

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write this letter of support for Debi Peterson and the Urban semester students at Messiah College – Philadelphia Campus. From October to December 2003, the students worked with Project H.O.M.E. to collect information on the physical conditions of the Cecil B. Moore Homeownership Zone, which is situated in Lower North Central Philadelphia. Project H.O.M.E. is working in cooperation with the Philadelphia Empowerment Zone, and the City of Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative, to administer City's Targeted Basic Systems and Repair Program. (TBSRP)

The TBSRP provides a combination of grant and loan funds to income eligible homeowners for the purpose of making plumbing, heating, roofing, structural repairs, and exterior façade improvements. It is made possible through funding from the City of Philadelphia's Neighborhood Transformation Initiative Program (NTI), and will be addressing approximately twenty-one properties throughout the North Central Empowerment Zone. (NCEZ)

Messiah College students were responsible for evaluating the conditions of public and private spaces. This evaluation included streets, sidewalks, trees, lighting, and land that are in public spaces. It also included evaluating the condition of building facades, windows, and roofs. Information was collected on a PDA, and then uploaded into a GIS program managed by Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC), which is the local trade association for community-based organizations. Three maps were generated from this information. Each map identifies blocks throughout the NCEZ that could potentially meet program requirements for the TBSRP. The maps were presented to Philadelphia Empowerment Zone in early March 2004, and a strategy for implementing the TBSRP is currently underway.

I have worked with many volunteer and student groups during my four years at Project H.O.M.E., and the Messiah College students exceeded my expectations in every way. The students were energetic and committed to learning about their neighbors in addition to meeting a very tight data collection schedule. Debi was extremely responsive to our needs, very sensitive to the culture of the community, and responsible for the overall management of the data collection project. Messiah College's work has been extremely valuable in helping to identify select blocks to be preserved within the Philadelphia's North Central Empowerment Zone.

If you have any questions about Project H.O.M.E. or the TBSRP, please contact me at 215.235.3110.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Placke  
Director, Housing and Community Development