

Roosevelt Park Giving Circle

Neighbor To Neighbor Support

Over the last few years, 200 families across the Roosevelt Park Neighborhood have fostered a collective community in hopes of creating both a sense of belonging and an opportunity to enhance the lives of one another.

Eleanor Moreno has been living in the neighborhood for most of their life and believes that the best way to ensure the residents there thrive is through mutual aid.

“We are not a formal institution or anything like that, we are just people who reside in the neighborhood and really care about Roosevelt Park,” they said.

The neighborhood’s giving circle functions primarily through a text message thread – one where residents can connect with one another quickly and easily.

“We have this giant group, thread, with 200 families in the neighborhood and we ask one another things like: Do you need anything? Can we support you? Can we drop off anything?” Eleanor explained.

This eventually led to neighbors using their basements to keep basic need items other residents in the neighborhood may need from time to time.

“Someone was able to get, pallets of milk that didn't need to get refrigerated. And then also pallets of toilet paper,” they added.

But it wasn’t just residents sharing their basements with one another, it also became a sharing of resources as residents willingly decided to give \$5 dollars per month to create a money pool to help each other in times of need.

“We function in a type of membership for mat – where folks are not just investing their own dollars but also their time...and while not everyone can give \$5 as part of the membership fee – we’ve begun a process to encourage residents to trade goods and services with one another,” Eleanor said.

The pool of funds for mutual aid went even further when the Roosevelt Giving Circle applied funds from the Grand Rapids Neighborhood Match Fund.

“Our neighborhood is changing quickly, and as new development pops around our blocks – rent is increasing and many families find themselves unable to pay the increasing costs – so we use our pool of funds to help with these emergency needs,” they add.

The funds from the Neighborhood Match Fund aren’t only helping solve emergency needs, but also used to create infrastructure so neighbors can easily access space to collect and store basic resources for residents to access.

“We center our conversation around what it looks like for us as people in this neighborhood to call this neighborhood home. What are the top three things that we could utilize a larger pool of money based on what we’re hearing in the neighborhood or what other residents here are interested in investing,” Eleanor said.

While there are no plans for the Roosevelt Giving Circle to formalize or become a nonprofit organization, Eleanor says that kind of structure isn’t needed when the point of the collective is neighbors helping neighbors with as few barriers as possible.