



AmeriCorps & Cities of Service

SPOTLIGHT ON SEATTLE



Hilary Nichols fell in love with city government through the course of her

AmeriCorps VISTA service placement with the Cities of Service “Love Your Block” program in Seattle.

Hilary coordinated a “Find It, Fix It” community walk program that brought together the Mayor, city department directors, council members, police, and community members to tour a neighborhood and identify public safety needs and awarded grant money for community members to do projects that improved the safety and appearance of their neighborhood.

One of the highlights of her term of service was a “Find It, Fix It” community walk she organized in South Park, a low-income neighborhood on the west side of Seattle. The South Park community worked with city management to identify what the neighborhood needed, from cleaning up the area to refurbishing a staircase that connected the business district at the bottom and the residents and community health center at the top.

The residents used a “Love Your Block” community grant to fund efforts to refurbish the staircase, remove trash from the neighborhood, and paint a mural. They also convinced the city to add a floodlight to the area to increase safety. Hilary says she learned a valuable lesson from the project, that “making seemingly small infrastructure improvements can have a tremendous impact on the lives of the citizens.”

Through the project, Hilary learned that collaboration between the community and city government is essential to creating vibrant neighborhoods. She learned that many low-income, immigrant, limited English proficiency, and homeless communities face additional barriers in working with city government, and that national service members could play an important role in dismantling those barriers.



In every neighborhood where I helped organize a community walk, I encountered people who did not know who to call or what to do about local problems. I feel my biggest impact was to be a resource for them, even if I didn’t always immediately have a solution to their concerns.

When her AmeriCorps VISTA term of service ended, Hilary wanted to continue to make an impact in local communities, which led her to a position with City of Seattle as the coordinator of a civic leadership development program dedicated to teaching emerging community leaders how navigate city government.

Hilary’s service philosophy is best encapsulated by the Shirley Chisholm quotation, “Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this Earth.” Hilary hopes everyone gets the opportunity to serve in some capacity and pay their rent.