
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAM
Seward Neighborhood Group 2012 Application

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Organization Name:	Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG)
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1. Community Participation efforts. Organizations should discuss: (1) the proposed outreach activity in the neighborhood, and (2) the proposed methods to involve residents and other stakeholders in one or more of the three key program purposes.

Identifying and Acting on neighborhood priorities:

SNG will engage residents through the ongoing outreach activities outlined below. We will continue to use all of these communication tools to alert residents to opportunities for involvement in neighborhood planning and to seek their participation, seek their participation, and secure their input into developing a Neighborhood Priority Plan.

SNG will engage residents through:

- Supporting the 30+ block clubs in Seward by promoting National Night Out and connecting block leaders with resources for their events and activities
- Planning and staging a full calendar of neighborhood events throughout the year (see #6 below)
- Distribution of a bi-weekly SNG e-newsletter (currently with 790 recipients)
- Regular committee meetings and projects (SNG has the following standing committees: Community Development, Crime and Safety, Environment, Fundraising, and History & Archives)
- Online tools—regular postings and updates to: SNG website, E-Democracy Community Forum (currently 650 members), Seward Profile (newsblog for Seward), Facebook page, and Twitter

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- Home visits by Housing Coordinator, and promotions for Community Energy Services workshops and other Housing Program activities, including the Southside Housing Fair and various local neighborhood public bulletin boards.
 - Seward Towers resident discussion groups, Towers monthly newsletter, and other programming facilitated by the Towers Community Organizer.
 - Collaborating with Seward Civic and Commerce Association on events and initiatives that support Seward's business community.
 - Continuing to engage in the many and various informal conversations and meetings that staff, board members, committee members, and other volunteers regularly have with residents and business owners throughout the neighborhood.
 - Continuing to expand our block party/SNG fundraiser project, by recruiting block club leaders and other residents active in the community to host block party fundraisers for SNG. These parties will: mobilize existing block clubs to get together outside of National Night Out; support blocks without organized clubs in efforts to create a block club; allow SNG to promote projects and survey residents on current issues (a board member or other volunteer will attend each party to give a brief presentation); and, raise funds for SNG. Several new events have occurred in 2011/12 because of our expanded emphasis on block clubs. Numerous block clubs held "national night ins" during the winter months, others hosted progressive dinners for their residents, and one block closed off its street on Halloween while residents sat by fire pits and handed out treats to the trick-or-treaters.
 - The renewed publication of the neighborhood print newsletter, the *Seward Profile*. Since the demise of *The Bridge-Seward's* community newspaper- in 2009, we have faced challenges to get information out to the entire neighborhood. While our online presence has increased greatly in the past two years, thanks to much volunteer work by dedicated residents, we knew we needed to find more ways to connect with our many residents who don't regularly use the internet. To that end, and in conjunction with planning for 2012-2014, in 2011 we started producing and distributing the *Seward Profile* a quarterly print newsletter that is mailed to all Seward residents. Each issue has promoted upcoming events and activities and has encouraged neighborhood involvement in ongoing activities in the neighborhood.

Impacting City decisions and priorities:

In early 2012 SNG held special discussions on the redistricting of city wards and park districts and the effects that it would have on the Seward Neighborhood. Due to our highlighting this issue, numerous Seward residents testified at the redistricting meetings to provide their opinions on the plan to split Seward into 2 wards. We continue to invite our City Council members to our board meetings in order to stay updated on all issues affecting our neighborhood.

SNG also holds monthly Community Development Committee (CDC) meetings. The CDC reviews proposed development projects in the neighborhood and makes recommendations to Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) about the disposition of such projects including the use of public funds. These meetings allow for discussion on new building variance requests, and ongoing neighborhood issues pertaining to housing and

neighborhood livability. These meetings are well attended by a variety of Seward Residents.

In 2011, SNG was influential in getting bike lanes installed on Franklin Avenue and 26th Avenue. The neighborhood had significant input on reconstruction of Riverside Avenue in areas where it impacts the Seward neighborhood. Currently, we are working with Ventura Village and the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) on making major changes to the section of Franklin Avenue between Bloomington Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue.

The SNG supported and assisted in the implementation of the City's "Enhanced Recycling Pilot Program." In March 2011 a 700+ pilot dual sort recycling project was started in the central part of the Seward neighborhood to evaluate methods to improve resident participation in recycling. This was the first effort in 22 years to significantly improve city recycling rates. In 2012, again with SNG support, the City agreed to transition the dual sort pilot area to a single sort program. Resident response has been overwhelming positive.

2. Building Organization Capacity:

SNG has worked to create a variety of community events that interest different aspects of the community. In December we organized the first ever "Seward Arts Frolic" at the Playwright's Center, which showcased local writers, dancers and musicians and provided community building opportunities over food and drink before the event began. In April we organized "Seward Day at the Dog Park" to foster community among dog owners and off lease park users. In June we will host a Garden Tour along with an all-community picnic and scavenger hunt. All these events have been organized by different groups of new volunteers in the community. Younger residents, who have joined the Profile and History Committees, are adding a new generational perspective to these efforts. We are creating new leadership by finding our members' passions and helping them build community by following their passions. After each of our events we survey community members on their opinions of the event to help us improve it for the future. We use online surveys as a way of getting ongoing feedback on our work.

3. Building neighborhood relationships:

We are excited to announce that SNG will be opening a new Bike Walk Center this summer. The center will be called Spokes: Bike Walk Connect. Seward is deliberately not in the name of the center because its programs will outreach to not only Seward Residents, but to residents of Ventura Village, East Phillips and Cedar Riverside as well. We are excited about building on past relationships with these communities while we also work to create new ties. One of the roles of Spokes: Bike Walk Connect will be to outreach to the new immigrant populations to increase biking and walking in these communities. A Spokes community organizer will work closely with our organizer in the Seward Towers to get our neighbors out biking, walking and participating in the community.

Spokes will tie in well with our existing Seward Walkers, who walk throughout the neighborhood every Thursday evening from May - October. We are working with our

organizer in the Towers to bring together a diverse community of walkers each week. Last Thursday, we had six walkers on our first walk of the season and four of the walkers were residents of the Seward Towers.

SNG's Crime and Safety Committee will create a yearly community policing plan. Last year's plan looked to engage residents, businesses, and the police to: decrease crimes overall, but with special attention to personal safety on Franklin Avenue in Seward and on the LRT-Transitway. The plan also addresses our work to increase involvement with Seward Youth Programs, increase pedestrian, bicycle and auto safety, and continue a decrease in issues negatively affecting livability in the neighborhood. One area of focus for this year is increasing the participation in the Seward Walkers.

We also continue to build relationships with the businesses of the Seward Neighborhood. In December, 2011 we worked with the Seward Civic and Commerce Association (SCCA) to create the first combined Seward Arts Festival and Franklin Frolic. SNG contracted with SCCA to run the Franklin Frolic and, based on this year's success, has made plans to create the Seward Arts Frolic, an annual December event-jointly sponsored by SNG and SCCA-that highlights both our local artists and promotes the businesses of Seward.

We continue to partner with the Longfellow neighborhood in supporting the Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Program.

4. How will your organization reach out to under-represented groups in your community? Who are these groups?

A priority of SNG is outreach to the immigrant community in Seward, to engage our newer residents and increase immigrants' participation in neighborhood projects and activities. The heart of this work is SNG's resident facilitation services in the Seward Towers, where the majority of residents are now East African (Somali, Oromo, Ethiopian, and Eritrean). SNG's organizer facilitates quarterly Residents' Discussion Groups and a range of programming, such as exercise classes, weekly Sewing Circles, and Somali finger weaving classes. We are also working with the Sibley Bike Library to loan bikes out to residents of the Seward Towers. When Spokes opens, we will again host "Learn to Ride" classes. When we held learn to ride classes in 2011, we learned that we needed to host women only classes in a private setting, such as the inside of a warehouse. Building on these experiences, we continue to learn the most effective ways to include all members of immigrant communities in the biking community. We will also continue to hold neighborhood-wide meetings in the Towers to make the meetings more accessible to the immigrant community.

We are building our capacity to provide youth programming in Seward. The Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership (SLRJP) facilitates ongoing monthly community circles for youth in Matthews Recreation Center. The circles are a structured storytelling process that help resolve conflict, prevent and reduce violence, and give participants a safe place to talk about concerns. SNG's Towers Organizer helps promote the circles. SNG supports SLRJP through subsidized rent and publicity at events, in the SNG website and e-

newsletter, and in other communications.

5. What are the Housing Activities of the Seward Neighborhood Group?

SNG has a half-time housing coordinator who provides free advice to Seward homeowners on making improvements to their property. The housing coordinator helps with preparing plans for improvement projects and identifying needed repairs. He provides assistance in hiring contractors, securing financing, and on issues arising during and after construction. SNG currently has three NRP home improvement loan programs, which the housing coordinator oversees and promotes to neighborhood residents. During the 2012, the programs are being expanded to provide more assistance to rental properties.

The neighborhood has partnered with the Center for Energy and Environment in implementing the Community Energy Services program in the Seward neighborhood. This program provides workshops on saving energy and doing energy audits on homes. To date, through the program, 163 homeowners have received energy audits and 68 homeowners have made energy conservation improvements to their homes. SNG also provides a rebate to homeowners that make energy conservation improvements.

SNG is working with Seward Redesign on implementation of the Seward Commons project, a 3.84 acre, high-density, transit oriented development located near the Franklin Avenue LRT Station. The first phase of the development, which includes 40 units of housing and a health and wellness center for people with mental illness, will be closing on financing in June with construction starting shortly thereafter. The second phase, which includes housing for senior citizens, is scheduled to start construction by the end of 2012.

Housing related activities comprise an estimated 30% of the work done by Seward Neighborhood Group.

6. Other--What festivals and events will your organization host or support in 2012/2013?

Every year SNG stages a number of events intended to build community, promote local businesses and artists, raise funds for SNG, and organize around particular issues. In 2012/13, SNG will stage the following events:

- Garage Sale Days (May)
- Seward Garden Tour (June)
- Seward Community Picnic and Scavenger Hunt (June)
- King's Fair (September -2013)
- Seward Arts Frolic (December)
- Zipp's Winetasting Benefit for SNG (fall)
- Annual Meeting/Potluck Dinner (November)
- Seward Day at the Dog Park (April 2013)

- Block parties/SNG fundraisers (throughout the year)

In addition, we will support the 30+ block clubs in Seward by promoting National Night Out and connecting block leaders with resources for their events. We will also work with the Seward Civic and Commerce Association to promote the Seward Arts Frolic in December. We will continue to promote Community Energy Service workshops, , as opportunities for Seward homeowners to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes.

7. What else would you like the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission know about your organization?

SNG, like all neighborhood organizations, is a volunteer-driven organization. Each year hundreds of volunteers contribute over a thousand hours of volunteer time to fulfill SNG’s mission to make Seward a better place to live, work, and play. The budget submitted here is dedicated solely for general operations support and to fund the half-time Community Coordinator position, and funds only a portion of those budget items. All other SNG programs (events, grant-funded projects, and other staff positions—Housing Coordinator, Seward Longfellow Restorative Justice Partnership Program Manager, and Seward Towers Organizer) are revenue neutral.

**SNG
2012-2013 CPP Budget**

	Cost Category	Contract Budget
1	Salary Expenses	\$39,075.00
2	Employee Benefits	\$12,375.00
3	Occupancy	\$33,750.00
4	Communication/Outreach	\$8,550.00
5	Supplies	\$3,340.00
6	Reserved for implementation of Neighborhood Priority Plan	\$1,650.00
	Total	\$98,740.00