

Community Participation Program 2013 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: West Bank Community Coalition

Contact person: Hussein Ahmed

Date of Board Approval: June 18, 2014

1. Stakeholder Involvement

Reviewing your CPP activities in 2013, Please provide information about:

- What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2013?
2013 has been an exciting year for the WBCC: We were able to carry out improved and more pronounced community outreach by expanding our outreach methods. In October 2013, we launched new, and more interactive website, we use social media to connect people and share information events and news about the neighborhood, and we were able to use more resident volunteers for the activities and event we organized. We also carried out several events and projects in which we collaborated with various stakeholders ranging from educational institutions such as U of MN, Augsburg College, Fairview University Medical, West Bank Community Development Corporation, West Bank Business Association to name a few.

- How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2013?
As in last year, we are facing some challenges reaching out to the small Spanish and Korean members of our community. Our engagement with these groups was limited due to lack of volunteer interpreters in Spanish and Korean. We are now working on providing stipends to get outreach materials translated into these languages, We have sought the help of the NCR Department for help and they have offered us help with Spanish translations and the valuable advice on how to do a better outreach to these underrepresented communities.

- Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?
Yes, as we are coming to realize by now, the traditional flyers and postings are becoming less effective with most people particularly younger and middle-aged groups. As a result, we now use Social Media tools such as Facebook and to lesser extent Twitter both linked to our newly redesigned website to reach out to residents. We also use the e-Democracy, which has a large number of subscribers of all ages and ethnicity. Other strategies we found effective in terms of reach are the 411 phone program (a phone call in/listening programs mainly run by Somalis) and KFAI Radio. As for the immigrant residents, we still use word of mouth, talking to smaller groups

at a time by visiting their buildings to talk to them as a group and on one-on-one basis. This has been quite successful.

- What did not work so well? Why?
Posting flyers the neighborhood has not worked well for us. We realized there are over abundance of flyers in the neighborhood and it appears that people have developed mental fatigue, and to some East African residents it is a challenge reading – even in their own language. In this group we use the traditional word of mouth, talking to group leaders, KFAI Radio, 411, a phone call in/listening in programs mainly run by Somalis.
- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?
During our last election of WBCC Directors in December 2013, we door knocked and flyered the neighborhood reaching an over 2,000 residents. We hosted three jobs and opportunities events in which a total of 450 people attended.
- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?
We have a list of 20 volunteers from the *community*. We seek the help of some of these whenever to host or co-sponsor community events. However, we have a core of 9 volunteers who help us with activities.
- How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?
Some of the activities that were attended include: On June 1, 2013 we organized the *Cedar Riverside Resource Fair* in collaboration with Augsburg College in which 173 people attended. On June 15, 2013 the WBCC and the West Bank Community Development Corp. collaborated to organize *Don't Pass Us By* event to highlight the opportunities and challenges the LRT (train) system will bring to the West Bank. Over 200 people attended the event. On November 22, 2013 we held *Youth Employment and Education Forum* in which 30 youth participated and received job application from the Nature Conservancy Group.
- How many people receive your print publications?
A typical print publication from WBCC is received by at least 1300-2000 people. This is based on the houses we flyered and the postings we printed and delivered to announce our annual meeting and board election.
- How many people receive your electronic communications?
We have electronic email subscribers through Mail Chimp of over 250 people. Our email subscription also has similar number of subscribers – they overlap. In 2014 we plan to enhance our reach by soliciting more residents and businesses to subscribe to our website as 'members'. Our newly redesigned website can have up to 2000 subscribers.

2. 2013 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?

In the year 2013, the WBCC held or participated as major partner 10 events. Two of major highlights for our organization are listed below:

1) In April 2013, The WBCC partnered with the WBCDC on the *Don't Pass Us By* (DPUB) a community engagement project to help community of color become fully involved in the LRT transit planning. The main goal of the project was to inform the communities in Cedar Riverside about the arrival of the LRT in 2014 and the economic impacts – both positive and negative that may result. The aim of DPUB project is to ensure the immigrant owned business and minorities are not displaced by the arrival of the LRT but are able to take advantage of the development and economic prosperity the train might bring the neighborhood. With this in mind, the WBCC and WBCDC sponsored a presentation by Faisal Roble an expert on urban development and Senior Planner for the City of Los Angeles. There were over 200 people that attended the DPUB event held at Brian Coyle Center on June 15th. We conducted exit interview on participants and the feedback was very positive. We also produced videos about the event. The Somali version and English subtitled (shortened) version of the video is now available at the WBCC website.

CEEDAR THE DON'T PASS US BY TRAIN IS COMING

It will bring new customers and higher rents for businesses. Will our businesses be displaced? How can the community be part of this future?

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

Saturday, June 15th - 2 to 5 p.m.
Brian Coyle Community Center • 420 15th Avenue S.

Child Care available • A light snack will be served

Sponsored by West Bank CDC and West Bank Community Coalition

Featured Speaker
Los Angeles City Planner
FAISAL ROBLE

Faisal Roble, a Senior City Planner for Policy and Master Planning for the City of Los Angeles, currently manages citywide policies and programs related to housing, mobility, and the development of Transit Oriented Districts (TODs), serving some 10% of the city with over 1.2 million residents.

Faisal closely works with Council offices, the Mayor's office, and various business and civil organizations between the Planning Department and the community at large. Faisal is one of the most influential persons in planning in the city of Los Angeles.

Learn more at our website
Wixii faah faahin dheeraad ah fadlan booqo websaadeena
DONTPASSUSBY.ORG

CEEDAR TAREENKA WUU DON'T PASS US BY IMAANAYAA

Waxaanu la imaan doona macaamil cusub iyo ijaarka dukaamada oo qaaliyoba Ganacsigeena mala bara bixin doonaa? Mise, qeyb baan ka noqon doonaa mustaqbalka? **FADLAN NAGALA SOO QAYBGAA SHIRKAN AAN KA WADA HADALNEE.**

Sabti, Juun 15keeda 2-5 pm
Brian Coyle Community Center
420 15th Ave. South

Caruurta was la idin hayn doonaa Cunno was la keeni doonaa

Waxaa soo Qabanaabiyeey West Bank CDC ayo West Bank Community Coalition

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DONTPASSUSBY.ORG



Above: Flyers in English and Somali and Photos of *Don't Pass Us By* event hosted by WBCC and WBCDC June 15, 2013

2) On June 1st, the WBCC co-sponsored the Cedar-Riverside Employment and Training Resource Fair in partnership with the Brian Coyle Center, Augsburg College, Cedar Riverside NRP, Riverside Plaza Tenants' Association, Emerge,

Corridors 2 Careers and Search to provide community the opportunity to learn about job training and education programs provided by 14 organizations and institutions that attended the fair including Emerge, Clues, Goodwill/Easter Seals, Employment Action Center, Project for Pride Living, Minneapolis Community & Technical College, Dunwoody Institute, St. Catherine's University, and Summit Academy to name a few. Over 175 people attended the fair including 17 participants, mostly young adults that enrolled in the ACT National Career Readiness Certification assessment. This assessment enables individuals to practice critical work skills to improve and become readily employable.

2013 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2013:

In July 2013, The WBCC collaborated with several neighborhood organizations and stakeholders including Augsburg College, HealthForce Minnesota, Riverside Plaza Tenant's Association (RPTA), Fairview Hospital, University of Minnesota, Sherman Associates, ADC and the Cedar-Riverside Partnership to organize the Urban Scrubs Camp 2013, a 4-day summer program that helps more high school students consider health care careers and to expose them to college life. Students also get the chance to see and participate hands-on training on various fields in health care ranging from Chiropractic to Veterinary Medicine. The program is increasingly becoming popular in Cedar Riverside. In 2012, only nine (9) students of the 20 spots reserved for students from Cedar Riverside/West Bank were filled. This year, however, 17 students attended the program. The students that participated in the program were engaged in the program and said it was a fun learning experience. The WBCC is excited to be part of this important initiative that will enable youth to get acquainted and empowered to consider the lucrative field of health care as a profession after high school.

- During 2013, we continued our participation in the task force on LOT A Development, a city owned parking lot located on Cedar Ave and 4th Street South (behind the Red Sea Restaurant.) The West Bank Business Association (WBBA), and the WBCDC and the WBCC called for a comprehensive planning process to address the development of the site and the changes it may bring to the neighborhood. The three organizations also formed a task force of community representatives from each of the three sponsoring organizations, the University of Minnesota, the University District Alliance, and Councilman Cam Gordon's office. The job of the Task force was to voice our concern about the potential loss of 100 commercial parking spaces that serves all of the businesses near the intersection of Cedar and Riverside once the city develops the site. The task force met 11 times during the year and presented recommendations to five community meetings. The task put forth analysis and recommendations and did revision of the proposed criteria based on community comments. As a result, the Task Force produced a Lot A Resolution that was approved by all three neighborhood organizations. This summer the resolution was sent for consideration to Mayor R.T. Ryback, Councilman Cam Gordon and City of Minneapolis' Community Development Committee Chair Lisa Goodman.

- The WBCC in partnership with the MN Workforce Development and Riverside Plaza Tenants' Association to sponsor a two-day youth job training and skills assessment workshop held at the Riverside Plaza Resource Center (Computer Labs) on August 22nd and 23rd the WBCC in collaboration with the MN Workforce Solutions to administer job readiness assessment through NCRC. The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) certifies workers as having key work-ready skills and is a tool for businesses in Minnesota to hire the best employees while saving money and boosting productivity. There were 25 youth that registered for the program but only nine (9) attended and were able to complete two-day program. Most of those who did not attend the sessions said they had time conflict with summer school or work. Certificates of successful completion will be sent out to those who completed the program.

- In September 2013, The WBCC convened and facilitated a meeting between resident of the Cedars high rises and the management and staff of Metropolitan Housing Authority (MPHA) to help address issues of concern raised by the residents which included amount of rent charged by MPHA when residents travel to their home country; entry of units prior to 48 hour as required by the lease rules; alleged violations of tenant rights and safety concerns in and around the premises. There were 105 participants that attended the meeting. Also present were Senator Kari Dziedzic, State Representative Phyllis Kahn, and Abdi Warsame from Riverside Tenants' Association (RPTA.) The meeting was well attended and covered all the issues of concern to the residents. It was agreed that the WBCC executive director and the MPHA management would work together

by meeting as needed to address any future issues and concerns residents raise. Senator Kari Dziedzic offered to follow up with the MPHA on the issue of full rent being charged to low-income residents when they take extended (90 days) leave to visit their relatives in Africa.

- On November 25th the WBCC held its first ‘Engaging our Youth Series’ entitled *Youth Open Forum on Employment and Education* at Brian Coyle Center. The aim of the forum was to hear and learn more about youth perspectives on job search, career charting and education. There were 30 youth aged between 15-21 that attended the event. Topics of major concern to youth included not taking the time to thoroughly filling out job applications, issues with online applications (no one calls back), lack of transportation, no peer mentorship, help with personal development such as confidence building, being assertive, proper dress attire to work, help with resume/cover letter writing to mention a few. We also invited The Conservation Corp MN & Iowa. Len Price, the Executive Director and Hollis Emery came and gave a presentation about the Conservation Corp and the available job opportunities for youth: Youth employment for 15-18. This program is led by Ameri Corps members and offered youth opportunities to connect with the natural world through hands-on conservation and neighborhood beautification projects, job and leadership skills training, environmental science education and recreation.

Jobs for this program include Summer Youth Corps and Youth Outdoors and Youth employment for 18-25. This program provides meaningful work for young adults in managing natural resources, responding to disasters, conserving energy and leading volunteers, field crews, seasonal trail crews, home energy squads, conversation apprenticeship academy, individual placements, and youth leaders. Details of these jobs were posted on our website. The WBCC believes this is a great opportunity for youth to not only obtain paid jobs, but to also learn interpersonal skills, work ethics and leadership skills that will serve during their entire lives. Senator Kari Dziedzic, a tireless champion for youth development and empowerment, referred these jobs to us. We plan to continue to work with Senator Dziedzic in the coming years to continue to make a difference in the lives of community members. One great accomplishment the WBCC is really excited is the fact that youth unemployment and empowerment are receiving the attention they deserved thanks to our continued efforts in speaking out about this and providing youth the opportunity to speak up and demand change – which is now beginning to finally happen.

3. *Housing*

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

Typically, an average of 40%-45% of our time spent on housing issues. This in the form of direct involvement in housing-related meetings, events or resolving issues related to housing. However, most of our housing activities are spent working closely with the Cedar Riverside NRP. The areas about housing we collaborated and provided input include educating residents and business owners about tenant rights, home and smoke cessation, safety issues in the Riverside Plaza high rises, construction of Cedar Townhouses (by CRNRP), development of Lot A (corner of Cedar Avenue and South 4th St) and the Five15 on the park housing development by Fine Associates

4. *Financial Reports*

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

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?

We frequently interact with CPED, MTEP and NCR and they have all being very helpful in providing us guidance, advice and all the information we needed from them. We would like to see more collaboration with the City's MTEP department to help residents get access to jobs, entrepreneurial and vocational training opportunities. This will make a huge difference in reducing the unusually high unemployment rates in Cedar Riverside Bank neighborhood.

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? Scale of 5

2. *City Communications – effectiveness*

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

Yes. The information we receive from the city has always been timely and informative. However, some of the information about 'Public Hearings' tends to be more technical. It can be made a little simpler to regular folks can understand it.

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

We always received communications from the city in a timely manner. We do not see any issues here.

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? I would give scale of 5

4. *City Departments*

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

We do not have, nor do we see major issues in the ways the city departments function. They are doing a good job. However, we would like to see ways the city can collaborate with neighborhood organizations in hosting events to inform and/or educate residents about important issues. Especially major issues such presentation about housing, jobs, safety and entrepreneurship and business development. City staff can provide us guidance and technical assistance when needed.

5. *City Assistance*

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

We would like to get help in getting assistance in interpreting some outreach materials into Spanish and Korean. I spoke with Lance and Carrie and they have both been very helpful in providing us assistance. We would like to see this continue so whenever we need a flyer or a postcard translated into these languages we can send to the NCR department in advance and they can help us provide translations.

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? I would give scale of 5

6. *Other comments?*

So far, our experience with the city has been a positive one. And, the staff we dealt with has been very friendly, professional and helpful. We are glad to have such people as our allies at the city.