

Community Participation Program Guide to 2011 Annual Reports

Intended audience: Your Community Participation Program annual report is primarily intended to inform the NCR Department, the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC) and the public about your Community Participation Program activities. You may also want to use your annual report to NCR as a way to inform others about your work, including funders, other neighborhood organizations, City departments and the City Council. If your organization produces a separate report for your annual meeting, you may also want to include it as supplemental material.

Contents: At a minimum, your annual report should address the following:

1. Accomplishments

What were your organization's major accomplishments in 2011? How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work? (Note: focus on your accomplishments, not your activities, such as "Field Regina Northrup organized the Lee Family 80th Anniversary Commemoration on July 16, 2011, recognizing an important story in the history of Civil Rights in Minneapolis. In addition to engaging more than 1,000 residents, the event coincided with the City's Community One Read event, providing the opportunity to connect the commemoration with broader city events.")

Our major accomplishment was to keep the office running and staffed despite a 75% budget cut over previous years and the City seizing more than \$111,000 of our NRP Phase II dollars. We were able to do this because of a combination of factors:

- 1) We changed office locations, to a less visible but more affordable space saving about half our monthly rent.
- 2) We were able to leverage funds to continue the highly successful and popular MIMO Project (Move-in/Move-out) as well as garner funds for urban agriculture projects like the launch of the Fairshare Farm (22nd Ave SE and Fairmount) as well as complete the Growbarrel Project.
- 3) The organization's dedicated staff and committed volunteer board members.

The public noticed very little of the funding cuts as we were able to maintain our current programs through the calendar year 2011 largely due to the grants in the pipeline for projects already underway, leveraged from our former NRP base funding. This enabled us to hold two MIMO events, one in the Spring and one in the Fall bringing the total participation to 1,409 and diverting over 11,000 pounds of usable household items from incineration downtown. Also, we were able to open the Fairshare Farm which brought in 37 new gardeners to that plot, which quickly became the most popular community garden site for students and long term residents alike. Our Growbarrel Project brought in 61 people as part of a series of workshops on how to build your own self-watering container.

We also launched the Blueprint Project which created a new committee to solicit community feedback that will eventually be included in the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan.

Our ability to carry on with the creation of new gardens, new neighborhood feedback mechanisms, and fulfilling our obligations to our grantors were all major accomplishments, given our limited funding from the City and the seizure of previously promised (NRP) funds. It is doubtful any City department could keep its output at the level the neighborhood did sustaining a 75% cut and then having 50% of what was banked also taken away. If the City could sustain those cuts, then we should be revisiting our tax structure and department expenditures. This speaks to the point that neighborhood organizations get people to do things that you could not pay a City staff to do and the reason for this is simple; in the past, they were given resources (money) and partial control in how those were allocated. Take that away, and you take away the successful participation model that was created here in Minneapolis.

2. *2011 CPP Submission*

Reviewing your submission for CPP funds for 2011, what outreach and engagement activities did you carry out? What worked well, and what did not work so well? Why? We carried out most of the activities as outlined in the report and are further expanded upon in section #3 below. These include: MIMO, Fairshare Farm, Como Corner Garden, Growbarrel workshops, Como Earth Month, Como Clean-Up, the Como Cookout, and other similar activities. We continued our existing committee structure of community involvement through regular monthly community meetings, including the SECIA Annual Meeting, and also added another planning tool, the "Como Blueprint" Committee, a committee whose output will be submitted for integration into the City's Comprehensive Plan. We have web tools and social media we utilized such as MIMO & Growbarrel Facebook pages as well as one for the organization which all continue to draw members. We generated 12 editions of the newsletter, the Comotion, and more than 24 electronic newsletter (Como Tidbits) updates. We continued to update our websites; both the www.secomo.org and the www.comogreenvillage.info websites, the latter includes regular blog posts on environmental events and news in the community.

All of these activities worked very well. We had a record number of students become involved, one of our most under-represented populations, and we were able to do this primarily because of grant funding of our projects like MIMO, GrowBarrels, and the Fairshare Farm. The reasons for success were thoughtful planning and the level of experience the neighborhood has in organizing the community around projects of interest. If the financial resources were there, even more successes would occur.

3. *Stakeholder Involvement*

Reviewing your submission for CPP funds for 2011, how did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities? Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful?

As identified above, involving the short term rental population (students primarily) is the most under-represented population and many strides have been made over the

years to include them further, such as creating Board positions and new program activities developed to engage students. Three projects specifically designed with a student component include: the MIMO Project, the Fairshare Farm, and the Growbarrel Project. More information is available on our website, www.comogreenvillage.org about these projects. As already identified we used social media tools to help get the word out along with traditional methods like the newsletter and door-knocking (around the time of “move-in” with the University of Minnesota Student & Community Relations as a partner). These projects were successful because they involved students from the beginning, including them on the project the whole way through as volunteers and interns. Students helping to develop projects and outreach for other students, that is a successful model and one that has taken more than 10 years to create. It is also a fragile one, that without continued nurturing will likely fall by the wayside once resources are pulled.

Please also provide the following:

- A. How many people currently serve on your board? Are there vacancies?
11, one vacancy
- B. Approximately how many individuals have participated in committee meetings in the last year? 57 volunteers (not including Annual Meeting—see total in “E.”).
- C. How many people attended your annual meeting? 65
- D. How many households regularly receive your publications (such as newsletters or newspapers)? *Comotion* (Monthly newsletter) 2,502 addresses, bi-weekly electronic newsletter more than 530 individuals
- E. Approximately how many people participate in other activities of the organization?
In 2011 we had many opportunities for people to participate in organizational activities. MIMO had 1,409 participants in the Spring and Fall events and more than 38 volunteers. The Fairshare Farm had 37 gardeners, who put in more than 900 hours to create a new vegetable garden space, and held six community events there. The Como Earth Month included the work of two SECIA interns and involved a couple of dozen people, though we did not track participation as the activities were self-directed environmentally focused ones. In May we had the Como Clean-up in which, 10 people participated. Como Corner had its 20th anniversary in 2011 and involved six regular gardeners and many student volunteers. We had the Annual Como Cookout in September which involved 400 people, despite the rainy weather which forced the event inside for the first time (2010—800, 2012—1,000 people attended). The Growbarrel Project involved 61 people.

2011 was a banner year for student volunteerism too. By November we had counted more than 173 students who worked with us as interns, volunteers or service learners. Of the 4,820 total volunteer hours for the year, students contributed over half. We had 7 interns who each put in more than 120hrs towards community involvement. Overall we had 395 total volunteers calculated for all SECIA related meetings/events, which includes the above and meetings on Parks, Schools, other gardening events, and more. Between all the event attendees and volunteers more than 2,200 people were involved in a SECIA neighborhood event in 2011.

Additionally, we had 3,874 people visit our Como Green Village website in 2011 (our environmental projects website) and the Como History page had 6,105 page views. See attached "Annual Meeting poster" for more 2011 summary information.

4. *Financial Reports*

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

Our organization was able to accomplish all of the above activities on a budget of around \$200,000. NRP provided approximately \$106,000, a funding source that is almost depleted. NCR provided just over \$57,000, meaning that to reach the same amount of people in the future, supplemental funding and/or resources will have to be found.

(see budget page)

In addition to your annual report, please take time to describe your interactions with City departments and other jurisdictions.

1. *Impact*

What interactions occupied a major part of your time? What worked well, what could be improved?

The major part of the time spent with the NCR department, specifically, would be time spent trying to figure out what the guidelines and requirements were. This was difficult as the protocol and guidelines were evolving and changing as time went on. These shifting objectives were like moving goal posts and not a best use of anyone's time. Those problems will hopefully resolve as time goes on as 2012 was slightly better than 2011 and the next year will likely be even better as NCR better understands the community organizations it is now representing as well as better understanding its role.

Interactions with other city departments (and "other jurisdictions"?) were about the same.

2. *City Communications – effectiveness*

Is the information that you receive from the City understandable and useful?

As the information and guidelines were changing while the program was being implemented, this question can be best answered as "not really." Information provided early on is now completely irrelevant and not useful; whereas, newer information is more relevant and useful. For example, it was stated in the 2011 CPP application that the next planning round would be for funding for three years, and now that has changed to a year and a half. So we would ask you, was that first series of questions you asked about how we would do our planning for three years useful? Not likely, but yet it was answered and collected as feedback.

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.

This question is painted in very broad strokes as it is impossible to answer it completely as a bullet point in a summary report. Our organization receives between 50 and 150 notices from the City a year, or we become aware of City impacts without notice for up to 150 events. The impacts and notices come from a variety of departments that deal with everything from roads, to sewer, to housing, to taxation, to impacts in neighborhood funding. As of right now, there is not just one person to call to inform the City of lack of notice etc.... The answer is "yes" we have contacted City

departments repeatedly if notice is inadequate or we need more information. A typical interaction would be to call the councilmember, get the name of the contact of whom we are to speak with (if not clear in the notice) and follow-up with them. Sometimes this works, but often it results in unreturned phone calls and emails unless compelled by the councilmember or a unit supervisor. Collecting feedback on this will not change the situation, but if you are serious about improving this communication the neighborhood would welcome a discussion on this, in the neighborhood. (See below for more)

4. *City Departments*

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

One place to start is to designate a contact in each department that is accountable to the NCR or some other City body, like the City Council, and it is their responsibility to handle notices properly, coordinate community feedback, and resolve problems going forward. This is in your own best interest to develop a strategy as neighborhood groups are already providing this function and with the funding cuts you can expect more direct contact with City departments, especially from angry residents, which we currently channel into more productive outlets and are often able to assist them directly.

5. *City Assistance*

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

Simple answer is to provide more funding, similar to NRP levels. If more output is expected, then more resources are needed, nothing could be more simple. Ask any department if this is true. Ask yourselves if this is true. Can you do more or less with more resources? An adequate level of funding would be \$10M of direct neighborhood programming (not including City Administrative overhead) for all the neighborhoods annually. This is less than the annual increase in the 2013 CPED proposed budget.

6. *Other comments?*

In 2011 SECIA received several statewide awards and nominations. We were featured at the MN State Fair in the MN Community Pride Showcase as a winner for the "Como Green Village" project. We were also finalists in two categories, a rare honor, at the MN Environmental Initiative Awards for the categories of Environmental Education and Climate Protection. Other items to consider are, considering that NCR has at its disposal vast City resources and mechanisms for communication: How many people did the NCR department involve in their community meetings in 2011? How many of those people were from Southeast Como? These are the types of questions that might be helpful to contemplate as the NCR department moves forward with developing formulaic plans for community involvement.

