

Community Participation Program 2012 Annual Report

Neighborhood Organization: Linden Hills Neighborhood Council

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1. Stakeholder Involvement

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

- What outreach and engagement activities did you carry out in 2013?

During 2013 LHiNC actively worked with City of Minneapolis Staff on the development of a Small Area Plan for the neighborhood. Several Open Houses were held and the community was invited to attend meetings and voice opinions. All meetings of the Small Area Plan Steering Committee were open to the public. To mark each significant development in the Small Area Plan process, LHiNC issued a special e-newsletter, and included all details in the bi-monthly *Linden Hills Line* print newsletter.

LHiNC reached out to all neighborhood residents to promote a sense of sharing and community through print and electronic media, and the use of neighborhood signage. We increased our use of social media through Facebook and Twitter, and introduced a new, user-friendly website that attracts more users. LHiNC continues to actively promote participation on its committees and attendance at its monthly Board Meetings. In October, our Annual Meeting was held at Lake Harriet, a break with the tradition of holding the Annual Meeting in the Linden Hills Park building, and as a result attendance increased to over 100 participants.

In September, LHiNC introduced a neighborhood priority survey as part of its Neighborhood Priority Plan process. Neighbors weighed in and helped LHiNC identify the priority of enhancing parks and green space in the neighborhood.

- How did you reach out to and involve under-represented communities in 2013?

In 2013 LHiNC introduced a new website in an attempt to attract more users of all demographics, and we have increased our use of social media. The hand-delivery of the Linden Hills Line newsletter, including several special editions which covered significant neighborhood news, continues to be an effective tool for reaching all neighborhood residents, including seniors, renters and ethnic minorities. All LHiNC meetings are open to the public, and 2013 saw a significant number of members of under-represented communities in attendance.

- Did you find any strategies to be particularly successful? Why?

We have seen that special editions and hand-delivery of our printed newsletter have been successful at reaching and engaging residents, perhaps because residents feel an effort was made to reach them where they live.

- What did not work so well? Why?

We have had difficulty recruiting volunteers for community events, other than the Linden Hills Festival. We may consider increasing attempts at direct contact, via phone calls or door knocking.

- How many people did you reach through direct contact (door knocking, meetings, one-on-ones, etc.)?

We reached well over 3,000 people through our open board meetings, committee meetings, open houses, and activities at Linden Hills Park including Winterfest, the Festival, the Corn Feed, and Fall Fest.

- How many individuals volunteered in organization activities?

Approximately 35 people volunteered on LHiNC's board and committees, and 150 volunteers helped with the 2013 Linden Hills Festival.

- How many individuals participated in your organization's activities?

The Linden Hills Festival draws around 3,000 people. Approximately 400-500 people attend the Corn Feed.

- How many people receive your print publications?

Approximately 2,900 households receive the Linden Hills Line print newsletter.

- How many people receive your electronic communications?

Approximately 1,400 people receive our e-newsletters.

2. 2013 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?

Highlight #1: Small Area Plan

- The completion of the 18-month process to develop the Linden Hills Small Area Plan is a significant highlight for our community.
- The entire community was affected by the Small Area Plan process, as all residents were encouraged to participate in open meetings and workshops. Further, the Small Area Plan will help shape the design and use of the neighborhood's commercial areas, thereby having an influence on all residents.
- LHiNC took steps to ensure all residents were properly informed and welcomed in the process, by making news of the Small Area Plan available in print newsletters, e-newsletters, on LHiNC's website and through social media and neighborhood flyers.
- The outcome is that the City of Minneapolis has adopted the Linden Hills plan, which will guide development in the neighborhood's commercial areas in the future.

Highlight #2: Trolley Path Gardens

- The trolley path gardens, running north of 44th St. between Zenith and Xerxes Aves., had become neglected and were overgrown with weeds and invasive plants.
- LHiNC received complaints from residents who complained the paths had become unsightly.
- The LHiNC Environment & Sustainability Committee worked with the Southwest Community Education Green Team to develop an ongoing maintenance program for the gardens. Much work was performed to eliminate destructive invasive plants, and native plants, attractive to birds and butterflies, were planted throughout the gardens. The LHiNC Youth Grant program provided funding to the Green Team for ongoing maintenance. An adjacent neighbor has volunteered to provide the Green Team with the needed access to water for the ongoing watering of new plants.

- 3.** The outcome is a beautiful and sustainable garden environment adjacent to a frequently-used neighborhood walking path. LHiNC was able to develop a partnership with a local youth group to successfully address a problem area and ensure the gardens will be maintained on an ongoing basis.

4. 2013 Accomplishments

Please provide information about your other accomplishments in 2013:

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

Accomplishments

- Completion of the 18-month long Linden Hills Small Area Plan process, including selecting the Steering Committee, educating and engaging the public, offering public forums for review of the plan during various draft stages, and supporting the plan as submitted for the approval of the City of Minneapolis.
- Completion in 2013 of LHiNC's Solar Grant program, which issued \$121,800 in reimbursements to neighborhood residents for completed solar projects.
- Purchase and placement of a commemorative bench to honor the generous contributions to our urban forest by a Linden Hills resident.
- Donations in the form of grants to organizations/projects that make Linden Hills a better place to live, such as: Minneapolis Pops Orchestra, Linden Hills Park, Linden Hills Chamber Orchestra, Linden Hills Power & Light, and the Christopher Watson Dance Company.
- Donations totaling \$11,500 in the form of youth grants with a goal of promoting youth programming in our community.
- Donations of scholarships to students of Southwest High School.
- Continued collaboration with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to offer family-friendly, open-to-all programs and events at Linden Hills Park, including two free movies in the park.
- Participation in the MPRB's Park Stewards program to protect and preserve the William Berry Woods, a unique and valuable native plant community in Linden Hills.
- Partnership with the MPRB, East Harriet-Farmstead Neighborhood Association, and the Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis on the Roberts Revitalization Project to develop and implement a long-term management plan to enhance and protect the Sanctuary as a natural and undeveloped area for birds.
- Bringing over 3,000 people together to enjoy the Spring Festival at Linden Hills Park, with the help of approximately 150 volunteers and many donations and sponsorships from area businesses and residents.
- Facilitation of the annual Linden Hills neighborhood garage sales: with over 60 registered sales, the event brought shoppers from outside the community into the neighborhood, and promoted a sense of neighborhood unity and fun.
- Open communication with Linden Hills residents, through the bi-monthly newsletter, monthly e-news, email distribution list, social media, website, flyers and signage, and open Board and Committee Meetings.
- Continued commitment to waste reduction and management by adopting a Zero Waste policy for all LHiNC-sponsored events.

- Continued commitment to protect and enhance the urban forest through grants to plant and sustain trees and understory plants.
- Partnerships with other agencies and organizations (such as Linden Hills Power & Light, East Harriet-Farmstead Neighborhood Association, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board) to collaborate on projects and programs that benefit our neighborhood and the City.

5. *Housing*

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

LHiNC spent approximately 5% of its time on housing-related activities, as it continues to offer low-interest, home-improvement loans to residents, and it has an active Zoning Committee that weighs in on building variance requests. In 2013, LHiNC began exploration of reviving its Housing Committee to work on issues concerning affordable housing and aging-in-place opportunities.

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?

We consulted several times on important matters with Robert Thompson from the NCR department. In all cases, these interactions were very timely, helpful and beneficial. We are also working closely with the City Planning Department on the development of a Small Area Plan. We also spent time with our new Neighborhood Specialist, Michelle Chavez, who has been helpful and engaging.

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? 4 ?

2. ***City Communications - effectiveness***

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

Yes

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent, how would you rate overall communications from the City? 4 ?

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.

Yes, we receive adequate notice of activities in the neighborhood.

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? 3 ?

4. ***City Departments***

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

LHiNC has received invaluable assistance from Robert Thompson, Neighborhood

Relations Department, and also significant guidance from Michelle Chavez, who has been generous with her time. However, there would seem to be many topics and activities about which the work and experience of the City's numerous neighborhood organizations could be usefully pooled and shared. Examples of this are 1) the creation and maintenance of a neighborhood organization website, and 2) suggested possible revisions to an organization's governing documents.

5. ***City Assistance***

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

Our organization would benefit from the availability of training sessions for neighborhood board members.

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? 4

6. ***Other comments?***