

Community Participation Program 2014 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Southeast Como Improvement Association

Contact person: Ricardo McCurley

Date of Board Approval: April 2, 2015

1. Stakeholder Involvement

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

- What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2014?
We hosted multiple events including: Two “Bike-motion” earth day celebrations (100), Three “TCEducate” educational lectures (the series has won the Local Public Health Hero Award) (120), one “Como Corner Comotion” art fair(200), Six “FairShare Farm-on!” garden parties (50), our Como Cookout (900), 45 committee and board meetings (50), as well as Yoga classes (25), Sports and Archery “Innovation clinics” at the park (35)and our annual meeting (25). We also tabled at multiple University of Minnesota housing, environmental and internship fairs.
- How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2014? Our “Innovation Clinics” are geared to attracting underserved populations and we had great turn out from our low-income and communities of color.
- Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?
Our use of college student volunteers and interns has greatly increased our operational capacity. They bring so much energy and skills to our projects!
- What did not work so well? Why?
Like any volunteer, students take time to manage and in bringing more volunteers and interns into the association, it reduced our administrative capacity
- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?
~95, this included individuals at all committee and board meeting plus student volunteers. Attendance is estimated in parenthesis above.
- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?
~105, this include 35 committee and Board members, 20 student volunteers and interns, and 50 gardeners

- How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?
~1475, this included attendance at all events. Attendance is estimated in parenthesis above.
- How many people receive your print publications?
2600 households, ~6000 people
- How many people receive your electronic communications?
467 for our e-newsletter, 264 like on Facebook, 252 followers on Twitter, and 26 Instagram followers

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? We continued to struggle with the General Mills/Henkel Superfund site. In November of 2013, it was announced that Trichloroethylene gas potentially entering over 200 basements in our neighborhood. Our residents were scared and while the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency was trying to convey information, their efforts were inadequate to surpass the vast knowledge gap between their scientists and our neighbors
- Who was impacted? While just over 200 homes were fitted with vapor mitigation systems, even homeowner outside the plume found their homes unsellable. Student renters were powerless to force their landlords to comply with the free testing. Almost everyone in the neighborhood felt some level of fear and anxiety.
- What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity? We connected our organization with environmental groups and list serves across the country with experience in TCE related cleans. We created a lecture series to fill the knowledge gap frustrating neighbors and regulators alike. The TCEducate series partnered us with the MPCA, University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Rural Affairs (CURA), and Barr Engineering to shape a new model to educate citizens and respond to their concerns regarding contaminated properties that potentially can impact the environment in which they live, work and play. While there is a wealth of information related to the negative health effects of TCE vapor that data is not easily accessible and confusing for concerned citizens to comprehend. The goal of this project is to educate the residents within the neighborhood on the many facets of TCE vapor. Series of lectures were created to raise the neighborhood residents understanding of everything surrounding the TCE contamination along with the geological investigation that will aid in the final remedial design for the neighborhood. Topics that have been covered to date include: Health risks with respect to indoor air quality and TCE, Superfund 101, and Remediation Technologies. The finale of this series will be a two-day event this April, during SECIA's Earth Day celebrations, called TCEducate: Earth Day Extravaganza. These lectures are designed help put our neighborhood situation in a broader context and continue us on the path of becoming an informed population, able to understand and participate in discussions on the future of our neighborhood.
- What was the outcome?
~120 people attended the lectures in 2014 and we've made the presentations available on our website. There has been overwhelming support and praise to the series. We even won a Local Public Health Hero award. We are also conducting surveys during the lecture to gauge their effectiveness. The preliminary data is confirming our success!

3. 2014 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2014:

- What were your organization's major accomplishments? We educated our neighbors on the highly technical data surrounding TCE and its clean up; our events and meetings had over 1500 people attend them; we worked closely with more student interns and volunteers than ever before; we added Twitter and Instagram to our communications; we created a coalition of eastside Minneapolis neighborhoods, businesses and bike/pedestrian advocacy groups, The Grand Rounds Completion Coalition (GRCC), to advocate for better bike infrastructure; installed two bike repair stations along Como Avenue and at Van Cleve Park; lobbied and received an organics recycling drop-off site at Van Cleve Park
- How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work? This year was advocacy and education. Our neighbors and the broader community have more knowledge on topics like environmental health risk, bike repair, pollution clean-ups, Superfund legislation, organics recycling, soccer, basketball, archery, yoga, emerald ash borers, rain gardens, native plants, bee health and many more. For each of these topics, our goal is to empower our residents to join the larger conversations surrounding these issues and advocate for themselves.

4. *Housing*

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

~25% of our work was focused on housing. This included work on street light projects and we began a Housing Strategy research project. We also committed funds to the City of Lakes Public Land Trust, which helps make home ownership more affordable.

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?

NCR, Public works, Solid waste and the City Council. Our interacts with these department are good

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? __4__

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

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

It feels excessive at times in the length of emails, but the frequency is good

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.

Yes

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? __4__

4. ***City Departments***

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

Don't know

5. ***City Assistance***

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

Create an Emergency Fund to help neighborhoods handle unexpected costs

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?***