

**Victory Neighborhood Association
Community Participation Program
2011 Annual Report**

1. Accomplishments

What were your organization's major accomplishments in 2011? How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work? (Note: focus on your accomplishments, not your activities, such as "Field Regina Northrup organized the Lee Family 80th Anniversary Commemoration on July 16, 2011, recognizing an important story in the history of Civil Rights in Minneapolis. In addition to engaging more than 1,000 residents, the event coincided with the City's Community One Read event, providing the opportunity to connect the commemoration with broader city events.")

- **Completed the Victory Rain Garden Party – installing the last 9 of 32 rain gardens in residents' yards and one at a business location.**
- **Organized and hosted the 3rd annual Garden Tour giving all of our residents (and visitors) the opportunity to visit neighbors' gardens and connect and meet other residents of the neighborhood. Also hosted a neighborhood BBQ at Loring School as the kick off to the Victory Garden Tour. More than 70 individuals attended the BBQ and were informed about and connected to ViNA. Several offered to serve as the key communicator for their blocks**
- **Organized and hosted an environmental Dinner and a Movie series giving residents the opportunity to meet with their neighbors, view a movie about the American food industry while enjoying dinner from a local restaurant and joining in a post-movie facilitated discussion**
- **Organized a group of 'seasoned' block group leaders who were willing to serve as mentors for new block clubs and/or key communicators. They chose to call themselves the "Blockheads."**
- **Developed a data base of block leaders and 'key communicators' and the blocks on which they live. Over 40% of the blocks are 'organized'**
- **Sponsored the 4th year of the Camden's Farmers Market at 44th and Penn offering residents access to fresh locally grown food in the food desert of North Minneapolis and another opportunity to meet and interact with their neighbors on a weekly basis**
- **With the assistance of a Great Streets Business Support grant conducted a branding study for the business nodes of 44th and Penn and 42nd and Thomas, developed the "Discover Victory" brand and began a campaign to market the businesses at the two nodes.**
- **Partnered with Hennepin County and Minneapolis Park and Recreation on the rededication of Victory Memorial Drive on June 11, 2011. ViNA also kept residents informed during the rehabilitation work on the Drive that preceded the rededication**
- **Partnered with the Cleveland Neighborhood Association on the Live on the Drive concert series and with Our Neighborhood Works for Holiday on 44th, two of the biggest community building events in Camden.**

- Conducted a spring workshop for residents on vegetable gardening which provided residents with information on how to grow their own food. More than 40 residents attended.
- Began a campaign to educate residents about the effects of raking leaves into the street on the water quality of our creeks, lakes and river. 236 catch basins were stenciled with the message “Please Don’t Pollute, Drains to the River” by 15 volunteers including scouts from the local Girl Scout Troop.

2. *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?*

ViNA continued with their quarterly newsletter, and biweekly e-newsletter, and e-mail contact list and maintained their website which encouraged residents to connect with the neighborhood organization. We also published a short news article in the monthly Camden News and our Facebook page (290 fans) and Twitter accounts (95 followers) have exploded in participation, expanding our electronic network significantly and our monthly neighborhood meetings have attracted a number of new participants.

We organized and hosted a number of events which had a great deal of participation such as the Victory Garage Sale, Spring Cleaning and Greening day, the Garden Tour, and Movie in the Park. We also sponsored the Camden Farmers Market and were sponsors of the Live on the Drive, Lowry Avenue Harvest Fest and Holiday on 44th – all very large community events. Unfortunately, our most widely attended event, the Ice Cream Social, was rained out in 2011. At each of these events we provide information to all of our residents about ViNA and our programs, projects and activities.

Our most effective outreach is done by our volunteers and block leaders. We provide Welcome Packets that residents can bring to the new residents on their blocks. We have been making a concerted effort to identify and engage at least one resident per block that is willing to serve as the ‘key communicator’ for their block/neighbors. We have identified “key communicators” on 42% of the block in the neighborhood and are hoping to reach 50% by the end of 2012. We have also increased our e-mail list of over 100 residents and over 165 receive our electronic newsletter. There are now over 350 residents on our membership list.

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?

In 2011 we entered into a partnership to with the Patrick Henry High School Asian Cultural Club to identify and engage our Asian residents. In addition to publicizing and encouraging our non-Asian residents to attend the PHHS May Show, we have had students from the ACC attending some of our meetings and events. In the summer of 2011 we had a student intern from the ACC who attempted to identify Asian homes and door knocked and polled those residents about their interests and concerns in the neighborhood. Most of the Asian

residents remain isolated but we continue our partnership with the ACC and our outreach.

Please also provide the following:

- A. How many people currently serve on your board? **7** Are there vacancies? **No**
- B. Approximately how many individuals have participated in committee meetings in the last year? **25 (Environment 8, Events 10, Business 2, Livability 5)**
- C. How many people attended your annual meeting? **29**
- D. How many households regularly receive your publications (such as newsletters or newspapers)? **1989 receive the newsletter and the Camden News. 165 receive the e-newsletter which is forwarded to others.**
- E. Approximately how many people participate in other activities of the organization?
Garage Sale – 80 households had sales, 100s of people shopped
Garden Club – 8 members
Gardening Workshop – 40+

4. Financial Reports

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

See 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? We spent most of our time trying to get help with problem properties, parking issues at 42nd and Thomas, traffic concerns at 44th and Penn, a walking /bike trail at Ryan Lake, and a new Webber Park Library (Hennepin County)

What worked well? Nothing – except for help with problem properties from our CPS, Tim Hammett

What could be improved? We need someone who advocates for us in City Hall. We have never met or been contacted by our representative on the NCEC, Latrell Beamon.

2. *City Communications – effectiveness*

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful? NO! It is not timely, we receive short if any notice of meetings that affect us and meetings are usually held during the work day that is not convenient. Meetings are scheduled for the convenience of city staff and not residents.

3. *City Communications – timeliness*

Do you receive adequate notice of City activities in your neighborhood? There are few if any city activities taking place in our neighborhood, however, we have received timely notice of street repairs when they are being done. But other activities such as shutting off the power to move houses into our neighborhood and reducing 44th Ave N to two lanes to do water main upgrades received no notice what so ever.

If not, did your organization inform somebody at the City of this? Usually we inform our Council member of these because we know that informing City Department is futile (especially public works).

Did the City respond in a positive manner? Please explain. In the case of residents power being shut off without notice the response was a variety of excuses as to why they were not obligated to notify. The same response when they did not notify residents of their water being turned off during recent water main upgrades. When we informed Public Works about how the traffic divergence for water main work at 44th and Penn was causing major confusion and near accidents, they did respond by altering the traffic lanes and signage.

Another example of non-response and non-communication was during a recent incident when the water main was leaking at the connection to a rental property. Water poured down the street for nearly a month even though nearly every resident on the block called 311 numerous times. The response from 311 was that it was the property owner's responsibility to fix the problem and the City would fix it only if the property owner did not respond in 3 weeks! Residents have expressed frustration with calling 311 as they see no response. They no longer use 311.

4. *City Departments*

How can City departments improve the way in which they function in your neighborhood? **City staff should start to realize that they work for us – the taxpayers – and that we are not just an impediment to them having a good day. We need better communication - a list of phone numbers and who to call for specific problems AND phone calls/e-mails returned. 311 is not working. Better communication between departments and jurisdictions, such as Hennepin County, is also needed. City Departments need to stop working in silos.**

5. *City Assistance*

How can the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department improve the assistance it provides to your organization as a citizen participation group? **We need more timely notification of meetings, and events. City staff needs training on how to communicate with, respond to and work with neighborhood organizations. Representatives on the NCEC should be required to meet with and communicate with those they represent. We would like have more regular communication and responsiveness from our Neighborhood Specialist.**

6. *Other comments?*