

## **CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION**

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
University of Minnesota  
330 Humphrey Center**

# **Housing Assistance for Culturally Specific Groups**

Conducted on behalf of  
The East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center

Prepared by  
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May 1999

*This report (COPC 006) is also available at the following internet  
Address: <http://www.npcr.org/>*

January 2001

The East Side Community Outreach Partnership Center supported the work of the author of this report but has not reviewed it for publication. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and is not necessarily endorsed by East Side COPC.

East Side COPC is coordinated by the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota. 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. The author and publisher are solely responsible for the accuracy of the statements and interpretations contained in this publication. Such interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views of the Government.

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May 10, 1999

This portfolio represents work done by Terri M. Scott, Graduate Research Assistant for the COPC grant between February 1999 and April 28, 1999.

Organization of this material is such that the reader can see the progress of the interview project almost from its inception to the ending presentation. What is not represented here are seven different meetings that took place between Mary Martin and myself (3) and meetings with the COPC group (3) and another meeting with John Poupart and Cecelia Martinez. Each meeting lasted approximately 2 hours, in addition to several phone calls.

Although the second section - "Data Collection Procedure" - shows a DRAFT copy of the intended procedures, it became the procedure used to obtain information from selected organizations. In a meeting with the People of COPC group, this draft was read. It was at that time a request was made to respond in 2 days with additions, deletions or even general comments to the process presented. Sudden opposition was voiced, as this time frame was thought to be too short. After waiting for a period of about two weeks, there was no response. It was assumed that the procedure was unanimously, by consensus, acceptable to use.

The "East Side Inclusivity study DRAFT" went through a process of consensus also. The last page in this section shows the feedback that was given by John Poupart and Cecelia Martinez who represent the American Indian Research and Policy Institute. We are grateful for their well thought out comments as they did contribute to the final instrument wording.

The procedure for data gathering is demonstrated in the next five sections that show each organization interview. They all include the actual notes from the interview, a letter reiterating the focus of the interview and a request for feed back, the corrections, and a copy of what was originally sent. Most of the corrections are structural or 'first level' changes, rather than on principles. Additional literature is provided from each organization at the end of each section.

A copy of my presentation given on April 28<sup>th</sup> is the last section. It is as close of a copy to what was actually said in the 20 minutes that were made available. I would like to point out that one of the audience members stressed that the major finding I concluded with, was also what he was seeing in a larger meeting of several organizations across the East St. Paul area.

"Future Directions" overhead was added and thoroughly intended to be used in future meetings throughout the summer. This was not created as a result of what I thought as needed but something that has come out of what the organizations were saying. Additionally, the "Whats needed" after each program is also something that each organization was saying they needed - not my response to it. The project was an enjoyable one and I sincerely hope that whoever picks up the project from this point forward might see this information as instructive.

Terri M. Scott, COPC Graduate Research Assistant.

### Grant purpose focus and reason for survey

On February 8, Mary Martin and I met to discuss what ways we could go about gathering data information from the various agencies that are engaged in service to People of Color in the East St. Paul areas. We shared ideas about the potential re-draft of a survey/questionnaire that has already been created, we looked at previous grant successes to determine what works, and talked about cultural issues related to various ethnic groups.

#### **OH 1**

The COPC grant states that one of the purposes is “to develop culturally specific strategies to inform area residents and link them to resources for housing assistance (both rental and homeownership), job development, and workforce readiness”. (sec.H.1DB.e. pg. 15). This is a critical area of focus because of the major demographic shifts that have occurred within the past few years.

#### **Population change (OH 2)**

From a variety of organizations surveyed, we learned that “...in 1980, 97% of the populations on the East side was European American. By 1990, 85% was European American. It is projected that by the year 2000, 72% of the population will be European American. The estimates we now have from a study ESNDC (East Side Neighborhood Development Company) just conducted indicate that we now have 14% Asian American, 8% African American, 8% Latino, and 2% Native American in this working class neighborhood.” (Interview with Mike Anderson 3/25/99). It is important to note that this was an estimate because the projection is already short by 4% meaning that the European American population is already at 68% rather than holding true to the 72% projection. We might be able to speculate from this, that the rate of population growth among people of color is actually greater than what is now known from this study.

What this means for community organizations is that they become responsive to communities of color within their area of service. What I would like to do today, is to share with you some of the examples that have been provided through one on one interviews and then share with you, identified areas that need improvement. Profound in this telling, is that it actually sets the pace for COPC “future direction” approaches.

#### **“Community Partners” interviewed (OH 3)**

The following list shows some of the “community partners” who are committed to the COPC grant efforts. We specifically chose each one of these organizations to not only help us with ‘working out the bugs’ of our survey instrument, but to also learn more about their organizations and what work they are currently engaged in.

East Side Neighborhood Development Company – focusing on housing, Economic, and Community development.

Daytons Bluff Neighborhood Housing Services – focusing in on housing with partnerships between government, insurance and financial institutions.

Payne-Phalen District 5 Planning Council – whose established role is to help meet the physical, economic and social needs of their specific area

Upper Swede Hollow Neighborhood – focusing on commercial and housing development and community organizing –

Phalen Corridor Initiative – Economic and community development and neighborhood rehabilitation

This list verifies the role and purpose each organization has. All of them said that their desire was to “improve the quality of life” [for area residents through active participation]. They have also stated that there are partnerships they are forming with Hmong Pacific Association, The Womans Association of Hmong and Lao, “Earth Star” – a Native American based organization, Merrick County Services (emphasizing Hispanic) and African American churches.

Examples of culturally specific strategies  
in development and “What’s needed”

Better Together is a program that is working on creating the infrastructure among several community organizations in the East Side St. Paul area. A community potluck was recently held April 8 and 9<sup>th</sup> which addressed questions of partnerships and ‘creating a prosperous multi-racial community.

1. Environmental education and caring for the environment through Daytons Bluff elementary school serving 75% minority children. From this - youth action, academic and career opportunities are becoming known. New attitudes about caring, being

good stewards, participation and making a difference in the community is being developed.

#### Whats needed?

It is desired that new perspectives be brought to educational discussions such as values differences that relate to historical/cultural understanding. For example – issues of environmental justice and the correct naming of geographical locations that are respectful to indigenous people before settlement times. These are seen as important pieces to help with issues of racism, discrimination and stereotyping questions and further discussion. There is no doubt however, that the common cause of caring for the environment is an avenue to begin discussion.

2. A homeownership and home rehabilitation effort has recognized the living pattern of Southeast Asian families. As a result, they are actively engaged in architectural drafting that responds to the issue of larger families. By erecting 5 bedroom homes, instead of the 2 and 3 bedroom styles, they will be able to address the familial need that stems from cultural influences.

#### What's needed?

What this organization desires is to learn more about Hmong culture, beliefs, practices in order to further modify their program.

3. Another example of activity for community building is Youth programming that has done an excellent job of bringing the African American community together. Beautification projects, exposure to multicultural arts, and creating working relationships between youth and local businesses are some of the things the youth program does. Activity is high for both youth and parents in the African American community.

#### What's needed?

Other people, such as Hmong and Latino come but then drop away after a short time. American Indian people seem to express little interest. It is hard to get a handle on the inter-racial problems that seem to exist. Answers to this problem has long been an issue.

4. The fifth example is the assisting of Hmong entrepreneurs in the neighborhood. Loans, grants and marketing people who do market analysis have found ways to help businesses thereby creating a stronger clientele base. The result of these efforts is a thriving business.

#### What's needed?

Multiracial programs and people of color to serve on the board of our organization. These organizations show that they are working very hard to ensure that they can be as responsive to their new communities in the best way and as quickly as possible. One of the ways that has been expressed over and over again is the very real necessity of having people of color directly involved in these various programs and processes.

#### A major finding

The most significant finding from this mini-study was the overwhelming interest that each organization showed in having people of color invested in board membership. One of the questions we asked was "How are the following five groups involved in program, policy and governing decisions for your organization?" Each organization named board activity as a major body for decision making. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, people of color would be on the board and then not stay for their entire term. Or, it is found fairly difficult to get board interest. What some organizational leaders suggested was that there might be a fear of being looked upon by their peers as THE spokesperson for the entire ethnic group – this was referred to as the 'critical mass' problem by some.

Further inquiry into the board or governance led to other good questions and ideas:

#### **Ideas for future directions – OH 4**

1. Leadership development for boards. How do you successfully develop or recruit multi-racial boards? (mentioned independently in three different interviews)

2. We need board training. The board training needs to take a contextual approach – looking at real world dynamics for people instead of just sitting around and talking about race.
3. The dominant culture already sitting on the board needs to be welcoming.
4. With reference to board membership: How do we create an environment that helps people of color to stay?
5. Understanding Roberts Rules of Order might be problematic. What might we do to train people to understand this way of operating at board meetings?
6. Inter-relating and interplay between cultures seems to be missing in the community. What can we do to change this?

Summary and conclusions:

What I learned most from this mini study was that there are very caring individuals who bring a great deal of enthusiasm and caring to their work. They are thinking about how to grapple with demographic, and primarily economic development.

- Job training creates an avenue for a person to become gainfully employed. A good track record on the job, creates stability for future homeownership.
- The environment seems to be a central focal point for neighborhood organizations to rally around with young people at the center.
- People of color board membership appears to be lacking. At the same time, each organization expressed a concern and interest in building the links in order to have longer term board seats filled by people of color.

Not mentioned in this report, was the level of communication that goes on to inform people about neighborhood events. Newsletters and flyers are the major form of



communication letting people know what events are happening when, as well as meetings. On three independent occasions, it was mentioned that these newsletters are earmarked for being translated into Hmong and Spanish as well. Whether or not people come, can't come due to work, transportation or child care issues, or prefer not to be involved and why was not addressed in this mini-study.

It is my hope that "future directions" can be worked on, while simultaneously completing surveys for other community organizations. From this small sample, I might surmmize that the large majority of these other organizations would bring a similar story to the table.

We came into this study thinking that we would first find out where people already are with respect to their understanding of cultural diversity and sensitivity. What we essentially learned was that the process for understanding is given consideration and focus. In seeking to fulfill its original intent of developing culturally specific strategies to inform area residents and link them to resources for housing assistance, job development and workforce readiness, COPC does this. Listening to these and other community organizations and members has aided to truly serve as a cooperative and partnering link that assists with improving the quality of life for all East Side St.Paul residents.

## Ideas for Future Directions

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