

## SOUTHEAST UPLIFT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW 2006-2007

### **Southeast Uplift Mission:**

*To assist the citizens and neighborhood associations of Southeast Portland to create communities which are livable, socially diverse, safe and vital. Southeast Uplift provides an organizational structure and forum to empower citizens to effectively resolve issues of livability and community development.*

Southeast Uplift was founded in 1968 to halt construction of a freeway that would have divided southeast Portland, displaced homes and led to further socioeconomic deterioration. Volunteers who represent neighborhood and business associations, as well as community-based organizations govern our Board of Directors. Funding for our operations comes primarily from contracts with ONI to provide direct services, training, capacity building, communications and other support to neighborhood associations and individual donations.

### **Staff:**

Cece Hughley Noel, Executive Director

Joyce Walls, Fiscal & Operations Manager

Afifa Ahmed-Shafi, Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator

Gary Berger, Neighborhood Planner .5 FTE

Bojana Dedijer Skarich, Neighborhood Services Coordinator (AmeriCorps Member)

Beginning this fiscal year, Southeast Uplift ended two significant contracts with the Bureau of Housing and Community Development to provide leadership development, training and other support to low-income, renters and other traditionally under-represented community members in our coalition area. With this reduction in contract funds, we eliminated 3.5 FTE this year - two Community Organizer positions, two part-time Administrative staff. Our Neighborhood Planner position has been reduced to half time. Just recently, our Policy and Strategy Coordinator resigned to work for the City of Portland, Office of Transportation.

### **Major Areas of Focus/Work**

Last year, Southeast Uplift completed a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the organization for the next three years. This year, we're continuing to expand upon our relationships and **key partnerships** with other community based organizations, Reed College, the Somali Women's Association, Native American Youth Association, Portland State University, Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc., Central Northeast Neighbors and Portland Community Media.

Our **Strategic Directions** provides guidance to staff to implement the priorities of the neighborhood, business and community leadership in our coalition area in the following key areas:

- **Strengthening and Bridging Neighborhood Associations** includes providing enhanced support to individual neighborhood associations and business associations encouraging interaction across neighborhoods.

- **Convening and Engaging the Full Diversity of Our Community** includes creating education and civic involvement opportunities with a variety of approaches and tools.
- **Promoting SEUL's Identity: Broadening Awareness and Support** includes telling SEUL's story in a variety of ways, celebrating meaningful successes, expanding public awareness, and broadening financial support.
- **Energizing and Focusing the Core** means identifying and focusing on top priorities. It includes building a strong leadership team through ongoing board and staff development efforts.

Our program areas and work plan is re-organized this fiscal year to reflect the strategic direction priorities to achieve program goals as described below.

**1. Outreach/Capacity Building/Leadership Development:**

**Goal:** Provide a foundational program of support to all twenty neighborhood associations within our coalition area, focusing on outreach to traditionally underrepresented populations.

- ❑ **Capacity Building Networking Forums**
- ❑ **Leadership Training**
- ❑ **Toolkits and Resources for NA's**
- ❑ **Volunteer Recruitment and Retention support to NA's**
- ❑ **Organizational development support for NA's**
- ❑ **Support for Neighborhood Clean-ups & Events**

**2. Communications and Community Engagement:**

**Goal:** Further develop the communication strategies identified through SEUL's Strategic Planning process by providing strategic support to the neighborhood associations to produce newsletters, web sites and other methods.

- ❑ **Website development** – resources for neighborhoods hosted on our site; re-design of the SEUL website
- ❑ **Electronic Newsletters**, – calls to action, neighborhood news, weekly updates, support to NA's in developing e-newsletters
- ❑ **Cultural Competency** – training for NA's; support for CBO's
- ❑ **Community Asset Mapping** – partnering with PSU to identify CBO's in NA's; establishing connections with NA's and other groups
- ❑ **Community Partnerships** – further development of support and joint projects to increase capacity and implement joint values and priorities with CBO's and other cultural groups in our coalition area.
- ❑ **Message development** – developing our NA's success stories, utilizing popular education methods; marketing the value of grassroots democracy to build capacity, increase participation and receive support and resources

Our other major program areas include:

**Land Use and Transportation**

Southeast Uplift continues to provide support on an on-going basis to neighbors on land use and transportation issues, assisting residents in developing proactive responses to proposed development and land uses, traffic and transportation issues.

- Provide information and referral to residents related to land use, transportation and other policy issues.
- Provide and support a forum for policy and decision-making through the Board's Land Use and Transportation Committee (LUTC.)

### **Administrative Support**

- **Fiscal Sponsorships** - SEUL fosters community building by providing fiscal sponsorships and insurance for neighborhood events and block parties and to emerging community organizations that do not have 501(c)(3) federal tax status. Currently, SEUL stewards over 40 community groups through fiscal sponsorships that supports such efforts as residential speed bump purchase projects to the redevelopment of a former drug property into a community center.
- **Information and Referral**- Southeast Uplift acts as a clearinghouse for information about City, County and other local programs.

### **Neighborhood Grants Program**

Beginning this fiscal year, SEUL will administer the Office of Neighborhood Involvement's small grant program to provide support for outreach to under-represented populations, capacity building and community partnerships through projects in the coalition area that support neighborhood associations.

### **Funding Shortfalls/ Challenges**

Southeast Uplift recently completed a fundraising plan and a strategic plan that focuses on strengthening the core of the organization to be able to increase and diversify our funding, to re-instate program levels in the next FY – expanding our capacity in the next three years.

Our major challenge has been having **funds to increase salaries and retain enough professional staff to support our mission**. Unless **salary equity with city wages** is met, coalition staff turn over will remain a problem for SEUL and the neighborhood system it supports. In the past two years, SEUL has lost four highly skilled professionals to city jobs, primarily because the salaries we are able to provide are not reflective of the level of professional service they've performed at SEUL. Funding for *minimum* staffing levels is needed to support the neighborhood system, as we now know it. Given the greater expectations placed on the system in the current fiscal and political climate, funding should at least meet the goals. In an ideal world, SEUL would have the number of staff restored to nine FTE in order for the organization to achieve its mission.

As our community becomes more sophisticated and savvy, their needs for *professional* support from the coalition office increases. The high level collaboration with government and collective community action to address policy and technical issues that allows the community to respond to opportunities, such as the Tabor/Atkinson Community Commons project, could not have happened without the complex interplay of technical support from staff, the infrastructure of the non-profit corporation (the coalition) and the community who had the will and tenacity to solve this community problem.

However, SEUL is addressing the challenge of doing more with less by finding more efficient ways to provide service. This year the effort will include updating the

technology of our website and database to provide more strategic support to neighborhoods by developing methods and tools to help them become better leaders. Although we've recently completed a technology assessment to guide us, **we will need additional funds to invest in updating our database technology to better track volunteers, participant activities and donations.**

Our goal this year is a complete re-design of our website to make it a resource hub for neighborhoods, provide tools, best practices and information and also host each neighborhood association site within our web. **Additional funds will be needed to reach the goal of making the SEUL website the virtual classroom, meeting space and forum and fully implement its functionality for our neighborhoods.**

Although we've ramped up our efforts to write grants and develop partnerships with other CBO's to find funds to support programs, the philanthropic climate amongst private foundations is not fully supportive of grass roots democracy and community building and we have not prevailed. A major issue has been in developing the message about the value and benefit of the neighborhood system to potential funders. This will remain an ongoing problem, as education and other critical government services are placing a burden on individual donors to address those needs. **Government must step in to provide increased resources and support for local decision-making and grassroots democracy.** The work of the neighborhood system is by definition, an extension of government in its truest form - community governance – a partnership with the community to solve problems and increase livability in our neighborhoods. It should be fully funded.