

West Seventh Neighborhood Cultural/Ethnic Diversity Project

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Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)
[Methods](#)
[Results](#)
[Summary of Results](#)
[Recommendations](#)
[Limitations](#)
[Appendix](#)

Introduction

The West 7th neighborhood has always been and is still primarily a white-European blue-collar neighborhood however it has become more culturally and ethnically diverse in recent years. The 1990 census indicated that 12% of the population in West 7th was non-white/non-Caucasian. In response to concerns from many West 7th organizations that they are not meeting the needs of all cultural and ethnic groups in the neighborhood, a research project was conducted to determine how neighborhood organizations can better serve residents from diverse cultural/ethnic backgrounds.

For the first phase of the project, in-person interviews were conducted with leaders from neighborhood organizations regarding issues of cultural/ethnic diversity. During the second phase of the project, interviews were conducted with neighborhood residents of color regarding how they feel about living in the West 7th neighborhood and how well the local organizations are meeting their needs. Residents from African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and Southeast Asian communities were interviewed. The research was conducted by a graduate student from the University of Minnesota with guidance from Jim Smith, the director of the West 7th Community Center, and several other neighborhood leaders. A description of the methods used, a compilation of results of the interviews, a summary of the results, and recommendations on how neighborhood organizations can improve their services are included. Information from this report will be shared with all interested individuals and organizations in the West 7th neighborhood, particularly members of the West 7th Partnership.

Methods

Phase I

Leaders from 11 neighborhood organizations were interviewed in-person. Eight of the leaders were recommended by West 7th Community Center staff, and three additional leaders were recommended by these eight. Each leader was asked six open-ended questions pertaining to cultural/ethnic diversity issues in their organization and in the West 7th neighborhood. Religious leaders were asked one additional question regarding religious diversity. The interview questions are included in the appendix, and a summary of responses is included below. Participation in these interviews was voluntary, and all information is reported anonymously-only the graduate student conducting the research had access to identifying information and it was destroyed after completion of the project.

Phase II

A total of 28 neighborhood residents were interviewed. Participants were identified through several channels: 5 were referred by leaders from phase I; 16 were obtained via a participant list from Project Noel, a neighborhood-wide holiday program; and 7 were

referred by various organizations in the neighborhood. Participants were from various ethnic/cultural groups: 14 were African American, 9 were Hispanic/Latino, and 5 were Asian American. The percentage of participants from each ethnic/cultural group approximately correlates with the ethnic/cultural makeup of the West 7th neighborhood, based on the 1990 census and a recent survey of school students by the Wilder Foundation.

Interviews were conducted in-person whenever possible, however due to scheduling difficulties approximately half of the interviews were conducted over the phone. Participants were asked to respond to a variety of questions regarding how they feel about services in the West 7th neighborhood and about living in the neighborhood. The questions were developed based on input from West 7th Community Center staff and neighborhood leaders in Phase I, and were expanded based on results from the first 5 interviews. A copy of the final interview form is included in the appendix. Most questions were open-ended-response choices included on the form were used for ease in recording only.

Conducting the interview through an interpreter was an option for all non-native English speakers. Eight of the interviews were conducted with an interpreter-5 with a Spanish interpreter and 3 with a Hmong interpreter. Participation in this project was completely voluntary. In most cases names of the participants were known, however names and identifying information are not reported in conjunction with the responses-only the graduate student conducting the research had access to identifying information and it was destroyed after completion of the project.

Results

Phase I: Interviews with Leaders of Neighborhood Organizations

Although the responses to the interview questions varied considerably among the leaders, some common themes did emerge. Among the leaders who have worked in the neighborhood for several years, all agreed that the neighborhood is becoming more culturally and ethnically diverse, however there was some disagreement about which ethnic/cultural populations are increasing. A possible explanation for this disagreement is that many of the organizations serve a particular section of the neighborhood and demographic changes may be different in each section. The groups that were identified by leaders as increasing in population include Hmong, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Native American, Hispanic/Latino and African American.

Barriers to serving diverse populations

All the leaders agreed that there are many barriers to overcome in order to adequately serve culturally/ethnically diverse populations. They all identified language as a barrier for non-native English speakers particularly among the Southeast Asian population. Several leaders added it is also a barrier that most staff members of West 7th

organizations are white when the neighborhood is fairly ethnically/culturally diverse. Many leaders have tried to hire more diverse staff members but have had difficulty finding employees who are bi-/multi-lingual and/or are from diverse cultures. A few leaders mentioned that racism and discrimination toward people of color are barriers to having neighborhood services inclusive of all cultures. A few also commented that although there is racism and discrimination in the neighborhood, actions and words are sometimes interpreted as being racist when they actually are not-such as when a neighbor's complaint about the behavior of a neighbor from a different ethnic/racial group is interpreted as racist when the complaint has nothing to do with race or ethnicity.

Many leaders also identified lack of transportation to programs, appointments and meetings as a major barrier. Bus service is limited and it is difficult for parents with many children to manage them on a bus. Several leaders added that because many of the residents of color are low-income, it can be difficult to involve or engage them in programs that don't specifically focus on meeting primary needs. One leader explained this, "Often these residents do not have the time or resources to focus on anything but basic needs such as earning money and taking care of their children. It is even hard to make an argument to get people involved when their primary needs are not being met." Another leader said, "When living becomes more important than getting an education-wondering where the next meal is coming from and will we be in the same house tomorrow-that is the biggest challenge for us to handle."

Strategies used to overcome barriers

A common strategy used by neighborhood organizations to serve the culturally/ethnically diverse populations is providing programs that are deliberately inclusive of all segments of the population, such as multicultural events and programs that are designed to engage residents from all backgrounds. All of the leaders I interviewed also stressed the importance of the different ethnic groups in the neighborhood learning about each other's history and culture. Many of the organizations are providing some opportunities for learning about the various cultures, however most of the leaders feel that more are certainly needed. The community education program offers history tours that celebrate the rich cultural and history of the neighborhood, and teach participants about the uniqueness and the similarities between immigrant ethnic groups of the past and of today. Several organizations that have primarily white members or clients coordinate programs and activities with organizations that serve a more ethnically diverse population. These collaborations encourage the different ethnic groups to learn about each other, to work together and to socialize together. Many leaders feel that more of these collaborations are needed and would benefit both the neighborhood residents and staff members of neighborhood organizations.

Only a few neighborhood organizations provide transportation to activities, meetings and events, and only a few organizations have staff members who are bilingual in English and either Spanish or the Southeast Asian languages. As stated above, several leaders have attempted to hire more people of color and/or bilingual staff members but have had difficulty recruiting qualified candidates. Some leaders have advertised positions in

ethnic newspapers and at ethnic specific organizations, and have included in the job advertisement phases such as, "Individuals from diverse cultures encouraged to apply." One organization that has been fairly successful in hiring staff from diverse ethnic backgrounds places priority on job applicants who have life experience relevant to the position rather than on specific education or employment qualifications. Another organization had considerable success with hiring a bilingual Southeast Asian person to work with an English-only speaking employee-together they ran programs for the Southeast Asian community and adapted the programs components to meet the needs of that community. All the leaders that have ethnically/culturally diverse staff members feel their organization and the neighborhood greatly benefit from these employees.

All the leaders agreed that it is a good idea to talk to the residents of West 7th from ethnically diverse populations to learn about their needs and opinions, and to insure that the organizations are developing programs that meet these needs. Several leaders feel that it is very important to talk with residents one-on-one to gain trust with the residents before asking for input or asking for attendance at organizational meetings. Several of organizations have residents' council and/or advisory groups to gain input from neighborhood residents for development and improvement of programs. These have been somewhat successful, however several of these groups have had difficulty attracting ethnically diverse residents-explanations given for this include residents lacking time and resources, and having difficulty finding childcare during meeting times. One leader added that residents often have to bring their children to these meetings and it can be difficult to conduct business because childcare is not available at the meetings.

Additional strategies proposed

All leaders had suggestions and recommendations for additional strategies to serve ethnically/culturally diverse populations. One leader suggested that the neighborhood have community outreach workers from the various ethnic communities who would serve all organizations-these outreach workers could recruit and refer residents to the various neighborhood programs. Several leaders suggested that the block clubs be strengthened to provide more neighborhood cohesion and communication. Another leader suggested that more neighborhood leaders could be recruited through existing channels such as the block clubs, the school parent organizations or the churches. Several leaders also suggested encouraging more neighborhood participation by asking residents to do small specific tasks that fit into their schedules-such as asking them to make a few phone calls or providing transportation to an event.

Phase II: Interviews with Neighborhood Residents

Responses from interviews with the 28 neighborhood residents are compiled below. Results are reported based on the total number of respondents for each question (i.e. for ease of comparison, the number of respondents who didn't respond to each question is not reported).

Demographic data

Rental vs. home ownership:

- 86 % rent the house or apartment they live in (24)
- 14 % own their place of residence (4)

Racial/Ethnic/Cultural group:

- 50 % = African American (14)
- 32 % = Hispanic/Latino (9)
- 4 % = Asian American (5)

School information

23 of the 28 families (82%) have school-aged children between ages 5-18. Of the total of 36 children:

- 12 children attend a school **within** the neighborhood
- 24 children attend a school **outside** of the neighborhood

The most frequent reasons for choosing schools **within** the neighborhood are convenient location and other family members attend the school. The most frequent reasons for choosing schools **outside** of neighborhood are the school's good reputation and that the school is a magnet or specialty school.

Satisfaction with schools **within** neighborhood:

- 60 % are very satisfied; 40 % are somewhat satisfied

Satisfaction with schools **outside** of neighborhood:

- 72 % are very satisfied; 22 % are somewhat satisfied; 6% are not very satisfied

Healthcare facilities

- 15 residents use healthcare facilities **within** the neighborhood
- 15 residents use healthcare facilities **outside** the neighborhood

The most frequent reasons for choosing healthcare facilities **within** the neighborhood are convenient location and familiarity with facility. The most frequent reasons for choosing healthcare facilities **outside** the neighborhood are familiarity with facility and family uses that facility.

Satisfaction with healthcare facilities **within** the neighborhood:

- 60 % are very satisfied; 40 % are somewhat satisfied

Satisfaction with healthcare facilities **outside** the neighborhood:

- 75 % are very satisfied; 25 % are somewhat satisfied

Churches/Places of worship

- 16 residents attend a church or other place of worship

Of these:

- 2 attend churches/places of worship **within** neighborhood
- <
- 14 attend churches/places of worship **outside** the neighborhood

The most frequent reasons for choosing churches/places of worship **within** the neighborhood are convenient location and family members attend the church. The reasons for choosing churches/places of worship **outside** the neighborhood include family or friends attend that church, native language is spoken there, and the philosophy/beliefs of church.

Satisfaction with churches/places of worship **within** neighborhood:

- 50 % are very satisfied; 50 % are somewhat satisfied

Satisfaction with churches/places of worship **outside** the neighborhood:

- 86 % are very satisfied; 14 % are somewhat satisfied

Childcare

- 46 % of residents use childcare services

Types of childcare services used include relative's home, neighbor's home, daycare center and home outside the neighborhood.

The most frequent reasons for choosing type of childcare services are convenient location and friends/family as caretakers.

Grocery shopping

Most residents indicated that they shop at 2 different grocery stores. Many residents primarily shop at Rainbow or Cub, and shop at Coopers (Super Value) for convenience items and light shopping.

- Number of residents who shop at each store:

Coopers = 15
Rainbow = 17
Cub = 9

- Reasons for choosing each store:

Coopers - convenient location
Rainbow - good prices and selection
Cub - good prices and selection; convenient location

- Satisfaction with each store:

Coopers = 36 % are very satisfied; 64 % are somewhat satisfied
Rainbow = 73 % are very satisfied; 27% are somewhat satisfied
Cub = 62 % are very satisfied; 38 % are somewhat satisfied

Experiences with neighborhood organizations

Residents were asked if they were aware of and/or had contact with 5 specific neighborhood organizations (all 5 are members of the West 7th Partnership and are interested in how well they are serving residents of diverse backgrounds). If the respondent had contact with the organization, they were also asked if they had positive or negative experiences at that organization.

West 7th Community Center:

- 78 % were familiar with the center, and 90 % of these had contact
- one respondent had a negative experience

Fort Road Federation:

- 32 % were familiar with the Federation, and 33 % of these had contact
- no respondents had a negative experience

Community Education program at Monroe School:

- 25 % were familiar with the program, and 33 % of these had contact
- one respondents had a negative experience

Salvation Army:

- 71 % were familiar with the organization, and 60 % of these had contact
- one respondent had a negative experience

Partners for Violence Prevention:

- 1 respondent was familiar and had contact with the program
- respondent had a positive experience

Comfort/Acceptance level

Residents were asked three different questions pertaining to how accepted and comfortable they feel in the neighborhood.

- How comfortable/welcome do you feel in the neighborhood?

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Not very comfortable	Not at all comfortable
African American	71%	21%	0	7%
Hispanic/Latino	78%	22%	0	0
Asian American	60%	40%	0	0
Total	71%	25%	0	4%

- How accepted are your children by other children in the neighborhood?

	Very accepted	Somewhat accepted	Not very accepted	Not at all accepted
African American	64%	27%	0	9%
Hispanic/Latino	44%	33%	11%	11%
Asian American	50%	50%	0	0
Total	55%	31%	5%	9%

- How accepted is your ethnic/cultural group in the neighborhood?

	Very accepted	Somewhat accepted	Not very accepted	Not at all accepted
African American	71%	14%	14%	0
Hispanic/Latino	12.5%	75%	0	12.5%
Asian American	50%	50%	0	0
Total	42%	47%	5	5

Potential improvements to the neighborhood

Residents were asked whether they would approve or disapprove of several potential improvements to the neighborhood:

<i>Potential improvement</i>	<i>Yes, a good idea</i>	<i>No, not a good idea</i>
Stronger or more block clubs	20	1
Block parties	20	3
Farmers market	23	3
Meeting on ethnic/cultural diversity	19	2
Increasing the # of home owners	15	4
Ethnic specific outreach worker	19	1
Youth recreation center	20	0
New park/playground equipment	17	2
Ethnic specific grocery store	11	10

Residents were also asked if they would like to see any other new organizations, businesses or programs in the neighborhood. The most frequent responses were childcare services and corner store/department store (5 respondents each). Other responses (in order of frequency) included: housing services, job services, language training, and a community meeting place/center.

Neighborhood leadership

Residents were asked four questions regarding neighborhood leadership. The first question asked who the resident would go to if they were having a problem in a neighborhood. 12 of the respondents either didn't understand the question or indicated they "didn't know" who they would go to. Of the 16 respondents who did answer the question, the majority (12) indicated they would first go to the police. Other common responses were "my landlord" and "my neighbor".

The second question asked what makes someone a good neighborhood leader. The most frequent response was "someone who cares about the neighborhood". The second most frequent response was "someone who is responsible". Other common responses were "someone who is fair", "someone who is a good communicator" and "someone who is knowledgeable about the neighborhood".

The third and fourth questions asked if residents if they knew someone who is a good neighborhood leader and what suggestions they had for recruiting neighborhood leaders. A minority (41%) of the residents indicated they knew someone who was a good neighborhood leader, and most residents did not give suggestions on how to train for recruit neighborhood leaders.

Additional information

Residents were asked three questions regarding how well they know people on their block.

- How many people on your block do you know by name?

Average #: 3
Range: 0-20

- How many do you talk to on a weekly basis?

Average #: 2
Range: 0-10

- How many do you consider to be good friends?

Average #: 1
Range: 0-5

Residents were also asked to indicate what is the most important thing needed to make a neighborhood a good neighborhood. The most frequent response was "communication among neighbors". "Looking out for one another" and "having social events" were also common responses. Other responses pertained to having respect for each other, having respect for diversity, safety issues, and having a central meeting place or community

center. When asked if they would like to become more involved in the neighborhood, 58% indicated they would.

Summary of Results

These results indicate both the strengths and weaknesses of West 7th neighborhood organizations in regards to serving ethnically and culturally diverse residents. Many respondents choose services and organizations outside of the neighborhood but those who do choose neighborhood organizations are either somewhat or very satisfied with the services in the neighborhood. For example, the majority of the children in the families surveyed attend schools outside the neighborhood, however most respondents are satisfied with the schools their children attend whether the school is within or outside the neighborhood. Similarly, approximately half of the respondents use healthcare facilities within the neighborhood and all respondents are generally satisfied with their healthcare facility. A majority of the respondents shop primarily at Rainbow and Cub and are very satisfied with these stores, and although most respondents also shop at Cooper's most are only somewhat satisfied with it. Of the residents that attend a church, a significant majority choose to attend a church outside of the neighborhood because family or friends attend the church or because their native language is spoken at the church. Most respondents do not use childcare services other than friends and family and although most are satisfied with their childcare arrangements many respondents indicated a need for more affordable and convenient childcare facilities.

Most respondents are familiar with the West 7th Community Center and the Salvation Army, and 1/4 - 1/3 of respondents are familiar with the Fort Road Federation and the Monroe Community Education Program. Only 3 respondents indicated a negative experience at any of these organizations. The negative experiences at the Community Center and the Community Education program were due to a language barrier, and the negative experience at the Salvation Army was due to lack of follow through with processing of a loan.

Most respondents feel very comfortable in the neighborhood, however the Asian American respondents feel less comfortable than the Hispanic/Latino and African American respondents. The Hispanic/Latino population and the Asian American population indicated less acceptance for their children and for their ethnic/cultural group as compared with the African American population, and the Hispanic/Latino respondents indicated significantly lower acceptance for their ethnic/cultural group. Most respondents are in favor of the proposed improvements to the neighborhood and considerable enthusiasm was indicated for a farmers market, a neighborhood meeting on ethnic/cultural diversity, a neighborhood outreach worker and for a youth recreation center. The Asian American and the Hispanic/Latino respondents are generally in favor of an ethnic specific grocery store for their ethnic community, however the African American respondents indicated they generally did not favor this idea for their ethnic community.

Many of the respondents had difficulty answering questions about neighborhood leadership-many hesitated to answer the questions, had difficulty understanding the questions and/or chose to skip the questions. Of those that did respond, the majority indicated they would go to the police if they had a problem in the neighborhood and a minority of the respondents indicated that they knew someone who is a good neighborhood leader. When asked what is the most important thing in a neighborhood, most respondents indicated that communication between neighbors is most crucial.

Recommendations

Based on the results of both the interviews with the neighborhood leaders and the residents, several improvements for neighborhood organizations are recommended. The most crucial improvements pertain to the barriers in accessing services because of language and low-income status. Residents who speak little or no English have significant problems accessing services in the neighborhood. It is recommended that interpreters be more accessible for all neighborhood programs-although arranging for interpreters can be expensive and complicated, it is an important step to making neighborhood services more accessible (see appendix for local interpretation services). Another feasible solution to the language barrier is neighborhood outreach workers who speak the native languages of the residents. The Learning Readiness program has this type of model and it is quite successful, however a neighborhood-wide outreach worker could serve all neighborhood programs, and the residents interviewed were very supportive of this idea. Similarly, expanding staff members who are bilingual and/or from diverse cultures is also recommended. As mentioned previously this can be difficult, however a potential strategy is to reduce education and work experience requirements and place emphasis on life experience and experience with people of color. Another strategy is to include in the job description "Preference will be given to applicants with knowledge and/or experience with [specific cultural group or groups]."

Residents who have limited incomes often lack the time and resources to access services, particularly because of lack of transportation and affordable childcare. Drop-in childcare services and childcare services during neighborhood meetings and events are especially lacking. The Family and Children's Service in Minneapolis is an organization that can be used as a resource for how to successfully offer childcare at events and meetings-they have childcare available for their events (see appendix). Transportation can be a very complex problem and may be more difficult to solve however it should also be a priority.

Although this research project can be seen as an important step to learning the needs of residents of color, it is recommended that additional efforts be made to involve residents in planning and implementing neighborhood programs. Block clubs are one mechanism to engage residents however most residents interviewed did not have contact with their block clubs. Strengthening the block club program is one option but alternative mechanisms should be considered. Several promising programs are operating in the Twin Cities area. One is the Community Living Rooms developed by Freeport West, Inc. in Minneapolis. The Community Living Room is a gathering of neighborhood residents who

live in close proximity to each other where neighbors come to relax and build relationships with each other. The emphasis of the conversations is on the strengths of the neighborhood, not on the problems. Contact Freeport West for details of this process (see appendix for name and phone number).

Additional strategies recommended based on the interview results include organizing neighborhood ethnic/cultural events that celebrate ethnic holidays and special events, organizing a farmers market, and adding ethnic-specific stores. The Hispanic/Latino and Asian American groups were particularly interested in ethnic-specific grocery stores. As with all these strategies, it is very important to include neighborhood residents in the planning and implementing of the events. Many of the interview participants expressed interest in becoming involved in the neighborhood and agreed to provide their name and phone numbers to neighborhood organizations for future planning efforts (see appendix). These residents can be contacted to provide their input on program decisions and provide assistance in the implementation of future programs and events.

Limitations of Project

The primary limitation of this project is the relatively small number of residents that were interviewed. It is difficult to generalize to the entire neighborhood given that only 28 residents participated in the project. Another limitation is that certain ethnic/cultural groups were not represented or were under-represented-particularly the Native American and Asian American populations. It is recommended that future projects involve more residents from these populations and from all populations of color in the neighborhood. It is also recommended that future input from residents be through more intimate and informal channels if possible-such as through the Community Living Room model. This type of contact and input will likely be more thorough and comprehensive, and can also include developing programs and events that will strengthen the neighborhood.

Appendix

Neighborhood residents willing to become more involved in neighborhood:

*****only available for neighborhood organizations-not included for NPCR report*****

Organization contacts:

Freeport West, (Community Living Rooms), Stephanie Ball, 825-0724

Family and Children's Service (childcare services), Nan Madden, 341-1614

Interpretation services:

Asian translations (offers translation and interpretation for all languages): 721-5878

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