

Community Participation Program 2013 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: East Calhoun Community Organization

Contact person: Monica Smith

Date of Board Approval: March 6, 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?*
 - Primer on Uptown Small Area Plan – January 22
 - Organize volunteers for organics recycling at Loppet – February 2-3
 - Public Meeting for 36th St Bikeway – February 7
 - Livability Committee meeting focusing on late night noise – March 26
 - Organized 10th Ward Candidate Forum on Environment – March 28
 - Morning bird-watching walk – April 28
 - Earth Day Clean-up – May 4
 - Bicycle Festival – May 11
 - Super Sale – June 1
 - Community Puppet Show & Potluck – June 1
 - Organize volunteers for organics recycling at Nature Valley Uptown Criterium – June 14
 - Raingarden project planting day – June 22
 - Community Picnic – July 11
 - National Night Out block parties – August 6
 - Labor Day Parade and Community Potluck & Bingo – September 2
 - Organize volunteers for organics recycling at Greek Festival – September 6-8
 - Host joint Uptown Green Team meeting on Solar Power – September 11
 - Hazardous Waste Collection – September 21
 - Annual Meeting – October 3
 - Raingarden Tour – October 5
 - Co-sponsor Ward 10 Candidate Forum – October 16
 - Wine Tasting Fundraiser – October 30
 - Holiday Caroling Party – December 18
 - ECCO participated in the yearlong Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis conducted by Metro Transit. ECCO had a representative on the Community Advisory Committee. We promoted all of the public meetings in our e-newsletter to help raise awareness for the transit study.

- *How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2013?*

ECCO considers renters to be our under-represented community.

- We purchase a half-page ad in every issue of our monthly neighborhood newspaper, the Uptown Neighborhood News, with information about our board, committees and upcoming events; we also publish our monthly board meeting minutes in the paper, which is delivered to all addresses in the neighborhood (including multi-family buildings) and the paper is available at a number of local businesses.
 - We produce and distribute a monthly e-newsletter.
 - Hennepin County mailed a postcard to all residents to promote the Hazardous Waste Collection that ECCO helped organize and staff.
 - One-third of the ECCO Board members elected in October 2013 are renters.
 - We redesigned our website to be more engaging (www.eastcalhoun.org). The new software allows us to easily update content to keep the site current and relevant.
- *Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?*
 - Our monthly email newsletter is a handy guide to current neighborhood events, programs, and issues.
 - Fliers delivered for the Bicycle Festival, Super Sale, Labor Day celebration and Annual Meeting is an effective way to communicate with residents in single-family homes and duplexes.
 - We launched the new website at the October Annual Meeting. Site visits for the last quarter of 2013 were strong. We hope to continue increasing the visits in 2014.
 - *What did not work so well? Why?*
 - Our Facebook page does not attract much attention. We need to make more of an effort to keep the content current and encourage more people to “like” the page.
 - *How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?*
 - ECCO had direct contact with approximately 150 residents through board and committee meetings, annual meeting, door knocking, phone communication regarding neighborhood programs and activities.
 - *How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?*
 - 40-50

- *How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?*
 - 500

- *How many people receive your print publications?*
 - The monthly *Uptown Neighborhood News* is delivered to 1,000 addresses in East Calhoun. In addition, the paper is available at a number of local businesses.

- *How many people receive your electronic communications?*
 - Our email distribution list contained 485 addresses in 2013.

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?

1. East Calhoun Bicycle Festival, May 2013

The ECCO Green Team organized the first annual Bicycle Festival. The focus of the event was to promote bicycle safety and featured good and services



related to biking including helmet fitting, bicycle tune-ups and a bike swap. Over fifteen businesses/organizations donated time and products to the event. The festival also featured fun activities such as slow bike race and a kids' bike rodeo. Unfortunately, the weather was very cold and windy so attendance was lower than expected. The organizers are planning for the second annual Bicycle Festival in May 2014.

2. Hazardous Waste Collection, September 2013

ECCO partnered with Kingfield, CARAG and East Harriet neighborhood to organize a Hazardous Waste



Collection event. A local church provided their parking lot so we could hold the event in the area. The neighborhood organization provided volunteers to help direct traffic. The event was a great success with over 500 participants and no long waiting lines.

3. 2013 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2013:

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

1. Raingarden Project

The East Calhoun Green Team partnered with Metro Blooms for the installation of 14 raingardens on residential property in the neighborhood. The Green Team was awarded grants from both the



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Mississippi Watershed Management Organization and the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District to defray the majority of the project costs. The gardens were planted on June 22nd (one day after the Solstice Storm tore through the neighborhood taking down numerous trees and power lines).

To achieve the project goal of improving water quality, ECCO carefully selected each potential rain garden location, working closely with the homeowners to place the garden in the most feasible location that received runoff from impervious surfaces (typically roof runoff). During the project pre-screening conducted by an ECCO volunteer (Nathan Campeau, P.E.) several sites were eliminated from consideration due to the small potential benefit to water quality. After ECCO's pre-screening, Metro Blooms worked with each resident to further refine the location of each garden to maximize treatment.

Due to the sandy soils that predominate the neighborhood, ECCO requested that the gardens be constructed deeper than typical Metro Blooms rain gardens, further increasing water quality treatment. Our estimate of water quality improvements resulting from the 14 rain gardens constructed watershed includes:

- Reduction of annual runoff by over 95% from contributing watersheds (over 112,000 gallons)
- Reduction of total suspended solids (TSS) by approximately 51 pounds annually
- Enhanced groundwater recharge

To support the outreach and educational goals of this project, ECCO conducted outreach in several ways, including workshops (Metro Blooms workshop 2012), neighborhood meetings (ECCO Green Team meetings, annual meeting), email (ECCO email newsletter, multiple publications), print (Uptown Neighborhood News, multiple publications), direct education and communication with recipients of rain gardens, and a neighborhood rain garden tour in October 2013.

Benefits of a raingarden: A raingarden is designed and planted to capture rainwater so it can penetrate deep into the soil to help protect and restore water quality. This helps to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that would otherwise take pollutants from the air, our yards, and the streets and carry them into our lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

2. Nice Ride Station

East Calhoun resident Grant Dietrich asked for support from the ECCO Board to request a Nice Ride station in the neighborhood. Nice Ride did not have plans to a station in our neighborhood in 2013. Dietrich met with the owner of Dunn Bros Coffee and sought permission to place a



station on his property. Dietrich developed a proposal that he submitted to Nice Ride requesting a station in 2013. Nice Ride couldn't refuse Dietrich's arguments and installed a station at 34th and Hennepin in Spring 2013. Nice Ride considers the location a success with 1,046 trips originating from this station in the first five months of service.

3. Community Leader Award

The Uptown Association (at its annual meeting in January 2013) nominated EIRA Coordinator Monica Smith for a Community Leader Award.

4. Housing

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

- 10%

5. Financial Reports

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

Please see separate 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?

We interacted the most with our City Council Member Meg Tuthill and her staff. CM Tuthill attended our monthly board meetings to share information about City news and issues.

Elected officials from City Council, Park Board, Hennepin County and State House/Senate attended our annual meeting in October 2013 to provide updates and answer questions from residents.

We worked most directly with NCR for our CPP, NPP and NRP programs.

We were engaging with Public Works on the 36th St Bike Lane. This process continues into 2014.

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?

Many of the notices of public hearings are very cryptic and require follow-up on the part of neighborhoods to learn more so we can determine whether it is an issue we wish to address.

The MPD Action Alerts do not provide adequate information. The system is restricted to a maximum number of characters so the alerts are often truncated in the middle of a sentence. The alerts state the following: “Do NOT contact your CPS for a copy of the report. If you need the complete public information report, you can request a certified copy from our Records Information Unit, call 612-673-2961, or stop in to Room 31 in City Hall (350 S. 5th Street), during regular business hours.” This policy makes it very difficult to see the complete report.

CM Tuthill’s e-newsletter was very helpful.

The City’s website is a good resource.

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.

Public hearing notices are mailed within 10 days of hearings, and that often isn't enough time for neighborhood boards to meet and form a response to a variance.

ECCO is partnering with Public Works on the 36th St Bikeway project. We were not receiving replies to our requests for a status update. A few months went by before we learned that our contact person was no longer in the position.

The ECCO Board had difficulty identifying why the trees on the 31st St center boulevard are no longer being watered even though an irrigation system is in place. The lack of water is causing the trees to die.

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? 2

4. City Departments

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

Does each city department have a three - five year plan for addressing issues of concern in every neighborhood? These would include anticipated population change, infrastructure upgrades, needs for police and fire services, environmental impacts foreseen, school issues. If so and neighborhood organizations knew the plan, we could anticipate how to plan around change for our community.

5. City Assistance

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

Our neighborhood specialist, Jack Whitehurst, is very responsive and helpful. We are interested in hearing more about successes in other neighborhoods, particularly regarding engaging renters.

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? 4

6. Other comments?

