



Dayton's Bluff farmer's market provides an opportunity for local residents to purchase locally, enjoy live entertainment and meet and mingle with their neighbors.

Inside the 2014 Annual Report

The Report provides information on district councils' work in 2014 on the issues of community building, environment, outreach and transportation. Also highlighted are examples of district council work in-depth:

- District Councils Take Lead in Forging New Era of Inclusive Healthy Transportation Planning (Districts 1,2,11 and 14)
- Cross-Cultural Dialogues Lead to Community Plans for Positive Change (Districts 1,2,3,5 and 8)
- Residents Collaborating with City and State Staff on Designs for Walkability (District 13)

Highlights

During 2014, Saint Paul District Councils worked with more than **2,100 volunteers** on behalf of Saint Paul neighborhoods, including more than **1,100 board and committee members** • Fielded more than **17,000 resident requests** • Served more than **5,600 neighbors** visiting district council offices • Organized and maintained nearly **300 block clubs** • Made recommendations to the city on more than **270 zoning and licensing issues** • Participated in six community clean-ups that collected **307 tons of household waste** and **195 tons of recyclable material from 2,672 residents** • Participated in parades and festivals attended by more than **22,000 people** • Kept more than **11,000 subscribers** current on neighborhood issues and events via email • Mailed regular updates about neighborhood issues and events to nearly **80,000 residents**.

About District Councils

Saint Paul's 17 neighborhood groups or district councils have been working for nearly 40 years to make a positive difference through community involvement. As independent nonprofit organizations, district councils ensure community participation in Saint Paul's planning and decision making processes. Besides city funding, many district councils receive funds from individual donations; some also receive funds from business/organizational sponsorships, foundations and other government funding sources.

Each district council provides advisory recommendations to city officials on physical, economic, and social development issues. District councils also identify neighborhood needs, initiate community programs, and recruit and nurture neighborhood leaders and volunteers.

Community Building

District councils focus on community building by creating social networks and supporting leadership and initiative by individuals and groups in their neighborhoods. For example:

- **District 6 Planning Council** organized a place making committee, Friends of the North End, to identify and promote spaces for community gatherings, using tools such as public art, traffic calming, pocket parks and neighborhood branding.
- **Summit-University Planning Council** partnered with other community-based organizations to organize a St. Paul Open Streets event along an eastern stretch of University Avenue on Sunday, September 24. Around 7,000 community members walked, bicycled or skated and enjoyed recreational activities for all ages along the Avenue.
- **Union Park District Council** held its second annual Ice Cream, Peanut Butter and Jam event. Hundreds of residents enjoyed a fun day full of live music, children's events, food, art, local business demonstrations, and lots of community building.
- **Highland District Council** hosted movies at Hillcrest Recreation Center during the summer months, attended by more than 200 community members. During one of the movies, *The Blind Side*, the main character (Big Mike) happened to be in town and signed autographs at the event.





Environment

All 17 district councils distribute recycling information and bins. Some are also involved in other environmental issues affecting their neighborhoods:

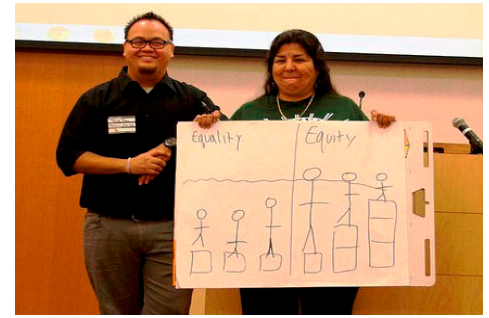
- **District 2 Community Council** collaborated with neighborhood schools to identify two wetland areas adjacent to school buildings that they will work to reclaim and protect.
- **District 10 Como Community Council** initiated Como Composts!, a neighborhood educational initiative promoting the composting of organic waste (food, paper, yard waste) through engaging online content, videos, printed materials, and events. The project's goal is to increase 16,000 residents' awareness and use of a variety of composting techniques, including home composting and the Ramsey County Yard Waste sites.
- **Macalester Groveland Community Council** organics recycling drop-off program served over 1,000 participants and has removed over 115,000 pounds of organics from the waste stream. The program offers even avid backyard composters the opportunity to compost more materials like freezer boxes, egg cartons, paper towels, napkins, meat and bones, dairy products, compostable tableware, pizza boxes too greasy for recycling pick-up, and much more.

District Councils Take Lead in Forging New Era of Inclusive Healthy Transportation Planning

By Kyle Mianulli, Communications and Engagement Director and Lauren Fulner, Transportation and Sustainability Coordinator, Hamline Midway Coalition

As improving transportation systems continues to be a top priority for the City of Saint Paul, it is essential that diverse interests and voices from communities across the city are involved in the planning process. Too often, communities and individuals that stand to benefit most from better transportation services are underrepresented in planning processes. Meaningful community involvement is paramount to creating a sustainable multimodal transportation system that is economically efficient, environmentally sound, equitable and improves public health.

With these challenges in mind, a coalition of district councils and other community partners led a first-of-its kind effort in 2014 to build grassroots capacity in communities across Saint Paul around transportation issues. The St. Paul Healthy Transportation for All convening brought together community leaders, organizations, elected representatives and policy officials from across the city to begin plotting the path for a healthier and more equitable transportation system for all. The goals for the convening included connecting advocates from across the city; increasing knowledge of transportation systems and resources; and empowering participants to lead their communities around issues of equity, health, and transportation.



“To truly create equitable transportation development, a diversity of voices must be present at the decision-making table early in the process,” says Tong Thao, community organizer with East Side Transit Equity, which led two workshops at the event. “During planning for the Green Line LRT, it was the actions of community leaders from the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods that ensured their communities were not bypassed.”

The district councils on the planning team – Districts 1,2,11 and 14 - look forward to continue growing community capacity for this work, and will further engage Saint Paul community members in conversations, gatherings, and activism in 2015.

Outreach

District councils use many ways to reach out to the diversity of community members in their neighborhoods:



- **District 1 Community Council** has worked with community members on reaching neighborhood youth between the ages of 10 and 18 years. This work has included regular meetings of a Young Mentor's Group.
- **Frogtown Neighborhood Association** door knocked over 500 homes last summer and surveyed 500 residents on issues, from employment to housing needs. The information gathered through door knocking ensures that neighborhood initiatives reflect community priorities.

Cross-Cultural Dialogues Lead to Community Plans for Positive Change

By Sara Udvig, Executive Director, Summit-University Planning Council

On November 15, 2014 neighbors from across Saint Paul gathered together to talk about racism, inequality, and ways to enact positive change. Freezing rain and Saturday crowds at the new Arlington Hills Community Center did not hinder attendance or enthusiasm. The Saint Paul Cross-Cultural Action Forum offered participants a supportive, energized environment - the resulting dialogue was rich with discovery, learning, and produced a clear direction for the group's future collaborative work.



their dialogue groups, informing the conversation with a wealth of knowledge from their diverse backgrounds and wisdom from experience in: urban agriculture, science, education, politics, transit development, government, business, non-profit administration, philanthropy, community based initiatives, leadership and organizing.

Together, neighbors identified and formed task groups around priority actions that focus on dismantling racial disparities in Saint Paul and fostering greater solidarity among people from different backgrounds. Action steps ranged from simply staying connected, to inviting government officials, police officers, and key institutional stakeholders to participate in future conversation circles.

For more information on The Saint Paul Cross Cultural Dialogue Project, contact Diane Wanner at 651-266-8572 or diane.wanner@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

The action forum marked a milestone for five district councils - District 1 Community Council, District 2 Community Council, West Side Community Organization, Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council, and Summit-University Planning Council - that have been working on this project for nearly two years. The five participating district councils also hosted cross-cultural dialogue groups during Fall 2014 to come together around the public concern of racism and inequality in their individual neighborhoods. The Saint Paul Foundation and Everyday Democracy, a national nonprofit helping communities develop their own ability to address community problems, provided support for the project.

At the November 15 forum, nearly 40 participants shared action ideas from

Residents Collaborating with City and State Staff on Designs for Walkability

By Julie Reiter, Executive Director, Union Park District Council

Great changes are taking place in the heart of the Union Park District Council (D13). At the corner of Snelling and Selby Avenues, a high-density development with apartments and a large grocery is emerging from the ground. Starting next year, Bus Rapid Transit will pass through the intersection. And since June, the Green Line has been running along the neighborhood's north border.

Many residents embrace the changes, but worry that increased traffic will affect pedestrians accessing local businesses and public transit. So, Union Park convened a group of residents, local business owners, City and Metro Transit staff, and the Minnesota Department

of Transportation (MnDOT). Together, they toured the area, reviewed resident survey responses and traffic data, and developed design solutions that address pedestrian safety concerns while accommodating traffic flow. MnDOT and the developer are taking on some of the proposed changes, while the City is working on implementing others.

Union Park also engaged over 300 residents to provide input to make walking safer and more pleasant along Snelling to the Green Line. Residents, along with public and private stakeholders, participated in a workshop

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Transportation

Access to all forms of transportation - including transit, walking and bicycling - is an important part of livable neighborhoods. A growing number of district councils are helping engage community member voices on transportation plans and policies

- **West Side Community Organization (District 3)** worked intensively with a group of West Siders to develop their leadership in engaging in transportation planning issues.
- **Dayton's Bluff Community Council (District 4)** received an Excellence in Community Engagement Award from the American Planning Association, on behalf of the four east side district councils (Districts 1,2,4 and 5) that formed the East Side Transit Equity (ESTE) collaborative to engage underrepresented communities around the transit developments happening on the east side.
- **Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council** worked with public partners to secure more than \$400,000 in new pedestrian and bicycling trail amenities in the Minnesota Department of Transportation I-35E Cayuga and MNPASS projects.
- **West 7th Street/Fort Road Federation (District 9)** is participating on an advisory committee for the Riverview Corridor Transit Study. The Riverview Corridor connects neighborhoods, historic districts, businesses, thriving commercial districts and downtown Saint Paul to the regional transportation network.

Saint Paul District Councils

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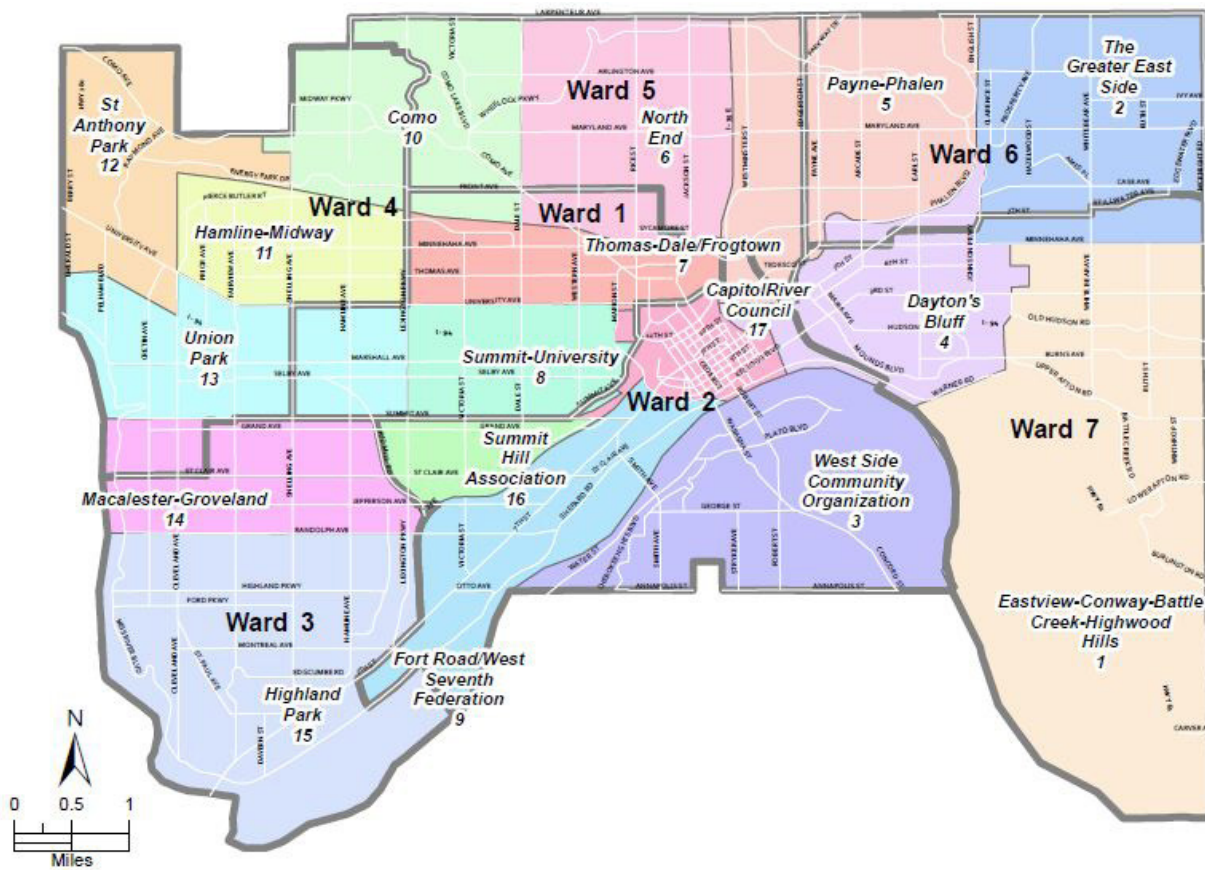
using concepts from Saint Paul's draft Street Design Manual to identify specific changes to Snelling to improve its walkability. With Public Works and MnDOT at the table, residents were able to present their concerns and suggestions directly. MnDOT plans to incorporate some of the recommendations in its 2015 Snelling Avenue repaving project.

"Walking Snelling every day, it's been easy to feel as though MnDOT won't notice my needs next to five million other Minnesotans," remarked resident Colin Fesser. "But, these group walks and roundtables have given me a chance to share my concerns with people who make decisions about how safe and pleasant my personal walk will be. That's a pretty amazing feeling of civic engagement."



Union Park District Council (D13)
- Designs for Walkability.

City of Saint Paul Wards and District Councils



Source: City of Saint Paul



For more information: Contact Diane Wanner, District Council Coordinator Saint Paul City Council Research Office at 651-266-8572 or email her at Diane.Wanner@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

There are many ways you can get involved in your community through working with your district council. Join a committee, work on an event, help with outreach or tell us what you would like to do!

Contact your district council for more information. Visit www.stpaul.gov/districtcouncil.