

Community Participation Program

2013 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Seward Neighborhood Group

Contact person: Kerry Cashman

Date of Board Approval: May 28, 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?**

This was the first full bike season of operation for SPOKES Bike Walk Connect; our new community non-motorized Transportation center. SPOKES has continued to be a hub of activity for bikers and walkers in and around Seward including: including: twice weekly open shop times, twice-monthly women, transgender and femme open shop night, community rides, weekly volunteer nights, adult learn to ride classes and earn-a bike classes. Participation in these events has been diverse racially and includes a younger demographic than SNG has reached in recent years.

Activities included:

- In the 10 four-week Earn-a-Bike classes, 46 people earned bikes, helmets, lights and locks—and gained the knowledge to maintain them.
- 715 people participated in the 105 free open-shop sessions
- 71 people took safe-cycling classes
- In the 5 four-week Adult Learn-to-Ride classes, 46 people learned how to ride a bike
- 106 people took bike maintenance classes.
- 58 people received Nice Ride annual membership scholarships
- There were a total of 1374 participants in bike activities
- There were a total of 290 participants in pedestrian activities

58 volunteers providing between 45 minutes and 466 hours of volunteer time during 2013.

In addition, SPOKES hosted

1. A public meeting on the Hennepin County/Three Rivers bike and pedestrian plan that drew 29 people,
2. The winter training meeting for the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota that drew 40 people

and

3. An open-streets workshop with the Alliance for Biking and Walking that drew about 40 people from around the country (and Canada)
 - We host King's Fair on odd years. This huge event is located in Matthews Park. We work closely with Matthews Park, local business and musicians to plan this event. Over 1500 neighbors attended, with 4 bands numerous artists, meet and greets by local politicians. New in 2013 we hosted a petting zoo with over 50 animals for locals to touch and see. We made a concerted effort to gear King's Fair to the high school crowd. We knew we had succeeded when we had our own "mosh pit" during one of the local high school bands set.
1. Some other events include:
 - i) A *Garden Tour* which highlighted 10 of our beautiful gardens and
 - ii) Finally a *kick-off to our annual Seward Arts Festival* where we worked with artists and the Playwright's Center to host an evening of spoken word, dance and music.
2. We collaborated with the Seward Civic and Commerce Association (SCCA) to combine the annual Franklin Frolic, an SCCA event, and the Seward Arts Festival, SNG's annual arts event. The SCCA has hired SNG to organize their portion of this event, resulting in broader contacts with the business community for SNG and demonstrating the symbiotic relationship of a strong neighborhood group and strong business association.
3. The SNG Community Development Committee has focused on pedestrian and bicycle safety issues in response to a number of concerns raised by Seward residents. Many of the concerns raised are along Franklin Avenue, Seward's 'Main Street'. The neighborhood has been working with both Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Works on a plan to redo the Cedar/Minnehaha Avenue intersection, including the closure of Minnehaha Avenue north of Franklin. Other issues being worked on include the need for crosswalks on Franklin Avenue between 22nd and 26th Streets, and between the Seward Tower West highrise and Triangle Park.
4. SNG has continued to work with Seward Redesign on the Seward Commons project, which entails the redevelopment of an industrial area located adjacent to the LRT near the Franklin Avenue Station. This year, the SNG Community Development Committee discussed the reconstruction of Snelling Avenue and 24th Street and Phase 3 of the project. Phase 1 proposed by Touchstone Mental Health, which includes 40 apartments and a health and wellness center for people with mental illness, was completed in 2013. Construction on the second phase, a 60 unit senior apartment building proposed by CommonBond, started in the fall of 2013. The SNG Community Development Committee reviewed and made recommendations on plans for the reconstruction 24th Street and Snelling Avenue, which includes bike lane connections between Minnehaha Avenue and the Hiawatha Bikeway. The

concept plans for Phase 3, which includes 80-85 market-rate apartments was also approved by the committee.

5. In response to safety concerns raised by residents of 34th Avenue, between 24th and 25th Streets, for the large number of young children living on the block, SNG has been working closely with the residents to develop a project that includes both traffic calming and stormwater management. Through this effort, SNG has received grants from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) to develop plans for stormwater curb extensions, which are bump-outs with rain gardens. It is the first project of this type in the Twin Cities and will serve as a pilot project for other neighborhoods. We are hoping that construction of the project can begin in 2014.

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

- 1) Our new collaboration with the Twin Cities Daily Alliance created our fall “Community Conversations” project. We are very excited with the success of this project. The goal was to get neighbors from both sides of Franklin to spend time together getting to know each other. To that end we invited neighbors to come to a 4 week dinner session at Matthews Park. We hoped for a total of 12 participants per 1 month session and found ourselves almost overwhelmed with over 20 per session. We gathered over food and learned about each other food and culture. The room buzzed with energy every week.
- 2) We are thrilled with the increased immigrant participation in our *Learn to Ride* programs at Spokes. We are confident that Spokes is serving an important role helping our new neighbors feel more comfortable riding a bicycle and also giving people access to a bike who previously would not have been able to own one. We have a full time community organizer who works in the Seward Towers and a part time organizer at SPOKES, both of whom live in the Seward Towers. This has made a huge difference in our connection in the towers. On the other hand our goal of increased integration and community participation with our new neighbors has been mixed.

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

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

The answer to our success and our struggles go hand in hand so I want to answer them together:

We were thrilled with the success of our Community Conversations project. The participants were lively and created new bonds with each other. Some of the

difficulties we faced were needing way more translation services than we anticipated and finding ways to make connections among different East African communities. We also found that the continuity of having staff at every dinner was very important. This led to some strong bonds for the staff but it was also very exhausting for staff to lead so many evening meetings. This made the weekly dinners unsustainable. We are currently working with volunteers to set up meetings that are completely volunteer driven. We hope this will help us sustain this program and continue to make connections across communities.

We are still seeing increased participation of our immigrant population with Spokes Bike Walk Connect, our bike walk center. We have hired an organizer to specifically work with Spokes and our immigrant population. We believe that this is a program that will increase diversity in SNG's activities. We continue to strategize on this issue.

- **How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)? I don't know how this is different than the question regarding participation below. 3028**

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

398

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

Total 7,155

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

4500

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

971 Newsletter

1000 e-democracy (there is overlap but we aren't able to compare the lists)

347 SPOKES email newsletter (again, some overlap with the first two)

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?

Community Development Committee:

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2. 2013 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2013:

- What were your organization's major accomplishments?

Seward Neighborhood Group—2013 in Review

Our many accomplishments include . . .

3. Designing and implementing a **Three-Year Strategic Plan**.
4. Collaborating with the Twin Cities Daily Alliance to create and promote the **Seward Conversations Project**. The project included nine **dinners** with multi-cultural, multi-lingual participants from all over Seward.
5. Organizing the largest **King's Fair** ever with two stages, pony rides, a petting zoo, and over 1500 attendees.
6. Collaborating with neighborhood businesses and over 35 Block Clubs on **National Night Out**.
7. Coordinating **Garage Sale Days** in May with over 100 sales.
8. Continuing publication of **The Profile Quarterly** and distributing it to over 4500 Seward homes and businesses.
9. Organizing the **kick-off to the Seward Winter Frolic** at the Playwright's Center, which highlighted the work of 14 performance artists, entertained 100+ guests, and raised over \$1400 for SNG. Our **Seward Winter Frolic: Art in the 'Hood**, in collaboration with the SCCA, will take place in December and highlight local artists and businesses.
10. Promoting the 2nd annual **Seward Garden Tour**, which exhibited ten beautiful gardens and raised \$800 for SNG.
11. Continuing support of **Hub of Heaven Community Garden**.
12. Monitoring and promoting the **recycling and composting pilots** conducted in Seward by Minneapolis Solid Waste and Recycling.
13. Working with Seward Redesign on the **Seward Commons Project**, which included approval of the Seward Senior Housing Project and street reconstruction projects in the Seward Commons project area. In 2013, construction was completed on the Touchstone Project and began on the Seward Senior Housing Project.
14. Advocating for **improvements to Franklin Avenue and 25th/26th Avenues** to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.
15. Working with residents on 34th Avenue between 24th and 25th Streets to **obtain planning funds** from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization. The plan is to construct bump-outs with rain gardens to manage both storm water and traffic.
16. Offering a variety of **home improvement loan programs**, which include changes to make them more attractive and increase utilization. The income limit was eliminated for the revolving loan program; the interest rate on both the revolving loan program and interest subsidy program was lowered to 2.5%.

17. **Reducing the cost for home energy audits** from the Center for Energy and Environment by \$40 and offering \$150 rebates to homeowners completing improvements recommended by the audit.
18. Working on programs to educate and encourage Seward households to reduce reliance on practices and products releasing toxic components into neighborhood air and water—namely “**Make Seward Green**” and “**Great Green Yards**.”
19. Continuing support of the **Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership**. In the last 12 months, 36 youth have participated in restorative conferences. They have returned \$700 to victims, contributed 150 volunteer hours to the community, and expressed 24 apologies to those harmed.
20. Continuing to grow our online presence. The **E-Democracy Seward Neighbors Forum** has become an important way for SNG to communicate with the neighborhood. The forum has grown by 25 percent – from 827 members in 2012 to 1,033 members in 2013 – and averages 3 posts each day. The **Seward Profile site** broadcasts items like community reports from the Minneapolis Police Department and information on neighborhood events. The **SewardTweets** twitter account now has 615 followers. A calendar is also available for community groups to add their events.
21. Through the Community Development Committee, we **reviewed and made recommendations on requests** for rezoning, Conditional Use Permits, Variances, and expansion of nonconforming uses.
22. This was SPOKES’s first full season of operation. In April we opened the **Hub mini-store at SPOKES** with a kick-off party that hosted more than 200 people! In our **Adult Learn-to-Ride classes** we taught over 40 people how to ride a bike, and a number of our students are now volunteering to help others learn. We started a Learn-to-Ride More class to provide more traffic skills to our graduates. About 40 people have received bikes through our **Earn-a-Bike program**. We also loaned 24 bikes to low-income residents for the season and worked with Cycles-for-Change to loan another 20. The **Open Shop** will continue through the winter on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, and the **Women and Transgender Open Shop** will operate on the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month. Thursday evening volunteer hours will also continue through the winter.
23. Through a Legacy Fund Research Grant, a Seward Co-op Community Fund Grant, and the generous donation of a Seward resident, we enlisted twenty neighborhood writers to conduct archival research and oral history interviews and to write, edit and consult in the History Committee’s **Seward History Book Project**. This unique, collaborative way of telling a neighborhood’s story is being recognized by others. Staff of the Special Collections Room at Hennepin County’s Central Library are touting the book project as a model of what other neighborhoods could and should be doing.

24. Housing

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

35%

25. 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?

Housing, CPED, City Council (5)

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?

Yes

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.

Yes

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

4. ***City Departments***

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

5. ***City Assistance***

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

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? 4.5

6. ***Other comments?***