

**Community Participation Program  
Lyndale Neighborhood Association  
2014 Annual Report**

Neighborhood Organization: Lyndale Neighborhood Association  
Contact Person: Mark Hinds  
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**Stakeholder Involvement**

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

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

LNA conducted a wide range of activities during 2014. At LNA our outreach and engagement activities start with a comprehensive communications program designed to make sure our community members have the information they need to be informed and engaged community members.

This includes publishing the award winning Lyndale Neighborhood News twelve times a year; having three electronic newsletters that include a general newsletter, one for volunteers, and one for neighborhood businesses that reach over 1,600 people on a monthly basis. LNA also has a website ([www.Lyndale.org](http://www.Lyndale.org)) had 12,059 visits and 47,042 page views. Our content sharing partnership with the Twin Cities Daily Planet means many of our stories have a much wider readership than just in the neighborhood.

LNA uses a variety of outreach techniques including door knocking, phone calls, flyers, block clubs, mailings, community events, personal asks, etc. to build connections with community members. These activities are conducted on an ongoing basis around all of LNA's program activities. This past fall LNA conducted a doorknocking campaign to encourage community members to get out to vote and identify neighborhood priorities through our Nicollet Votes campaign. The canvass was focused on reaching traditionally underrepresented community members and included knocking on over 500 doors. LNA also regularly doorknocks in apartment buildings to understand the issues renters are facing and to recruit people to our renters group meetings.

LNA also provides a wide range of opportunities for community members to be engaged in their neighborhood's work. This includes serving on one of LNA's five active committees (Board, Housing, Business, Crime & Drug, and Volunteer), being a block-club leader, volunteering with one of LNA's programs, assisting with ESL classes, helping with a community event, directly working on a community project, or participating in our monthly Lyndale Neighborhood Meetings.

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

A major part of LNA's work the past few years has been trying to build a working multi-cultural community where all Lyndale community members feel welcome and encouraged to be a part of LNA's work.

This work has included the Lyndale Women's Leadership Program, where LNA works with cohorts of Latina and Somali women over a nine month period to help them develop their community leadership skills. In 2014, the program graduated our fourth Latina cohort and our third Somali cohort.

LNA's ESL program continues to grow and reach more students. LNA's ESL program is designed to connect students and volunteers to LNA's other work. In 2014 LNA provided 11,006 hours of student contact time, which was a 34 percent increase from 2013. During the year 135 new students registered for classes and 40 percent of students increased their language level.

In addition to this work, LNA organized several culturally oriented events, including our annual La Posada and Dia Del Nino events. LNA also publishes a section of the Lyndale Neighborhood News in Spanish each month, as well as information in Spanish and Somali on our website.

LNA has worked hard to find the resources to have staff and volunteers who are linguistically and culturally competent to work with all of the cultural groups in Lyndale.

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

Yes! Our strategy of using longer-term programs and activities, particularly the Women’s Leadership and ESL programs to engage under-represented community members is paying off. These are some of the innovative ways we nurture relationships with diverse community members and provide opportunities for community members to get connected with each other and develop their leadership skills. This work is enabling us to build meaningful relationships in ways that we could not do with community events or door knocking alone.

It takes a long time to build trust and engage people, especially within new immigrant communities where community members have reasons to be wary of governmental institutions and may not have had any experience with community-based organizations. The combination of structured programs, community events, projects, and direct advocacy work is helping us develop meaningful relationships. Having a long-term approach based on respect and trust is changing who is involved in the neighborhood, how they are involved, and what we work on as an organization. It is also getting us closer to our goal of having a working multi-cultural community.

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

The strategies LNA is using work well. The hardest thing with our model is making sure we have the financial resources necessary to support staff who are culturally and linguistically competent to work with all of our communities over a long period of time. LNA would not be able to support these programs and this work if the only resources we had was the current level of support through the CPP and NRP programs.

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

1,000

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

255

**How many individuals participated in your organization’s activities?**

8,000 plus

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

Approximately 8,000 – LNA mails the Lyndale Neighborhood News to every residence and business in the neighborhood twelve times a year, the paper is also distributed to local businesses and through a series of paper boxes throughout the neighborhood. In addition to the Lyndale Neighborhood News, LNA mails invitations for our Open House, Annual Meeting/Fish Fest, and annual fund drive to the entire neighborhood. All of these publications are in English and Spanish.

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

We have three electronic newsletters that reach 1,639 people. The newsletters are the Lyndale E-News, which is our general information newsletter; Lyndale Gives Back, which is targeted towards

volunteer opportunities in the neighborhood; and Lyndale Business Matters which is targeted towards neighborhood businesses. Each electronic newsletter is emailed on a monthly basis.

### **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?*

One significant thing for LNA in 2014 is how our work is changing through our Inclusive Organizing Initiatives with traditionally underrepresented communities, LNA is seeing a change in who is coming to meetings, the number of people coming to the office for assistance, and who is volunteering. The Women's Leadership and the ESL programs have significantly helped to connect community members to LNA and other community resources. The Women's Leadership Program is advanced to the point it is starting to move into systems change work with graduates.

LNA's goal is to be a working multi-cultural community is starting to happen through this work. Graduates from the Women's Leadership Program are taking on issues in the community and working with LNA to address those issues. Graduates were instrumental in working with Somali and Latino community members during our Nicollet Votes campaign which focused on encouraging people to vote and registering new voters.

Two major issues came to the forefront during 2014 that were driven by the outreach conducted by the women. The women identified equitable access to Painter Park and unfair housing practices as two key equity issues in Lyndale.

The issue with equitable access at the park relates to the type and cost of the programs offered and how they are communicated to traditionally underrepresented communities. There is a gap with Painter Park and the Park Board in how they decide programming and communicate this programming to non-English speaking community members. Little to no outreach is conducted by the park and there is no process in place to learn about the types of programs the community wants. The women have set up meetings with park officials to create a dialog about what programming the neighborhood wants and how to communicate with a diverse community.

The other major issue is unfair housing practices where landlords are taking advantage of people's immigration status and language to provide substandard housing. LNA is actively working with graduates and other community members to address this issue on a community and city-wide level. A renters' group was formed where community members are learning about their rights, teaching others about those rights, and learning how to advocate for themselves. They also are working to address problems with the City's inspection system.

### **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?*

2014 was a good year for LNA, we were able to continue making progress on achieving our vision of building a working multi-cultural community. This included our ongoing efforts to engage as many people as possible in their neighborhood's work, with an emphasis on connecting with our new

immigrant community members and large community events. The Women's Leadership and the Lyndale ESL programs are important parts of this work.

These programs and our other inclusive organizing work are helping LNA see significant growth in engagement from traditionally underrepresented communities. Both programs are unique in that they are intentionally designed to build community and help participants develop the tools they need to have a voice in shaping the community and move up the economic ladder. From English language skills to leadership skills, these programs help participants develop the confidence, connections, and relationships that enable them and their families to thrive – something we are very proud of as an organization!

From our many accomplishments last year, one that sticks out the most is Nicollet Open Streets, something we hope to make an annual tradition. Attendance estimates showed that 9,500 people biked, walked, ate, drank, connected with organizations, talked with neighbors, were entertained, or simply played on the 16 blocks of Nicollet Avenue closed to automobile traffic that day. We also were able to include over 100 local businesses, nonprofit, and governmental organizations in a myriad of creative ways, such as selling food and beverages, sharing ideas, and providing entertainment and activities.

Almost 80 percent of organizations open during the event reported an increase in the number of visitors that day compared to a typical Sunday, and almost two-thirds of these thought their customer traffic at least doubled. Many of the organizations thought the event brought new folks into the neighborhood, not just their regular customers.

Close to half of the nonprofit and government organizations surveyed estimated they had 100 or more conversations during the event, or in other words, more than one conversation every three minutes. Sixty percent of for-profit businesses estimated they made more money during the event than they typically do on a Sunday afternoon in September and almost half estimated their sales at least doubled.

But perhaps the most important aspect of the event is the amount of pride and fun that community members reported having that day. The event drew so much positive energy that LNA and event partner KFNA are going to try to hold the event every year.

Another exciting accomplishment is the formation of the Renters' Rights group. This group comes together to address housing issues in the neighborhood, learn about their rights as renters, learn to advocated for themselves and others, and connect with organizations that can help them. So far the group has taken two cases to court and won both cases against unscrupulous and discriminatory landlords.

The ESL program also initiated an annual jobseekers workshop called "Ready to Work". This workshop featured a panel of local business owners, talking about what they look for in employees, assistance in filling out job applications, access to educational resources, and mock interviews with human resource specialists. Activities at Ready to Work were conducted in English, Spanish, and Somali. Students and other community members who participated found the workshop to help build their confidence in accessing employment.

## **1. Housing**

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

Approximately 9.6 percent. It's important to note that LNA operates a number of programs and other activities that take a significant amount of staff time that are not related to housing related activities.

Due to the work of the Renters' Rights group, we are making this work a focus of 2015. We are working to potentially create a partnership with other neighborhoods that helps ensure Minneapolis community members are secure in their housing.

## **2. Financial Reports**

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

Please see separate document.

## **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?*

During the past year, most of our interactions were with the Ward 8 office, with the 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct, and with the Access and Outreach staff from NCR. In general, we had quick, helpful responses. The areas where we work with the City on a regular basis are much more responsive than other departments, where responses tend to take longer and staff is less helpful.

Our biggest frustration this year was how the NCR handled the changes with CEE. The fact neighborhoods were brought in after decisions had been made show we are not considered partners by the City. The department also did not allocate enough resources to transition the contracts in a timely manner.

*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? 3*

### **2. City Communications – effectiveness**

*Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?*

It depends on which department is sending out the information. We often find that most of the legal notices we get are nearly indecipherable for staff who work on these issues all the time, let alone community members.

We also would like the City to publish information in multiple languages more regularly, which means going beyond just saying if you would like this translated.

*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? 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.*

This is one of our many areas of frustration with the City. So many of the notices and communication pieces we receive from the City are timed so late in the process that it is very difficult to engage community members around the issue at hand – and even when we do the information is often dismissed out of hand.

The timing of the notices also makes it clear the City is more interested in checking a box than authentic community engagement. An additional issue is that we often receive so many communications that is difficult to sort through them to identify which ones should be high priorities from the neighborhood's perspective. We have regularly tried to relay this information through City staff and Council Members numerous times, but it doesn't seem to have any affect on the process.

*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?*

As we said last year, and the year before, one of the main ways City departments can improve how they function with neighborhoods is to start developing some respect for the work we do. It's very difficult to approach working with departments, when you so often hear City staff bad-mouthing neighborhoods in public meetings. This happens on a regular basis and seems to be a part of a culture that is dismissive of authentic community engagement and the work of neighborhood associations.

As an organization we have not seen any change in this issue over the past year, nor any effort to engage in a discussion about the role of neighborhood associations and City departments. The face we have submitted this comment three years in a row and it has never been acknowledged serve to reinforce this point.

#### **City Assistance**

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

The most important thing the NCR Department can do is to become an advocate for neighborhoods and increasing neighborhood funding. The work neighborhood organizations are trying to do cannot be done well with the current level of financial or organizational support from the City.

*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? 2*

#### **5. Other Comments?**

As we said last year, and the year before, we would be happy to sit down to discuss the issues we have raised in the comments on working with the City and the NCR Department.