

## **2014 Community Participation Program** **Neighborhood Annual Report**

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Neighborhood Organization: [Windom Park Citizens in Action \(WPCiA\)](#)

Contact person: [Joe Bove – president / Gayle Bonneville, staff](#)

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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?  
In addition to WPCiA's monthly Neighborhood Meetings, we continued our monthly postcard mailings announcing agenda items and neighborhood voting opportunities at our monthly meetings. E-blasts and web site updates continued to encourage local residents and businesses to get involved in WPCiA and its programs. We expanded our social media presence on Facebook by starting to become more visible on the "fan page" for the neighborhood. Other new initiatives this year for outreach included tabling at the Northeast Farmers Market and at a designated stop on the Northeast (bike) Ride. WPCiA also revamped its annual festival/fundraiser (see below), which included a WPCiA outreach table. The table featured general information and handouts on WPCiA and included guest staff from Hennepin County's Lowry Avenue revitalization project and our housing partner CEE. This event, as well as a social event at a local restaurant, helped WPCiA increase its visibility and its fundraising efforts.

The Community Land Use and Planning Committee had a full agenda in 2014, reviewing two new substantial retail/commercial developments pending in the neighborhood as well as housing-related variances. Traffic and transportation challenges were other key topics for the committee and WPCiA as a whole, with major construction/detours on Central Avenue, the I-35W rerouting, new Lowry Avenue plan, and impacts on Johnson Street from surrounding road construction. A Small Area Transportation Plan is in the works.

The Quarry [shopping center] Oversight Committee changed its name to the Retail Oversight Committee and expanded its focus area. The committee provided a vehicle for engagement with Quarry owners on issues related to signage, crime and property maintenance.

WPCiA also engaged the community on improvements to the playground at Windom Park via the NRP Parks Committee and regular WPCiA meetings. The community gave WPCiA the thumbs-up to pursue a “signature” playground feature (zip line) and nature play area using WPCiA funds to augment the park board’s playground funds.

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

WPCiA has consistently identified renters as under-represented/under-engaged. We invited HomeLine, the tenant advocacy/legal advice organization, to present at one of our monthly neighborhood meetings. HomeLine provided a variety of free handouts and donated a copy of the “How to be the Smartest Renter on Your Block” book for use by the neighborhood.

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

While the focus of the Windyfest festival was fundraising and having an enjoyable community event (and not solely participation in WPCiA per NCR guidelines for festivals and events), the process and the new committee still engaged new faces as volunteers – volunteers who are still engaged in 2015 and are planning this summer’s event.

As in past years, the postcard mailings did bring new faces to our monthly neighborhood meetings and new volunteers. These monthly mailings enable WPCiA to maintain contact with all members of the community and to let them know what topics are on the agenda in that month -- in order to pique their interest and hopefully get them to attend the meeting. WPCiA continued in 2014 to engage on a variety of topics with a variety of guest speakers, including MnDOT, Hennepin County, St. Stephen’s homeless outreach, HomeLine renters assistance, city air quality staff, city organics recycling staff, park staff, Minneapolis Police Department, daycare clearinghouse providers, elected officials, local businesses, Kids Voting, Friends of the Library, and representatives of the neighboring city of St. Anthony Village.

- What did not work so well? Why?

It appeared that few if any renters participated in the neighborhood meeting featuring HomeLine, despite a mailing to all addresses in the neighborhood noting this agenda topic. We are unsure why – perhaps language barriers or perhaps not wanting to antagonize a landlord by attending a public meeting.

Also, it is difficult to ascertain if we hit our audience while tabling at the Northeast Farmers Market (outside of neighborhood) among the larger

crowd and at the Northeast Ride (poor weather and limited bikers stopping at the designated WPCiA location in the park) and whether the fees paid and volunteer time were worthwhile from an outreach standpoint (vs. supporting a popular community project), but they did provide a chance to promote the festival/fundraiser. Tabling at the annual festival attracted limited crowds since most would attend a festival like this to enjoy the food, games, music, Bier Garten, etc., not necessarily informational tables. Our housing partner attracted some attention due to the free game and prizes for kids. Some who stopped by the WPCiA booth said they were not from the neighborhood.

- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?  
400
- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?  
40
- How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?  
1,100
- How many people receive your print publications?  
Monthly announcement postcards are sent via U.S. Mail to 3,100 residential and business addresses in the neighborhood, plus some absentee owners and other requestors.
- How many people receive your electronic communications?  
Electronic communications are e-mailed to 420 e-mail addresses. This list grew by about 53 addresses in 2014. Facebook "fan" page: 340 members. Twitter: 197 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?
- Who was impacted?
- What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?
- What was the outcome?

A major project for WPCiA in 2014 was re-establishing the annual festival/fundraiser from the ground up after previous partner Pillsbury School opted out of the annual event at the park. The goal was fundraising and establishing a fun new community event emphasizing entertainment and music for all ages (less focus on kids' carnival activities, as in the past). While most expenses were not CPP-eligible, the planning and implementation of this project nonetheless engaged new members of the community as volunteers and brought new visibility and positive attention to WPCiA as an organization serving the neighborhood. The event did net approximately \$2,500 for WPCiA, respectable during a short-notice rebuilding year of change.

## **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?

The Home Energy Squad rebate program was implemented in 2014, with the assistance of our housing partner, CEE. The Northeast Minneapolis Tool Library was approved and is now nearing its grand opening. While NRP funds were used to support these housing-related programs, WPCiA engaged the community in broad input via discussing these topics and having votes on whether to fund them or not at our monthly neighborhood meetings. (The board refers decisions such as these to the broader neighborhood each month, to engage more voices and opinions.) Also related to NRP but still meaning community engagement and outreach for WPCiA was the popular Commercial Revolving Loan Program for exterior rehab; several new applicants and inquiries materialized in 2014, and WPCiA has added money to the fund to continue this program.

WPCiA's new logo, created by a northeast Minneapolis artist, was unveiled at the Windyfest festival, providing a welcome update to the neighborhood organization's visibility.

With a new bookkeeper in place in 2014, WPCiA worked to gain accurate, timely and reliable accounting information.

**4. *Housing***

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

Approximately 25 percent.

**5. *Financial Reports***

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

See attached.

**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?

Contact was primarily with the NCR department itself. WPCiA had a board training session with two NCR staffers and consulted with the city on finding a new bookkeeper as well as for ongoing financial reporting direction. We also contacted NCR staff for advice and guidance as we undertook our new fundraising event. We've found the NCR staff to be responsive on these topics.

WPCiA also regularly, but to a lesser extent, communicates with CPED. Providing comment on developments pending in the neighborhood (and seeking details from city staff on variance requirements, etc.) works well. However, communication on tax-forfeited housing is limited. The city should extend the deadline for comment on the tax-forfeiture list, and in turn should more promptly respond on the outcomes of decisions related to the tax-forfeiture list.

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?

Most is useful and understandable. More timely communications is needed related to tax-forfeiture housing lists/outcomes, however. Notices of public hearings related to ordinance changes are vague; a suggestion would be to include some context: i.e., what the ordinance briefly says now, what the proposed amendment says.

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.

The city usually offers only a few days lead time on the tax-forfeiture housing lists; this should be extended. In return, the city does not respond to the neighborhood about the outcomes once we relay public input on the tax-

forfeiture list. This has been an ongoing issue for some years. It has been reported before, with no response one way or the other from the city. Timeliness of other CPED-related communications is spotty – some are adequate, some are too short notice to engage the community broadly. Some developers are not responsive to the neighborhood, due to vague direction required by the city for them. Some are unresponsive entirely to the neighborhood organization once they have “dropped notice and run.” Others provide advance notice that they are planning to file with the city and are more than willing to attend WPCiA meetings/follow our designated land-use review guidelines. We suggest the city document given to developers specify that they not only need to “notify” the neighborhood association but to follow the neighborhood’s designated procedures for a land-use application.

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?

See No. 3 above. In addition, it appears the NCR outreach specialist assigned to WPCiA has changed three times in the past year without introduction to WPCiA, so we are unsure of the role and expectations of these city staff members.

**5. City Assistance**

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

Specifications on Neighborhood Priority Plans (NPP) would be appreciated in the form of a detailed, written guide document like NCR created recently for use of CPP funds for festivals and events.

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?**

The recent guide document on use of CPP funds for festival and events is a good resource. A suggestion shared at a recent citywide meeting on this topic was to allocate a small percentage of funding to each neighborhood either from the city General Fund, non-TIF money or by reducing CPP allocations by a like amount for use on food, festivals and entertainment as part of a neighborhood organization’s work. WPCiA encourages the city to explore this idea. Current

procedures put neighborhood organizations at a disadvantage, since the NCR funds other nonprofit community organizations via less-restrictive General Fund money.