

2012 ANNUAL REPORT

Audubon Neighborhood Association
1509 27th Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418

Contact person:
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Date of board approval: March 21, 2013

INTRODUCTION

2012 was a year of transition for Audubon Neighborhood Association. In December of 2011, five senior members of the board resigned for personal reasons ranging from pregnancy to moving out of the neighborhood. Most of the remaining board members were either newly elected or had joined in recent months. In particular, the newly elected president was a relatively new member (1½ years), but still was the second-longest-serving member of the board. As someone who had not been actively involved in management of board activities, he was in effect receiving on-the-job training.

In short, we all had a lot to learn. One source of support was NCR, which frequently provided informal guidance in response to specific requests, thus saving us the time and frustration of extensive research. The primary resource, however, was our office manager, Robin Sauerwein. Between her continuity and excellence at her job, Robin was invaluable in providing assistance to the board—the president, in particular—as we grew into our new roles. Simply, we could not have done it without her.

While it was a year of transition and frustrations, there were successes, as described in this document. We had—and still have—a lot to learn. But we learned a lot and matured as a board. This bodes well for 2013 and future years.

I. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2012?

Our primary activities were the following:

- Print and electronic newsletter
- “E-mail blasts” on specific issues
- A volunteer roster of people who had agreed to be contacted regarding specific one-time or short-term requirements
- An extensive campaign to involve the neighborhood in a particularly controversial issue regarding the city’s request to use neighborhood funds to partially finance building a house in the community
- Distribution of literature and discussions at the neighborhood’s farmers’ market.

How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2012?

We see this as an area in which we did not do well. Reaching out to these neighbors is the primary focus of our NPP-development process.

The proposed house development noted above would have taken place in a neighborhood area in which residents are not involved in the community. We successfully reached out to these neighbors through traditional means (electronic announcements), word-of-mouth, and (particularly) delivering flyers to every home near the lot in question.

Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?

The flyers seem to have been most successful. It is difficult to tell for certain, however, what brought people to the meeting. Regardless, the meeting was by far the best-attended of the year.

What did not work so well? Why?

We suspect that the use of the e-newsletter and e-mail blast may not have reached much of the target population.

How many people did you reach through direct contact (door-knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?

Forty, primarily through attendance at meetings. We also reached an unknown number—certainly dozens—by distributing literature and discussing neighborhood issues at our farmers market.

How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?

Approximately 25, including board members, newsletter writers, and individuals helping with specific activities, such as the Spring WingDing described below.

How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?

We must give very approximate numbers:

- **Spring WingDing**, our annual social event: Approximately 200, a smaller number than expected—we were limited to indoor activities because of rain.
- **Farmers' Market**: There were approximately 3200 customers over three months. It is impossible to say how many individuals took part, since most presumably visited more than once and individuals outside of Audubon patronized the market. However, it seems reasonable to estimate that at least 300 neighbors came to the market at least once.
- **Community Meetings**: Approximately 20 neighbors on average attended the bimonthly meetings, generally the same individuals.
- **Homeowner's Loans**: Twelve loans were granted in 2012.
- **Garage Sale**: Approximately 35 Audubon homes participated in the garage sale, and several hundred buyers from around Northeast patronized the sales. We cannot provide more specific information, because it was a three-neighborhood event and we don't know how many of the customers were Audubon residents.

A very rough estimate is that 800 neighbors participated in one or more of these activities.

How many people receive your print publication?

We print 2250 copies, approximately 2000 of which are mailed directly to neighbors. The remaining copies are distributed through local businesses, service centers, and other institutions. Therefore, the newsletter advertises community activities to neighbors from outside of Audubon as well as to our own residents.

How many people receive your electronic communications?

Approximately 160.

2. 2012 HIGHLIGHTS

As requested, we are limiting our response to two events.

The Spring WingDing, held April 28, was a community event held in conjunction with Audubon Park and Northeast Middle School. The event included exhibits, entertainment, and food donated by local merchants (the food was sold to the public, the proceeds going to a middle-school parents' organization.) Because of rain, we could not hold outdoor athletic activities as planned, and entertainment activities were limited. However, we estimate that 200 people attended, almost all from the neighborhood. Most were families, and perhaps half of the attendees were children.

The Polk Street property community meeting in May was the one controversial issue that the community faced last year (recognizing that there may be other issues that have not come to light). We highlight this event because we successfully brought our members of the community (and were commended for our effectiveness in doing so) and involved the community in a major decision rather than making it at the board level.

3. 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Most of these have been addressed:

- Spring WingDing
- Farmers' market
- Polk Street community meeting
- Garage sale

In addition, we believe that our bi-monthly newsletter is very successful. It is edited by a highly experienced editor, and community volunteers write the articles. We have it produced professionally by a local printer, which we believe is money well spent. The newsletter continues to be very positively received, both within and outside of the community. It is our primary means of communication with the community. We also send out a monthly electronic version of the newsletter.

The community was involved in a potential development of the Hollywood Theater, a city-owned Johnson Street landmark that has been vacant for decades. Our involvement included a meeting with the interested developer, attendance at an Economic Development Commission meeting, and dedication of a community meeting to a presentation of the proposed plans.

In June, the ANA president contacted his counterparts from four adjacent neighborhoods and arranged a meeting to discuss common concerns and identify future joint projects. The group has since expanded to six neighborhoods and continues to meet monthly. While initial meetings primarily involved discussing common problems and sharing ideas, we have more recently begun to address potential common initiatives.

4. HOUSING

We must confess that the time spent on housing has been minimal, under 1%. This is an issue warranting long-term focus, particularly in terms of evaluating the best use of our remaining NRP funds.

5. FINANCIAL REPORTS

An income and expense report is attached.

6. INTERACTIONS WITH CITY

Impact

As noted in the introduction to this document. NCR was particularly helpful early in the year as the board worked to get up to speed in our work. Carrie Day Aspinwall, our neighborhood representative, was responsive and gladly attended meetings when asked.

Last Spring, NCR informed us that our by-laws were not in compliance with city regulations and needed to be re-written to maintain our funding. We received a great deal of help in this process, which led to a new set of by-laws that was more clear, reflected changes that had taken place over the years, and was fully in compliance with city regulations. The community unanimously approved the new by-laws in our annual meeting.

Effectiveness

The response to specific questions was very helpful. However, it was difficult for us to get an understanding of our current financial status or the specifics of the financial relationship between the association and our funding sources. This was particularly frustrating as we were finding our way in the early months. City reports are not always as clear and straightforward as they might be, and high-level, condensed versions would be very helpful.

As we have discussed with our neighborhood specialist, we have had significant problems with the quality of support we have received from the NCR accountant. We are considering doing what some other neighborhoods have done: obtained independent accounting support at their own expense.

Timeliness

It sometimes took a while to get responses to phone calls and e-mails, but we recognize that NCR staff are very busy. We do hear back in time.

City Departments

We don't have any specific ideas regarding how city departments could better serve our neighborhood. This is an area that we hope might be better addressed as part of the NPP process.

City Assistance

NCR held an informal informational meeting at the Central Avenue Library that the president found to be very helpful. We encourage you to hold additional meetings that provide an opportunity to discuss issues with NCR representatives.

Overall Rating

We give a rating of 4. The three reasons that the rating is not a 5 are timeliness, confusing reports, and poor accounting support. We emphasize, however, that our experience with the city departments has generally been positive and we appreciate your assistance over the past year.