Eating Is an Agri-cultural Act: Understanding Food Systems from the Perspective of Citizens Who Eat and Exploring Policy Possibilities for Local Units of Government. We consume food to physiologically reproduce our bodies, but in the process we also create cultural and political realities; food is at the core of health, illness, prosperity, and poverty. As a policy arena, food has been relegated for decades through national decision making and farm bill subsidies that favor large-scale production of commodity products. However, the past few decades have also seen the rise of a grassroots movement to create robust local and regional food systems. David Syring (Sociology and Anthropology, U of M—Duluth) will build on previous research and intensive regional activism that has led to nascent regional food possibilities in northeast Minnesota. In collaboration with businesses, nonprofits, and local units of government, Syring will use quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the understandings of citizens regarding the value of local food, as well as collect best and future practices for local governments to enhance local food options and economic opportunities for producers, processors, distributors, and eaters. Program: FIRP

Effectiveness of State Policy to Promote Bioenergy Innovation Description. Minnesota is in the midst of a rapid proliferation of policies aimed at creating sustainable energy systems that simultaneously address complex issues of national security, climate change, and economic development. Adding to the challenge is the lack of knowledge about the effectiveness of our policy efforts. Dennis R. Becker (Forest Resources) will investigate the development of renewable energy in Minnesota by analyzing innovations and accomplishments resulting from a sample of existing state bioenergy policies, and their interaction with state agency programs and research initiatives. The research will analyze the implementation of state policies and relate them to policy-specific drivers, types of innovation sought, projected utilization and economic impacts, and cost effectiveness. This comparative analysis will be conducted using a case-study approach with cross-case analyses. Results of this analysis can inform state energy planning by evaluating the effectiveness of different policy tools for advancing bioenergy production, illustrating the role of policy in facilitating innovation, and revealing unintended consequences of policy incentives. The research will also test evaluation protocols, which will be employed in subsequent research investigating the effectiveness of state policies and programs across the country. Program: FIRP

Financial Counseling among Foreclosure Victims: Predictors of Help-Seeking Behaviors and Outcomes of Counseling. Since 2005, foreclosures have displaced more than 90,000 Minnesotans from their homes, with more people still likely to go through foreclosure. For these homeowners, financial counseling may prevent actual foreclosure. Seeking counseling, of course, is voluntary; research has shown individuals of certain demographic backgrounds are more likely to seek help than others. Partnering with LSS Financial Counseling Service, the largest provider of foreclosure prevention counseling in Minnesota and whose mission is to “help people achieve financial peace of mind,” Alexandra Luong (Psychology, U of M–Duluth) will use telephone-based interviews and surveys to differentiate characteristics of potential foreclosure victims who seek financial counseling from those who do not. Such information will help financial agencies reach out to individuals who normally would not seek help. Luong will also evaluate the outcomes of financial counseling by comparing the financial situations of clients versus nonclients. Program: FIRP

Worker Earnings, Commuting, and Labor Force Participation in Minnesota Counties. Jobs are key to the success of individuals, families, and communities. When new jobs are created in a specific location, they can be filled by residents who were not working, workers who commute from elsewhere, residents who previously commuted to another location, or new residents. Who fills the new jobs has important implications for local government services and revenue. However, the labor supply response is likely to differ depending on the earnings potential of the new jobs, as well as whether the location is rural or metropolitan. Elizabeth E. Davis (Applied Economics) will analyze county-level data on commuting linkages and labor supply responses, disaggregated by earnings categories, to understand variations across Minnesota counties. Increasing our knowledge of these linkages and the differential impacts of labor market changes on lower income workers will contribute to a deeper understanding of economic challenges across the state and help inform local economic development policy. Program: FIRP

Planned Unit Development: Examining Approaches and Outcomes of Flexible Development in the Twin Cities. Typically codified in local...
zoning regulations, the planned unit development (PUD) tool provides a means to master plan at the project scale to respond to unique site or market conditions, promote a mix of uses or densities, coordinate infrastructure development, and accomplish specific planning goals such as conservation and affordable housing. However, anecdotal evidence suggests these outcomes are not always achieved, and little research has been conducted to determine how successfully PUD approaches are used. Carissa Schively Slotterback (Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs) will investigate the use of PUDs in 65 municipalities in the 11-county Twin Cities metropolitan area by conducting a content analysis of these communities’ PUD ordinances, interviewing practitioners involved in PUD implementation, and assessing the outcomes of completed PUD projects on the ground. For practitioners in the Twin Cities region and nationwide, this research has potential to increase awareness and understanding of PUD tools, how they are used, whether they achieve their intended goals, and best practices for improving their use to encourage positive development outcomes.

**Programs:** CGPAC and FIRP

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**Where Do They Go? Foreclosure and Residential Mobility Patterns in the Twin Cities.** The foreclosure crisis continues to weave a destructive path through the communities of Minnesota. At the neighborhood level, some of the impacts of foreclosure are self-evident; abandoned and boarded structures abound in highly impacted neighborhoods, and maps of foreclosures have given us an understanding of the spatial distribution of the crisis in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Yet, the individuals and households caught up in foreclosure remain nearly invisible, and very little is known about the mobility patterns of those who have lost their shelter due to foreclosure. Jeff Crump (Design, Housing, and Apparel) will undertake a study to determine the mobility patterns of households in Hennepin and Dakota Counties that have gone through foreclosure. Using housing mobility data available from Excensus LLC, the study will examine and analyze, at the census tract level, patterns of residential mobility that are linked to the foreclosure process and compare them with the predominant movement patterns of nonforeclosure households. This research has the potential to suggest appropriate regional policy, investment, and development recommendations to address foreclosures. **Programs:** CGPAC and New Initiatives

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**CURA Grant-Writing Workshop Draws a Crowd**

On September 28, 2010, CURA hosted a Grant Writing for Neighborhoods workshop at the offices of the Wilder Foundation that attracted nearly 100 attendees representing 76 organizations. The turnout was a welcome surprise for CURA staff who organized the workshop. “This overwhelming response shows the pressing need among place-based organizations for funding and grant writing assistance,” said CURA community programs assistant Jeff Corn. “We had planned for a few dozen, but soon discovered that we had underestimated the interest for a workshop of this kind.”

CURA designed the grant-writing workshop with the specific needs of neighborhood organizations in mind. Fundraising for neighborhood organizations is an increasing challenge and city financial support is on the wane because of the end of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP).

The overall goal of the workshop was to give neighborhood organizations concrete ways to write successful grants to support their unique work. The workshop included brainstorming sessions, presentations from neighborhood organizations that have written successful grants, a panel of local funders, and breakout groups. The brainstorming sessions, facilitated by CURA community organizer Jay Clark, helped attendees focus on both the challenges they face in securing funding and the unique value of neighborhood organizations that groups can highlight in grant applications. These included the ability to catalyze community strengths and maintain relationships; the fact that they are democratically elected; their geographic focus; their strong legacy of community engagement; and their ability to organize residents around self-identified issues to solve problems.

The panel of local funders included Sarah Hernandez from the McKnight Foundation and Monica Bryant from Headwaters Foundation. Hernandez and Bryant stressed the importance of using both data and personal stories to communicate impact and produce compelling grant applications. Funders also are interested in knowing how neighborhood organizations engage underrepresented residents, and how this work helps to identify neighborhood problems, produce solutions, and result in action. Other suggestions included making sure to respond to all questions that are asked, counting the value of volunteer time, preparing a thorough and thoughtful budget, expecting occasional rejections and learning from them, and never being afraid to contact program officers with questions or to solicit feedback if your application is rejected.

The workshop concluded with breakout sessions that helped attendees discuss their unique situations, gather feedback from CURA staff and other attendees, and further focus their techniques for writing successful applications. Ishmael Israel, chairperson of the Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC), attended the workshop and gave the sessions high marks: “This was a great workshop. I got a grasp of the ins and outs of seeking out grants and [writing] grant applications.”

CURA also announced a special mini-grant competition sponsored by the Neighborhood Partnership Initiative (see article on page 35) and open to all workshop attendees. The purpose of the grant is to fund a partnership between a neighborhood organization and a nonprofit group that works with youth, immigrants, people of color, or the arts, with the goal of organizing underrepresented constituencies around an issue. At press time applications were still under review, but an announcement will be made soon on the CURA website at www.cura.umn.edu/NPI.php.