and the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which wrote and administered the grant. The grant was awarded for work to be completed over three years. The educational partners chose the east side of St. Paul for the



photo by Steve Schneider

COPC program because of the previous experience all three partners had working with this community—especially Metropolitan State University, which is located in and has a long-standing public commitment to working with the East Side community.

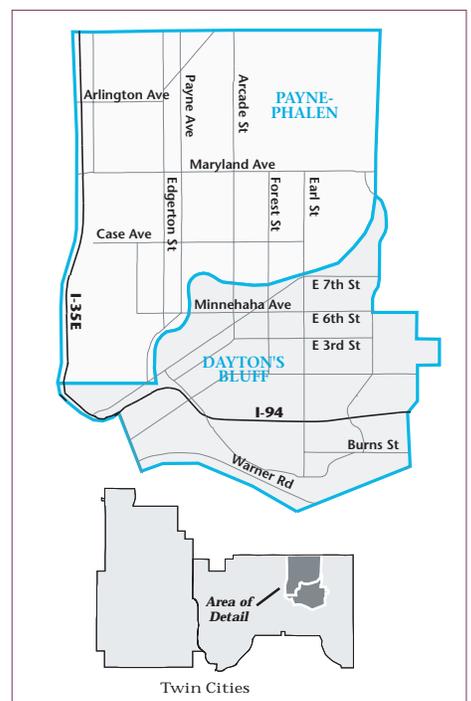
## The East Side of St. Paul

The East Side is often likened to St. Paul's front porch. Dayton's Bluff is located on a 100-foot limestone bluff overlooking downtown St. Paul (see Figure 1). Immediately to the north is the Payne-Phalen neighborhood. The bluff areas of both neighborhoods overlook the Mississippi River. Together these neighborhoods comprise Districts 4 and 5 of the city's official citizen participation structure (see sidebar), which constitute the boundaries of the East Side COPC program.

During the last few decades of the 19th century, the Dayton's Bluff and Payne-Phalen neighborhoods were prime residential areas that attracted high-value housing for industry leaders. As these families relocated from the area after the turn of the century, the majority of East Side housing became occupied by workers at Hamm's Brewery, Whirlpool, Burlington Northern Railroad, American Hoist and Derrick, and other manufacturing firms that were quick to take advantage of the excellent water, rail, and (eventually) highway access to the area. In their book *Where We Live*, Judith Martin and David Lane-gran describe East Side housing as "for

the most part, composed of unremarkable small old houses on small lots, utilitarian duplexes and apartment buildings, and a few newer high-rise buildings. Houses are crowded together and close to the street, producing a cramped and closed-in feeling." Although housing structures on the East Side have primarily remained sound, exterior condition surveys conducted in

Figure 1. Location of the Payne-Phalen and Dayton's Bluff Communities on St. Paul's East Side



1988 and 1996 documented a gradual deterioration in the overall condition of the housing stock.

This slow decline in housing stock was matched by industrial disinvestment in the area beginning in the 1970s. Vacant and polluted industrial sites represent a significant development challenge on the East Side. Thousands of industrial jobs have been lost, and now only a 3M plant remains as the major employer in the area. The tax base south of the Phalen Corridor—the common boundary shared by Districts 4 and 5—declined from \$73 million in 1980 to \$48 million by 1996, a decrease of 34%. However, the corridor is still a significant source of higher paying blue-collar jobs and, compared to the city as a whole, the area has fewer lower paying service jobs.

To some community members, neither housing nor industrial disinvestment is the most dramatic recent change on the East Side. According to “The Working Paper” by the Dayton’s Bluff Urban Partnership (see below), “Perhaps the most dramatic change in Dayton’s Bluff can be seen in the faces of its population, as it becomes home to new Asian immigrants and increasing numbers of African American and Latino families, accounting for about 15% of the population in 1990.” Figures from the 2000 U.S. Census document that non-Latino/Latina residents of color accounted for 46% of all East Side residents; in addition, more than 1 in every 10 (11%) East Side residents is

Latino/Latina. The Black, Latino/Latina, and Asian and Pacific Islander communities on the East Side between 1990 and 2000 grew, respectively, 200%, 163%, and 268%. This increase in the percentage of residents of color is attributable both to a growth in the absolute numbers of persons of color on the east side and to a decline in the number of White residents. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, in the last decade the communities of color on the east side of St. Paul grew by 15,895 individuals, replacing 8,849 White residents who left the area. This increase of more than 7,000 residents represents almost half of St. Paul’s population growth during the last decade.

### Putting Together the East Side COPC

Before writing the COPC grant proposal, CURA studied the neighborhood plans of District 4, “The Working Paper” of the Dayton’s Bluff Urban Partnership (September 1997), the neighborhood plans of District 5 as stated in “Neighborhood Investment Strategy” (December 1997), and the strategic plan of the Phalen Corridor Initiative (1997). Three themes emerged clearly and consistently from these documents. First, there has been a gradual deterioration in the physical condition of East Side housing. Second, deindustrialization has cost the area thousands of good-paying jobs during the last three decades. Third, a dramatic demographic shift has taken place on the East Side during the last two decades.

## The City of St. Paul District Council System

In 1975, the City of St. Paul created a district council system to facilitate citizen participation. As the St. Paul Consolidated Plan (1995) explains, “The District Councils represent the primary means for citizen review and participation. Each organization has its own elected citizen boards that serve in an advisory capacity. Issues include review and recommendation of housing, economic development, public improvement, and other related programs and projects. The District Councils provide the framework for citizen input on both neighborhood and citywide issues, and encourage participation of their residents in all relevant issues.”

There are 19 Planning District Councils, covering every community in the city. The Payne-Phalen Community Council (District 5) and the Dayton’s Bluff Community Council (District 4) represent the communities involved in the East Side COPC program.

The various neighborhood plans emphasized three strategies to address these developments: (1) housing rehabilitation assistance and homeownership programs, (2) job development, and (3) workforce readiness and job placement. All three plans were also clear about their commitment to new residents of color in the area. As stated in “Neighborhood Investment Strategy,”

1. We must strive to be a “neighborhood of choice.”
2. We must seek to increase neighborhood wealth.
3. We must successfully make the transition to a multi-racial neighborhood.

One question remained, however: How could organizations address the disconnection between the resources available through established community organizations and the new residents of color?

After a proposal was framed based on the written plans of each neighborhood to be involved, individual meetings were held with East Side community organizations and organizations of color located on or knowledgeable about the East Side. From these conversations emerged a 17-



**Much of the housing on the East Side consists of small single-family homes or duplexes on tiny lots.**

member steering committee (see sidebar) and, during the next three years, more than 75 projects addressing housing, job development, and workforce readiness (see Tables 1–3). All of these projects involved community partners and academic staff, faculty, and students working together. Many of the individual projects were designed to meet specific objectives that, in turn, either explicitly or indirectly helped the community partners meet measurable goals that had been included in each neighborhood’s written plans.

Additional projects addressed the disconnection between community resources and the new residents of color. One measurable objective emerged: assist at least 75 people of color to become new homeowners. Most of these projects, however, provided applied research assistance to newly created task forces, one representing each of the larger communities of color on the East Side (African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Latino/Latina). Each task force was composed of knowledgeable individuals and representatives of organizations of color located on or informed about the East Side. Each task force, with the help of students, gathered a variety of data about their East Side community to identify issues and opportunities in the areas of housing, job development, and workforce readiness that might be unique to each constituency. The proposal also recognized that as a result of these investigations, other issues might emerge as more important considerations. The central objective was for each community to identify the issues most important to them. Each task force was then challenged to develop a plan, hopefully in communication with other East Side COPC community partners, for how to address the most pressing issues facing their community.

Each East Side COPC academic partner brought to the table a mix of resources and needs that were different both from those of the community partners and from those of the other academic partners. Aided by their past experiences working with each academic partner, the community partners identified projects appropriate for faculty or student assistance. The academic partners made available faculty and students with a diverse range of interests and skills. Faculty served as researchers and training

## The East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center Steering Committee Roster, May 2001

### Community Partners

*Eustolio Benavides*

Director, Caminna  
(Latino Task Force chair)

*Carol Carey*

Director, Upper Swede Hollow  
Neighborhood Association

*Paul Carrizales*

Former director, Hispanic Advocacy  
and Community Empowerment  
through Research (HACER)

*Bruce Casselton*

Director, East Side Work Resource Hub

*Jim Erchul*

Executive director, Dayton’s Bluff  
Neighborhood Housing Services  
(DBNHS)

*Fu Hang*

Director, Asian Development Corpo-  
ration  
(Asian Task Force cochair)

*LeVon Lee*

Executive director, American Indian  
Family Center

*Curt Milburn*

Project director, Phalen Corridor  
Initiative (PCI)

*Petey Mitchell*

East Side Neighborhood Develop-  
ment Company (ESNDC)  
(African American Task Force chair)

*John Poupart*

President, American Indian Policy  
Center  
(American Indian Task Force chair)

*Katya Ricketts*

Main Street program manager, East  
Side Neighborhood Development  
Company (ESNDC)

*Neal Thao*

Assistant professor of social work,  
Metropolitan State University  
(Asian Task Force cochair)

*Luis del Valle*

Coordinator, East Side Job Bank,  
Merrick Community Services

*John Vaughn*

Community organizer, Dayton’s  
Bluff District 4 Community Council

*Roxy Walker*

Community organizer, District 5  
Planning Council

### Organizational Partners

*Barbara Jeanetta*

Program officer, Twin Cities Local  
Initiatives Support Corporation  
(LISC)

*Mark Langseth*

Executive director, Minnesota  
Campus Compact (MCC)

*Patricia Mack*

Field coordination and operational  
support, U.S. Department of Housing  
and Urban Development (HUD)

*Gary Peltier*

Northeast team leader, City of St.  
Paul Planning and Economic Devel-  
opment Department

### Academic Partners

*Center for Urban and Regional Affairs,  
University of Minnesota:*

Kris Nelson, project director  
Fred Smith, coordinator  
Vanessa Steele, project associate  
Bill Wilson, special consultant

*Macalester College:*

George Latimer, professor of urban  
studies  
Karin Trail-Johnson, director,  
Community Service Office

*Metropolitan State University:*

Susan Giguere, director, Center for  
Community-Based Learning  
Sam Grant, associate director, Center  
for Community-Based Learning  
Tom O’Connell, professor in the  
College of Arts and Sciences

**Table 1. East Side COPC Student Assistantship Projects, 1999–2001**

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Organization*</b>	<b>Description</b>
African American Community Outreach	African American Task Force	Research neighborhood demographics and resources for African American residents
Housing Action Plan	DBNHS	Develop a coordinated action plan for the area
Evaluate Hmong HomeLink	ESNDC/HomeLink	Evaluate client satisfaction in Hmong HomeLink program
50/30 Campaign	ESNDC/HomeLink	Develop a marketing campaign to increase homeownership rate for people of color on the East Side
Locational Incentives for Homeownership	DBNHS	Survey of housing assistance recipients and nonrecipients to determine factors influencing housing purchases
Payne Avenue Business Assessment	ESNDC/Payne Avenue Business Association	Inventory and assess current use and status of commercial property on Payne Avenue
Phalen Corridor Community Outreach	Phalen Corridor Initiative	Conduct outreach discussions to gather community input on business development in the neighborhood
Problem Property Toolbox	DBNHS	Examine problem properties and identify resources and strategies for responding to them
Dayton's Bluff Housing Assessment	District 4 Community Council	Develop a housing tracking system for the Dayton's Bluff Elementary School target area
Housing Program Tracking System	DBNHS	Create graphic displays on current housing assistance to analyze and monitor condition and impacts
Employer Homeownership Program	DBNHS	Create homeownership program plan for East Side employers and employees
Manufacture Survey/Manufacture Update	East Side Work Resource Hub/Job Bank	Update inventory of East Side manufacturers to identify jobs on the East Side
Operational Plan for Work Resource Hub	East Side Work Resource Hub	Develop an operational plan for the work resource hub
Dayton's Bluff Data System Documentation and GIS	DBNHS	Train staff and residents in data system documentation, data uses, and geographic information systems
Latino Community Outreach	Latino Task Force/HACER	Research neighborhood demographics and resources for Latino/Latina residents
Hmong Community Outreach	Hmong Task Force	Research neighborhood demographics and resources for Hmong residents
American Indian Community Outreach	American Indian Task Force/AIPC	Research demographics, resources, and issues related to American Indians in St. Paul
Analysis of Dayton's Bluff Housing and Development	DBNHS	Monitor and report on housing plans and outreach efforts in Dayton's Bluff
Housing Condition Survey and Assessment in Payne-Phalen	ESNDC	Modify problem property toolbox from Dayton's Bluff program emphasizing available resources
Creating a Housing Information System Utilizing GIS in Payne-Phalen	ESNDC	Develop housing information system to manage and track community housing priorities and impacts
ESNDC Business Recruitment Plan	ESNDC	Develop and implement business recruitment plan for underutilized and vacant properties
Latino Community Outreach	Latino Task Force/HACER	Compile area demographics and develop culturally specific outreach strategies
HomeLink Program Resources	ESNDC/HomeLink	Develop comprehensive homeownership program resources
Housing Assistance Tracking System	ESNDC	Develop housing assistance information and tracking system
Geographic Information Systems Tracking	ESNDC	Expand information and tracking systems piloted in Districts 4 and 5

**Table 1. East Side COPC Student Assistantship Projects, 1999–2001 (continued)**

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Organization*</b>	<b>Description</b>
Phalen Corridor Outreach	Phalen Corridor Initiative	Staff volunteer committees and facilitate communication throughout the corridor
Phalen Corridor Initiative Development Strategy	Phalen Corridor Initiative	Incorporate community input from outreach meetings into St. Paul PED and Port Authority development framework
50/30 Campaign	ESNDC/HomeLink	Assess Urban Coalition’s 50/30 program to increase homeownership for people of color
GIS—Data System Documentation	ESNDC	Train staff to perform data system documentation
Better Together	ESNDC	Create an inventory of area demographic information
Kids Stability Project	District 4 Community Council	Assist with coordination of the Kids Stability Project
Housing and Employment Survey	CURA	Conduct survey on employee housing
African American Community Outreach	African American Task Force	Support the work of the African American Task Force
East 7th Street Transit-Oriented Development	DBNHS	Create strategic marketing plan for development
African American Community Outreach	African American Task Force	Research crime issues for African Americans in the neighborhood
African American Community Outreach	African American Task Force/ ESNDC	Research health and safety issues for African Americans in the neighborhood, and coordinate Health Summit
Problem Properties in Payne-Phalen	District 5 Planning Council	Research problem properties in District 5
East Side Housing Forum	District 4 Community Council	Profile East Side, Ramsey County, and St. Paul housing programs, and research resident and agency affordable housing needs
East Side Business Recruitment and Outreach	DBNHS	Work on business recruitment activities and follow up with businesses in East 7th transit-oriented development project
Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus School Organizing	District 4 Community Council	Support community council’s organizing campaign to improve educational quality
A+ Homes for Learning Project	DBNHS	Work with homeownership education providers to develop and conduct homeownership workshops
School-to-Work Program Assessment	East Side Work Resource Hub	Survey students and research ways to improve the Harding School-to-Work Program
East Side Neighborhood Tour	ESNDC	Develop East Side Neighborhood Tour for business association
East Side Latino Resource Center	Latino Task Force	Research and write development plan for the East Side Latino Resource Center
Job Bank Outreach and Follow-up	East Side Work Resource Hub/Job Bank	Develop and implement outreach strategies to link area residents of color with job bank resources
Micro-Entrepreneurship Outreach/ Micro Training	Neighborhood Development Center	Identify prospective trainees and develop training format and follow-up plans
PCI Communications Project	Phalen Corridor Initiative	Coordinate PCI’s communications efforts
African American Youth and Elders Council	African American Task Force	Research youth activities on the East Side
Multicultural Leadership Institute	Metropolitan State University	Undergo leadership training to work with communities of color on the East Side
Housing Barriers and Resources for American Indians on the East Side	American Indian Task Force/AIPC	Research housing barriers and resources for American Indians on the East Side
Hmong Homeownership on the East Side	DBNHS	Provide outreach to neighborhood families for homeownership resources

\* The abbreviation “ESNDC” stands for the East Side Neighborhood Development Company, “DBNHS” for Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services, “HACER” for Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research, and “AIPC” for the American Indian Policy Center.

**Table 2. East Side COPC Course Projects, 1999–2001**

Project Title	Organization*	Instructor	Description
Housing Action Plan	DBNHS	Ed Goetz, U. of Minn.	Create a coordinated action plan for the area
Strategic Plan for Arcade	ESNDC/Payne Arcade	Barbara Lukermann, U. of Minn.	Create a strategic plan to identify appropriate uses for underutilized and vacant space
Outreach and Involvement of Communities of Color	American Indian Task Force, African American Task Force, Hmong Task Force, Latino Task Force	Mary Martin, Metro State U.	Compile area demographics using 1990 U.S. Census data, 1997 school and county data, interviews, focus groups, and an inventory of resources in the area
Operational Plan for Work Resource Hub	East Side Work Resource Hub	Melissa Stone, U. of Minn.	Analyze information on neighborhood-based employment efforts, and identify issues and suggestions for linking workforce readiness resources with the unemployed
East 7th Street Transit-Oriented Development	DBNHS	Barbara Lukermann, U. of Minn.	Create a strategic marketing plan
African American Community Outreach	African American Task Force	Nicholas Cooper-Lewter, Metro State U.	Assist African American Task Force with initial data collection and research design
Pride on Payne	ESNDC	David Lanegran, Macalester Coll.	Research demographic, attitudinal, historical, and economic development trends in District 5
Marketing Plan for Community Newspaper	District 4 Community Council	George Latimer, Macalester Coll.	Develop marketing strategy and business plan for creating a community newspaper
Action Plan for East Side Workforce, Economic, and Community Development	East Side Workforce Development Task Force	Lee Munnich, U. of Minn.	Diagnosis, vision, and action plan for East Side Workforce, Economic, and Community Development
Operational Plan for Work Resource Hub	East Side Work Resource Hub	Melissa Stone, U. of Minn.	Analyze information on neighborhood-based employment efforts and suggest ways to link workforce readiness resources with the unemployed

\*The abbreviation “ESNDC” stands for the East Side Neighborhood Development Company and “DBNHS” for Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services.

**Table 3. East Side COPC Faculty Research Projects, 1999–2001**

Project Title	Organization*	Instructor	Description
Locational Incentives for Homeownership	DBNHS	Ed Goetz, U. of Minn.	Survey housing assistance recipients and nonrecipients to determine factors influencing house purchases
Manufacture Survey/Manufacture Update	East Side Work Resource Hub/Job Bank	Andriana Abariotes, Metro State U.	Update inventory of East Side manufacturers to identify jobs on the East Side
Micro-Entrepreneurs Training	Neighborhood Development Center	Xavier Escobedo, Metro State U.	Conduct training classes and provide follow-up assistance for Latino/Latina residents
Micro-Entrepreneurs Training	Neighborhood Development Center	Luis del Valle, Metro State U.	Conduct training classes and provide follow-up assistance for Latino/Latina residents
Micro-Entrepreneurs Training	Neighborhood Development Center	Kou Vang, Metro State U.	Conduct training classes and provide follow-up assistance for Hmong residents
Housing and Employment Survey	CURA	Ed Goetz, U. of Minn.	Conduct an employee housing survey
East Side Latino Focus Groups	Latino Task Force	Deb Bushway, Metro State U.	Coordinate focus groups with Latino/Latina residents to identify issues of concern
Eastside Community Housing Project	American Indian Policy Center	Cecilia Martinez, Metro State U.	Research barriers to housing, perceptions about housing, and housing resources available for American Indians

\*The abbreviation “DBNHS” stands for Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services.

program developers, project supervisors for class projects, and academic advisors for individual student projects. Students, bringing their enthusiasm and fresh insights, worked on projects through classes, internships, and individual applied research projects. Staff helped fit projects into academic schedules and expectations, recruit appropriate faculty and students, secure additional technical assistance for some projects (for example, projects enhanced by maps generated by geographic information system [GIS] software), coordinate meetings, and disseminate project results.

## Results

Table 1 presents an overview of the objectives met by the various projects undertaken as part of the East Side COPC program. Established community partners have also benefited from project results that have helped them achieve their program goals. Each of the four major communities of color has identified the issues most important to them and the next steps to address these issues. Plans are emerging from the discussions within and between the communities on the East Side. Relationships are beginning to form between task force members and the established East Side community organizations. These relationships in turn are starting to nurture partnerships and plans. The number of faculty interested in incorporating community projects into their curricula, engaging in community-based research, and serving as advisors for students doing community research is growing. Students are receiving a richer and fuller educational experience by grappling with real-world problems and situations; enhancing their resumes and potential employment networks; and, in some cases, even changing their career plans.

Approximately halfway through the East Side COPC project, the steering committee began to discuss the need to capture what the East Side COPC really was. It was important, the committee felt, not only to tell the East Side COPC story but also to reflect on the project's accomplishments, assess its significance, and distill what could be learned from



photo by Steve Schneider

***Each academic partner brought to the East Side COPC a mix of resources and needs that differed from those of the community partners and those of the other academic partners.***

the experience. This special issue of the *CURA Reporter* is one way of accomplishing these goals. Another way was asking Barbara Lukermann, a senior fellow at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, to assess the first two years of the East Side COPC by conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis. The report was an important contribution in bringing the steering committee together by providing a common understanding of our endeavors, and it also helped produce consensus on the decision to apply for a follow-up New Directions grant from the Office of University Partnerships at HUD (which was awarded to the East Side COPC partners this past October).

The articles that follow provide a variety of participant perspectives on this many-faceted and extensive project. The articles by Thomas O'Connell and John Vaughn, Katya Ricketts and Jim Erchul, and Bruce Casselton and Melissa Stone illustrate the various ways East Side COPC partners have utilized the applied research skills of students. O'Connell and Vaughn discuss an example of how East Side COPC research projects, carried out in the context of community organizing, laid a foundation for a major new community initiative in Dayton's Bluff. Ricketts and Erchul consider the impacts of East Side COPC research projects in the context of community development by

discussing the impact of these projects on the capacity of their respective community development corporations. Casselton and Stone reflect on the contributions the East Side COPC made to the complicated Work Resource Hub Collaborative, and on how structuring university courses around the needs of a community client changed and improved the classes.

The articles by Sam Grant and Vanessa Steele; Elizabeth Seefeldt, Jamie Lane, and Jessica Deegan; and Curt Milburn provide other perspectives on the East Side COPC experience. Grant and Steele consider how the discussion of race and multicultural relationships have emerged and evolved through the East Side COPC. Seefeldt, Lane, and Deegan reflect on their East Side COPC experiences from their perspective as students. Finally, Milburn describes the value to community organizations of employing students as interns.

In the final article, John Poupart and Barbara Lukermann offer a summary of their work with the East Side COPC partners and identify lessons learned as well as challenges that remain for the future.

Many "results" may well emerge from the relationships started around the tables where the East Side COPC Steering Committee met. Regardless of whether anything else develops from the East Side COPC program, participants have already benefited from and been changed by the discussions that have taken place and the mutual respect that has come to characterize the new East Side.

**John Poupart is founder and president of the American Indian Policy Center, located in St. Paul, Minnesota; chair of the East Side COPC American Indian Task Force; and a member of the East Side COPC Steering Committee. Frederick W. Smith is coordinator of community development programs at CURA, was the lead author and principal investigator for the COPC proposal submitted to HUD, and is a member of the East Side COPC Steering Committee.**

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# CURA Adds Programs on Faculty Leadership and Development, Food Systems and Institutional Change, and Human Wellness

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The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs recently welcomed new staff member Margaret Adamek, who joined us in October as special projects director. Maggi comes to CURA from the College of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Sciences (COAFES) on the St. Paul campus, and brings with her three programs that emphasize community-university collaboration and support CURA's mission of connecting university faculty and students with community organizations and public institutions in Minnesota.

The Northern Lights Leadership for Institutional Change (NL-LINC) program provides faculty development and learning opportunities that focus on engagement and collaboration with communities. The program offers faculty the opportunity to rethink their role as expert; reevaluate the nature of scholarship in partnership with communities; and design research projects that contribute to reciprocal, equitable, and socially relevant practice. The program

hosts semi-annual regional seminars for university and community stakeholders around themes related to engagement and collaboration. The NL-LINC program is funded by a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, with additional support from the University of Minnesota, North Dakota State University, South Dakota State University, and numerous tribal land grant colleges in the region.

The Food Systems Professions Education (FSPE) initiative is a consortium of 12 of the nation's largest land grant universities that explores transformation of the food system and institutional change in higher education. After many years of developing skills, models, and best practices around the issue of organizational transformation, the FSPE network (with CURA as the lead agency) is now aggregating and disseminating the lessons learned through this initiative. Participants have developed deeper understandings of and enhanced their capacity for collabora-

rating with community partners, engaging the public on critical social issues, changing the campus culture to become more learner-centered, redefining the faculty reward system, and promoting institutional change.

The Sugar Project is a new interdisciplinary community-university collaboration between leading health practitioners, community members, and academicians focused on innovative ways to treat addiction, diabetes, obesity, and depression through nutritional intervention. The program seeks to build alliances between communities and higher education to solve rural economic problems, promote sustainable ecosystems, and address pervasive public health problems through an integrated approach to human wellness. The consortium is currently seeking funding for a long-term effort.

For more information about NL-LINC, FSPE, or the Sugar Project, contact Maggi Adamek at (612) 624-7451 or madamek@umn.edu.

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## Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System Awarded Department of Commerce Grant

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The Minneapolis Neighborhood Information System (MNIS) has been awarded a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. The grant was one of 74 Technology Opportunity Program (TOP) grants totaling \$42.8 million awarded to nonprofit organizations and state and local governments across the United States and Puerto Rico.

MNIS is a joint project of CURA, the City of Minneapolis, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, and participating Minneapolis neighborhood organizations. The project provides detailed housing information and analysis to help neighborhood organizations plan and evaluate housing improvement strategies programs.

According to Kris Nelson, a program director at CURA who oversees the University of Minnesota's participation in the MNIS project, the grant will enable the University to better fulfill its land grant mission by supporting the development of "a model community partnership between neighborhood organizations, local government, and a research university."

"The TOP grant will allow the University to provide resources and technical expertise that will enhance the capacity of neighborhood organizations to use state-of-the-art information technology being developed by the City of Minneapolis," Nelson explained. These tools will assist community organizations with community planning and the preven-

tion of housing deterioration and abandonment.

The MNIS partners plan to use the award to create an integrated property database system that will give neighborhoods real-time access via the city's intranet to basic housing information, as well as problem property indicators such as code violations, delinquent property tax status, and utility arrears. Neighborhoods will be able to incorporate local data with city and county data, and produce maps of past and current housing programs, housing conditions, and areas at-risk. These tools will allow neighborhood organizations to track the health of their neighborhood's housing supply and target resources and strategies for addressing housing deterioration problems accordingly.

# From Research to Action: Housing Mobility and Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School

by Thomas O'Connell and John Vaughn

Dayton's Bluff is perched, like a front porch, overlooking downtown St. Paul. It is a community of more than 17,000 with a rich history of immigration and settlement beginning in the 1850s.

Starting in the mid-1980s, layoffs at several large East Side employers—such as Whirlpool and the Stroh's Brewery—accelerated a new wave of change in Dayton's Bluff. The housing market then responded to the jobs crisis. Much of the single-family, working-class housing in the lower bluff (nearest to downtown St. Paul) was converted into duplexes by absentee landlords to take advantage of the housing needs of a more diverse, lower income market. Dayton's Bluff repeated its history as a place for low-income families—particularly recent immigrants—to make a new start.

Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School, located in the middle of the lower bluff, reflects many of the changes in the surrounding neighborhood. It is a "community school" where a majority of the 550 or so students live within five blocks and walk to school. In a display of class pictures from the last 30 years that used to be located outside the school office, one could see the changes in the community reflected in the faces of the students. During the 2000–2001 school year, the school population was 37% African American, 33% Asian (mostly Hmong), 13% White, 12% Hispanic, and 5% American Indian.

What follows is a report on a joint effort by Dayton's Bluff Community Council, Dayton's Bluff Elementary, and the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program to combat one of the most serious issues facing low-income urban schools: student mobility. Through research, coalition building, and organizing, project partners were able to build a sustained response to the issue.

## Housing Mobility Takes Shape as an Issue

In 1997, the Wilder Foundation chose Dayton's Bluff Elementary as one of three sites for its major school reform initiative, the Achievement Plus Program. In partnership with the school district, the City of St. Paul, and Ramsey County, Achievement Plus leaders hoped to jump-start student achievement by providing "wraparound" social and health services for families through before- and after-school enrichment programs for the children. Most local organizations readily signed on to this huge initiative and became "community partners." Metropolitan State University and the Dayton's Bluff Community Council were among the more active organizations to participate in the early stages of this effort.

Project partners soon realized that it would be difficult to raise student achievement at Dayton's Bluff with such a high student turnover rate. Their concerns were

underscored when the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) and its partners issued *A Report from the Kids Mobility Project* in 1997 (see sidebar). This study of the effects of mobility on Minneapolis public school students found that the economic and social stresses experienced by high-mobility families had a significant negative impact on school success. The report also cited national studies that concluded that children do not start to show the benefits of school stability for a year and a half. Completing two consecutive years at Dayton's Bluff Elementary is a milestone that only about one-third of students reach. In 1998, Achievement Plus chose housing mobility as one of two priority issues (along with attendance), and a subcommittee was formed to explore the issue and develop effective responses.

Real-life events soon brought home what everyone had only been discussing theoretically—housing's direct bearing on schooling. Mary Poe, an outreach worker at Dayton's Bluff Elementary School, and Marcie Groves, a community organizer with the Community Stabilization Project, began to work with a group of tenants who lived across from the school in a notorious 12-unit building popularly referred to by local residents as "the Bates Motel." The building is owned by Peter and Michael McCarty, sons of a former St. Paul mayor. More than 30 Dayton's Bluff Elementary students lived there. Grievances were brought forth by the score, and eventually residents went on a rent strike. Concurrently, city inspectors identified dozens of code violations in the building.

After a tense summer that included several heated community meetings and a few physical confrontations between tenant and landlord factions, repairs were made to address the building's code violations. Unfortunately, nearly every resident in the building was evicted in the process. Despite efforts to relocate their families in the neighborhood, dozens of children had to transfer schools. Some residents called for the school district to intervene by busing children from displaced families



photo by Steve Schneider

Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School

back to the school, but the district's transportation department rejected the proposal.

The tenant organizing and follow-up efforts to improve the situation at the Bates property provided lessons about just how difficult addressing low-income housing issues can be. They also presented a challenge to the new housing subcommittee: How could committee members develop effective responses to housing issues while operating within an organizational culture that had no experience with the kind of "street advocacy" required to address such issues? After nearly a year of exploring the housing dimensions of the larger issue of mobility, both the community-based and institutional Achievement Plus partners agreed to reorganize the committee as a freestanding coalition. During this transition, Mary Poe went to work for the Dayton's Bluff Community Council as a housing organizer.

### The Housing Mobility Coalition and the East Side COPC

The Housing Mobility Coalition began with about 15 core members, including Metropolitan State University, the Dayton's Bluff Community Council, several housing-related agencies, Achievement Plus, and about a half-dozen local residents and landlords. This group decided that their first step should be to get a firm understanding of mobility. They reached out to the East Side COPC for assistance.

Two East Side COPC interns, along with two groups of urban planning graduate students from the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, were brought into the Housing Mobility Coalition to research St. Paul's new 10-year City Housing Plan, investigate student mobility, and research strategies for dealing with problem properties.

The interns eventually presented their work at a public forum. This forum led directly to the implementation of an innovative three-year effort to reduce housing mobility called the Children's Stability Project. Thus, East Side COPC research contributed greatly to the community's understanding of and response to housing mobility. What follows are some of the highlights of this process.

**Some Interesting Discoveries.** An East Side COPC intern and University of Minnesota undergraduate student conducted open-ended interviews with 25 families who had moved from the area and left Dayton's Bluff Elementary, and 25 families who had stayed for one or more years. Those who stayed stated that they



photo by Steve Schneider

**Referred to by residents as "the Bates Motel," this 12-unit apartment building became the focus of early efforts to address poor housing conditions and housing mobility in Dayton's Bluff.**

liked their housing, and had positive feelings about their neighbors and Dayton's Bluff Elementary. Those who had left cited conflicts with their landlord, deteriorating housing conditions, and crime in the neighborhood as key reasons for their leaving.

Another interesting discovery was that most families moved in December or January, not during the spring and summer as everyone had assumed. Parents reported that their mobility was mainly caused by evictions, and that they generally had one-month leases. Thus, many were searching for housing during the holidays in a market with a 1% vacancy rate. Simply obtaining housing—regardless of the condition of the building or whether its location meant children needed to change schools—was the primary goal for these families.

Research into the City Housing Plan confirmed what many already knew: that there is almost no vacant land remaining in the community for housing, and that the school is located in a historic preservation district, in which demolition of existing buildings is prohibited. In other words, the only real option for this community in the short term is working with the existing housing stock.

**Research to Action.** The housing research undertaken by COPC interns was presented at a public forum at Metropolitan State University on May 27, 1999. About 100 people—including parents of school children, local civic activists, agency representatives, and public officials—attended the Housing Mobility Forum. Several parents gave testimonials about

their struggles with housing and with keeping their children in stable learning environments. The forum also served as a sort of public statement that said, "OK, we understand the problem—now it's time to do something."

## Kids Mobility Project Report Available from Family Housing Fund

Virginia Craig. *A Report from the Kids Mobility Project.* Minneapolis: Kids Mobility Project and Minneapolis Public Schools, 1998. 15 pp.

This publication provides an overview and summary of the Kids Mobility Project, which investigated the effects of changing residences on student achievement. The project included a review of the literature on student mobility, as well as two studies—one analyzing school data related to student achievement and mobility, and the second analyzing interviews with 100 low-income families about the impact of moving. The Kids Mobility Project was a collaboration led by the Minneapolis Public Schools and Hennepin County, with financial support from CURA and the Family Housing Fund (FHF).

Copies of the report are available from Family Housing Fund. To order, call (612) 375-9644 or send e-mail to [miko@fhfund.org](mailto:miko@fhfund.org). The report is also available on the FHF Web site at <http://www.fhfund.org/research/kids.htm>.

Buoyed by the energy generated at the public forum, and working directly from the research, the Housing Mobility Coalition quickly laid the groundwork for a plan to reduce student turnover at Dayton's Bluff Elementary and to increase housing stability overall in the lower bluff area. The effort was dubbed the Children's Stability Project. It is a three-year project with five agencies as the main participants: the Dayton's Bluff Community Council, Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services, CURA, the Community Stabilization Project, and the St. Paul Association of Responsible Landlords (SPARL). Mary Poe became the primary staff person for the project (see sidebar). Major funders include the McKnight Foundation and the St. Paul Foundation.

The project originally employed six basic strategies to reduce student turnover and increase housing stability. They included the following:

1. Keeping people in the community who want to stay through a local housing placement service that matches tenants with landlords (with priority for Dayton's Bluff Elementary School families), and helps the parties resolve problems and disputes.
2. Focusing on the school families most at risk of homelessness by serving as a housing placement and problem-solving subcontractor to a social service program funded by Ramsey County.
3. Improving tenants' abilities to stabilize their own housing via tenant training.
4. Promoting homeownership by recruiting families into home buying or home buying preparation opportunities.
5. Trying to prevent tenant-landlord disputes from resulting in eviction by sponsoring a local housing mediation service.
6. Helping landlords be better property managers via landlord training.

CURA was engaged to do evaluation design for the Children's Stability Project, and the East Side COPC continues to provide research assistance in conjunction with the evaluation process. Last fall, University of Minnesota doctoral candidate Laura Davis evaluated the project's accomplishments and challenges.

### The Work Continues

From November 1999 through August 2001, the Children's Stability Project worked with 309 families to place them in new housing. Of those families, 140 (45%) were placed successfully. This enabled 189 students to remain at Dayton's Bluff

Elementary (many families had several children at the school) through at least one housing mobility cycle. An additional 42 families were assisted with solving housing-related problems that could have lead to eviction, including disputes with landlords or neighbors, late rents, disagreements over repairs, etc. These families had 113 children at the school. Two families with five children enrolled at the school have been successful in buying a home in the community.

In addition, 36 renters from Dayton's Bluff completed the Community Stabilization Project's tenant training in 2001. Of these families, 17 had children enrolled in the school. Later this year, the tenant

training curriculum will be translated into Hmong and Spanish through the financial support of the East Side COPC.

Only three mediations have been brought to a conclusion. In a market with a 1% vacancy rate, there is simply no incentive for landlords to mediate when they can simply evict and have dozens of fee-paying applicants lined up the next day (not to mention the widely known practice of seizing damage deposits by evicting low-income tenants who have limited means to challenge the landlord through legal channels).

Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services also located some buildable land

## Housing is a Daily Challenge

by Laura Davis, East Side COPC researcher

"Mary Poe? She's always busy—with a capital B," explains Danielle, a tenant. "She doesn't have an easy job." This sentiment is echoed by Bob, a landlord who owns many rental properties in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood. "She can work miracles. Always so busy. I call her every day."

Although Danielle and Bob represent two groups who often find themselves pitted against each other in a competitive housing market, they both go to the office of the Dayton's Bluff Community Council seeking Mary Poe's assistance. Mary is the housing organizer for the Children's Stability Project. She listens sympathetically and acts as a kind of broker and mediator. On this day, Danielle needs more time to find another place to live after receiving an eviction notice, while Bob is seeking help dealing with a problem tenant.

Like many who have been cast afloat in the Twin Cities' tight rental market, Danielle doesn't have many options. "Those landlords. They sell. They buy. Do you know what my last landlord said to me? He said we're a lower class of people on the East Side. He said he and his partner were going on the South Side." Danielle recounts her latest ordeal to Mary. "A lady came from the Health Department and said the building needed a lot of major work. The ceiling caved in." The Health Department condemned the building, leaving Danielle without a place to stay. Now living in her car, Danielle explains that she is just trying to "keep it normal. Keep the kids going to school."

Bob tells Mary that he has received complaints about one of his tenants. He wants her to talk to the mother of the family—a family Mary helped to place in the building several months ago—to try to resolve the dispute. His concerns extend beyond the immediate problem with this particular tenant, however. He says there are just too many kids in the neighborhood these days, and he fears the back of the fourplex he owns is becoming a neighborhood hangout.

Danielle has gotten more than referrals and sympathy from the Children's Stability Project. "You meet people," she says. "You listen to what they say. There's information sharing. Survival tips." Mary listens to Danielle's story and nods as she starts to make some calls to landlords she works with to inquire about vacancies. "Your place should be condemned," she tells Danielle. "Some places are just not choice worthy. I'll do what I can."

Mary agrees that the fourplex Bob owns is becoming a dangerous hangout for kids. After speaking with the problem tenant, she tells Bob that "the noise has calmed down" for now, but reassures him she will pay the mother a visit later that day. She also tells him they need to come up with a plan to address the other issues at his building before there's a serious problem.

After Danielle and Bob leave, I have a moment to ask Mary how the Children's Stability Project is working. "It's working," she responds. "They're staying longer. It used to be three months; now it's a year. We've placed a lot of folks. Some are not lasting. Some stay. Dayton's Bluff is stabilizing. We're planting some ideas. Yeah, good ideas."

in the school attendance area, and is currently engaged in a plan called Homes for Learning. By December 2002, DBNHS hopes to build 16 affordable rental units on two main sites just a few blocks from Dayton's Bluff Elementary. The marketing for these units will be conducted through the school. The Dayton's Bluff Community Council supported this project, and successfully appealed a Planning Commission decision that would have stopped the project at one of the sites.

Finally, SPARL provided training for six local landlords in 2000, but has since concluded that a wider market than just Dayton's Bluff is necessary to support a landlord training program.

### The Results So Far

The St. Paul School District defines the *mobility index* as the number of students who either left or entered the school as a percentage of the annual October first enrollment count. The mobility index for Dayton's Bluff Elementary during the last several years is shown in Table 1. The 74% mobility index for the 1999–2000 school year is due to the abrupt collapse and consequent closing of the nearby Success Academy in spring of 2000. If the 30 Success Academy students who enrolled at Dayton's Bluff Elementary for a short time before leaving at the end of the year are excluded, the mobility index for 1999–2000 would be around 61%. The Children's Stability Project hopes to reach its goal of a 45% mobility index by the end of the 2002–2003 school year.

School district officials are quick to point out that between 70 and 80% of students were enrolled at Dayton's Bluff Elementary for 160 days or more each of the past four years. They call this the *stability index*, and it presents a hopeful picture. It also means that during those years, between two hundred and three hundred students cycled in and out of roughly a hundred seats. Dayton's Bluff teachers frequently cite the difficulties this creates for the mobile students, and also the strain it puts on other students and the school staff. Viewed in a larger context, less than half of the 70–80% of students who complete one year at the school are there for three consecutive years.

Dayton's Bluff Elementary school staff turnover has also been high in recent years. At the end of the 2000–2001 school year, the principal was let go and all teacher contracts were canceled. Only a handful of staff from 1998 remain. Between staff turnover, student mobility, and curriculum changes, the school popu-

lation has literally started over each year of the Achievement Plus initiative.

Many in the community have been encouraged by the appointment of Von Sheppard as the new principal this school year. Parents and school staff report improvements in the daily functioning of and general atmosphere at the school. Fall 2001 test scores were slightly higher than in previous years, which has given many hope.

Setting the stage for better school performance by reducing student turnover depends on the success of the Achievement Plus reform effort. Unfortunately, the initiative has had little success at raising student performance. Despite good participation in after-school programs and



photo by Steve Schneider

***The Children's Stability Project is a three-year effort aimed at increasing housing stability among families whose children attend Dayton's Bluff Elementary and reducing student turnover at the community school.***

the expenditure of \$2.7 million in program funds during the last three years, the school remains on probation with the school district. Because of this lack of results, the Dayton's Bluff Community Council worked with local legislators last session to demand accountability for any further Achievement Plus funding. In the end, however, Achievement Plus' request for \$3 million from the state legislature was not approved.

Currently there are about 2,600 rental units in the Dayton's Bluff Elementary attendance area. More than half of those units are duplexes. When viewed in the context of the overall amount of housing available in the neighborhood, the impact of the Children's Stability Project is likely to be rather small. The goal of encouraging

housing stability throughout the Dayton's Bluff community has proven incommensurate with the size of the Children's Stability Project. In addition, it has been difficult to track mobility on a larger scale. Although Xcel Energy electricity account data have given the project a vague picture of mobility rates, a method has not yet been identified to accurately measure housing mobility in the community.

The three-year Children's Stability Project will conclude at the end of 2002. It was never the intention of the Dayton's Bluff Community Council to institutionalize the Children's Stability Project, but rather to assist the school and the community during a difficult time. It is clear, however, that the link between housing, community schools, school performance, and improved communities is strong and merits sustained action beyond this local pilot project. The challenge to sustaining any action is to create productive partnerships between large institutions such as the school district or the Wilder Foundation and local communities and community organizations. So far, that gap has not been significantly bridged in Dayton's Bluff.

The East Side COPC program continues to support the Children's Stability Project with research interns who assist with evaluation by helping to review case files, analyze pre- and post-training tests, and conduct neighborhood surveys. The partnership between the East Side COPC and the Dayton's Bluff community began as research, turned into action, and is now one of continuing research supporting sustained action. It demonstrates the potential for carefully constructed and ongoing community-university collaborations.

**Thomas O'Connell is professor of political studies and faculty coordinator of the Center for Community-Based Learning at Metropolitan State University (MSU). In this latter role, he oversees MSU partnerships with community organizations and serves as a member of the East Side COPC Steering Committee. John Vaughn is community organizer for the Dayton's Bluff Community Council and manages the Children's Stability Project. He is also member of the East Side COPC Steering Committee.**

**Table 1. Mobility Index for Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School, 1997–2001**

1997–1998	1998–1999	1999–2000	2000–2001
64%	56%	74%	53%

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# Building Community Capacity through the East Side COPC

by Katya Ricketts and Jim Erchul

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In the day-to-day work of a community development corporation, with a tight budget and a small staff, we often do not have enough time to pursue new ideas, analyze new data, or reflect on our work. Instead, staff are focused on meeting pressing needs and producing immediate results for our neighborhood. The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) model addresses these organizational challenges by providing to community organizations trained researchers with the time, energy, and outside perspective necessary to contribute to the work of such organizations. Our own organizations—the East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC) and Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services (DBNHS)—have been fortunate to work with 22 East Side COPC interns and research assistants since 1998. The work of these students has made us smarter than we would have been on our own. As a result of our collaborations, we are better informed, our programs are more focused, and our reports are more accurate.

This article describes how the East Side COPC has helped our organizations with commercial and housing development activities on the East Side in St. Paul. There are two primary ways that our involvement with the East Side COPC has informed the work of ESNDC and DBNHS. First, the programming decisions we are making today are more focused and refined as a result of better data. Second, we have increased our ability to communicate, both to community constituents and leaders, and to external agencies with whom we work. This article will describe briefly the community development goals of ESNDC and DBNHS, discuss how our involvement with the East Side COPC has helped to build capacity in our respective community organizations, and offer some concluding remarks about our experiences.

## Community Development in Payne-Phalen: ESNDC and DBNHS

The East Side Neighborhood Development Company has worked since 1979 to bring together the growing diversity of residents and business people in the East Side’s Payne-Phalen community to improve housing, commercial areas, and the civic life of the community. Payne Avenue is the main street of the Payne-Phalen community. Turn-of-the-century brownstone buildings house neighborhood commercial businesses and provide affordable housing and office space on upper floors. In 1998, Payne Avenue (with ESNDC as the implementation agency) was selected by the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation to receive funding to launch the Payne Avenue Main Street program. The program is an intensive effort to organize and mobilize business owners and the surrounding community, market and promote the area, redevelop the physical environment and infrastructure of Payne Avenue, and promote commercial development along the corridor. As a result of the Main Street program, nearly \$23.8 million of private and public money has been reinvested in the Payne-Phalen business district; 62 businesses have made significant improvements to their building facades, with improvements to another 7 businesses in progress; and 9 additional businesses have been attracted to the area.

Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services was established in 1980 as a partnership between residents, government, and financial institutions to improve the housing and quality of life in the Dayton’s Bluff community. The program promotes homeownership through down-payment assistance and reduced-rate financing; home improvement and repair through low-interest and deferred loans; new construction and sale of housing; purchase and rehabilitation of vacant houses; and improvement of neighborhood commercial structures and districts. During the last 20 years,

DBNHS has reinvested more than \$32 million in over 1,013 housing units.

## Building Community Capacity: Our East Side COPC Experience

**The East Side Neighborhood Development Company.** In 1998, an East Side COPC graduate research assistant in public affairs began working with ESNDC on two projects related to the Payne Avenue Main Street program: (1) developing baseline indicators for the program to measure the existing community environment (e.g., building values, crime rate, occupancy rates, etc.) and (2) documenting program activities (e.g., loans made, technical assistance provided, etc.). The graduate student’s most significant contribution was identifying indicators to evaluate the Main Street program. The indicators were selected based on access, reliability, and relevance of data. This time-consuming task could not have been accomplished without the skill, dedication, and focus of the research assistant. The research assistant provided a more detached perspective on the program, which proved useful in determining the most meaningful indicators to examine in evaluating the changes on Payne Avenue.

These data have proved valuable in a number of ways. Professional consultants hired to evaluate the effectiveness of the Main Street program are now using the baseline information. The framework developed by the graduate assistant helped determine the data fields most useful for measuring change, which enabled the consultants to evaluate changes on Payne Avenue over the duration of the program.

The information also has been used to track program activities, most notably by using geographic information systems (GIS) software to map the location of loans and grants that have been made to new or existing businesses. This information helps us not only to communicate to internal and external constituencies the level of assistance that has already been provided to the community, but also to identify areas that have not yet been served by



**A recruitment packet developed by an East Side COPC graduate research assistant has allowed ESNDC to attract a chiropractic clinic to the neighborhood, help two residents invest in and rehabilitate a previously vacant building, and assist a sporting goods business to relocate to a larger commercial space.**



the Main Street program, allowing ESNDC to better target outreach efforts.

Another East Side COPC graduate student research assistant majoring in written communication developed a marketing and recruitment packet to be used to recruit new businesses to the area. The research assistant incorporated information gathered from the baseline study, as well as data from a marketing study completed by an outside consultant working with ESNDC. The original recruitment packets provided information on 20 available properties in the Payne-Phalen community, including market data and property information (photograph, property description, square footage, zoning

restrictions, lease rates, parking availability, property tax rates, and contact information). In addition, the packets contained information on services available to main street businesses through ESNDC. The organization has updated the recruitment materials for new properties using the design template the research assistant created for the initial packet.

This well-designed and professional-looking packet has been used extensively by ESNDC for a variety of purposes. Three examples illustrate the many ways in which these recruitment materials have been put to use. First, the marketing packet was used to help attract a chiropractic teaching clinic to the area. When

the clinic's banker initially contacted ESNDC about the clinic's interest in finding a new space, ESNDC organized a tour of available properties and provided information sheets that described the property, provided contact information for the seller, and listed services and programs that were available to help the clinic purchase and improve a building to meet their needs. Using this information, the clinic purchased a 2,400-square-foot commercial space that was previously vacant, and made improvements to the property. The clinic now employs five full-time-equivalent staff at this location. ESNDC also used the recruitment materials to assist two long-time East Side residents who were interested in investing in a building located on Payne Avenue. These individuals repainted the exterior of the building and brought in a third tenant. Finally, a minority-owned sporting goods business, which was started during the summer International Marketplace sponsored by ESNDC, is now looking to expand beyond the small store it occupies to a larger commercial space on Payne Avenue. Again, ESNDC has used the marketing materials to help the business find a suitable space.

The student researchers approached their work with ESNDC as professionals. They brought strong research skills, resourcefulness, and a broader base of understanding to the work of the Main Street program. Their work not only helped produce useful research products for the program, but also provided a framework and documented a methodology that allows these products to be easily and efficiently maintained and updated by ESNDC. As a result, we are better able to carry out our day-to-day business to improve Payne Avenue by creating new investment and attracting new businesses to serve the community.

**Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services.** With the assistance of several East Side COPC research assistants, DBNHS has begun to use GIS technology extensively to assess the relationship between housing and mobility among families at the community school, Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary. High mobility has long been cited as a major contributor to poor achievement among some students attending the school.

A graduate student in geographic information science and an undergraduate student in housing studies were hired to work with DBNHS. The undergraduate converted a housing condition

survey into an electronic database so the information could be used in GIS applications. The graduate research assistant helped obtain parcel maps and public property data to provide base reference maps. She also helped DBNHS identify how maps could be used by our organization to present our work to board and community members, funders, and public agency partners.

Ultimately, DBNHS found that many of the buildings in which Dayton's Bluff Elementary students live are substandard, thus contributing to the mobility of families who relocate to find better housing. Using the housing condition database and GIS software, it was discovered that 10% of the school's population was housed in one nearby apartment building that was a problem property. The GIS analysis put a face on the problem of student mobility and helped educate community leaders, school board members, and City of St. Paul officials about the connection between housing conditions, housing stability, and student mobility. As a result, DBNHS submitted two successful funding proposals—one to the State of Minnesota and one to the City of St. Paul—to build or redevelop affordable housing in the area surrounding Dayton's Bluff Elementary. In the last two years, DBNHS has used the funding to redevelop 7 vacant houses and build 15 new houses that provide affordable homeownership opportunities to families with children who attend the community school.

In addition, an advisory committee formed by DBNHS, community leaders, landlords, parents, and other residents reached the conclusion that quality affordable rental housing within walking distance of the school was needed to meet the housing needs of lower income families. As a result of the committee's work, DBNHS is starting construction of a 16-unit rental project suitable for families with children. This is the first new rental housing project in the Dayton's Bluff community in more than 20 years. East Side COPC research assistants documented the important connection between student achievement and housing mobility, and the link to the undesirable housing conditions in which many families lived. This research persuaded the committee, and ultimately the community, about the need to create new affordable rental housing for families with children attending the community school. This is a significant achievement, given the

increasing public opposition to many affordable rental housing projects.

### Conclusion

The East Side COPC has provided us access to the vast resources of higher education in the Twin Cities. Our experience with the East Side COPC has been important to building DBNHS'

organizational capacity to plan programs, target resources, and evaluate programs and services. The energy and outside perspective brought by the student researchers, and by the faculty that supported them, has enabled us to develop a stronger conceptual context for our work. This has helped us to develop a more coherent rationale for



photos courtesy of Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services

***In the last two years, DBNHS has used funds leveraged with the assistance of several East Side COPC projects to build or rehabilitate 22 homes in the neighborhood. These homes help to reduce student mobility by providing stable and affordable housing opportunities to families with children who attend Dayton's Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary School.***



our community development work, and thereby better engage our leadership and reenergize efforts to connect our work with other community development projects. Documentation of the research findings and projects carried out by student researchers provided us with a means to communicate our work to public officials, funders, and the general public. The research also contributed to our credibility by demonstrating the careful thought and understanding that goes into our decision making.

As with any partnership, our work with our academic partners has also required a commitment of our time—time to communicate our work, to explain the community context, and to provide project feedback and oversight. We have learned that bringing student researchers onboard should be approached with the same seriousness

and forethought that is used in any hiring decision. But the results of that time commitment have been more than worth it, and we have been rewarded with new ideas, new energy, the introduction of new technology, and the development of additional resources for community development.

On a broader scale, our involvement with the East Side COPC has contributed to a new generation of community development professionals. It is a great pleasure to see students who have worked with us go on to work for or serve in leadership positions with other community development corporations in the Twin Cities and throughout the nation.

Finally, an intangible impact of the East Side COPC on ESDNC and DBNHS is that the neighborhood and our organizations have received broader exposure. The process created by the East Side

COPC for connecting students and classes to community organizations has opened many doors. Professors and staff at the educational institutions have become more familiar with and more involved in the East Side. The long-term impact of these initial relationships is that ESDNC and DBNHS are better positioned to maintain access to student research, and we believe those partnerships will continue to enrich our work.

**Katya Ricketts is director of economic development at the East Side Neighborhood Development Company. She is a graduate of the public affairs program at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. Jim Erchul has served as executive director of Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services since 1991. He has a master's degree in social work from the University of Minnesota.**

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## Project Update: Fish Lake Dam Site Excavation

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A three-year cooperative project between the Archaeometry Laboratory at the University of Minnesota at Duluth and Minnesota Power has provided a rare opportunity to contribute to scientific knowledge about the history of human occupation in northeastern Minnesota, while simultaneously promoting educational and public outreach goals. The project, led by George "Ripp" Rapp and Susan Mulholland of the Archaeometry Laboratory, involved archaeological excavations at the Fish Lake Dam site near Duluth that combined research, teaching, and volunteer participation.

Minnesota Power owns the land on which the site is located, and manages it as part of the St. Louis River Hydroelectric Project. Part of Minnesota Power's responsibilities under its federal operations license is to manage and protect significant archaeological sites. The Archaeometry Laboratory is a research center at the University of Minnesota at Duluth that focuses on interdisciplinary archaeology. In 1990, the laboratory began conducting various archaeological projects for Minnesota Power, ranging from land surveys to excavations. Beyond the

immediate land management concerns of Minnesota Power, a long-term objective of the relationship was archaeological research into northeastern Minnesota's history.

The Fish Lake Dam site provided a unique opportunity to look at a sequence of human occupations spanning several thousand years, from the Paleo-Indian Tradition to the Woodland Tradition. The Archaic Tradition of 3,000–8,000 years ago was especially well represented. Given the time span of this period and the general lack of information about it, the research potential of the site was obvious. Excavations undertaken during 2000 continued the work of previous years by combining the efforts of University of Minnesota students, volunteers from the local community, and archeological professionals. Students and volunteers learned excavation techniques and recorded data from their field work, under the supervision of professional archaeologists. Students also learned archaeological method and theory through discussion periods. Funding from CURA, provided through the Center for Community and Regional Research at the University of

Minnesota at Duluth, was critical in supporting project staff in the field.

The most recent excavations led to identification of a substantial Woodland Tradition component, including a fire hearth where pottery is thought to have been fired. Prior to this season, the Woodland Tradition had been represented by a few scattered fragments of pottery. The intact deposits provided an opportunity to date the period of human occupation. Earlier Archaic Tradition deposits were also identified at greater depths. When these recent finds are combined with deposits unearthed during previous seasons, it appears that as many as a half-dozen Archaic occupations may have occurred at the site. The presence of so many different groups, as indicated by different spear-point styles, will permit analysis of human lifestyles during much of the Archaic Period.

Analysis of the materials will be completed during the winter of 2001–2002. Additional excavations are planned for the future, but already significant information is available about the long history of human occupation in northeastern Minnesota.

# A Genuine Partnership in a Racially Transitioning Community

by Sam Grant and Vanessa Steele

Fifteen years ago, the East Side of St. Paul—like many communities in the Twin Cities metropolitan area—was home to very few people of color. The East Side has changed dramatically since that time, and now more than 50% of residents are people of color, including a very sizable population of African Americans, American Indians, Latinos/Latinas, and Hmong (see Table 1). Because of these demographic changes, it is imperative that existing East Side community organizations partner with representatives of communities of color, and that leaders of color emerge to ensure that what are considered positive changes for the community do not become negative changes for communities of color.

Toward this end, three years ago the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) committed to developing four task forces, one in each of the primary communities of color on the East Side. The African American Task Force, American Indian Task Force, Hmong Task Force, and Latino Task Force were created to facilitate a partnership among residents of color on the East Side, students at the universities and colleges participating in the East Side COPC, faculty committed to participatory research initiatives through the East Side COPC, and organizational representatives from the East Side community.

For many reasons, forming these relationships among cultural groups, institutions of higher education, and community organizations posed a variety of challenges. The most significant challenge was the lack of pre-existing relationships and networks between these institutions and organizations and communities of color on the East Side, which limited our ability to bring people to the table. A second challenge was scheduling. Because of the diverse schedules of students, faculty, organizational staff members, and residents, it was hard to find convenient times for members of the task forces to meet and carry out their work. A third challenge was creating an agenda. Given

the diverse interests and concerns of participants, it was a challenge to prioritize issues and decide which ones the task forces would work on. In addition, the limited resources available to task force members and the difficulties in mobilizing additional resources made it hard for the task forces to carry out the work they had set for themselves.

Despite these challenges, the task forces were established in each of the communities of color. Each task force successfully identified priority issues on which to focus its efforts, and each engaged in projects that improved the quality of life of residents of color on the East Side. Does that mean the East Side COPC has been successful? We think the answer is a guarded “yes”—the East Side COPC has demonstrated that genuine partnerships between communities and academic institutions can generate positive impacts for a community undergoing significant racial transitions.

Much of East Side COPC’s success is evident in the development and growth of the task forces, which provided authentic links between the East Side COPC and communities of color. Below we provide a snapshot of each task force. Although they share common concerns on some issues, the task forces themselves are as unique and diverse as the communities they represent. Each has been vigilant in resisting overgeneralizations about the issues that face its community, and each has persisted in bringing its unique voice to the East Side COPC table. During the last three years, East Side COPC partners have developed relationships built on trust and mutual respect around such common concerns as poverty, discrimination, housing, access to resources, and quality of life issues.

## The East Side COPC Task Forces: Leadership and Capacity-Building in Communities of Color

**The American Indian Task Force.** In many ways, the emergence of the American Indian Task Force inspired the multicultural and inclusive tone of what we know today as the East Side COPC. At a preliminary planning meeting for



photo by Nancy Conroy

**John Poupart, chair of the East Side COPC American Indian Task Force**

submitting a COPC proposal to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), John Poupart—director of the American Indian Policy Center and now chair of the American Indian Task Force—raised an important question: How will American Indians and other people of color be included in the COPC process? Poupart’s question came as a surprise to many in the room; few had thought seriously about how to bring people of color to the table. Ultimately, the idea of creating four task forces that would represent the American Indian, African American, Hmong, and Latino/Latina communities on the East Side was born from a desire to find answers to Poupart’s question.

The American Indian population on the East Side is the largest urban population of American Indians in St. Paul. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, American Indians make up .02% of the East Side population. Prior to White settlement in the area, large numbers of Dakota peoples had lived on what we now call the East Side. The recent re-migration of American Indians to the East Side is due largely to the availability of housing during the last 15 years. Fifty

percent of American Indians in St. Paul live below the poverty level, most of them on the East Side.

Many of the barriers that communities of color face in the United States derive from poverty and discrimination. In the case of American Indians, lack of understanding about traditional American Indian culture is another significant barrier, one that contributes both to poverty and to discrimination. The East Side community's lack of awareness about American Indian cultures and peoples is reflected in the dearth of resources that are available to American Indians. Few East Side COPC organizational partners provided—or sought to provide—services to American Indians prior to their participation in the East Side COPC. The American Indian Task Force successfully raised with its organizational partners the issues of inclusiveness, access to services, and community outreach with respect to American Indian residents on the East Side.

The task force was formed with a vision of building a better tomorrow for American Indian children. "American

Indian people find strength in their culture and values," John Poupart explains. "Our values and norms keep us alive and energized." The task force's mission is to nurture and sustain those cultural values and norms by providing services to, and encouraging leadership from within, the American Indian community. Accordingly, the task force is composed of American Indian leaders with experience advocating for and providing services to the community.

Several successful research and outreach projects have been carried out under the direction of the task force, including an assessment of housing needs, a research project on a historical American Indian figure, and the collection of demographic data on American Indian residents. As a result of these projects, several reports were published describing barriers that American Indians on the East Side face. The reports included demographic information about and resources for these East Side residents. Poupart explains that the reports "have helped to educate policy makers, East Side COPC partners, and residents about the American Indian community."

Future plans for the American Indian Task Force include designing a multiuse service center for the East Side American Indian community and making a greater impact on policy makers. The task force will continue to educate policy makers, community organizations, and community members about American Indian issues and concerns. Poupart is optimistic about the task force's continued work with the East Side COPC. "We can learn from others on the East Side, and others can learn from us in an honorable exchange of information. [In this way,] we can achieve knowledge and a unified response to the challenges we face as a community."

#### **African American Task Force.**

African Americans have been migrating to the East Side in small numbers for more than one hundred years. Although the majority of African Americans who settled in St. Paul from the 1800s to the 1960s moved to the Summit-University area, a small number chose to reside on the East Side. Those who migrated were primarily from the southern and eastern parts of the United States, and most

**Table 1. Demographic Changes in the Dayton's Bluff and Payne-Phalen Communities on St. Paul's East Side, 1980–2000**

	White	Black	American Indian	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Other	Two or more races*	Total	Hispanic or Latino†
<b>Dayton's Bluff</b>								
1980	13,123 (81.0)	1,329 (8.2)	328 (2.0)	1,093 (6.7)	336 (2.1)	—	16,209 (100.0)	764 (4.7)
1990	13,204 (85.5)	732 (4.7)	149 (1.0)	1,080 (7.0)	277 (1.5)	—	15,442 (99.7)	629 (4.1)
2000	9,745 (55.2)	2,256 (12.8)	370 (2.1)	3,456 (19.6)	913 (5.2)	921 (5.2)	17,661 (100.1)	1,890 (10.7)
<b>Payne-Phalen</b>								
1980	22,215 (83.3)	1,326 (5.0)	600 (2.3)	1,864 (7.0)	657 (2.5)	—	26,662 (100.1)	1,218 (4.6)
1990	22,253 (83.4)	1,372 (5.1)	518 (1.9)	1,885 (7.1)	664 (2.5)	—	26,692 (100.0)	1,221 (4.6)
2000	16,863 (53.5)	3,636 (11.5)	514 (1.6)	7,433 (23.6)	1,542 (4.9)	1,531 (4.9)	31,519 (100.0)	3,325 (10.5)
<b>Total</b>								
1980	35,338 (82.4)	2,655 (6.2)	928 (2.2)	2,957 (6.9)	993 (2.3)	—	42,871 (100.0)	1,982 (4.6)
1990	35,457 (84.2)	2,104 (5.0)	667 (1.6)	2,965 (7.0)	941 (2.2)	—	42,134 (100.0)	1,850 (4.4)
2000	26,608 (54.1)	5,892 (12.0)	884 (1.8)	10,889 (22.1)	2,455 (5.0)	2,452 (5.0)	49,180 (100.0)	5,215 (10.6)

Source: 1980, 1990, and 2000 U.S. Census

Note: Figures in parentheses are row percentages. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\* In the 2000 U.S. Census, people were, for the first time, able to identify themselves as belonging to more than one racial group. This category signifies that a respondent chose two or more races on their census form. In such cases, the responses were not counted in the totals for the individual racial categories chosen by the respondent. This has a deflationary impact on the totals for all racial categories, but particularly for the category American Indian.

† This category includes people of any race of Hispanic or Latino/Latina heritage.



**Petey Mitchell, chair of the East Side COPC African American Task Force**

were fleeing enslavement, looking for better work opportunities, or searching for a better life. Today, the majority of Black migrants come to the Twin Cities from southern states or from larger midwestern cities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Gary (Indiana), or Detroit. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, African Americans now make up 12% of the East Side population.

In most cases, African Americans who relocate to the Twin Cities are fleeing poor economic and social conditions, searching for better jobs, and generally seeking a better way of life. "The availability of housing is the primary reason that African Americans have moved to the East Side," says Petey Mitchell, chair of the African American Task Force. Although low-cost housing is available on the East Side, resources and services for the African American community generally are not. "The Black community doesn't have an identity on the East Side—only a presence," Mitchell says. Outside of a few churches, businesses, and homeowners, there are no African American institutions on the East Side, and there are few Black teachers and even fewer community organizations or social service providers to address the needs of the growing African American community. In addition, much of the East Side population is highly mobile; changing residences several times per year is common for a significant number of renters. Deteriorating housing stock, poor landlord-tenant relations, and month-to-month leases contribute to this instability and further aggravate the

problems caused by the general lack of resources and services.

The African American Task Force has taken to heart the East Side COPC's challenge to form a task force of residents, community organizations, and academic partners. The task force's vision is to increase community prosperity to the point where people achieve genuine self-determination and realize their full value and potential as members of the community. The task force set out to achieve this mission by first assessing the needs of the African American community on the East Side and evaluating available resources in the areas of housing, health, safety, crime prevention, education, and faith-based and community organizations. Based on the needs that were identified, the task force is now working with residents, institutions, and organizations on collaborative projects that attempt to address some of these issues.

The strength of the Black community on the East Side is reflected in the increase in homeownership, and in the influence of African American organizers who are attempting to increase awareness among community organizations, schools, and service agencies about issues important to the Black community. "African Americans are wanting to call the East Side home," says Mitchell. "They are digging in their heels and investing in this community to make it a better place to live."

Building networks, connecting residents with resources, and fostering community leadership are the greatest

challenges currently facing the task force. The task force is working on three collaborative projects on the East Side intended to increase healthcare services and options for African Americans, improve and increase educational and cultural enrichment activities for African American youth, and increase housing stability for African American families who rent.

**Hmong Task Force.** The Hmong community is the largest of all communities of color on the East Side. "The Hmong have changed the neighborhood and added to the idea of diversity," says Fu Hang, former cochair of the Hmong Task Force. Hmong residents make up 22% of the East Side population, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. Socioeconomic and cultural impacts of the Hmong community are evident in the increase in Hmong homeowners, small businesses, and community-based organizations, and in the number of Hmong children enrolled in East Side schools. "The East Side has become the hub of the Hmong community in the Twin Cities," Hang adds.

The growth in economic opportunities is the reason many Hmong move to the East Side. However, lack of knowledge about mainstream institutions that provide loans for homeownership, home improvement, and small businesses can become a significant barrier to full participation in these opportunities. "The Hmong community can generate equity, but once they are beyond that point, what sort of resources are there for them?" Hang observes. Other challenges that the Hmong community faces include language and cultural barriers, and the negative impacts of stereotypes and misconceptions on the part of mainstream culture. Hang also foresees segregation as a potential problem, and as a source of further misconceptions about the Hmong community.

Clanship and cultural bonds to family have played a strong role in the Hmong community's successful economic and social growth in the Twin Cities. The Hmong Task Force was formed by East Side business owners and people who worked in the community. The mission of the task force is to research the needs and concerns of the Hmong community, and initiate an advocacy plan. The task force has focused on the issues of affordable housing and employment opportunities for Hmong on the East Side. The Hmong Task Force is currently under-

going a leadership transition, and Hang would like to see the task force emerge from this transition as an advocate group with greater resident involvement.

**Latino Task Force.** The Latino/Latina community is the second fastest growing community of color on the East Side. Often overshadowed by the large Latino/Latina community on the West Side, “East Side Latinos are virtually invisible to service providers,” says Eustolio Benavides, chair of the Latino Task Force. Latinos/Latinas began migrating to the East Side in small numbers at the turn of the 20th century in search of work and housing opportunities. More recently, Latinos/Latinas (predominantly of Mexican descent) have been coming to the East Side in larger numbers. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Latinos/Latinas make up 11% of the East Side’s population. Many community advocates believe this statistic drastically underestimates the Latino/Latina population because undocumented Latino/Latina residents are not counted by the U.S. Census Bureau or serviced by government-sponsored programs. Benavides says that the dramatic increase in the number of Latinos/Latinas on the East Side is evident to any observer. When he moved to the neighborhood nine years ago, he explains, “there were only 10 families attending Sacred Heart Church. Now there are about 600 families” attending the church’s Spanish services.

The lack of social services for Latinos/Latinas on the East Side is one of the greatest barriers for the community, says Benavides. Churches are being overwhelmed by the requests of Latino/Latina parishioners seeking to obtain basic services in the areas of housing, employment, legal advice, and translation. Although these services are available on the West Side, transportation is a barrier for many East Side Latinos/Latinas. One of the central goals of the Latino Task Force is to provide these services on the East Side.

The Latino Task Force is made up of East Side residents, community organizational staff members, and advocacy group representatives. The task force envisions a future in which Latinos/Latinas enjoy a high quality of life, with access to economic opportunities and to services that meet their needs, and with opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the community. One of the major projects of the task force is to build an East Side Latino Cultural Center that can serve

as a resource for Latinos/Latinas to network and gain access to services, and as a home for agencies that are seeking to better serve the Latino/Latina community.

“Our values of family, children, and faith are the strength of the Latino

community,” says Benavides. Families can provide each other with economic, mental, spiritual, and even medical resources. These internal resources have contributed to the community’s prosperity on the East Side. There are a growing number of Latino/Latina busi-

## Task Force Collaborations: The Better Together Initiative

*by Petey Mitchell, community organizer, East Side Neighborhood Development Company*

My first impression of the East Side involved a gang of angry White people standing outside of Frost Lake Elementary School protesting the school’s integration. I was a fourth grader at the time. Back in 1968, the East Side was no place for Black children to go to school. With the enforcement of federal court rulings that deemed segregation unconstitutional, I was one of about 60 Black kids to be integrated into East Side schools that year. The protesting parents and residents refused to let us enter the school, so we sat on the bus for six hours that first day. We were only permitted to leave the bus for bathroom breaks. For the next three days, we repeated the same scenario, sitting on the bus for six hours while the protesters shouted and waved signs outside of the school. On the fifth day, the principal finally permitted us to enter the school with police and National Guard escorts.

Needless to say, we African American children didn’t feel very welcomed to the school or to the East Side. The White kids weren’t so bad—it was the adults who despised us. After being graduated from sixth grade at Frost Lake Elementary, I vowed never to step foot on the East Side again. I attended junior high and high school in Rondo, where my community was. Not until 1997 did I come back to the East Side when I accepted the position of community organizer at the East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC). Ironically, I saw this position as an opportunity to continue the diversity work that we started back in 1967.

One of my first tasks as community organizer was to initiate the Better Together project. The goal of Better Together is to build a prosperous multicultural neighborhood by bringing together residents of different cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds on impor-

tant community issues. With the neighborhood’s dramatic increase in residents of color during the last 10 years, it became necessary to build a sense of community and solidarity in the neighborhood. The initiative started by bringing residents of different backgrounds together through meetings and networking exchanges. Community forums were held to educate people about each cultural, ethnic, and racial group’s history and celebrations. A year later, the initiative sponsored breakfast clubs, where residents of different backgrounds ate breakfast together in an effort to build cross-cultural relationships. The following year, Better Together began to bring together residents of different faiths by facilitating meetings between religious and spiritual leaders to discuss community needs and assets. Last year, the initiative sponsored a conference that focused on the “new” East Side and its increasingly diverse communities. The East Side COPC American Indian Task Force, African American Task Force, Hmong Task Force, and Latino Task Force presented reports on their respective communities’ history, culture, and the issues that affect them. The conference served as an educational and networking tool for a broad group of East Side service providers, residents, business owners, school administrators, pastors, and others.

If someone had told me 20 years ago that I’d be working on the East Side on a multicultural community project called Better Together, I would have laughed. My experience as a fourth grader at Frost Lake Elementary represented a painful side of the struggle to bring different communities together. But Better Together has been successful in its effort to build a prosperous multicultural community on the East Side. Through the East Side COPC partnership, the task forces of color and community organizations like ESNDC have been able to magnify the voices of residents of color and raise awareness about their concerns and the issues that affect them.



**An East Side COPC Hmong Task Force meeting**



**The East Side COPC Latino Task Force**

nesses, strong churches, and a new Latino/Latina charter school starting up on the East Side, and service providers are beginning to recognize the importance of hiring staff who speak both Spanish and English. The task force's future challenges include finding resources to establish the Latino Cultural Center, and collaborating with community and social service organizations on outreach projects.

**Looking to the Future: New Directions**

Community-university partnerships are inherently difficult to construct and sustain. The East Side COPC has consistently pursued a genuine partnership that puts the community's interests first. This was a difficult challenge in the beginning, and it remains a difficult challenge as we look to the future. Specifically, the East Side COPC must continue to address the following challenges:

- ▶ build the capacity of each task force to plan strategically, raise outside resources, and activate "deep ties" in the community;

- ▶ revise the organizational model of the East Side COPC to recognize a new orientation toward leadership represented by the communities of color task forces; and
- ▶ learn from our East Side COPC experience so that we become more effective at engaging in genuine university-community partnerships and cross-cultural relationships.

With the support of the New Directions grant we were recently awarded (see sidebar), the East Side COPC partners will continue to build multicultural relationships by collaborating on projects that address issues of concern to multiple communities.

As with most collaborative efforts, it is much easier to generate ideas about what to do and how to do it than it is to actually implement effective strategies. So many of the dynamics of and barriers to genuine partnerships are simply not under our control. Furthermore, individual, organizational, and cultural blind spots can often impede our effectiveness, despite our best efforts. There are no road maps.

Wrong turns have been and will continue to be made, but we have begun the journey. Organizational capacity is increasing within each community of color at the same time that the willingness to listen and the ability to hear are increasing on the part of the community partners and educational institutions. The agendas for change are clearer and we are better able to identify the issues involved. Honest and direct conversations are occurring where they were difficult or impossible before. Relationships are growing stronger among all participants, and new opportunities and programs are emerging as a result. If we address the challenges above, we will have something even more useful to share with those engaged in community-university collaborations.

**Sam Grant** is associate director of the Center for Community-Based Learning at Metropolitan State University. He directed Metro State student researchers who worked with the East Side COPC task forces. **Vanessa Steele** is community program specialist at CURA and a member of the African American Task Force.

## East Side COPC Program Awarded New Directions Grant

The East Side COPC program was recently awarded a \$149,000 New Directions grant by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support work from October 2001 through September 2003. All of the original East Side COPC partners will continue to cooperate in the New Directions effort, which will be called the New East Side Partnership.

The New Directions grant will support projects proposed by the East Side COPC task forces. The grant will be used to train new organizational staff and community leaders, support affordable rental housing efforts, develop plans for a Latino/Latina community center and an American Indian multiuse service and cultural center, establish a community health clinic and outreach campaign, and support after-school programs for local children.

# Student Perspectives on the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center

During the three years of the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program, 61 student assistants were employed to work on 55 projects, ranging from helping with communications and outreach efforts to providing geographic information systems (GIS) analysis and assisting with the development of new programs. Students participating in the program were from one of the three academic partners who participated in the East Side COPC (Metropolitan State, Macalester College, and the University of Minnesota), or from one of the schools that participates in a consortium of Twin Cities schools of higher education (Augsburg College, College of St. Catherine, Concordia University, Hamline University, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and the University of St. Thomas). More than one-third of the student positions (36%) were filled by people of color, bringing a diverse perspective to COPC's work with the East Side.

Students were competitively selected for the program, and were employed as professionals working under the supervision of the community organization responsible for the project. These students were immersed in the East Side community, were given significant responsibilities, and made important contributions to the organizations they worked with. The three student narratives that follow reflect the range of experience and perspective represented by the three academic institution partners and the students who participated in the East Side COPC program.

## A New Understanding of Community Development

by Elizabeth Seefeldt

I am entering my senior year of undergraduate studies at Macalester College with a major in economics, a pre-med emphasis, and a minor in anthropology. My views of community development have been colored by watching my parents and their coworkers engage in community health work and education in Nepal, and by my own community service work in Nepal and India during high school. Living in a family dedicated to improving the spiritual and physical health of the surrounding community has shown me how worthwhile and satisfying such work can be, and has made me want

to pursue similar work after completing my education.

I must admit that I am also a bit skeptical about some community development efforts. From my community service work abroad, I've learned that such efforts can succeed only if the community development agency has a realistic goal and establishes a genuine partnership with community representatives. In addition, I've learned that efforts to improve other people's lives from outside the community can be concretized and made self-



photo by Steve Schneider

Elizabeth Seefeldt

sustaining only if the will to change and the methods of change emerge from the community itself.

I was introduced to the East Side COPC program through the community service office at Macalester College and my subsequent assignment with Dayton's Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services (DBNHS) here on the East Side. My work this summer has involved research on the state of East Seventh Street businesses. This work was intended to inform the activities of the businesses, DBNHS, the city council, and other interested parties who want to see the area revitalized. I hoped to add to the discussion the perspective of the owners of the businesses on the street, a perspective that was sometimes difficult to obtain due to their hectic schedules and mistrust of government in general and "city planners" in particular.

I carried out my research assignment by surveying each business on East Seventh and finding out about their customer base, resources, and willingness

to make changes to their storefronts. I also investigated the possibility of starting an East Seventh Street Business Association. Another component of the assignment was to distribute to businesses information about the East Side Business Loan fund, a special loan program for small businesses whose credit histories make it difficult for them to obtain a conventional loan. My principal contacts for this research were DBNHS, the East Side Neighborhood Development Company, and of course the business owners themselves.

Development of a business district such as East Seventh seems like an easier task than, say, improving housing, primarily because businesses have a profit motive to improve. The real challenge is making the nonprofit's role relevant and worthwhile to business owners. Their partnership and accountability are almost ensured if the plan is drawn up together, the goals are realistic, and the necessary resources are available. I went into the project armed with all of these resources, as well as previous research on the East Seventh Street and the surrounding community, and with a great deal of enthusiasm and optimism.

After spending time talking to the business owners during the course of the survey process, I discovered complications and conflicting interests that had to be dealt with, but I also was pleasantly surprised to find a real willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the business owners to improve their own businesses and the streetscape. The difficulties I encountered included differences of opinion among the business owners as to the best way to proceed, and skepticism from some business owners about working with any outside agency—whether a business association, a nonprofit organization like DBNHS, or city government. Thus, it was no surprise to find that much planning had already been done without the active involvement of the businesses themselves.

Now that I have completed my research with DBNHS, I have a new understanding of community development. First, the pace is not always fast, and there are no easy answers to many problems due to lack of resources, the multitude of different opinions and interests at stake, and the negative attitudes some people have about development and other people

or institutions. The area that surrounds East Seventh Street is quite diverse and has a lower income than much of the surrounding areas. There is a real split in the fabric of the community between the “old East Siders” and the new immigrant and mostly low-income African American residents. I have learned during the interview process about the reality of racism, mistrust, and fear in the area, and how that can slow down the development process because people are unwilling to change and work together.

I have also observed that there are a lot of funds available for development, but because of legalities and political inefficiencies, they are not always used optimally. I have become much more sympathetic toward the businesses, which work hard to survive but are continually tripped up by high taxes and sometimes absurd permit fees.

Working in this area of the Twin Cities has given me a better appreciation for the problems associated with poverty and for the way that they are dealt with here. Above all, the lesson I’ve learned from working on the East Side is that people need to want to change for change to occur, no matter how much people from outside the community want them to change or provide the resources for them to do so.

**Elizabeth Seefeldt is a research intern with Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services. She is currently an undergraduate economics major at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.**

### Learning about Communities of Color on the East Side

by *Jamie Lane*

Community development wasn’t something that I thought much about prior to working as a student research assistant with the East Side COPC African American Task Force. After graduating from high school my interests were somewhat unfocused, as they are for most teenagers. Being independent and getting a decent-paying job were my primary concerns. I graduated from Rosemount High School in 1989 with an increased awareness of and desire to learn more about people of color, their histories, and their struggles. I am White, my grandparents having migrated to this country from Croatia and Germany. My interest in ethnic studies grew out of the positive experience that I had in an African American

history class I took in high school. The fact that history was so different from what I previously had been taught sparked my interest. The things that I learned in that class inspired me to look more critically at what information was given to me. It changed my life in a very personal way.

After high school, I attended Inver Hills Community College where I earned an associate of arts degree. I am currently an undergraduate student at Metropolitan State University in the ethnic studies department. My first contact with community work and community development occurred when I was hired by the African American Task Force to work on a housing research project. Until that point, most of my jobs had been in counseling or



photo by Steve Schneider

*Jamie Lane*

retail. The project involved housing for African American residents on the East Side, specifically determining the barriers to obtaining housing, the types of housing desired by residents, and the resources available to residents. Mary Poe, former housing organizer for the District 4 Community Council, was my supervisor. I started the project by shadowing Mary and learning what she does as a housing organizer. Her work is challenging, to say the least. Mary services people who are seeking rental or emergency housing. All of her clients are low income, and many are African American. Mary finds housing or other resources for renters, and matches responsible landlords with good tenants. At times, Mary and I would run down to the housing court to review court files or support a tenant or landlord in a case. Occasionally, she’d mediate a dispute between landlords and tenants.

Prior to getting this position, I didn’t have much research experience—outside

of small classroom assignments. As part of my job, I began collecting information about housing resources that were available to East Side residents. I learned that there were more resources available for homeownership than rental housing, and that many programs were citywide or metrowide, with few neighborhood-specific services. I interviewed the directors of four housing service programs that assist East Side residents: HomeLink, Dayton’s Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services, District 4 Community Council’s Children’s Stability Project, and the Roof Project. Two of the programs provide rental housing services and the other two provide homeowner services. After researching the available housing resources and talking with select housing service providers, I had a better picture of the East Side’s housing situation. Many people say that the East Side is the last remaining place in the Twin Cities metropolitan area to find affordable housing, but much of the available housing on the East Side is not suitable for occupancy. Dilapidated housing, slumlords, and irresponsible tenants characterize much of the rental housing on the East Side. Although Mayor Norm Coleman’s advertisements encouraging homeownership and business development on the East Side focus on the neighborhood’s beautiful Victorian-style homes, the ready availability of housing, and the thriving business corridors, most East Side renters live in concentrated poverty with few resources available to them.

As part of my work, I also conducted a focus group meeting at the Dorothy Day Center with people who had been in and out of the homeless shelter. This was the third focus group concerning residents’ housing concerns that the task force coordinated. I learned more about the specific barriers that deter people from obtaining housing. Unlawful detainers (UDs) pose the most significant barrier. Unlawful detainers can be placed on a renter’s rental record by a landlord if the renter leaves the apartment in arrears or is evicted. The UD stays on a renter’s record for an indefinite period of time. Many renters say they are discriminated against because of the UD system. They also say that they have few avenues to register complaints about discriminatory rental practices or bad landlords who don’t maintain their properties.

By the end of the project, I had learned a lot about housing at the grassroots level. Serving people that many organizations and agencies don’t want to serve revealed to me how discrimination plays out in

housing and community development. My final product for the project was a report that described the barriers facing and aspirations of many African American residents with regard to housing. It included a housing services resource list. I intend to take my experience with this research project and the African American Task Force and apply it to my interests in ethnic studies. The tangible experiences that I gained through this project will provide me with a current, not just a historical, perspective on the issues that many communities of color in the Twin Cities face on a daily basis.

**Jamie Lane is an undergraduate student at Metropolitan State University, majoring in ethnic studies.**

### From Intern to Professional: An Evolution of Working on the East Side

by Jessica Deegan

I have been involved in the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program since its inception. As an undergraduate working toward a bachelor of science degree in housing at the University of Minnesota, I discovered CURA in my search for internships related to my field of study. I was interested in learning more about housing in the context of community development, so I wanted an internship with a community-based organization.

I applied for—and after an arduous interview process, obtained—an internship with the HomeLink program, working with Carol Wicklund. There were two things I did not realize would stem from my taking this position. One was that I was beginning a relationship with CURA—and later with the East Side COPC program—that would extend beyond my initial duties as a researcher. The other was that I was beginning a process of coming to understand that while the reality of community development is much different than the idealism of academia, there are common denominators.

HomeLink is a homeownership and mortgage education program geared to first-time homebuyers on the East Side of St. Paul. As a research assistant, I brought my University-groomed research skills to HomeLink, and conducted a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the program. I was happy to finally be able to use these skills in the real world. However, at the end of the day, it was still *research*. My fellow research assistant Mai Neng Moua and I put together a great report for HomeLink. Yet we never really knew exactly what it meant to be that family of

eight immigrants with limited English and no credit history trying to purchase a house. I'd say we just didn't get it yet.

My experience with HomeLink, a much-needed step between academia and coming to learn how things really work, got me thinking beyond percentages and census data.

Back at the University, I was looking toward graduation when HomeLink's host offices, the East Side Neighborhood Development Company (ESNDC), called me back to the community. Mike Anderson, director of ESNDC, contacted me hoping I would consider a year of AmeriCorps service as my next step in professional development. A year of committed full-time volunteer work meant a slightly



photo by Steve Schneider

**Jessica Deegan**

delayed graduation and living at a poverty-level wage, but I was eager to get back to the real world.

As the volunteer staff in the office, my work was varied. I did the ubiquitous nonprofit mailings, learned how to paint houses, and was responsible for organizing a communitywide outreach campaign. I met people who were statistics to me in my research, and found out that they couldn't be so easily categorized. These were great people who were making a difference in their community. Suddenly I was doing the work I had thus far only researched. I also had the opportunity to work with the East Side COPC program to hire and supervise research assistants, and through my connections with CURA, I served as a community mentor for a student doing another research project with HomeLink.

As my year of service was ending, Mike asked what I thought I might want to do next, and put me in contact with another project on the East Side. Before I knew it, I was interviewing for my first "real" job at the Phalen Corridor Initiative

(PCI) with the director of the program, Curt Milburn. I remembered seeing a billboard for this high-profile urban redevelopment initiative back when I was an intern for HomeLink. The billboard had displayed a map of the corridor, and a laundry-list of development projects the initiative intended to complete. When I was offered and accepted the job, I realized that I had taken another step in my transition, as I was questioning the importance of "research" by this time. All I wanted was to see things get done, and for me, taking this job was the way to do that. I now got to work at the intersection of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors on community and urban development—each of which envisioned similar end results, but just had different ways of getting there. As I moved on, I was also able to continue my relationship with the East Side COPC program, both by working with student interns and by joining the East Side COPC Steering Committee.

To the Phalen Corridor Initiative, I've been staff for two years. It's a great project, but such an incredibly long process. I have learned that the day-to-day activities of this work can easily bury you in the details. Someday, there will be another billboard showing all the things that this project accomplished for the Phalen Corridor. No one will remember how long it took or how many hoops we jumped through, just what a difference it has made since that first billboard was put up. Practitioners and academics alike will appreciate the results of this fine project.

I have finally found the common denominator I have been searching for since I was a student: it is the outcomes of community work, which can bridge development efforts with the academic theories and research. We all want the same things for our communities.

Now that I have made peace with that internal struggle between the world of academia and the real world, I am returning to school to pursue a master's degree in geographic information science. My experiences with the East Side COPC program and CURA have helped me learn to strike a delicate balance by carefully considering the effects of research and data analysis when applying them to the real world, and by not losing sight of the big picture outcomes. I look forward to taking my real-world skills back to the University.

**Jessica Deegan is project assistant for the Phalen Corridor Initiative. She received her bachelor of science degree in housing studies from the University of Minnesota, where she is currently pursuing a master's degree in geographic information science.**

# Learning about Collaboration: A Community-Classroom Partnership between the East Side Work Resource Hub and the Humphrey Institute

by Bruce Casselton and Melissa M. Stone

Partnerships, alliances, and collaborations are now common forms of institutional life. In particular, many public policies are being implemented through these mechanisms, involving individuals and organizations from public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit enterprises. There is a large and ever-increasing variety of such partnerships, set up both voluntarily and by mandate, designed to tackle issues such as housing, economic development, transportation, healthcare, and social welfare reform.

Coauthor Melissa Stone developed a course in 1997 at the University of Minnesota's Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs titled "Managing Collaborations" to introduce students to the particular challenges of managing within these multiorganizational, collaborative settings. After offering the course several times, Stone became convinced that studying collaborations solely within a classroom setting was inadequate. Students had to experience the complexities, ambiguities, and particular

tensions inherent in partnerships, alliances, and collaborations in order to understand their unique management challenges. Stone also felt that by working in teams—which are themselves collaborations—students could reflect on these experiences to enrich their understanding of the project collaboration. East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) director Kris Nelson learned of Stone's desire to engage students with a community collaboration and made possible the connection to the East Side Work Resource Hub. Thus, in the spring of 1999, a team of six graduate students began to work with the partner organizations at the East Side Hub as part of their course. At the time, no one realized the impact they were to have on the life of the East Side Hub partnership.

## Background

In 1997, Ramsey County—backed by advice from employers, nonprofit service providers, and Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) recipients—

initiated an innovative approach to welfare reform that addressed the dual issues of job access for welfare households and access to workers for employers facing labor shortages. Organized as the Community Employment Partnership (CEP), the approach utilized 10 work resource hubs within St. Paul and Ramsey County suburbs that created neighborhood access to services for job seekers. The McKnight Foundation, embarking on its own statewide welfare reform partnership initiative in 1997, provided funding.

Although the county did not provide a template for how each work resource hub was to be organized, the broad vision was for each hub to be a partnership of county agencies and community-based organizations to deliver employment and support services. The location of the hub on the East Side improved the access to integrated, accountable, customer-driven government and community resources for residents. The co-location included Ramsey County Community Human Services financial workers and MFIP employment service counselors from five different organizations (currently, there are approximately 1,000 MFIP cases served through the East Side Hub). Additionally, there were support services such as drop-in childcare, General Educational Development (GED) and English Language Learners (ELL) classes provided by other organizations, and a referral mechanism to other community resources such as childcare, transportation, social services, and housing and legal services. The partners equipped a resource room and developed a job bank that helped all residents locate employment. Throughout the process, there was an expectation that the collocated partners would pool resources and create a common culture to support clients as they worked toward overcoming barriers in an expedient and effective manner.

The original vision behind the creation of the work resource hubs



photo by Steve Schneider

**The East Side Work Resource Hub features a job bank to help residents locate employment opportunities. Other resources include drop-in childcare, GED classes, and referral services for housing, transportation, and legal assistance.**

echoed the hope for many collaborative ventures: integrated service delivery, cost effectiveness, and creative problem solving. How to achieve those aims within a rapidly changing institutional environment—and across organizations more familiar with being competitors than collaborators—posed significant challenges for all hubs, including the East Side Hub.

### The East Side Hub–Humphrey Institute Partnership

As explained elsewhere in this publication, the purpose of the COPC program is to engage colleges and universities in community development by funding faculty-student work on projects planned and driven by the community. Key themes in the East Side COPC’s community plans were job development, workforce readiness, and job placement. As one of the community “organizations” involved in the East Side COPC plan, the East Side Work Resource Hub was trying to establish its own stability as a collaboration at the same time it was providing services to the community. The East Side COPC played a unique role in assisting this collaboration’s development by connecting leaders at the hub with Stone’s course on collaboration.

In the spring of 1999, when the initial group of graduate students began work with the partner organizations at the East Side Hub, the purpose behind the project was twofold: to help the East Side Hub develop strategies for greater involvement by partners, and to research “best practices” of successful collaborations in governance, staffing, communication, accountability, and membership.

A clear purpose and good intentions notwithstanding, the students experienced firsthand frustrations and ambiguities that paralleled those experienced by the East Side Hub partners themselves. Seven of the ten weeks of the project were spent trying to reach agreement between the partners and students on the specific focus of the project!

Through these negotiations, students were confronted with a variety of core questions: Who was “in charge”? When was an agreement actually final? What was the East Side Hub anyway? In the end, the students recommended a series of steps to formalize decision making and leadership within the East Side Hub collaborative—in other words, to establish the hub as an entity that could be understood by its partner organizations.

In 2000, another group of students worked with the newly hired manager of the East Side Hub, coauthor Bruce Casselton, to examine how the hub should extend its reach of programs and services to MFIP and non-MFIP clients. Gaining agreement on this project’s focus was much easier. Stone realized that negotiations needed to start earlier and involve multiple parties at the East Side Hub. Casselton, however, was the clear focal person and could guide the process with partners. In fact, students found the initial project focus to be too narrow. They proposed an ambitious additional part to the project that integrated their understanding of theory with the East Side Hub experience. The result was the introduction of a developmental chart (see Figure 1) for the hub to assess where it had been and where it could go in terms of programs and services, community empowerment, membership, and leadership in order to achieve its mission.

This past year, two more groups of students again worked with Casselton and the East Side Hub partners. The broad theme of both projects was hub sustainability. One team assessed the value of the collaboration to partners and developed ways to capture or measure that value. The other group focused on fiscal management and funding strategies for the East Side Hub. In addition to specific recommendations, the students concluded that the hub’s value could not be captured by “bottom-line” measures for partner organizations, but that other measures could indicate the kinds of collaborative advantages enjoyed by partners from their involve-

ment in the hub. If partner managers could see these other types of values, then the best future funding strategy was cost sharing by partner organizations.

### Results

The flow of the projects parallels the development of the East Side Hub as a collaboration—the first project concerned important governance and structural issues, the second focused on expanding the collaboration to include more partners and more services, and the third targeted critical sustainability issues.

The first year’s team recommended that the East Side Hub develop its own mission statement, regularize meetings and committee structures, and hire a “manager” to serve as a full-time coordinator for hub activities. Prior to the student project, hub partners had discussed several of these ideas, such as hiring a full-time staff person. The report provided additional rationale and credibility to these ideas, and within six months, the East Side Hub implemented most of the recommendations.

The second year’s team recommended additional partners who could offer childcare, transportation and housing services, and, more generally, a clearer path for the hub to follow to become more fully integrated into the East Side community. Taking advantage of countywide discussions and the potential infusion of additional state and federal funds, the hub focused on developing a unique transportation plan and a peer connection program for MFIP participants. Unfortunately, funding was not secured for either project. Late in 2000, the East Side Hub focused on strengthening relationships with local employers. Casselton continues to introduce the team’s developmental chart to other partnering organizations.

The outcomes measurement group in the third-year team identified several themes that emerged from their interviews and based their recommendations for outcome measures on those themes.

Figure 1. Developmental Chart for East Side Work Resource Hub<sup>1</sup>

Interorganizational Strategies	Networking	Coordination	Cooperation	Collaboration
Exchange information	X	X	X	X
Alter activities		X	X	X
Share resources			X	X
Enhance abilities of all partners				X

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from A.T. Himmelman, “On the Theory and Practice of Transformational Collaborations: From Social Service to Social Justice.” In C. Huxham, ed. *Creating Collaborative Advantage*. London: Sage Publications, 1999.

The timing of these recommendations was crucial because of a Community Employment Partnership initiative to base future financial support for the hubs on outcomes and performance measures. Thus, the students' work supported a critical process for the East Side Hub partners.

The financial stability team's work also coincided nicely with current initiatives at the time. Their recommendations focused on financial reporting system changes that were included in discussions between Casselton and the East Side Hub's fiscal agent. Additionally, the funding strategy recommendations identified several viable pathways, but also introduced the possibility of disengagement of the partners from the collaboration. At the time of this writing, the choice of funding strategies has not been made.

Several factors make it difficult to draw a causal connection between student team recommendations and actions taken by the collaborative. First, collaborations are dynamic entities, and events beyond the control of the collaboration will significantly affect it. For example, as the second student team was wrapping up its project, the hub was facing the possibility of a relocation that would have profoundly affected its services and financial condition. In fact, at the time of this writing, the East Side Hub faces the relocation issue again. Second, decision-making processes within collaborations are complex—especially for major decisions—because the self-interests of partner organizations are not always aligned, attendance at meetings may be sporadic, and partner representatives may not be authorized to make commitments for their home organizations. Thus, moving forward on major decisions, such as cost sharing, takes time and is influenced by many complicating factors.

To what extent did the student teams' recommendations facilitate the sound development of the East Side Hub? That is difficult to answer, and perhaps less important than the contribution of the students' examination in the first place. The value of these efforts to the East Side Hub was more than a list of recommendations. The profound benefit was the investigation of the health of the partnership by bright, invested individuals. The students were able to provide a service that self-examination by the participating partners could not achieve. With the first team, and each year thereafter, it

was recognized that the partners—particularly the partner managers—would share information with the students that they might not share with their partner colleagues.

More specifically, Casselton believes that exposing the East Side Hub each year to a group of new students has kept the hub honest, and has consistently injected a sense of reality about what the hub is. From his perspective, students gave the hub plenty of theoretical insight, but more important, they regularly held up a mirror to hub partners, which helped the hub focus on what was real and what was not. This articulation by the students may have prolonged the life of what is often an ephemeral and temporary organization. Several other hubs in Ramsey County have not had this regular outside examination, and have struggled to remain real. Casselton believes that by introducing the idea of disengagement, the students were pointing out the natural evolution of the collaborative process. More to the point, students helped the East Side Hub recognize that at some point "all horses die and we can resist the temptation to try to kick them back to life."

### Challenges

Casselton believes that one of the challenges was in setting the tone for appreciating and valuing the examination (he would avoid calling it an intrusion) by the students. Everyone is busy and partners benefited from a gentle reminder of the long-term value to the East Side Hub of the student projects. The time spent to help the students grasp the complexities of the partnership was also a challenge, although the work of the previous year's students helped guide the immersion process for the next group. Last, trying to keep the right names with the right students during the infrequent face-to-face meetings was a personal challenge for Casselton.

According to students, one of the biggest challenges they faced was how to balance multiple and competing demands—the need to master the conceptual material on collaborations, develop a working team, and dive into the hub project as soon as possible. Their past experience with in-class projects did not prepare them for the necessary—and sometimes lengthy—negotiations with the hub, and the need to have a solid understanding of the hub as a complex entity before going forward with the



photo by Steve Schneider

***Some of the biggest challenges of the community-classroom collaboration for Professor Melissa Stone were learning to reevaluate her role in the classroom and being prepared to deviate from the course outline to meet the evolving needs of her students.***

specifics of the project. Furthermore, students were sometimes not aware of how staff from community organizations or public agencies perceived them, both as graduate students and as representatives of the University of Minnesota and the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. They were entering into other people's worlds as outsiders, and needed to learn to balance their tendencies toward quick critique and analysis with a deeper appreciation for how the collaboration was being experienced by those directly involved.

For Stone, one of the biggest challenges was always being prepared to deviate from the course outline to meet the emerging needs of the student teams for particular types of information—for example, understanding social welfare reform policy, designing semistructured interviews, or analyzing qualitative data. The syllabus became an evolving worksheet that has varied widely year-to-year. What this challenge implies is also a gradual change throughout the semester in the role of the faculty member from being the traditional authority figure in the classroom to being a facilitator of the total experience, including intellectual rigor, quality of the project, and team experience. As projects unfolded, the student teams needed to take more and more control over their learning, deciding what they needed and when they needed it. Stone often found students reluctant to step outside their role as receivers of information and into a role of co-creators of their educational experience.

## Lessons Learned

From these project experiences, we offer the following lessons. First, working over a number of years with the same community partner deepens the experience for the partner, the faculty, and the students. Relationships between community partners and the university require time to develop clear expectations concerning what students are capable of doing and what the partner most needs and wants from the relationship. Time is also necessary for trust. Trust is the critical ingredient for any partnership, and expanding the boundaries of a partnership to include students and faculty requires no less. Clear expectations and trust then allow the rela-

tionship to move from an expert-to-client model into a partnership model based on mutual learning.

Second, faculty also need to trust that students will develop a quality product without faculty having to control the exact flow of the process. Faculty need to give students a solid conceptual grounding, leave space during class time for reflection and feedback, and pay attention to team dynamics that can derail a good project. Students *can* do the rest!

Finally, we have learned that the benefits of these partnerships between the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and the East Side Hub go beyond any list of final recommendations proposed by

student teams. Substantial benefits arise from the processes of engagement where faculty, students, and collaboration partners have to articulate, listen, and reflect on what it is they are trying to do and how. For Casselton and the partners, this was the experience of having a mirror held up to them for each of the last three years. For students and Stone, this was making theory real and knowledge useful.

**Bruce Casselton has managed the East Side Work Resource Hub since November 1999.**

**Melissa M. Stone is associate professor of public affairs and planning at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs.**

## Project Awards

To keep our readers up-to-date about CURA projects, each issue of the *CURA Reporter* features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way. The projects highlighted in this issue are made possible through the Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR) program at CURA. The projects described here represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

■ **Calhoun Gateway Small Area Plan.** The West Calhoun Neighborhood Association (WCNA) and the Cedar Isles Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) are collaborating on a project to determine the optimal land-use plan for the area around Calhoun Village and Calhoun Commons. A student will research potential uses for the area, incorporating feedback from neighborhood stakeholders. The project will result in a small area plan that will propose a vision, goals, and general land-use plan for the area.

■ **Community Garden Resource Guide.** The GreenSpace Partners is a community greening program in the Phillips neighborhood. The program is sponsored by the Green Institute and works directly with volunteer community members to improve inner-city livability through developing and maintaining community green space. GreenSpace Partners is currently working to increase the number of green spaces and reforest the neighborhood. The program will receive student assistance in creating a resource guide for community gardeners.

■ **Business Analysis of Lake Street Commercial Corridor.** Lake Street Partners (LSP) is a collaboration of 11 community organizations whose communities share Lake Street as a border and who have similar economic and community development visions for the Lake Street community. Lake Street Partners will receive assistance from a student to assess the potential for business growth and stability along the Lake Street commercial corridor from I-35W to Hiawatha Avenue. The project will result in an analysis that will inform LSP's workplan for the commercial corridor.

■ **East Side American Indian Task Force—Multipurpose Center and Demographic Database.** The East Side American Indian Task Force is one of four task forces working with the St. Paul East Side COPC and is coordinated by the American Indian Policy Center. The American Indian Task Force will receive student assistance to conduct a feasibility analysis of a multipurpose center planned for American Indians on St. Paul's East Side, and to update a demographic database about American Indians living in St. Paul, with special attention to residents on the East Side. These projects will identify resources for developing the multipurpose center and provide demographic information for future research projects.

■ **Marcy-Holmes Master Plan.** The Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Revitalization Program (MHNRP) exists to serve all stakeholders in the Marcy-Holmes neighborhood. The organization is completing the first phase of its Neighborhood Revitalization Program, which focuses on housing, crime and

safety, economic development, and environmental issues in the neighborhood. In the interest of preparing the neighborhood for future growth and change, MHNRP is undertaking a neighborhood-wide master planning process. A student will assist MHNRP to conduct a literature review on neighborhood-university collaborations, with the goal of identifying projects and programs that have successfully addressed the growth of universities and the impacts on the neighborhoods in which they reside.

■ **East Side Latino Task Force—East Side Latino Resource Center.** The East Side Latino Task Force is one of four task forces working with the St. Paul East Side COPC. The task force recently conducted a needs assessment of the Latino/Latina community on the East Side that identified the need for a resource center where Latinos/Latinas could obtain access to cultural and social service resources. The Latino Task Force will receive student assistance to develop a plan for the operation and funding of a Latino Resource Center on the East Side. The project will result in a report that will identify both a strategy and resources for developing the center.

■ **Midtown Greenway Zoning Overlay Research.** The Midtown Greenway Coalition is a grassroots group representing residents and businesses from the 14 neighborhoods through which the Midtown Greenway will pass. The Midtown Greenway is a planned nonstop bicycle highway within a greenway along the 29th Street rail corridor in south Minneapolis that will connect the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes with the

Mississippi River, and provide transportation, recreation, green space, jobs, economic development, and housing revitalization. Land use in the area adjacent to the greenway will be important to the success of the Greenway as a revitalizing force in the surrounding community. The Midtown Greenway Coalition has developed a draft of the proposed zoning overlay and will receive student research assistance to determine the practical effects of the current draft overlay. The project will result in a report that will illustrate the impacts of the overlay and provide suggestions for improvement.

■ **Affordable Rental Housing on the East Side.** The East Side communities of Dayton's Bluff and Payne-Phalen in St. Paul have a growing need for affordable housing, especially for low-income families whose children attend community schools. Area property owners are reluctant to participate in government housing programs out of fear of the administrative and regulatory burdens they impose. A student research assistant will work with the Dayton's Bluff Community Council and the East Side Neighborhood Development Company to research

how Section 8 can contribute to quality and desirable rental housing on the East Side, to locate property owners willing to accept Section 8 housing vouchers, and to identify property owners whose past actions indicate they would not be desirable participants. This research will contribute to the development of an ongoing system that facilitates participation of property owners in the Section 8 housing program and assists eligible families with children attending community schools to locate and retain housing in the community.

■ **East Side African American Task Force—Youth Activities Project.** The East Side African American Task Force is one of four task forces working with the St. Paul East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC), a community-university initiative focused on housing, job development, and workforce readiness on the east side of St. Paul. The purpose of each task force is to develop and implement a plan to address the disconnect between programs, organizations, and resources on the East Side and the area's residents of color. The African American Task Force will receive student assistance to identi-

fy resources for providing cultural and educational enrichment activities for African American youth on the East Side. The project will result in a report informing youth programs, schools, and community members about potential youth activities and resources for the East Side.

■ **Cedar-Riverside Market Study.** Cedar Riverside Business Association (CRBA) represents businesses and institutions in the Cedar-Riverside area. The organization's purpose is to exchange ideas, provide a voice for the Cedar-Riverside commercial district in public policy decisions, and promote a vigorous neighborhood commercial district. Currently, CRBA is collaborating with the University of Minnesota Office of Community Relations on a project to encourage University students, staff, and faculty to shop at businesses and participate at community center events in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. A student will research ways to encourage people from the University to patronize Cedar-Riverside businesses and cultural centers. The project will result in a report providing recommendations for action.

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## Project Funding Available from CURA

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■ **The Program for Interactive Research** is designed to encourage University of Minnesota faculty to carry out research projects that involve a significant issue of public policy for the state or its communities, and that include interaction with groups, agencies, or organizations in Minnesota involved with the issue. Ideal projects will have an applied orientation, as well as serve the research interests of the faculty member. Awards cover the faculty member's salary for the summer, and support a research assistant for one year. Applications for the 2002–2003 academic year competition must be received no later than 4:30 PM Friday, March 29, 2002. For more information, please visit our Web site at <http://www.cura.umn.edu/programs/IRG.html>, or contact CURA director Thomas M. Scott at (612) 625-7340 or [scott001@umn.edu](mailto:scott001@umn.edu).

■ **Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR)** provides student research assistance to Minneapolis and St. Paul community organizations involved in neighborhood-based revitalization. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood's needs and interests, including planning, program development, or program evaluation. Priority is given to projects that support and involve residents of color. Applications from organizations collaborating on a project are encouraged. Applications are due March 7, 2002 (for summer 2002 assistance), and July 10, 2002 (for fall 2002 assistance). For more information, visit NPCR's Web site at <http://www.npcr.org>, or contact NPCR project director Kris Nelson at (612) 625-1020 or [nelso193@umn.edu](mailto:nelso193@umn.edu).

■ **The University Neighborhood Network (UNN)** links community organizations to course-based neighbor-

hood projects that students carry out as part of course requirements. For more information about support for course-based projects, visit UNN's Web site at <http://www.unn.umn.edu>, or contact UNN coordinator Emily Schug at (612) 625-0744 or [unn@umn.edu](mailto:unn@umn.edu).

■ **The Graduate Interns for State Agencies Program** fosters opportunities for graduate students to work outside the University of Minnesota on research, program development, program evaluation, or other short-term projects for a state agency in Minnesota. The agency supervises the graduate assistant, and shares costs equally with CURA. Grants for 2002 are for the summer, and the application deadline is March 30, 2002. Interested state agencies can contact program manager Ed Drury by phone at (612) 625-6045 or by e-mail at [drury001@umn.edu](mailto:drury001@umn.edu).

# Students as Interns: The Partnership with the Phalen Corridor Initiative

by Curt Milburn

The Phalen Corridor Initiative (PCI) is a multimillion-dollar community development project to help redevelop four inner-city neighborhoods located on a railway corridor on St. Paul's East Side. During the last 30 years, closings at major industrial plants in the area have forced thousands out of work and left behind many polluted brownfield sites. The major focus of the initiative is to build a roadway that provides access to these brownfields, clean up the abandoned sites, and attract new businesses and jobs to the area. These goals have led to the need for workforce development training and more quality housing, as well as the need to seek community support for and participation in this ambitious project.

Beginning in 1998, PCI began a partnership with the East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program that has provided significant benefits, both to the initiative itself and to the students who worked with our organization. This article focuses on PCI's partnership with the East Side COPC, and the outcomes and challenges this relationship has produced. The article begins with a brief history of the Phalen Corridor and PCI before turning to a discussion of the roles that East Side COPC student interns have played with respect to the outreach capacity of PCI.

## The Story of the Phalen Corridor and PCI

Since the turn of the century, the Phalen Corridor, located on the East Side of St. Paul (see Figure 1), has historically been a blue-collar neighborhood where newly arrived immigrants could find jobs and quality affordable housing. Beginning in the 1970s, however, a wave of industrial disinvestment in the area put thousands out of work, and left widespread poverty and abandoned brownfields in its wake. Despite efforts by some local residents to improve their neighborhood, some areas in the community are still plagued by substandard housing, underutilized

and polluted land, and few employment opportunities.

The Phalen Corridor Initiative began in 1994 as a collaborative effort to attract jobs to the corridor area. The partnership's focus has since expanded to include job training and workforce development, economic development, brownfield redevelopment, and mixed-income housing. As a public-private partnership, PCI is a collaboration in which none of the partners exercise a controlling role. Currently, PCI works with more than 60 community partners, including the St. Paul Port Authority, St. Paul's Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), the area's district councils, and corporations like 3M and Wells Fargo Bank.

To date, PCI has been involved in several major projects. Perhaps the most well known is an effort to build a roadway along an existing railway line that runs through the corridor to increase access to the area and spur economic development. On the far east end of the corridor, the Ames Lake Wetland Area restoration project has attracted new residential and commercial development, including a senior housing complex, a consolidated branch office of Wells Fargo, and a new office of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. On the opposite end of the corridor, a polluted brownfield has been redeveloped as the Williams



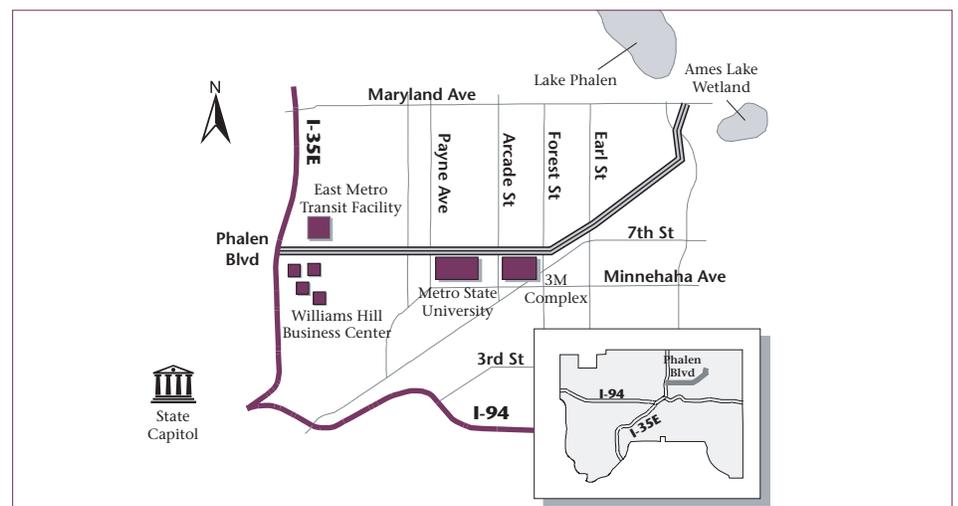
Site of the future Phalen Corridor

Hill light-industrial park providing more than 650 jobs. Schools, a new YMCA, public facilities, and a number of housing projects have also been attracted to the corridor.

## The Role of East Side COPC Student Interns at PCI

The main reason PCI chose to participate in the East Side COPC program was the access it provided to student interns

Figure 1. The Phalen Corridor



who could help staff our program and enhance our outreach capacity. Through the East Side COPC program, we were able to fill one internship position over three years that involved communications work with neighborhood, government, and corporate volunteers, and a second position designed to assist with and record our community outreach efforts.

**Communications Assistance.** A number of East Side COPC students have worked with PCI's communications task force and with various PCI partners (the Port Authority, the City of St. Paul, and corporate public relations and marketing professionals), and each has provided different assistance. Several interns helped produce PCI's biennial newsletter, *PCI Today*. The newsletter has a circulation of 10,000, and highlights the partners involved in the Phalen Corridor Initiative and the successes of the project. The interns' most valuable contribution was to make connections to our various partners and draft articles for the newsletter. Given our relatively small staff and the deadline-driven nature of the newsletter, it would have been difficult for PCI to complete the newsletter in a timely fashion without this assistance.

Other interns were responsible for a variety of communication-related tasks, including designing and producing posters and other promotional materials to announce community outreach meetings, scheduling outreach meetings, and coordinating translation of materials into Hmong and Spanish. More and more of the residents who attend our community meetings are people of color, and English is not always their primary language. The East Side COPC interns often attended meet-

ings with representatives from these groups, helped design outreach materials that were culturally sensitive, and helped plan the community outreach meetings.

Finally, one intern who was a political science major provided some unexpected assistance to PCI. The student had connections to Martin Sabo, a congressional representative from this district, and was able to use this relationship to provide PCI more direct lines of communication with government officials in Washington. This influence allowed PCI to persuade Representative Sabo to tour the area, and eventually helped secure transportation project funds for the Phalen Corridor Project in the U.S. House of Representatives during the 2001 legislative session.

**Community Outreach Assistance.** The Phalen Corridor Initiative held two series of community outreach meetings for local citizens—one in 1998 and one in 2000—to inform them of and involve them in redevelopment plans for the area. We hired a different student intern to evaluate the success of each series of meetings. The first intern was a graduate student who had done community project evaluation in Brazil; the second was an undergraduate from Zimbabwe who had studied community development in France.

The 1998 community outreach effort consisted of three public meetings held during a three-month period. The graduate intern we hired helped design the meetings, trained 12 local pastors and seminary students to act as facilitators, and created information handouts for participants explaining facilitation techniques. Each meeting focused on a different development area along the Phalen Corridor. The meetings began

with presentations by various PCI partners—including the Port Authority, PED, and the St. Paul Department of Public Works—who used maps and charts to illustrate potential development scenarios. Following the presentations, the trained facilitators ran breakout groups that focused on specific issues and allowed attendees an opportunity to express their views.

All in all, the meetings were very effective. Roughly 350 people attended the three meetings, and those who participated became quite engaged in the issues and had genuine opportunities for input. At one meeting that focused on a particularly sensitive development site, however, the situation became somewhat heated. A redevelopment proposal that involved demolishing the old Stroh Brewery and 30 dilapidated houses nearby met with an unfavorable response from some citizen participants. The PCI partners listened to citizens' objections and decided to put on hold redevelopment plans for the brewery until a separate working group could be formed to consider the issue.

At the conclusion of the three meetings, the graduate student intern was asked to analyze the community outreach effort, and prepare a report that would be sent to project partners and citizens who had attended the meetings. When a draft of the report was circulated, a number of partners expressed concern that it cast an unreasonably harsh light on some of the proposed redevelopment projects and the intentions of the steering committee members in recommending them.

Our work with this graduate student intern was ultimately a learning experience for everyone involved. As a redevelopment partnership, PCI's philosophy is that there are no "good guys" or "bad guys" when it comes to community development. In this situation, residents who wanted to save their houses were not bad, nor were the residents and business people who supported demolition and redevelopment—the two groups just didn't see eye to eye. Although the intern was a highly capable student who did a commendable job designing the outreach meetings and training facilitators, his report included a number of value judgments about people's perspectives on the development project. To resolve the situation, PCI worked with the graduate student intern and East Side COPC staff to bring a more

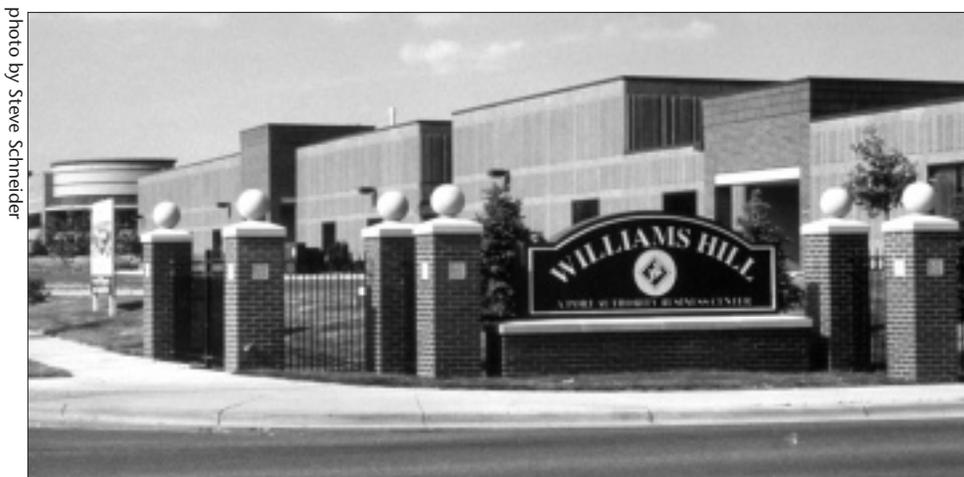


photo by Steve Schneider

**The Williams Hill Business Center is a light-industrial park that was built on a former brownfield site along the Phalen Corridor.**

balanced tone to the final report, and to include both critical and encouraging feedback from those who attended the meetings.

In 2000, PCI repeated the community outreach process while working with an undergraduate intern from Zimbabwe. The student was again responsible for organizing three outreach meetings and arranging for facilitators. These meetings were attended by more than 300 people, and once again a proposal for massive redevelopment in one area of the Phalen Corridor met with an unfavorable response from some citizens in attendance. As with the first set of meetings in 1998, the student intern was asked to conduct an analysis of the meetings and write a report. This student produced a clear, concise draft report that provided a balanced analysis of the meetings, including both positive and negative participant reactions, and the draft was praised by both the partners and participants alike.

A major outcome of these meetings and the efforts of the student interns was to help those opposed to the initial redevelopment plans to find their voice, become involved, and secure input into the redevelopment process. As mentioned above, participants at one of the meetings in 1998 had disagreed with the proposal to demolish the Stroh Brewery. Based on the report from these meetings, the City of St. Paul and the St. Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED) decided to organize the Stroh Working Group to bring together people with different ideas for how to develop the land so they might reach consensus on a plan. Through the East Side COPC program, a student in public affairs at the University of Minnesota was hired as an intern to work with this group and research conversion of industrial buildings to new uses. Although the student found several relevant redevelopment projects in other cities and reported these findings to the working group, participants could not reach consensus on a plan during their six-week meeting period. The working group ultimately produced a white paper that detailed the options for this area.

Neighbors opposed to one of the redevelopment projects unveiled at the 2000 meetings were even more successful at having input. This group of approximately 40 residents worked with the PCI partners to produce what

became known as the Westminster Junction—a compromise project that will protect most of the original homes in the area while also creating an industrial park, a housing rehabilitation program, and several new housing opportunities.

### Conclusion

Students bring two strengths to the table in community-university collaborations: their own unique talents as individuals, and their expertise as academics. In general, our experiences working with student interns and university classes have been positive.

Although at times we have encountered some difficulties, we have found that almost every student we employed was conscientious, diligent, energetic, and receptive to working with community members and other PCI partners. In spite of the difficulties, the advantages of working with student interns outweigh the disadvantages every time. One major advantage is that students bring an outsider's perspective to a project, allowing them to provide new ideas and suggest new techniques and approaches to old problems. A major disadvantage is that outsiders bring their own biases (whether inadvertent or intentional), and they may not be aware of the political implications of their participation for the community or organization they are working with.

Based on our experiences with the East Side COPC program, it is possible to identify several keys to success in working with student interns. First, interns must be available to work enough hours to justify the training time involved. Too often, college internships are for only 5 or 10 hours per week. Their limited availability makes training these students almost futile, and severely limits the level of responsibility an organization can entrust to them. In our case, the interns we worked with were available for 15 to 20 hours per week, and were able to take on projects as complex and diverse as assembling high-gloss publicity materials, creating funding databases, and performing research on daycare facilities requested by our business partners.

A second key to success is that student interns must be available for longer term internships to become invested, involved, and committed to the organization, and sensitive to its philosophy and culture. Many college internships are of limited duration



photo by Steve Schneider

***The Ames Lake Wetland Area restoration project has attracted new residential and commercial development to the east end of the Phalen Corridor, including a senior housing complex and a new office of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.***

(a few months or one academic semester). Again, it is difficult for a community organization to invest time and effort in a student who will be available to the organization only for a short time. In our case, some students interned with us for as long as one year; this contributed greatly to their input in our organization.

Finally, students must make the effort to find an appropriate niche at the community organization. If they are to contribute to the organizational mission and benefit as individuals from the experience, it is important that they channel their energy and passion toward projects that draw both on their specific interests and on the needs of the organization at the moment.

We would like to thank the East Side COPC partners for their support of our community during the last three years, and we look forward to working with all of them again in the years to come.

**Curt Milburn is the project director of the Phalen Corridor Initiative and the executive director of the East Side Area Business Association.**

# The Process of Adjusting to Change: Lessons Learned from the East Side Partnership

by John Poupart and Barbara Lukermann

More than one hundred colleges and universities are collaborating with neighborhood organizations across the nation as part of the Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) program, a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) partnership project that focuses faculty and student research on the problems and priorities set by the local community organizations in a targeted urban area. The partnership is not “business as usual,” where a faculty member identifies the research issues and views the community as a laboratory for testing existing theories and for having students observe community members in the field. Instead, the COPC approach begins with community groups asking the academic partners for specific help in providing credible information and insights that will increase their effectiveness and capacity to effect change from within. The goal of COPC is to bridge the two worlds of academia and community in a shared commitment to address the challenges and grasp the opportunities available to make communities desirable places to live and work.

Community organizations on St. Paul’s East Side entered into this partnership with the University of Minnesota, Macalester College, and Metropolitan State University with the expectation that the expertise of students and faculty would go a long way toward increasing their capacity to effect positive economic and social change. The preceding articles have discussed issues that are common to many inner-city neighborhoods as they become more racially diverse and have to adjust to a new service-oriented economy. After three years of working together through the East Side COPC program, other questions remain to be answered: What have we learned? Has the experiment resulted in more cooperation between the various community groups, rather than each neighborhood organization focusing only on its own issue area? Has trust among the community groups expanded so that it is



photo by Steve Schneider

*A meeting of the East Side COPC Steering Committee*

possible for thorny issues of social and racial change to be openly discussed with a sensitivity to cultural differences? How easy or difficult has it been for the academic partners to relinquish some of the control over the research agenda and help develop community leadership and the capacity for local groups to act on their own behalf? What do we know now about the value added through these collaborations between academia and nonprofit organizations that would be valuable for other neighborhoods? It is precisely these questions that this article will attempt to address.

## The Experiences of COPC Participants

In early 2001, open-ended personal interviews were held with almost all of the members of the East Side COPC Steering Committee. The interviews were designed to provide qualitative feedback on the program, and were structured around the following four essential questions, with opportunities for interviewees to expand on their own concerns:

1. Has the East Side COPC program been able to deliver quality products and respond effectively to requests in a timely way?
2. What have been the principal accomplishments and disappointments of the program?

3. Has the East Side COPC program made a difference, and if so, in what ways? Have expectations been met?
4. What are the lessons learned or new insights gained from participating in this partnership?

**Accomplishments and Strengths.** A number of specific accomplishments or strengths of the East Side COPC program were identified by steering committee members during the interviews.

**Providing a Delivery System for High-Quality Interns.** Community partners uniformly praised the quality of work produced by students, and there has been great demand for graduate student assistance. The experience and personal networks of individuals within the three academic institutions, the East Side COPC administrative processes for recruitment and hiring, and the support from East Side COPC staff have all helped community groups develop appropriate work plans and minimize the amount of work neighborhood staff must do to access student and faculty resources. More than one community partner acknowledged that students can act as mediators for the organization by being out in the community and building confidence that some of the community-based initiatives “are real, and change is going to happen.” Another

partner recognized that “students are our sleuths—they are analysts, not just data gatherers. It is not in the interest of our partners to be totally forthright with each other, but students can somehow tease attitudes and priorities out in ways we cannot do.”

**Giving Organizations the Opportunity to Address Big Strategic Issues.** The neighborhood organizations know what has to be done on a strategic level, and perhaps how to do it, but often they do not have enough staff and talent to carry out this work. Program partners noted that research assistants provided organizations with the ability to focus on these issues. One community member commented that “we are so busy putting out fires that we need the research piece that COPC can provide.” Two community partners stated that the research findings made a big contribution in creating board support for their strategic plans.

**Helping to Leverage Additional Resources.** East Side COPC staff and student researchers have helped several organizations leverage additional resources to help address critical needs in the community. Examples here include success in getting a McKnight Foundation grant for the Dayton’s Bluff Children’s Stability Project, and a successful proposal to the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation—with matching funds from the City of St. Paul—for a pilot employer-assisted housing program.

**Helping to Put on the Table Issues Surrounding Communities of Color.** East Side COPC research projects and task force reports have documented demographic changes, made them more visible, and brought some new residents of color into neighborhood discussions. The task force reports clearly point out many unmet and priority needs of these new residents of color on the East Side, ranging from recruiting more businesses owned by people of color, to greater awareness and sensitivity on the part of mainstream social agencies who serve communities of color.

**Identifying School Performance as a Priority for Community Partners.** Research projects from the Dayton’s Bluff neighborhood point out how poor school performance is often tied to lack of stable housing, and how the reputation of schools can affect the reputation of the entire neighborhood as a place to buy a home. Accomplishments to date include demonstrating the difficulty and complexity of achieving family



***The East Side COPC partnership has helped to put on the agenda issues affecting communities of color on St. Paul’s East Side.***

stability, and showing that putting more resources into schools is not by itself sufficient to address the problem of mobility. The community organizations now have data to support their claims and to advocate for a stronger public commitment to linking the educational and housing programs of the city and school district.

**Creating the Potential to Change the Agendas of Local Organizations.** There is no consensus in the two East Side neighborhoods on what should be the future balance between owner-occupied and rental housing. Existing district plans focus on increasing the proportion of owner-occupied units, partly because of the poor quality of existing rentals and partly because homeowners are viewed as more stable and desirable neighbors. As a result of the various research projects examining the potential for revitalizing the commercial corridors in these neighborhoods, there may now be greater receptivity to accepting a mix of new rental units and owner-occupied units. One community partner commented, “If District 4 supports new initiatives for rental housing, the COPC projects will have provided the groundwork.”

In summary, the strengths and accomplishments of the East Side COPC as identified by program partners include the following:

- ▶ providing a trusted process for decision making that has been community led
- ▶ maintaining high trust levels between staff in the community organizations and the COPC staff
- ▶ recruiting talented students who have produced quality, policy-relevant work
- ▶ increasing the technical capacity of community organizations, including geographic information systems (GIS) capabilities
- ▶ enhancing the legitimacy of neighborhood priorities based on good information
- ▶ clarifying the stakes for the East Side
- ▶ building a forum for people of color
- ▶ creating stronger working relationships among community groups

***Disappointments and Weaknesses.*** A number of specific disappointments or weaknesses of the East Side COPC program were also identified by steering committee members during the interviews.

**Difficulty of Recruiting New Faculty into the COPC Applied Research Work.** The reward system inside academia still provides strong disincentives for younger, nontenured faculty to be involved in applied research. Tenure and promotion is based on publications in peer-reviewed journals. Most faculty active in the East Side COPC from all three academic institutions are established researchers and teachers already committed to community-based research.

**Lack of Integration between the Work of the Task Forces and the Steering Committee.** Because they are not part of other East Side COPC processes, task

force chairs have experienced a sense of isolation, and are unsure about what is going to happen to the findings and recommendations of their work. Task force members are concerned about the payoffs from their efforts, and question whether or not the mainstream community organizations can integrate their priorities into the district councils and community development organizational strategic plans.

Barriers in Gaining Participation in Community Development from Residents of Color. With no existing neighborhood organization on the East Side around which to center outreach or mechanisms for interaction, the community development work of the task forces essentially required starting from scratch. All task force chairs are volunteers, and it has been difficult to recruit members to work on the task forces. In addition, one of the task force chairs commented that “people of color don’t understand the cultural norms and bureaucratic procedures of organizations,” and the East Side COPC is essentially a consortium of these organizations.

Lack of a Shared Vision among Various Cultural Groups. The community development corporations, the district councils, and the four communities of color on the East Side are still very separate groups with different ways of communicating with their members. In addition, residents of color on the East Side come from varied ethnic backgrounds. For example, Latinos/Latinas hail from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia, El Salvador, and Cuba, and all have different reasons for emigrating. Asians have come from Vietnam and Cambodia as well as from Laos. Newly arrived Ethiopians and Somalis join the African American communities, but there is often tension between the different Black residents. Thus, it is naive to assume consensus on issues and values even within a “single” community of color.

Slow Progress in Persons of Color Moving into Leadership Roles. This COPC objective is difficult to achieve when there are relatively few organizations or businesses on the East Side to engage people of color in community decision-making processes. Although four persons of color were recruited to serve on the District 4 Community Council, only one has remained in that position. The explanation offered by one task force member is the “lack of ‘payoff’ in seeing their needs and priori-

ties being met through participation. The steering committee is top-heavy with Whites.”

In summary, the disappointments and weaknesses of the East Side COPC program identified by program partners include the following:

- ▶ lack of integration between the work of the task forces and the steering committee
- ▶ slow progress in persons of color moving into leadership positions
- ▶ limited number of faculty engaged in the action research projects
- ▶ city departments not actively engaged in the COPC process
- ▶ communication gaps between the mainstream organizations and communities of color

### Lessons Learned

It is perhaps easier to document the tangible products—research reports, maps, and how the community has used them in their day-to-day work—than to reflect on the insights gained from the somewhat unique set of relationships that has emerged from the East Side COPC program. In many ways, a Community Outreach Partnership Center is a social experiment: a journey where all of the twists and curves along the way are unknown, but where the partners in the journey are willing to live with some uncertainty and flexibility. *One of the great lessons learned from this partnership is that flexibility—rather than rigor, structure, and a mandate—can be the greatest friend and ally.* On the other hand, partnerships do need some structure to build personal networks over time, as well as to build trust that all members will benefit from those relationships

An inherent tension exists for both sets of partners in a COPC program. The community organizations and not the faculty design the research questions, yet the outcome of the research process may not always bolster the particular position of the organization. The East Side COPC has had the additional challenge of three very different educational institutions sharing the outreach roles—three institutions that have very different approaches to applied research. *One challenge has been to forge new working relationships between the academic partners as well as with the community partners.*

*A second challenge was to forge stronger working relationships between the community partners.* On the east side of St. Paul, there was no organized consortium of community nonprofits and district

councils to act as a central clearinghouse before the East Side COPC was established, thus a new steering committee was set up to provide the opportunity for diverse community groups to come together, to learn from each other, and to give close attention to the process for decision making as well as the products of the research. Staff and faculty from the colleges joined community members on the steering committee, which is led by John Poupart. Regular meetings of the steering committee have become one significant way for community representatives to become more informed of each other’s issues and goals.

The chairs and cochairs of four newly formed minority task forces established through the East Side COPC are also members of the steering committee, and bring some measure of racial diversity to a leadership group that is still predominantly White. *The East Side COPC has thus provided an arena to squarely put on the table for discussion race and other issues affecting people of color.* In retrospect, we discovered that each task force developed a very different action plan, and that the elements of these plans often strayed from the core issues of housing, workforce development, and job creation initially identified by the steering

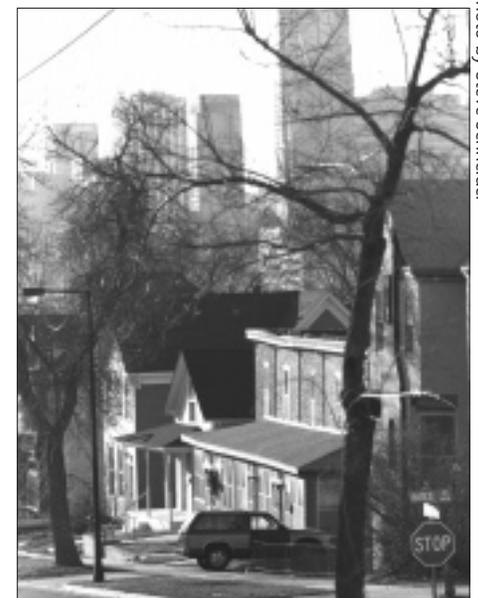


photo by Steve Schneider

***The East Side COPC has helped create the potential to change the agendas of local organizations. Although district plans called for increasing the proportion of owner-occupied housing units, as a result of various East Side COPC research projects, there is now greater receptivity to a mix of both rental and owner-occupied units.***

committee. Through their work, the task forces have raised concerns about such issues as health, education, and social services; have helped to redefine the nature of the problems and challenges affecting residents of color on the East Side; and, in many cases, have posed different solutions to those problems than those first envisioned by the steering committee. The steering committee has responded by creating a new subcommittee charged with integrating these concerns into the COPC workplans.

The completed research projects and task force reports have documented the demographic changes that have altered the social structure of the East Side, made these changes more visible to decision makers, and demonstrated the importance of gaining broader participation in building a multicultural neighborhood. In the early days, tension at the steering committee meetings was palpable as the American Indian, Latino/Latina, Asian, and African American members defined their unique concerns and described the East Side neighborhoods of the future as being very different from the past. Over time, steering committee discussions have become more open, more tolerant, and less defensive. *Time has been an ally in acknowledging both cultural differences and the need to accommodate these differences* by recruiting businesses owned by people of color, encouraging bilingual staff hiring in mainstream social service agencies, and addressing the need for neighborhood cultural centers for new residents of color to celebrate their different cultural and ethnic heritages.

This leads to a second important finding: *sustained and targeted resources from the colleges have a large payoff for both the community and academia.* It is typical for faculty and students to seek out opportunities for short-term action research based on individual faculty contacts with a particular community organization, either in the form of a faculty research project or as a means for students to satisfy course requirements. Targeting and sustaining these working relationships has significant benefits, and this simply would not occur without the structure and resources provided by a Community Outreach Partnership Center. The community partners gain by being able to assign longer term projects and to link the research findings from one project to another. Participation of all three academic partners has extended

the student resource pool to meet the community organizations' needs, and it has been particularly valuable to have had access to the graduate student pool at the University of Minnesota in addition to undergraduates at Macalester College and Metropolitan State University. Melissa Stone, a professor at the Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs who has run three successive workshops on creating stronger organizational capacity with the East Side Work Resource Hub, points out the huge value added by maintaining a local partnership over time—value to the client since collaborations are inherently messy and new structures for working together have to be forged, but also value for the students who learn from the previous year's work and produce a richer set of readings and theory for the faculty member to use in her or his research.

Several community partners tell us that targeting of resources to their community organization for the past three years has enhanced their capacity to influence policy and attract additional resources. All of them are strapped for funds, and staff know what research needs to be completed, but are simply too busy conducting day-to-day business to take on many of the research tasks and develop new and appropriate strategies with their boards. Reliable data to document or support a position taken by the neighborhood can lend credibility and legitimacy to neighborhood priorities. This has increased the capacity of community organizations to act on their own behalf.

Both the community and the academic partners have learned a number of important lessons about community-university collaboration

itself. *The COPC experience has enhanced the ability of the academic partners to choose which projects are most appropriate for faculty or students to assist with, and the ability of the community organizations to identify the kinds of assistance they require.* Staff at the academic institutions now have a much broader range of experience working with community organizations, as well as a growing number of academic resources (faculty research projects, student internships, classroom collaborations) at their disposal. As a result, they are better equipped to identify which community projects will most benefit from the kinds of assistance they can make available to community organizations. Similarly, because they are more familiar with the types of resources available from the university partners, the community organizations are better able to identify the specific kinds of assistance they need, and to make optimal use of those resources.

In addition, *the academic and community partners have learned that university staff and faculty must be directly engaged with community organizations* to ensure that research projects are focused on a clearly defined question or issue, and that the projects provide useful and usable information for the organizations. Developing a work plan collaboratively is essential to ensuring that the organizations will have a useful product at the end. At the same time, *academic partners have had to learn to let go when appropriate*, and to recognize that the eventual end products and the uses to which these products might be put are often beyond their control.

### Challenges and Unfinished Business

As the three-year East Side COPC experi-



photo by Steve Schneider

***A continuing challenge of the East Side COPC program has been to forge new working relationships between the various participants in the partnership.***

ment comes to a close, several questions remain: Will the internal resources of the institutions of higher learning still be accessible to the local community as federal funds dry up? Will academic administrators support this type of outreach with their own dollars? Will there be reasons for steering committee members to continue to meet and share information on a more informal basis? Can the communities of color develop stronger action agendas and have their plans implemented and integrated into the strategies of the long-established community groups? How will community leadership in the communities of color be nurtured, and what will be the motivation for residents to become actively engaged in community work? How can leadership in bringing community groups together shift from the colleges to another kind of collaboration?

There is reason to be optimistic that community outreach from all three academic institutions will continue to

be available to the community as part of their respective missions. "Action research" has been identified as a priority for Macalester College in its teaching mission; Metropolitan State University is located in the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood, and has an established Center for Community Service; and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota has supported community-based research and learning for faculty and students for nearly 30 years. The challenge is for community leaders to maintain their personal contacts with staff and faculty at these institutions, and for faculty who are knowledgeable about the east side of St. Paul to continue to view the East Side as a wonderful laboratory for applied research in the social sciences. Both sets of partners have strong motives to maintain the momentum.

A contribution of the East Side COPC has been to clarify the stakes for

the East Side by highlighting both the challenges in the community and the urgency of addressing them. Communities of color have learned that there are others willing and able to help them achieve their goals. We look at the East Side COPC as the beginning of something larger, not the end of an experiment in community-university partnerships. The East Side COPC has created a crossroads that brought people together to begin the process of defining the common good for a richly diverse part of the Twin Cities.

**John Poupart** is founder and president of the American Indian Policy Center, located in St. Paul, Minnesota; chair of the East Side COPC American Indian Task Force; and a member of the East Side COPC Steering Committee. **Barbara Lukermann** is a research associate at CURA, a senior fellow at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and a fellow of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

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## New Publications

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"When Rescue Is Urgent: Children in Shelter Placement for Seven Days or Less." By Esther Wattenberg, Katherine Luke, Molly Cornelius, and Jennifer Menke. Minneapolis: Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare, University of Minnesota School of Social Work, and CURA. December 2001. Free.

Coauthored by CURA research associate Esther Wattenberg, this report examines the circumstances of 1,306 children in Hennepin County who were removed under urgent situations and placed, for seven days or less, in emergency shelter care. This population represents more than one-quarter (26%) of the total number of children who experienced out-of-home placement (4,998) in Hennepin County for 1999. The paper examines the circumstances of children who are removed from their families under emergency situations, their demographic profiles, and exit information following their shelter care.

Two research questions guided the study: (1) Is placement in a shelter the least intrusive response for the safety

needs of children in emergency situations? (2) Is it possible to capture and clarify the working relationships between child protection workers and local law enforcement officers? The paper draws conclusions and offers recommendations to improve protocols that guide emergency placements.

Hardcopies of the paper are available from the University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare by calling Anne Preston at (612) 624-4231 or sending e-mail to [casw@che.umn.edu](mailto:casw@che.umn.edu). The publication will soon be available online as a PDF file (requires Adobe Acrobat 4.0) at <http://www.cura.umn.edu/whatnew/publications.html>.

**Renewing the Countryside: Minnesota.** Edited by Jan Joannides, Sara Bergan, Mark Ritchie, Beth Waterhouse, and Okechukwu Ukaga. Minneapolis: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Great Plains Institute for Sustainable Development, 2001. 159 pp. \$29.95 softcover, \$39.95 hardcover.

*Renewing the Countryside*, coedited by CURA's Community Assistantship Program coordinator Jan Joannides, tells the stories of 43 Minnesotans who are protecting the environment and promoting their rural communities through innovative businesses, living practices, or community projects. The stories are organized by category (farming, marketing, product innovations, harvesting nature, conservation, tourism and culture, community, and learning), and are accompanied by numerous color photographs. Case studies featured in the book include Wildrose Farm, Sno Pac Foods, MOM's Dairy, Richard Bresnahan Studio, White Earth Land Recovery Project, Haubenschild Farm, Prairie Restorations, Inc., Angry Trout Café, and Harvest Moon Community Farm.

The book is available at local Twin Cities bookstores and can be ordered by phone at (612) 870-3472 or online at <http://www.mncountryside.org>. Bulk discounts are available.

## A New Look for the Reporter

As you may already have noticed, we have introduced a number of changes to the *CURA Reporter* with this issue. The redesigned masthead featured on the front cover includes our new logo, which is intended to reflect the breadth and diversity of CURA's efforts to bring the resources of higher education institutions in Minnesota to communities throughout the state. Our thanks to the University of Minnesota's student design studio ByDesign, which created the logo, and to local graphic artist Jennifer Wreisner, who designed the new masthead.

Beginning with this issue, we will also switch to a two-color design for the *Reporter*. This change will allow us to accommodate more detailed and complex maps, diagrams, and other illustrations in future issues.

Finally, beginning with volume 32, the *CURA Reporter* will be numbered by quarter (Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall issues) rather than by month to reflect our quarterly publication schedule.

Despite these changes to the look of the *Reporter*, our editorial staff remain committed as always to providing our readers with interesting, accurate, and up-to-date information about CURA's community-based programs, projects, and activities.

## Project Update: Arthritis in American Indian Country

A recent research project in Wisconsin has found that the rate of arthritis is extremely high among American Indians in the state. The project, which was funded by CURA through the Center for Community and Regional Research (CCRR) at the University of Minnesota's Duluth campus, was designed to determine the prevalence of arthritis and its effects on the daily lives of the Chippewa people living on tribal lands in Wisconsin.

Researchers Barbara A. Elliott, Karen M. Johnson, Robert D. Leff, and John J. Day conducted interviews with randomly selected tribal residents to determine the prevalence of arthritis among the population. The interviews were followed by focus group sessions and medical chart reviews. More than half of those interviewed (56%) self-reported a diagnosis of arthritis, based either on a previous physician diagnosis or on an evaluation of self-reported symptoms by a certified rheumatologist. Of this group, 80% reported limitations to their activities attributable to arthritis. For only half of the group did medical charts include a diagnosis of arthritis or indicate medical tests to document the diagnosis.

The study found the prevalence of and limitations due to arthritis to be extremely high among the Chippewa. Reasons for this require further investigation, but these preliminary findings have significant implications for housing, community activities, and medical services necessary to accommodate the needs of this group.



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