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Top: Jobs and Property Improvement Forum
Bottom: Toni Cousins at CBN founding
A Letter from the Staff

We are happy to announce the first anniversary of the Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis (CBN). On September 29, 2011, 30-plus nonprofit community building organizations came together at the Old North Restoration Group’s headquarters in Crown Square to strengthen our region’s neighborhoods and in turn strengthen the entire region.

With support from the University of Missouri-St. Louis Des Lee Creating Whole Communities Initiative and the Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance (RHCGDA), CBN has worked with its members to foster strong community building organizations, create a strong community building system, and raise the profile of community building in the region. In the pages ahead you will read about our work in these three areas but first, we want to thank the Network members for a great first year through acknowledging some of our accomplishments. Since our founding, we:

- Created an online resource manual
- Started three Better Together collaborative groups where organizations that work near one another can find ways to work together and engage in peer to peer learning
- Created member scholarships that 5 organizations used to send staff to Neighborworks trainings this summer
- Developed a communications strategy for the sector
- Created an online presence that reaches hundreds of people each week with the Network website, facebook, and twitter
- Started the bi-weekly St. Louis Community Builders Exchange e-newsletter in collaboration with the St. Louis Home Repair Network and the St. Louis Federal Reserve Office of Community Development that reaches over 350 people
- Were on St. Louis on the Air, a local public radio show
- Sent letters to lawmakers in support of preserving community building funding sources like Community Development Block Grant and HOME funds
- Hosted a forum to spread local knowledge on creating community jobs while doing property improvement that fostered partnerships to expand Riverview West Florissant Development Corporation’s youth employment program
- Developed a regional funders list of foundations who support community building
- Created an encyclopedia of housing, economic, and infrastructure development resources from state and local government

Looking to the coming year, we have some exciting work ahead. The CBN is creating its first ever advocacy agenda that will address policy recommendations for the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. We are creating a two-year organization capacity building program based on member-identified needs. The first training of which is on financial sustainability. CBN is also going to host an awards reception for the entire community building sector honoring great practitioners in government, banking, foundations, business, and nonprofit community building.

To end, all of this work is done in support of the St. Louis region’s neighborhoods, the people and children that live there, and in recognition of their importance to regional vibrancy. We hope you will stay involved for what we hope will be an exciting second year.

Thank you,
Karl Guenther and Todd Swanstrom
Year in Review

Fostering Strong Organizations

CBN’s Organizational Capacity Building Committee has been focused on activities and strategies that will help individual organizations increase their ability to do the important work their communities ask of them. Throughout the last year, the committee put time and effort into four broad strategies: centralizing and cataloguing information, peer to peer learning, access to trainings, and fostering collaboration.

Centralizing and cataloguing information is an important strategy for providing access to a baseline level of information for practitioners. A few resources compiled are:

- Nonprofit management and development tools and information
- Encyclopedia of housing, economic, and infrastructure development incentives
- List of nonprofits by zip-code

Peer to peer learning is one of the most valuable benefits a network brings to its members. Through peer to peer learning, the network has/is:

- Created a shared funders list of who supports community building
- Developing a list of who members recommend contracting with for services
- Held forum on how to do job creation for residents and property improvement

Access to trainings that will address a capacity issue for members is often a barrier to professional development. CBN developed a two-prong approach to trainings.

- Des Lee Creating Whole Community Scholarships for individual organizations
- Network wide trainings tailored to the areas of highest need across all organizations

Fostering collaboration both helps strengthen organizations by combining the strengths of multiple organizations and enhances the ability of our region to do strategic community building. Given the importance of collaboration, the network has invested in:

- Helping scale best practice programs through collaboration
- Better Together meetings that bring organizations and adjacent neighborhoods together for peer to peer learning and cross-neighborhood planning

Creating a Strong Community Building System

The Network’s Civic Capacity Building Committee is responsible for fostering a strong community building system in the region to increase effective investment in our region’s neighborhoods. CBN recognizes that our region is at its best when the public, private, and nonprofit sectors are working together. For that reason, we have:

- Reached out to government officials in local government to build strong relationships as partners in neighborhood development
- Collected member input and done research on potential policy recommendations for each sector
- Presented to the Metropolitan St. Louis Community Reinvestment Act Association
- Reached out to funders to help with data driven decision making

Raising the Community Building Sector’s Profile

One reason CBN members came together was to collectively tell the story of the important work they do building vibrant neighborhoods that create a stronger and more competitive regional economy. Given this priority, the Executive Committee focused on how best CBN can fill that role. Over the past year, CBN has:

- Worked with a consultant to develop communications plan
- Developed and utilized website, facebook, and twitter
- Provided members message training
- Published bi-weekly St. Louis Community Builders Exchange in partnership with Home Repair Network and St. Louis Federal Reserve Office of Community Development
- Appeared on St. Louis on the Air
2011-2012 Timeline

September 29, 2011:
• Founding Network Meeting
• Jobs and community improvement chosen as CBN topic focus

Winter 2011/2012:
• Executive Committee formed
• Organizational Capacity Building Committee formed
• Civic Capacity Building Committee formed
• Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis adopted as official name of the network
• Community Builders Network logo designed and adopted
• CBN website, facebook, and twitter created
• CBN members presented at jobs and community improvement forum
• CBN assessment of issues with local and state government
• CBN Funders Database online
• Community Builders Exchange e-newsletter in circulation

Spring 2012:
• Communications plan completed with messaging
• Media training delivered to Executive Committee and at Network meeting
• Membership criteria, application, pledge, and certification determined
• Resource manual online
• Nonprofits by Zip-code list online for members
• Contract for services list online for members to share good contractors, health insurance providers, payroll companies, phone services, and more
• Members interested in Riverview West Florissant Development’s youth jobs and community improvement program are partnering to expand the program
• CBN organizational assessment completed and used as template for capacity building programming

Summer 2012:
• Three Better Together groups met to encourage information sharing, peer to peer learning, and collaboration
• New CBN website is under construction
• Two year organizational capacity building plan is under development; first installment will focus on financial sustainability
• Research to develop advocacy agenda
• Developed encyclopedia of development tools for housing, infrastructure and economic development
• CBN on St. Louis on the Air
• Presented to Metro St. Louis Community Reinvestment Act Association
CBN Members

Affordable Housing Development Corporation
Beyond Housing
Carondelet Community Betterment Foundation and Housing Corporation
Community Action Agency of St. Louis County
Community Renewal and Development, Inc.
Cornerstone Corporation
DeSales Community Housing Corporation
Emerson Park Development Corporation
Gatekeepers Community Development Corporation of Bethalto and Madison County
Grace Hill Settlement House
Grand Oak Hill Community Corporation
Habitat for Humanity St. Louis
Jubilee Christian Development
Lemay Development Corporation
Lemay Housing Partnership
Lutheran Housing Support
Metro St. Louis Coalition for Inclusion and Equity
North Grand Neighborhood Services
North Newstead Association
Northside Community Housing, Inc.
Old North St. Louis Restoration Group
Park Central Development
Rebuild Foundation St. Louis
Rebuilding Together St. Louis
Riverview West Florissant Development Corporation
Robert Fulton Development, Inc.
Saint Charles County Housing Corporation
Saint Louis Association of Community Organizations
Saint Vincent Greenway, Inc.
Shaw Neighborhood Housing Corporation
Skinker DeBaliviere Community Council
Southwest Garden Neighborhood Association
The ACTS Partnership

For more information on these organizations and the Community Builders Network of Metro St. Louis contact Karl Guenther at guentherk@umsl.edu and visit us online at

www.communitybuildersstl.org