
Announcing RCP's 2016–2017 Partnership with Brooklyn Park

By Maria Wardoku

Unique. United. Undiscovered? Not for long.

The Resilient Communities Project is excited to announce our partnership with Brooklyn Park for the 2016–2017 school year. RCP will match undergraduate and graduate courses across the University of Minnesota with the 19 potential projects that Brooklyn Park developed to advance its strategic goals.

The partnership will be one to watch closely, not only because of the innovation and creativity the projects will inspire, but because Brooklyn Park is already as diverse today as the rest of Minnesota will be by 2040. Brooklyn Park is a first-ring suburb northwest of Minneapolis, and the sixth-largest city in the state. More than half of the city's 79,000 residents are people of color, and 20% of residents are immigrants. Strikingly, 10% of residents are immigrants from Liberia, giving Brooklyn Park (when combined with Brooklyn Center) the largest population of Liberians outside of Liberia.

Brooklyn Park's experiences today are other communities' future challenges and opportunities. What better way to prepare for the future than to follow the efforts of this pioneering community and learn from its experiences? Of Brooklyn Park's 19 projects, 11 touch on adapting to changing community demographics, so the partnership will produce a wealth of ideas in this area.

One of those projects is around developing a community kitchen. Brooklyn Park would like to support

food businesses to promote small business development as well as reduce safety risks associated with home-based food businesses. Many of those using residential kitchens for food businesses are new immigrants. A community kitchen would help support the entrepreneurial spirit of communities of color in the city, as well as provide a resource for food safety education, healthy eating, and cooking classes.

Another exciting project that is certain to have broad applications beyond Brooklyn Park is an effort to obtain more detailed demographic data than what the Census provides. In order to effectively serve its increasingly diverse population, the City needs more information about the ethnicity of local residents and where different ethnic groups live within the City. In addition to better demographic information, the project will also map the needs and assets of families in each neighborhood.

Yet another project seeks to determine whether the City can feasibly provide and maintain multi-purpose athletic fields for a broader array of sports, given new demands for facilities for rugby, lacrosse, and cricket that have come with changing demographics.

These are just three of the 19 fascinating projects that students will work on beginning in fall 2016. Our partners at Brooklyn Park are just as thrilled about the projects as RCP.

Kim Berggren, the City's Director of Community Development, will be leading the project from the Brooklyn

Park side. "We are extremely excited to partner with the University of Minnesota to advance many sustainability projects of importance to our community," Berggren said. "We believe students and faculty will bring innovative ideas that will help Brooklyn Park strategically invest in our future. Thanks to the University and to CURA for collaborating with local governments through a commitment to RCP."

Jay Stroebel, Brooklyn Park City Manager, echoed Berggren's excitement about the potential of this partnership, noting that "As one of the largest and most diverse cities in Minnesota, Brooklyn Park is a community with tremendous economic, environmental and social opportunity. Given our significant prospects for the future, we look forward to working with our community partners and the University of Minnesota to address the challenges (poverty, redevelopment, aging infrastructure, etc.) we face and fully realize our community's potential."

Stay tuned for more updates as we discover Brooklyn Park, a bold, ambitious city leading the way forward through Minnesota's changing demographic landscape.

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