

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY  
COMMUNITY OUTREACH  
PARTNERSHIP CENTER**

**GRANT # COPC-NJ-98-029  
*SEMIANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT***

**JANUARY 1, 2000 – JUNE 30, 2000**

***PART A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

*Submitted to:*

**Armand Carriere, Government Technical Representative  
Office of Community Partnerships  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

*Submitted by:*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Rutgers Community Outreach Partnership Center (RCOPC) is well into its second year of activities in the West Side Park community in Newark, New Jersey. During the current reporting period – January - June, 2000 – our emphasis was on completion of several major substantive tasks in the areas of neighborhood revitalization, healthcare, education, and economic development.

RCOPC continued to meet or exceeded all of the goals in all of the functional categories identified in the Project Management Work Plan in our original funding proposal.

Following is a summary of major highlights for the last six months.

### COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

- CUPR researched and prepared a guide to resident leadership training opportunities available to West Side Park residents and community-based organizations, and distributed copies of the guide to community partners.
- Through NCFC's Citizenship and Service Education (CASE) and Community Scholars programs, 19 Rutgers-Newark students completed their community service internships in West Side Park community organizations during the Spring semester.
- RCOPC continued to meet regularly with the Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC) Coordinator and committee chairs to coordinate RCOPC activities to meet neighborhood needs.

### NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

- CUPR coordinated and supported preparation of a *West Side Park Three-Phase Redevelopment Plan* for the 31-acre County park in the heart of the West Side Park community. The Park Redevelopment Plan was researched and prepared by graduate students in the Spring semester Community Development Studio offered by the Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development at Rutgers-New Brunswick.
- CUPR continued to provide technical assistance for installation of the West Side Park Community Technology Network, consisting of networked community computer centers operated by four community partner organizations.
- In partnership with four West Side Park community partner organizations, NCFC completed *One Block Over: A Multimedia Project of the West Side Park Community*, in which neighborhood youth worked with college mentors to publish a multimedia report on the West Side Park community.
- Lucent Technologies Foundation announced a \$125,000 grant to fund the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project, a collaboration between CUPR, NCFC, and the International Youth Organization (IYO).

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- CUPR surveyed small businesses on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to identify problems, needs, and opportunities, assisting Tri-City Peoples Corporation in support of the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association.
- CUPR initiated exploratory research for a retail and marketing survey for the West Side Business Hub proposed by CREST Community Development Corporation.

#### **HEALTHCARE**

- CUPR inventoried health care services and career training opportunities available to residents of West Side Park, drafted a *Health Care Services Directory*, and began a community information program, with Tri-City Peoples Corporation, to distribute the Directory to neighborhood residents and community organizations.

#### **EDUCATION**

- Working with three community partner organizations, CUPR prepared a submission to the Newark Public Schools as part of the district's application for a *21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers* proposal.
- CUPR prepared a Directory of after-school programs available within the West Side Park neighborhood and assisted the NEC Education Committee in its publication and distribution.
- CUPR continued to provide technical assistance to improve coordination and communication between the public schools and community-based organizations in West Side Park.

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***PART B. NARRATIVE DISCUSSION***

*Submitted to:*

**Armand Carriere, Government Technical Representative  
Office of Community Partnerships  
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

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## OVERVIEW

This report summarizes the activities of the Rutgers Community Outreach Partnership Center (RCOPC) during the period from January 1 through June 30, 2000, mid-way through Year Two of the three-year grant period. RCOPC has met or exceeded all of the goals for this period in the seven functional categories identified in the Project Management Work Plan included in our original funding proposal.

RCOPC's target neighborhood is the West Side Park community of Newark, New Jersey. West Side Park, a community of approximately 20,000 residents in 130 square blocks on the west side of the Central Ward, is Newark's target area under New Jersey's Urban Coordinating Council initiative and is one of eight neighborhoods comprising Newark's federal Enterprise Community. RCOPC's principal objective is to assist and support the community-based revitalization efforts underway through these state and federal programs.

During the Year One start-up phase of the project, RCOPC focused primarily on comprehensive planning and community organizing. RCOPC activities during that initial period emphasized data gathering, asset mapping, community training in mapping software and analysis, and capacity building.

Now well into Year Two, RCOPC's emphasis has shifted to the substantive tasks identified in the Neighborhood Empowerment Council's Community Action Plan. Highlights for this reporting period include:

- ❑ a \$125,000 grant from the Lucent Technologies Foundation to fund the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project;
- ❑ a redevelopment plan for the 31-acre County park that is the heart of the West Side Park community;
- ❑ publication of *One Block Over: A Multimedia Project of the West Side Park Community*;
- ❑ preparation of a directory of health care services available to West Side Park residents;
- ❑ technical assistance to the West Side Park Community Technology Network;
- ❑ economic development assistance to the West Side Business Hub and the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association; and
- ❑ participation in the Newark Public Schools' submission of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers funding proposal.

RCOPC continues to maintain a close and cooperative relationship with our community partners in West Side Park. Our principal community contact is the Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC) established under the New Jersey Urban Coordinating Council initiative to plan and implement the revitalization of West Side Park. RCOPC leadership is provided by Dr. Robert W. Lake, Professor in the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) and Dr. George Paschalis, Director of the Newark Center for Families and Communities (NCFC).

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

**Objective:** *The community organizations partnering in RCOPC are expanding their missions to keep pace with the challenges confronting their neighborhoods: affordable housing, economic development, day care, social services, health care, education, and neighborhood planning. The CBOs are stretching themselves internally to undertake these many project directions. These groups must do this work in the face of serious constraints: minimal staffing, little training, inadequate planning, and low operating budgets. These organizations could benefit from additional expertise to identify their capacity needs and locate resources to fill these demands.*

**Proposed Activities:** Tasks scheduled for Year Two focus on capacity building assistance to the NEC, provision of Rutgers personnel and other resources in West Side Park, and student internship placement in community-based organizations.

### **Outcomes:**

**Capacity Building.** A rich network of strong, vital, and energetic community-based organizations constitutes one of the most important resources of the West Side Park community. A major challenge confronting these organizations, however, is the need to continually engage community residents in their activities and to foster leadership skills among neighborhood residents.

Recognizing this need, CUPR researched leadership development programs available to West Side Park residents and distributed the information to our community partner organizations. Two training models were identified: comprehensive training, in which residents participate in an off-site training program together with residents of other New Jersey communities; and targeted training, in which trainers come into the community to work with residents on issues specific to the community.

Two community partners – the International Youth Organization (IYO) and CREST Community Development Corporation – are working to establish seven Resident Councils within West Side Park as a way to engage residents in community issues. To provide leadership for the seven resident councils, they are recruiting residents for comprehensive leadership training provided by the NJ Affordable Housing Network’s Community Building Support Initiative (CBSI). Two groups of residents have completed the training program and a third group is being recruited for training to begin this Fall.

**Mobilizing University Resources.** One of RCOPC’s primary partnership methods is to identify and mobilize faculty, students and other University resources to work directly with our community partners in West Side Park’s revitalization. The principal means of accomplishing this objective include:

1. support for graduate student research assistants to work with community partners;
2. use of the Department of Urban Planning’s Community Development Studio;
3. student internship placement; and
4. close coordination between RCOPC and our community partners.

*Graduate Research Assistants.* During the January-June 2000 reporting period, CUPR supported eight graduate student research assistants who provided 890 hours of technical assistance to community partner organizations on a broad variety of COPC-related projects. The substantive focus of these projects, described elsewhere in this report, ranges through all seven functional areas defined in the RCOPC Workplan.

*Community Development Studio.* This year, the Spring semester Community Development Studio offered by the Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development at Rutgers-New Brunswick worked with the Neighborhood Empowerment Council and the West Side Park Conservancy to prepare a redevelopment plan for the 31-acre County park (West Side Park) located at the heart of the West Side Park community. The park redevelopment project (described in more detail below) engaged ten graduate students in a facility planning and design exercise combined with a process of community organizing, resident mobilization, and institution building that contributed significantly to both the material quality of life and institutional capacities in West Side Park.

*Student Internship Placement.* Under the supervision of George Paschalis, Director of Rutgers' Newark Center for Families and Communities (NCFC), 19 students completed their community service internships in the West Side Park community during the Spring semester (760 total hours). Under CASE, the Citizenship and Service Education program, undergraduate students enrolled in CASE courses complete 40 hours of community service each semester, providing needed personnel to expand the capacity of community-based organizations to deliver services. During the Spring semester, Patricia Bender, Director of the Writing Center at Rutgers-Newark (and a member of RCOPC's Community Advisory Committee) taught Advanced Exposition, and Professor John Boyer taught Journalism and Communication Media. Students in both classes worked closely with West Side Park youth on improving writing skills and promoting a better understanding of communications technology. In addition, three NCFC Community Scholars worked at NCFC in partnership with the newly created West Side Park Youth Leadership Council. Beginning in June, eight Community Scholars are serving as literacy tutors to 32 children enrolled in summer camp run by the International Youth Organization (IYO), providing one-on-one tutoring five days a week over an eight-week period.

*Coordination with Community Partners.* RCOPC faculty and staff attend the regularly scheduled (monthly or bimonthly) NEC meetings held within the West Side Park community. Regular meeting attendance maintains the visibility of RCOPC within the community, facilitates reporting on RCOPC activities, provides accessibility to RCOPC staff for our community partners, and helps to keep RCOPC staff current on community issues. In addition, RCOPC Directors Robert Lake and Stephen Finn meet bimonthly with the NEC Subcommittee chairs. These meetings are crucial opportunities to review Subcommittee programs and priorities, identify the Subcommittees' research and outreach needs that can be filled by RCOPC, and maintain the flow of information between RCOPC and the NEC.

## NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

***Objectives:** RCOPC's neighborhood revitalization activities focus on maximizing the positive neighborhood spin-off effects of the community's most visible physical and social assets. The neighborhood revitalization efforts listed here represent high-priority projects as identified in the NEC's West Side Park Community Action Plan. Following consultation with community leaders, we have identified three major projects to anchor RCOPC's neighborhood revitalization agenda: redevelopment of the 31-acre county park (West Side Park) in the heart of the West Side Park community; youth leadership development and training; and establishment of a Community Technology Network,.*

***Proposed Activities:** Tasks scheduled for the January-June 2000 period focus on all three programs identified above.*

### **Outcomes:**

**West Side Park Redevelopment Plan.** West Side Park, a 31-acre County park located at the heart of the West Side Park community, was the focus of the Spring semester Community Development Studio. Under the direction of Kathe Newman, ten graduate students enrolled in the Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development at Rutgers-New Brunswick, prepared a redevelopment plan for the park, which has suffered from significant deterioration and lack of maintenance. The Neighborhood Empowerment Council and the West Side Park Conservancy were the clients for the report. CUPR provided substantive and logistical support and funded a Teaching Assistant to staff the Studio project.

As an integral component of the park redevelopment process, the Studio organized a series of five community planning meetings. More than 200 neighborhood residents participated in discussion and planning to identify redevelopment priorities and to design a playground and a tot lot as the first phase of park redevelopment. These meetings not only contributed to the redesign of the park but also served the important function of mobilizing the community and involving residents in defining solutions to neighborhood problems.

The final report, *West Side Park: A Three Phase Redevelopment Plan*, was presented at a public meeting attended by approximately 50 residents, community activists, and representatives of community-based organizations. The report presents design and construction recommendations for a playground and tot lot and provides additional recommendations regarding maintenance, safety, youth involvement, and ways of strengthening the institutional capacities of the West Side Park Conservancy.

In addition to the written report, the Studio also produced a 3-dimensional depiction of present conditions and future renovations; a video documentary of the park redevelopment process and the community meetings; a directory of potential funders for future park revitalization efforts; and a CD-Rom of the final report and accompanying photographs and documentation.

Copies of the final report were distributed to community partners and interested residents as well as to relevant city, county, and state officials. The report is also available on the RCOPC website at [http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/cupr/rcopc/wsp\\_rev\\_plan.htm](http://www.policy.rutgers.edu/cupr/rcopc/wsp_rev_plan.htm).

Because the Park redevelopment process will continue well beyond the end of the Studio's Spring semester schedule, CUPR is continuing to support a graduate student assistant to help implement the report's recommendations. The student assistant has already provided more than 100 hours of technical assistance to the West Side Park Conservancy and the Neighborhood Empowerment Council.

**Youth Leadership Development and Training.** RCOPC devoted a major effort during this reporting period to youth leadership, in conjunction with the Youth and Young Adults Subcommittee of the Neighborhood Empowerment Council.

*One Block Over: A Multimedia Project of the West Side Park Community.* Under the supervision of George Paschalis, Director of the Newark Center for Families and Communities (NCFC), neighborhood youth worked with college mentors to publish *One Block Over*. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, the students shared their experiences and ideas with more than 100 residents and community leaders at a publication party hosted by NCFC, the New Community Corporation, and the Neighborhood Empowerment Council.

*One Block Over (OBO)* used multimedia technology as a means for interaction between elementary, high school, and college students as well as parents, teachers, and community leaders. The project had three main objectives: to promote a better understanding of technology; to promote literacy through writing; and to engage youth in identifying and analyzing issues that affect their community.

Student teams composed of elementary and high school students and college mentors explored their neighborhoods with digital cameras and video equipment, conducting interviews with community leaders while recording their own impressions and experiences. Students were given the opportunity to present their findings through different media: electronically, through a website that documented their progress throughout the project; in printed form, through a full-color final publication; and in a multimedia presentation to the community.

*West Side Park Youth Leadership Council.* OBO ultimately led to the creation of a Youth Leadership Council that is now helping to guide future redevelopment efforts in West Side Park. Three NCFC Community Scholars are working with the Youth Council on a number of activities centered around the park, including creation of a tennis clinic, several park cleanups, and an ambitious plan to renovate the flagpole in the center of the park.

*Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project.* CUPR, NCFC, and the International Youth Organization (IYO) collaborated to obtain a \$125,000 grant from the

Lucent Technologies Foundation to fund the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project. The grant funds an innovative work-based learning project to impart technological and leadership skills to 50 high school juniors and seniors who reside in the West Side Park community.

The project builds on and expands previous RCOPC-related programs. CUPR will recruit and support a program coordinator. NCFC will offer its successful multimedia project (see above) to program participants, and will provide 25 Rutgers college students to mentor participants in a 2:1 ratio. Participants will receive computer-aided instruction focusing on upgrading math, science, and computer skills. Participants will also form part of the West Side Park Youth Leadership Council and will undertake community service projects. IYO staff will provide training in employability skills, drawing from its 30-year expertise in this area. Networks will be created with area employers such as Lucent Technologies, Prudential Insurance, and Continental Airlines to provide internship possibilities and exposure to the business world. Youth will also have the opportunity to serve as tutors and mentors to 8-12 year-olds in the community to impart the computer and technology skills they learn in the program.

*Youth Investment Council.* Stephen Finn, Director of CUPR's Project Community, has been recruited by the Mayor of Newark to serve on the city's Youth Investment Council (YIC). The YIC is part of Newark's Workforce Investment Board (WIB) mandated by the new Workforce Investment Act. The YIC is responsible for developing an integrated system to provide Newark's youth with the personal and career skills they need to succeed in higher education and the marketplace. Finn chairs the YIC's Planning Committee, which will examine the inventory of services currently available to youth to identify gaps. Finn recently participated in a strategic planning retreat for Newark's YIC and WIB members, conducted by the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers-New Brunswick.

**Community Technology Network.** RCOPC continues to support development of a Community Technology Network in West Side Park, consisting of community computer centers based at four community-partner organizations – Corinthian Housing Development Corporation, International Youth Organization (IYO), Salvation Army West Side Branch, and Tri-City Peoples Corporation. These organizations have each established computer training centers providing classes and activities for school-age children, young adults, and senior citizens. The four centers operate independently but are also networked so that programs and operating hours are coordinated to provide maximum accessibility for neighborhood residents.

CUPR continues to provide technical assistance to facilitate start-up of the individual centers, to facilitate information sharing, and to network the centers into a coordinated program. CUPR graduate research assistant Nick Rattray served as a "circuit rider" working with the individual centers on hardware and software installation and facilitating coordination of the Network. In March, he conducted two webpage design workshops for community partner organizations. CUPR is currently recruiting a graduate student

assistant to provide instructional assistance as well as hardware and software troubleshooting for the Network beginning in the Fall.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

***Objectives:** RCOPC work under this functional category provides research and outreach in support of small business development within the West Side Park community. RCOPC recognizes the far-reaching positive multiplier effects of a strong small business sector in the community and, in cooperation with the NEC Economic Development Subcommittee, will focus a considerable portion of its research and outreach efforts to promote the development of small businesses in the West Side Park community.*

***Proposed Activities:** Tasks in the Economic Development functional category include research and technical assistance focused on small business development in the principal commercial zones within West Side Park. RCOPC's focus in the current reporting period is on the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue neighborhood shopping district and the major commercial concentration located along Springfield Avenue.*

### **Outcomes:**

**16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association.** Building on work initiated in the earlier period, RCOPC has continued to work with Ollyn Lettman, Community Development Director of the Tri-City Peoples Corporation, on a merchant organizing initiative aimed to rejuvenate and energize the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association and spur economic development along this commercial corridor. One of three principal commercial corridors within West Side Park, 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue is an important neighborhood shopping and convenience goods location and fronts the county park that gives the West Side Park community its name. Commercial deterioration along this corridor creates a hardship for residents and threatens to undermine the major park redevelopment effort that is currently underway.

In the current reporting period, CUPR conducted a survey of 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue small business owners to document their perceptions of problems, needs, and opportunities for small businesses in the area, and to assess their interest in participating in the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association. Respondents identified crime, inadequate city services, and the low income of customers as the biggest problems confronting small businesses on 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue. However, respondents also expect the neighborhood to improve significantly over the next five years and point to the new housing construction as evidence. Improved safety and security was overwhelmingly identified as the most important factor that would benefit small businesses. These survey responses will help to identify barriers to small business growth and to suggest a future agenda of activities for the 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue Merchants Association.

**West Side Business Hub.** RCOPC is assisting the CREST Community Development Corporation (CCDC) to develop a proposal for a West Side Business Hub located on Springfield Avenue, the principal commercial corridor in West Side Park. The centerpiece of the West Side Business Hub proposal involves redevelopment of a two-block neighborhood shopping mall anchored by a 50,000 sq. ft. supermarket. RCOPC is assisting CREST CDC to conduct a retail market analysis to assess market potential within the trade area. Completion of the retail market analysis as part of the predevelopment process will provide the data needed to attract a developer for the supermarket site and support an application for development financing.

## **HEALTH CARE**

***Objective:** Adequate health care is an essential part of any plan for neighborhood renewal. RCOPC will contribute to this objective by assisting in development of a proposal, and seeking funding for, a nurse-managed neighborhood clinic within the West Side Park community.*

***Proposed Activities:** In conjunction with the NEC Healthcare Subcommittee, RCOPC will continue the planning and development process to establish a community health care center within West Side Park.*

### ***Outcomes:***

**Health Services Directory.** Plans for the community health care center are provisionally on hold due to conflicting commitments within the School of Nursing and unanticipated changes in the funding picture. However, RCOPC continues to work closely with two community partner organizations – the Tri-City Peoples Corporation and Corinthian HDC – to expand the capacity of the existing health clinic operating in West Side Park.

Within the current reporting period, RCOPC developed a *Health Care Services Directory* as an information resource for residents of West Side Park. The Directory consists of three sections:

- (1) a list of health care providers organized by type of service provided, ranging from primary care providers to maternal and child health services, HIV/AIDS treatment and counseling, substance abuse and alcoholism treatment, mental health, geriatric care, and home health care, among other services;
- (2) a detailed description of the services provided by more than sixty organizations serving the West Side Park community; and
- (3) a list of health care education and training opportunities available to WSP residents.

Working with Corinthian HDC and Tri-City, RCOPC is developing a community education program through which to distribute the information contained in the *Health Care Services Directory*.

## EDUCATION

**Objective:** *In partnership with the NEC Education Subcommittee and the Newark Public Schools, RCOPC will design a comprehensive after-school program to provide a safe haven and structured activities for children attending the 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue School. The 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue School has been designated as the community school for West Side Park and will be open extended hours in the evening. This school has been identified by our Community Partners as the most appropriate location for the after-school program.*

**Proposed Activities:** *Working with the NEC Education Subcommittee, the United Community Corporation, and the Newark Public Schools, RCOPC will develop a concept and strategic plan and will identify possible funding sources for an after-school program in the public schools.*

### **Outcomes:**

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center.** RCOPC continued in this reporting period to advance a major initiative designed to improve and facilitate planning and coordination between the public schools and community-based organizations in West Side Park, focusing primarily on after-school programs.

As part of this initiative, CUPR convened three community partner organizations to discuss and prepare a submission to the Newark Public Schools as part of the district's application for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Center grant from the U.S. Department of Education. CUPR's Project Community Director Stephen Finn worked with leaders from the Tri-City Peoples Corporation, International Youth Organization, and Corinthian HDC and prepared a concept paper to develop an after-school program serving high school youth in the West Side Park community. CUPR also participated in a planning charette conducted by the Newark Public Schools to discuss the citywide needs and services of high school youth that could be addressed by the district's 21<sup>st</sup> Century application.

Many of the components of the West Side Park concept paper influenced the Newark Public School's application, including the creation of Student Advisory Councils throughout the district's secondary schools. While Newark was ultimately not selected to receive a grant, the collaboration within RCOPC between Rutgers and our community partners significantly increased communication and coordination among the groups. Ideas developed through this collaboration informed the Youth Leaders in Technology proposal that was successfully funded by the Lucent Technologies Foundation (see above).

**After-School Programs.** RCOPC also continued to support the NEC's Education Subcommittee to distribute information about after-school programs available in West Side Park and to improve coordination between community-based organizations and the public schools. CUPR graduate assistant Melina Patterson compiled information and prepared a directory of after-school programs within West Side Park for distribution to neighborhood residents.

## **RELATED ACTIVITIES**

- ❑ Project Community Director Stephen Finn participated in the Workshop on Teaching and Learning for Community Building: Professional Development and Community Leadership Development Programs, May 12, sponsored by HUD's Office of University Partnerships.
- ❑ CUPR graduate research assistant Melina Patterson attended the Training Workshop on Community School/University Partnerships, March 1-3, co-sponsored by the Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania and the National Center for Community Education.
- ❑ Melina Patterson participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Grant Writing Workshop, on February 5, in Newark, sponsored by the Newark Public Schools.
- ❑ RCOPC Director Robert Lake participated in a panel on Geography and Urban Policy: Challenge and Prospect, at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, April 7, in Pittsburgh.