Brentwood-Darlington Safe Routes to School

Regional Flexible Fund Grant Recipient $2.2 million dollars
Community Lead and Driven Grassroots Project
Brentwood-Darlington Neighborhood
Brentwood-Darlington Safe Routes to School. Grant Funding: $2,200,000.
Total Project Costs: $5,350,000
Brentwood-Darlington is a neighborhood with numerous sidewalk gaps and substandard bicycle facilities. This project would provide sidewalk infill on SE Duke and SE Flavel and add a neighborhood greenway on Knapp and Ogden.
Start Date-Completion Date

• Initial contact with PBoT with focus on this project began in the Fall of 2015

• Final decision to award grant occurred on February 2, 2017.
Road Blocks

• Many people didn’t know our neighborhood; we are often ignored because we are west of I-205, but have East Portland issues.

• Getting PBoT to move our project forward and submit an application.

• Getting TPAC, JPACT, and Metro to recommend our project for funding; some committee members did not think our project was regional enough to use RFF grant money and our technical score was low.
Steps Taken 1: PBoT

- Initial contact with Pbot through email about sidewalks on SE Ogden Street (a lot of forwarding and no return messages)
- Finally, forwarded to someone interested in our story from Active Transportation. Hours of phone calls and face to face meetings with them.
- Discussions led to enlarging project to SE Duke and SE Flavel to make it more competitive as a RFF project.
- Sent pictures and data about our sidewalks to key people at PBoT.
- Attended key Pbot meetings to get sidewalks scoped to bring project forward as a potential applicant.
Steps Taken 2: Speaking at Committees

- Speaking at key committee meetings downtown about our project and creating flyers to pass out to members educating them about our neighborhood and its needs. These committees made recommendations to PBoT for which RFF grant projects should be applied for.
  
  - PBoT RFF Project Proposal Meetings
  - Bicycle Alliance Committee Meetings
  - Pedestrian Alliance Committee Meeting
Steps Taken 3: Grassroots Activism Part 1

• Neighborhood group worked to get over 1000 hand written signatures of support for our project; door to door, libraries, movie nights, neighborhood gatherings, etc.
• Garnered letters of support from area representatives, businesses, and organizations
• These were hand delivered to PBoT and Local Commissioners
• With all of these efforts, PBoT chose to include our project in their RFF grant application list
Once our application was evaluated by Metro, we were rated #11 in the Technical Rating.

Only the top 10 projects would potentially receive funding.
Steps Taken 4: Public Comment Period: Grassroots Activism Part 2

• Metro comment period 10/11/16-11/7/16: Our community made hundreds of comments on an online system; using mostly social media to drive action.

• Gathered dozens of letters from key organizations and government representatives

• Our schools’ students wrote almost 300 postcards in support of our project with personal stories.
• Community members and organization and government representatives spoke in front of Metro Council during their RFF public comment meeting.

• Community members spoke to the media about our neighborhood and our project.

• Community members spoke in front of JPACT and TPAC during their RFF meetings. (Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation and Transportation Policy Alternatives Committee)
Given that all of the projects are important to the City of Portland, we are now relying on the technical grant application scoring of the projects as well as the public feedback that Metro received during the public comment period. We are pleased to see that all of the City of Portland projects received significant public support. However, one Active Transportation project, the Brentwood-Darlington Safe Routes to School project, received an exceptional amount of support. Not only did the Brentwood-Darlington project receive the highest number of positive comments in Metro’s online tool, but project advocates sent postcards, spoke at multiple meetings, and sent in a petition with over 1000 signatures.

If funding is formulated based only on technical rankings, Brentwood-Darlington’s technical score would put it just below the funding line. However, given the magnitude of community support for this project, Portland is willing to make adjustments to our other high scoring projects to stretch the funding to include Brentwood-Darlington as well. We propose to rescop our budget request, and are willing to increase the local match on the following Active Transportation projects as reflected below:

Due to our exceptional amount of support, PBoT adjusts other projects to make ours more appealing for funding.
We moved up to #9, which means we were recommended for funding!
Final Steps

• TPAC recommended our project for funding on 1/6/17
• JPACT recommended our project for funding on 1/19/17
• Metro confirmed our project would receive funding on 2/2/17
Top Lessons Learned

• Small, and often underestimated, groups can accomplish great things when they work together.
• Face to Face is key when building relationships.
• Being reliable and consistent is a must.
• Positivity and a willingness to work together gets you further than shaming.
Final thoughts...

• In our case, we learned that if you really want to make something happen, you have to work at it. No one will hand you anything, even when the City knows that the project is needed.

• Get your community engaged and active and reach out to representatives and organizations in your community that will support you.

• You have to be willing to sacrifice major time and be willing to speak at committees and face to face with key people and groups that make decisions.

• It is a lot of work, but if you believe in your project, you can make it a reality!

Action
Changes
Things