

Community Participation Program 2014 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: East Phillips Improvement Coalition (EPIC)

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

Communication:

- EPIC sent out over 90 EPIC E-News editions to a list of 480 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 480 people are on EPIC's resident email list and there are approximately 550 people in EPIC's total email database.
- Flyered the whole neighborhood multiple times: twice for the Annual Meeting in 3 languages, twice for announcing the Summerfest and for the 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 again 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 120 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 6 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 continues to be 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:

- The **2014 Annual Meeting** was one of our most successful in the history of EPIC. It was one of the largest ones we have had, approximately 115 people with 65 voters, and one of the most diverse. The election provided us with people who have a heart for the neighborhood, with strong diversity and with people with good skill sets, the skills we needed amongst us to be able to do what we can for the state of the neighborhood and its residents. People had a good time and remarked how good they felt about it afterward. We were pleased that volunteers from the neighborhood, mostly youth, were our servers and that a young man, Sherzad Kordian, from here cooked the food in the kitchen for his neighbors. He is one of the lead chefs at the Guthrie theater, so we had the best as well as the classiest.
- 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 35 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 a form of communication...of steadiness in an often chaotic setting.
- The **monthly meetings of the East Phillips Park Programming Partnership**, a standing committee of EPIC, have been invaluable. The committee was formed to assist the Park Staff in providing quality programming for all community members in the new East Phillips Park Cultural & Community Center. Over twenty organizations came together and still continue to meet to work out solutions to problems in this partnership with EPIC, Park Staff and community members to discuss, design and implement programs, gatherings and events for all ages and ethnicities in this diverse community. The central idea is that if a service organization can help meet its mission by serving our people in our facility with their staff, it will be a win-win for everyone. It has really worked.
- EPIC again took **our portable meeting** in the form of 30 chairs and held one large information gathering and problem-solving meetings in 2909 Bloomington Apartments for 35 Somali residents and many children, with interpreters. Council Member Cano was present to answer questions. And engage in problem solving. 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.

- Continued 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 continued a project to get new immigrant refugees to food shelves and show them how this works. This involves 8 families, about 30 people.
- Coordinated and managed EPIC's large Community Garden serves 36 families of all ethnicities, involving over 120 people. The garden committee hosted several meetings and parties in the garden, especially Community Garden Day where people from all over town come and visit the garden, and also the Fall Harvest Party, which invites all of East Phillips.
- Continued to assist 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. Sometime they get to interact with the Nepali children who also frequent the garden with their parents. The interaction with new people from both groups is entertaining and they actually discuss plants. They are full of curiosity about one another
- The grant from the Seward coop to rebuild the EPIC garden fence and paths providing stipends and carpentry lessons for teens got onto full swing last fall. A major piece of reconstruction was accomplished with teens learning to use laser leveling sights (something really new), drills, post hole diggers and more. More teen leaders were recruited and they recruited 15 workers to help. Teens and their helpers learned a lot and Teens and their helpers learned a lot and became more invested in the community. It was really successful.



- **Volunteers reached out for youth.** More efforts to reach out and build relationships through finding out real needs and seeking concrete solutions through our volunteer base are all efforts to help new comers and any strugglers to position themselves for self-sufficiency and the ability to help others. The idea is "each one, teach one". Some are the following:
- Newcomers to the area were encouraged to enroll children in programs at the Preschool Time for Tots; Banyan program; and Pillsbury United Waite House. At least seven families were shown how to fill out applications for eight children so they can attend;

- Funds were raised to send fourteen children to residential summer camp and three-day camps of one week each.
- Eight tutors have been recruited to serve elementary and middle school students with limited English. This is making a major difference in their ability not just to do well on their lessons, but to feel comfortable even being there, not easy for new immigrants, strengthening their confidence in their own ability to manage school.
- Working with interpreter's one board member served as a family advocate in three schools with four families to insist on speech and hearing assessments and therapeutic interventions. She also accompanied families to immigration appointments and gave guidance about record changes and showed them how to work the system to get what they need. It is wonderful to have experienced and bold members of the community on the EPIC Board.
- Eight new immigrant families were enrolled in the local food shelf at the Waite House this year, so the program is growing. It probably impacts 40 people, as they learn how to help themselves and now can show others. An EPIC volunteer with a van has provided transportation on Mondays and Fridays and some have begun to drive their friends... This helps insure children and youth with adequate nutrition throughout the week.
- **Youth Sports are getting started and taking off.** This year we watched our teams use our new ball fields at East Phillips Park and fill them to overflowing with area young people as we continued to tweak the Park for use with more trees for Arbor Day and help support our teams. It is important to know that the parents and coaches did the organizing. EPIC and the families created the petitions that got the ball fields. EPIC only advised and encouraged.
- This year the East Phillips Park Soccer Teams won the City championships in 18U, 13U and 11U all open teams. The amazing coaches from East Phillips and Ventura Village were Ahmed Yussuf, Abdallahi Geedi and Ali Micalin. East Phillips Park put on a celebration for our champions. The photo shows the teams, coaches, Representative Karen Clark and Board Chair Carol Pass joining the celebration.



East Phillips Park Programming Partnership

The East Phillips Park Programming Partnership, a standing committee of EPIC, was formed to assist the Park Staff in providing quality programming for all community members in the new East Phillips Park Cultural & Community Center. Over twenty organizations came together in this partnership with EPIC, Park Staff and community members to discuss, design and implement programs gatherings and events for all ages and ethnicities in this diverse community. The central idea is that if a service organization can help meet its mission by serving our people in our facility with their staff, it will be a win-win for everyone.

They meet monthly on the last Tuesday of each month (except December) at 11:30 A.M. at the Community Center and volunteers provide lunch.

- This year EPIC'S Programming Partnership, helped put together EPIC's effort to "Bridge the Digital Divide", to help introduce people to the online world and all of the access it offers. We have realized that job searches, housing searches, help lines and more are all more readily accessible to residents who have even rudimentary computer skills.
- **National Night Out:** East Phillips had 12 National Night Out parties. Board members visited many of them with our neighborhood brochures. EPIC put up \$100 per registered block party and we considered a prize for the best one, but decided against it. Each one was unique and competition would probably take the fun and enjoyable break from such concepts out of it making it more like what we face every day. Some hired performers. Some had music and dancing. Some had games. Almost all had food, some of which was exotic. It was a nice summer night of friends and families.

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

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?**

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.

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 connected well with over 500 to 600 people board members in these various venues and meetings, we probably

- **How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?**
Approximately 80

- **How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?**
Approximately 1600

- **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 480 residents averaging at least twice a week. We assume these go to households, especially in the immigrant community where the family English speaker shares information.

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?



The first EPIC SummerFest: This was our first venture into a major festival and it also was a great success. The line-up of performers was wonderful and the unusual character and quality was great, everything from Equadoran dancers to a local rock star. The food was good and the inflatable slide and “jumpy castle” was really fun for the kids. The day was beautiful and sunny and it could not have been better. One of the best things was that we could still use our CPP funds for this and so we could have wonderful performers without killing ourselves with fund raising. This year if we can do this, it will be much more difficult, because we will have to raise all the money.

EPIC’s response to families on the far side of the “Digital Divide”:

This year EPIC’S standing committee, the Programming Partnership, helped put together EPIC’s effort to “Bridge the Digital Divide”, to help introduce people to the online world and all of the access it offers. We have realized that job searches, housing searches, help lines and more are all more readily accessible to residents who have even rudimentary computer skills. We worked with Bill Roddy of Osiris Organization and the Park to upgrade both the youth and adult computer labs in the Center. This made it possible to partner with Wells Fargo and the City of Minneapolis IT Department, who provided instructors for our new FREE Computer and Financial Literacy classes taught in both English and Spanish. Our next goal is to provide free used and reconditioned computers to those graduates of our Computer Literacy Class who are in need a computer.

Neither we nor the Park are paying for any of this...just lots of networking and organizing... EPIC put together the pieces and provided the space through Jeanne Whitehill, Director of East Phillips Park Cultural & Community Center.



2014 Phillips Clean Sweep: Through the Clean Sweep Event every fall the Community fights the trashy appearance and unhealthy features caused by people littering or by people coming from elsewhere to dump things here...unwanted tires, furniture, paint cans, etc. This is an affront to the residents and emphasizes the low opinion some people have for our residents. The Phillips Clean Sweep occurs annually on the second Saturday of October. It involves all four Phillips Neighborhoods and Little Earth of United Tribes in a day long community building event, starting with a free breakfast, the distribution of four hundred free Clean Sweep T-Shirts and then the neighborhood wide clean up. This is all followed by a free lunch and entertainment in Stewart Park. EPIC has helped coordinate, host and manage the event every year for the last ten years. This involves 6 months of planning and fund raising. EPIC and Midtown host Breakfast in the Welna Hardware parking lot and EPIC often has an information table at the party in Stewart Park. It brings out everyone and is a true inspiration for all of the residents. It is the one and only Phillips wide event of the year.



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?

Greenway Heights Apartments

This year marks the real completion of one of our longest projects, the Greenway Heights Apartment building with 42 units of affordable rental family size homes. This is a major achievement and demonstrates EPIC's commitment to the renting population. This project took EPIC 12 years and we inherited this from the former board, when we took over a battered organization in 2005.



This is one of those rare cases where the developer allowed us to have something to say about the building, so it ended up with balconies for each apartment. We love the building with its bent middle and apparently the landscaping will be great. We are not thrilled about the color, but someone told me that it would grow on us. I will wait and see. We are awaiting a grand opening. It is EPIC's last major building project of apartment size. Both the pieces of land where our apartment projects now sit were once the sites of violent criminal activity. In fact I knew the last man to be shot in one of the last old buildings that stood where Greenway Heights now stands, filled with families.

The Pool - This year EPIC passed and finally contracted \$50,000 NRP dollars to help trigger a match from the Mdewakanton Sioux Community for restoration and construction of the Phillips Aquatic Center. This means EPIC's full contribution reached \$75,000. We are proud to be the first and largest donor of the neighborhoods and to be unhesitant when we see a great idea and a real moral responsibility. We imagine bringing back the "Sharks", the earlier Phillips Neighborhood swim team and our youth becoming award-winning swimmers.

The youth and children who learn to swim will be the most important benefactors of the new pool. Minneapolis has had one of the highest rates of drowning for kids of color in the US. Hopefully this terrible statistic will change.



Administration to sustain the Community:

Hired a CPA to do our books: This year we hired a CPA and while this doesn't sound exciting...it is. It keeps us much more organized and gives up to date clarity about funding, which is always good. All our taxes and filings will be in on time without board members tearing their hair out. Filing quarterly reports will not seem next to impossible.

EPIC successfully completed an audit. This insured internal policy coherence and integrity. The EPIC Board had our books and financial procedures audited and they were found to be internally consistent and our financial records and organizational policies and procedures are sound.

These two accomplishments have made our organization stronger and given us greater confidence in our future.

4. Housing

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

This year we worked on moving our contracts from CEE to Greater Metro Housing Corp. and an NPP for New Home Construction with PRG and Greater Metro Housing.

EPIC was finally able this last year to refill our lost housing budget that was drained by the Mayor's actions in 2010. This is now a Neighborhood Priority Plan to fill our vacant lots. EPIC has one almost ready to go and others will soon follow. We hope this will give East Phillips stability for years to come. Here are some elevations to consider. We are hopeful new families will be attracted to our neighborhood.



5. *Financial Reports*

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

See Attached financial statements. .

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? Too complicated to answer.

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? Some were stellar ____5____
Some were clearly ____1____

2. *City Communications – effectiveness*

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?
We often found that we knew more than staff and they often brought more heat than light.
We worked at getting along. It was not easy.

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? ____2____

4. *City Departments*

How can City departments improve the way in which they function in your neighborhood? Try taking your own ethics seriously. Self evaluation.

We encountered serious Community Engagement problems regarding the City's Roof Depot site proposal and found that it had been in the works for years with no discussion with the neighborhood. There seems to be little chagrin about this on the part of Public Works...not even embarrassment or apology...We are working on this, but the citizens who will be impacted are about three years behind. A very poor way to honor the city's first principal of community engagement:

1. Right to be involved – Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

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? ____1____

6. *Other comments?*