

Community Participation Program 2013 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: East Phillips Improvement Coalition

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Date of Board Approval: 5/2/2015

Stakeholder Involvement

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

- What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2013?

EPIC uses multiple strategies for outreach, engagement and informing residents of useful and sometime necessary information and opportunities. This year included the following strategies:

Communications:

- EPIC sent out over 70 EPIC E-News editions to a list of 430 residents on happenings, meeting announcements and information about special votes, crime concerns, local events, job opportunities, public health warnings and City of Minneapolis programs and timely actions of the City that call for a response. Approximately 450 people are on EPIC's resident email list and there are approximately 500 people in EPIC's total email database.
- Flyered the whole neighborhood multiple times: twice for the Annual Meeting in 3 languages, for information about the Swimming Pool project and for Clean Sweep event.
- Flyering often includes door-knocking, which, however labor intensive, is always the best method with the best outcome and is usually the most rewarding for each person. We did a significant amount of this with each of four major flyerings of approximately 850 flyers. Direct contact was made with about 75 persons each time, so about 300 direct contacts were made while flyering.
- Board members visited most of the National Night Out Parties, handed out our EPIC Brochures for general information and hosted some others. Direct contact was made with about 100 people
- The EPIC website is improving. Meetings and events for the EPIC organization as well as the Community Garden meetings and events are posted there. Minutes are up to date and available back to 5 years. There are translator buttons allowing translation into 85 languages for both the EPIC membership meetings and the Garden meetings, which have a large non-English-speaking population.
- Board members conducted numerous one-on-ones with neighborhood residents. Some board members spend time in the parks to meet with various less accessible groups of residents to discern where help is needed. Our practice is to go to wakes, funerals, weddings, special holidays, graduations and birthdays when invited. This has been a major effort of

EPIC to offer support and friendship where people feel they have someone they know if they need help. The Board chair and some members make it a practice to go to immigration or other court cases if asked for the same reason. The City can be cold. The EPIC Board has thought it important to communicate something different and warmer.

Meetings for Outreach and Engagement:

- Hosted an Annual Meeting with election and breakfast of approximately 85 participants.
- The EPIC Board meets monthly and the meeting is open to the public and always has most of the nine board members who are tasked with carrying information to their various groups and bringing concerns back. Other members of EPIC show up when they have an issue or need something done right away, or they call so we can act on things in a timely way if there is some emergency. The board has always been very available. We have not varied meeting time for years so people know where to find EPIC members if they need to.
- The EPIC General Membership Meetings are held 12 times a year. These meetings have anywhere from 12 to 30 or more in attendance, depending on the issue. Sometimes, however, the attendance approaches that of the Annual Meetings, around 70 or more people if the issue is big. These meetings always announce the next meetings and up-coming key events and opportunities. The meeting time and place also is not varied, so people know where to come without even having to consult anything or anyone. If it is the 2nd Thursday of the month, they know we will be there. This regularity is also a form of communication...of steadiness in what is often a chaotic setting.
- Two of these meeting were devoted partly to final design of Greenway Heights, EPIC's final apartment building project, the only affordable rental housing on the Midtown Greenway. The community chose to add a wood beamed portico on the front entry and balconies for each apartment. They agreed to add \$35,000 to the project in an NRP Plan modification for this and were excited that they had a part in this major addition to the neighborhood. This bought credibility for the EPIC organization and its claim to represent the views of the community and also that it fosters plans to benefit renters as well as homeowners.
- EPIC bought 30 chairs and held two large information gathering and problem-solving meetings in 2909 Bloomington Apartments for Somali residents, with interpreters. State Representative Karen Clark was present to answer questions at one and a Somali police officer was present at another. Donations provided food and tea.

Events and Programs:

- Helped coordinate, host and manage the large Phillips wide Clean Sweep event, a day long joint Phillips garbage pick-up event with breakfast, lunch, involved about 500 people from the 4 Phillips neighborhoods. This involves

- 6 months of planning and fund raising. EPIC and Midtown host Breakfast and EPIC had a table at the final part of the day at Stewart Park for lunch.
- Initiated a project to have East Phillips teens serve at the Annual Meeting and some ethnic families who are licensed prepare the food. This has been very successful in bringing the community together with itself.
 - Board members initiated a project to get new immigrant refugees to food shelves and show them how this works. This involves 6 families, about 25 people.
 - Coordinated and managed EPIC's large Community Garden which serves 36 families of all ethnicities, involving over 120 people. Hosted several meetings and parties in the garden, especially Community Garden Day and the Fall Harvest Party, which invites all of East Phillips.
 - Assisted the Native American Ojibwe/Dakota Language Immersion School with the Family Partnership and Wicole Nandagikendan to begin gardening in the community garden. Involves about 15 children and 3 adults from Little Earth.
 - Received a special grant from Seward Coop to rebuild parts of the EPIC garden fence and paths with stipends and carpentry lessons for teens. Recruited 3 teen leaders and 13 workers to work. Teens and their helpers learned a lot and became more invested in the community. It was really successful.
 - Hosted Arbor Day tree planting in East Phillips new park, involving about 40 people planting trees. It rained, but was successful.
 - Fostered participation in the Phillips Bridging Festival which was an outreach to residents of the four Phillips neighborhoods to get us talking about our shared street, 24th St., involved about 80 people from all the four Phillips neighborhoods.
 - Set up MNsure counseling through MNCare in the park to get new immigrants on health insurance. Involved about 30 people, African American, Latino and Nepali with a Nepali interpreter. Many completed the process. We followed up to be sure no one was left out.
 - Collected donations for very large flat screen TV and started Movie Night in the park, involving 30 to 40 families and many teens. This TV is also used to post and announce events in East Phillips and elsewhere.
 - Donated funds for uniforms for Somali park soccer teams and assisted in gaining access to the fields. This involved assistance to about 60 youth and their coaches and families.
 - EPIC residents both play and show up to cheer on our teams for the Liga Hispana de Beisbol as well as assist in problem paper work and field rental issues. EPIC has sponsored the league since its beginning. It involves about 300 people, most families from East and Midtown Phillips.
 - Initiated training for youth volunteers in the Park with Urban 4-H with a certificate program to facilitate gaining employment there. 10 youth participated with their families.
 - Community volunteers collaborated to design EPIC's Brochure for our Housing Programs and volunteered to market it.

- Last year, 2012, EPIC members worked a long time on Criteria for Collaboration, a Policy to govern how we partner with other organizations and remain within CPP guidelines. We believe the Policy is a sound one and included it in our Policies and Procedures Manual. This year the EPIC Community funded our first collaborating partner, A-POD, A Partnership of Diabetics. This organization is a highly successful method of treating diabetes with the mutual aid of a group support process. This allowed us to do our part recruiting participants, aiding the organization by paying for a Spanish interpreter, while A-POD aided our elders in coping with their health issues. It was the win-win we envisioned in our new partnership program,

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

All these programs, meetings and activities involve outreach to people of color, of minimal income and of basic life hardship. EPIC doesn't really reach out to any well-represented communities here because there are so few individuals in that category. If they are, they are usually in the helping professions themselves. None of our meetings, work or programs go out to other than under-represented people that we are aware of, not by choice, but there just aren't any here.

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

All of these programs were thought to be effective in different ways.

1) Involvement of residents in the design and creation of the long project to leading to the Greenway Heights apartment building was brought to a very successful and empowering conclusion. We need to be grateful to our developers, PRG and Phoenix, for their generosity in opening the way to major community engagement and to the EPIC Board in pursuing this in this manner. Residents openly commented that they never hoped to have such an experience in making a big wonderful building happen. People felt very good about their participation.

2) EPIC E-News with its frequency is expected and looked for regarding happenings and participation. It has been highly successful. Flyering and door-knocking is effective also for large infrequent happenings.

3) Many of our efforts bring about working together on projects: the fence building in the garden with the teens, Arbor Day tree-planting, sharing the production of the Annual Meeting. These brought about bonding in the community, a very positive perception of the EPIC organization and a culture of sharing the work of the community

4) Taking the meeting to the people turned out to be a real winning strategy. Finding out the needs of the Somalis by setting up chairs and meeting there at 2909 Bloomington was critical. Council Member Cano helped resolve some of their problems as did the Somali police officer, but

this requires maintenance. We learned that each success creates more additional work to maintain and go beyond it and for this we need the community members to see that and step up. Some have and then some not, or maybe can't. This is a hard reality.

5) Helping with access to the food shelves created bonds and a willingness to participate. This needs to continue and grow. As do each of these programs. We see we are the first responders in many situations and until something radically changes, EPIC is the only organization right here to take this on. We see we need to build the organization stronger and bigger to manage all these needs better. That the problems and needs are so big and we are pretty small is our only frustration. We hope to do something about this in the future.

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

Most everything worked well, often better than expected, but we saw all sorts of places for greater outreach in existing programs and more new programs and more creative ways to do things. Basically we want to do more and build on what we have done.

Only the effort to provide sports possibilities was a struggle and we reflected a lot about that. It requires strong and consistent family support and with parents working, this is hard to come by.

Our meetings have sometimes grown small, but when there is an issue they immediately grow big again. With 12 community meetings a year, that's a lot. We have thought about cutting back, but there seems to be constant issues of a level that should have community wide focus.

We believe that our effectiveness still suffers from a lack of translated materials. It would be helpful to have a Spanish language person continuously available. Not having that is a weakness, Somali also.

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

Probably, given each of the board members in these various venues and meetings, we probably connected well with over 500 to 600 people.

- **How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?**

Approximately 70

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

Approximately 1500

- **How many people receive your print publications?**

Our printed flyers are placed in 800 households and our half page in the Alley Newspaper, which was not monthly at this time, goes out to approximately 1,200 people.

- **How many people receive your electronic communications?**

Our EPIC E-News regularly goes out to 415 residents averaging at least once a week. We assume these go to households, especially in the immigrant community where the family English speaker shares information.

1. **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?*

EPIC's emphasis has shifted from major housing and redevelopment, which were sorely needed, but are less dire than previously, to reaching out and determining quality of life issues of east Phillips residents, then creating responses to them that connect people in the neighborhood who will volunteer with EPIC and the people who have basic needs and concerns that we can do something about. We have people with relational skills and knowledge and we are surrounded with situations which, with a little intervention, could change lives in major ways. This shift in strategy is evident in the section on Stakeholder Involvement. It is a closer and more connected and intimate view of that concern.

Therefore, our "Highlights" reflect that. Some of the newest ones are:

- Having teens and families help prepare and serve the breakfast for their neighbors at the Annual Meeting,
- Everyone going to the food shelves together and learning how they work,
- Teens and parents rebuilding the garden fence with other gardeners and learn some carpentry skills,
- Native American nursery school children interacting with Nepali children in the community garden,
- Planting trees together in our new park,
- Working together on insuring everyone through MNsure,
- Watching family movies together on the new big flat screen in the park,
- Spending time at Liga Hispana de Beisbol, Somali Soccer games, weddings, funerals, birthdays, special holidays,
- Going to court with immigrants and Americans in trouble.
- Recruiting, driving people to meetings and participating in A Partnership of Diabetics with our elders of various ethnic groups,

These things build a neighborhood with a heart for one another. This helps the crime problem, helps solve the domestic abuse problem, the prostitution problem, the loneliness and isolation problem that leads to much of the rest. This is EPIC's version of One Minneapolis.

2. 2013 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?

Greenway Heights Apartments

East Phillips residents' involvement in the completion this year a 10 year long community project, Greenway Heights apartments. This came with the final design and addition of \$35,000 to add balconies by fostering a contribution from the County; all leading to final approval at the EPIC Annual Meeting in April. This is the conclusion of a 10-year effort to put affordable family rental on East Phillips' premier site on the Greenway. It was an odyssey of a journey finally reaching the end in a building designed, endorsed and partly paid for by the community. This was a time of celebrating what we all did together.

The impact is that the whole community has built what the community needs, wants and helped bring about...This was empowering to everyone. They saw what we can do if we work together and never give up.

The second is we now have new, safe places to live in a wonderful, big new building for many new immigrants and modest income people and on the Greenway, a great addition to our community, ridding the blocks of the crime that these three previously vacant lots fostered.

3. *Housing*

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

EPIC completed reorganizing our housing program last year according to our Phase II Plan and early this year EPIC spent considerable time working on a brochure for the housing rehab and homebuyer program and beginning to market it. We also spent a lot of community time finishing the details on design on the Greenway Heights Apartment building. We also began planning a new home construction plan as a Neighborhood Priority Plan. This involved about 10% of our time.

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?

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? 1

2. ***City Communications – effectiveness***

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

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City? 2

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.

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?

They can make certain they do not function in culturally or racially biased ways. They must not come writing off people groups or approaching this area as though they should have lesser services and attention to care than more affluent parts of the city. If they do come to assist us they must not enter into this part of the City to work with only one people group, selecting out one group to work with to the ignoring and excluding of others and giving preferential treatment to one and not others..

5. ***City Assistance***

How can the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department improve the assistance it provides to your organization as a community participation group? Treat EPIC with the same consistency and fairness that the others have, instead of singling us out with unique and difficult demands directed at us and not other organizations.

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

6. ***Other comments?***