



Community Participation Program
Neighborhood Organization
2015 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization Information - *please confirm*

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Southeast Como Improvement Association

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Neighborhood Organization

Contact:

Cody Olson

Organization Address:

1170 15th Ave SE #302

Organization Address 2:

Organization ZIP:

55414

Organization Email Address:

secomo@secomo.org

Organization Phone Number:

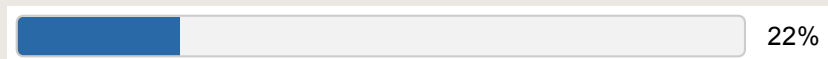
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DATE OF BOARD APPROVAL

Once your board has reviewed this draft annual report, please provide the date of the meeting at which the board approved submission of this report to NCR. **Note:** Meeting minutes may be requested by NCR.

Date / Time

MM	DD	YYYY
04	05	2016





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Stakeholder Involvement - *basic outreach & engagement*

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES DID YOUR ORGANIZATION USE IN 2015?

MEETINGS (please check all that apply)

- Held regular committee meetings or discussion groups that are open to all stakeholders.
- Held at least one general membership or community meeting (in addition to the annual meeting) to gather input from residents and other stakeholders for a neighborhood specific initiative.
- Hosted at least one general membership or committee meeting in response to a City request for input - such as a development proposal, transit planning or public works project.
- Conducted one or more focus groups.

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your meetings?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

Experience has shown that standing board meetings tend to be a poor method of initial community engagement. These meetings tend to be more focused on the business of the organization and reviewing or approving projects that are determined, discussed and developed through a subcommittee or via staff or interns. Where SECIA has had the greatest success are when our standing sub-committees are robust and working on activities or projects that are directed by and/or of interest to community members.

SECIA has empowered our sub-committees to be the level where ideas are generated, discussed and planned. Under this model we have been able to accomplish a variety of projects over the last 20 years, engaged a number of community members including harder-to-reach populations (in particular our younger renters) and encouraged some to become new committee, task group or board members. This model has been most successful when at least one of the following elements is available to residents.

When the organization is able to provide the staffing to reduce the underlying work-load on volunteers or provide the financial resources to actually implement a project. Volunteers generally do not get involved to write reports, manage spread sheets, or otherwise work on logistics issues and having to take on those roles in the past couple of years has reduced our volunteer base significantly. Likewise, volunteers and stakeholders tend to drop off if there are no resources to implement their vision or to solve issues.

When there is an issue, or project that is of a specific focus or duration, managed by staff or committee where the stakeholders really feel that their input will be heard and incorporated. Where their involvement will effect an action or make a real change. An example of this would be our Blueprint project developing a small area plan for the Como neighborhood. This should also be where a City's request for input could be an engagement option. However, as the City has pushed out communities from input into those items that have actual impact in their community, there is almost no opportunity anymore to make a difference on key activities. More on the issues surrounding the City's requests for input are discussed under the City section of this document.

DOOR-TO-DOOR (please check all that apply)

Door-Knocking or Dropping Flyers Door-to-Door

- At least once with goal of reaching a portion of neighborhood.
- At least once with goal of reaching most or all of neighborhood.
- For more than one issue/outreach effort.
- On a routine basis.

Door-Knocking/Flyering

Was carried out primarily by staff

Was carried out primarily by volunteers

Door-Knocking/Flyering

Was carried out primarily to increase membership and participation

Was carried out primarily to gather input on a specific city or neighborhood issue

Was carried out primarily to inform stakeholders of a city or neighborhood issue

Approximately how many households did your organization reach through door-knocking in 2015?

8-12 standard bl

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your door-to-door outreach?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

Door knocking is a proven method of outreach but is very labor intensive and its success often depends on the reason. Going out with a specific reason is more effective than general information sharing. Having solid staffing resources can help, but SECIA no longer has that capacity. The makeup and nature of the volunteer pool and the community also have to be taken into account when assessing the use of door knocking. Core volunteers in Como tend to be older with very limited time and traditional work schedules while large portion of the neighborhood tends to be younger and are often not available when volunteers can door-knock.

However in 2015 as an example of a successful targeted approach, SECIA successfully used door-knocking to outreach for our Utility Box Wrap fundraising and our Bread Oven fundraising. In both these cases this also offered an opportunity to provide additional information on the community to those engaged through this method.

EVENTS (please check all that apply)

Staffed a booth or table at neighborhood event or other community event that included sign-up sheets, surveys or information about your organization.

Organized one or more issue specific event (such as a safety forum, housing fair, Open Streets, Creative Citymaking, etc).

Organized smaller events for specific outreach to target audiences (e.g., sidewalk tabling to reach renters, lemonade stands, tabling at Farmer's Market, etc.)

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your events?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

It is in the area of events that SECIA has consistently been able to make connections. Our signature fall event – the Como Cookout – continues to draw from all members of the community and has been running around 800-900 participants. Timed to be able to include the returning student body, it offers tabling to other relevant organization and agencies. SECIA also manages a tent area for the organization that we can use to introduce people to the work going on in the community, take input and do quick surveys if needed.

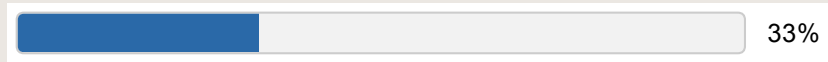
We also host a number of smaller more specific events during the year that can allow for more targeted approaches. For example, with our large rental population (often younger University students) in particular we have been most successful when we can provide, structured, organized events and activities, especially around environmental issues and the gardens/urban farming options. They are excited to be involved when we have the resources to provide the guidance needed. We had a typically robust year for our smaller activities:

Gardens related: Community Garden Day; monthly Fair Share Farm-On; worked with SE Seniors (garden produce donations); Van Cleve Youth garden; Talmage garden
Bread Oven Fundraising event at Sporty's restaurant
Utility box wrapping completed with the support of neighbors donations

OTHER (please check all that apply)

- Conducted at least one community-wide survey (such as a random sample or all-household survey).
- Conducted another form of survey (e.g., intercept survey).
- Developed partnerships with cultural, religious, professional or business associations to expand outreach into under-represented populations.
- Distributed a quarterly or semi-annual newsletter to all households.
- Other activities (please describe here):

Given the area's lack of a community newspaper, SECIA has committed to keeping our paper newsletter – The Comotion - mailed out to each household. This continues to be a major financial cost to the organization but with our mix of residents, providing a mailed paper newsletter is one way to assure every household receives the same information. By 2015 we had to make a change and reduced our monthly mailings to a quarterly format. While this saved us some funding, it also reduced the usage of the newsletter as a timely resource for providing information to the community. In addition, we are aware that people read/seek information through a variety of sources and have a roster of other communication options (discussed below).



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Stakeholder Involvement - *under-represented groups*

HOW DID YOUR ORGANIZATION REACH OUT TO UNDER-REPRESENTED GROUPS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD? (please check all that apply)

- Worked on an issue of particular interest to an under-represented group within the neighborhood.
- Provided notices of annual and special meetings in multiple languages.
- Provided newsletter articles or web pages in multiple languages.
- Targeted outreach in apartment buildings or blocks to reach renters.
- Targeted tabling at other events or locations (such as farmers markets, cultural events, etc.).
- Held focus groups or open meeting formats for under-represented communities.
- Met with other agencies in the community that work closely with under-represented constituencies in the neighborhood.
- Included an Americans with Disabilities Act statement on meeting and event notices.
- Reviewed participation activities, and identified new leaders and volunteers for volunteer, committee and board participation.
- Held one-time/pop up events in areas of the neighborhood that don't often have neighborhood meetings
- Other activities (please describe here):



What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your outreach to under-represented groups?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

As defined by the City, Como's largest under-represented group would have to be our rental population. We also have a large university student cooperative housing complex and Project for Pride in Living affordable and transitional housing that includes a large immigrant population. So in general, these represent three areas that we continue to need to focus on for greater inclusion.

As stated elsewhere, we have had success with our younger rental population. But during 2015 and currently we continue to struggle to keep this transient population engaged. Most of our proven methods of renter outreach need staffing and financial resources to support a project based engagement model. With the reduction of those supports, the organization made a commitment to at least keep recruiting our student interns for as long as we are able. In 2015, we had a number of student interns (20+) during the year that were recruited and involved in community gardening, communications, fundraising, and other projects. We table at University events to recruit interns. The internship model has been so successful for us that one of our prior student interns has just been hired to be our new Neighborhood Coordinator.

The SECIA board continues to have two standing board seats for students appointed by the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) and what used to be the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA). This second organization underwent changes during 2015 and we will have to reassess that seat, but MSA continues to be involved. Our MSA representative in 2015 went on to run for a regular board seat.

We do continue to struggle with outreach to our other community members, and have had the most success when we have created focus group opportunities related to specific topics.

As an example of outreach related to a specific issue, our Como Blueprint project (small area plan) which started before 2015, had its

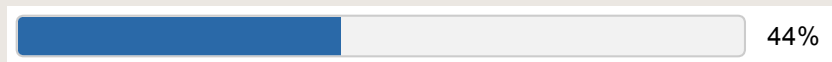
final public meeting in 2015 and is now within the City's process for approval. As part of this final public meeting the committee included the following outreach activities:

Postcard announcement/invitation mailed to every single family household address in Como, both rentals and owner occupied indicating time, date and location of meeting.

Provided announcement of the public meeting in three editions of the Como e-newsletter, the Tidbits with time, date and location of meeting. Posted flyers in store windows, apartment lobbies, including PPL's Brooke and Charlotte Commons apartment buildings (which has a high minority immigrant population). Flyers were also posted on the public notice board at Van Cleve Park.

Had a table at the Como Cookout where committee members explained and described the Blueprint and Public Meeting; including a sign-up sheet for email reminders of the meeting.

Advertised free child care at the event, plus refreshments.



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Stakeholder Involvement - *information & communication*

HOW DID YOU INFORM THE COMMUNITY OF DISCUSSIONS, DECISIONS AND THE STATUS OF THE ORGANIZATION?

BOARD MEETINGS (please check all that apply)

- Board meeting minutes and financial reports and summaries are provided on the organization's website and kept current.
- Meeting agendas and minutes are easily available and posted on the organization's website before and after each meeting.
- Meeting notices and agendas are distributed to members prior to each meeting with ample notice.
- Time is allowed at board meetings for stakeholders to ask questions or raise issues.

How many new board members were elected/appointed to your board this year?

4

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your board meetings?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

Working on building membership from the ground up, we successfully recruited and voted in four new board members at the annual board meeting in November 2015. These new members have been active in various community projects and community gardens.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS (please check all that

apply)

- Meeting agendas and minutes are easily available and posted on the organization's website before and after each meeting.
- Affected residents and other stakeholders are contacted prior to an issue being discussed at a committee meeting.
- Meeting notices and agendas are distributed to members prior to each meeting with ample notice.

Other (please specify)

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about your regular meetings?

What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?

SECIA currently has two standing sub-committees that meet on a regular basis. A number of other committees have become more adhoc in nature as the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funding has been expended and is not being replaced with revenue at a level to lend itself to larger projects.

Our two regular sub-committees are Housing and Livability and Environment. They have a regularly scheduled day and time each month which is indicated on our website and in our communications. Materials are sent out before each meeting to committee members. Committee membership continues to decline as funding goes away and the City has reduced options to provide effective input into issues affecting the community. However, one project in 2015 did push back against this trend. Our Housing and Livability committee convened a Housing Strategy steering committee to compile options for improving housing and housing options in Como. Working with a consultant, a list of Housing Strategies was created.

The steering committee was created by recruiting 13 people that included ages from about 30 to about 78, at least one renter, one long-time renter in the neighborhood who later became a homeowner, both single and partnered people and one couple with a new baby. About 11 of these people participated through the whole 10 month process. The group was formed by getting suggestions from the board and the Livability Committee. The convener recruited from the suggestions by means of phone calls and continuing to ask for new names in the course of the phoning. "Tabling" was done at the Como Cookout.

The purpose of the group was to advise the consultant developing strategies for stabilizing the neighborhood's housing for both renters and home owners. Those who participated were committed to that goal. At least three members of the group had not participated in SECIA activities before. Another had been inactive for many years.

Recently the Housing Strategy Group has transformed itself into the Strategy Implementation task force for 2016. We have recruited one new member for this work and the group continues to recruit where possible. About half the original group dropped out when the Strategy development was finished.

SPECIFIC ISSUES

- Affected and interested stakeholders are notified and involved in your organization's decision-making process.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION (please check all that apply)

- An annual report is available to all residents on the organization's website.
- The organization's bylaws, grievance procedures, meeting schedules and contact information are easily available on the organization's website and through other means.

OTHER (please check all that apply)

- Our community events and meetings are regularly advertised in community newspapers.
- We use social media (such as e-democracy or Facebook) to share information.
- We share city news and information on our organization's website or through email, social media or other means.

*What more would you like to tell NCR or the community about participation in your organization?
What are you doing that is new or particularly successful to involve residents and others?*

The broad age range of our resident population means that we have to try to be as robust as possible in our methods of communication. Young people are less likely to read to newsletter or go to a website. Older resident rely heavily on traditional methods of communications. Managing the variety of methods and the timing of information while making sure that the same information is provided across communication methods is a part-time job unto itself. To address this need, SECIA has created a communications intern position that we attempt to fill seasonally. In addition, there is an internal chart that we use to try and make sure communications are sent out in as many forms as possible. The core methods we use include:

Three web sites (organization, environment and Blueprint).

The paper newsletter – The Comotion – sent quarterly.

An electronic newsletter – The Tidbits – sent twice a month in general. The Tidbits has a listserv of over 500 emails.

Various facebook pages.

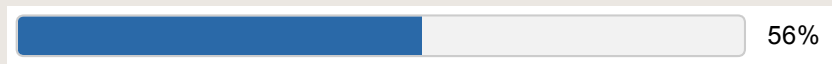
Twitter account.

Neighborhood group services.

Community communications in general have been problematic in recent years. Southeast Minneapolis has been without a community newspaper since 2009. The Bridge succumbed to the recession and to competition from the MN Daily for advertising. The effort by the board members of SE Publications to provide an electronic source of news for the University area neighborhoods through the TC Daily Planet partially worked until the TCDP ran into difficulties in 2015. The MN Daily, does outreach and write articles on the neighborhood, but cannot function as a community newspaper. Besides its focus being the student body, it is not delivered to each household. A solution would be to start a new community newspaper, but that is a project that is beyond the scope of one neighborhood organization. A possibility could be funding to be used in a cooperative way by neighborhoods that have a geographical affinity (or institutional relationship like being near the U) for the development of a community newspaper. This would be totally dependent on funding and staffing time available for the project.

This reduces our options of reliable ways to reach people and causes us to rely heavily on e-communications which bring its own issues. The overwhelming numbers of e-communications that many people receive can cause them to ignore information we are trying to send. The method of personal approach as stated before is effective, but our barrier to that is lack of volunteers willing or able to undertake that task, and often not a specific enough reason for outreach.

Lack of a level of funding that allows projects to be developed and implemented also continues to hurt our ability to engage the community.





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2015 Highlights

PLEASE DESCRIBE ONE OR TWO MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

- 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?

MAJOR HIGHLIGHT #1

One key highlight would be the virtual completion of a community small area planning project – the Blueprint. While there are still processes to work through with the City before final City approval, the last public meeting was held in 2015 and the produced Blueprint was approved by the SECIA board to forward to the City. This constitutes a major step in a process that started well before 2015 and was undertaken without the financial resources needed to hire the professional consulting help as was done in other neighborhoods. A team of committed volunteers and a hired recent urban planning graduate were able to shepherd this complicated project through the neighborhood steps, write the document and bring it to its final form to the City.

MAJOR HIGHLIGHT #2

A second highlight would be a project that shows the importance of our local park to the SECIA community. Como is a neighborhood with very limited and overused public green space. We have only one public park that serves the whole Como neighborhood and a good portion of the Dinkytown community as well. With the number of housing units skyrocketing right next to our neighborhood, our park is feeling the growth pressure at a time when funding is non-existent to expand park services. In particular, services of interest to the broader community members (students, senior, families, single adults, etc) were lacking.

SECIA submitted a grant application to the Stadium Area Advisory Committee's (SAAG) Good Neighbors Fund (GNF) and received approval for 2015. We successfully partnered with the Park Board and brought in a variety of alternative activities designed to appeal to a broader audience. We included everything from archery to volleyball clinics; cooking classes to yoga for seniors. We are currently finalizing that grant report, but by all indications it was a very successful project for a relatively small investment of funds (less than \$15,000).

We'd love to share your highlights with others.

If possible, send digital photos, videos, illustrations or a link to any of these to ncr@minneapolismn.gov with the Subject Line: **2015 CPP Annual Report Images**. If you have a large digital file, please make arrangements to mail or deliver a copy directly to your NCR Neighborhood Specialist.



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