

**Community Participation Program
2012 Annual Report**

Neighborhood Organization: **Bryant Neighborhood Organization (BNO)**

Contact person: Nina Soffer – Staff 1 position

Date of Board Approval: **March 5, 2013**

1. Stakeholder Involvement

Reviewing your CPP activities in 2012, Please provide information about:

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

Earth Day- We've made an annual commitment to work to clean up the area around Phelps Park which is a hub for the boys and girls club but also for the community at large; with its playground, the Phelps Activities Council (PAC) running sports programs and the Minneapolis Parks Department renting out space for teams to practice or play. We look forward to the day when more people will volunteer to come out, meet their neighbors and clean up the area. We are certainly expecting greater attendance in years to follow than we received in previous years since we increased the visibility of the organization and have gotten out to the community more than ever.

Community Meeting- We hold three community meetings every year and an annual meeting to do official business. Our community meetings are held at the South Side Boys and Girls Club usually on a Saturday Morning. We have the board of directors present as well as our staff. We also have regular invited guests such as Elizabeth Glidden, Mark Graves (boys and girls club director), and James Halbur who heads up PAC, Karen Notsch our Safety Officer as well as a rep from GMHC who runs our NRP funds for our housing loans and a representative from the Parks Dept. We always have opportunities for our residents to ask questions and make suggestions for the future of the BNO and the Bryant Neighborhood. We have been earnestly working on greater turn out and hope that attendance multiplies as our residents see the dedication the BNO has to its neighborhood and residents.

Movies in the Park- This event is always co-sponsored with the Mpls Parks Dept. and draws nice crowds in summer nights to see a movie with neighbors. Typically, a board member introduces the movie and gives a brief description of the organization so there was greater recognition of what the BNO does for and in the neighborhood.

Annual Meeting-*This meeting is held annually in October and is the time to elect our board members and executive committee. It is also the time that we have many guests to inform our residents with happenings in our neighborhood. This year for the first time in many years, we published an Annual Report Booklet which showed all of our accomplishments as well as how we spent our money to make them happen. A week following the meeting, we sent the annual report in our newsletter to all the households in Bryant. We also gave brief descriptions of all the sponsored events that were held throughout the year.*

Newsletter- *This is one of our cornerstones of communication with our residents. We mail out a quarterly newsletter that always speaks of our housing loans for renovation work; new businesses in the area; upcoming events and recaps of past events; request for volunteers and showcase new opportunities that arise. We recently were awarded free paint from Valspar and presented it after the newsletter was out so that all families had an equal chance of applying for the paint grant. Once the grant was secured, the information was then sent through e-democracy and placed on Face book as a reminder.*

E-democracy – *Is a great forum that the BNO supports and uses regularly to disseminate information to our residents. We display city wide events as well as localized events. It is used as a way to garner interest in BNO happenings and ask for participation and/or volunteers for events. This is a great way to communicate safety issues as well as a way to see what is going on in the neighborhood from all our residents. The E-democracy site has approximately 200 members at the time of this report.*

Facebook- *This is a media based social network where we have a BNO group page. We currently have 110 members at the time of this writing. The site is used as a way for residents to communicate with one another as well as a device for us to distribute information. It is monitored by the BNO and has been a great resource to find out about events, get information out quickly. We are working to increase our membership numbers.*

Rain garden planting- *We initially started this project with NRP funds and it was incredibly successful. We planted 2 boulevards with native and drought resistant plants and then we chose 12 houses to design and plant rain gardens to help preserve the Mississippi watershed and to enhance the neighborhood. All the homes that received rain gardens were along the 40th street bike corridor where we have a fair amount of bike and pedestrian traffic in the warmer months. The final event which was to plant the gardens was a volunteer based effort where we used CPP funds for supplies on planting day.*

National Night Out (NNO) - This is a long standing sponsored event where we have grants up to \$150.00. Block leaders apply for funds to help sponsor the event and to bring fun and entertainment to their NNO event. We do not pay for food but our typical grant application asks for dollars for utensils and activities for children, like the blowup jumpers.

We have many NNO events in our neighborhood. During NNO our staff person tries to go and visit as many happenings as possible to represent the BNO and to let our residents know what is happening in the organization as well as the neighborhood. The staff person also tries to get more email addresses and sends links to our Facebook, e-democracy and website to gain greater accessibility to do outreach

Ice skating and Sledding Days- We work in conjunction with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation to set up days for residents and kids from the Southside Village boys and girls club to go ice skating at Sibley Park and sled at Phelps Park. For the sledding days, the parks dept. supplies sleds for kids and adults alike to sled down the banks of Phelps Park.

Accounting- We hired an accountant to set up our system in QuickBooks so that we would be more efficient and accurate in our finances to both the city and our residents. Our accountant comes in on an as needed basis to make changes to the system so it is even more effective and gets us prepared for the annual filing our taxes

Office Space- Our office is located in the Southside Urban League Building. We have been committed to the building for 2 years now and enjoy the space since we get to share with other organizations doing work in the neighborhood.

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

We have found that the most under-represented community is our Latino population. We actively sought out native Spanish speaking residents to our board but had no luck in having someone volunteer. We have sporadically written newsletter articles in Spanish to begin to engage our Latino residents more, but it is not consistent. We tried sending out flyers in Spanish to announce community meetings but still have had little success. We also did outreach to try and find a Somali resident that was to no avail as well.

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

Communication was a tremendous success.

We were able to implement several new products to get information out to the neighborhood.

- **What did not work so well? Why?**

The BNO has not had a consistency to our outreach to the Latino population.

There is probably a cultural disconnect as well that we need to spend time on to discover what is necessary to reach out in an effective way.

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

Through all of these methods we have met with over 200 residents directly. Many through community meetings, earth day, NNO out outreach efforts, as well as various volunteer opportunities throughout the year.

- **How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?**

We have had over 50 volunteers for our activities this year.

- **How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?**

250 Individuals have participated in our organizations activities in 2012. There are quite a few individuals that come to more than one event.

- **How many people receive your print publications?**

We mail out 1000 publication to each resident and business in our neighborhood which translates to over 2300 residents receiving our newsletters on a quarterly basis.

- **How many people receive your electronic communications?**

We have 200 e-democracy members and 114 Face book members

2. 2012 Highlights

Please describe one or two major highlights, and if possible, please include digital photos or illustrations:

- **What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?**

The issue that the BNO and Neighborhood was facing was lack of communication and outreach to the Residents. Residents did not really know we existed or had distrust from past boards and had become disengaged from the BNO

- **Who was impacted?**

All residents were impacted.

- **What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?**

The BNO in its due diligence began to make sure the newsletter was written and distributed quarterly to the homes of the Bryant Neighborhood on a regular basis. Articles always include something on the remodeling loans, as well as introductions to businesses or organizations in Bryant neighborhood.

The BNO also established regular quarterly community meetings that are announced in the newsletter or are flyered in the neighborhood; we hold our regular annual meeting in October as well.

We also created a website and Facebook group page so we can get information out on a regular basis to the residents who choose to join. Information on how to join is always on the newsletter as well. We also supported the transition from yahoo group to e-democracy which is another outlet for us to disseminate information. We have a resident who is the over-serer of Facebook and he does a great job in keeping it pertinent and open to all our residents.

We also for the first time in years put out an Annual Report Booklet for the public to see our annual report. This was a joint function of the treasurer and staff of the BNO. It was distributed to residents and the city at our annual meeting and was then sent out in our quarterly newsletter to all our residents so they could see the progress and get an idea on what it is the BNO works on in a yearly capacity.

- **What was the outcome?**

The main outcome is that our residents know that we exist and that the BNO is striving for excellence and looking to serve its residents to help the neighborhood grow and communicate it needs to each other as well as the city. We are beginning to get greater responses to volunteer requests as well as greater participation in meetings and events. There is still a need to grow and get better but we have certainly come a long way in the past 2 years.

See Attachments A & B – Photos

Issue #2: *The need for marketing materials to market the neighborhood association and to have information available at neighborhood functions.*

Who was impacted?

All the residents of the neighborhood

What Steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?

We utilized board members along with other neighborhood resources (i.e., 38th & Chicago Business Association staff – Bright Business Program) to assist us with creating a brand.

We received assistance in creating a brochure to market the neighborhood.

We received assistance with the update of the website.

For the first time in years we put together an Annual Report that was distributed throughout the neighborhood to all residents and also enclosed it in our newsletter to make sure everyone received the information and posted the report on our website.

We put together tri-folds with information and pictures of completed projects for events and functions.

What was the outcome?

We were able to create a brochure with information about the neighborhood association. Complete with office hours, board members, location and history of the neighborhood. (See attached)

We are currently revising this brochure to make it more cohesive with the Annual report and to give more polished look and identity to our neighborhood so that we can market the BNO through merchandise and new border/corridor markers within the neighborhood.

3. 2012 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2012:

- What were your organization's major accomplishments?
 - *Organizing our financials*
 - *Board Training*
 - *Updating our QuickBooks accounting system*
 - *Filing our 990's & updating our registration with the IRS*
 - *Organization of our office files*
 - *Rain gardens established with aide and assistance of Metro Blooms*
 - *Flowers planted at Phelps Park with the assistance of the Mpls Park Dept.*
 - *Met with seniors in the neighborhood to establish their needs.*
 - *Completed 1st Annual Report put together a financial report for our annual meeting. It is the first time it was done and the neighborhood gained a lot of insight into the organization and had a product they could look at to see what the dollars from the city helps us to accomplish. (see attached file) The report highlighted the major activities that occurred in Bryant for the year.*
 - *Designed and completed a new brochure for BNO to use for events. (see attached file)*
 - *Earth Day clean up*
 - *Regular quarterly community meetings and annual community meeting*
 - *Quarterly newsletter delivered to every residence and business in the Bryant Neighborhood*
 - *Regular updates to our e-democracy and Facebook members on Bryant happenings as well as happenings in the surrounding area*
 - *Many announcements to our residents about our NRP funding for renovation work, this has increased the usage of these loans significantly*
 - *We have a board of 8 at the time of this writing which is more than we have had in at least 2 years.*
 - *We have created an excellent relationships with the Park s Department, trying to beautify the park and keep it in good condition, Boys and Girls club- supporting their efforts with local kids*
 - *We have established a relationship with Watershed High School Sponsoring their computer labs*
 - *We supported a summer Hip Hop camp for children at Watershed that was highly successful*
 - *We have been an active member of the SUN project from close to its inception*
 - *We have helped sponsor youth sports at Phelps park throughout the Phelps Activity Council*
 - *We have applied for various grants*
 - *We received the Valspar paint grant program allowing us to distribute free pain to our residents*
 - *We have pushed our NRP housing loans- increasing our applicants over the past years*

- *We hold regular monthly board meetings*
 - *4 new board members*
 - *We have participate in the facade grant program and continue to grant money to local business to beautify their exteriors*
 - *We are members of the 38th Street Business Association and active with their work*
 - *We have a how to keep in touch flyer we hand out to residents so they know how to reach us and our various media outlets*
 - *We added a Razor donation widget to our Face book page and website*
 - *We had a very productive year implementing structure to our organization. We launched plans and events that had not been accomplished before. We have set up structure for future boards to continue and we are looking forward to meeting new challenges and getting funds to our seniors to assist them with their daily living.*
 - *We also plan on establishing some fundraising events to obtain additional funds to assist with our neighborhood development.*
- *How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work?*
 - *There is better awareness of the existence of the Bryant Neighborhood Organization*
 - *There is a greater knowledge of resources available to homeowners and businesses.*
 - *More neighbors are participating in events*
 - *Neighbors are more aware of green initiatives*
 - *There is a better knowledge of the work that is accomplished by the organization by having physical materials that can be distributed throughout the neighborhood.*
 - *The boys and girls at the Boys and Girls Club were affected directly with our cleaning of the kitchen efforts as well as through financial means. We have given money to the Boys and Girls Club to enhance their learning efforts at the club.*
 - *We have sponsored the Phelps Activity council to help pay for uniforms where 50% of the funds needed to go towards girls participating in the various sports.*
 - *We helped the local high school by sponsoring their computer lab; giving them access to computers and software.*
 - *We worked to beautify the park and get all three organizations that work at the park to function more efficiently*
 - *We had movies in the park which most people enjoy*
 - *We beautified the neighborhood with our rain garden project*
 - *We offered low and no interest loans for home remodeling projects*

4. **Housing**

What percentage of time did your organization spend on housing-related activities?

15%

We check in with GMHC every month with our board meetings, we promote our loan programs a dozen times a year and now initiated the Valspar grant program which will allow homeowners to receive free paint to repair their homes. It occupies a lot of our conversations I would say it is 15 percent of our time. But this is difficult for us to calculate.

5. **Financial Reports**

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

See Attached Income & Expense Report

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

1. *Impact*

What interactions with City departments occupied a major part of your time?

We had the most interactions with Bob Cooper and Carrie Day Aspenwall. They both assisted us with clearing up our financials as well as NRP modifications.

We also had contact with Judy Duffy for CPP reimbursements and Rebecca Parrell for our façade grants.

What worked well?

Being able to communicate via email has been great, though there is not always a swift response to emails and sometimes not direct answers or miscommunications.

Having access to dedicated individuals such as Judy, Bob Cooper and Carrie who are available and ready to work and assist us with our questions. Everyone has been extremely patient with our myriad of questions.

We do like the spreadsheets we can use for reimbursements.

What could be improved?

The paper work involved for modifications is burdensome and difficult. The BNO is rebuilding and systems were never in place for NRP or CPP therefore, we had to figure it all out from scratch which was very cumbersome. We believe it would be helpful to have handouts or a chart that shows the steps involved to make reimbursement requests and modifications.

Payment reimbursements can be slow and maybe more significant do not show what the reimbursement is for so tracking numbers down can be more difficult.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate your overall experience with your interactions with the City? 4

2. City Communications – effectiveness

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

Some of the information is understandable but there are a lot of emails and packets of information, some of interest and some not. It would be good to have information related to us on a priority scale so we can keep abreast of all the happenings. Different Neighborhood organizations have varying amount of personnel and hours dedicated. Ours is one of the least staffed hourly, it is taxing at times to read through everything and weed out what is of the greatest importance. Sometimes letters come a little late and it is difficult to get someone to attend a meeting so we go unrepresented.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City? 3

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.

Most of our board members are signed up on the cities list to receive notices. The Executive committee and our staff at BNO receive regular updates and they are at times posted to our website. On the other hand notices sometimes come late and it is hard to get people to attend. We have not corresponded with the city about this.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the timeliness of communications from the City? 3

4. City Departments

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

Depending on what time of year it is a timely response from the city is sometimes not the case. If there is a city event it can take up to one month to receive a needed response.

5. **City Assistance**

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

Have our NCR representative stop by with hands on assistance at lease 2-3 times per year to assure that materials and information are presented in the matter it is needed by the city.

On a scale of 1 to5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the assistance provided to your neighborhood by NCR? 3.5

We had a very productive year implementing structure to our organization. We launched plans and events that had not been accomplished before. We have set up structure for future boards to continue and we are looking forward to meeting new challenges and getting funds to our seniors to assist them with their daily living.

We also plan on establishing some fundraising events to obtain additional funds to assist with our neighborhood development.

*We will continue our work with the **SUN project** to see how the neighborhoods can aide and assist each other in the future. There is already a schedule prepared to share space for meetings. Each neighborhood will be responsible for the meetings for a three month period.*