

Neighborhoods 101

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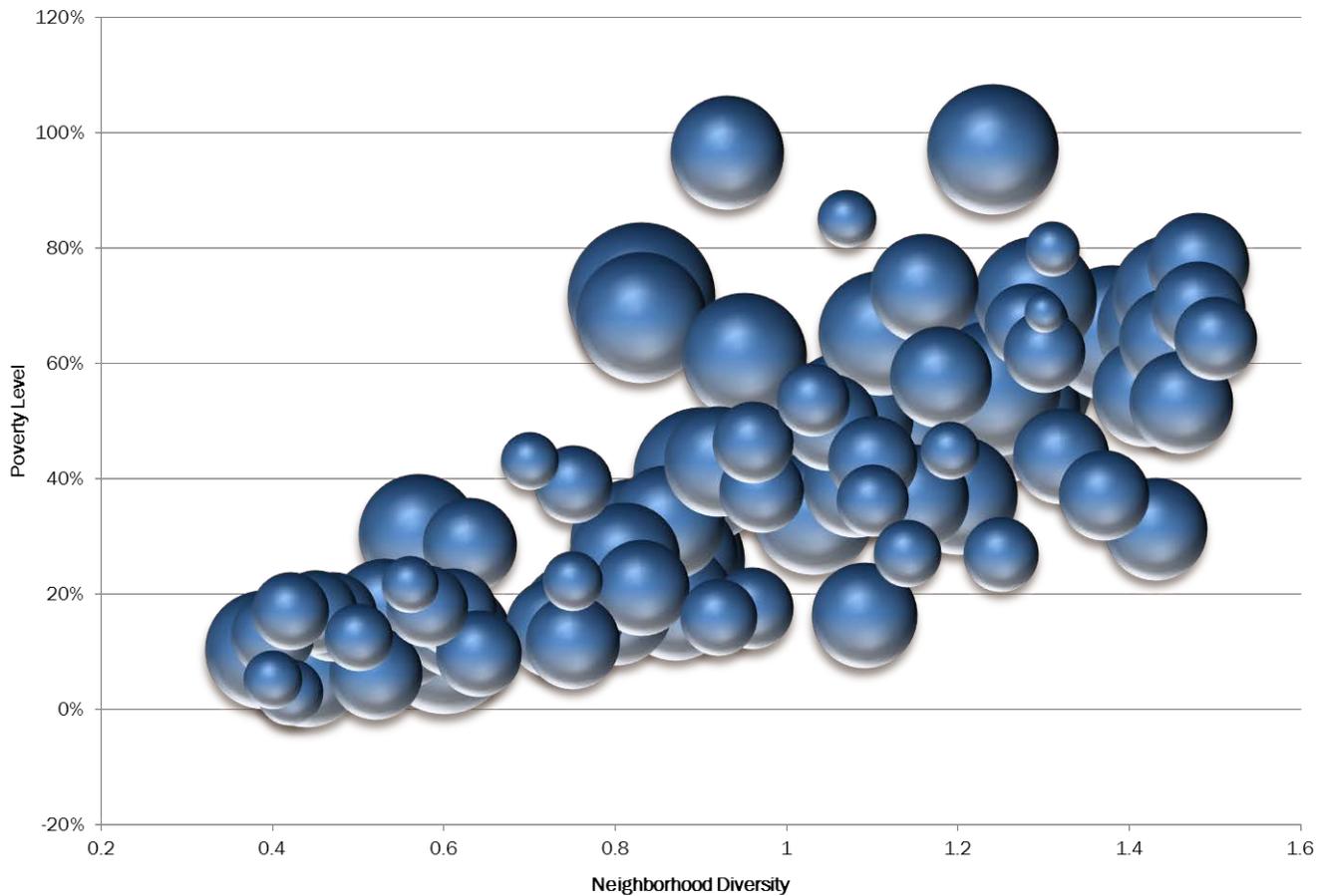
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1. What is a “neighborhood organization?” in Minneapolis?

- a. The City of Minneapolis has 70 recognized neighborhood organizations representing 84 residential neighborhoods.
 - Each neighborhood organization is an autonomous nonprofit organization and has a volunteer board of directors elected by residents (and sometimes other stakeholders).
 - Some neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis have histories going back more than 50 and even 100 years. Others have been around less than 20 years.
 - A neighborhood organization may represent 1 or more geographically defined neighborhoods.
 - Communities represented by neighborhood organizations range from as few as 672 residents (Northeast Park) to more than 20,000 residents (Longfellow Community).
 - Some are highly diverse with multiple languages spoken at home (East Phillips) while others have little racial diversity.
 - All neighborhood organizations received funding through the Community Participation Program and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.
 - Most neighborhood organizations have at least one part-time staff person, but some may be entirely run by volunteers. Large neighborhood organization may have several full- and part-time staff members.
 - There is a long history of funding programs supporting neighborhood organizations before NRP and CPP, including Model Cities and the Citizen Participation Program.
 - Some neighborhood organizations do additional fundraising and grant-writing, and have significant support from other funders besides the City.

Figure 1. Range of diversity, poverty, and population of communities represented by neighborhood organizations

Neighborhood Organization Diversity, Poverty, Population



b. Each recognized neighborhood organization must meet eligibility criteria identified in the Community Participation Program (CPP) Guidelines.

- Geographically based
- Represent neighborhood in its entirety
- Provide for participation of all segments of neighborhood
- Ensure membership is open to all residents
- No barriers to resident participation
- Hold regular open meetings

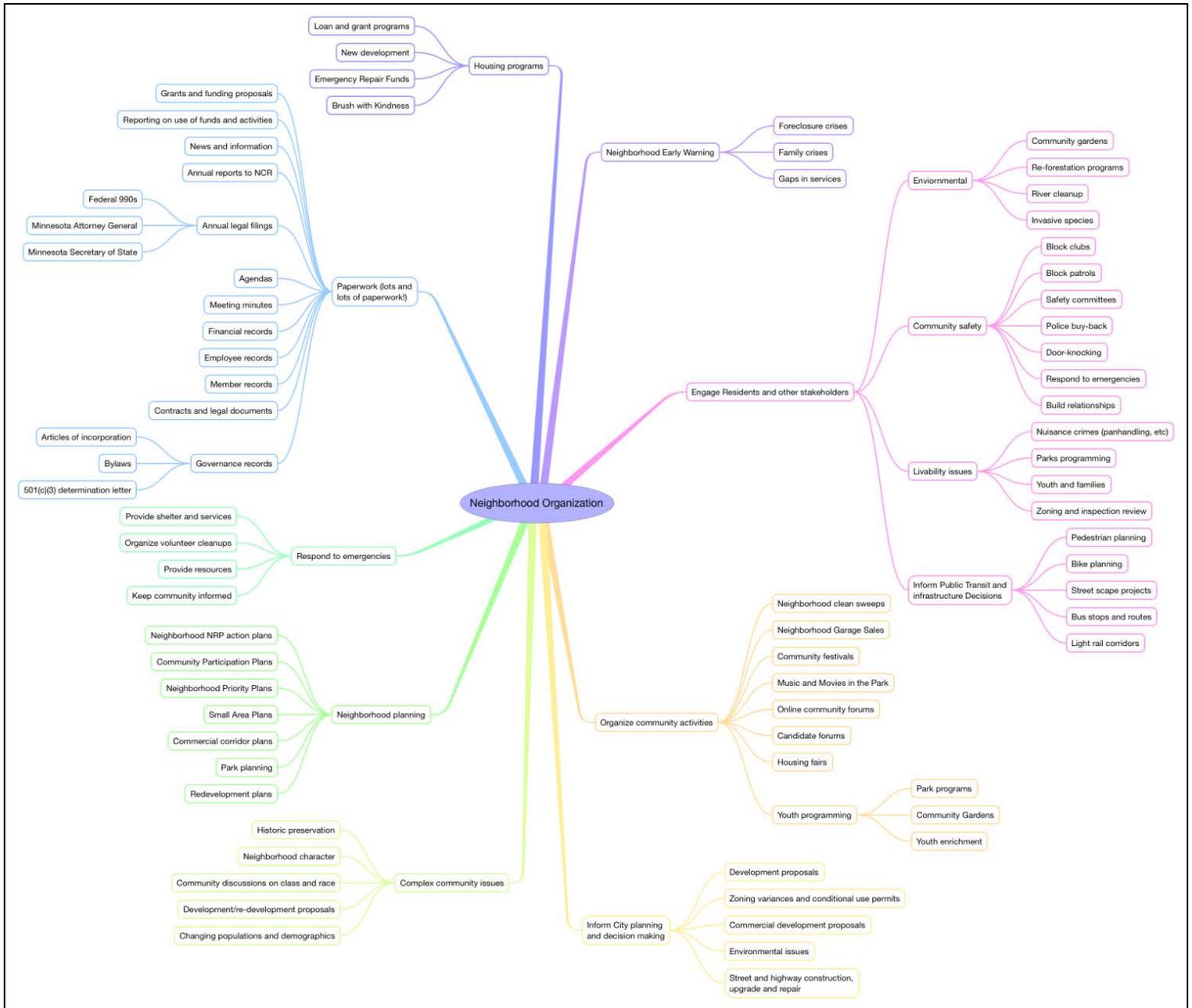
2. What kinds of issues do neighborhood organizations work on?

a. Engage residents and other stakeholders:

- Door-knocking
- Community meetings

- Committee and task force meetings
 - Focus groups
 - Surveys
 - Publish newsletters and maintain email lists
 - Maintain online presence through websites and social media
- b. Organize and mobilize
- Respond to local issues:
 - Housing
 - Environmental
 - Safety
 - Transit and infrastructure
 - Other livability
 - Organize community activities
 - Community gardens
 - Block clubs and block patrols
 - Neighborhood festivals and events
 - Online community forums
 - Youth and senior programs
 - Candidate forums
 - Planning
 - Neighborhood Action Plans (NRP and NPP)
 - Strategic plans for the organization
 - Small area plans
 - Commercial corridor planning
 - Park planning
 - Redevelopment planning
 - Respond to development issues
 - Development proposals
 - Zoning variances and conditional use permits
 - Street and highway construction, upgrades and repair
 - Commercial development proposals
 - Environmental issues.

Figure 2: The range and scope of neighborhood work.



c. Deal with complex community issues and conflict.

- Historic preservation and neighborhood character.
- Community discussions on race and class.
- Respond to proposed developments.
- Changing populations and demographics.
- Respond to emergencies (e.g. 2011 tornado).
 - Provide services.
 - Organize volunteer cleanups.

- Provide resources (e.g. redirect funds for home repair).
- Paperwork, lots and lots of paper work
 - Writing grants and funding proposals
 - Reporting on use of funds and activities
 - News and information
 - Annual reports and legal filings (990s, MN Annual Report, etc).
 - Regular financial reports
 - Meeting minutes
 - Other record keeping (e.g. member records)

3. Opportunities and challenges facing neighborhood organizations

a. Changes in City Funding Programs

- Neighborhood NRP funds are being drawn down over time.
 - 20 year program running from 1991 through 2010
 - All neighborhood organizations participated in NRP planning.
 - Some neighborhoods have fully expended NRP Phase I and Phase II plans.
- New Community Participation Program funding program started in 2011.
- The funding rules (i.e., NRP requirements) have largely stayed the same.

b. Changes in City leadership.

- New City Council.
- New department leadership in key agencies.

c. City, regional, and state agencies are looking to neighborhood organizations more often for community engagement and input:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation (e.g. Highway 94 sound wall).
- Metro Transit (LRT routes and stations).
- Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (Proposed North Minneapolis Work Force Center).
- Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (Waite House re-purposing).
- Hennepin County (Penn Avenue Community Works project).
- CPED planning (North Minneapolis Creative CityMaking).
- Health Department (North Minneapolis Greenway).

Figure 3: Who makes demands on my neighborhood organization?

- d. Neighborhood Priority Plans are an evolving process.
- New Neighborhood Priority Plans are simpler to propose.
 - Neighborhood Priority Plans have led to better communications between neighborhood organizations and City Departments.
 - NCR staff are reviewing NPP process to simplify and improve.
- e. Neighborhood organizations are seeking new partnerships and relationships.
- South Urban Neighborhoods (SUN) partnership of 7 neighborhood organizations in South Minneapolis.
 - Northside Neighborhood Council (NNC) in North Minneapolis.
- f. Complaints, grievances and legal actions.
- Neighborhood organizations have seen a significant increase in complaints, grievances and legal actions in the last few years.
 - Complaints have typically concerned the following issues:
 - Employment issues.
 - Failure to follow bylaws.
 - Failure to follow ADA requirements for meetings and notifications.

- Challenges to annual elections.
 - Internal board disputes.
 - Failure to properly use City funds allocated to neighborhood organizations.
 - Failure to provide regular or clear financial reports to neighborhood organization board and residents.
 - Failure to include under-represented populations in neighborhood decision making process (e.g. renters, low-income individuals).
 - Failure to follow CPP Guidelines by creating barriers to participation.
- g. Elections and candidates for office
- Neighborhood organizations must remain strictly non-partisan in relation to candidates for office.
 - In the last two election cycles, some candidates have aggressively sought access to speak or be recognized at neighborhood meetings and events.
 - Failure to follow rules around elections can result in loss of 501(c)(3) status and/or City funding.

4. Resources available to your neighborhood organizations:

a. NCR Staff:

- Neighborhood Specialists
 - NCR has 5 Neighborhood Support Specialists assigned to 70 neighborhood organizations.
 - When you have questions or run into problems, call your Neighborhood Support Specialist!
 - NCR Access and Outreach Specialists work with many cultural communities, and can help your neighborhood organization better connect with under-represented groups.

b. Risk Management

- Audit Services. NCR is assembling a panel of CPA firms to assist with annual filings, financial compilations, financial reviews and audits.
- Legal guidance. NCR has non-profit attorneys on retainer to provide governance guidance as needed.
 - Request must come to NCR through Neighborhood Organization Board Chair.
 - Guidance from attorneys must be shared with full board.
- Directors and Officers insurance. NCR assists with arranging a pooled Directors and Officers insurance policy to cover most neighborhood organizations.
- General Liability insurance. NCR assists with arranging a pooled General Liability Policy to cover some neighborhood organizations.

5. Online resources:

Updates for neighborhood organizations and our neighborhood programs at:

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/programs/index.htm>

Links to great Neighborhood Stories:

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/links/WCMS1P-106892>

Links to neighborhood organizations and contacts, neighborhood plans, funding reports, and other information here:

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/links/index.htm>

Links to neighborhood profiles where you can find maps, data and graphs at:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/neighborhoods/index.htm>

City's website on Planning, Zoning and Development Review:

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_planning-zoning

City of Minneapolis Planning Sectors and Planners:

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_planning-zoning

Links to zoning handouts and applications:

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/planning/cped_zoning-handouts-and-applications

Links to demographic data and reports by neighborhood in Minneapolis and St Paul.

<http://www.mncompass.org/twincities/neighborhoods>