

Community Participation Program 2012 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: [Windom Park Citizens in Action](#)

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Date of Board Approval: [March 26, 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? WPCiA continued outreach and engagement via its monthly neighborhood meetings (at which all “members” may make motions and vote), its board meetings, its Community Land Use and Planning Committee, and the culmination of its NRP Phase II Steering Committee work, as well as via the annual carnival/fundraiser held in conjunction with Pillsbury School. Our electronic mailing list continued to grow in number of subscribers (now nearing 400) and our monthly postcard mailings to all residential and business addresses in the neighborhood (approximately 3,100) continued with positive feedback from recipients. WPCiA hosted and organized a multi-neighborhood Central Avenue Forum in April attended by approximately 45 people. WPCiA also helped a neighborhood volunteer coordinate the first annual Neighbors Sale Weekend (yard sales) in which more than 100 addresses in three neighborhoods participated. We continued seeking input on our revamped Commercial Revolving Loan Program.

Attendance at our monthly meetings was higher in most months than in past years, with more new faces than usual attending the meetings in 2012 – some carrying the monthly postcard alert/agenda announcement with them. WPCiA strives to make its monthly neighborhood meetings true interactive community forums, where people know they can weigh in, make motions, vote, support/deny in an advisory capacity matters coming before the City Council, and generally have an influence on the direction of WPCiA. With 323 people signing in at our main monthly meetings this year (and others attending but not signing the roster), we have shown an increase in attendance this year.

WPCiA volunteers are among the 100 or so volunteers who help with our annual community carnival in conjunction with Pillsbury School and Windom Park Recreation Center. We also provided funding for well-attended annual Halloween and Bunny Party events at the park.

- How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2012? WPCiA mails a monthly postcard with brief announcements and upcoming agenda items to all addresses in the neighborhood, including
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businesses and renters (which we have identified as under-represented in our activities). We included some Spanish translation on the monthly postcards.

- Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?
The postcards appear to be useful in increasing attendance at our monthly neighborhood meetings and in bringing new faces to the meetings. Some have come to the meetings with postcard in hand, and some have commented that it reminded them of the meeting or compelled them to attend.

Via word of mouth/neighbor to neighbor (recruitment via a current board member), we now have a renter on our board of directors. Also, three local businesses have become fairly regularly attendees at our monthly neighborhood meetings.

- What did not work so well? Why? We continue to deal with difficulties stemming from the end of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and the new requirements/philosophy of the new NCR Department. Funding that involves engagement vs. actual projects is a new way of thinking for neighborhood organizations and their volunteers; the “marketing” of volunteer participation has changed markedly and will require more adjustment time.

In addition, we had some issues with non-responsiveness from city departments that impacted our work negatively. WPCiA’s board of directors deemed the “community engagement” issue important enough to make it a major agenda item at our February 2013 neighborhood meeting; other Eastside neighborhood groups were invited to join in this panel discussion.

- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)? Approximately 650.
- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities? Approximately 50 (board members, committee members, community gardeners and carnival volunteers)
- How many individuals participated in your organization’s activities? Approximately 1,900 (not including loan programs)
- How many people receive your print publications? Approximately 3,100 (all residents and businesses in the neighborhood) receive print communication

from us every month. (We use a professional mail house to update the mailing list each month.) We no longer publish a print newsletter due to capacity limitations as well as inherent limitations in timeliness and questions about whether recipients actually find a longer format useful or even want to read a newsletter format at all. At this time, it appears shorter communication via the postcard, coupled with our e-list, packs more punch and brings people to our meetings.

- How many people receive your electronic communications? Our e-list has nearly 400 people subscribed to it. We note this e-list on each monthly postcard and encourage people to sign up for more timely updates. We send announcements to this list an average of two to three times per month. We have a Twitter account and a “fan” page on Facebook administered independently via a resident, but thus far those formats take a back burner due to time constraints and the inherent limitations of wondering how many residents actually use them. We serve a fair number of senior residents who may not actively participate in social media. But we realize the need to “cover all bases” and try to communicate via multiple methods.

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?

[See below.](#)

3. 2012 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2012:

- What were your organization's major accomplishments? While not directly related to our CPP funding, a major accomplishment for WPCiA in 2012 was gaining City Council approval of its Phase II NRP Neighborhood Action Plan and the near-finalization of our Commercial Revolving Loan Program. We also consider it a major accomplishment that attendance at our monthly neighborhood meetings has increased when many neighborhoods now say they struggle to engage residents in attending their meetings.
- How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work? Residents will be directly impacted by the 24 strategies in our Phase II Action Plan as we now enter into the implementation phase. And the Commercial Revolving Loan Program will help businesses make exterior improvements to buildings at key corridor locations in and around the Windom Park neighborhood.

4. Housing

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

33 percent

5. Financial Reports

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

See attachment.

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? CPED business division (1) and NCR (2) occupied a major part of our time, along with follow-up communications clarifying information with/from planning staff. See other comments addressing this above and below.

From February 2013 neighborhood meeting preparation sheet:

- *City regulation requires only that a developer/zoning-change applicant “notify” the neighborhood organization, not “engage with” that community. Result: This can negatively impact “community engagement” and interfere with the role neighborhood organizations are contracted by the city to perform. It incentivizes applicants to sidestep/ignore neighborhood organizations and their “community engagement” processes, especially on potentially controversial projects. For example ...*
 - 1) *Developer/zoning applicant recently received approval from City despite failure to engage with the neighborhood organization on controversial project.*
 - 2) *Other applicants have questioned why they need to meet with the neighborhood organization.*

- *Lack of adequate notice for City’s public hearings means community engagement is negatively impacted: For example ...*
 - 1) *Several times so far in 2013 alone, Windom Park has been unable to perform its usual community engagement/notification process due to lack of notice/short notice from the city. (Primary method for WPCiA meetings: Postcards with agenda items are mailed monthly to each address.) The city contracts with neighborhoods to perform this community engagement role. We are receiving approximately two weeks’ notice of public hearings involving properties in our neighborhood. Most neighborhood organizations meet monthly for the main community engagement meeting/voting. Other policy issues are on a more useful 45-day notice system.*
 - 2) *City notices often provide little background information on the subject matter – they read more like just a legal notice, requiring volunteer and staff time to investigate. Ordinance change notices are vague, making it difficult to tell if the change is a minor housekeeping detail or a key revision*

impacting our community members. Attachments left off online City reports.

- 3) *CLIC – Capital Long Range Improvement Committee. NRP office formerly provided neighborhoods with a list of projects. Neighborhoods unable to determine what capital projects are pending or up for input in their community.*
 - 4) *Tax-forfeited property list requires very fast turn-around time. City’s letter always notes this and gives advance notice that city will not meet with neighborhood prior to deadline.*
- *Lack of engagement by some City departments/staff or improper engagement interferes with neighborhood organizations’ efforts at community engagement: For example...*
 - 1) *City department head recently tried to cancel, with one day’s notice, an annual meeting agenda item to which he was not an invited speaker. Other Hennepin County speaker (who had confirmed meeting attendance five to six weeks earlier) then declined to participate on day of meeting due to City staffer’s efforts. Neither has followed up on agenda item since.*
 - 2) *Difficulties in getting phone calls returned from City (reported by residents as well as neighborhood staff).*
 - 3) *WPCiA unable to utilize City’s Outreach team, Healthy Corner Store program, etc. despite need and requests.*
 - 4) *Regulatory information difficult and time consuming to obtain from city, even when it involves a pending project or specific question.*
 - 5) *WPCiA’s Commercial Revolving Loan Program – took years to develop; little information from City.*
 - 6) *311 has provided different versions of information than other City staff, leading residents and staff on wild goose chase (for example, on recent regulatory topic).*

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? ___2___

2. City Communications – effectiveness

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

No. Notice, when provided, is too often too late to allow us to engage in effective community engagement per our bylaws and the philosophy of WPCiA. Other information that we must dig out is often not user-friendly or doesn’t provide adequate “addendum” or background information. Notices of ordinance changes

do not provide context, such as current status and proposed status. This requires extra effort, time and expense on the part of neighborhood organizations to determine what the notice might mean for their constituents – assuming it can be done in a timely manner.

No communication has been provided on CLIC projects and processes since the NRP office closed.

In addition, there is a need for in-person communication/training from the NCR Department -- such as used to be done via the NRP Director and his staff. For instance: on the status of insurance (not just for potential vendors, but what's covered, what's not covered), 990 changes, more detailed explanation of recent program income changes, etc.

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

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.

See above. Yes, City was notified by WPCiA on more than one occasion. No response from city – just acknowledgement our comment.

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? 1

4. ***City Departments***

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

See No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 above.

5. ***City Assistance***

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

See above.

In addition, we have requested but been denied assistance from the outreach team for identifying and reaching out to under-represented groups, including Spanish speakers, in our neighborhood.

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? 2

6. ***Other comments?***

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in!