

## **Community Participation Program 2012 Annual Report**

*Neighborhood Organization:* Corcoran Neighborhood Organization

*Contact person:* Eric Gustafson, Executive Director

*Date of Board Approval:* May 6, 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?*  
Direct methods included door-knocking, telephone calls, interaction at community events and committee and board meetings, participation in public art and other neighborhood projects, and interactions in our office. Indirect methods included flyering at homes, our monthly neighborhood newspaper and weekly e-mail newsletter, and interactions via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and E-Democracy, as well as online surveys.
- *How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2012?*  
Our farmers market programming and outreach has continued to target low-income residents and Latino and East African immigrants in the neighborhoods near the market, with the aim of building the most inclusive farmers market in Minnesota. As a result of our work, food assistance usage has roughly doubled each year since we became the first market in Minnesota to accept EBT-SNAP (food stamps), and our focused outreach drew 632 new users to the Midtown Farmers Market in 2012, the highest for a Minnesota farmers market on a per customer basis.

We also work hard to reveal, represent, and build leadership from hidden constituencies. For example, when Hennepin County announced plans to improve pedestrian safety where 32nd Street crosses Hiawatha Avenue, we arranged for a special presentation and input meeting at a nearby housing campus for residents living with traumatic brain injury (TBI), so the engineers could understand the experience of crossing rail tracks and a four-lane highway in a wheelchair. We have also been deliberate about holding various public meetings at Clare Midtown, a 45-unit supportive housing facility for people living with HIV/AIDS, in order to optimize engagement with this group. At present we are convening residents and building leadership for a new community garden near both these locations, focusing our door-knocking and recruitment efforts on residents who rent their housing, residents living with TBI, residents living with HIV/AIDS, and other underserved members of the community.

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

Door-knocking continues to be our preferred outreach technology based on 38 years of experience. More and more, we are also supplementing direct engagement campaigns with the use of social media.

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

While our e-mail newsletter was very popular when we launched it in 2006, we found during the last year that it is out of date in terms of appearance but especially functionality. People now expect to be able to comment on and interact via news items. As such we are currently retooling both our e-newsletter and our website to better meet peoples' needs, while increasing our use of Facebook.

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

Approximately 1,500.

- *How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?*

Approximately 200.

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

Over 60,000 including participation in the Midtown Farmers Market.

- *How many people receive your print publications?*

As we've done since 1985, we continue to hand-deliver The Corcoran News to all 1600 homes in the neighborhood, which comprise 3,942 people.

The Corcoran News is much more than a communication vehicle for CNO; it is primarily a participation venue which "seeks volunteer voices reflecting Corcoran's diversity to engage and equip our neighbors to better understand, improve, and protect the unique character of our neighborhood." Each edition consistently draws original writing and reporting on neighborhood-specific ideas and issues from 10-15 Corcoran residents, and we have increased efforts to ensure prominent placement of Spanish and bilingual content. Resident volunteers also provide editing and other production energies and expertise.

- *How many people receive your electronic communications?*

2,740 people receive the Midtown Farmers Market weekly e-mail and 844 receive CNO's e-mail newsletter.

## 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?*
- *Who was impacted?*
- *What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?*
- *What was the outcome?*

We recently wrapped up a project aimed at engaging youth and families in 10 participatory public art activities during the warm months of 2011 and 2012, with funding support from the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC). Our public art activities were intended to address the community-identified issue of traffic calming; the idea for a pavement mural emerged as a direct response to the 34xx 19th Ave block club's concerns about speeding cars and drivers' disregard for stop signs and traffic rules on their block.



*Pavement mural at 21st Ave/E. 33rd St installed by 90 volunteers led by artist Carole Bersin.*

More generally and more importantly, our project sought to give residents opportunities to shape public spaces in their neighborhood, to create public art, and to work with neighbors on a community improvement effort. In the winter/spring prior to each program year, we convened a small Art Jury comprised of neighborhood volunteers, City of Minneapolis Public Arts Coordinator Mary Altman, and technical consultant Susan Hensel at Susan Hensel Gallery. This group guided the creation of a Call for Art which Susan and Mary helped publicize using their networks. Each year we received 15-20 proposals which contained some very viable local artists and ideas.

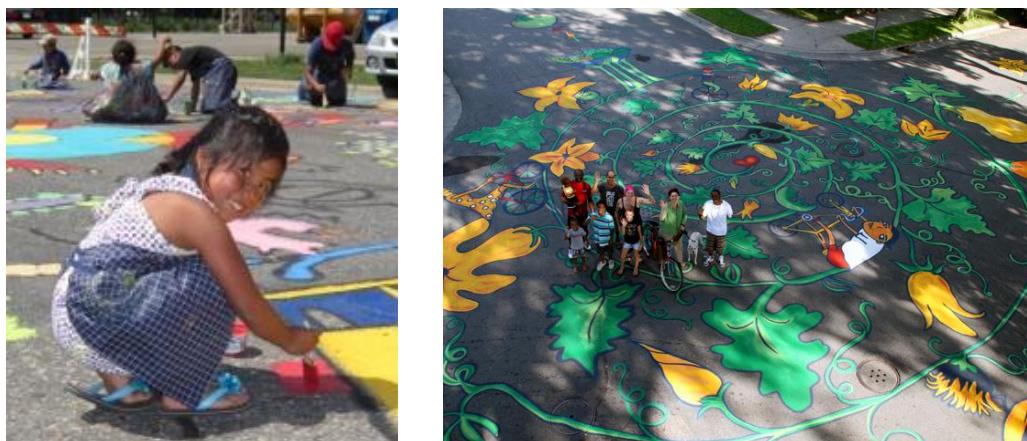
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*Street Theater performed at 6 National Night Out block parties by 12 volunteers led by artists Blake Love & Sandy Spieler.*

Once contracts were negotiated, we scheduled the art activities and prepared a plan to publicize and recruit participants for each of the activities using our free monthly neighborhood newspaper and other media, but focusing primarily on person-to-person outreach aimed at underserved groups within the neighborhood. This outreach included door-knocking and flyering at homes within a 1-2 block radius of each project site.

Our Call for Art asked the proposing artists to suggest a process through which residents would not only install the public art but would help to compose or provide input on the design to the greatest extent possible. One of the artists, Elise Kyllo, describes and demonstrates this process of gathering residents' ideas, incorporating them into her design, and then bringing the design back to residents for comments and suggestions prior to final design work, in the "Paint the Pavement" video we created and published on our website at <http://www.corcoranneighborhood.org/murals.html>. We strongly recommend this video for its vivid illustration of the project process and impacts, which are representative of all of our pavement mural projects. The video is also intended as a tool for community groups considering organizing a participatory public art project. The video was funded by the McKnight Foundation.



*Left: Pavement Mural at 21st Ave/E. 36-½ St installed by 80 volunteers and Folwell students led by artist Elissa Cedarleaf Dahl. Right: Pavement Mural at 19th Ave/E. 34th St installed by 100 volunteers led by artist Elise Kyllo.*

Another pavement mural was done in partnership with Folwell K-8 performing arts magnet, where the students were a primary participatory group in addition to neighborhood residents. In this case, artist Elissa Cedarleaf Dahl went into the classroom and shared a sketch of the blank intersection with each student. She asked students to draw their vision for the mural on the page and gathered input from over 100 students through this process. Elissa used as many of the students' images and conceptual ideas as possible in crafting her final design.



*Left: Faces of Corcoran at YWCA Midtown and various other storefronts and garage walls; photo portraits of 20 neighborhood residents by artist Sarah Claire Ahlers. Right: Fenceweaving Mural at Mpls Public Schools property at 22<sup>nd</sup>/E. Lake St. installed by 70 volunteers led by artist Denise Tennen.*

As we explain in our “Paint the Pavement” video (find URL above under “Process”), the desire to slow traffic served to unify community members. While we have not set out to measure or verify a change in driver behavior, a number of residents who live near the pavement mural sites have commented that traffic has slowed overall to some degree. Through the course of this work, we have shied away from claiming that pavement murals or other public art installations will change driver behavior, and we have instead focused on the broader community benefits and powerful community building opportunities of these projects.

We learned a great deal from this project, and we have since been invited to share our expertise on organizing publicly-created public art and placemaking with several neighborhood groups, as a presenter at the Sustainable Communities Conference in Minneapolis, and with two different University of Minnesota courses focused on urban design. We have also improved our skills in collaborating with artists and using art to engage community members.

### **3. 2012 Accomplishments**

*Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2012:*

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

**To make healthy food accessible to more people, CNO:**

- drew 55,000 people to 48 days of the Midtown Farmers Market's tenth season,
- broke our previous record for EBT (food stamps) accepted at the Market,
- helped Market vendors and residents donate 10,000 pounds of food to the hungry,
- equipped 4 corner stores to carry fresh fruits and vegetables, and
- planted the seed for a new community garden in 2013.

**To include more neighbors in the life and leadership of the neighborhood, CNO:**

- drew 100 women to Mujeres en Acción y Poder groups at Corcoran, Powderhorn, and Sibley Parks, and
- organized 3 pavement murals and a fenceweaving project created by 350 youth and adults.

**To protect and improve neighborhood housing, CNO:**

- equipped new and veteran block leaders to prevent burglaries and crime on their blocks, and
- connected homeowners to energy-saving programs, fix-up loans, and foreclosure prevention help.

**To give residents a voice on important issues and decisions, CNO:**

- recruited residents to write, produce, and deliver The Corcoran News to every doorstep, and
- engaged and represented residents in important land use and planning decisions at City Hall.

And finally, to **ensure a strong future for our important work**, CNO united seven southside neighborhood organizations to explore partnerships and ways to do more with less.

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**4. Housing**

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

Approximately 25% overall including work supporting the planning and development of new housing, work supporting the rehabilitation by partners of foreclosed and distressed housing, work resolving problem properties in collaboration with City enforcement partners, and work promoting home improvements resources including home energy efficiency and low-cost graffiti prevention.

**5. Financial Reports**

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

Our 990 is attached to this 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?*

*What worked well? What could be improved?*

- Problem Properties and crime prevention work with Housing Inspections and the Police Department. This long-standing collaboration driven by CM Gary Schiff lost ground in 2012 when Regulatory Services restructuring furloughed a highly effective housing supervisor out of his role and budget cuts prompted a transition from monthly meetings of our Problem Properties Caucus to bimonthly or/and e-mail interaction only. CPS Karen Notsch remains a highly effective and invaluable partner.
- Public art projects with the Public Arts Coordinator, Arts Commission, and Public Works. While the “process” of collaborating with Public Works is far from transparent, it works well enough when Mary Altman is involved. Mary is another invaluable asset to the community.
- Healthy Living project with the Dept. of Health and Family Support. Great collaboration and perhaps the strongest communicators of any City department.
- Development-related work with CPED and David Frank. Strong overall and David is very friendly, accessible, and an effective communicator. Other CPED staff are also good communicators.
- CPP contract administration with Neighborhood Specialist Carrie Day Aspinwall. Good relationship and Carrie recently referred us to a training consultant who will be working with our board.
- Other interactions with Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR). Disappointing. For example, we requested help from a simultaneous translation specialist for our quarterly meeting, after hearing through word of mouth that NCR provides this service. Unfortunately, we had to seek intervention from our City Council Member to get a response from NCR after making multiple attempts over multiple weeks to contact both the translation specialist and then the NCR director. When the specialist did participate we received negative feedback from Spanish-speaking attendees about his performance and his attitude, and so for subsequent meetings we began paying a contractor we found on our own to provide a service that is ostensibly available to us from NCR at no cost. We work hard to include non-native speakers in our activities and can't afford to lose them due to a poor experience.

*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? “3” overall, because our “other interactions with NCR” have been so poor.*

**2. City Communications - effectiveness**

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

The information is generally understandable but is often characterized by unnecessarily technical and obscure jargon, and thus often requires seeking additional input from city staff to gain clarity.

*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" overall*

**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.*

As described above in our response to question #2, we have usually received the information we need through an adequate if not efficient process.

*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" overall*

**4. *City Departments***

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

Create a skilled liaison position for each major department and hire effective and friendly people for these positions.

**5. *City Assistance***

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

First, it is far from clear to us what sorts of services the NCR department offers or how to access them. Except for a minimal staff role to administer CPP funds, we recommend reallocating funds directly to community based organizations to hire their own assistance, e.g. for simultaneous translation. And/or, reallocate administrative resources to a contract with Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which has long provided effective and efficient support for the work of community based organizations and has a deep understanding of our work. Either of these scenarios would eliminate the political aspect of the current arrangement where NCR is a City department, and would result in a more effective use of resources.

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

**6. *Other comments***

