

# Project Narrative – anc1D 2008 Small Grants **anc1D** mount pleasant, dc

**Title:** In 15 words or less, give a title that describes the project's main beneficial result.

We Are MtP: Celebrating Difference, Finding Common Ground

**A) Group:** Mount Pleasant Artists' Cooperative is a very new, still-developing neighborhood group. Its vision is to bring MtP artists together who are interested in using their art for civic engagement and community empowerment. MPAC will, through art and cultural expression, work towards neighborhood unity by fostering understanding across common divisions (like race, class, age), building personal relationships, and facilitating cultural and artistic sharing. We will support neighborhood causes, working with civic groups and individuals, meanwhile supporting each other's artistic development. We will target artists from a diversity of mediums, as well as from a diversity of Mount Pleasant communities. Our participating artists will be homeowners, renters, citizens, immigrants, and on.

**B) Project:** The project MPAC is requesting funding for will bring artists together from across the spectrum of Mount Pleasant's diversity to plan and execute a month-long series of neighborhood-based, community-building art projects. The effort, "We Are MtP: Celebrating Differences, Finding Common Ground", aims to bridge class and cultural differences within the neighborhood.

Each art project will be designed to address at least one of We Are MtP's three main goals:

- A) To celebrate diversity in MtP while exploring what it means to be a community of different values, expressions and languages.
- B) To foster dialogue and cultivate understanding around the areas where diversity of culture/class/perspective generates division and misunderstanding.
- C) To find, explore and celebrate common ground across our differences.

Artists will be given autonomy to design and execute their art project, but all artists are expected to bring their project proposal to the larger MPAC group for feedback, to participate in planning meetings and to take responsibility for some of the logistics of implementing the overall series. Throughout this project, MPAC is committed to two central principles:

- 1) To make every effort to engage underserved communities in the neighborhood both by reaching out to those communities and by creating spaces where people will feel empowered to participate fully.
- 2) To build and maintain positive and respectful working relationships with other artists, neighbors and civic groups in MtP.

Money from an ANC 1d grant would go towards buying materials, paying for permits, and for publicity costs (printing posters, copying fliers, etc).

**C) Benefits:** Mount Pleasant is home to many communities spanning different cultures, classes, and ethnicities. For as many different communities that call Mount Pleasant home, there are as many different ideas of what people want this home to be. Visions and values for MtP differ widely among residents. But the residents who are most civically engaged in the neighborhood are people who own homes and have steady jobs. There are large sectors of the neighborhood who do not participate in neighborhood decision-making and planning. But these missing voices, visions and values are needed in the civic process. With this project we are aiming to engage all sectors of the neighborhood. Inherent in the design is the belief that by creating opportunities for people to interact with and understand each other, by creating spaces for people to feel welcome and needed, we can reinvigorate Mount Pleasant's civic life for those who have disengaged from it. By building relationships across culture and class, we believe we can nurture those connections and provide mutual aid, support and solidarity when hard times arise. Especially in this uncertain economy, we believe fostering strong relationships that are rooted in community-building will be central to navigating through the next decade as a diverse but unified neighborhood.

**D) Leverage:** MPAC's vitality will depend on recruiting a wide range of artists and neighbor volunteers. Its success will depend on expanding neighborhood engagement and creating welcoming spaces for underserved residents to participate in its events. Art is naturally an effective fundraiser and through art auctions, music concerts and other cultural events, we can raise money for future projects.