

Community Participation Program 2014 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: East Calhoun Community Organization (ECCO)

Contact person: Monica Smith

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1. Stakeholder Involvement

Reviewing your CPP activities in 2014, Please provide information about:

- *What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2014?*
 - Organized a letter writing campaign to raise awareness about proposed changes to the flight patterns at the airport that could drastically increase airplane noise over southwest Minneapolis and the Chain of Lakes.
 - Held Livability Committee meetings on a variety of topics of interest to residents:
 - Airplane noise
 - 36th St Bikeway
 - Zoning issues for new buildings and variances for home construction
 - Food trucks in Uptown
 - Flier neighborhood for:
 - Help Our Bees campaign
 - Cherry Tree project
 - Neighborhood events: bike festival, Super Sale, Community Puppet Show and Potluck and Labor Day
 - Provided an opportunity for residents to share ideas and offer feedback at all of our events via a open ended comment card called “Got ideas?”
 - ECCO information chalk boards placed in various locations around the neighborhood to promote upcoming events and raise awareness.
 - January; Staffed an ECCO information table at the Uptown Association annual meeting
 - April: Organized a workshop on growing organic apple trees and Earth Day clean-up event
 - May: Bicycle Festival
 - June: Super Sale, Community Puppet Show & Potluck, and organized volunteers to manage recycling and composting at Nature Valley Uptown Criterium
 - August: National Night Out block parties
 - September: Labor Day Parade and Celebration
 - October: Annual Meeting and co-sponsored a School Board Candidate Forum
 - December: Convened a Task Force to focus on reinvesting NRP Phase II housing funds and Holiday Caroling Party.

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

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.
 - We mailed an invitation to our Annual Meeting to all residents in the neighborhood.
 - 46% of the ECCO Board members elected in October 2014 are renters and 62% live in multi-family buildings.

- *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, and Labor Day celebration are an effective way to communicate with residents in single-family homes and duplexes.
 - The Annual Meeting mailing was one way to ensure that we were inviting all residents in the neighborhood to participate.

- *What did not work so well? Why?*
 - Our Facebook page continues to languish due to lack of effort.

- *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, and phone communication regarding neighborhood programs and activities.

- *How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?*
 - 30-40

- *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.
 - Our mailing list includes 1,330 addresses.

- *How many people receive your electronic communications?*
 - Our email distribution list contained 558 addresses in 2014.

2. **2014 Highlights**

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

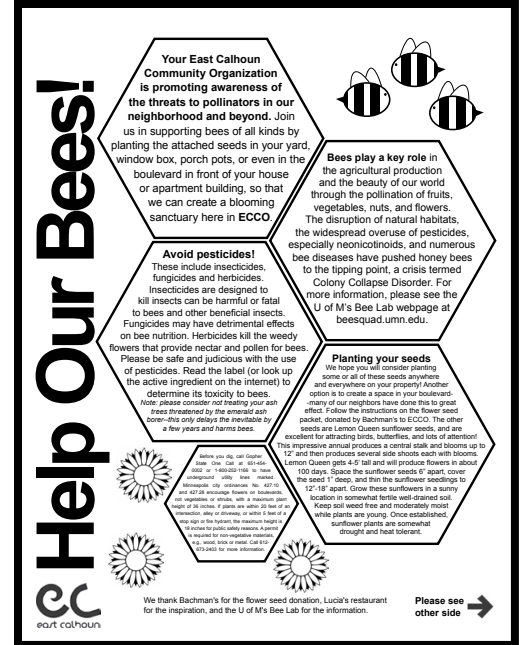
- What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?
- Who was impacted?
- What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?
- What was the outcome?

1. **Help Our Bees campaign**

ECCO’s Green Team created a campaign to promoted awareness of the threats to pollinators. Fliers were distributed through the neighborhood with information about the critical role that bees play in agricultural production and the dangers of pesticides on the bee population. Attached to the fliers were packets of seeds that were pesticide-free and pollinator-friendly. Residents were encouraged to plant the seeds on their property to promote a blooming sanctuary in ECCO.

Special thanks to Bachman’s for donating the seed packets.

Outcome: 900 seed packets were distributed to residents and the neighborhood was in bloom.



2. **Organic Cherry Tree Project**

ECCO initiated a legacy project to promote the planting of organic cherry trees in the neighborhood.

The goals are to:

- Promote community building around local food production and environmental stewardship.
- Promote education on organic best practices friendly to pollinators, children and pets/animals.
- Promote sustainable landscaping for food and environmental protection.
- Celebrate the results of our community's efforts in an annual event like a Cherry Festival.



ECCO provided funding for property owners for up to one cherry tree per site

(for up to 50 households), with support for correct tree planting, etc, and information and support for organic best practices from an ecological standpoint. Cherry trees are ideal for this purpose because they are relatively pest free and produce fruit very early in life. They also come in a variety of sizes and are self-pollinating making them ideal for most sites.

ECCO will ask owners of the site to pledge to avoid pesticide use or any other practices that could be chemically toxic to the environment for pollinators, people, or animals. We would provide their yard with a small sign indicating that they are part of the organic cherry tree program for display. We would also invite them to be part of a community of ECCO gardeners to share our successes and issues in caring for cherry trees.

The project was announced at the Annual Meeting in October. Registration forms were due in mid-December. The project will continue in 2015 when the trees will be available for planting and a Cherry Tree Workshop is being planned for April.

Outcome: 40 cherry trees will be planted in the spring of 2015

3. **ECCO Task Force**

ECCO convened a Task Force to focus on reinvesting NRP Phase II housing dollars due to the drastic change in administrative fees from our housing administrator. The Task Force had their first meeting in November 2014 and will work for the next several months to identify and evaluation priorities for the funds. The Task Force includes several people who are new to the neighborhood and offer a fresh perspective as well as long-time residents who know and understand the history of the neighborhood.

Outcome: The work of the Task Force will continue in 2015.

3. 2014 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2014:

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

1. Good Faith/Good Neighbor

The Livability Committee initiated a policy that will help inform neighbors about potential zoning variances and new developments in the neighborhood. Project proposers typically meet with ECCO's Livability Committee to discuss their project plans, solicit feedback and ask for support. The new policy asks the project proposer to notify the nearby neighbors and invite them to the meeting to participate in the discussion. This proactive approach helps facilitate open communication in the neighborhood and provides opportunities for residents to engage more with ECCO.

Impact: The result is that nearby neighbors has an opportunity to hear the proposed project plans and provide feedback prior to the formal city process and public hearing.

2. Donation Request Criteria

ECCO frequently receives donation requests from local nonprofits to help support their projects and programs. The ECCO Board implemented a new policy that outlines the criteria that the board will use to evaluate the donation requests and includes a formal application.

Impact: The new policy helps the board make sure that any donation given from our very limited unrestricted funds aligns with the purpose and goals of the ECCO Board and provide the most benefit to our residents.

3. ECCO Annual Meeting

ECCO had a very successful Annual Meeting in October 2014. A postcard mailing was sent to all East Calhoun residents inviting them to participate in the meeting. The event began with a pizza dinner to allow neighbors to relax and socialize. The tone of the evening was very convivial and inviting. A slide show provided highlights of the previous year and initiatives were announced for the upcoming year.

Impact: The good news was that over half of the attendees were first time participants for our annual meeting. The ECCO Board elections were held and the meeting and we are pleased to report that six of the eight board members elected were new to the ECCO Board (the other two members were elected to a second term).

4. Housing

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

- 15%

5. 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?

We interacted the most with our City Council Member Lisa Bender and her staff. CM Bender or her Policy Aide attended our monthly board meetings to share information about City news and issues.

Elected officials from City Council, Park Board, State Senate, and Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission attended our annual meeting in October 2014 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.

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. Language used is full of acronyms that only city employees recognize.

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 Bender’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.

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?

City departments could provide a speaker or guest to neighborhood board meetings to inform and educate our organization on the department's function and who to contact if necessary to engage with that department

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?**