

# A Study of the District Councils in Saint Paul

**April 1996**

A report prepared by the League of Women Voters of Saint Paul  
District Council Study Committee.

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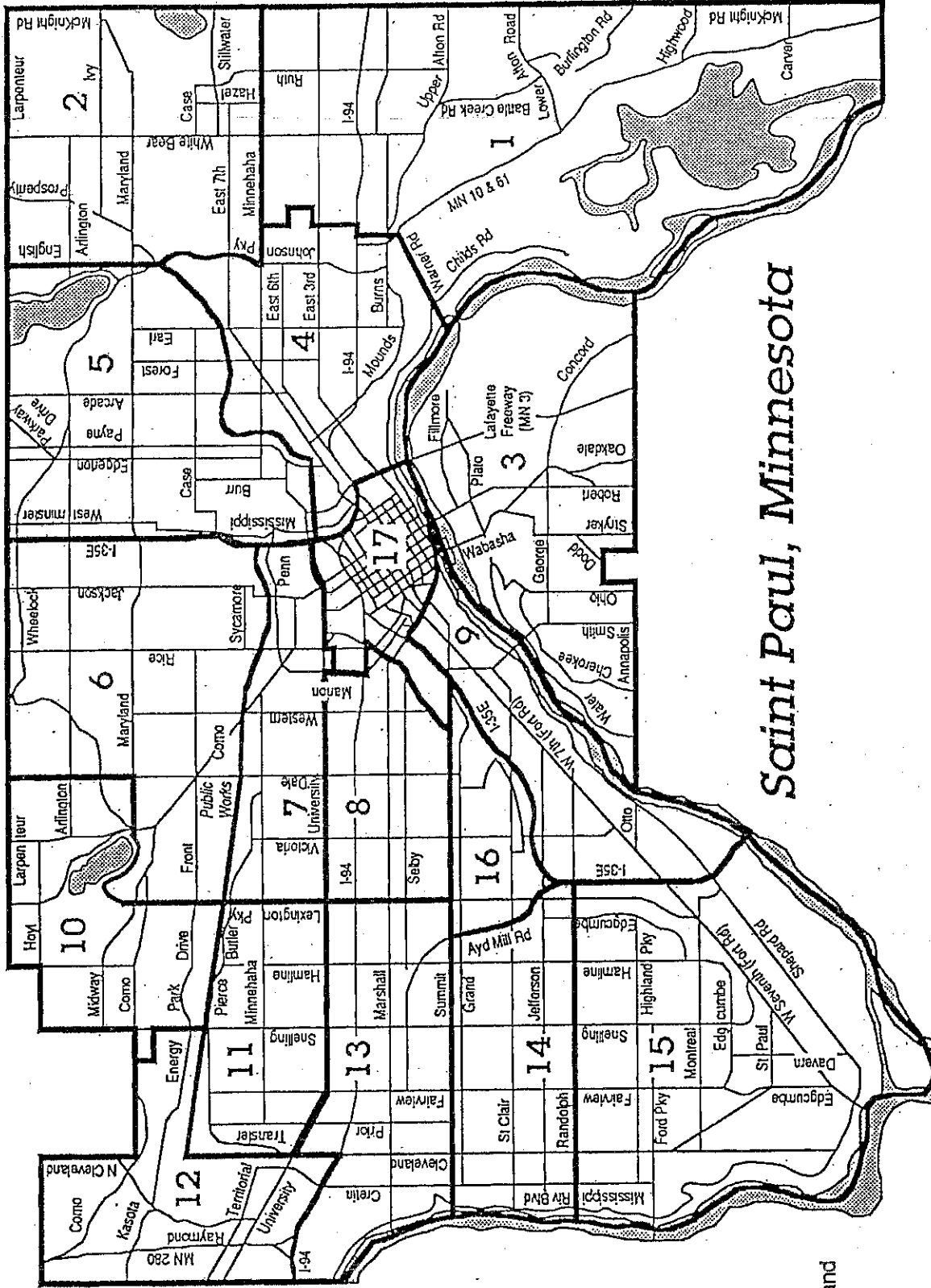
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# CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PLANNING DISTRICTS

1. Battle Creek  
292-7828
2. Greater East Side  
731-6842
3. West Side  
293-1708
4. Dayton's Bluff  
772-2075
5. Payne-Phalen  
774-5234
6. North End  
488-4485
7. Thomas-Dale  
298-5068
8. Summit-University  
228-1855
9. West Seventh  
298-5599
10. Como  
644-3889
11. Hamline-Midway  
646-1986
12. St. Anthony  
292-7884
13. Lexington-Hamline  
645-3207
- Merriam Park  
645-6887
- Snelling-Hamline  
644-1085
14. Macalester-Groveland  
698-7973
15. Highland  
298-5138
16. Summit Hill  
222-1222
17. Downtown  
221-0488



Saint Paul, Minnesota

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## BACKGROUND

### WHY THIS STUDY WAS DONE

"A study of the effectiveness of the District Council system in Saint Paul" was the local program item adopted at the May, 1994 Annual Meeting of the Saint Paul League of Women Voters. District Councils are neighborhood volunteer groups established to advise the City on developments in their areas, but which also carry out many social and neighborhood improvement activities. Adoption of the study was motivated by community concern at cutbacks in Saint Paul's Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), including elimination of the position of Citizen Participation Coordinator, and by the fact that it has been 20 years since District Councils were established and it was time to see if the system needed adjustments.

#### What's in a Name?

The City's official title for *District Council* is *Citizen Participation Planning District*, but *District Council* is the more common name. Some District Councils have adopted other names, for instance, District 4 is also known as the Dayton's Bluff Center for Civic Life. District 13 is composed of 3 councils: the Lexington-Hamline, Snelling-Hamline and Merriam Park Community Councils. In this publication, the Citizen Participation Planning Districts are referred to as *Districts* or *District Councils*. The sub-groups in District 13 will be referred to as *councils* or *community councils*.

### HOW THIS STUDY WAS CONDUCTED

After interviewing two of the former Citizen Participation Coordinators, the committee developed a list of areas of concern and specific questions to be investigated (See Appendix 1). Using the question list, committee members interviewed the community organizer of each District from Fall 1994 to Spring 1995. The list of people and written documents consulted appears in Appendix 2. One member of the committee visited board meetings of about half of the District Councils in 1995.

No attempt was made to identify specific Districts in our survey results. The purpose was to study general trends, not to critique individual districts.

In December, 1995, the committee arranged a panel discussion on the subject *Strengths and Weaknesses of the Saint Paul District Council System*. Panelists included Ken Ford, senior planner, Saint Paul PED, Kiki Sonnen, former City Council member, and Marilou Chepple, current President of District 16. The moderator of the panel, Karen Christofferson, who had been involved in setting up the District Councils, gave some background on how and why the Councils were established. In addition, many of the committee members have been or still are involved in District Councils, as Board members and officers.

### WHAT'S NEXT

This report is only the first step in a three-part process. After League members have had a chance to read and discuss the report, they will come to a consensus on what governmental action should be taken, if any, regarding the study subject. The consensus forms the basis of any lobbying that the League may undertake before the appropriate elected bodies.

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## HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION

*"To understand Saint Paul is to understand its neighborhoods".<sup>1</sup>*

*"... a well-informed and active citizenry is the greatest resource and also the great necessity of a strong democratic society."<sup>2</sup>*

.....

Saint Paul is a City of distinct neighborhoods, many of which had active neighborhood associations prior to the official District Council process which was implemented in 1976.

A new City charter was adopted in 1970 for the City of Saint Paul, setting up the Mayor as chief administrator (*strong mayor* system) and the City Council as a policy-making body. This change led, after the election in 1972 of Mayor Lawrence D. Cohen, to his establishing a committee on Citizen Participation for Saint Paul. This committee's report, entitled *Making Democracy Work: A process for citizen participation*, details some concerns of the committee: "early and meaningful access of citizens to the City planning process (is) viewed as the single most critical aspect of citizen participation . . . to reduce citizen distrust of government, and to put the community on a more even footing with private developers and special interest groups."<sup>3</sup>

The committee recommended that the City Council set up a process whereby citizens in an area could be recognized as a Citizen Participation District, but stressed that decisions as to a specific structure for that District should be left to the citizens of that District and further, that the staff of the District be hired and fired by the District, not by the City.

The report was shelved for lack of funds until 1974, when the Federal Government's Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) required a citizen participation plan. The City sent out notices to all existing citizen groups resulting in a meeting of 400 concerned citizens. This forum divided up into committees, one of which, meeting without elected officials present, defined the boundaries of 17 neighborhood districts. Thus, the availability of Federal funds provided the impetus for initiating the Citizen Participation process, even though not all parts of the City were eligible for CDBG funds.

The City Council adopted a resolution on July 22, 1975 delineating these 17 neighborhood districts in the City, directing the office of the Mayor to use these districts as a basis for citizen input, and allowing the initiation of a system for notifying neighborhoods of pending City developments early enough in the process to allow for citizen input (*Early Notification System*). The City delineated 10 steps that citizens had to go through to be recognized as a Citizen Participation District, but left it up to each neighborhood to determine what structure that District would take.

In September 1975, a formal definition of citizen participation was adopted by the Saint Paul City Council:

"Citizen Participation is a process, not a structure. The City has a responsibility to develop a process that will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to communicate with City government, and further, that everyone is assured that they will be heard. This process cannot

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<sup>1</sup> *Task Force on Community/Neighborhood Action*, Saint Paul Foundation (1989), p.10.

<sup>2</sup> *Making Democracy Work: A process for citizen participation*, (1973), p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

guarantee that there will always be agreement nor is it a substitution of one level of government for another or any other transfer of power."

Implementation of the Citizen Participation process has involved three components:

1. **District Councils**
2. **The Early Notification System**, requiring City departments to notify a list of District Councils, neighborhood and business organizations and neighborhood based newspapers, of pending City actions that might affect them.
3. **The Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process**. (See Appendix 3 for more information on CIB.

Starting in 1976, the Citizen Participation process was implemented, with each of the 17 neighborhood-drawn areas petitioning for formal recognition as a District Council. Each District agreed on its own elective governing format and adopted by-laws. They prepared a General District Plan, with the help of a City planner, that became part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Districts establish their own committees, hire staff and manage their own budget.

Governing Boards of District Councils are composed of volunteers elected by District residents. The District Council is an advisory body to City government and serves as the neighborhood contact for planning and land use issues. District Councils address neighborhood needs and respond to City requests; they are both proactive and reactive.

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## **BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND ELECTIONS: CURRENT PRACTICES**

The District Councils of the City of Saint Paul hold elections yearly. In most districts, the residents vote to elect volunteer Board members. In some districts, people who own businesses or work in the district may also vote and serve on the Board. Terms of office are for one, two, or three years, according to individual council by-laws. Some may also designate term limits ranging from one term to unlimited terms.

The eligibility of residents to vote in District Council elections varies according to council by-laws. Examples of eligibility requirements are "must be 18 years or older" or "must attend three meetings prior to election". In addition, citizens must either live in the district, or own a business or work in the district. Thirteen District Councils elect members at annual meetings. These annual meetings are held on different dates throughout the year. The remaining board elections are held in varied ways, such as voting all day or specific hours on annual meeting day, holding no annual meeting but voting on a designated day, or voting by ballot at the district office.

The make-up of each District Council Board varies according to the individual District by-laws. While there are 17 District Councils, one district is divided into three entities, resulting in 19 Boards. There are three Boards with 30 or more members, eight Boards with membership of 20 to 29, and eight Boards with between 10 and 19 members. Although some Boards have a small portion of appointed members, the majority are elected as members-at-large or represent specific geographic grids throughout the district. Many Boards elect a representative from identified interest areas, such as non-profits, universities, religious and professional organizations, business associations, institutions and businesses.

Boards are responsible for collecting information, discussing issues and making decisions on policy and actions. One District Council, however, has an additional policy-making procedure—a *community meeting*, at which citizens who are registered at least 3 days in advance can vote with Board members on issues such as community development, land use and recommendations to the City. Resolutions are binding on that District Council Board if a majority vote in favor at an official community meeting, as long as a quorum is present. A quorum consists of 8 voting members of the Board and 8 registered voting members of the community.

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## COMMUNICATING WITH CONSTITUENCIES

Saint Paul has allocated funding to the Districts to be used for the dissemination of information to their constituencies. The City mandates that District Council Boards and staff must communicate with all entities in the District: homeowners, renters, businesses, institutions, and other organizations. All the District Councils communicate information through their own published newsletters and newspapers or newspapers published independently that serve their neighborhoods. Several District Councils work with their community newspaper in placing a regular column, written by District Council staff. These columns may be placed free of charge or for a fee.

All the District Councils send press releases or announcements of meetings and special events to their community newspaper and, when applicable, to the Saint Paul Pioneer Press. Occasionally, for important issues or announcements, District Councils may place a paid advertisement in the community newspaper. Depending on the District's neighborhood boundaries, more than one community newspaper may be used.

Over half the District Councils write and publish their own newsletters or newspapers. Some are edited by the District Council's Community Organizer or another staff member while a few District Councils hire an editor. They are usually financed by a budgeted amount, although some District Councils solicit donations and/or advertisements to help offset the cost. The newsletters or newspapers are distributed as frequently as 12 times a year or as few as three times a year.

Flyers and posters announcing issues or events are used almost as often as the newspapers to disseminate information. The flyers are distributed to residents, government entities, churches and businesses, as appropriate.

Other popular means of communication to constituencies include:

- Posting notices in popular community gathering places.
- Sending information to churches, business groups or residents affected by a specific issue.
- Attending meetings of other community or citizen organizations.
- Phone networking.
- Holding block meetings.
- Placing announcements in church bulletins.
- Just getting out and knocking on doors!

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## TRAINING

The Citizen Participation (CP) Coordinator, operating under the Planning and Economic Development (PED) Department of the City of Saint Paul from 1976 through 1993, provided training opportunities for District Council Community Organizers (COs) and board members. The Operating Budget which the City Council adopted for 1994 removed financing for the CP Coordinator, although the position is still (1996) listed in the City's Administrative Code. Currently, the Grants Manager of PED has assumed some of the CP Coordinator functions in addition to his prior job duties.

### District Council Staff

The chief staff person for a District is usually called a *Community Organizer (CO)*. However, some Districts hire *executive directors* to fulfill that function. All Districts hire other staff as needed (or as they can afford), such as bookkeeper, Crime Prevention coordinator, editor of newspaper, youth or outreach worker, etc.

Training for COs consisted of group opportunities and individual meetings with the CP Coordinator. COs continue to hold monthly meetings where sharing and problem-solving occur. Presentations are also made on City requirements, initiatives, programs, processes and financial responsibilities. The CP Coordinator formerly arranged and attended these meetings. At present, the Grants Manager attends them, although they are planned by the COs.

The CP Coordinator met with each new CO to present responsibilities, mandated rules and regulations for District Councils, as well as an overview of Saint Paul government structure. Individual meetings were set and continue to be set with City accounting personnel concerning financial procedures, requirements, and the City's reimbursement process. The Grants Manager now facilitates a mentoring relationship between experienced COs and new COs. Also, the City Human Resources Department offers City training opportunities to all COs.

District Council Board Members usually receive training from their CO on non-profit Board responsibilities, officer duties and financial responsibilities. The CP Coordinator was available to provide Board training and to review hiring practices for District Council Boards when necessary.

Several City-wide workshops and recognition award events for District Council Board members and neighborhood activists have occurred since 1976. The *Better Neighborhoods Forums* were held during the 1980's and early 1990's. In May 1995, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation sponsored a retreat for District Council Board Members and staff. In January 1996, a volunteer-organized neighborhoods assembly was sponsored by the Mayor, the University of St. Thomas, and the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, featuring workshops sharing successful practices of District Councils. Awards were also given to volunteers nominated by each District Council. Since the late 1980's, there have been quarterly meetings of District Council presidents or their representatives to share concerns and strategies.

Neighborhoods U.S.A. (NUSA), a national organization with workshop conferences for activists and COs, has provided annual opportunities for sharing and exposure to successful techniques. From the



late '70's through 1993, two COs (chosen by lot) and the CP Coordinator were sent to the conference by the City. Since 1993, delegates from District Councils have paid their own way to the conference or District Councils have done fund-raising to send them. In 1986, the NUSA Conference was hosted by Saint Paul.

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## **FUNDING OF DISTRICT COUNCILS**

### **BASIC BUDGET**

Each District Council receives a base of financial support from the City of Saint Paul through the Department of Planning and Economic Development. The allocation is proposed by the Mayor and adopted yearly by the City Council as part of the City's operating budget. As a percentage of the total City budget, the District Council share is rather small; for instance, in 1993, that share was 0.2% of the City operating budget.

The Citizen Participation allocation for each District Council is developed from a base amount of \$30,000, plus an amount based on resident population from the most recent Federal census, plus additional funding for population at or below 200% of the poverty level. The range of funding for districts is from \$33,029 to \$44,202. The City total was \$658,718 in 1994 and remained unchanged in 1995 and 1996. See Appendix 5 for a breakdown of funding by District.

The Citizen Participation budget for each District provides for a basic office and hiring an employee, including salaries, FICA, unemployment insurance, training, rent, telephone, supplies, printing and distribution costs, mileage and parking, equipment and bookkeeping.

Since 1990 each District Council, operating as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, contracts with the City for the money it receives. Contracts are based upon the Citizen Participation process for the involvement of citizens in participatory planning, participation in the Capital Improvement Budget Process, a communication network, and each district's own goals and objectives for the year. Each District agrees to proper and responsible management and accounting of the public dollars it receives. See Appendix 6 for *City Expectations*. If the district organization and/or staff want to provide services beyond the minimum to meet City requirements, they must do additional fund-raising.

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (CDBG)**

The City has participated in the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) since 1975. This money is targeted to areas of low and moderate income. Until 1992, 12 District Councils were eligible for and used primarily CDBG funds; the other 5 District Councils had to use only City General Fund money to operate. But in 1992, HUD started requiring detailed accounting of CO's time (down to the quarter-hour) and would not pay for some work that was required of District Councils by the City. In developing the 1993 City Budget, more General Fund money and less CDBG money was allocated for District Councils. By 1994, only 6 of the 12 District Councils formerly funded by CDBG were still receiving part of their funds from that source. The City still receives CDBG funds from HUD, but the money goes primarily toward funding parks, recreation centers, public works and housing projects that meet national HUD goals.

## **GRANT PROGRAMS**

The City of Saint Paul has some grant programs for which Districts or non-profit organizations can apply. In the past 5 years these have included Crime Prevention, Clean-Ups, Recycling promotion through the Neighborhood Energy Consortium (NEC), Civic Organizations Partnership Program (COPP), Community Festivals, Urban Revitalization Action Program (URAP) and Community Resources Program (CRP).

1. **The Neighborhood Crime Prevention Grant Program** was created near the end of 1989 to help neighborhood nonprofit groups develop programs that reduce crime. The range of grants in 1991-92 was from \$35,000 to a low of \$2,000. The median district received \$10,600. Most Crime Prevention grants are administered by District Councils, but in some areas of the City, funds go to some other organizations as well.
2. **Neighborhood Clean-Up** funds are available through the Department of Public Works for those District Councils that apply for this project. Most Districts make all arrangements for a one day (or 4 hour) site with dumpsters, volunteers to direct traffic and help with separation of metals, building materials, concrete, re-usable household items, etc. Some Districts charge for admittance, tires, major appliances and/or brush. The City provided nearly \$130,000 in 1995 for the whole program. The allocation for each district ranges from \$3,000 to \$9,116, with the median district receiving \$7,941. This would cover costs for publicity for this event, an administrative fee, and cost for waste haulers to provide the dumpsters or bins and to deliver the contents to appropriate sites.
3. **Recycling promotion** is provided in fifteen of the seventeen districts in Saint Paul through contracts with the Neighborhood Energy Consortium (NEC). The Consortium is funded by the City with pass-through funding from Ramsey County and the state. NEC provides \$80 per month for each participating District Council to provide a basic recycling promotion program, which includes designated duties such as answering questions from the local population, providing lawn sign sites and delivering blue recycling bins. For a more intense effort by a district, reimbursement can be up to an additional \$100 per month for writing newsletter articles, holding block club meetings on recycling, and having an active Environment Committee. Most districts participate at the basic level; about half provide the extra effort mainly on a sporadic basis, when not involved in another time-consuming project. Downtown is not included in this program since they have no curbside pick-up. District 14's program (Macalester-Groveland) predated City-wide recycling and is administered under a separate contract with the City.
4. **Civic Organizations Partnership Program (COPP)** was funded for a total of \$450,000 in 1993 with City general funds and CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) money from the federal government for eligible areas or people. The City Council allocated these funds annually on a competitive basis to non-profit organizations which can most effectively provide community services. District Councils that set up Living-At-Home/Block Nurse programs for senior residents have received some of these grants, as well as chore service connections and teen/youth leadership activities provided by District Councils.
5. **The Community Festival Revolving Loan Fund and Grant Program<sup>4</sup>** was established in 1986 for community groups and administered by the Division of Parks and Recreation. From 1987 to

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<sup>4</sup>This funding source is no longer available.

1990 the largest grants went to business organizations and District Councils. Funds were generated by a surcharge on admissions to Riverfest (a commercial musical/circus event held for two weeks on Harriet Island).

6. The primary purpose of the **Urban Revitalization Action Program (URAP)** is to address housing and economic development needs in those neighborhoods of the City most threatened by physical deterioration and lack of economic opportunity. The State requires a match of City resources. The City relies on CBDG for this money. By law, the City must devote at least 50 percent of its State URAP funds (25 percent of its total URAP funds) to housing. Community Development Corporations are the primary recipients of these funds, but one of the District Councils has received and used some URAP funds for housing rehabilitation.
7. The **Community Resources Program (CRP)** was established by the State legislature in 1989 to complement the "bricks and mortar" URAP, targeting those areas of the City with the most need. The City contracted with neighborhood organizations on a one year basis to meet the following objectives: increasing community safety and reducing crime, enhancing family stability, preparing for readiness for starting school, providing opportunities for residents to become self-supporting, building the capacity of neighborhood based organizations to create cohesiveness and stability in their communities.

### **OUTSIDE FUNDING SOURCES**

District Councils have augmented City funding for citizen participation with the City grant programs named above, various state grant programs (i.e., MN office of Drug Policy, MN Humanities Commission, DNR challenge grant), as well as ingenious multiple applications for funding from local businesses, corporations, and banks (received by 18 Districts) and foundations, trusts, and non-profit funds (7 Districts), soliciting individual donors (5 Districts) and sales of items (4 Districts). See Appendix 7.

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## **DISTRICT COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES**

*"The strength of (the District Council) process is . . . we're solving our own problems."*<sup>5</sup>

.....

Numerous activities and services have been provided by the District Councils in the past twenty years. All projects developed and accomplished by the Board of Directors and committees of the District Councils reflect hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer time. While the workings of the District Councils vary greatly, each District Council has an individual approach to the needs of the community it represents.

The following is a list of some activities and services that have been provided to the citizens of Saint Paul by the District Councils. This data comes from the study committee's survey of COs as well as from the July, 1993 Review of District Council Projects and a list of District Council Accomplishments, July 1994-95, compiled by some COs and submitted to Mayor Coleman in a letter dated June, 1995.

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<sup>5</sup> Kathie Tamowski, quoted in David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (1993), p. 75.

## **CITY ISSUES**

- Develop small area plans
- Review updates and zoning changes.
- Review site plans and licensing changes
- Explore best land uses for local areas
- Remove neighborhood nuisances for land reclamation projects
- Respond to City-initiated proposals, i.e., Capitol Improvement Budget process
- Provide volunteers for City-wide task forces and local projects
- Write articles for local newspapers concerning City policies and initiatives
- Work with citizens in districts to provide feedback to City

## **NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES AND LIVABILITY**

- Coordinate a long-range planning process with residents, churches, businesses and schools.
- Provide public forum for neighbors to address problems
- Work with local organizations to enhance quality of life for residents and businesses
- Distribute surveys asking residents about activities needed for community
- Promote District activities in local newspaper
- Conduct House Tours of homes in the area
- Encourage renter participation; establish tenant council at high-rises
- Create and distribute packets to new neighbors
- Organize and promote local festivals, community holiday tree, ice cream social, neighborhood garage sale, bike rodeo, progressive dinner, pride day and food drives
- Facilitate housing rehab and loan programs

## **ENVIRONMENT**

- Supply information and coordinate recycling.
- Organize annual community clean-up
- Organize Christmas tree pickup and chipping
- Form committees to help with wetland identification and restoration, safety around ponds, and lake management
- Organize community-wide garage sale to promote re-use
- Organize garden tours
- Promote boulevard tree planting and contract for boulevard stump removal

## **BEAUTIFICATION**

- Conduct an alley beautification contest
- Organize land and gardeners for community garden plots
- Urge City to purchase such environmental assets as a virgin prairie grassland area
- Promote community activities such as plant sharing
- Promote greening projects
- Help to beautify vacant lots and small parks; planting flower gardens on vacant property
- Work with organizations such as Graffiti, Inc.
- Form a group to help design expansion of a City facility such as a local library
- Organize a home improvement fair

### **PROMOTE SAFETY AND CRIME PREVENTION**

- Administer Crime Prevention grant
- Establish Block Clubs, train Block Club leaders, communicate regularly with Block Clubs, link with FORCE
- Work with local police teams
- Provide workshops on home security and personal protection
- Help to place "basketweave" stop signs in heavy-traffic neighborhoods
- Improve awareness of crime prevention strategies
- Sponsor town meeting on graffiti and vandalism
- Work to obtain safety grants
- Sponsor crime prevention fair

### **HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- Develop housing co-ops in scattered sites
- Maintain and improve housing stock
- Work to expand free housing inspection program
- Work in partnership with banks, local institutions, grantors to address housing issues and economic development
- Work with local community development corporations and local developers
- Work with businesses and business associations
- Originate applications for grants to alleviate local problems
- Manage approved grants to rehab residents' homes and vacant houses
- Provide home improvement fairs
- Work to obtain exterior lighting grants
- Provide a neutral space for resolution of potential conflicts between expanding businesses, institutions and area residents

### **SERVICES FOR YOUTH**

- Conduct a reading-readiness program for pre-schoolers
- Conduct a latch-key child-care program
- Raise money for tot-lots and playground equipment
- Organize summer jobs youth programs
- Organize leadership development for teens
- Support the development and growth of a youth council
- Co-ordinate rent-a-kid, job connection, and chore service programs to help senior citizens
- Develop a program for at-risk youth
- Recruit, sponsor and coach public achievement teams
- Facilitate communication with School Board for neighbors most affected by new high school
- Work with businesses to match mentors with youth
- Sponsor a yearly education symposium

### **FAMILY SERVICES**

- Develop a family resource center
- Introduce and promote a Farmers' Market to community
- Help single-parent family households

- Help low-income families and individuals
- Develop family centers

### **SENIOR SERVICES**

- Develop and continue to support Living-at-Home/Block Nurse Programs
- Conduct chore service program
- Provide income tax form preparation
- Provide help with housing inspections
- Hold activities in District Office for seniors
- Provide senior citizen drop-in center

## **A VIEW OF DISTRICT COUNCIL BOARDS: FROM THE BACK OF THE ROOM**

**by Carol Osip, member of LWV Study Committee**

My reason for visiting District Council Board meetings was to see how they looked and felt and behaved apart from sterile descriptions of them on paper. I have been on two different District Council Boards, but had the challenge last spring and summer (1995) of visiting as many different board meetings as I possibly could. I made it to about half of the districts. I sat in the back of recreation centers, church halls and library basements. I dispassionately watched the goings on, but admit that at times I became as emotionally interested in some of the issues as the residents themselves.

Anyone who is aware of how the councils were originally set up shouldn't be surprised that there are many differences among them and these differences are both enlightening and fascinating. Let me refer to some of them and let readers form their own opinions of their relevance.

1. The Boards that I visited ranged from 11 to 27 members in attendance. Though the geographic districts differ radically in size and sometimes Board sizes reflect that, the size of the board will necessarily change the way the group functions and makes decisions, and how the individuals interact. Board size can also drastically affect the amount of input from individual Board members. Add to that the arrangement of the group. If the members face out toward the potential audience or if they sit around a table facing each other - that, too, influences the input.
2. Most Boards used a user-friendly type of parliamentary procedure. On the other hand, some used Roberts Rules of Order to such a degree that, at times, the process overshadowed the issues. At the other end of the spectrum, a few meetings were conducted so casually that members spoke simultaneously and side comments were frequent. A resident volunteering an opinion at either of these extremes might find the process intimidating.
3. Some District Council Boards focus heavily on neighborhood issues and concerns and the City is rarely mentioned. Others always seem to be ever conscious of their relationship to the City and the best ways to exert their influence in City matters.

4. Two District Board members said they rarely saw their City Council member, but they communicated in other ways. At most meetings a City Council aide sat in the back with a notepad and did a lot of writing. At one meeting a City Council member came to listen to neighbors discuss a controversial issue. The Council member made some comments about the issue and then took up time reviewing a list of interventions and personal opinions on City matters. It was reminiscent of a campaign speech.
5. Visitors and guests are treated with varying degrees of hospitality at the Board meetings. At some, copies of relevant meeting information are available and name cards are displayed in front of Board members. At one meeting a member made a point of greeting each guest. One chair not only asked guests to give their address and areas of concern, but at the end of the meeting a new resident was asked in a friendly way if he wanted to be on the Board. He seemed to appreciate the invitation. At some meetings copies of agendas and minutes are sparse and visitors pretty much fend for themselves. One evening a husband and wife who were new to the neighborhood were visiting their District Board meeting. The wife came up to me at one point and whispered, "What does CIB mean?" I told her and then let her borrow my District Council booklet. I wished there had been a brochure from that District explaining their activities and ways of functioning.
6. Boards have few members of color. I suspect that all are too keenly aware of this and wish it were otherwise. Nevertheless, it should be said that some were nicely diverse in terms of gender, age, economic and educational backgrounds and the length of time the members had lived or worked in the area. However, some Boards almost seemed to know each other too well. They lacked that surprise element that Boards without cliques have - the ability of not being able to predict how each would vote on an issue before they actually expressed an opinion.

With all these differences, what are the threads that tie all these Councils together? On paper it is many common goals and objectives, similar neighborhood activities, and participation on City committees. In person, there is obvious energy and spirit, a desire of citizens to become better informed, a great pride in their neighborhoods and concern about the quality of life. These are all people who are giving up time at home or work because they share a vision of the City they want Saint Paul to become. They ultimately believe that the people who come to the meetings and dare to sit in the front of the room are the people who make the City move.

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## CONCLUSIONS AND CONCERNS

In gathering information and preparing this report, the LWV Study Committee identified several areas of concern about the District Councils and their interactions with their communities and the City. We offer this list as food for thought and discussion.

Just as there is diversity in Saint Paul's neighborhoods, there is a vast amount of diversity in the District Councils, from their modes of elections and governance to their range of activities. Districts also differ widely in the size of their area and in residential population. Some Districts are successful in attracting a wide range of outside funds and some are attracting many volunteers and participants in projects, while others are less successful in these efforts.

Many Districts have experienced high turnover in their CO position. Two districts have had 7 COs in the last 10 years, and 13 districts have had 3 to 5 COs. However, seven districts have had just one or two COs in the last 10 years. According to one former CP Coordinator, "(Being an) organizer is a "burn-out" job (with) long hours, low pay, people yelling at you." Ever since the position of CP Coordinator was left unfilled, new COs have had fewer opportunities for guidance and training. With the lapse of this position, there is also concern that the City's oversight of District budgets and activities may not be adequate.

One of the City-mandated functions of District Councils is responding to proposed new development. While most Districts work closely with the business community, some Districts have been criticized as being anti-development, anti-business, or too parochial in their concerns. There is also concern that some Districts do not truly represent their constituencies, that those Boards are comprised of "cliques" who do not encourage "outsiders" to participate.

Are any of these concerns justified? What, if anything, should be done about them? Will Saint Paul's unique version of citizen participation continue to grow and improve, or will the City and its citizens allow it to wither? All of us have a stake in the outcome.



## APPENDIX 1 DISTRICT COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are your sources of outside (non-City) funding?
2. How many organizers has your District Council had in the last 10 years?
3. How is the business community represented on your council?
4. What is your relationship (official or unofficial) with other neighborhood groups?
5. How do you communicate with citizens in your neighborhood?
6. How much turnover has there been in your Board in the last 5 years? Do you have term limits in your by-laws?
7. How do you carry out your elections?
8. Do you have non-partisan, conflict-of-interest, financial and personnel policies for your Board? Are they informal or written? (Personnel policies include conditions for hiring, firing, grievance, holidays, etc.)
9. What staff members are employed by your District Council?
10. What major activities or services do you provide?
11. Which Capital Improvements Budget (CIB) committees do your citizens currently serve on?

## APPENDIX 2 SOURCES

**Community Organizers** (interviewed September 1994-July 1995)

<u>District</u>	<u>Community Organizer</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>Community Organizer</u>
1	Jennifer Wathen	11	Susan Marschalk
2	Tim Dornfeld	12	Abby Struck
3	Judy Brown	13 L-H	Julian Loscalzo
4	Susan Omoto	13 S-H	Ed Bower
5	Susan Vanelli	13 MP	Ed Bower
6	Carla Jacobsen	14	Kathie Tamowski
7	Jeanne Staley	15	Gayle Summers
8	Greg DuShon	16	Chris Trost
9	Betty Moran	17	Mary Nelson
10	Julie Hoff		

### **Panelists at LWV program on December 2, 1995:**

Marilou Chepple, President, District 16

Karen Christofferson, former Citizen Participation Coordinator

Ken Ford, chief planner, Saint Paul Dept. of Planning and Economic Development

Kiki Sonnen, former City Council member

**Others**

Ann Copeland, former Citizen Participation Coordinator  
Donna Drummond, Saint Paul Dept. of Planning and Economic Development  
Scott Feyen, District 6 President  
Paul Gilliland, activist from District 2  
Robert Hammer, Grants Manager, Saint Paul Dept. of Planning and Economic Development  
Jerry Jenkins, former Citizen Participation Coordinator  
Susan Kimberly, Speaker at District Council retreat, May 1995  
Jane McClure, freelance reporter covering community affairs for neighborhood newspapers  
Martha McDonell, Neighborhood Energy Consortium  
Kathie Tarnowski, Community Organizer, District 14

**Published material**

- *The Task Force on Neighborhood/Community Action, Report and Recommendations*, The Saint Paul Foundation, Inc. Project Director: Kathleen McKown, (1989).
- *Neighborhood Grant Programs: A Management Analysis*, Saint Paul City Council Research Center, (October, 1990).
- David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government*, Penguin Books, (1992).
- *Making Democracy Work: A Process for Citizen Participation. Report of the Committee on Citizen Participation*. Todd Lefko, Chairman, (September, 1973).
- *Profiles: City of Saint Paul Citizen Participation Planning Districts*, Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development, (January 1994).
- *Reports of Accomplishments from the District Councils to the City*, (1993-95)
- *Saint Paul Capital Allocation Policy, 1996-2000*, City of Saint Paul
- *Recommendations of Citizen Participation Task Force*, City of Saint Paul (amended April 21, 1987).
- *Community Development Block Grant Statement of Community Development Objectives and Projected Use of 1994 Funds*, Saint Paul PED, (April 20, 1994).

### APPENDIX 3 THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET PROCESS (CIB)

State law provides that the Saint Paul Long Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) Committee be composed of 18 members, four from each full and two from each partial Senate District. City Ordinance states one member from each planning district, if possible.

Each District Council submits the names of three nominees to the mayor, who chooses one nominee to submit to the City Council for approval. If less than three are submitted, the mayor may nominate any person, even from another planning district. The CIB Long Range Committee members serve a three-year term, attending meetings during the late afternoon on the second Thursday, as well as on a weekly Task Force during the biennial CIB development and at public hearings on the proposed budget.

There are three Task Forces during the "odd-year" CIB development: *Community Facilities, Streets and Utilities*, and *Residential and Economic Development*. Each District Council can appoint a delegate and an alternate to each Task Force. The Task Forces meet for nine weeks during April, May and June to review all CIB proposals from departments, divisions, District Councils and citizens. Each Task Force ranks its projects according to fiscal criteria.

The City-wide CIB committee combines the recommendations from all three Task Forces into one prioritized project budget which is forwarded to the mayor who may change it. The mayor's recommendations are sent to the City Council, which may also change the recommended budget prior to final adoption in December.

In the Spring 1995, 15 of 17 District Councils were represented on the Long Range Committee, 11 of 17 on the Community Facilities Task Force, 12 of 17 on the Streets and Utilities Task Force and 11 of 17 on the Residential and Economic Development Task Force.

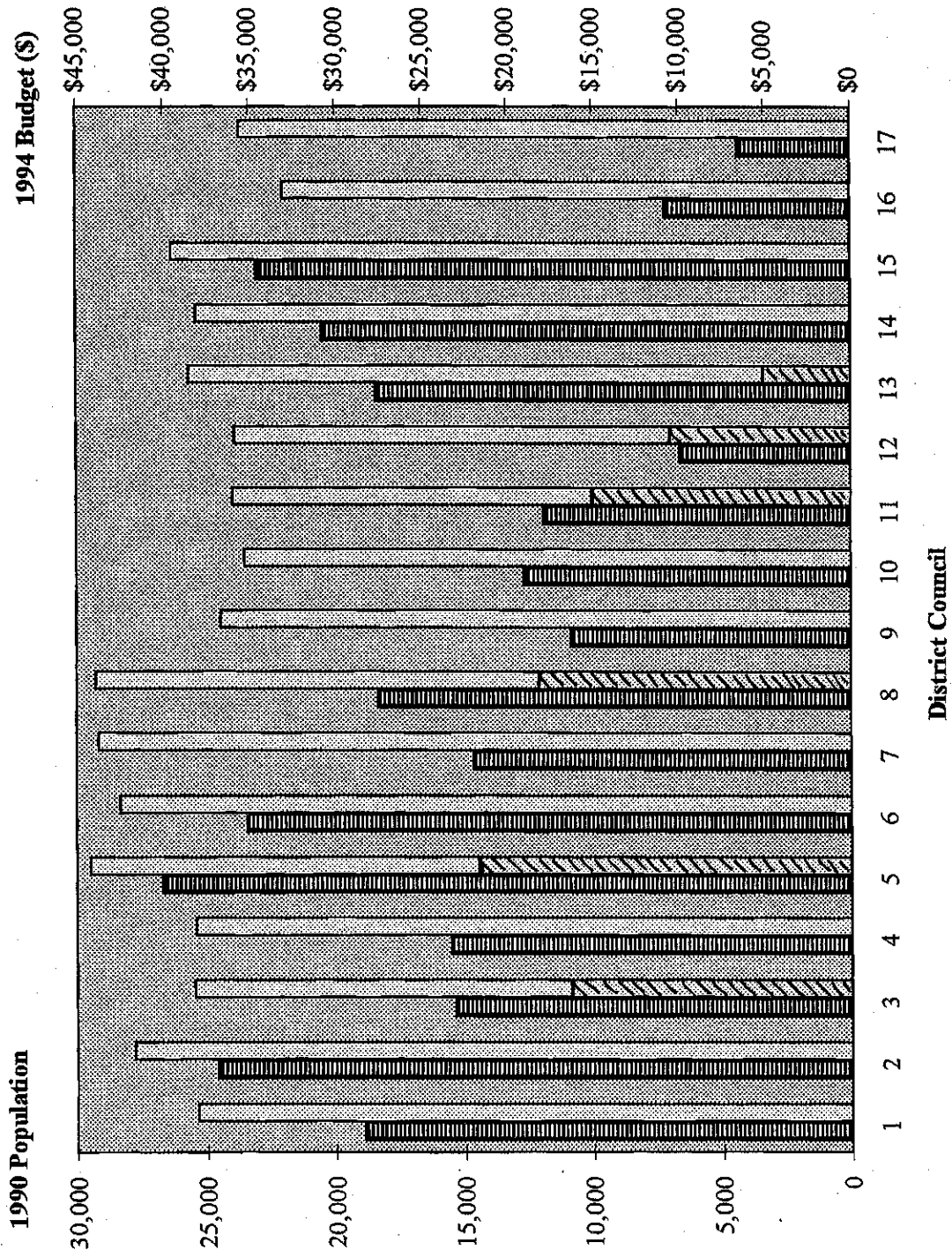
### APPENDIX 4 TABLE OF ACRONYMS

<b>CIB</b> .....	Capital Improvement Budget
<b>CO</b> .....	Community Organizer
<b>COPP</b> .....	Civic Organization Partnership Program
<b>CP</b> .....	Citizen Participation
<b>CRP</b> .....	Community Resources Program
<b>DNR</b> .....	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
<b>FORCE</b> .....	Program to combine the resources of police, housing, public health and human ..... services departments to concentrate on problem areas
<b>HUD</b> .....	U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
<b>LWV</b> .....	League of Women Voters
<b>MN</b> .....	Minnesota
<b>NEC</b> .....	Neighborhood Energy Consortium
<b>NUSA</b> .....	Neighborhoods, U.S.A.
<b>PED</b> .....	Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development
<b>URAP</b>	Urban Revitalization Action Program

# **APPENDIX 5 1990 POPULATION AND 1994 BUDGET**

	<b>District</b>	<b>1990 Population</b>	<b>From General Fund</b>	<b>From CDBG</b>	<b>Total 1994 Budget</b>
1	Battle Creek/Conway/ Highwood/Eastview	18,846	\$38,008		\$38,008
2	Northeast Saint Paul	24,517	\$41,668		\$41,668
3	West Side	15,312	\$22,164	\$16,050	\$38,214
4	Dayton's Bluff	15,499	\$38,110		\$38,110
5	Payne-Phalen	26,665	\$22,937	\$21,265	\$44,202
6	North End	23,380	\$42,479		\$42,479
7	Thomas-Dale	14,594	\$43,745		\$43,745
8	Summit-University	18,301	\$26,471	\$18,445	\$43,916
9	West Seventh	10,800	\$36,648		\$36,648
10	Como	12,624	\$35,280		\$35,280
11	Hamline-Midway	11,837	\$20,856	\$15,103	\$35,959
12	St. Anthony	6,580	\$25,382	\$10,480	\$35,862
13	Lexington-Hamline/ Snelling-Hamline/ Merriam Park	18,399	\$33,287	\$5,205	\$38,492
14	Macalester-Groveland	20,471	\$38,083		\$38,083
15	Highland Park	22,983	\$39,504		\$39,504
16	Summit Hill	7,122	\$33,029		\$33,029
17	Downtown	4,295	\$35,519		\$35,519

# 1990 POPULATION VS. 1994 DISTRICT COUNCIL BUDGET



## **APPENDIX 6 EXPECTATIONS**

### **What the City Expects of a District Council Because of City Funding**

1. District Council Board and staff will communicate with all entities in the district: homeowners, renters, businesses, institutions, other organizations.
2. District Council will have responsible and fair procedures for hearing and deciding on neighborhood issues. The Council will be sure that all sides are notified of the meeting and heard before it makes a decision.
3. District Council will have regular communication with people in the district to keep them aware and informed.
4. District Council will be an advisory body to City government both to put forward neighborhood needs and to respond to City requests.
5. District Council will be the neighborhood contact point for planning and land use issues.
6. District Council will manage its financial affairs responsibly by accurate accounting of money received and spent; filing of proper tax payments and forms to both state and federal government; maintaining its 501(c)3 federal and its Minnesota tax exempt status; carrying adequate insurance including general liability, automobile, workers compensation and unemployment insurance; maintaining financial and personnel files and files of minutes of all Council meetings.
7. District Council agrees to fair employment and non-discrimination practices, certification of insurance coverage, compliance accounting, and a host of other administrative policies.
8. District Council staff or a board member will send copies of all agendas, minutes, and letters about conflict of interest to the citizen participation contact person in the Department of Planning and Economic Development for the files as mandated in the City Council budget for citizen participation.

## **APPENDIX 7 FUNDING SOURCES USED BY DISTRICT COUNCILS IN 1994**

<b>CITY</b>	Neighborhood Crime Prevention Grants Clean-Ups Neighborhood Energy Consortium (Recycling) Civic/Community Organization Partnership Program
<b>STATE</b>	Office of Drug Policy Humanities Commission DNR Grant or Challenge Grant
<b>SMALL BUSINESS</b>	donations or sponsors or services provided
<b>BANKS</b>	Donations or corporate sponsors or for specific events
<b>CORPORATIONS</b>	The Saint Paul Company Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) Downtown Corporate Donor Program
<b>FOUNDATIONS, TRUSTS, FUNDS</b>	Northwest Area Foundation Pew Charitable Trust Bigelow Foundation 3M Foundation Edwards Memorial Trust McKnight Foundation United Way Saint Paul Foundation Minneapolis Foundation Bremer Foundation Headwaters Fund Cooperating Fund Drive Highwinds Fund
<b>FUNDRAISING EVENTS</b>	Home tour Teen fund-raiser Garden tour Spaghetti dinner Ice cream social Art auction
<b>INDIVIDUAL DONORS</b>	Solicited by: letter, in person, in newsletter/newspaper
<b>SALES</b>	T-shirts, sweatshirts, books







