



The Sustainable Neighborhoods Network:
A City-citizen Partnership to Promote Sustainability

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Congratulations!!

Together, you have directly involved 1000s of residents in improving the environmental and community health of your cities, and indirectly influenced 1000s more.

- Transportation options workshops
- Sidewalk assessments
- Carbon footprint challenges
- Fireplace replacement
- Home energy & water audits
- Solar Fair
- Xeriscape workshops
- Vehicle maintenance
- Healthy home improvements
- Community garden potlucks
- Stream bank projects
- Fertilizer reduction campaign
- Noxious weed removal
- Compost & recycling sign up
- Bee-safe campaigns
- Community /school gardens
- Helping hands networks
- Neighborhood historic tour
- Local weekly lunch club
- Documentary screenings, *Bag-It*
- Community Support Agriculture
- Energy saving tips
- Recycling facility tours
- Reuse swaps
- Social dancing
- Adult wellness
- Emergency preparedness
- Sustainability hikes
- Health & Wellness promotion
- Bicycle repair
- Literacy programs
- ***And the lists continue!!!***

Why we studied SNN

Your neighborhood. Your ideas. Your home

Challenges to promoting sustainability and community

Appropriate scale & strategy

If states and nations won't sustain citizens, cities will

Climate pledges and guilt

Eco-localisation

"responsibilization" of the consumer

City Monitoring & Evaluation Systems, e.g. STAR Communities

"Individuation" of climate change

Capabilities and resources by class, race, and gender?

Community Participation

Democracy is in trouble...local government is the answer

Isolation, self-sorting, and segregation

Time and energy to participate

Some programs are gendered (extension of women's domestic work)

But people don't even know their neighbors

Power dynamics influence voice and distribution of resources



Was the SNN the solution to these challenges?

How we studied it

What are the direct and ancillary benefits of the SNN?

Is this a sustainable model?

Is it scalable & replicable?

Who participates?

Is it effective?

Why?

- 4-Year study of 5 Lakewood and 5 Denver neighborhoods (at least 2 years in program by 2016)
- Quantitative:
 - Project database analysis
 - Online survey open to all city residents
- Qualitative:
 - Participant observation through “RA/Interns”
 - Caeli Hill, Greg Colucci, Maddie Keating, and Lorin Crandall
 - 26 Interviews with staff and residents
 - 2 additional RAs: Camron Bridgford, Sarah Turnbach
- Funding: \$6,000 in 5 small grants from CU Denver

FINDINGS

Direct and Ancillary

Some of the numbers: In 2 years, 596 projects, 2056 credits, 99 Participants

People goal area targeted in most projects

Personal interaction may be what keeps it going

LAKEWOOD			
Goal Areas	Projects	Credits	% by Goal Area
People	159	489	40%
Land, People	52	161	60%
Energy, Air, Water, Land, People	31	143	
Land	27	56	
Energy	22	51	
Energy, Air, People	18	120	
Air, Water, Land, People	14	46	
Energy, People	11	32	
Water	8	18	
Water, Land, People	8	34	
Air, People	6	18	
Energy, Land, People	5	14	
Air, Land, People	4	10	
Energy, Air, Water, Land	4	8	
Water, People	4	20	
Energy, Air	3	4	
Energy, Air, Land, People	3	28	
Air, Land	2	6	
Energy, Land	1	4	
Energy, Water, Land	1	0	
Air, Water, Land	1	0	
N/AV	9	8	
TOTAL	393	1270	100%
Particants	52		

DENVER			
Goal Areas	Projects	Credits	% Projects by Goal Area
People	73	305	36%
Land, People	49	202	62%
Energy, Air, Water, Land, People	28	146	
Water, Land, People	9	28	
Energy	6	12	
Energy, Land, People	5	28	
Water, Land	5	10	
Energy, Air, Land, People	4	18	
Land	4	14	
Energy, Air	3	9	
Air, People	2	0	
Energy, Land	2	0	
Energy, People	2	0	
Energy, Water, Land, People	2	0	
Air, Water, Land, People	1	4	
Energy, Air, People	1	0	
Energy, Air, Water	1	0	
Energy, Air, Water, People	1	0	
N/AV	5	10	
TOTAL	203	786	
Particants	47		

Additional Numbers

- We also looked at:
 - Participation by age and gender
 - Involvement of “leaders” and who submitted the reports
 - More specific types of projects
- Findings
 - Reliance upon some individuals more than others
 - More females (similar to the research)
 - See full study for project details and summaries

Qualitative Findings: Ripple Effects

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- People report significant changes to behaviors:
 - Education, awareness, tools, camaraderie
 - Emotional investment
 - Appreciate connections with “like-minded” individuals
 - Neighborhood pride and greater attachment
 - Ownership and empowerment
 - Role of government: slightly mixed views
 - “We don’t want the government to solve all of our problems”
 - We need more resources from the City
 - Creates its own momentum
 - Mutual respect and admiration between planners and citizens
 - Leads to citizen involvement in other city goals



Discussion: Successes & Challenges

Affordable, equitable, practical, effective, enduring, wide-reaching, reliable, and scalable to other places?

SNN's virtuous cycle



Strengths

Positive
Individuation
of Climate
Change

Neighbors sharing
ideas with other
neighborhoods

Spurs other civic
engagement
beyond SNN

Promotes inter-
agency problem
solving

City is a hub
for resources,
continuity, and
Sustaining
momentum

Neighborhoods
receive equal
treatment and
SN has avoided
“death by
politics”

Politicians
learning
about and
embracing
sustainability

Weaknesses

Reliance upon **unique inside-advocate** planners who are passionate, patient, rational, cautious and strategic: **what if they leave?**

Communication Resources & strategies to get word out

No funding for nonprofits informally involved in lower-resource neighborhoods

If it can't be quantified, is it worthwhile?

Limited Scale

Institutional Hesitance: Politicians love it: but hesitant to **fully** support it

Reinforcing neighborhood differentiation: most leaders are homeowners

Opportunities

Neighborhood
Demand exists: many
want to do more and
bigger projects,
beyond
neighborhoods

Involve SN in
Denver's 3 Big Goals:
Community Resilience
Resource Conservation
Mobility

Developing,
tapping, and
strengthening
**informal and
relational
networks across
sectors**

Other agencies
eager to tap into
SN for citizen
outreach and
support, e.g.
implement HIA
actions

Create events
for residents
outside
participating
neighborhoods

Utility and
"Green"
businesses
want access
SNs

Threats

Year-to-year and insufficient staff funding

Some resident frustration from lack of resources, direction, and organization from City

Neighborhoods without resources don't join or don't get adequate support

Certain project opportunities and other City resources and programs institutionally favor SF homeowners

Inclusiveness and equity: some neighborhoods have more time and resources

Politics could threaten longevity of program

Summary thoughts

- SNN found a sweet spot between purely government led on the one hand and social movement or privatization on the other.
 - The government hasn't "left the building" (e.g. privatization) nor have the groups tried to influence the government for personal gain or disengaged from the public sector
- Two-way learning: citizens \leftrightarrow City
- Ripple effect is immeasurable but powerful
- Keep market in-check: may shift things toward capital gains, which could would lead to exclusion, bias toward certain projects, or turn-off for some
- Support ongoing, even increased, government support
- Continue accountability systems: re-launches, reporting points, website, achievement levels, etc.