



Update

The newsletter of the
NU Directions
Campus-Community
Coalition

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NU Directions
Student Involvement
200 Nebraska Union
Lincoln, NE 68588-0453
402-472-2454

www.nudirections.org

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UNIVERSITY OF
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Community Environment

Resident Roundtables Address Neighborhood Issues



Remnants of a student party in the North Bottoms neighborhood. Photo by Ed Caudill.

SPECIAL ISSUE:

This issue of *Update* features the Executive Summary of the Resident Roundtable Project, where special discussions were held in five neighborhoods known to UNL police as having multiple calls for service to address "wild parties." The Summary is reprinted in its entirety. Supporting materials, including the minutes taken from each of the roundtables, are also available through the NU Directions office.

BACKGROUND

NU Directions is a project dedicated to reducing high-risk drinking among college students at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). The project is one of ten campus-community coalitions funded at universities nationwide by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The American Medical Association monitors the program on behalf of the RWJF. Early in the grant the NU Directions Campus-Community Coalition discovered that as enforcement of alcohol policies on campus increased it displaced the problem to an even greater extent in

the surrounding residential areas. The Coalition began to address alcohol related problems in neighborhoods through a number of strategies:

- The Lincoln Police Department formed the Party Patrol, a special detail designed to respond to resident complaints of drinking parties in area neighborhoods.
- Door Hangers were distributed in neighborhoods known to house student residents. One side informed students of the enforcement effort, the consequences for maintaining a disorderly house and encouraged students to communicate with their neighbors.

(continued on Pages 2 through 5)



Background (Cont. from page 1)

The opposite side informed residents about the patrol project, instructed them to contact LPD if problems arise, and encouraged neighbors to communicate with students.

- News stories about the patrol project and its results appeared in both print and broadcast media letting both students and residents know that the effort was yielding results.
- UNL'S Community Challenge program organized students for a series of street clean-ups in the North Bottoms following home football games.
- NU Directions collaborated with Neighborhoods Working Together, a coalition of neighborhood associations and other partners that shared the same objectives, to open dialogue between students and area residents.

Though these efforts yielded improvement in the quality of life for local long-term residents, they were insufficient in thoroughly eliminating problems caused by student gatherings. In an effort to continue identifying strategies to improve the quality of life for neighborhoods surrounding the campus, the Resident Roundtable project was initiated.

PROCESS

The Resident Roundtable project was modeled after the “study circle” process, an organized set of meetings designed to yield insight across perspectives on a single issue. Each meeting had 5-10 participants and was led by an impartial facilitator. A list of critical questions was developed to guide the discussion, which moves from personal experience of the issue, to considering multiple viewpoints, to strategies for action. Minutes of each Roundtable discussion were kept by staff

and distributed to participants for verification and approval.

The preparation for the Resident Roundtables began with the formation of the Planning Committee. Members of the committee included:

- Ken Svoboda, Lincoln City Council & Internal Liquor Committee
- Patte Newman, Lincoln City Council & Internal Liquor Committee
- Ed Caudill, North Bottoms Neighborhood Association
- David Anderson, Real Estate Owners and Mangers Association (REOMA)
- Tom Casady, Chief of Lincoln Police Department
- Doug Franz, UNL student
- Dr. Dan Wheeler, UNL Faculty, & Neighborhoods Working Together
- Deane Finnegan, Executive Director, Leadership Lincoln
- Michelle Waite, Assistant to Chancellor of Community Relations, UNL

The Planning Committee’s role and responsibility was to meet and frame the issue, select participating neighborhoods, identify roundtable participants and formulate critical questions to guide the roundtable discussion.

Deane Finnegan recommended that members of Leadership Lincoln facilitate the Roundtable discussions. Neighborhoods were selected to participate in the Roundtable project based on both scientific and anecdotal evidence. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) maps developed by Lincoln Police Department were utilized to determine neighborhoods with the largest number of calls for service related to party complaints. Facilitators were identified and trained in the study circle model.

Neighborhoods	Facilitators
Clinton	Victoria Kovar
North Bottoms	Dara Troutman
14 th & Indigo	Georgia Glass
Hartley	Tami Burns
Everett/Near South	Victoria Kovar



Roundtable participants were selected based on their open mindedness and ability to represent the “typical” resident, including individuals who have or have not filed complaints. The committee urged that students, law enforcement, landlords, and property managers all be represented at each Roundtable if possible.

Participants were contacted and information regarding the project was distributed. Roundtable meetings were scheduled and held in the five neighborhoods. Each participant received the following five questions prior to the meeting:

1. Describe your ideal neighborhood. What does it look like during the day and at night? What does it look like during the week and on the weekend? What does it sound like?
2. What is keeping us from having our ideal neighborhood?
3. What is moving us closer to the ideal neighborhood?
4. Looking back at question #2. What might we do to help impact this list, so that we can create our ideal neighborhood?
5. How can we enhance what is already working for us in our neighborhood?

The facilitators used these questions as a guide to lead the discussion. In many cases the participants were familiar with one another and anxious to begin the discussion. Minutes of each meeting were taken by NU Directions staff and distributed to participants.

EMERGING THEMES

Several themes emerged commonly across neighborhoods and were expressed by a variety of participants. Themes emerging across neighborhoods were problems related to the physical environment, safety, and stakeholders’ attitudes and perceptions.

Physical Environment

Participants expressed concerns about the physical environment of neighborhoods. These concerns included:

- Too many cars parked on both sides of streets in neighborhoods.

- The litter from parties and inadequate trash service to rental property leaves neighborhoods unsightly.
- The noise from people yelling, cars with loud music and the commotion of people all night, wake up residents.
- Poorly maintained rental properties lower the value of the neighborhood.
- Couches on porches ruin the neighborhood aesthetics.
- A disproportionate number of rental properties overwhelm the balance between residents and tenants.
- Public intoxication, vomiting and urinating in public destroy the quality of the neighborhood.

Public Safety

Participants expressed concerns about safety for themselves and their property. They also discussed problems with the enforcement of current laws and lease policies.

- Landlords are unaware of problems at their property.
- Neighborhoods are poorly lit.
- Vandalism has been reported in neighborhoods.
- Retaliation has occurred in the form of vandalism.
- Residents won’t go outside at night because they are afraid of large groups of strangers that are drinking and being loud.
- Drivers in the neighborhoods are impaired.
- Streets have become completely blocked when cars are parked on both sides of the street and the traffic is heavy, making access for emergency vehicles impossible.

Stakeholders Attitudes and Perceptions

The comments made by participants in the Resident Roundtables revealed a set of attitudes and perceptions. Some of these perceptions were based on actual experiences and some were misperceptions. Many misperceptions were clarified during the Resident Roundtable process, however, misperceptions may still remain among the residents in the neighborhoods.



- The perception of residents that all disruptive parties in the neighborhood are hosted and attended by UNL students.
- The perception of residents that the vandalism that occurs is in retaliation for calling law enforcement.
- The residents' complaints are not validated by other members of the city because of their perception that college is the time to party and the party will be in the neighborhoods.
- The perception of residents that police are not doing their jobs and enforcing the law.
- The perception of residents that landlords will rent to anyone, never screen their tenants and do not enforce lease policies.
- The perception of residents that UNL does not care what students do in the neighborhoods.
- The perception of landlords that they are expected to parent or police their tenants.
- The perception of students that they are being harassed by neighbors and police.
- The perception of law enforcement that vandalism is not retaliation.
- The perception of residents and students that an invisible barrier between residents and tenants causes a lack of communication.

SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Participants of the Resident Roundtables discussed potential solutions including current activities and enforceable laws that should be implemented and/or maintained. The suggested solutions were divided into three areas and each solution was assigned to a stakeholder. These stakeholders are identified in italics behind the suggested solutions.

Physical Environment Improvements

- Provide adequate trash service for rental property (*Landlord*).
- Engage university and volunteer services in clean up projects in the

neighborhood (*UNL & Neighborhood Association*).

- Develop lease policies that clearly define responsibilities as they relate to the general appearance of the property. (*Landlord*).
- Communicate expectations about the physical environment to both permanent and temporary residents (*Neighborhood Association*).
- Ban parking on one side of the street (*City Departments**).
- Increase surface parking in neighborhoods (*City Departments*).
- Increase street lighting (*City Departments*).

Ensuring Resident and Tenant Safety

- Enforce parking and noise ordinances (*Law Enforcement*).
- Insure complainant anonymity (*Law Enforcement & Neighbors*).
- Increase lighting on streets and in parking lots (*City and University*).
- Retaliation should be considered when investigating reports of vandalism (*Law Enforcement*).
- Residents should be encouraged to document and report vandalism especially if they believe retaliation is the cause (*Permanent Residents*).
- Share police reports with landlords (*Law Enforcement & Landlords*).
- Enforce lease policies (*Landlords*).
- Issue citations for disorderly house to uncooperative landlords (*Law Enforcement*).
- DUI enforcement with sobriety check points (*Law Enforcement*).
- Enforce UNL code of conduct for off campus behavior of students (*University*).

* City Departments refer to the appropriate department within the city for the task at hand, including (but not limited to): Police, Health, and Building & Safety. At times, the specific city department is identified.



Communication/Relationship Building and Involvement of Stakeholders

To address both accurate and inaccurate perceptions, stakeholder participants of the Resident Roundtable identified a variety of solutions under the general theme of improved communication. These recommendations included:

Building relationships and communication in the following groups:

- Neighborhood association and city departments
- Neighbor and landlord
- Neighbor to neighbor
- Landlord and law enforcement
- Law enforcement and resident
- University and neighborhood association

Strategies to change attitudes and perceptions among stakeholders:

- Educate students on how to be a good neighbor (*University*).
- Encourage communication between neighbors (*Permanents Residents & Tenants*).
- Create opportunities for celebration and social interaction with neighbors and students (*University & Neighborhood Association*).
- Bring neighbors, students, landlords and law enforcement together at neighborhood association meetings to exchange information (*Neighborhood Association*).
- Encourage interaction between permanent residents and landlords. (*Neighborhood Association & Landlords*).
- Initiate programs that enable mediation between residents and tenants (*University*).

NEXT STEPS

The next step will be to present a set of suggested strategies created and approved by the planning committee, to Mayor Seng, Chancellor Perlman and the NU Directions Coalition at a

breakfast meeting scheduled for September 21, 2004. Following that meeting, NU Directions staff will facilitate the implementation of the priority strategies determined to reduce the problems identified through the Resident Roundtable process.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE IN SOLVING PROBLEMS

What Neighborhood Associations Can Do

- Communicate community standards and expectations to residents and tenants
- Create opportunities for social interaction between residents and tenants
- Continue open dialogue with students, landlords and law enforcement at association meetings
- Engage UNL service-learning projects that involve students in neighborhood improvements

What Landlords Can Do

- Provide adequate trash collection services for rental properties
- Develop and enforce lease policies that include property maintenance and restrict wild party use
- Communicate with residents near rental properties
- Participate in Neighborhood Associations
- Provide adequate parking for tenants

What Law Enforcement Can Do

- Enforce parking and noise ordinances
- Investigate retaliation incidents
- Share reports with landlords
- Conduct concentrated DUI enforcement and sobriety checks in identified neighborhoods during key hours

What the City Departments Can Do

- Increase surface parking in neighborhoods
- Increase street lighting in neighborhoods
- Support increased enforcement efforts
- Attention to health and sanitation complaints

What UNL Can Do

- Increase student service-learning projects in area neighborhoods
- Increase lighting in parking lots adjacent to neighborhoods
- Enforce UNL Code of Conduct violations occurring in off-campus neighborhoods
- Educate students on being good neighbors
- Create opportunities for social interaction between students and neighborhood residents
- Initiate programs that enable mediation between residents and tenants



Coalition Member Activities

NU Directions staff have been busy throughout the summer serving as consultants to other coalitions and prevention efforts and giving presentations across the country about the work in Lincoln.

Linda Major served as a speaker and consultant to other campus groups at the Region V Partners in Prevention Conference in Kansas City as well as at the Statewide Initiatives Leadership Institute in Pittsburgh, and recently reviewed grant applications for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. This fall, Linda will be mentoring several institutions in Massachusetts through a program at Boston University. **Tom Workman** assisted the coalition at Florida State University in creating a communications plan, and gave presentations to the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists in Boise, the Statewide Initiatives Leadership Institute in Pittsburgh, and the National Leadership Conference of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in San Diego.

UNL's Alcohol and Drug Program Coordinator **Bob Schroeder** and Assistant **Kirsten Licht** became trainers for facilitators of BASICS, a motivational feedback alcohol education program used at the University and recommended by the NIAAA Task Force on College Drinking. Bob and Kirsten have also been busy preparing new versions of Check-Up to Go to meet the needs of special populations on campus.

Congratulations to . . .

Owen Yardley, Fred Gardy and the University of Nebraska Police Department, who received a grant from the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety to enforce DUI laws on campus as part of the "You Drink, You Drive, You Lose" program. Last spring, UNLPD was given a special award from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) for their efforts at reducing drunk driving on and around the UNL campus.

Tom Workman, who has chapters published in two new books: "Drinking Stories as Learning Tools: Socially Situated Experiential Learning and Popular Culture" in *Changing the Culture of College Drinking: A Socially Situated Health Communication Campaign* edited by Linda Lederman and Leah Stewart, and "Death as Representative Anecdote in the Construction of the Collegiate Binge Drinking Problem" in *Constructing our Health: The Implications of Narrative for Enacting Illness and Wellness*, edited by Lynn Harter, Phyllis Japp, and Christina Beck.

Linda Major, who successfully completed her Master of Arts in Management from Doane College in May. Her thesis research looked at web-based server training for the hospitality industry, and her findings will be helpful as the coalition continues to work with web-based hospitality training in Nebraska.

A look at 2004-2005

New and returning workgroups of the NU Directions coalition continue to work toward the seven identified goals of the grant renewal. Here's a quick list of some of the activities already scheduled:

- Exploring an alcohol sponsorship policy at UNL
- On-line server training discussions
- Beginning a statewide initiative in Nebraska
- Year Two of Greek Re-Evolution
- FACE video on NU Directions

On Campus

Husker Choices Expands Drunk Driving Campaign



UNL's peer education group Husker Choices has added billboards near key entrances of the campus to its annual norms campaign. The advertisements have a different message than the popular button and prize patrol campaign that help UNL students learn the norm on drinking and driving; these billboards warn drivers entering campus of increased DUI enforcement. Husker Choices has taken on the coalition's third goal along with the UNLPD, resulting in positive feedback from many community partners. Coordinators Bob Schroeder and Kirsten Licht have also created a "safe party" campaign in collaboration with ASUN and the Athletic Department for use across campus. Recently,

Husker Choices and NU Directions distributed "Bulletin Boards to Go" to Resident Advisors and Greek leaders. The packet includes a variety of easy-to-read posters on key alcohol facts and harm reduction strategies.