

Community Participation Program 2012 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Longfellow Community Council

Contact person: Melanie Majors, Executive Director

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1. Stakeholder Involvement

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

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

Our regular outreach and engagement activities for 2012 included:

- Regular communications and updates through LCC's media sources:
 - Facebook
 - Longfellow/Nokomis Messenger*
 - Yahoo Groups*
 - Facebook
 - E-democracy
 - LCC Website
 - LCC Insider email newsletter
 - LCC Weekly Events Round-up (new weekly email newsletter)
- Monthly committee meetings (Board of Directors, Environment and Transportation, Neighborhood Development Committee, Community Connections, Advancement, River Gorge, Environment & Transportation, Seward/Longfellow Restorative Justice, Longfellow Business Association, Transition Longfellow, East Lake Street Workgroup, Longfellow Faith Forum and Southside United Neighborhoods.
- Community meetings for on-going and emerging issues
- General Membership Meetings (April and October)
- LCC programs and events
- Meetings with Hennepin County Community Works, and other partner meetings.

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

In one of our most successful projects, LCC partnered with the local Volunteers of America Program (VOA) to create a program for recently incarcerated individuals to teach them job skills and increase their community involvement. We created a gardening program where 10 participants learned how to garden, attended workshops and organized community dinners where they cooked with the vegetables harvested from their garden. There were over 300 attendees at the 3 community dinners held. Two of the participants were subsequently employed through local businesses that assisted in the program. The project was awarded the 9th Ward Award sponsored by Councilmember Gary Schiff's office.

Funding for the program came from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) with a portion of LCC staff time funded by CPP. This model program has been funded by CURA for 2013 and has engaged one of the most under-represented communities in Greater Longfellow.

LCC has also begun to explore new models for engagement that differ from our current structure of committee and board meetings. In 2012 the LCC Board of Directors authorized the creation of the Lake Street Workgroup and Transition Longfellow. Both of these groups have experienced strong participation and have engaged residents and volunteers that have not been a regular part of LCC's committee meetings.

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

The NPI program was very successful due in part to our partnership with the VOA and also because our program was one that has not offered by any other organization in the community. There is a significant need for this type of programming in the community so there was little need for marketing or recruitment efforts.

The Lake Street Workgroup has been successful because there are many residents in Greater Longfellow who have an interest in the revitalization of East Lake Street and there have been several new developments along the corridor. The workgroup has been meeting regularly for over a year and has teamed up with the Lake Street Council and Seward Redesign for assistance in marketing and façade improvements.

LCC also completed a Market Study of East Lake Street in 2012 that has assisted the workgroup in determining the kinds of businesses that are

needed along the corridor as well as strategies for housing development that can bring a density to the community to support these businesses.

Transition Longfellow has been very successful because they offer a new model for community engagement that is informal. The group meets regularly for movies, workshops and small events and participation is low or no cost. The focus of Transition Longfellow is sustainability, which includes an exhaustive list of topics for members to address. Transition Longfellow has the resources of LCC at its disposal and maintains a separate email list and Facebook page to do their outreach.

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

What has not worked well for LCC has been our attempts at encouraging other underserved populations in our community (i.e., Latino and Somali residents) to participate in our events, activities and programs. There are models of outreach and engagement that are being tested in other neighborhoods where the Latino and Somali populations are much larger than in Greater Longfellow. With these other models, there is direct outreach such as door knocking and board recruitment that have been successful. There are also neighborhoods that have developed specific programs to attract underserved populations to encourage participation in other neighborhood activities. LCC has been working with the Longfellow Faith Forum to invite representatives from underserved populations to work with active members to create strategies for broader engagement. LCC also hired a new Community Engagement Coordinator in 2013 who is fluent in three languages to strengthen our ability to do outreach to underserved populations.

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

In 2012, LCC's door knocking was focused mainly on our Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) grant. This grant is funded by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency and was awarded to Hennepin County, LCC and the East Phillips Neighborhood. Our grant was used to survey residents of our respective communities on their environmental concerns and then have them rank their concerns. Through this process we were able to make direct contact with over 200 community residents.

LCC continues to hold regular monthly committee and workgroup meetings as well as special neighborhood meetings as needed (see attachment for numbers).

LCC does not track one-on-one meetings but we have approximately 380 visits to our office throughout the year from

residents and businesses seeking resources and information. LCC staff also meet regularly with individuals in the community to discuss issues and concerns, and with local organizations to strengthen our partnerships.

- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?

LCC estimates that 373 volunteers were engaged in our committees, program, events and activities in 2012.

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

LCC's estimates that 5,313 individuals participated in our events, activities and programs in 2012.

- How many people receive your print publications?

LCC pays for a monthly page in the Longfellow/Nokomis Messenger newspaper. Their monthly circulation is 21,000, which includes residents, businesses, libraries, schools, churches and parks.

- How many people receive your electronic communications?

- Facebook: 888
- Newsletter and Weekly Roundup: 579
- Website: 1,200 visitors per month
- Yahoo Groups: 420 people are signed up on our groups.

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?

The following highlighted programs were also addressed earlier in this report.

East Lake Street Workgroup

- The issue/opportunity for this group is the revitalization of the East Lake Street Corridor in Greater Longfellow. There are more open storefronts on East Lake Street than there are along the other 2/3 of Lake Street.
- The entire community is impacted by these empty storefronts. LCC wants to encourage new development, façade improvement and increased investment along the corridor.
- LCC commissioned a market study of East Lake Street to determine the housing and commercial needs along the corridor along strategies for the successful development. LCC Board members created the East Lake Street Workgroup to look at ways in which community members could influence growth and development along the corridor.
- As a result of LCC's focused efforts along the corridor, we have engaged 23 residents who meet regularly to discuss strategies for improving East Lake Street. To date, there are plans for a new grocery store, a new coffee shop and a new convenience store. LCC has supported Lake Street Council in obtaining Façade Improvement grants available to existing business owners and LCC has implemented an Arts in Vacant Storefronts program in coordination with the League of Longfellow Artists (LOLA) to promote the area and encourage new business. The East Lake Street Workgroup continues to meet.

NPI Grant

- The issue/opportunity for this project was a lack of programming and resources available to recently incarcerated individuals who were reentering the community.
- Residents of Volunteers of America (VOA) and community residents were and are impacted by the lack of resources offered to this demographic of the community.
- LCC and VOA created a program to serve the needs of the target population that would provide job-training, community involvement and resource development.

- LCC and VOA applied for and were awarded a grant from CURA that allowed us to implement this pilot program. There were 10 individuals from VOA that successfully participated in and completed this program. The result was two participants found employment with local businesses, 3 community dinners were held with over 300 participants and all 10 participants learned new job skills. LCC and VOA also received the Ward 9 Project of the Year award for this program and were awarded additional funding through CURA to replicate and enhance this program in 2013.

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?

Examples of LCC's 2012 accomplishments include the following:

General Membership Meetings

- April Meeting had 94 attendees and we elected a full board
- October meeting had 130 attendees
- At each meeting we are seeing new faces and an increase of families with children.

Hennepin County Community Works/Care

- Surveyed and talked to over 200 residents about their environmental concerns in the community. Worked with residents, businesses owners and community organizations to rank the identified environmental concerns for use in eventual project development.

League of Longfellow Artists (LOLA)

- Held the 4th Annual LOLA Art Crawl. The event is increasing in size and participation each year and getting positive attention from outside communities.

LCC Website

- Our organizational website was revamped by a board volunteer to increase transparency of our organization. Our website has an average of 1,200 visitors per month to our site.

Pathways to a Peaceful Community Panel Sessions

- LCC's Community Connections Committee developed, organized and implemented a series of 3 panel sessions addressing various community concerns. There were a total of 48 attendees.

Graffiti Grant Program

- LCC's Environment & Transportation Committee applied for and was awarded a grant to remediate graffiti in the community. Staff and volunteers contracted with local artists to create decorative wraps for 15 utility boxes in the neighborhood.

4. Housing

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

LCC estimates that we spent 25-35% of our time on housing related activities in 2012.

Through the work of our Neighborhood Development Committee and our East Lake Street Workgroup, we spent time on the following activities:

- Review of regulatory requests for commercial and residential development
- Updates to the community on several local housing developments
- Referrals to the Center for Energy and Environment for LCC's open housing loan programs
- Referrals to the Center for Energy and Environment for LCC's Emergency Deferred Loan Program
- Completion of the East Lake Street Market Study
- Development and implementation of the Art in Vacant Storefronts program
- Irrigation Free Landscape Pilot project
- On-going planning

5. Financial Reports

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

Financial report is attached.

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?

LCC communicates most regularly with the NCR Department, CPED and the Department of Finance. Each of these departments is critical to the functioning of LCC. LCC relies on our communications with CPED to keep the community informed of development finance and regulatory requests that will impact the neighborhood. The NCR and Finance Departments assist LCC in managing a portion of our administrative and program funding.

For the most part, LCC is able to obtain the information we need in a timely fashion. We have regular contact with staff from all three departments and have established positive relationships with staff.

Notices from the NCR Department and CPED are not always consistent. There are times when LCC will receive notices by mail or email or both. There have been times when we have not received expected notifications at all. It would be most helpful if the neighborhood notifications were communicated in a consistent manner.

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? **4.5**

2. *City Communications - effectiveness*

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

Information from the City is understandable for the most part. When notifications for policy and program reviews are sent to LCC, they are usually documents that are dense in content and not easy to share with community residents who might be interested in comment and input.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City? **4**

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.

There have been instances where LCC received late or no notice on City-held regulatory reviews for businesses in the community. When this has

happened, LCC has contacted the appropriate staff-person from the City and has experienced a positive response. What is most problematic for LCC is that when a notification is late or not received we are not able to provide appropriate notice to the community. Residents and businesses attribute the lateness of lack of notice to LCC instead of the City and LCC is held responsible for issues that we cannot control.

On a scale of 1 to5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the timeliness of communications from the City? **3.5**

4. *City Departments*

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

As mentioned before, CPED, Finance and NCR are the City Departments that we work with most frequently. One suggestion I have is for City Department leaders to make attempts to attend a few neighborhood committee or board meetings each year. This would help both the staff and committees to establish relationships with City leadership.

5. *City Assistance*

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

NCR provides excellent assistance to LCC because there are several staff available at any given time to answer questions and to respond to requests for assistance. NCR works well with the Department of Finance which is especially helpful to LCC when we are working on funding requests and managing our Phase II NRP and CPP contracts. The Department seems to be making great strides in transitioning from NRP to CPP program management. It would be helpful if there was more consistent expectations in reporting requirements for CPP funding.

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? **5**

6. *Other comments?*