

**Community Participation Program
2013 Annual Report**

Neighborhood Organization: Corcoran Neighborhood Organization

Contact person: Eric Gustafson, Executive Director

Date of Board Approval: March 13, 2014

1. Stakeholder Involvement

Reviewing your CPP activities in 2013, Please provide information about:

- *What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2013?*
Direct methods included door-knocking, telephone calls, interaction at community events and committee and board meetings, participation in neighborhood projects, and interactions in our office. Indirect methods included flyering at homes, our monthly neighborhood newspaper and weekly e-mail newsletter, and interactions via e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, and E-Democracy.
- *How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2013?*
We conducted intensive outreach and organizing work in distressed apartment buildings, which are disproportionately occupied by Latino immigrants and low-income residents. We also continued the Midtown Farmers Market and related outreach to increase visits to the market by users of EBT-SNAP benefits. We also continued Mujeres en Accion y Poder, a program that engages Latina immigrant women and their families.
- *Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?*
Door-knocking continues to be our preferred outreach technology based on 39 years of experience.
- *What did not work so well? Why?*
- *How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?*
Approximately 1,000.
- *How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?*
Approximately 200.
- *How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?*
Over 60,000 including participation in the Midtown Farmers Market.
- *How many people receive your print publications?*

As we've done since 1985, we continue to hand-deliver The Corcoran News to all 1600 homes in the neighborhood, which comprise 3,942 people.

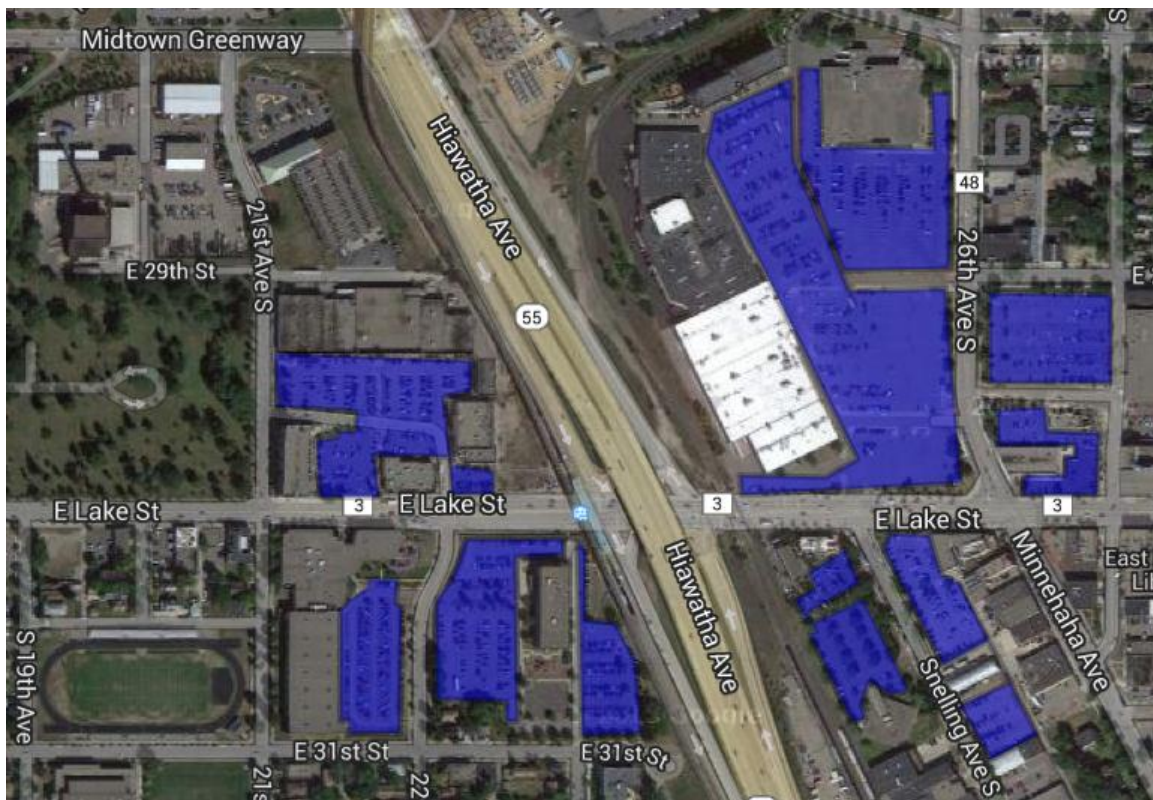
- *How many people receive your electronic communications?*
2,838 people receive the Midtown Farmers Market weekly e-mail and 924 receive CNO's e-mail newsletter.

2. **2012 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?*

Despite Lake Street / Midtown's ranking as the 3rd busiest LRT station on the Blue line, a February 19, 2014 StarTribune article explains that the station area has seen very little transit oriented development investment, and is still characterized by "a harsh environment for pedestrians," who, "upon exiting the southern end of the light-rail station, find themselves either beneath a highway overpass or climbing stairs into a surface parking lot."



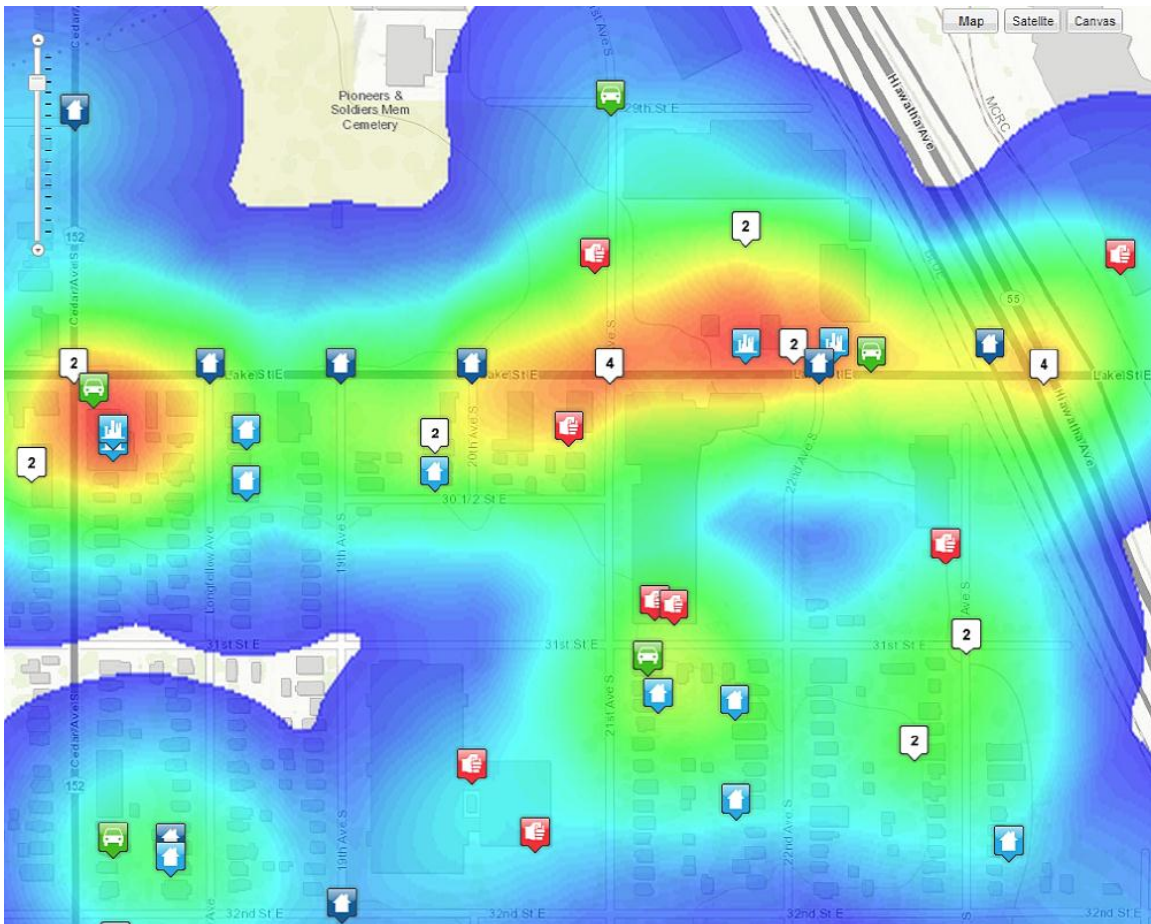
Surface parking uses still dominate the area, blighting the pedestrian environment.

Our work to change this environment is supported and driven in large part by the South High community, where elimination of yellow school bus service and school-sponsored student use of Metro Transit services are driving increased student pedestrian traffic along 21st Avenue to Lake Street bus stops and to and from the Lake Street / Midtown LRT station.



April 2013 design charette at South High.

During an April 2013 design charette organized by CNO and attended by over 25 students and faculty, residents, and staff from Hennepin County, Metro Transit, and the YWCA, many students complained about the hostile pedestrian environment they face as Metro Transit users walking to and from South High. Several student participants stated that when dropped off at South High after dark, following a sporting event, they will walk all the way to the 38th Street LRT station (almost 1 additional mile) to avoid the short but treacherous walk from South High to the Lake Street / Midtown LRT station. During discussions leading up to the design charette, the South High principal urged CNO leaders to “do something to fix” blighted properties along the project block of 30xx 21st Avenue.



2013 crime was highest where students get on transit and walk to and from these stops.

Our proposed redevelopment project, located just 925 feet from the Lake Street / Midtown LRT station, would replace four (4) blighted and nuisance properties with affordable housing, retail destinations, bike lanes, and jobs in response to demand from neighborhood residents and the South High school community, consistent with neighborhood and city plans and planning policy. The project would add pedestrian and bicycle traffic, significant on-site activity including 44-55 residences, 5,000 square feet of retail, 5,000 square feet of office uses, and natural surveillance to a block that presently feels empty, unsupervised, and unsafe. The project was conceived by neighborhood residents with South High input and voted a 2014 priority by the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization's Land Use & Housing committee and Board of Directors.



Concept plan developed by CNO in collaboration with the AIA's Search for Shelter.

Project partners and supporters include AIA Minneapolis, LISC, Twin Cities Community Land Bank, and development consultant Landon Group. We have met with and heard interest from 4 capable and reputable real estate developers, one of whom could co-develop the project with us, and we have met with and heard interest from 3 prospective commercial tenants. We recently submitted a funding application to Hennepin County to allow site acquisition and additional fundraising to move forward.

3. 2013 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2012:

- *What were your organization's major accomplishments?*
- *How were individuals in your community directly impacted by your work?*

In 2013, the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization:

- Launched Corcoran Community Garden. 38 gardeners including 15 beginners grew food and community this season.
- Equipped South High students to advocate for safer cycling to and from school. Hennepin County will install improvements at the 32nd Street crossing of Hiawatha Avenue in 2014, while students fight for new bike lanes from the Midtown Greenway to South High.
- Prevented foreclosure and repaired its harm. We referred 16 households to certified prevention counseling. We also referred distressed, foreclosed homes to nonprofit partners. At 5 of these, quality rehab and sale as owner-occupied

- affordable housing is complete or underway. (Also note: foreclosures slowed to 1 per month in Corcoran from 3 per month during 2011-2012.)
- Equipped home improvements. 23 residents improved their property with free exterior paint, and we continue to offer low-interest loans, a homebuyer program, and new exterior mini-grants.
 - Improved apartment housing by equipping and activating neighborhood tenants. Initial work by Mujeres en Accion y Poder volunteers and staff informed a StarTribune article that sparked immediate repair of crumbling concrete stairs and peeling paint on window frames.
 - Equipped new Latina leaders with skills and confidence. 13 women gained bicycles and maintenance skills from Cycles for Change, 12 women learned organizing skills from MN Center for Neighborhood Organizing, 14 women learned to prevent crime with the Minneapolis Police, and 14 women met with Mayor Rybak.
 - Began customer-driven efforts to quantify the Midtown Farmers Market's impact on the neighborhood and region, and helped customers fight for a permanent Market site at its home of 11 seasons.
 - Organized a City Council candidate forum at the farmers market and educated our incoming council member and mayor on crucial issues Corcoran residents are talking about.
 - Built pathways for improvements through conversation between retailers, landlords, and residents during our Corner Store work with the Minneapolis Health Department.
 - Kept residents up to date on Corcoran News through a free monthly newspaper delivered to every door, Advocate e-newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, posts on E-Democracy, and good old fashioned word-of-mouth between residents who know more neighbors because of our work.

4. Housing

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

Approximately 25% overall including work supporting the planning and development of new housing, work supporting the rehabilitation by partners of foreclosed and distressed housing, work resolving problem properties in collaboration with City enforcement partners, and work promoting home improvements resources including home energy efficiency and low-cost graffiti prevention.

5. Financial Reports

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

An income and expense report is 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?

- Problem Properties and crime prevention work with Housing Inspections and the Police Department. CPS Karen Notsch remains a highly effective and invaluable partner. Other departments and city staff are usually only helpful and effective when directed by the city council member's office.
- Healthy Living project with the Dept. of Health and Family Support. Great collaboration and perhaps the strongest communicators of any City department.
- Development-related work with CPED and David Frank. Strong overall and David is very friendly, accessible, and an effective communicator. Other CPED staff can be helpful, but only when directed by Mr. Frank or by the city council member's office.

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?

"3" overall

2. **City Communications – effectiveness**

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

The information is generally understandable but is often characterized by unnecessarily technical and obscure jargon, and thus often requires seeking additional input from city staff to gain clarity.

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" overall

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.

Not sure.

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?

Not sure.

4. **City Departments**

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

Reach out to and work with the neighborhood organization.

5. ***City Assistance***

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

It is not clear to us what sorts of services the NCR department offers or how to access them.

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? "1" overall

6. ***Other comments***

