

Community Participation Program  
2014 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Calhoun Area Residents Action Group (CARAG)

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### 1. Stakeholder Involvement

What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2014?

- CARAG hosted ten monthly neighborhood meetings featuring topics of community interest and encouraged attendee participation.
- The organization sponsors fun, community building events like the Chilly Chili Fest, Earth Day Clean Up, Super Sale, Bryant Square Park concerts, CARAG Garden Tour, Movie in the Park, and CARAG Annual Meeting..
- CARAG has an extensive social media presence with the CARAG website ([www.carag.org](http://www.carag.org)), Facebook group, and Twitter feed. In fact, CARAG now has more than 850 followers- the most of any Minneapolis neighborhood association.

How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2014?

CARAG worked actively to engage renters who make up about 75% of neighborhood residents, but they are underrepresented in CARAG activities. Volunteers and staff identify renters at community meetings and events personally engaging them about the organization and how to get involved. Also, CARAG works to tailor events so they will interest young renters including for example the Movie in the Park. Finally, CARAG continues to broaden our social media presence with many neighbors engaged through email updates, Facebook, and Twitter.

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

CARAG has found that flyering the entire neighborhood is the most effective way to reach out to neighbors. Special efforts are made by those delivering flyers to ensure renters view flyers. When possible flyers are taped to doors of apartment buildings with security entrances. Based on neighbor feedback, flyers paired with social



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media promotion is how most people learn about CARAG events and activities.

What did not work so well? Why?

CARAG has found that meetings with standard agendas do not bring many neighbors out. Many CARAG residents have other commitments in the evening, including work or recreational activities, that compete for time. So, CARAG has made an effort to involve meeting attendees in more interactive discussions and agenda topics.

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- **Direct Contact:** 500

**Print or electronic publications**

- Uptown Neighborhood News (UNN): 2,500
- CARAG E-Update: 520
- Facebook: 150
- Twitter: 850

**# of Volunteers :** 175

**# of Participants**

- 225- CARAG Chilly Chili Fest
- 75- Earth Day Clean Up
- 35- CARAG Super Sale
- 50- Bryant Square Park Concert Series Kick Off
- 100- CARAG Garden Tour
- 35- Kids of CARAG Car Wash
- 25- CARAG Pop Booth at Uptown Art Fair
- 50- Movie in the Park (rained out)
- 75- CARAG Annual Meeting
- 250- Various CARAG Neighborhood & committee meetings
- **920- Total**

## **2. 2014 Highlights**

Last summer, CARAG purchased a Little Free Library (LFL) as a community engagement tool. Volunteers then assembled, stained, and painted it in preparation for National Night Out on August 4. CARAG brought the library on a cart to all eight CARAG block events engaging residents along the way. Many block event attendees signed up to donate books and host the library at that time.

In September, the LFL was installed adjacent to the Bryant Square Park building as its' first stop. Volunteers then move and secure the library in a different location around the first of every other month. The LFL has been popular with both children and adults becoming a neighborhood focal point as it travels to different locations in the community.

## 2014 Accomplishments

### **Land Use & Transportation**

- Partnered with Public Works to implement the 31<sup>st</sup> St. pedestrian improvements & 36<sup>th</sup> St. protected bikeway projects
- **Initiated planning to install a park-let and bike parking facilities in the community.**
- **Reviewed multiple zoning and licensing issues.**

### **Livability & Engagement Committee**

- Organized community-building events such as Chilly Chili Fest, Super Sale, Garden Tour, & Movie in the Park.
- Led efforts to make CARAG events “zero-waste” and promoted new recycling rules.
- Partnered with Uptown Association to add ten artistic utility box wraps as a means to prevent graffiti and beautify the neighborhood.

### **Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) Implementation**

- Sponsored the planting of more than 40 boulevard trees to replace dead and diseased trees.
- Promoted CARAG Home Loan Programs.
- Subsidized the cost of home energy audits for 20 homeowners facilitating the saving of money and energy.

### **Uptown Neighborhood News (UNN)**

- Produced and distributed twelve monthly newspapers covering the CARAG and ECCO neighborhoods.

3. Housing  
What percentage of time did your organization spend on housing-related activities? 10%

4. **Financial Reports**  
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?

- CARAG interacts most often with City Council Member Lisa Bender and her staff. They attend the monthly CARAG neighborhood meetings providing an extensive update about City initiatives and projects.
- CARAG engaged periodically with NCR and Development Finance to administer CPP and NRP contracts and projects.
- CARAG also worked with Public Works staff on the W. 31st . pedestrian improvements and W. 36<sup>th</sup> St. Protected Bikeway projects.
- Representatives from the Minneapolis Police Department attended one CARAG meeting and we remained in email contact with our Crime Prevention Specialist.
- There was little or no engagement with CPED, Inspections, and other City departments beyond receiving group mail and email updates.

What worked well? What could be improved?

**Generally, CARAG interactions with City departments worked fine. CARAG and City departments may want to make an effort to connect with each other at least once a year.**

On a scale of 1 to5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate your overall experience with your interactions with the City? \_\_\_\_3.5\_\_\_\_

**2. City Communications – effectiveness**

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful? It varies in quality per department.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City?  
\_\_\_\_3.5\_\_\_\_

**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.

**Generally, CARAG is notified in a timely manner- with more limited notifications related to business licensing and zoning.**

On a scale of 1 to5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate the timeliness of communications from the City? \_\_\_\_\_3.5

**4. City Departments**

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

We are uncertain how to answer this broad question.

**5. City Assistance**

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

Perhaps, NCR could bring community groups with common characteristics together to discuss common issues and engagement strategies. For example, 75% of CARAG residents are renters and they are underrepresented in CARAG activities. We are interested in discussing how to engage more renters and get ideas to encourage renter involvement.

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? \_\_\_\_4\_\_\_\_

**6. Other comments?**

**Thank you for asking for our feedback.**