

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY OUTREACH
PARTNERSHIP CENTER**

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

JANUARY 1 – JUNE 30, 2001

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 halfway through its third year of activities in the West Side Park community in Newark, New Jersey. RCOPC has received approval from HUD for a one-year no-cost extension of the grant period to September 23, 2002.

This current reporting period – January-June 2001 – has been a pivotal period for RCOPC. Substantial staff and leadership turnover among our community and university partners has required significant re-evaluation of our mission, our objectives, and the university's relationship with the community. Due to extensive personnel and organizational turnover, some long-standing relationships have ended, some institutional memory has been lost, and new productive relationships have been established.

This transition has allowed us to emerge from this pivotal period with renewed energy and a clear direction for movement into the remaining year and half of original RCOPC funding. In addition, and notwithstanding the considerable energy expended on program restructuring, RCOPC completed several major projects during this period in the areas of comprehensive planning, neighborhood revitalization, youth and education programs, and healthcare.

RCOPC continues to meet or exceed 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 past six months.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

- The *West Side Park Data Atlas* has been completed in draft form and circulated to community partners for comments.
- RCOPC developed an *Interactive Mapping Server* to facilitate community-based planning in West Side Park and the City of Newark.
- The new *RCOPC Web Site* is on-line at <http://policy.rutgers.edu/cupr/rcopc> providing project descriptions, printable reports, planning data, neighborhood maps, and much more.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

- RCOPC stepped up efforts to facilitate the *revitalization of West Side Park*, the 31-acre county park that is the heart of the West Side Park community.

- RCOPC is working with two community partner organizations to develop *Neighborhood Land Use* and *Neighborhood Revitalization Plans* to help guide neighborhood-based revitalization efforts.
- RCOPC prepared a *Community Technology Center* grant application to obtain funding for the West Side Park Neighborhood Technology Network.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

- RCOPC assisted the *Mayor's Youth Investment Council (YIC)* to revise the Request for Proposals (rfp) process used to select vendors for summer programs, and served on the review panel to recommend proposals for funding.
- RCOPC continued to support the activities of the *Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project*, providing youth training in technology, leadership, and college prep.

HEALTHCARE

- RCOPC prepared a *feasibility analysis for the West Side Park Health Care Center*, a joint project of RCOPC, Tri-City Peoples Corporation and Corinthian HDC.
- RCOPC continued to update the *West Side Park Health Care Services Directory*, containing a data base of 146 health care service programs available to West Side Park residents.

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PART B. NARRATIVE DISCUSSION

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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, 2001. At the completion of this reporting period, RCOPC is mid-way through the third year of activities in partnership with the West Side Park community of Newark, New Jersey. HUD's Office of University Partnerships has approved our request for a one-year no-cost extension of the grant period, which continues RCOPC funding through September 23, 2002.

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.

RCOPC has met or exceeded all of the goals for this period in each of the functional categories identified in the Project Management Work Plan included in our original funding proposal. Our emphasis in this reporting period focused on several major substantive tasks identified in the Neighborhood Empowerment Council's Community Action Plan. Highlights for this reporting period include:

- ❑ completion of a feasibility analysis for a West Side Park Health Care Center
- ❑ updating the *West Side Park Health Care Services Directory*, listing health care services available to West Side Park residents
- ❑ stepped up efforts to facilitate the revitalization of West Side Park, a 31-acre county park, as the focal point of the West Side Park community
- ❑ completion of the *West Side Park Data Atlas*
- ❑ development of an *Interactive Mapping Server* to support community-based planning
- ❑ development of *Neighborhood Land Use* and *Neighborhood Revitalization Plans* to support neighborhood-based community revitalization efforts
- ❑ technical assistance to the West Side Park Neighborhood Technology Network
- ❑ continuation of the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology project, with additional funding by a grant from the Lucent Foundation
- ❑ assistance to the Mayor's Youth Investment Council

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 Robert Lake, Kathe Newman, and Stephen Finn at the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR).

The current reporting period was marked by substantial personnel and organizational changes affecting RCOPC's operations. Rutgers University closed the Newark Center for Families and Communities (NCFC) effective June 30, 2001. Before its closure, NCFC, a unit of the Rutgers-Newark campus, provided important community outreach activities focusing primarily on health, education, and programs for youth and young adults. These activities have been assumed by faculty and staff at the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) in collaboration with individual faculty on the Rutgers-Newark campus.

Major transitions have also occurred within RCOPC's community partner organizations. The position of NEC Neighborhood Coordinator, vacant since July 2000, was finally filled with the appointment of Dina Levy to the position in April 2001. Since the Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC) is RCOPC's principal point of contact to the West Side Park community, this nine-month lag presented major challenges of continuity and leadership. RCOPC staff bridged this extended transitional period by meeting frequently with individual community partner organizations and community residents in an attempt to maintain continuity and facilitate communication among all community partners. For much of this period, RCOPC provided a major communications link facilitating information sharing and coordination among community partners. Since her appointment as Neighborhood Coordinator in April 2001, Dina Levy has put the NEC back on track with a significant infusion of energy and leadership.

In addition, turnover in critical leadership positions at several community partner organizations has added further uncertainty and instability. Three community partners appointed new Executive Directors during this reporting period (one of these appointed two new ED's within a two-month period). Some of these transitions have also been accompanied by significant staff turnover involving individuals who were very closely involved with RCOPC projects. These changes have engaged RCOPC staff in an extended effort of meetings and outreach to establish relationships with new community leaders, explain the RCOPC mission and program, and understand the perspectives and organizational directions introduced by the new leadership.

1. COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

RCOPC has continued to expand and develop the West Side Park Community Asset Mapping activities initiated at the very outset of the project. These data gathering and dissemination activities support the planning and revitalization efforts of community partner organizations and provide essential neighborhood information for community residents.

WEST SIDE PARK DATA ATLAS

RCOPC has created a *Data Atlas* for the West Side Park neighborhood. Elements of the Data Atlas, compiled by Professor Kathe Newman at CUPR, are posted on the RCOPC web site. Copies are also being distributed to our community partners, libraries, schools, and other interested individuals and organizations.

The *West Side Park Data Atlas* contains maps and charts that show:

- ◆ Political boundaries (Congressional Districts, State Assembly Districts, Newark Wards)
- ◆ Census geography (tracts and blocks)
- ◆ Planning areas (Federal Enterprise Community and State Enterprise Zone boundaries, State Urban Coordinating Council area)
- ◆ Community-based organizations (location and contact information)
- ◆ West Side Park community organizing districts (location and contact information)
- ◆ RCOPC 1999 Parcel Survey data (land use, building condition, occupancy status, vacant lot condition, sidewalk condition)
- ◆ School data (location, grade levels, enrollment, student-teacher ratio, student mobility, class size, computer and Internet access information, and results of 4th, 8th, and 11th grade proficiency tests)

INTERACTIVE MAPPING SERVER

RCOPC developed an Interactive Mapping Server to facilitate community-based planning in West Side Park. With the Server, community organizations and other interested parties can access neighborhood maps and data over the Internet using a Web browser. No GIS software or specialized mapping skills are required. Users can view maps from the West Side Park Data Atlas and the City of Newark, change visible map layers, and query and display the data on-line. Data available through the Interactive Mapping Server include all the data contained in the West Side Park Data Atlas.

Professor Kathe Newman is actively engaged in developing a Newark area coalition to facilitate the future development of this Web site as a means to increase access to data and to facilitate both downtown and neighborhood revitalization in the city of Newark. As a result of this effort, the Interactive Mapping project has improved networking

among RCOPC, Newark city officials and staff, downtown Newark development organizations, and State officials engaged in urban revitalization efforts.

RCOPC WEB SITE

RCOPC has a completely redesigned, reorganized and updated Web site located at <http://policy.rutgers.edu/cupr/rcopc>. The Web site was redesigned to improve the sharing and dissemination of information about RCOPC, data and information about West Side Park, and RCOPC reports and publications. Information on the Web site now includes project descriptions, reports, databases, maps and other information from the West Side Park Data Atlas, slide shows, photographs, a West Side Park bibliography, and links to other important Internet sites. The City of Newark has included a link to the RCOPC Web site on the City's homepage.

2. NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

WEST SIDE PARK REVITALIZATION

RCOPC has placed a high priority on facilitating the badly needed revitalization of West Side Park, the 31-acre County park located in the heart of the West Side Park community. Working with RCOPC, the graduate Community Development Planning Studio in the Rutgers Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development, taught by Professor Kathe Newman, prepared a three-phase redevelopment plan for the Park during the Spring semester 2000. Based on extensive community consultation and participation, the redevelopment plan contained concept and site designs for a playground and a tot lot and presented recommendations for a phased redevelopment of the entire Park. In May 2000, the West Side Park community was awarded a \$500,000 Green Acres grant from the State of New Jersey, matched by an additional \$250,000 from Essex County, expressly devoted to Park revitalization.

Despite the allocation of funds and the RCOPC/Planning Studio redevelopment plan, work had not yet begun on the Park a year later, in Spring 2001. Cooperating closely with NEC Neighborhood Coordinator Dina Levy, RCOPC is working to support community organizing efforts to press Essex County officials to move forward with the badly needed Park revitalization. RCOPC has facilitated and participated in meetings between West Side Park community organizations, County Parks Department staff, representatives and staff from the County Board of Freeholders, and other County and State officials.

As a result of these meetings and continuing pressure from community organizations and residents, the President of the Board of Freeholders recently announced that the improvement of West Side Park is now his "number one priority." The County will hire full-time maintenance staff from the community, improve lighting and security in the Park, and begin construction of the playground this year.

NEIGHBORHOOD LAND USE AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLANS

RCOPC is working with two community partner organizations, Corinthian Housing Development Corporation and Tri-City Peoples Corporation, to develop a coordinated land use and neighborhood revitalization plan for their primary target areas within West Side Park. Initially, each organization sought to create a separate land use plan for its surrounding area. When it became clear that greater results could be achieved by working collaboratively, RCOPC agreed to prepare a coordinated plan that benefits from each organization's expertise.

Preparation of the Neighborhood Land Use Plan involves collecting, manually editing, and mapping relevant tax parcel data and other data contained in the West Side Park Community Asset Map. Corinthian and Tri-City will use the resulting Land Use and Neighborhood Revitalization Plan to assess property conditions, identify parcel owners, acquire site control of city-owned parcels, and obtain funding for planned neighborhood redevelopment. RCOPC will provide continual updating of the Land Use Plan to monitor neighborhood change and assist the partner organizations in their redevelopment efforts.

WEST SIDE PARK COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY NETWORK

RCOPC continues to support the West Side Park Community Technology Network. Rather than create one computer center in West Side Park, community partners chose to create five separate labs housed at community development corporations and community-based social service providers. RCOPC has facilitated the creation of the West Side Park Computer Technology Network, a collaborative effort working on common curriculum development, sharing technology resources, accessing external resources including funding and technical assistance, and identifying ways to use the labs for social service activities, economic development, after-school programs, job training, cultural awareness, cross-generational learning, and a host of other programs.

RCOPC provides support for Kamil Olufowobi, a graduate intern at the computer lab located at Corinthian HDC. During the current period, Mr. Olufowobi provided technical support to maintain the lab's workstations and servers, arranged Internet access, and networked with faculty and students from Rutgers-Newark and NJIT to participate in lab instruction. Kamil also provided technology support to the youth participating in the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology project (see below) and to senior citizens participating in the *Destination Newark: Writing Home* project sponsored by the Rutgers-Newark Writing Center.

In response to an RFP released in late Spring, RCOPC prepared a funding proposal for a Community Technology Center (CTC) grant from the U.S. Department of Education, in collaboration with the Rutgers-Newark Writing Center and the Salvation Army-West Side Branch. The proposal sought funding to support collaboration among the five community organizations comprising the West Side Park Community Technology Network and proposed support for a multi-generational computer skills training project.

Just prior to submitting the proposal, RCOPC learned that another community partner anticipated submitting a CTC proposal in the same funding round and opted to defer our proposal to a later date. We are also considering funding options from local and private foundations, believing firmly that the COPC should not compete directly with our community partners for project funding.

3. YOUTH AND EDUCATION

YOUTH INVESTMENT COUNCIL

RCOPC continues to support the Mayor's Youth Investment Council (YIC), part of Newark's Workforce Investment Board established under the Workforce Investment Act. The YIC's goal is to develop an integrated, comprehensive system to provide Newark's youth with the academic and vocational skills and social service support needed to prepare for and succeed in the marketplace. Professor Steve Finn, a mayoral appointee to the YIC, serves as co-chair of the planning subcommittee.

NEWARK NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH LEADERS IN TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

RCOPC is assisting the International Youth Organization (IYO) to implement the Newark Neighborhood Youth Leaders in Technology Project, with funding from a \$125,000 grant from the Lucent Foundation leveraged through RCOPC. The Project prepares 50 West Side Park high school juniors and seniors for college and careers through leadership and technology training, student internships, visits to college campuses, and help with college applications.

In the current period, Professor Steve Finn conducted an evaluation survey of the parents and caregivers of youth who participated in the program to determine its impacts on the youth and family members. Parents and caregivers gave overwhelming approval to the project and attested to the positive impacts of the program on the youth and their families. The project was observed to assist youth academically and emotionally, foster more interest in higher education, and nurture bonds between the participants and other family members. Participation in the program has helped youth with their school work. For those already doing well in school, the program reinforced their desire for learning and strengthened their academic performance.

4. HEALTHCARE

WEST SIDE PARK COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

Working in collaboration with two community partners, Corinthian HDC and Tri-City People's Corporation, RCOPC completed a feasibility analysis for a West Side Park Community Health Care Center. The feasibility analysis was conducted as a semester-long project of the graduate Community Development Studio in the Department of Urban Planning and Policy Development, taught by Professors Norman Glickman and Kathe Newman during Spring semester 2001.

Students in the Community Development Studio toured the target neighborhood, Tri-City's existing health clinic, and the proposed site and met with community organizations and neighborhood leaders. To conduct the feasibility study, students were divided into five working groups to examine the vision for the health center, assess potential health care delivery models, measure market feasibility, determine the potential for rental income on the site, and study health care reimbursement.

Experts on providing health care in poor communities of color, including health care funders and providers, addressed the studio class early in the semester. Course packs provided readings on racial and ethnic health disparities, establishing community health centers, health policy, and reimbursement. A class Web site and listserv enabled students to continually share information and discuss ongoing issues.

Students presented their findings and recommendations to the university community and in the target neighborhood at the end of the Spring semester. With the feasibility analysis in hand, both Corinthian HDC and Tri-City Peoples Corporation are moving forward to identify a site and obtain commitments from a health care provider to operate a new Community Health Center in West Side Park.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES DIRECTORY

RCOPC has continued to update and expand the *West Side Park Health Care Services Directory*. The *Directory*, intended as an information resource for residents of West Side Park, identifies 146 health care programs and providers organized by type of service and contains a detailed description of the services provided.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Rutgers faculty (Robert Lake, Kathe Newman, Stephen Finn) and two community partners (Tyshammie Cooper from Corinthian HDC and Judy Favors from Tri-City) attended the COPC National Conference in Denver, Colorado in April.