

Neighborhood Development Grants Program
2011 Neighborhood Development Project Application
 deadline: noon, 12/17/10, City Hall, CEDO offices, 149 Church Street
 attn: Jenny Davis, 865-7172, jdavis@ci.burlington.vt.us

Ward: 3	
Contact Person(s): 1) Abigail Sessions 2) Dawn M. Ellis 3)	
Mailing Address: Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes School 123 North St. Burlington, VT 05401	Phone(s): 1) 2) 3) E-Mails: 1) 2) 3)

Project Name: <u>Learn, Share, Grow, Show</u>
Project Location/Address: <u>Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes School, 123 North Street, Burlington, VT</u>
This Grant Request \$ <u>5,975.00</u>

Neighborhood Planning Assembly Steering Committee Signature(s): _____
City Department Signature(s) Department: _____ Signature: _____ Department _____ Signature: _____

1. What is your project? What do you hope to accomplish? Please be specific:

The Sustainability Academy at Lawrence Barnes School, a recently themed public magnet school in Burlington, Vermont's Old North End, is succeeding in "mixing it up" socio-economically in its student body. Achieving a socio-economic mix in the student body was one of the School Board's goals in creating the magnet schools. The possibilities for helping children and families in poverty increase their economic capacity increases with this mixing as they have increased access to "social capital", a concept described by Harvard sociologist Robert Putnam. As people from various socio-economic backgrounds come together, meet socially, network, and advocate for their children together, they can create a new, mixed income network. Within it, there are increased opportunities for people with limited access to capital, jobs or job availability information, or to educational pathways out of poverty to connect to people and networks that could help them. At the same time, in our particular school community, there is the opportunity for people from more homogenous cultural backgrounds to connect with people from a diverse array of cultures, countries, and backgrounds. The Old North End is the international city of Vermont.

We propose to create opportunities to further solidify those mixed-income, mixed-cultural background connections through tangible improvements to public facilities which will have the potential to stimulate community building and community development activities, building on the community's eclectic diversity as an economic asset. These include:

- Replacement and improvement of the now decrepit **raised bed structures** at the Sustainability Academy (SA) at Lawrence Barnes School. This will facilitate the continued development of a school-community garden, which will be used to encourage the range of families to participate in a community of plant growing, particularly of vegetables, which might come from a variety of cultures. The growing community offers one way to connect across class.

As parent Siobhan Donegan, involved in the community garden planning committee work, writes:

"Many students and parents will be new to Vermont but not to food gardening, having originally come from Somalia, Sudan, Iran, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Bhutan and Vietnam. The vegetable gardens will primarily serve lower income families who are looking to stretch their food dollars and reconnect with the land in a way that was so integral to their lives in their home countries."

- Addition of a **bike and scooter rack** and **two benches** at SA, designed in such a way to encourage foot and bike traffic, stay and chat conversations, and interactions among parents picking up and dropping off children. Again, providing a 'slow down' and meet people opportunity, while giving the structures needed to create incentives for healthy, sustainable, community-based transportation.

Within this sustainable welcoming natural space, enhanced by gardens, benches, and bike racks, people will gather, connect, share, learn, and grow. Some ideas for programming which could occur in this space (or actually in the school building in some cases) are these:

- Several **“Passion Hours”** across the school year. Times when anyone in the community (whether parents, student, community member without children, educator, business person) can sign up to share and present something they are passionate about, whether it's collecting model cars or fly fishing or playing the guitar. Showcasing the interest and assets of people from all walks of life, people may make connections that can jumpstart ideas. Similar to Pecha Kucha, without the sole reliance on PowerPoint, this format helps people share the essence of something important to them, building community and understanding across generations and socio-economic classes. Such events would be a simple, sustainable way of building social capital right here in the Old North End.
- The gathering place focused on the gardens and benches could be used in conjunction with an ongoing series of cooking classes, sponsored by City Market. Cooking could use vegetables grown in the gardens, and the meal could be shared in this enhanced outdoor space.
- Principal’s Chats (which occur twice a week at present) could take place outdoors in friendly weather, thereby reinforcing the sustainability theme of the school, encouraging parents to use the outdoors as a gathering place.

2. What particular neighborhood need or problem will the project address? How was it identified? Is it part of or coordinated with a larger municipal plan? How will it benefit low-moderate income residents?

The project addresses multiple needs to help Old North End residents generate ideas, social networks, and skills to help them move from poverty to economic sustainability:

- need for more social capital across economic levels in Burlington (from higher poverty level in the neighborhood) through informal forums and gatherings that cross socio-economic status.
- need for parents and teachers to have more informal channels for communication (arose at annual SA Title 1 planning meeting) to improve the school, communication, and understanding across their boundaries
- need to replace decrepit raised beds; broken and in the playground, they are an eyesore and dangerous; they are acting against their intent. If they are rehabilitated, they can further their community intent- gardening and rehabilitation. The community gardening is part of an ongoing implementation of the plan for grounds, playgrounds, and sustainability themed-focus curriculum.
- Lack of enough bike racks and scooter parking spots at the school (arose in a parent-principal chat), as families are increasingly choosing sustainable methods of transporting children to the school.
- Community networking, as part of micro-entrepreneurial development, particularly for new, immigrant, and poorer Burlington communities in the Old North End; a continued focus for some of the CEDO resources.

3. How will the project improve the neighborhood? Please be specific:

- Visually, the raised beds, bike parking, and benches will improve the look and utility of the public property of the school situated right in the heart of North St. in the Old North End.
- Bike racks and gardens will be visual and utilitarian reminders of the values of the Sustainability Academy, encouraging low-impact transportation and interaction with nature.
- Benches will create a park-like atmosphere on school grounds, encouraging neighbors to informally gather, connect, share, learn, and grow.
- By creating a new forum, Passion Hours, which could easily be sustained by the school community if it meets a need, the project catalyzes a cross-community platform for celebrating the assets of all its members. This is particularly important for those with the least economic clout, as they are often categorized as problems, rather than assets. Here, we change the mindset and work to enable and connect people.

Abi Sessions, principal at SA describes:

The physical elements provided for by this grant – raised bed gardens, benches, and bike racks -- would make our outdoor spaces more instructional, more attractive, and more inviting to the neighborhood. I am excited about possibilities for using this enhanced outdoor space in new ways, both unstructured and structured. By providing an opportunity for people -- teachers, parents, students or community members -- to gather, we will come to know one another in an authentic way, making connections and building understanding with neighbors we might only pass on the street.

4. Who will the project benefit? How will it specifically benefit people living in poverty?

- the Sustainability Academy community – its students, families, parents, teachers
- the Old North End community
- Burlington

People from this Old North End community, a high level poverty community, who elect to participate in events such as Passion Hours or cooking classes not only demonstrate how they are assets and celebrate their passions, they can also put ideas out there that can open up new opportunities, networks, and possibilities. The whole group of people that share, with or without a structure or format, will give a piece of themselves to help build this community.

5. Is there clear community support for the project? How has it been demonstrated?

This idea builds on existing plans around the sustainability theme of the SA curriculum, plans for the grounds developed collaboratively last year, plans for the community and student gardening, and connects well with existing planned priorities including expanded bike parking through area transit groups such as Local Motion. This project also builds on needs arising from Title 1 parent planning efforts through the Burlington School District for the Sustainability Academy at Barnes

6. How will the project leverage matching dollars, volunteer commitments or other community resources? What, specifically, are those commitments?

The school is providing access to the building and grounds for gathering, as well as administrator time and involvement from its principal, Abi Sessions. Active parents in the school community and Parent Teacher Organization including brought many aspects of this project to the table from ongoing work on behalf of students and the school community. These parent members include:

Meghan O'Rourke of Channel 17/Town Meeting TV
Tiffany Tillman of Shelburne Farms
Megan Peek, Community Outreach and Health Education Coordinator, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont
Dawn M. Ellis of Dawn M. Ellis & Associates
Becka Grimm, therapist
Susan Cline Lucey
Siobhan Donegan

The PTO members stand ready to mobilize to help make sure these investments go to work in the best ways for the parent-family-school relationship. We plan to work with Local Motion to tap into the transportation plan and potentially existing funds to help install the bike racks. Dawn M. Ellis is volunteering her time to shepherd the design of the project. There is also a group already mobilized and seeking support of the expanded gardening opportunity, including parent and Intervale Farmer Dylan Zeitlyn with garden design ideas, and parent Becky Rabin who was interested in connecting the summer garden to Sara Holbrook community center, with assistance from parents Meghan O'Rourke and Siobhan Donegan. These adults were happy to be part of a "core group" of families who will work together to water, weed, and harvest the garden regularly, and to invite other families to participate in gardening at Barnes.

Meghan describes a piece of the opportunity to tie into the afterschool bike club:

Barnes has had an afterschool bike club for at least three years supported by Local Motion and parent volunteers. Kids learn safe riding practices and helmet use. Local Motion lends kids bicycles for bike club and kids can then earn their bikes while learning mechanic skills by volunteering time in the local motion bike repair shop. On bike club days there is rarely space to park a bike and it makes the playground feel jumbled and doesn't give the sense that the school values bike riding or teach proper care of bikes.

7. Who will carry out the project? How will they be accountable to the neighborhood?

Abi Sessions, principal of Sustainability Academy at Barnes School has agreed to take the lead on shepherding the work of the project. In support of this work, Abi writes:

With the CDBG funds we could begin progress toward our vision of our school grounds as a reflection of our sustainability mission and a community gathering place. Last year we worked for most of the year with an inclusive process for design of our outdoor spaces, and in the spring we will be ready to renovate our outdoor space to complement our newly-renovated energy efficient indoor space. Replacing our raised beds will be a key element of our outdoor design. Students have grown flowers and vegetables in our raised beds for several years, but the beds have become hazardous with age. New beds are necessary to keep the playground and gardening area safe, and for us to continue our study of life cycles and farm to table.

Many of our families bicycle to school, resulting in overcrowding of our one bike rack. I believe having another bike rack would encourage more families to choose energy-saving transportation.

Benches will invite the neighborhood to sit, relax, visit, and enjoy one another.

The PTO members above have indicated they are ready to help in implementation. Dawn Ellis will help with the continued design of the project, particularly around inclusion of higher poverty level community members and continued focus on poverty reduction. As a researcher and consultant in the education and public service arena (www.DMEhelps.com), Dawn will work to incorporate other existing city services, such as CEDO entrepreneurial assistance. Other school-community entities, partners, and groups will continue to be consulted during the project. Partnering college student groups will be approached about providing other help.

There will be a creative ideas/ feedback board at each of the gatherings and workshops.

8. What is the timeline for completing the project (funding is available no earlier than 7/1/11 through 6/30/13)? What City departments will be involved in the project? Have those departments been consulted about the project?

Summer 2011- purchase and rehabilitation of raised beds, benches, and bike racks

September 2011- planning begins, different groups take over different aspects of the project

Oct, Nov, Dec 2011; Jan. or Feb., Mar, Apr 2012: Passion Hours in each of these months. City Market cooking classes continue.

Spring 2012- Sustain, Share, and Learn gathering in the garden area.

Reflection and Planning for sustainability

To tap City Departments, we plan to learn from CEDO best ways to channel arising entrepreneurial

ideas from the Passion Hours and sharing into their services for micro-businesses. In addition, we will encourage and invite people representing CEDO and other city resources to attend any of the gatherings, to be introduced and on-the-ground be available for quick introductory conversations with people who have questions or ideas.

9. How will the project will be sustained / maintained over the long term?

Well, this is the Sustainability Academy! So, the project will tap the school community, including students, to put forth best ideas about how the tangible investments (benches, bike racks, raised beds) can continue to be used, celebrated, beautified and personalized over time, and maintained. Likewise, community forums, such as PTO meetings and principal's chats will be used to check in with older community members, to help tap their ideas. Thus, we turn the work of maintenance and sustainability into an educational opportunity. In addition, since portions of this project arise from existing committees and plans, such as the plans for the SA grounds development; those committees will continue to have ownership and continuance of leadership in the process.

10. Line Item Budget: Show how you plan to pay for this project.

- Detail all items and services you will need to implement this project. Show the estimated cost of each, and list at least two sources for each estimate (please use Burlington-based businesses where possible).
- Detail all in-kind donations you plan to utilize, including volunteer hours, showing the “cost” for that donation in parentheses (). Please note that the value of an hour of volunteer time is \$20.25.

ITEM / SERVICE AND COST ESTIMATE

Tangible improvements	\$3,725
Raised bed material	
Benches	
Bike rack	
Installation	\$2,250
	Total request: \$5,975.00

IN-KIND SERVICE AND DONATIONS AND COST ESTIMATE

Installation	\$250
Parental involvement in improvements	\$3,645
Facilitation, presentations, assistance	\$1,000
Administration and potluck food	\$3,925
	Total in-kind: \$8,820.00

Total Budget for this Project (add all lines) \$14,795

Total value of all in-kind services and donations \$8,820

Total amount of Grant Request \$ 5,975