

Marcy-Holmes Community Participation Program 2011 Annual Report

1. Major Accomplishments and how individuals in our community were directly impacted by our work:

a. Housing and Land Use:

Since June, 2010, using as guidance our Master Plan, adopted by the City in 2003, the three supplements to that plan adopted from 2007-9, and the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth as guidance; and responding to the demands for increased density, sustainability and environmental concerns in our neighborhood; our Land Use Committee, Board, and interested citizens and stakeholders dealt with--and improved upon--the following list of projects, totally over 1000 housing units:

Thomas Place, 8 units
Florence Court, 121 units
Freund Haus, 8 units
412 Lofts, 102 units
Limelight, 12 units
520 Second St. S.E., 91 units
1011 – 4th St. S.E., 12 units
A Mill redevelopment, 250 units
Mill & Main I, 184 units
Andrew Riverside, 56 units
708 Central, 105 units
1101 University Avenue, 150 units

Some of these have been constructed; some are under construction; and some are still in the design stage and approval process. Other developments considered were proposed by five Dinkytown and two East Hennepin businesses and two major University building projects.

These affected our neighborhood by adding density; increasing recreational, retail and entertainment offerings; adding to City's tax base; and adding to the cachet/reputation of our area to attract an increasing diversity of residents. Committee and board comments helped improve site lines, green space and additional trees; improved aesthetics and attention to our riverfront; added historical interpretive elements; and utilize unused/vacant properties.

b. Redesigned website available at: www.marcy-holmes.org.

Hiring web designers from the neighborhood, we added a free business listing section and a "Community Exchange" page for neighbor-to-neighborhood postings, both valuable services to residents plus a Media Gallery page for posting neighborhood photos. An online form permits anyone to sign up for our monthly newsletter. Meeting agendas and minutes are also posted. The new website is easier to use; it's more welcoming and presents a very positive picture of Marcy-Holmes.

- c. **Successful Welcome Week program for students** with 150 Welcome Student lawn signs, produced by Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association, mounted on home-owner, apartment house, church lawns and at businesses. In collaboration with the University Neighborhood Student Liaisons and the City of Minneapolis, we door-knocked student rental properties to not only welcome students but to ascertain any property violations and get them remedied. Staff from the Minneapolis Police's Second Precinct, and from Inspections, Regulatory and Solid Waste departments were on hand at a local coffee house to handle problems discovered through the door-knocking.
- d. **Successful collaboration with the University District Alliance (UDA).** In addition to the above, our executive director and several neighborhood artists helped produce a new **Live Near Your Work website** (www.livenearyourwork.net). It showcases the UDA neighborhoods (Marcy-Holmes, Cedar/Riverside, Prospect Park and East River Road, and SE Como) and presents ownership and rental opportunities. We also assisted in producing, a video, **Voices of the District**, that was shown on MTN, the Minneapolis television network, as well as at neighborhood and district events. The Maxfield Housing Survey, commissioned by the UDA, proved there is a market here for other than student housing. Help from the City would be greatly appreciated in our quest to balance the population here.
- e. **Additional \$90,000 in Housing Renovation Loans were granted** through our Center for Energy and the Environment (CEE) loan program. The **interest rate on these loans was reduced to 2.5%** to attract more participants. This program is available to absentee landlords and owner-occupants of housing containing 1 – 4 units for interior or exterior improvements to property.
- f. **Master Plan Update Committee (MPUC) established** as a result of the 2010 census data showing 1000 new residents in Marcy-Holmes; all the aforementioned rental housing development; and taking into account the economic downturn in housing during the 2000-2010 period.
- g. **Marcy-Holmes was rated 4th out of 30 “best neighborhoods” in Twin Cities by Twin City Metro magazine in its 5th September 2011 Anniversary Issue.**

2. Outreach and engagement activities:

2010 census data showed that 93.7% of our population is in the 18-64 year old range. This includes many students and professionals, with 31.4% of our total population college graduates and 86.1% non-family households. Of our 10,015 residents approximately 3% are under 18 and 3.3% over 65. Sixty-three percent earn less than \$35,000 and 10% over \$100,000, making a very economically diverse population.

- a. **Focus Groups** – We held focus groups with the following groups: Riverside Residents; Neighborhood Religious Institutions; Students; International Students; Creative Neighbors; Non-Student Renters; Sorority House Directors; Landlords and Property Managers. We also conducted two sessions with people familiar with real estate and fund raising. These focus group meetings were held in neighborhood

restaurants, a church and a student apartment complex. We offered one to neighborhood businesses, but received no responses, perhaps because we already collaborate with the Dinkytown Business Association.

One result of our focus groups was that residents said they do not want to attend many meetings but were eager for more social/informational functions. In order to boost attendance at our meetings and enhance sociability, this year we held our quarterly general membership meetings at a neighborhood restaurant.

We circulated widely a short questionnaire (attached). This was made available at every general membership meeting, and at several events, to help decide neighborhood priorities. Many written responses came from neighborhood institutions, such as Marcy Open School staff members. We also conducted several one-on-one interviews with newer residents, especially those with children.

- b. **Annual and other community-wide events:** We sponsored and publicized widely our annual summer **National Night Out**, using the lot “donated” by Century Link (formerly Qwest) for the event; our annual spring **River Clean Up**; our annual **garden party and plant swap**; **tours of various frequently-unexplored areas of our neighborhood, including the University’s St. Anthony Falls Laboratories on an island in the Mississippi near Stone Arch Bridge; the newly renovated and expanded Florence Court before it reopened;** and a summer **Audubon tour** on the riverfront.
- c. **Other activities:** Working with artists, neighborhood stakeholders, a wayfinding specialist, and the Minnesota Historical Society, we created an attractive neighborhood map indicating historic sights, tours and amenities. (copy attached). The map is posted in a Stone Arch Bridge kiosk and printed on postcards distributed throughout the neighborhood. A QR code makes the maps interactive and opens to the Maps & Tours section of our new website. Both the website and kiosk projects, on which non-board members worked, are ways to promote living and working in and exploring our neighborhood.

We publicized and numerous neighborhood residents participated in the Alliance-sponsored hazardous waste collection event held in SE Como; the Community Energy Services energy audit and improvement program; the Architect Day program at which residents get free advice on building and landscaping; and our own event highlighting the work of U of M Metropolitan Design Center students and faculty on the riverfront. The UDA won an award for its high percentage of participants in the energy program.

Our board has representatives from area organizations and institutions (SE clergy, U of MN student groups, area business organizations) that take information back to their groups and collect comments.

Because we have so many students who are only here part of each year and neither think of this area as their home nor identify it as a particular neighborhood other than “the Dinkytown area,” we do not get as much participation from them as we would like. However, the rather-new University’s Neighborhood Student Liaison

program has been very useful and student involvement is increasing. Both positions reserved for students on our board are filled. Our Student Affairs Committee has been revived and we are working on a shared goal: increased bikeways and safety issues.

3. Stakeholder involvement:

We maintain long-term relationships with our two neighborhood business groups (Dinkytown Business Assn and NE Business Assn); SE Seniors; SE churches; numerous rental property owners, apartment building and condo managers; and housing and business developers. We gather information at open meetings, events and other gatherings. In the fall of 2010 we asked the community to rank remaining NRP Phase II strategies via mailings and our website and received a strong response.

Through the University District Alliance, we work on many common issues and projects for neighborhood improvement. We also collaborate with the Nicollet Island East Bank neighborhood on development projects such as the proposed Superior Plating site and other developments in the East Hennepin area and along the Mississippi River.

The bisecting of our neighborhood by I35W means that half our neighborhood focuses on the Dinkytown area whereas the west side of 35W focuses more on the commercial area of E. Hennepin and toward downtown via our many bridges, including the Stone Arch Bridge. Many of the newer residents, especially those on the riverfront below University Avenue, think they live in a riverfront neighborhood or even NE Minneapolis!

What we have found most useful in getting new people and under-represented communities involved is finding one or two residents in a development and getting them involved in committee work and adding new residents as board members. The same holds true for other stakeholders who do not live in the community.

Perhaps our biggest group of stakeholders that is not active in our community participation efforts is absentee landlords, some of whom consider neighborhood associations as adversaries. However, when they come before our land use committee or our board with ideas for renovating or improving their properties, we work with them both informally and formally and find getting to know each other and establishing collegial relationships helps a great deal. Our Master Plan also helps and we believe updating it with them as participants in our public meetings will also improve relationships. The chair of UDA's Livability Committee, which we participate in, is a landlord and the MHNA Board has always had several landlords filling seats. In fact, our current president, vice president and secretary are all neighborhood landlords.

One other activity that is improving relationships is our activity around the proposal of MnDOT to build a high sound wall along 35W. Residents, property owners and most institutions in our neighborhood oppose this wall that would further bisect

this neighborhood. We collaborated with the Beltrami neighborhood as well as SE Como on this endeavor.

Data on stakeholder involvement:

A. 21 board positions; 15 elected; 6 appointed representing various institutions; 2 currently vacant. Beyond having a quorum at each meeting, others' participation varies depending on the issues on the agenda. These range as few as 5 people to as many as 20 or 30 at some board meetings.

B. How many individuals have participated in committee meetings?

Land Use: 10 regular members/10 meetings annually; plus property owners, developers, architects, and citizens interested in the projects under consideration. This can vary from 6 to 8 additional people to 20 or 30 or even more when one or contentious projects are on the agenda.
Total Land Use meeting attendance for 2011 was 187.

Safety & Livability: 6 regular members/10 meetings per year, but again broader citizen participation varies, with big crowds when a local crime has achieved notoriety.

Master Plan Update Committee: 12 at two organizing meetings; additional members are being added to represent additional stakeholders and public meetings are anticipated.

Other committees: (also see below under E.)

C. 45 attended our 2011 annual meeting.

D. 333 households plus 150 others, including organizations and institutions, regularly receive our publications and notices. This does not include those who use the website to obtain information or those who receive MHNA information second hand through the University District Alliance, River Currents e-newsletter, or various other organizations' publications. We regularly communicate with the Twin Cities Daily Planet, which now publishes an online News of the University District edition. Since we no longer have a local newspaper and not everyone uses websites, we are working with the Daily Planet staff, at their invitation, to find writers to report on events and concerns in our neighborhood. The loss of a neighborhood newspaper was often lamented at our focus group sessions.

E. **Approx how many participate in other activities of the org?** This number is difficult to ascertain because we had numerous task force and subcommittee meetings including the kiosk task force; SE library renovation group; website update volunteers; the Bucket Brigade for watering young boulevard trees; Restorative Justice program volunteers. 67 people attended the focus groups; numerous people represented MHNA on the Alliance or volunteered with its committees. Dinkytown business people assisted with our postcard awareness

campaign, “A Plea for our Trees,” or donated goods for our events and meetings. 1st Congregational Church members and residents served cookies and lemonade during Welcome Week.

In addition, 250 people attended our National Night Out, including some who donated food and beverages, prizes, or services for the event. Some of these were E Hennepin and other merchants in the area; 60 helped on the River Cleanup; over 40 attended our garden and plant swap parties, contributing food and plants and helping set up and clean up; over 90 attended our various tours; 35 work as garden volunteers on our boulevard gardens and the 10th Avenue & 8th Street neighborhood garden; 115 responded to our questionnaire/survey; and board members; and about 20 attended our evening social event.

An unknown number of board members and interested individuals represented MHNA at various City meetings, including those serving on the SE Strategic Compliance Task Force; MHNA participants serve with SEMCOL (the SE Minneapolis Committee on Learning) and helped at its Learning Fair in Van Cleve Park; and others worked with or served as board members of the District Councils Collaborative on the Central Corridor. Outstanding MHNA volunteers are presented certificates each year at our annual meeting.

4. **Financial Reports**

Our financial statements are attached, with some notations.

Interaction with City departments and other jurisdictions:

City departments: As noted or implied above, MHNA board and interested residents interact regularly with CPED (Community Planning & Economic Development) staff, the Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Committee, Second Police Precinct, NCR (Neighborhood Community Relations and formerly NRP/Neighborhood Revitalization Program) and NCEC (Neighborhood Community Engagement Commission). MHNA representatives have worked with the Inspections Dept, Public Arts Administrator, Public Works, (including several sessions with Bicycling & Pedestrian Program); Traffic & Parking Services and Zoning. MHNA representatives have also appeared before City Council Committees and the full City Council. We work with our city council member who reports regularly to our board on City activities and events.

We are in regular communication with Ann Calvert about anything river-related and we regularly promote openings on city boards in our monthly mailers.

Other city agencies: Board of Education and more specifically, Marcy Open School. We have enjoyed a good relationship with “807” (Board of Education) and the principal and staff at Marcy Open School, where our office is located. We collaborated on several grants with the school this year and are pleased to report that one will complete the funding needed to establish a Peace Labyrinth on school grounds, thus realizing a longtime goal of the school.

MHNA also promotes school events in its monthly mailings; had an MHNA booth at the school's annual plant sale; and purchase flowers for our community gardens at this sale. We recruit committee members for the Marcy Arts Partnership, which plans the annual Marcy Arts Gala. (The Arts Gala is a hugely popular event in the neighborhood, with over 600 attendees this year and even a mention in MN Monthly, June 2012 issue.) We also advertised in the school musical program.

Minneapolis Park & Rec Board (MPRB): We have had our MPRB commissioner and park planners speak at our meetings and have consulted with MPRB's Stewards Program about adopting Elwell Park.

Hennepin County: We have worked with Hennepin County officials on SE Library proposed renovation plans, on I35W expansion from downtown through Marcy-Holmes, and other transportation issues. We had our county commissioner speak at a general membership meeting and had representatives on the I35W project at a board meeting.

Metro Council: Our MHNA president is an officer of the District Council Collaborative and other MHNA representatives have worked with DCC (District Councils Collaborative) on the Central Corridor issues affecting our area. Our June 2012 General Membership meeting will have a presentation on the new Transit Service Study project.

State of Minnesota: Working with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) on I35W expansion through Marcy-Holmes. With SE Como and Beltrami neighborhood organizations, we turned out over 80 people at December, 2011 meeting co-sponsored by MnDOT, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis.

Minnesota State Legislature: MHNA officers testified before the House and Senate Education Committees on legislation authorizing establishment of the University District Alliance, reporting on its implementation in our area. Our new state senator spoke and answered questions at our spring 2012 MHNA General Membership meeting.

University of Minnesota: As noted above, MHNA is active with the University District Alliance, and presented a statement and letters to the University Board of Regents on housing, the aforementioned legislation, and the need for the new university president to continue the work of the Alliance. We have also met and collaborated with Boynton Health Services, Student Legal Services; worked on class projects with the Graphic Design Department and the Humphrey Institute Sustainability Studies.

UDA was honored by new U of MN President Kaler at a reception at Eastcliffe. MHNA has two representatives on the SAAG (Stadium Area Advisory Group) which deals with the effects of TCF Bank Stadium on neighborhoods and also facilitates the Good Neighbor Fund, a program of grants for projects in the neighborhoods surrounding the stadium. Recently, MHNA representatives met with the Vikings about the potential effects of their using TCF stadium. We also work with the University's police department, whose chief has attended MHNA's Safety & Livability meetings in the past 1.5 years.

With the new census data, changed housing market and increased development in our area, we are working with CURA, the Center on Urban and Regional Affairs at the University, on updating our 2003 Master Plan and integrating the three supplements to that plan adopted during the last decade. The committee is being expanded to include representatives of all stakeholder groups in our neighborhood and, as work on the draft plan progresses, numerous public meetings will be held to get input.

MHNA also attends meetings and collaborates with the Minneapolis Riverfront Partnership. Our Kiosk Project advisory committee included the director of Mill City Museum and a rep from National Parks Services.

1. Impact What interactions occupied a major part of your time? What worked well, what could be improved?

Our time was spent: 50% dealing with housing issues, 25% marketing the neighborhood as a great place to live, 20% communicating and reaching out to neighborhood stakeholders, and 5% on managing our office and finances.

2. City Communications – effectiveness. Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?

We understand that the NCR/CPP (Neighborhood Community Relations/ Community Participation Program) process is evolving....rules and dates tend to be fluid. It also seems like the application and reporting process could be improved....there is much repetition and a sense that we are having to “jump through a lot of hoops”. Stacy Sorenson, our liaison, is a pleasure to work with. We have also had frequent contact with Doron Clark, our NCEC commissioner. Robert Thompson provided focus group training to our board.

We have had a hard time with the Public Works Dept this year. Because we want to make people more aware of our neighborhood name, we put aside funds for additional neighborhood signs and made plans to do even larger ones. But when we approached Public Works they informed us a new policy had been enacted that does not permit additional signs – in fact as signs wear out many will not be replaced, due to “sign pollution”. This was news to us, especially as we had the funding and had new signs made. We were not informed of this new policy beforehand, so communication was insufficient. It is not clear to us who made this policy or if the public was invited to comment. We struggle so with neighborhood identification (NE vs SE? Marcy-Holmes vs Dinkytown?) and now a solution has been closed off to us. We enlisted the help of our council member, but nothing has been resolved.

There are two other Public Works issues in the neighborhood that have been ignored by the City for years. First, no matter how we try to get some attention to it. 6th Ave SE, around the intersection of 7th St SE, and 7th St SE all the way to 2nd Ave SE, experiences frequent and serious flooding. Many cars have been ruined here and several residents must sandbag their driveways all season. Cars that brave the floods cause a tidal wave that overtakes even the sandbags. We think this has something to do with either an underground creek or insufficient and ancient pipes and their angle along this slight hill. It has been very frustrating (and expensive) for

neighbors in this western portion of our neighborhood. The City needs to address this.

And second is adding bike lanes here. Increasing bike safety is critical in a neighborhood that includes the busiest bikeway in the city, 15th Ave SE. But getting to 15th Ave is becoming a bigger problem- especially along 8th St SE. We have been told (by City personnel) that over 750 bikes a day travel this route – yet cars are parked on both sides all the way to intersections, making it very unsafe. In winter this narrow street is only one car wide due to snow piles, and winter bikers take their lives in their hands travelling it. When we ask the best way to improve the bike experience along 8th St SE we have been given mixed messages: Talk to your council person and put it on the CLIC (Capital Long-range Improvement Committee) list. We also have concerns about bikers on other busy roadways like University Ave SE and 4th St SE. It seems like other areas of the city get more bike attention than we do, when our usage numbers indicate we deserve more attention.

CPED (especially Haila Maze) has been very helpful, prompt in answering our questions, and so well informed. We were also well served by staff at HPC and Planning Commission.

However, it is not clear to us that the City sees our area as a priority- namely because we are not directly on the Central Corridor light rail line. Much development is happening here, but when will it be something other than student housing and what is the City doing to encourage diversity in housing choices here? Who is looking out for our neighborhood in terms of courting good developments? We should have an advocate at the city because there is so much potential here – are we the only ones who see it? If Granary Rd were to become a greenway connecting the Stone Arch Bridge to the U- as envisioned by the students at Metro Design Center – what a boon to the city – our own “Southeast Low-line” that would be a catalyst for new development, arts activities, gardens, farmers markets and more.

Also as more high quality student apartments are built closer to campus – what is to happen to the former single family or duplex housing as students vacate? Will they become more run down? Will the quality of renters change? How can this housing be re-purposed? City help would be very welcome in this eastern half of the neighborhood.

Finance Dept- We had several housing projects that used vehicles like TIF and Historic Tax Credits...some kind of primer to neighborhoods would be helpful, we're not all econ majors.

Second Precinct We work with Nick Juarez who provides updates and statistics to our Safety & Livability Committee. He, too, is always available to answer questions.

1. *City Communications – timeliness*

Do you receive adequate notice of City activities in your neighborhood?

We receive notices from the city in a timely manner. It's great to get the weekly planning reports. We appreciate the crime alerts and also notices of proposed zoning text changes.

2. *City Departments*

How can City departments improve the way in which they function in your neighborhood?

Our area would benefit greatly if a housing inspector visited regularly and wrote up citations. Waiting for complaints to be called in to 311 is not effective, especially with a transient population that does not invest itself in the neighborhood. The SE Strategic Compliance Task Force has done good work by concentrating on a few bad apples, but to make a neighborhood attractive and livable, things like un-mowed lawns, broken windows, parking on lawns and litter cannot be considered acceptable.

This year as Granary Road was studied for a cost benefit analysis and, thanks to outside insistence, the process was amended to include more than “build” and “no build”. A new category “Build Something Else” was added and that has shown the benefits described above. We applaud this new way of doing business and hope it will continue.

3. *City Assistance*

How can the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department improve the assistance it provides to your organization as a citizen participation group?

NCR staff has been very helpful – can’t think of anything needed. We very much appreciate the Officers & Directors Insurance and the work of CPA Mike Wilson that you provide.

4. *Other comments?*

Putting this report together has demonstrated to us that we accomplish a lot! So in that way, we are glad to have it down on paper and will make use of it in future planning. Also we look forward to some collaboration with our neighbors across the river who will now be part of the new Third Ward.

The MHNA Board of Directors approved this report on June 14, 2012

Attachments:

Questionnaire used as basis of focus groups

Kiosk map

End 2011 Financial Reports and latest (May 31, 2102)