



# NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION SURVEY RESULTS

## Study of Portland Neighborhood Associations

League of Women Voters of Portland Education Fund  
June 2006

The LWV of Portland, as part of its study of Portland neighborhood associations (NA), conducted two surveys of NAs in 2005 and 2006. The results are reported here to be of use to the neighborhood associations which participated in the survey and for other groups examining Portland's NA system. LWV of Portland plans to produce the final document of its study of neighborhood associations in November 2006.

### 2005 NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION OBSERVATIONS

To observe how neighborhood associations are functioning, LWV members attended NA meetings in 2005 to report on attendance, demographics, and whether or not they felt welcome to participate. Thirty neighborhood meetings were observed with results as follows:

*Table 1: Observation of 30 Neighborhood Associations by LWV in Spring, Summer 2005*

<u>Attendance</u>	Average attendance was 19 persons; range 5 to 60 attendees
<u>Atmosphere</u>	27 of 30 observers reported that they felt welcome to participate
<u>Diversity: race</u>	18 attended by only Caucasians; 12 with some minority attendance
<u>Diversity: age</u>	Most had wide range of ages; 6 mostly under 50; 2 mostly 50+
<u>Diversity: gender</u>	20 with balanced gender; 6 with more males; 4 with more females
<u>Diversity: tenancy</u>	14 mostly homeowners; 1 mostly renters; remainder unknown

### NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY: FALL 2005 – SPRING 2006

A second, more extensive survey was conducted in October 2005 – April 2006.

Participation in this survey was voluntary. LWV contacted all 95 Portland NAs inviting participation. Various methods were used: ONI email addresses, DC office assistance, and League volunteers. Thirty-seven of the 95 NAs responded. There is much important work by Portland NAs which is not reported in this survey.

Eight questions were asked, and included inquiries about purposes of NAs, communication practices, budgets, recent issues and projects, work with other organizations, greatest accomplishments, and perceptions of future roles of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) and the district/ coalition offices. It was suggested that the surveyor, in some cases the LWV member and in others the NA president or board member, arrange NA meeting agenda time for the survey, soliciting consensus from all in attendance. Several NAs convened a smaller group of members to answer the survey questions. In some cases the survey was completed by an individual board member or president, or completed individually by several participants and then compiled by the LWV.

In all manners of conducting the survey, responses are subjective. Even in cases where the survey was conducted at a full meeting of the NA, attendees have varying points of view and a consensus voice for NAs may not exist, especially for three of the questions (the purpose of NAs, greatest accomplishments, and perceptions of future roles of ONI and district/coalitions.) In addition, the answers depended on the length and depth of involvement of those responding. For instance, NA members involved for 25 years or for 2 years are likely to answer a question about greatest NA accomplishments differently.

Of the 37 surveys completed, all seven district coalitions are represented as well as one NA unaffiliated with any district. NAs responding varied widely by size of neighborhood as well as size of financial assets and breadth of community involvement. All NAs in the Portland system have a different character and it is difficult to categorize effectively. However the survey

### ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

NA	<u>Neighborhood Association</u> – 95 NAs serve entire city of Portland
DC	<u>District/Coalition Office</u> – 90 Portland NAs are divided into districts. Technical assistance and services are provided at these DC offices, 5 of which are incorporated coalitions of NAs, and 2 of which are city offices
ONI	<u>Office of Neighborhood Involvement</u> – The City Bureau that coordinates services to the NA system

may have sampled NAs that are more active than the average NA and which communicate most proactively since involvement in the League's survey involved another linkage to a community organization and a willingness to communicate. Because of the above and the relatively small number of neighborhood associations to sample, this survey's value is not in its statistical significance. Readers should understand that this discussion is indicative and not scientific.

## Purposes of Neighborhood Associations

*Q1: Based on the work of your NA, what is the purpose of neighborhood associations?*

In describing their purposes, each respondent to the survey uses different words and connotations, but it is clear their purposes are similar. Many or most neighborhoods use words like:

- Prioritize and solve problems, particularly regarding safety, livability, environment, land use and transportation.
- Advise and advocate for changes.
- Participate in and represent the larger community.
- Communicate among neighbors, businesses and governments.
- Educate and inform the community.

A very few respondents use words like: watch dog the community, care for residents, preserve continuity and history.

From this survey it is clear that neighborhood associations share broad categories of purposes, but the purposes depend most on the people involved, the local issues, and situations they deal with.

## Functions of Neighborhood Associations Today vs. 1974

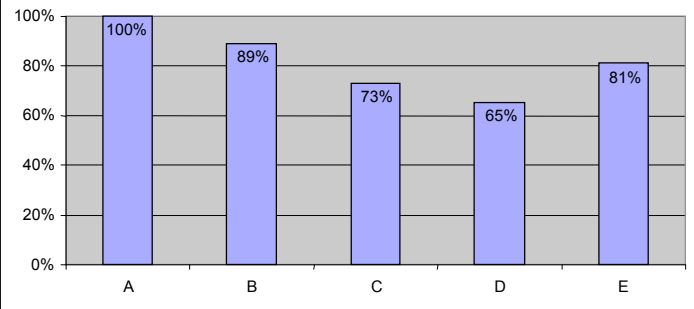
*Q2: Which of the functions below has your NA participated in, in the last year? (These are taken from the 1974 ordinance creating the city's neighborhood system.)*

- A. Recommend an action to the city on any matter of livability:
- B. Assist city agencies in determining priority needs of the neighborhood:
- C. Review and make recommendations on city budget items for neighborhood: improvement:
- D. Undertake/manage projects as agreed upon or contracted with public agencies:

*E. Engage in comprehensive planning on matters affecting the livability of the neighborhood:*

The survey results indicate that NAs today are fulfilling the functions envisioned when the NA program was introduced over 30 years ago. The first three functions involve communication with the city in terms of making recommendations, determining priority needs, and

Chart 1: Percent of NAs performing purposes named in 1974



reviewing budgets. It appears that a large majority of NAs are communicating in these ways with the city on a more or less continuous basis. Regarding items D and E, many NAs noted that their involvement here was through long term projects or plans and these were not projects or plans that had been initiated in the current year.

## Communication Practices

*Q3: How does your NA communicate with residents of the NA and other community members? Printed material mailed by the NA? How often? Mailed by the district/coalition? How often? Hand-delivered? How often? Web/e-mail? How often? Other?*

Neighborhood associations surveyed communicate with their members through newsletters, flyers, news articles, and websites. Thirty three of the 37 NAs (89%) that responded to the survey indicated they communicate in print with their neighbors. Twenty nine of 37 NAs (78%) rely on hand delivery. Twenty three of 37 NAs (62%) use mail. Nineteen of the 37 NAs (51%) use both methods of distribution during the year. It was not clear from the responses if the distribution covered the entire neighborhood, those who regularly participate, or some other partial distribution. Distribution of printed material ranges from monthly to yearly and for 15 NAs (40%) the NA material is supplemented by a newsletter from the district/coalition office. Only two of 37 NAs indicate they provide only the district/coalition newsletter. However, those NAs have an active website.

Websites/emails notices are active for 31 out of 37 responding NAs (84%), and in the works for another three NAs. These sites are updated daily in some instances, and

at least monthly.

Many NAs are creative in finding ways to reach their community through flyers posted in local businesses and schools, and available at other events, articles on topics of common interest in neighborhood newspapers, and A-frame signs announcing the regular meeting. All NAs that participated indicated an active effort within a tight budget to communicate with their members. Six of the 37 NAs sell ads or solicit grants to support the cost of the newsletter. When listing their greatest accomplishments, six of the 37 referred to their newsletter or website.

## Funding and Budgets

*Q4: Budget: Does your NA receive any funding from the city that goes into your NA bank account? Do you fundraise? If so, how? What is the size of your last annual budget?*

Difficulties were encountered in collecting budget information from NAs. The city allocates an average of about \$1000 per NA for communications. The way this money is divided within the coalition and how money is delivered to NAs varies by district/coalition. At Southeast Uplift, East Portland Neighborhood Office, and North Portland Neighborhood Services this funding is held at the district level for use by NAs in their communication activities, but it is not directly allocated to NA bank accounts. Therefore responses to the first part of this question were misleading.

Of the 37 NAs participating in the survey, 28 (76%) conduct fundraising in addition to any city allocation. Of those NAs that do fundraise, most listed more than one fundraising activity. The most common method was neighborhood clean ups (57%); second was donations,

either collected at meetings or from entities in the neighborhood (36%); third was ads in newsletters (21%). Other fundraising efforts mentioned were special events, garage sales, annual parties, grants, selling various items, tree committee project, brick sales, and historic home tour.

Regarding the size of NA yearly budgets, most NAs do not formally adopt an annual budget. Instead, if they have funding, they allocate it to projects and fundraise as planned or when needed. Of the 37 NAs surveyed, 9 reported zero funding or no budget. The amount of finances reported by the 37 NAs participating in the survey could be assets, expenditures, or budgets and is shown in Chart 2 at left below.

This bar chart shows the wide range of finances of NAs. Of the 37 NAs surveyed, 29, or 78% reported finances of \$4000 or below. The small size of most neighborhood association budgets shows that volunteers are engaging in much activity with very little funding. A smaller number of NAs, 8 in this sample, have finances over \$4000. This shows that NAs have varying abilities to raise funding, resulting in an inequality in the types of projects that can be carried out, and the degree to which NAs are dependent on the district/coalitions for support.

## The Work of Neighborhood Associations

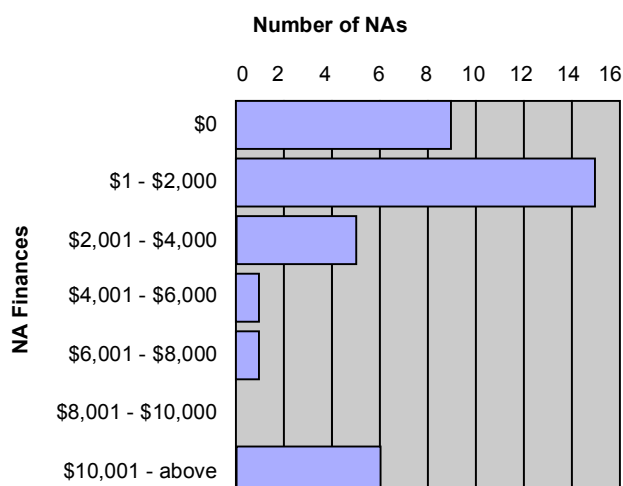
*Q5: What issues/projects have you worked on in the last two years? For each item, did ONI assist? Did your district/coalition assist?*

*Q6: What other organizations have you worked with in the last 2 years? Did you work with other NAs? If you worked with other NAs, were they in your district? Other areas of the city?*

Out of the 37 neighborhoods responding to the survey 172 significant projects were identified, an average of 4.6 projects per NA. Of these projects 36 (21%) involved land use and development, 29 (17%) parks, 29 (17%) transportation, 28 (16%) crime prevention, 15 (9%) fund raising, 13 (8%) were neighborhood clean-ups, 8 (5%) were social events, and 8 (5%) involved communications.

Of the 36 NAs surveyed that belong to district/coalitions, all indicated that they worked with other neighborhoods in their district/coalition. (Southwest Hills Residential League, although not part of a coalition, worked with other neighborhoods too). When expanded to involvement with neighborhoods city-wide only about half responded affirmatively. In response to our question about district/coalition or ONI assistance on projects, of all projects listed, 53% were supported by district/coalitions and 23% involved assistance by ONI. There were 67 projects (39%) that neighborhood associations accomplished without the help of either the district

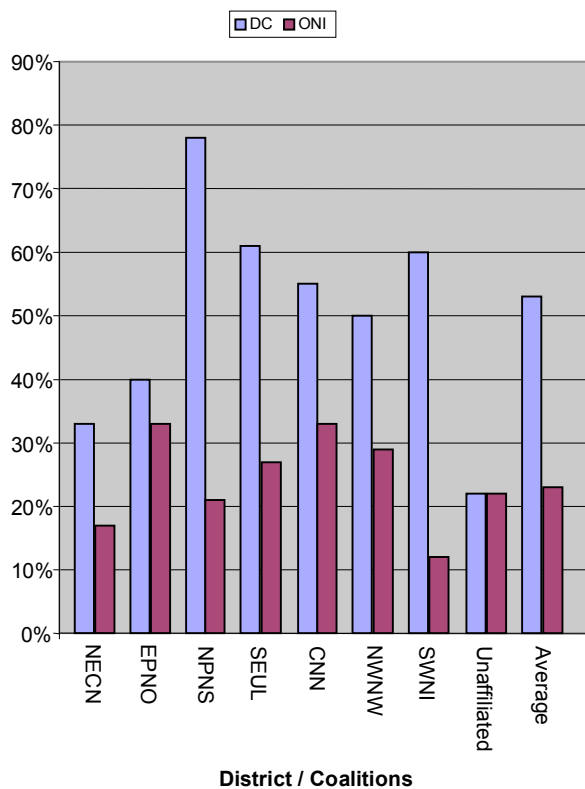
**Chart 2: NA Annual Finances**



coalition or ONI. When asked about the other organizations they worked with almost all worked with various city bureaus. Among the other groups mentioned were non-profits (28), schools (20), businesses (14), churches (9), state offices (8), social services (8), Metro (4), health care organizations, (4), and the arts (3).

Chart 3 looks at the total projects reported by surveyed NAs, divides them into districts, and shows the extent to which assistance was received by district / coalitions or ONI. The chart demonstrates (with an admittedly small sample) that while NAs rely more on district than ONI support, NAs in some districts rely more on the district/coalition than the average rate and less on ONI. Also, there is variance by district in the extent to which NAs rely on their DC office. This shows the variety in patterns of partnership, support, and independence within the neighborhood system.

**Chart 3: Percent of NA Projects Assisted by District / Coalition, ONI**



NECN Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods  
 EPNO East Portland Neighborhood Office  
 NPNS North Portland Neighborhood Services  
 SEUL Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program  
 CNN Central Northeast Neighbors  
 NWNW Neighbors West / Northwest  
 SWNI Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc.

## Future of Program: Purpose of ONI and District / Coalitions

*Q8: Regarding the future of the city's neighborhood association system: What should be the purpose of ONI? What should be the purpose of the district/coalitions?*

What should be the purpose of ONI?

Slightly over half of the NAs surveyed put forth one or more of these three categories of purposes:

- Support NAs and district/coalitions with technical assistance, training, advice, logistical support, legal advice.
- Provide timely information between government offices and NAs including communication between NAs. (Channel information into the community, be a source of citywide communications, be an information clearinghouse.)
- Ensure a neighborhood association voice in city government and be an advocate with city for NA system. (Be a strong conduit between NAs and city government, get city to support NA system, take input on budget priorities and help get NA priorities implemented, help with city political and bureau interface, provide liaison services, be a catalyst for interactions between NAs and city government.)

To summarize, NAs would like to see ONI provide *technical assistance, information and communication services*, and *advocacy with the city* to strengthen the NA system.

What should be the purpose of district/coalitions?

The purposes that NAs mentioned most frequently for district/coalitions were as follows:

- 75%: technical assistance and support which develops the capacity of the NA.** Examples are strategy advice, help identifying resources, information, training, leadership development, awareness of city policies, processes and politics.
- 50%: building bridges between NAs** so that a regional or multi-neighborhood issue can be addressed more effectively.
- 30%: providing services**, including crime prevention, graffiti removal, neighbor to neighbor conflict resolution, newsletters, and administrative tasks such as mailings, keeping records and research.

## Greatest Accomplishments of Neighborhood Associations

*Q7: What are your five greatest accomplishments over the history of your NA?*

Neighborhood Associations were asked to list their five greatest accomplishments. This question is subjective and the responses depend on the priorities of those responding as well as their knowledge of past NA activities and their own tenure. However, the list below gives a sense of the work of NAs over time, both in the tremendous amount of volunteer generated effort, and the breadth of the types of work of NAs.

### CENTRAL NORTHEAST NEIGHBORS

#### Cully Association of Neighbors

- Creation of Cully Neighborhood Plan
- Closing the Columbia Blvd. composting plant
- Spirit of Portland Award Winner
- Successfully lobbying to build Hush House
- Neighborhood cleanup with 55 tons collected

#### Rose City Park NA

- Excellent participation at meetings and events
- Land use group working with local businesses
- Relationships with the Rose City Park School
- Annual fall picnic with 1000 people attending

#### Roseway NA

- Vision plan
- Skinny Lot Battle
- Soccer Field at Wellington Park
- Decreasing adult businesses
- Safeway site
- No cell tower battle
- Oral History Project
- Oregon Symphony in the Park

#### Sumner Assoc. of Neighbors

- Benefit for the military - "Heart of Elvis" show
- Toy drive and food drive
- Kid Safe Halloween Party
- Fire station grand opening
- Neighborhood clean up

### EAST PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD OFFICE

#### Hazelwood

- Drive through at the Post Office
- Gateway Urban Renewal committee
- Design of Midland Library
- Establishment of Jane's Park, skate park

#### Hazelwood (con't)

- Off-leash area at Holladay Park
- Gateway parking garage and Oregon Clinic

#### Russell NA

- Creating a good plan with W. Chiropractic
- Protection of the Glendoveer
- Planning District
- Development of park with Russell School
- Relationship w / Russell Academy & Shepherd's Deer

#### Wilkes NA

- Wilkes Park
- Wilkes Creek Restoration
- Tree planting
- Land preservation
- Air traffic noise

#### Woodland Park

- Gateway Urban Renewal process
- Revising layout of 911 system
- Surviving as smallest neighborhood
- Elimination of methadone house
- Reconnecting with other NAs

### NEIGHBORS WEST / NORTHWEST

#### Arlington Heights NA

- Establishment of Fire Station 16
- Washington Park improvement configurations
- Decision declaring zoo parking as open space
- Preservation of open reservoirs
- Resolution of Holocaust Memorial controversy

#### Hillside NA

- Buying old Catlin School for community center
- Work with city to rebuild after a 2003 fire

#### Northwest District Association

- 1969 effort to stop the 405 freeway
- Integration/ neighborhood character/ housing
- Neighborhood plan
- Crime prevention & public safety awareness
- Active management of alcohol licenses
- Environmental Quality monitoring – air
- PGE Park
- Couch Park Master Plan

#### Pearl District

- River District Design Standards
- Pearl District Vision Plan
- Having our development ideas taken seriously
- Implementation of good neighbor agreements
- "Polish the Pearl" neighborhood clean-up
- Fostering a sense of a cohesive neighborhood



## **NORTHEAST COALITION OF NEIGHBORHOODS**

### Alameda NA

- Our community newsletter
- Tree planting
- New Alameda school playground
- Forums on community issues

### Boise NA

- Creation of Unthank Park
- Revitalization of Mississippi St.
- National Night Out -12 yrs
- Home ownership programs
- Awareness of gentrification
- Home improvement in target area

### Concordia NA

- Kennedy School development
- Sewer System Replacement
- Longest running community newspaper
- 33rd & Killingsworth development
- Skinny house zoning standards

### Irvington Community Association

- Historic Home Tour
- Irving Park water feature
- Being a respected entity - not becoming NIMBY oriented
- Successes in the Model Cities Program
- Charitable Giving
- Newsletter

### Woodlawn NA

- Helped police to drive out gangs from park
- Woodlawn Plan
- Developed Woodlawn Park with city
- 30+ years of NA existence
- Symphony in Park summer 2005

## **NORTH PORTLAND NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES**

### Arbor Lodge NA

- Neighborhood Community Fair
- Survival, through organizational changes
- Bylaws revamped
- Blocked condemnation in urban renewal
- Impacted MAX construction

### Overlook NA

- Operation of Overlook House
- Farmers' Markets in cooperation with Kaiser
- Worked with Adidas
- Impacted MAX service to area
- Reopening of I-5 pedestrian bridge

### Overlook NA (con't)

- Well attended meetings
- Overlook Views newsletter

### Piedmont NA

- Rosemont Building on Dekum
- Reduction of crime in our park
- Creation of OLCC impact zones
- Good neighbor agreements

## **SOUTHEAST UPLIFT NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM**

### Brentwood Darlington NA

- Development of our community center
- Helping to save the Green Thumb site
- Saving the Newhalem Park site
- Many years of spring clean-ups
- Enhancing neighborhood
- Involving and representing our neighborhood

### Buckman NA

- John Perry Community Plan
- Buckman neighborhood rezoning
- Oak Street row houses
- Saving Buckman School from closure
- Founding of Reach CDC
- Buckman Neighborhood Plan
- Eastside Esplanade
- Burnside Couch couplet
- Lone Fir Cemetery land transfer to Metro

### Eastmoreland NA

- Replanting 400 street trees
- Inoculation of elm trees
- Development of Eastmoreland Garden
- Fourth of July parade
- Neighborhood garage sale
- Union Pacific agreement to minimize noise

### Foster Powell NA

- Foster Target Area Project Grant
- Community Connector Program
- Increasing involvement & board membership
- Web-site
- Greater involvement in land use

### Hosford Abernethy Neigh. Dev.

- Stopping the Mt. Hood Freeway
- Stopping the Fred Meyer store at Powell Park
- MLK Viaduct
- Tomato Fest with heritage & history activities
- Washington H.S. community center and pool
- Burnside Bridgehead project

#### Kerns NA

- Annual Clean Ups
- Annual picnics
- Burnside Bridgehead project opposition
- Traffic calming
- Developing a sense of place with events
- Neighborhood communication
- Dispute resolved & good neighbor agreements
- Burnside/Couch Couplet
- Crime reductions

#### Laurelhurst NA

- Newsletter - editing, publishing, distribution
- Coe Circle/Joan of Arc
- Garage sale
- Maintain quality park
- Hassalo and 33rd traffic calming
- Maintain neighborhood livability
- Save Mt. Tabor reservoirs

#### South Tabor NA

- Outer SE Community Plan
- South Tabor Neighborhood Plan
- 57th and Division Property Development
- Speed Bumps
- A continuous board since 1988

#### Mount Tabor NA

- Neighborhood Traffic Plan
- Funding of children's play equipment
- Mobilization of 100's of neighbors for issues
- Reservoir cover issue
- Development of Mt. Tabor Community Center
- Mt. Tabor gateway monument

#### **SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOODS INC.**

#### Arnold Creek NA

- SW Community Plan
- Jackson crosswalks
- Arnold Street speed limit
- NET team developed
- Neighbors Night Out picnics

#### Ashcreek NA

- SW Community Plan
- Capitol Hwy and Taylors Ferry Plan
- Stopping the siting of water storage unit

#### Bridlemile NA

- 2.5 acre mini park
- Stream and watershed awareness
- Historical notations
- Transportation awareness/safety improvements

#### Bridlemile NA (con't)

- Setting neighborhood boundaries
- Tree preservation awareness

#### Hayhurst NA

- SW Community Plan
- National Night Out parties

#### Markham NA

- SW Community Plan
- Joint project with BES for a stormwater facility
- Maintaining focus on traffic problems
- Involvement in watershed restoration event
- Providing potlucks to bring neighbors together

#### Multnomah NA

- SW Community Plan
- Metro Money \$500,000
- Resolution of Headwaters Project

#### South Burlingame

- Getting more people involved
- Shifting to community building
- Extending Tri-Met bus to 39th and Hillsdale
- Ivy pulling
- Being on the radar screen
- Fulton Park improvements

#### **NON-AFFILIATED**

#### Southwest Hills Residential League

- Preserve open space and character
- Marquam nature park
- Walking trail network
- Traffic calming
- Pedestrian improvements

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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