

Community Participation Program 2013 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: **Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association**

Contact person: Melissa Bean, Executive Director

Date of Board Approval: February 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?

We broadened our membership and board to include more students, new residents and more diversity.

- 1) Mailings & E Mailings
 - Notices of meetings and information to members, organizations, businesses and institutions
 - Member recruitment in larger multifamily buildings
 - List of MHNA accomplishments sent to residents, businesses, organizations and institutions Fall 2013
- 2) Postings
 - MHNA Website postings (MHNA and Live Near Your Work)
 - MHNA Facebook postings
 - Posters in businesses and public places
 - Lawn signs (“Welcome Students” and “Vote No on 35W Walls”)
 - “Envision Marcy-Holmes” online tool to help create Master Plan
 - Kiosk at Stone Arch Bridge about neighborhood and MHNA
- 3) Advertising media
 - Advertising in TC Daily Planet, MN Daily, Marcy Open School Parent Press & Musical program and on Dinkytown Circulator Bus
 - Press releases sent to media re: 35W Walls and Dinkytown demolitions resulted in stories in tv, newspapers and online press
- 4) Others’ e-lists
 - Special project opportunities posted on several arts organization sites including City’s Public Art e-list to artists
 - Land Use workshops & training via University District Alliance e-list
 - Ash Tree Awareness project volunteers in cooperation with U MN student groups
- 5) Personal contact: one on one
 - Master Plan committee makeup diversity via personal contact
 - Business, Landlord, Student and Religious Community recruitment to board and committees via personal contact
 - 35W absentee owner voting by phone and letter
- 6) Personal Contact – Door Knocking, flyering and door hangers around issues, such as 35W Sound Walls and Public Works bike blvd project

- Annual fall Meet & Greet Welcome students campaign
- 7) Presentations
- Booth at Third Ward Neighborfest Fall 2013
 - Workshop presenter at Neighborhoods USA conference
 - Table at National Night Out
 - Land Use Training workshops
 - Board retreat
 - Master Plan public meetings and focus groups
 - Local organizations, such as churches and business association meetings
 - Brought interesting speakers in to General Membership meetings and held the meetings in a convivial public place (a restaurant) that encouraged mingling after meeting
- 8) Misc
- MHNA map postcards are included in: leasing packet at Mill & Main; at area lodging places (University Inn, Wales House); SE Library; in welcome packets for new hires at UM (through Relocation office)
 - Events - A Community Carillon Festival, a streetdance, National Night Out supper, plant swap and potluck, tours of new buildings in the neighborhood – these are fun things that draw people in.

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

- 1) Students
- Formalized a process to engage student groups – help recruit for projects and leadership roles
 - Commissioned two student composers and hired several student musical groups to perform at events. Commissioned one student (and one new grad) to design artwork for utility box project here.
 - Worked with several classes at UMN (for ex a Landscape Architecture class on Dinkytown Bikeway, a Design Class on 6th Ave Greenway plans)
 - Made sure students were on the Master Plan Steering Committee
 - Found a student for site coordinator for Earth Day River Clean Up
 - Worked with student groups on safety initiatives Fall 2013; Move In/Move Out fall and spring; Ash Borer Awareness tree wrapping; delivering flyers
- 2) Non- English speakers
- Translated National Night Out posters and flyers in Spanish
- 3) Non resident property owners
- Made sure they had representation on Master Plan Committee and were notified of public meetings
 - Asked for and received assistance with 35W Wall Campaign
 - Invited to Fall Fundraiser event
- 4) Business owners

- Strengthened our ties with area business associations via appointed reps (to and from Dinkytown Business Association and Dinkytown Small Area Plan)
- Helped organize campaign to preserve Dinkytown including volunteers to inform elected officials
- Continued compiling our Local Business Listings on MHNA website
- Designed and printed a graphic spelling out Marcy Holmes using letters from area business signs, with credits on back. These were sent to approximately 500 “Friends of Marcy Holmes”.
- Invited to and participated in Land Use meetings and trainings

5) Youth

- Partnered on a (successful) grant to build a Peace Labyrinth at Marcy Open School
- Outreach to neighborhood on a possible plan to move Marcy Open School out of neighborhood. Between the parents and MHNA, 200 people attended a meeting where that idea was put to rest. This was followed by a board motion to the school board, presented to our school board representative at one of our meetings.

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

Our 35W Noise Wall lawn sign campaign was a highly visible (and affordable) way to make people aware of an issue that affected owners, students, renters, businesses, institutions and politicians. After a favorable outcome, we used the same signs as a way to communicate our victory to the thousands who pass through our neighborhood. These signs also caught the attention of policy makers – we continue our efforts to see the MN DoT policy changed to be more fair and transparent.

The Land Use trainings were well attended and appreciated. They are now going to be featured at the next Community Connections conference so other neighborhoods can learn how to replicate. It seems a lot of people who want to participate in neighborhood planning or plan review are intimidated because they don't know the lingo or process. These sessions help build confidence so more can participate.

What did not work so well? Why?

Some of our committees were tired and stale- no longer relevant but, by virtue of tradition, just continued to meet. At our board retreat we grouped priorities into a new set of committees and task forces that have succinct charges and funding. We are also using a matrix to record board strengths and talents so that we can bring new faces to leadership roles. While it's too soon to know if this is a successful approach, it is a fresh start and we are hopeful that it brings in more people to help with exciting projects.

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

Approximately 1400

How many individuals volunteered in organization activities? 450 - 500

How many people receive your print publications?400

How many people receive your electronic communications?

Monthly Mass communications via email: 500

Approx number visiting website: 2000 per month

Plus individual emails too numerous to mention

2013 Highlights

Please describe one or two major highlights, and if possible, please include digital photos or illustrations:

35W Sound Walls

As part of a plan to alleviate wait time to enter 35W north from downtown (4th St So) MN Dot, Hennepin County and City proposed an extra lane between downtown and NE Minneapolis. The addition of the new lane triggered a MN Dot process to add sound walls, 20' high, on either side of 35W in our neighborhood.

MN DoT was using a new process, approved in summer 2011, to decide when and where to install the walls. Over a 2-year period, we held meetings, voiced our concerns about the lack of transparency and unfairness in the new "voting" process, and contacted elected officials, to no avail. MN DoT insisted in following their policy so it fell to MHNA to organize a Vote No campaign in order to muster 51% of "benefitted receptors" to vote no and oppose the walls. This was not an easy task. A very small number of owners (nearly all absentee landlords) and even fewer residents (nearly all U MN students who were on break from school) were eligible to vote. Votes were assigned 1 per unit, regardless of the number of people living in a unit. There was no mechanism to verify voters or ballots- in fact some ballots were sent to "resident". Non-votes were counted as yes votes in favor of a wall. Since owners' votes were counted two - three times what resident votes were counted, we concentrated on them. With the help of many absentee owners, who posted our lawn signs, signed ballots and encouraged others to comply, community members who doorknocked and flyered, and board members and staff who made calls and kept track of the votes, we finally were able to vote them down. We waged a media campaign and this issue became the talk of the neighborhood last summer and fall.

While we received congratulations from many, we were not content to keep the status quo. We continued to expose the unfair process and a state legislative audit was finally done because of our efforts. Elected politicians have taken notice and we hope a more fair and transparent process will be adopted.

Preserve the character of Dinkytown

Both Marcy-Holmes and Dinkytown underwent intense planning projects this year. Two large mixed use student apartment projects were approved, across the street from each other, which started a heated debate about loss of business parking, high density in a commercial area and what benefits and negative impacts that would bring, and the notion of preserving the fabric and character of an area that is known and loved by many. When a third proposal, for a hotel, which required tearing down some buildings that contributed to this character, came to us, we sprang back into action. MHNA and the DBA held many meetings; we testified at city hearings; we did research on the value of historic designation; we sent press releases and did interviews.



“Save Dinkytown” at Public Hearing

The outcome has not yet been decided. But the MHNA is convinced the City’s 2013 market study, done in conjunction with the Dinkytown planning, got it right: Dinkytown’s character remains its most important market strength, an “increasingly important differentiator” especially since light rail is serving other University district commercial area.

Master Plan Update

The Marcy-Holmes neighborhood Master Plan was 10 years old and while it served us well, it was time for an update. The dramatic growth of apartment building development, new transit opportunities, greater emphasis on riverfront trails, need for new infrastructure, and identifying new areas for establishing creative businesses are elements of the new plan.

We were very strategic in creating a diverse steering committee to oversee the process. We hired a professional planning firm, convened several public meetings, and posted on our website, “Envision Marcy-Holmes”, to collect feedback on where we see ourselves in 10 years. Soon the full plan will be posted on the city’s website for final review. Over 200 people came to open meetings; we held seven focus groups on specific topics, and had 400 visitors, 75 active participants, 7,466 page views, and 90 ideas that came out of “Envision Marcy-Holmes”.



Info table at National Night Out 2013

9) 2013 Accomplishments

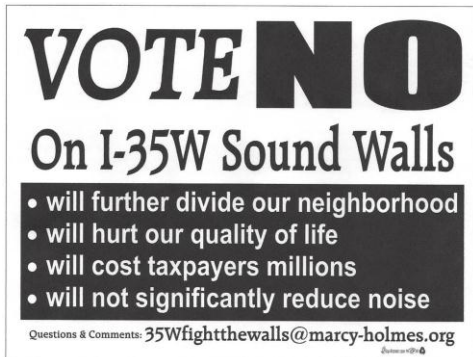
Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2013:

Be One Neighborhood: 2013 Achievements of Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association

With the support of our volunteers, donors and the city, the MHNA served its mission of improving and enhancing the quality of residential life here. Highlights include:

Shaping Our Future:

• **Won a Tough Fight for Livability:** We joined together residents and property owners to win the fight against the \$3 million, 20-foot high sound walls that MnDOT proposed cutting through our neighborhood. Our lawn sign campaign was a very public demonstration of a community's voice uniting to make an impact; the phone calls to specific voters were the invisible yet critical strategy.



Successful lawn sign campaign

• **Informed Development Decisions:** We advised the City on transportation, housing, zoning, safety, historic preservation and neighborhood priorities. Our all-volunteer Land Use committee reviewed, commented on (and improved) over 20 developments proposed for our area in 2013, and initiated a University-area land use training. *We have added or are in the process of adding over 2,340 new units in Marcy-Holmes since 2010.*

• **Planned for Vibrant Future:** A major initiative this year has been updating our 2003 Master Plan. We formed a steering committee, hired a professional planning firm, convened several public meetings, and posted a website, Envision Marcy-Holmes, to collect feedback on where we see ourselves in 10 years. Soon the full plan will be posted on the city's website for your final review.



U MN Students assist with ash tree project

Caring for Our Present:

• **Initiated Shade Tree Protection:** We informed the public about the Emerald Ash Borer threat by putting wide green ribbons on ash trees and conducting public meetings with tree care experts and the Minneapolis Parks Forestry Department. We created a task force: Save Our Shade (SOS) Trees. Many ash trees will now be saved due to our efforts.

- **Beautified Our Shared Spaces:** We beautified our streetscape with 13 flower gardens, all adopted by volunteers. We partnered with Marcy Open School to facilitate the installation of a landscaped “peace” labyrinth, available to the student body and general public.



Marcy Open School Labyrinth

- **Fostered Creativity:** We showcased our neighbors’ talents by bringing original music to neighborhood festivals (National Night Out and Community Carillon Festival) and commissioning local composers to write music for the carillon bells at a historic church here. (Watch in 2014 for other arts and cultural activities – an audio history tour narrated by 27 community voices and 6 artist-designed utility box coverings that will create a gallery on our streets.) We had a street dance featuring local musicians.

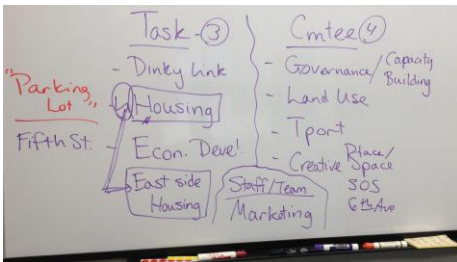
- **Offered Fix-Up Assistance:**

We added funds to a low-interest housing fix-up loan fund.

- **Addressed Safety:** We continued our collaborations with two police departments, the City, U of MN and surrounding neighborhood and business groups. Our residents are “eyes on the streets” – first to call 911 and 311. MHNA volunteers attended the UDA Livability meetings.

Building Capacity to Improve Our Community:

- **Engaged Stakeholders and Strengthened Leadership:** We broadened our membership and board to include more students, new residents and more diversity. We created a board manual and held a board retreat to select priority actions for 2014, solidifying our commitment to improving this neighborhood. We instituted a monthly volunteer recognition award. We moved our office to a more central location with more space and even wi-fi.



MHNA Board retreat Nov 2013

- **Won Media and Marketing Attention:**

MHNA was featured on local television news, in online newspapers, the Star Tribune and the MN Daily; on the “Dinky” shuttle bus; on the Varsity Theater marquee; and in local school and church publications. Information about our great neighborhood was also included in leasing materials for new housing projects, at local motels, in prospective “new hire” materials distributed at the U of MN, and in Welcome Students Week promotional materials, delivered to 900 student residences

Building Our Unique Identity:

- **Promoted Quality of Life Here:** We started a facebook page and hired a marketing assistant. We informed and engaged neighbors with our monthly “Items of Interest” and newly-designed website, www.marcy-holmes.org. Board members talked with visitors to our booth at the Third Ward Neighborfest in October. We continue to promote our great neighborhood via www.livenearyourwork.net.



We created, printed and distributed a unique postcard highlighting the theme: Be One Neighborhood. Letters spelling Marcy-Holmes are taken from area business signs.

Housing

What percentage of time did your organization spend on housing-related activities?
60%

Our LU Committee weighed in on 20 proposals this year.
(2,340 new housing units planned, built or, in progress in Marcy-Holmes since 2010.)

Participated in University District Alliance (UDA) Housing Committee.

Supported CLCLT (City of Lakes Community Land Trust) affordable homeownership application to MN Housing Finance for a program in the U District.

Initiated Land Use training workshops that brought City staff to neighborhoods to better explain zoning, land use, site plans, etc to residents.

Spent a large amount of our Master Plan time considering housing. We also created an RFP, interviewed planning consultants, wrote a scope of services and hired a firm.

Promoted our Housing Loan Fix Up Program, for residences of 1-4 units.

Continued to promote the LiveNearYourWork website.

Researched and weighed in on zoning changes and establishing a conservation district.

Outreach- Contacted people directly affected by new housing proposals as well as notices posted on MHNA website and via emails

Presented a workshop at NUSA conference, a portion of which dealt with efforts to preserve home ownership in a university neighborhood.

Created a Housing Diversity Task Force, an outcome of our fall board retreat.

10) *Financial Reports*

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

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?

Haila Maze in planning. (Master plan)

NCR - especially Stacy Sorenson, Bob Cooper and Robert Thompson.

(Funding requests and reports and rules, trainings)

Heritage Preservation Commission staff planners. (Development proposals)

City council members (35W issue, requests for assistance on various issues)

Public Works, Shaun Murphy (6th Ave/7th St Bike Boulevard)

2nd Precinct Kathy Waite & Nick Juarez (crime prevention and public information)

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?

We really appreciate the weekly planning notices.

Sometimes there is not enough time between a notice and end of public comment period. Example: Parking overlay changes; parking changes and bike lanes on 4th St SE.

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.

See above.

We recently heard we have a police substation in Dinkytown...but that was news to us. There has been no communication about or from. We rarely hear from our Housing Inspector - closer ties would be beneficial.

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? _____3_

4. ***City Departments***

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

The Land Use trainings were a start, but we need more experts coming out to the neighborhoods. An Inspections workshop would be great- people are not always sure what is code, how to complain, how to follow up. We requested extra funding for more housing inspectors here but have not received any reply. It is difficult for novices (neighborhood volunteers) to make informed decisions without the necessary tools/background.

Could the city's property look up feature also be sorted/searched by owner? That would be very helpful.

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.

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?*