
Page 2: 2020-21 Community Participation Program Annual Report Organization Information - please confirm

Q1

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION

Southeast Como Improvement Association (SECIA)

Q2

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION

Neighborhood Organization Contact: **Jessica Focht-Perlberg, Executive Director**
Organization Email Address: **secomo@secomo.org**

Q3

Organization Website and Social Media

Website **www.secomo.org**
Facebook **www.facebook.com/SoutheastComo**
Twitter **@SouthEastComo**
Other **Instagram: @secomompls**

Q4

Date / Time **04/12/2022**

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.

Page 3: 202-21 Community Participation Program Annual Report Additional Organization Information

Q5

Indicate the POSITION TITLE of each PAID EMPLOYEE OR CONTRACT STAFF (excluding professional services such as accounting, legal, etc.)

Position Title #1	Executive Director
Position Title #2	Communications Intern
Position Title #3	Community Building Intern
Position Title #4	Community Garden Intern
Position Title #5	Community Garden Intern

Q6

Please indicate below the AVERAGE HOURS PER WEEK of each paid staff (excluding separate professional services such as accounting, legal, etc.)

#1 Hours/Week	30.0
#2 Hours/Week	7.0
#3 Hours/Week	7.0
#4 Hours/Week	7.0
#5 Hours/Week	7.0

Q7

IF NEEDED, PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFO BELOW: Note if any positions are seasonal, temporary, etc.

Intern staff have historically been currently enrolled students, given the objective of connecting and engaging with our high population of students and other renters, who make up the largest intersection of historically underrepresented residents. While these positions are not categorized as seasonal or temporary, intern staff typically stay on for at least two semesters, or the equivalent.

Q8

MEETINGS (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 projects

,

Conducted one or more focus groups

Q9

DOOR-TO-DOOR (Check all that apply) Door-Knocking (with goal of face-to-face engagement)

At least once reaching a portion of neighborhood,

For more than one issue/outreach effort,

On a routine basis,

Conducted primarily by staff members,

Carried out primarily to increase membership and participation

Q10

Approximately HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS DID YOU REACH through door-knocking in 2020-21?(Please provide a cumulative total for both years)

250

Q11

FLYERING - Dropping literature at doors (Check all that apply)

At least once reaching a portion of the neighborhood,

At least once reaching most or all of the neighborhood,

Carried out primarily to inform and increase membership and participation

,

Carried out primarily to gather input or inform on a specific city or neighborhood issue

Q12

Approximately HOW MANY HOUSEHOLDS DID YOU REACH through flyering in 2020-21?(Please provide a cumulative total for both years)

1200

Q13

EVENTS (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.)

Q14

COMMUNICATION (Fill in all that apply)

Print a paper newsletter?(If so, at what frequency?)

Yes. We distributed a print neighborhood newsletter (The “Comotion”) approximately 6 times during 2020-2021. Additionally, we distributed approximately 60 biweekly + special editions of our electronic neighborhood newsletter, (“E-Comotion”) during 2020-2021.

Number of subscribers to your email list

Approximately 505

Number of followers on your primary social media channel (facebook, twitter, or other)

Approximately 100

Q15

OTHER (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

Q16

How did your organization adapt to issues surrounding COVID19 and civil unrest? (Check all that apply)

- Staff working from home,**
 - Online meetings/events,**
 - Cancelled events/meetings,**
 - Doorknocked,**
 - Held events/meetings in person outside with social distancing**
 - ,**
 - Other activities (please describe here)::
 - (Note: Did not have public-facing office prior to pandemic.)
-

Q17

How did you connect with your community about important information? (Check all that apply)

- Phone,**
 - Email blast,**
 - Flyer,**
 - Postcards,**
 - Doorknocking,**
 - Social media posts/campaigns,**
 - Special page on website**
-

Q18

What issues affected your community? (Check all that apply)

- Community members needing PPE,**
 - Businesses damaged/destroyed,**
 - Food insecurity,**
 - Housing insecurity,**
 - Encampments,**
 - Increased crime,**
 - COVID-19 outbreak in your community,**
 - Other (please list)::
 - Notes: - Businesses damaged: While a few local businesses did incur some damage (graffiti, broken windows) during the civil unrest following George Floyd's murder, the property damage experienced here was relatively minor, as compared to other neighborhoods more directly affected. - Encampments: While our neighborhood hasn't seen the same degree of organized encampments as some other neighborhoods, we do encounter occasional individuals or small groups of unhoused neighbors setting up temporary housing in certain areas of the neighborhood.
-

Q19

Did your organization create initiatives and projects or share information from/with other organizations that were developed in response to: (Check all that apply)

COVID-19,

Encampments for those experiencing homelessness,

Food insecurity,

Mutual aid networks,

Other (please list):

Social Justice Study Community: From January-July 2021, a SECIA student intern and board member volunteer partnered to co-facilitate a new initiative to offer a virtual place for learning, connection, and community growth around anti-racism and social justice. The discussion group met monthly to consider sources of learning, discussion about how various types of inequities show up in our neighborhood; and begin to think about possible future action steps on a variety of topics, including racism and implicit bias; intergenerational social justice; the Derek Chauvin trial & its community impact; Asian & Pacific Islander Awareness Month; and LGBTQIA2S+ awareness / Pride Month.

Q20

PLEASE SHARE ONE STORY ABOUT A PROJECT OR INITIATIVE YOUR ORGANIZATION CREATED OR SUPPORTED IN RESPONSE TO THE VARIOUS CRISES OF 2020-21:

2020: As an immediate response to COVID-19, during the spring and summer 2020, SECIA created a small, neighborhood-level mutual aid network which was shared through our website, newsletter communications and flyers around the neighborhood, in an effort to help connect residents with direct needs with basic needs resources, and with other residents with resources to contribute.

2021: Our “Como Cares initiative” emerged from a series of neighborhood conversations and meetings in summer and fall 2020, in the aftermath of the pandemic, George Floyd’s murder, and resulting civil unrest, focused on how we might reimagine community safety in SE Como, in a way that we watch out for our neighbors; not watch our neighbors. Planning discussions focused on finding new ways to address neighbors’ direct needs as we think holistically about community-centered safety without perpetuating racialized harm; the role of community building, and revisiting mutual aid.

The former board members who co-championed this effort also led the development of a UMN-Good Neighbor Fund grant to further these activities piloted in 2021, and continuing to be expanded into the current year. Despite the lost capacity due to both co-champions leaving the board to pursue their professional studies; these activities included our Harvest season free produce distribution events (see #24: Highlights for more details); and participation in the “Accompanying Unhoused Neighbors collaborative” in cooperation with community, faith, and business organizational members of the neighboring Marcy-Holmes neighborhood association and other community organizations.

Q21

Please provide an ESTIMATE OF VOLUNTEER HOURS PROVIDED to your organization in 2020-21. (see Volunteer Hour Tracking Guide for suggested ways to calculate this. Please provide a cumulative total for both years)

5000

Q22

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

Worked on an issue of particular interest to an under-represented group within the neighborhood

,

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

,

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

,

Met with other agencies in the community that work closely with under-represented constituencies in the neighborhood

,

Other activities (please describe here)::

Notes on developing language access: SECIA instituted the practice of regularly including language/disability access notices on event flyers and communications in 4 key languages: English, Somali, Spanish, Hmong. We translated at least 4 key organizational/activity documents in 4 key languages: English, Somali, Spanish, Hmong, provided at events and available on website & links shared on our fall "Welcome Packet" outreach; and adopted an updated Language Access Policy in fall 2021, which we are now working to implement.

Q23

What more would you like to tell NCR or the community ABOUT YOUR STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT? What are you doing that is NEW OR PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL TO REACH RESIDENTS and others?

Door knocking: Our summer 2021, primarily staff-led door knocking neighborly conversation campaign was effective, although quite limited in scope due to understandable reticence of volunteer participation during the pandemic. Conversations we did have yielded both new awareness and interest in neighborhood involvement, a new source of direct information about resident needs and neighborhood interests, as well as some longer term connections with historically underrepresented residents who had not previously engaged with SECIA, who then began to attend repeated neighborhood events. We aim to build on the process and outreach training tools developed by staff in summer 2021 to expand door knocking in future years as a broader volunteer effort.

Continued, expanded intentional relationship-building with leaders in “communities within communities” in SE Como. For example, through initial connection with a SECIA Board member who is also a member of the Dar Omar al Farooq mosque community, we have continued to gradually develop our relationship with our Muslim/East African immigrant neighborhood leaders, through collaboration on a range of smaller and larger community events, including fall 2020 Census outreach, outreach tabling at spring 2021 Eid Celebration at Van Cleve Park, and fall 2021 neighborhood cleanup and Como Cookout events.

Intentional welcome to multiple onramps to involvement: Understanding people have all different levels of interest, need and availability, we worked to welcome people into many different opportunities to get involved. Also, in observing the various limitations of remote engagement, as soon as we could safely gather outside with COVID safety precautions in place, we moved to return back to engaging people through in-person events.

In late 2020, we began work with the first of two cohorts of UMN Graduate Civic Leadership Engagement program students who helped us develop our equitable engagement strategies. In the first year, the project students researched, help draft, and engage the community on a racial equity framework; the core principles of which helped ground our equitable engagement plan developed in 2021 (for implementation in 2022). In late 2021, the second year cohort started work to help us develop both a more robust outreach contact database and a more sustainable process to build, track, and further engage with new resident contacts, to help us further welcome them from one-time survey or event contacts towards longer-term, more sustainable engagement with the neighborhood and SECIA.

Q24

MAJOR HIGHLIGHT

1) Launched Reimagining SECIA & Racial Equity Initiative & Work Group

What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?

The concept for "Reimagining SECIA & Racial Equity Initiative" was initially launched at SECIA's November 2020 annual meeting, following early organizational discussions and small focus groups in 2020, during the midst of the pandemic and racial reckoning occurring in the aftermath of George Floyd and civil unrest, as a way to begin to intentionally reassess SECIA's purpose and prepare the work of expanding our equitable engagement, to work towards becoming an ever more inclusive and representative organization. The initial Reimagining SECIA & Racial Equity plan and work group was approved by the Board in February 2021. The focus and principles of this initiative evolved into SECIA's eventual Equitable Engagement Plan (table & narrative) approved by the Board and city in fall 2021, and currently in implementation.

Who was impacted?

We remain a neighborhood organization for ALL; AND we recognize that equity requires us to re-center our focus on our historically underrepresented communities.

What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?

Late 2020 and 2021 Highlights of the Reimagining SECIA & Equity Work Group included:

Draft racial/equity framework, resolution

Social Justice Study Community

Neighborhood mapping, in consultation with CURA; Community Surveying

Summer 2021 door-knocking campaign; Tabling in highly trafficked neighborhood locations (e.g., Van Cleve Park) and as invited guests at cultural events, like Eid Celebration, May 2021

Welcome Packet to all tenant households, fall 2021

Launch Mini-Grant Program

Development of Equitable Engagement Plan (table & narrative) for 2022 implementation

Programmatic input, e.g.: new Como Kids Meetups (relationship/community building for neighborhood families with young children); Como Cookout changes (worked to expand culturally-specific food, live music/artists)

What was the outcome?

As this iterative work of developing, implementing and learning from successes and failures with new approaches to equitable engagement, the work is ongoing. We will continue to periodically assess progress, gather feedback, and apply our learnings as we proceed towards the goals and objectives outlined in our Equitable Engagement Plan for 2022.

2) Como Cares Initiative - Harvest season free produce distribution event series; participating / then leading member of "Accompanying Unsheltered Neighbors Collaborative" hosting bimonthly "Drop-in Resource Days" (2021)

(A Highlight of the new "Como Cares Initiative" outlined above in # 20)

What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?

The idea for hosting free produce distribution neighborhood events came out of a series of Reimagining Community safety discussions and the resulting "Como Care" concept and goals, including finding ways to help address direct needs of the neighborhood and of neighbors, such as addressing food insecurity, a heightened need across the community in the wake of the crises of 2020-21.

Who was impacted?

Consistent with local and national trends, heightened food insecurity throughout the pandemic had a broader impact across

2020-21 Neighborhood Annual Report

communities in our neighborhood, including students, families, the elderly, with disproportionate impact on historically underrepresented communities.

What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?

A new partnership with East Side Neighborhood Services (ESNS) allowed us to pilot a series of free produce distribution events in July-September 2021, outdoors at our Van Cleve Park, our neighborhood hub, proximally located to some of the larger low-income apartment buildings, and highly frequented by a diverse cross-section of our community members. The partnership with the Park as host and timing of the events in late afternoon/early evening maximized access for kids and families heading home from daytime children's camp programming at the Park, or across the street at the childcare center.

The certain source of free produce, donated by ESNS (in partnership with Second Harvest Heartland) also provided us the opportunity to supplement with both individual and community neighborhood garden donations for food sharing at these events. Two small new dedicated pickle and salsa gardens were cultivated for food sharing at these summer monthly produce distributions and for SE Senior deliveries (in conjunction with our FairShare Farm garden.)

What was the outcome?

Over these three events in July, August and September 2021, we served approximately 450 neighbors (approx. 230 households) and distributed approximately 4,900 lbs of free produce. SECIA made many new connections with new neighborhood volunteers excited to engage in this new project, and a broad array of neighbors who benefitted and also perhaps engaged with the neighborhood for the first time through these events, including students, families, immigrant residents, and elders residents. The produce distributions were intentionally set up to feel welcoming and accessible, and free of barriers or stigma, with the feel of a small community farmer's market, with participants selecting the fresh produce they needed. The neighborhood-grown table was especially popular, and visitors enjoyed additional fun activities, like a free yoga class, a free kids book exchange, and visit with the local Arvonne Fraser Library's mobile

The final September 2021 event was also offered in conjunction with one of the bimonthly "Drop-in Resource Day" events organized through a separate partnership effort with "Accompanying Unsheltered Neighbors Collaborative," of which SECIA's "Como Cares Team" joined as a member and then helped lead, along with neighboring Marcy-Holmes and other faith and community-based organizations, and the UMN Office of Off-Campus Living. Through these "Drop in Day" Events, this group aimed to connect unsheltered neighbors with a hot meal, community resources and neighborly connections.

3) FairShare Farm Community Garden (ongoing project in its 9th-10th years)

What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?

The FairShare Farm Community Garden, an ongoing neighborhood project in its 10th year in 2021, continues to meet a demonstrated need and interest from neighbors in accessible, community-led urban agriculture. It is SE Como's community based vegetable garden, farmed in community (shared space) by volunteer members, open to all.

Who was impacted?

FairShare Farms continues to be led and operated by volunteer coordinators, supported by SECIA student intern/staff and open to all community members, through an affordable member contribution to share the costs of the garden (\$25/yr; sliding scale available upon request to maximize access).

What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?

FairShare Farms is accessible to all levels of gardeners, as senior garden volunteers do teach as needed, and lend tools. Produce is shared between members at each work session. Produce is also shared with elders in need through a partnership with SE Seniors in the neighborhood. Extra produce, if any, is taken to a local food shelf, like Little Kitchen.

What was the outcome?

2020-21 Neighborhood Annual Report

Particularly during the pandemic times, when other in-person programming and community-building opportunities were so limited, in a time of great need, FairShare Farm, along with our other 5 native and pollinator community gardens, served as an especially important means of COVID-safe community connection and community building opportunity. In addition to providing access to gardening and gardening education, including to those who may not otherwise have access to urban agriculture spaces, such as the high proportion of tenant residents in the neighborhood, the gardens provided COVID-safe community meeting spaces and green spaces of beauty and pride in the neighborhood. FairShare Farms also provided another means of low-cost, accessible fresh produce that was both enjoyed by community members and shared with those in need, at a time when food security and access needs were heightened.

5) Diverter Rain Garden (completed in 2020)

During our 2020 gardening season, SECIA completed a rain garden project on the 15th & Talmage traffic diverter. This project was completed in collaboration with dedicated neighborhood volunteers and donors who championed the project and led the work to secure a Mississippi Watershed Management Organization action grant to install the garden. The project was completed in further collaboration with Minneapolis Public Works for the infrastructure work and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for the swamp white oak and for clearing the old weedy vegetation and trees. As a result of this community-led project, this garden is a beautiful addition to our city and will filter thousands of gallons of water going into our ecosystem.

6) Como Cookout

What was the issue or opportunity the neighborhood was facing?

The return of SECIA's 19th Annual Como Cookout on October 3, 2021, after having canceled the Cookout in 2020 due to the pandemic, was a wonderful opportunity for SE Como neighbors to be in community with each other again outdoors on a beautiful, sunny day at Van Cleve Park, our neighborhood hub, after a difficult year of multi-layers of challenge and isolation.

Who was impacted?

Even amidst the rain date change (a key part of the COVID safety plan to forego an indoor rain option), about 600 neighbors attended to enjoy the event and get to know their neighbors, learn about opportunities to get involved through their neighborhood organization and other community organizations, and be in community for some cross-generational, cross-cultural celebration of our neighborhood community. The event occurs in the fall specifically to help welcome and involve new students and other new renters who typically move into the neighborhood in late August. Activities geared for kids and all ages also helped to draw and welcome neighborhood families, and all residents.

What steps did you take to address the issue or opportunity?

As it historically has, the Como Cookout again provided the opportunity to collaborate with both established and developing partners to plan and put on this community-led neighborhood event. SECIA again worked with the Office of Off-Campus Living, with the shared objectives of engaging our large proportion of student residents in the neighborhood. We worked to engage other historically underrepresented communities in this event through partnering with our neighborhood Van Cleve Park, and both faith communities in our neighborhood, the SE Christian Church and Dar Omar Al-Farooq mosque communities.

The event planning group, in conjunction with our Reimagining SECIA & Equity work group, worked to support and promote student and local performing artists through an open call welcoming event performing artists. In partnership with the UMN Off-Campus Living office, additional grant funds were secured to also expand the free food menu to include meat and vegan sambusas from Afro Deli, as at least one additional, more inclusive dietary/culturally-specific menu offering, which was a popular selection.

What was the outcome?

Neighbors enjoyed the live music, eating sambusas, halal hotdogs, corn, baked potatoes and treats. Kids enjoyed mini-golf and the inflatable basketball and obstacle course. And neighbors of all ages enjoyed getting to know each other, and our community organizations at the community resource fair. In addition to the benefits of community building and resource sharing, neighbors had conversations with SECIA volunteers, were invited to SECIA's annual meeting and elections, and about 50 more neighbors completed our community survey during the Cookout. New connections were made through this long-standing neighborhood community building tradition

transition.

6) Reestablished new Land Use & Development Committee

During 2020-2021, SE Como experienced well-documented increasing speculative, corporate development in our neighborhood, affecting both substantial rent increases, and exacerbating historic inequities with access to affordable home ownership as a means of wealth building. At the same time, SE Como residents also identified heightened challenges with narrower opportunities for engagement and voice in neighborhood development projects, as the implications of policy and regulatory changes corresponding with the implementation of Minneapolis 2040 took effect.

As a first step, SECIA reestablished a new Land Use & Development Committee in late 2020, launched in early 2021. This reformulated committee hosted an initial educational session with City Planning Commission guests, a community discussion forum with a neighborhood developer, and weighed in with support for the University District Overlay. The committee began to review and engage on impactful neighborhood variance requests and development projects under the new framework. Later in 2021, the committee began exploring future potential partnerships, and developed and launched a community survey to both identify general tenant needs and gauge community interest in a possible land trust program, as one possible option to create pathways to more affordable and accessible home ownership for a broader diversity of our neighborhood residents.

Q25

Respondent skipped this question

We'd love to share your highlights with others. If possible, upload a digital photo, video, or illustration with the link below, or send any of these files to ncr@minneapolismn.gov with the Subject Line: 2020-21 CPP Annual Report Images. If you have a large digital file with multiple images, please make arrangements to mail or deliver a copy directly to your NCR Neighborhood Specialist.
