

Nokomis East Neighborhood Association

2011 Community Participation Program – Annual Report

1. *Accomplishments*

What were your organization's major accomplishments in 2011? How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work?

- Co-sponsored, with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the third annual Minneapolis Monarch Festival. The festival celebrates the annual migration of the Monarch Butterfly from Minnesota to Mexico with music, art activities, games, food and education. Children and their families learned about the monarch butterfly's lifecycle and critical habitat needs. The event creates connections between Minnesotans and Latinos based on their common interest in saving the endangered Monarch Migration. An estimated 8,000 people attended, with 40% of the participants Hispanic/Latino
- Continued to maintain three native plant gardens at Lake Nokomis collectively designated as a Monarch Waystation, which provide habitat for monarch butterflies and other wildlife, and demonstrate the beauty and benefits of native plants. Conducted a workshop on Growing Monarch Habitat, complete with a garden kit for participants to take home and plant. The workshop was attended by 45 people.
- Maintained the "Gateway Gardens," a community Monarch Butterfly garden located next to the 50th Street LRT station.
- Served in an advisory capacity for the multi-neighborhood South Minneapolis Housing Fair, which was attended by 500 people; led the hiring process for a new event coordinator; and began acting as fiscal agent for the fair.
- Meet with business leaders and assisted in the formation of the Nokomis East Business Association.
- Held the "Night Before New Year's Eve Party," a free family oriented event on December 30, 2011 attended by 1,000 children and adults. The party provides people of all income levels an evening of games, art activities, hayrides, food, music, and socializing.

2. *2011 CPP Submission*

Reviewing your submission for CPP funds for 2011, what outreach and engagement activities did you carry out? What worked well, and what did not work so well? Why?

- Attended 15 National Night Out parties in the Nokomis East neighborhood providing informational materials and door prizes to block clubs, and listening to issues or concerns raised by residents.
- Maintained and regularly updated an extensive website with neighborhood information, designed to promote the neighborhood, local businesses, encourage citizen involvement in neighborhood and city affairs, and volunteerism. The website was visited 39,300 times in 2011.
- Kept 600 members of an email list up-to-date on neighborhood issues, meetings, events and opportunities to comment on City issues with 33 "NENA Updates" electronic newsletters.
- Hosted five Town Meetings covering safety concerns (with MPD), the City Budget, street resurfacing, construction of an apartment building, and a major expansion of the Keewaydin School campus (with the PTA). A total of 230 people attended these meetings.

- Participated in planning a National Night Out party for the Bossen area; provided prizes for the fish pond game and three volunteers, including one bilingual (English/Spanish). This activity was not a very effective outreach tool for NENA. We spent time running games for children, many of whom were not accompanied by a parent, so there was little interaction with the adults.

3. *Stakeholder Involvement*

Reviewing your submission for CPP funds for 2011, how did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities? Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful?

- Our Latino organizer for the Monarch Festival set and accomplished a target of increasing Latino participation in the Minneapolis Monarch Festival from 25% in 2010 to 40% in 2011. It was achieved by using a combination of bilingual posters, postcards, and flyers for schools; bilingual posts on the festival's facebook page; public service announcements on Hispanic radio stations, stories in the Latino press, an interview on Impacto Local (Univision 13); and personal contacts with teachers, businesses and community leaders. It was also important that the Festival is fully bilingual. This makes Latino's feel welcome – that it is 'their' festival as much as anyone's, and makes recruiting bilingual volunteers easier.
- We found that distributing fliers (even bilingual fliers) was not sufficient to draw people to events or meetings. Face to face contact is very important in developing trust with people who don't speak English, who may not be 'documented,' or who feel marginalized by poverty.

Please also provide the following:

A. How many people currently serve on your board? Are there vacancies?

- The NENA Board has 15 positions. In 2011 all positions were filled. Currently there are two vacancies, one for a Wenonah neighborhood representative, and one for a Keewaydin representative. The Wenonah vacancy is due to a lack of candidates for the position at the 2012 annual meeting, and Keewaydin vacancy is due to a resignation.

B. Approximately how many individuals have participated in committee meetings in the last year?

- NENA has only one 'committee' right now – the Executive Committee, consisting of Board Officers. We use "working groups" to accomplish specific tasks and to work on projects. Most volunteers are less interested in long term committee work, and more inclined to spend their time on events or short term projects that have a concrete objective and a foreseeable end.
- A group of 6-8 people worked on establishing a community garden in the neighborhood until it decided that there was insufficient support to successfully finish the project. A Livability Working Group started in 2011 to address "problem properties" which was identified as a concern by a significant number of respondents to our 2010 NRP Phase 2 survey. The five members of the group have researched different types of problems, strategies for dealing with them, and resources available.
- Beginning in 2011, we switched from using an event planner to having volunteer team leaders to handle planning and logistics for the Night Before New Year's Eve party. Approximately 8 team leaders were responsible for different activity areas, including planning, set up, and supervision of the 60 volunteers who staff the event. This approach builds volunteer skills and saves money.

- The Gateway Gardens (a monarch habitat across from the 50th Street LRT station) is maintained by a group of 10-12 volunteers who get together twice a month over the growing season for “Weeding Meetings.” The Nokomis Naturescape (a group of 3 gardens) is maintained by NENA volunteers and members of the Twin Cities Chapters of The Wild Ones and Audubon. Twenty-five – thirty people work on the gardens each year.

C. How many people attended your annual meeting? Approximately 60 people.

D. How many households regularly receive your publications (such as newsletters or newspapers)?

We publish a monthly column in the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger, which has a circulation of 21,000, including all households in Nokomis East.

E. Approximately how many people participate in other activities of the organization?

- 1,000 people attended the Night Before New Year’s Eve party. 8,000 people attended the Minneapolis Monarch Festival. 95 households participated in the 2nd Annual Nokomis East Neighborhood Garage Sale.

4. *Financial Reports*

Please provide an income and expense report for your organization for the year. (Please include all funding sources).

Financial statements are attached.

In addition to your annual report, please take time to describe your interactions with City departments and other jurisdictions.

1. *Impact*

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

- The most time interacting with the City was spent on the draft CPP guidelines. The final product was far better than the initial draft, and it did contain a lot of the changes that neighborhoods asked for. The frustrating part of the draft guidelines was that the expectations of neighborhood organizations far exceeded what could be accomplished with the funding available, and the reporting requirements were excessive. The expectations now seem to be more in line with funding, but the reporting requirements still carry an unprecedented level of oversight and supervision as if neighborhood organizations are somehow remiss in their contractual obligations or less responsible than other nonprofits that receive city funding.
- NENA worked extensively with MPRB staff in planning the Minneapolis Monarch Festival. It worked well because staff from both organizations are very committed to putting together a successful event, and willing to put in the extra time it takes to get things right. The offices of Council Members Quincy and Colvin Roy were very responsive to our request for Minneapolis Tap, and in promoting the event.
- While it didn’t require a lot of time, our work with our Neighborhood Specialist at NCR has been very positive. She has been very supportive and helpful, as have the Development Finance staff who responded to many contract and funding and related questions.

2. *City Communications – effectiveness*

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?

- In general, yes. Notices from Planning are the exception. They refer to the general nature of zoning changes, or variance requests, but do not contain enough specifics to know if or how it will impact our constituents. Waiting for staff reports to come out the day or two before a hearing leaves no time to respond on behalf of residents.
- Oddly, we receive no information on what NCEC is doing or the new NRP Policy Board. If we want to know, we have to go looking for it (which has gotten harder since the city's website was redesigned).

3. *City Communications – timeliness*

Do you receive adequate notice of City activities in your neighborhood? If not, did your organization inform somebody at the City of this? Did the City respond in a positive manner? Please explain.

- The only significant non-routine City activity in the neighborhood in 2011 was resurfacing streets in the Wenonah neighborhood. The communication from the city was very good, and timely.
- We used to get street sweeping notices, but now we only know it's going to happen when the "no parking" signs go up. If we have advance notice, we can let people know why it's important, and help them avoid tickets.

4. *City Departments*

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

- It is too difficult to find out who to talk to when you have a question. 311 is fine for reporting potholes, but it's cumbersome at best if a person needs to have a conversation with the staffer responsible for their concern. The City needs to make it easier to find staff. There should be an online directory of key positions, or at least department and division numbers. 311 has the effect of discouraging people from interacting directly with staff.

5. *City Assistance*

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

- **Recognize and respect the fact that neighborhood organizations are independent nonprofit corporations, and not an arm of the city.** In the last 20 years neighborhood organizations have matured and gotten very good at doing a lot of things. And they accomplish those things with a relatively small amount of money. Yet the achievements are rarely acknowledged or attributed to neighborhood organizations. Time for a little credit! We've earned it.

6. *Other comments?*