



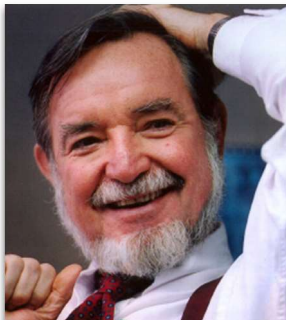
West Central Development Project

WINTER 2021-2022



We are committed to working alongside people experiencing poverty in the West Central neighborhood to develop leadership and connect assets to improve lives through development instead of charity. Residents and non-residents from all economic situations are part of this effort.

In 2021, The West Central Development Project (WCDP) engaged hundreds of West Central residents in activities of their initiative. Resident input drove their concerns, their hopes and their dreams. These efforts brought neighbors together growing the web of relationships. It is in the strength of relationships and partnerships that neighborhoods improve their lives together. This report illustrates some of the ways the WCDP walked with neighbors in 2021.



John McKnight, DePaul University

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) consultation

John McKnight, co-founder of ABCD, led the Spokane Development Project in a series of Zoom consultations in the winter of 2020-21. Focus was sharpened, and a new style of community engagement was developed. John also connected us with Vicki Bokelman, an ABCD practitioner in a neighborhood in Manesha, Wisconsin, who gave vision to a “partnering” approach that has been very successful for our work in West Central this year.

Celebrating Diversity in West Central

The West Central Development Project led the neighborhood response to White Supremacist flyers that appeared on windshields in August 2020. Without drawing attention to the group responsible, the Racial Justice Group rallied the neighborhood around a celebration of diversity. That effort included full-page ads in the *Inlander* and *Black Lens*, inserts in utility bills, launching a Facebook page, and presenting a workshop for youth leaders on recognizing youth at risk of being recruited by these groups. Raising awareness about these threats and developing neighborhood cohesiveness were two important outcomes. Please visit our Facebook page, [WeAreWestCentralSpokane](#) and follow us. We encourage neighbors to post items that lift up inclusion and diversity. We also plan to continue an emphasis on education around this issue.

[#wearewestcentralspokane](#)





2001 W Boone - Before



2001 W Boone - After

Boone Street neighborhood initiates a facelift

On Boone Street, a main artery through the West Central neighborhood, a long-neglected building had become a gathering place for daily drug use and a dumping ground for trash and debris.

In mid-August, COPS West (the neighborhood police office) offered to clean-up the derelict facility. The project required a large volunteer group, so the Development Project showed up 10 days later with about 25 volunteers armed with chain saws, shovels, brush trimming tools, and sleeves rolled up to tackle the mess. Six hours and six dumpster loads later, the property was clean and the building was secured against drug using intruders.

The one-day effort resulted in an ongoing team of neighborhood residents who are now meeting regularly and acting to improve the neighborhood.

Rental Assistance effort gave needed relief

In addition to the long-term housing research, the Development Project organized a rent relief event that was highly successful. On March 24, two sites were open for renters to get administrative assistance in online applications for rent relief due to the pandemic. More than 20 volunteers assisted in this one-day event that resulted in a large number of renters successfully applying for over \$60,000 in assistance.

Affordable Housing crisis tackled

West Central residents are more passionate about the crush of the housing shortage than any other issue. Again and again, housing pressures cause deep pain for those who experience poverty. Desperate needs remain unaddressed. A long-term affordable housing research team (HEART) has been established with a West Central focus. Alignment with the Spokane Alliance brings skill, experience, and capacity to make a powerful impact. It is expected that this effort will be ongoing for a significant period of time.



Poster Contest reveals West Central through young eyes

As a prelude to the annual Neighbor Day sponsored by the West Central Community Center, the WCDP launched a Poster Contest for the youth in West Central. Sierra Ross, the youth services director at the Community Center, was instrumental in getting the entry forms out to Audubon and Holmes Elementary, Glover Middle School and North Central High School, as well as encouraging participation by as many kids as possible. Her work resulted in over 50 entries, which were then judged by neighbors dropping into the Community Center over an afternoon and evening.

The winners received gift baskets and all the entrants were awarded gift certificates for pop and ice cream, contributed by Jolly Mart. Supporting youth achievement was one of the prominent issues identified in the WCDP listening sessions two years ago. In addition, having local businesses display these posters helped the neighborhood come together around the positive images reflected in the young people's artwork.

Spring Fling enlivens Home Yard Cottages

Transitions

It was a bright, sunny day in April when the residents of Transitions Home Yard Cottages broke free of their COVID-19 isolation and engaged in a morning of crafts, games, lunch and raffle prizes. The WCDP had been working with the staff and a few residents to implement the practices of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) in this small community and the Spring Fling was one of the outgrowths of this effort.



The Cottages are a collection of 24 permanent supportive housing units for women and children surrounding a common area. Many of the residents were previously homeless, incarcerated or DV victims. The small scale of the community and the staff's enthusiasm for helping the residents identify and use their assets instead of focusing on deficits make this a good fit for our efforts to educate and promote the ABCD model.

WCDP Provided training on development as opposed to charity

Co-led by Katie Haney and Woody Garvin, training in Development Project approaches two energized organizations. Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors and Transitions Home Yard Cottages staff explored skills in building community and power through a resident focused action. The Development Project is now well equipped to assist neighborhoods and organizations in training for a bottom up instead of top down orientation, and an asset based rather than a deficit focused understanding. It is expected that training in the foundations of community organizing and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) will increase this year.



Neighbors experienced the sight and touch of farm animals

A Petting Zoo of more than 20 different farm animals drew more than 200 residents to the campus of Westminster Presbyterian Church on August 12. This cooperative effort brought together the welcome of Westminster members, the enthusiasm of Portland Presbyterian Church students on a mission trip, and the owners of the Petting Zoo for this hands-on event. Fliers distributed in the neighborhood resulted in an influx of parents and children to see and touch every imaginable farm animal: chickens, geese, ducks, rabbits, pony, llamas and more. The afternoon saw a steady stream of neighbors greeted by animals, Westminster members, and West Central Development Project volunteers. The event contributed to neighborhood cohesiveness and identified some residents interested in working on events in the future.

Neighbor Day offers opportunity for residents' input

The first Friday of June is traditionally the day for the West Central Community Center's Neighbor Day. Except during a pandemic. It was cancelled in 2020, and 2021 was iffy. But the all-outdoor venue of Cannon Park convinced the City to approve the celebration and the WCDP was there to interact with the 200+ visitors who attended. Underneath our ample tent, one table featured the poster contest, with photos of the winners and posters available to anyone who stopped by. Another table featured the Racial Justice Group and encouraged residents to write on the tablecloth suggestions for making the neighborhood more inclusive. Our third table had suggestions for improvements for the neighborhood and asked visitors to put dots on their favorite ideas, in addition to writing in their own ideas. The sign-in sheets allowed people to indicate their area of interest and become more engaged in the work of the WCDP. This opportunity to talk to residents one-on-one about what they want to see happen in the neighborhood was rich and fruitful.

West Central Bike-About pedaled a new way of seeing



On a May Saturday, a gang of cyclists pedaled through West Central with new eyes to see the neighborhood. At the sendoff gathering, neighbors and guests were encouraged to see the good things in West Central, not the problems or eyesores, the "assets" not the "deficits." Over a two-hour period, the bikers toured the neighborhood and met with 7 affiliated community groups that ranged from [Habitat for Humanity](#) and the [West Central Abbey](#), to the [West Central Community Center](#) and [Made with Love Bakery](#). Representatives from these groups shared how their entity was contributing to the well-being of the neighborhood, providing the riders with new windows through which to view West Central. A gathering in Olmstead Park afterward provided a simple meal and an opportunity for participants to share what they had observed in their Bike-About.

Donations to the WCDP can be made to www.smith-barbieri.com; Look to the top right and click on "Donate."

Partner with us!

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