Spring 2013 Project Awards

Each issue of the CURA Reporter features a few capsule descriptions of new projects under way at CURA. The projects highlighted in this issue were made possible through one of CURA’s community-based research programs, which provide graduate-student assistance for community-based applied research projects, program planning and development, and other short-term projects. These projects represent only a portion of those that will receive support from CURA and its partners during the coming year.

■ Corridors to Freedom, Action Research for Emancipation. La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles (La Asamblea) is a faith-based organization based in Twin Cities- and St. Cloud-area churches that organizes to build leadership in the community. La Asamblea is organizing the Latino community to have a voice in decision making around transit-corridor development. Through this project, La Asamblea wants to create community-driven research tools that build power by enabling the community to act. Members of the Latino community who live in close proximity to transit corridors will be a primary source of information and expertise, and will provide their thoughts about opportunities, threats, and issues regarding transit.

Lizeth Marroquin, a Master of Systems Engineering student in the College of Science and Engineering, is gathering information from Latino residents living in Twin Cities transportation corridors. The results will be used to organize around shared interests, to educate community members about what is at stake for them in the planning process, and to inform a document that captures the community vision for the project, which will be subsequently delivered to decision makers.

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Women in Cedar Riverside, Asset and Gap Analysis. Founded in 2008, the Cedar Riverside Neighborhood Revitalization Program (CRNRP) represents the constituents of the Cedar Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis. CRNRP plans to support and/or build programs for East African women that promote economic self-sufficiency, financial literacy, and wealth accumulation. More than half of all families in the neighborhood live in poverty, and a large segment of the households in the neighborhood are led by single, female parents. Adding language barriers, religious and cultural differences, and the responsibility of providing income to extended family members overseas to the mix, East African women are facing an uphill battle as it relates to moving out of poverty and into career paths that can sustain their families. Ubah Hirsi, an undergraduate in psychology, and Kubra Dire, an undergraduate in family social science, are facilitating three to five focus groups with East African women, as well as researching existing programs. The results of the research will be used to inform the allocation of neighborhood funds, build a case statement for future fundraising, and, if applicable, be used as a basis for further program development work within the organization.

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Minneapolis American Indian Center Business Plan for Cultural, Arts, and Economic Growth. The Minneapolis American Indian Center (MAIC or the Center) is a nonprofit organization primarily providing social services in the Twin Cities through programs that serve court-related advocacy, and substance-abuse prevention and treatment, as well as programs aimed at the urban community of American Indian elders and youth. Located in the heart of the Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis, MAIC is one of the last and longest running American Indian centers in the country. Over time, the Center has evolved away from its original role as a cultural and community center. An organizational assessment and an annual survey both indicated that the community is in support of revitalizing the Center through activities that create an atmosphere for self-determination and regaining a strong cultural identity for individuals and families. Gauri Kelkar, a Master of Sustainable Design student in the School of Architecture, is working with the Center for Sustainable Building Research at the University of Minnesota to develop a vision, including design possibilities, for MAIC that incorporates culture, arts, and retail. The results of this research project will be used to turn the vision of the Center’s future into reality.

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ West Side Initiative. In 1975, West Side Community Organization (WSCO) became the first neighborhood association in St. Paul to be recognized as an official district planning council, representing the residents of District 3 in St. Paul’s Citizen Participation Program. The West Side Initiative is a collaborative effort by residents and institutional partners to leverage and align resources to bring to life the work of the West Side Plan, a 10-year plan for District 3. In the past, these types of neighborhood and small-area plans have not been fully realized, as implementation systems, including ways to track and measure progress made toward the realization of the goals/strategies outlined in the plan, have been lacking. Dean Porter, a Master of Urban and Regional Planning student at the Humphrey School, is developing a set of indicators and measures relating to the community plan and projects/initiatives undertaken by WSCO and its community partners. The results will be used to track the impact of the plan over time and to support fundraising activities.

Program: Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program

■ Study of the Champion Communities Primary Prevention Model for Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence. The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) is a voice for victims/survivors, sexual-assault programs, and allies committed to ending sexual violence. In the Champion Communities Primary Prevention model (currently being piloted in Winona and Bemidji), crime-prevention strategies, specifically around sexual violence, are generated, carried out, and studied at the local level by teams of community residents. MNCASA offers training and technical assistance to teams in identifying community needs,
strategizing around context-specific culture and policy change, community organizing, and research/evaluation. By studying both the process and preliminary impacts of this supported team-based model at the two pilot sites, MNCASA hopes to provide evidence that this model can make a difference in communities statewide. Susan Lange, a Master of Public Affairs student at the Humphrey School, is studying the impact of training/technical assistance on the pilot teams’ capacity, as well as developing evaluation tools. The results of this research will be used to inform the structure of future primary-prevention efforts in the pilot communities and statewide, develop tools to assist communities statewide in initiating their own primary-prevention efforts, improve MNCASA’s training and technical support activities, and advocate for primary-prevention support with state policy makers and potential funders. **Program:** Community Assistantship Program (CAP)  

**Mapping the Root River Watershed for Increased Implementation of Stormwater Management Strategies.** The mission of the Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District is to promote natural-resource stewardship by providing educational, technical, and financial assistance. Effective stormwater management in the district requires a complete understanding of stormwater drainage in the area. Mary Hammes, a Master of Natural Resource Science and Management student at the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, is aggregating existing data and developing a series of maps showing stormwater drainage areas in cities in the Root River watershed. The Fillmore Soil and Water Conservation District and the cities in the Root River watershed will use the results of this work to develop education and outreach materials for watershed residents to better understand water issues. Interpretive sites can also use the results to show where stormwater is coming from and how the land use in the area affects water quality and quantity. **Program:** Community Assistantship Program (CAP)  

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**Project Assistance Available from CURA**

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs supports research and technical assistance through a number of individual programs, each with their own deadlines and application procedures.

*The Community Assistantship Program (CAP) matches community-based nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, and government agencies in Greater Minnesota with students who can provide research assistance. Eligible organizations define a research project, submit an application, and, if accepted, are matched with a qualified student to carry out the research. The application deadline for fall semester 2013 assistantships (September through early January 2014) is June 30, 2013. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with applications, contact CAP coordinator Will Craig at 612-625-3321 or wcraig@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cap.*

*The Community Geographic Information Systems (CGIS) program provides technical assistance in mapping, data analysis, and GIS to community-based organizations and nonprofits in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Staff at the CGIS program specialize in parcel-level mapping, demographic analysis, and Internet-based GIS technologies. The CGIS program has no formal application process or deadline to apply. Project requests can be made by phone, e-mail, or online at z.umn.edu/cgis/help, and generally can be turned around within two weeks. For more information, to discuss potential projects, or for assistance with data needs, contact CGIS program coordinator Jeff Matson at 612-625-0081 or jmatson@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/cgis.*

*The Kris Nelson Community-Based Research Program (the Nelson Program) provides student research assistance to community and neighborhood-based organizations and suburban government agencies in the Twin Cities seven-county metropolitan area. Priority is given to groups serving diverse communities. Projects may include any issue relevant to a neighborhood or community’s needs and interests, including planning, program development, or program evaluation. Applications from organizations collaborating on a project are encouraged. The application deadline for fall semester 2013 assistantships (September through early January 2014) is June 30, 2013. For more information, contact CURA community programs assistant Jeff Corn at 612-625-0744 or curacb@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/nelson-program.*

*The Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO) trains people to work effectively in organizing and staffing neighborhood organizations. It trains new organizers and increases the skills of existing neighborhood staff, leaders, and volunteers through internships, workshops, and other programs. For more information about MCNO and the training opportunities available, contact Jay Clark at 612-625-2513 or clark037@umn.edu, or Ned Moore at 612-625-5805 or nedmoore@umn.edu, or visit www.cura.umn.edu/mcno.*