

Community Participation Program 2014 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Seward Neighborhood Group

Contact person: Kerry Cashman

Date of Board Approval: March 25, 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 had a Block Club training/brainstorming meeting that was attended by around 10 Block club leaders.
 - Promoted storm drain stenciling and neighborhood education around the watershed and storm drains. This worked resulted in a channel 5 news special highlighting the program and around 100 storm drains freshly stenciled in 2014
 - Earth day river walk and talk by a National Park Ranger. Attended by 65 people.
 - Garden Tour in June highlighting 10 gardens and ending with a garden party for all participants and guests.
 - Community Conversations potluck dinners with our East African community—more details below
 - Worked with the Bike Coalition and the SCCA to promote the first annual Franklin Ave. Open Streets. Our Open streets went the length of Seward and well into the Phillips Community. We worked hard to promote an Open Streets event that was inclusive to both Seward and Phillips and helped residents cross the barriers to each neighborhood.
 - Created and promoted a year round arts website for local artists and arts organizations.
 - Created the Sand Bucket program to promote walkable sidewalks during the winter. Distributed 25 buckets of sand to host households in the neighborhood to provide for neighbors.
 - Sponsored the Seward Winter Frolic, the Seward arts and business holiday event. Over 500 people visited homes, galleries and businesses to show and enjoy food and artist run activities including a neighborhood wide Lighting Ceremony in Triangle Park.
 - Celebrated our 4th Seward Winter Frolic Kick-off highlighting Seward Artists and Musicians. This event creates a wonderful opportunity for local performance artists to perform in a professional setting in front of an audience.
 - Our bike program: SPOKES continued to reach out to low income and immigrant new bikers through learn-to-ride classes, a bike lending library and earn a bike programs.

- Continued working with the Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Works departments to develop a safer intersection for drivers, walkers and bicyclists at Franklin and Cedar and Minnehaha Avenues.
- How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2014?
 - Our Community Conversations potlucks were very successful in making connections with the new immigrant population in the Seward Towers. We hosted 3 potlucks and had 2 cooking classes. Each potluck had a focused topic and we invited neighbors who were interested in making cross-cultural connections. Our attendance ranged from 25 – 40 at our meals.
 - Our learn-to-ride program continues to reach out to both low income and new immigrant populations. We not only provide a free lending library for bikes, we have earned a bike programs and we teach adults the skills to be independent bikers.

- **Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why? What did not work so well? Why?**

We seem to have the same issue from year to year. We find that interacting over food and over common bonds is the most successful. Our potluck meals were fun and we had lots of repeat attendance from both our neighbors in the Towers and from south of Franklin. While the meals the conversations were lively and friendly, we found that despite enjoying our time together our bonds did not progress any further. We believe that the meals our important but shared activity might be a missing link. We started with the idea of cooking classes which we believe might be a great next step. Our first few classes were fun and very well attended but the space made mingling difficult. We will continue to work on promoting areas of joint activity.

Our learn to ride classes have garnered some very dedicated volunteers for SPOKES from the new immigrant population. This is a perfect example of needing to have both shared need and shared interest in order for a relationship to develop to the next level.

- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)? We don't do any door knocking but I guess in terms of who we reached individually I would put it around 3000 if we take out duplicates from below.

- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?
346
- How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?
5602
- How many people receive your print publications?
4500
- How many people receive your electronic communications?
975 for the SNG online newsletter
593 for the Spokes online newsletter
1100 for the e-democracy community forum

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 Seward Towers East and West are faced with needing major renovations of the waste stacks, heating units and windows. These Towers are widely known as some of the most successful low income housing units in the city. We found that goal of funders seemed to be to make all ownership and management structures ones that they understand without looking into what was actually working successfully in the Towers. Together with its partners in the Seward Towers Corporation, SNG worked to obtain refinancing necessary to fund a major renewal project designed to insure that these 640 units remain quality affordable housing for the next twenty years and at the same time preserve these buildings as community assets by maintaining neighborhood and Towers resident representation in the governance and ownership structure.

Our Community Conversations continue to be a highlight for us. We create the opportunity for different parts of the neighborhood to join together and share a meal. We have found that many Seward residents state that the diversity is one of the reasons they love the neighborhood but at the same time most of our diversity is living side by side as opposed to a mixing of the cultures. We are working to create relationships that cross cultural barriers. Our meals were lively and well attended. Those that attend the meals tend to return but we still have not moved to the next level of relationships. We continue to brainstorm and work to figure out how to deepen our intercultural relationships in the neighborhood.

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?

Seward Neighborhood Group—2014 in Review

- Implemented the neighborhood run Community Conversations with potluck dinners with multi-cultural, multi-lingual participants from all over Seward.
- Organized the first ever SNG led cooking class at the Seward Co-op. Taught Somali Injera making to 25 neighbors, followed by a multi-cultural potluck.
- Collaborated with neighborhood businesses and over **35 Block Clubs** on **National Night Out**.
- Created the Sand Bucket program to promote walkable sidewalks during the winter. Distributed 25 buckets of sand to host households in the neighborhood
- Organized a river walk on Earth Day with a speaker from the National Park Service and over 60 neighbors attending.
- Coordinated **Garage Sale Days** in May with over 80 sales.
- Organized and promoted 3rd annual **Seward Garden Tour**, exhibiting 10 beautiful gardens and raising \$800 for SNG. Added a final garden party for all participants that was a great hit for gardeners and visitors alike.
- Continued support of **Hub of Heaven Community Garden**.
- Continued publication of **The Profile Quarterly**, **distributing it to over 4500 Seward homes and businesses**.
- Organized the **kick-off to the Seward Winter Frolic** at the Playwright's Center, highlighting the work of over 15 performance artists, entertaining over 100+ guests and raising over \$1400 for SNG.
- Collaborated with Seward Civic and Commerce Association to create the **Seward Winter Frolic: Art in the 'Hood**. Developed a new year round Arts website that includes a page for every interested Seward Artist.
- SPOKES taught almost 70 adults and teens how to ride a bike; over 60 people earned a safe bike.
- SPOKES loaned bikes to low-income residents, provided the bikes for the Bike Library at Seward Towers, and hosted community bike rides including Somali Independence Day celebration, Seward History and Architecture , Native Art, Ice Cream and Fall colors rides.
- SPOKES Open Shop provided a popular way for people to use our bike tools and our volunteers' and staffs' experience to fix their own bikes.
- SPOKES partnered with Community Education to help start the Seward Montessori Bike Club.
- SPOKES programs received national recognition by Bicycling Magazine, Rails to Trails Conservancy Magazine and the League of American Bicyclists.

- SPOKES was an active participant in the planning of the Franklin Avenue Open Street event.
 - Continued working with the Hennepin County and Minneapolis Public Works departments to develop a safer intersection for drivers, walkers and bicyclists at Franklin and Cedar and Minnehaha.
 - Worked with Seward Redesign on the Seward Commons project including approval of the concept plan for Phase III of the development.
 - Through the Community Development Committee, reviewed and made recommendations on requests for rezoning, Conditional Use Permits, Variances and expansion of nonconforming uses.
 - Worked with residents on a 34th Avenue block to address both stormwater management and traffic calming through bump-outs with rain gardens. With planning funds from the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, the final design for the project was completed.
 - Offered a variety of home improvement loan programs, including the revolving loan program and interest subsidy program at 2.5% interest. Interest in the loan programs increased in 2014 and 80% of the revolving loan program funds have now been loaned out.
 - Hosted multiple meetings on Community Solar Gardens and staffed an environmental education table at the Faith Mennonite Sustainability Fair.
 - Continued support of the **Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership**, which celebrated its 10th anniversary in October. Since the program's creation, 186 youth have participated in restorative conferences, resulting in \$1,000 returned to those harmed, over 1,000 volunteer hours contributed to the community, and nearly 200 apologies to those harmed.
 - Continue to grow our on-line presence. The **E-Democracy Seward Neighbors** Forum has become an important way for SNG to communicate with the neighborhood and has grown from 1,033 members in 2013 to 1,206 members in 2014. SewardTweets twitter now has 717 followers. We have an active community calendar.
 - Contribute to SNG in 2014, and help make Seward a better place to live, work, and play!
Seward Neighborhood Group * 2323 E. Franklin Ave. * Minneapolis, MN 55406
612-338-6205 ext 119 *admin@sng.org www.sng.org or www.sewardarts.org
- To give to SNG online go to <https://givemn.org/organization/Seward-Neighborhood-Group>

4. Housing

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

45% of our time went to housing related activities.

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?

I can't think of many interactions. sorry

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?

Yes

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City? __4__

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.

I think the only area where we hear complaints is the licensing department can be very slow and full of red tape.

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? ____4__

4. ***City Departments***

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

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? __5__

- 6. Other comments? We were having some issues getting connected to the correct person in the water department in order to connect a hose up for a community garden and Jack Whitehurst made a call and helped get to the right person. That was great.***