

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

330 Humphrey Center
301 -
2400 -
phone: 612-625-1111

Building Community in Seward Neighborhood

*A Self-Study Project of the
Seward Neighborhood Group*

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

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Prepared by
Nancye Belding, Mary Beth Neal, and Marina Kosyakovsky
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NPCR

330 Humphrey Center
301 - 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612/625-1020

e-mail: npcr@freenet.msp.mn.us

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seward is a neighborhood with a strong sense of community, where all people feel welcome and safe. Children and youth are nurtured. People and property are safe from crime and violence. The arts and culture are celebrated. Diversity is respected. Each individual is encouraged to achieve his/her full potential.

-Seward NRP Action Plan

SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP (SNG)

Star Tribune articles of 1993 and 1995 linked Seward's relatively high property values to its "resident support and strong community identity."

The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG), founded in 1960, is one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis. It is recognized by the City of Minneapolis as the official citizen participation organization within the boundaries of the Seward neighborhood.

SNG is a volunteer-driven organization with an elected Board of Directors and several permanent committees of long standing: Community Building (formerly Neighborhood Issues), Development, Finance, *Seward Profile*, and Personnel. Newer committees are Housing, Environment, Youth, and the NRP Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC).

The scope of SNG's activities changed dramatically when the City of Minneapolis decided to spend millions of dollars on neighborhoods in its innovative "Neighborhood Revitalization Program" (NRP). In 1995, the Seward Neighborhood was awarded 4.7 million dollars over the next five years to implement its NRP Action Plan.

SNG's program activity has quadrupled as the NRP strategies have begun to be implemented.

KEY CONCLUSION: COMMUNITY BUILDING KEEPS SEWARD IDENTITY POSITIVE AND STRONG

SNG'S Community Building Program

The Community Building program has undergone rapid change in the last two years. From a relatively narrow focus on crime, problem properties, and events it has shifted to an abundant potpourri of activities and projects, all aimed at strengthening both a fabric and a perception of community.

More than any other SNG program area, Community Building has the most projects, the most new NRP-funded projects, the most participants, and the most staff. This includes dozens of ongoing projects and activities, three-plus FTE staff, a hundred or so regular volunteers, and thousands of participants.

The NRP Action Plan did not provide for sufficient staff and resources to deal with too-rapid growth, or to carry out its ambitious strategies, or even to leverage additional dollars. Nonetheless, many impressive successes have been achieved during the almost-two years since NRP began implementation in Seward.

The Study Team finds these successes astonishing, given the scope of the tasks being attempted and the relatively small staff to support them. The residents of Seward have provided incredibly dedicated volunteer support, many thousands of hours. It is probably correct to say that every single household in Seward has been touched by some community building effort.

Outcomes: Four out of Four

The four desired outcomes identified in this self-study are being pursued aggressively and successfully. The Study Team commends SNG for the consistency with which these goals are met in the multitude of Community Building program activities.

Participation

The 1st Outcome

Diverse, broad-based participation in activities, events and projects at the block and neighborhood levels.

Accomplishments

The Seward neighborhood has been buzzing with organized activities, open to all, at the block level as well as the neighborhood level. The activities are widely promoted through the *Seward Profile*, delivered door-to-door, and sometimes flyering. Virtually every one of these activities has been either sponsored by, or supported by, SNG's Community Building program.

To name a few of these, they include:

- ◆ Block and apartment club parties, especially on National Night Out.
- ◆ Sponsoring three traditional neighborhood-wide events, and some new ones as well.
- ◆ Monthly meetings for residents, agencies, and others to express views.
- ◆ New opportunities to participate in projects of personal interest, such as theater, arts, and community gardens.
- ◆ New opportunities to participate in decision-making task forces such as community policing, media access, and park renovation.
- ◆ New project work groups for residents and others to help build community, such as Welcome Wagon and Stroll Patrol.

- ◆ Door-to-door membership drive to inform residents of SNG activities and invite them to take part.

Reduced Isolation

The 2nd Outcome

Reduced anonymity and isolation of separate groups- -by age, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, income level, social class, own/rent, business/resident, etc.

Accomplishments

Isolation and anonymity are reduced when people meet with one another and feel welcomed. Targeted groups for increasing diversity of participation include persons of color, senior citizens, renters, and youth. During the past year, outreach activities to these groups have included:

- ◆ An outreach survey, aimed at identifying barriers to participation for residents of color.
- ◆ New apartment club organizing at multiple apartment buildings with high target populations.
- ◆ Door-to-door membership drive using a block map of Seward.
- ◆ The launching of an intergenerational theater project, with intensive recruitment of youth and seniors.
- ◆ Links to SNG's Youth program, and to the business community, in all Community Building activities.
- ◆ Increased diversity of staff and Board makeup.

Networks

The 3rd Outcome

Increased connections and networks built among community agencies, resources, businesses, and residents.

Accomplishments

In its long history, SNG has created links, partnerships, or collaborations with most of the major players in Seward: businesses, schools and colleges, agencies, institutions, and government. Each of these constituencies has been offered opportunities to participate and/or support SNG's community building and anti-crime initiatives. To give a few examples:

- ◆ Businesses are asked to sponsor events, to become SNG members, and to consider hiring Youth program participants for summer jobs.

- ◆ Staff at Matthews Park are closely involved with SNG's Youth program, and other activities that take place at the park.
- ◆ Schools, colleges, health facilities and churches all contribute something:
 - ⇒ Seward Montessori School lets SNG use space and some resources, and the Community Education Coordinator provides space, time and resources for SNG projects.
 - ⇒ Augsburg College volunteers work regularly on SNG projects.
 - ⇒ Fairview Hospital has supported SNG financially through its foundation; Smiley's Clinic gives financial and volunteer support.
 - ⇒ Churches lend space for theater group meetings, and help or sponsor events.
 - ⇒ Other agencies such as CCP/SAFE, the Police Department, and Way to Grow work through SNG to inform residents about programs and opportunities available to them.

There will never be enough networks and connections built to sit back and relax; this ongoing activity is the very nature of community building.

Relationships

The 4th Outcome

Build relationships = people face to face.

Accomplishments

Face-to-face relationships are the interwoven warp and woof that make up the community fabric. SNG staff spend about 99.5 percent of their time building those relationships. Every phone call or person stopping in to the office asking for information means people talking to each other about the neighborhood. No one is ever too busy to talk to a caller or visitor. At SNG the administrative work always takes a back seat to the people who live, work and play in Seward.

Other ways that the Community Building program supports relationships are:

- ◆ **Block clubs:** The block clubs, the basic unit of SNG organizing, are a vehicle for residents to meet and get to know one another.
- ◆ **Community Building Committee (CBC):** The CBC provides a regular forum for face-to-face encounters among residents and other stakeholders in the neighborhood.
- ◆ **Stroll Patrol:** The strollers make a practice of greeting people who are out working in their yards or walking along the street.
- ◆ **Welcome Wagon:** This new initiative is aimed at making newcomers feel welcomed, both homeowners and renters.

KEY FINDING: CBC NURTURES OLD AND NEW ACTIVITIES

In the past year CBC has nurtured the new community-based Stroll Patrol, the Welcome Wagon, a Community Policing task force; and it has provided support for a teen video project, the Earth and Tree Fair, and the NRP theater project.

CBC (the Community Building Committee) reports to the SNG Board. It is responsible for oversight of the Community Building program activities. It meets monthly and is open to all neighborhood residents or other interested persons, and is commonly perceived as the entry point for participation in neighborhood activities. Until recently called "Neighborhood Issues" and focusing principally on anti-crime efforts, its role is being re-defined. CBC is staffed by SNG's community organizers.

CBC nurtures grass roots projects

New projects that emerged from grass roots interest and were nurtured by CBC in the past year include the Stroll Patrol, the Welcome Wagon packet for new residents, and a video project made by teens.

CBC supports new SNG initiatives

CBC helped to find volunteers for the first Earth and Tree Fair last April. It provided door-knockers for the first annual membership drive last fall. It sponsored a candidates forum prior to the November elections. It helped the fledgling NRP theater project by providing community input and ideas.

CBC Supports long-standing SNG activities

CBC continues to help organize traditional SNG events including Clean Sweep, the Garage Sale Daze, King's Fair, and the block club parties on National Night Out.

CBC is a channel for collaboration

One of the most important accomplishments of CBC is simply that it provides a meeting point for agencies and individuals.

CBC is a gateway for outreach

CBC is traditionally the "entry point" for new people to take part in SNG, with its open forum format. With its new emphasis on community, CBC has successfully attracted some new members from hard-to-reach groups such as renters, people of color, seniors, and high-rise residents. But committee members and staff want to do even more. Seward's changing demographics, in fact, require continuous outreach in new forms.

KEY FINDING: OUTREACH INITIATIVES BRING NEW PARTICIPANTS

Outreach initiatives during the past year have been more aggressive than at any time in SNG's history.

SNG organizes nine new block and apartment clubs

Since the idea of block clubs originated, SNG has supported block club organizing. At present there are 38 block and apartment clubs, nine of which have started in the past year through the organizing efforts of SNG.

SNG supports block clubs with training, Incentive Fund

SNG works with Community Crime Prevention (CCP/SAFE) in its block club leader training program. Block leaders have been encouraged to attend conflict resolution training sponsored by Matthews Center. SNG is looking into Internet access for block club leaders. SNG also offered block clubs money for parties and special projects last year through its Block Club Incentive Fund.

SNG goes door-to-door for new members

In the first annual membership drive, 42 volunteers went door-to-door through Seward's 65 blocks asking people to sign up as members. About 500 people have signed up since the kick-off at last year's National Night Out.

SNG launches Welcome Wagon for new residents

Volunteers worked many hours to assemble the new Welcome Wagon packets. Apartment dwellers learn from the building management, and homeowners from the realtors, that they can get their Welcome Wagon packet from SNG. This also encourages them to introduce themselves.

Diversity building brings new participants

SNG is conscious of the changing neighborhood demographics, and wants to try to bring in new constituencies, or old ones which have traditionally not participated. Last year, new outreach initiatives at the high-rises and large apartment buildings brought dozens of new participants. Five of these people were elected to SNG's 20-member Board of Directors at the last Annual Meeting.

KEY FINDING: CRIME AND SAFETY INITIATIVES FOCUS ON PREVENTION

A strong perception of safety persists in Seward

Seward has successfully maintained its public perception as "an oasis of safety and stability" (a reporter's comment), though surrounded by two neighborhoods where crime is thought to be a serious problem.

The appearance of safety has clearly been strengthened by all of the new block-based activity over the last year and a half. The visible presence of the Stroll Patrol, the formation of new block clubs and encouragement of existing ones to have more activities, the organizing efforts at large apartment dwellings and high-rises, the door-to-door membership drive, the intergenerational theater project—all of these

have increased the number of people who are talking to each other, getting to know each other, creating a safety net of "eyes and ears."

CCP/SAFE Crime Team gets results

Much of SNG's reputation for fighting crime has resulted from its understanding that crimes sometimes termed "nuisance crimes" in the justice system heavily impact a neighborhood's livability.

CCP/SAFE is a community crime prevention initiative of the Minneapolis Police Department. Seward's CCP/SAFE partners, a civilian and police employee, have for many years worked closely with SNG staff, and Seward's "beat cops" and housing inspector. This is usually called the "CCP/SAFE Crime Team." At weekly meetings, crime and problem property reports have been reviewed for potential joint actions. For example, in a suspected drug house, it is very difficult to get enough evidence to convict a dealer. However, the housing inspector can set up a meeting with a landlord which is attended by other members of the team. The landlord is informed of the suspected activity and evidence collected by block club members. Many times this will cause the landlord to evict the tenant.

SNG records crime and problem property reports from neighborhood businesses and residents; often people will call SNG but not the police. These reports form the basis for the crime team's joint activity. The crime team uses the block club as the medium for problem resolution wherever possible, and also works closely with Seward's block club leaders.

Recently several members of the team have left for new positions, including the CCP/SAFE specialist and police officer, one of the beat cops, and SNG's community organizers; this has caused some (hopefully temporary) interruption in the team's ability to work together.

Prevention-based activities increase

Seward residents are remarkable in their willingness to participate in the activities that make the neighborhood more livable and safe. The Stroll Patrol is one of the initiatives that makes the neighborhood so appealing and unique within the limits of the inner city.

- ◆ **Alley Inspections and Safety Grants:** Many block clubs were originally formed in response to problem complaints. Increasingly over the past year, however, the focus has shifted toward prevention-based measures such as social activities and safety projects at the block level. These projects can include free alley inspections, and block grants funded either by CCP/SAFE or SNG to install safety lighting or a similar project.
- ◆ **Crime Stats and Prevention Tips:** The CCP/SAFE partners make information about crime statistics and other safety tips available monthly to block club leaders, the SNG office, and people who come to the CBC meeting. Often they attend these meetings. Over the past year SNG's community organizers have increasingly written articles for the *Seward Profile*, informing residents and

businesses of crime prevention measures such as how to take safety precautions, and when to call 911.

- ◆ **Community Policing Task Force:** A new task force of residents and businesses has done research on how money for community policing in the NRP plan might best be used. It has recommended a three-month trial of paid off-duty police patrolling "hot spots", and a surveillance camera, with evaluation to follow. A lively discussion has happened at the neighborhood level about what community policing means, and the final vote has not yet been taken.
- ◆ **Restorative Justice:** SNG staff have been studying the relatively new concept of restorative justice, and how it might be used in Seward to connect first-time offenders and their victims for mutual benefit. This concept is still in the planning stages.
- ◆ **Stroll Patrol:** The Stroll Patrol grew from the grass roots. In response to an assault at Matthews Park in 1995, 70 people turned out to a public meeting, and one of its results was the Stroll Patrol. Although new, the Stroll Patrol is as well-known to residents as SNG's traditional events. The strollers walk together at set times, wearing bright clothing or hats, to create a peaceful and non-threatening presence that hopefully deters crime. They are seen as positive and friendly by the neighbors.

KEY FINDING: EVENTS BRING PEOPLE, DIVERSE GROUPS TOGETHER

Events build community

By their very nature, Seward's events build community. They appeal to universal interests and thereby invite broad-based participation. They get people out on the streets. They demand a lot of work and cost money, so they bring together all the resources of the community in making them happen. Most important, they get people talking to each other.

Clean Sweep, Garage Sale Daze enhance visual character

Clean Sweep is a city-sponsored garbage pickup event every spring. SNG finds adult and youth volunteers to go along with the garbage trucks and assist residents with the heavy lifting, so they can clean out garages and basements.

About a month after Clean Sweep, SNG organizes a neighborhood-wide Garage Sale, with 80 to 100 households participating. The event is advertised in the metro papers, and lawn signs and maps are provided for shoppers. Often, SNG also holds its own larger sale as well, with donated goods and proceeds going to the Youth program or others who help out.

Garage Sale Daze is a chance to get rid of unwanted junk, make a little money, and show off the neighborhood to garage sale enthusiasts. There is a festive atmosphere; the alleys and streets are buzzing with activity as people buy and sell and spend time catching up with their neighbors after a long winter indoors.

King's Fair celebrates identity, history, diversity

The main event, this biannual celebration of Seward's history draws 1,000 or more people in mid-to-late September. It takes place in the Matthews Park, centrally located in the neighborhood, which was also the site of the original Minneapolis Fairgrounds. King's Fair is especially a visual treat, turning the park into a fantasy reminiscent of medieval European fairs.

Guests enjoy an afternoon of many amusements under bright carnival tents: games of skill and chance at the Midway, Bingo, prizes, a raffle, two stages of live entertainment as well as roving jugglers, dancers and storytellers, historical exhibits and information booths about programs of interest to Seward dwellers, food sold by local vendors, and the chance to buy hand-made local arts and crafts.

SNG events are the primary means by which businesses, churches, schools and institutions are involved in community activities. Virtually all of these are asked for help with King's Fair--to support a midway game, donate a raffle item, or even take charge of an activity themselves. Many resource agencies have information booths at King's Fair. And it could never happen without thousands of hours of volunteer support.

A historical theme is chosen and researched for each Fair. The last one, "Remembering the Forties," brought back people who used to live in Seward 50 years ago. The next Fair, with its theme of immigration, will be a celebration of immigrants old and new, especially appropriate because of the influx of people from other countries to Seward in recent years.

SNG supports other old and new events

- ◆ SNG participates through its Youth program in the annual ***Halloween Parade***, which has been going on for 32 years. This year SNG's theater project also worked with Youth program participants to create a very special Haunted House.
- ◆ SNG lends its help to block clubs for ***National Night Out*** and other block club parties. All SNG staff and Board members visit National Night Out parties to inform residents about current activities.
- ◆ A new event is the ***Earth and Tree Fair*** attended by hundreds of people in the spring of 1996, which promises to become a regular event on alternate King's Fair years.
- ◆ Another recent innovation where SNG helps out is the ***Seward Follies***, a series of mid-winter events designed to get residents out of their houses and do fun activities such as skiing and dancing, sponsored by adult Community Education.

KEY FINDING: SEWARD PROFILE IS WELL LIKED, WELL READ

"I find that the Profile is superior when it comes to just reporting the needs and concerns and the day-to-day business of the neighborhood." - A resident

The *Seward Profile* is published 11 times a year in tabloid format and delivered to each household (except in the large multiple dwellings where copies are left at the

entry way), as well as principal business locations. It is the official vehicle for informing the neighborhood of SNG's activities, meetings, and important upcoming decisions that affect residents. As one resident put it,

We are a very active neighborhood and lots of things happen. People need to be informed before they happen, and then they have to hear about the results. It is a very good combination. It is read a lot."

But the *Profile* has a far more important function than SNG's legal obligation—it is the primary community building tool in terms of the written word. Also, it preserves neighborhood history in the making.

The *Profile* contains two or more pages written by SNG staff. The rest of the paper contains news, photos, letters, and feature stories of local interest. SNG publishes the *Profile* but contracts out its production.

Most Seward residents have heard of the *Profile*, and rate it highly, according to a membership survey. They also use it to find jobs, apartments, and other resources. SNG encourages this by providing a free *Profile* ad each year to all of its members.

KEY FINDING: NRP PROJECTS OPEN NEW VISTAS

Theater Project fits many community building goals

While the NRP-funded theater project was the first of SNG's ventures into arts programming, it also embraces all of the goals of community building: bringing the generations together, exploring and promoting Seward's history and identity, offering performances and events of appeal to diverse audiences, and networking with churches and institutions to broaden participation. It offers free classes and workshops in theater-related skills to all who are interested.

In its first year, the project sponsored weekly site-based classes, two performances, and a series of workshops on mask-making, song-writing and acting. Participants were recruited at the high-rises, churches, and all SNG events. The project was heavily promoted through the *Profile*. Participation was less than hoped for, and there was concern that it needed to proceed more slowly in order to generate more resident participation. About two dozen seniors and youth were regular participants, and an advisory group of six to eight people worked hard to launch the project. The performances were enjoyable, with themes derived from local history research and oral interviews. Mini-appearances at events including the Earth and Tree Fair and Garage Sales helped to build awareness of the new project.

Although there were fewer participants than hoped for, they came from previously hard-to-reach young and elderly populations; this is one of the project's greatest successes so far. Another success is new connections built with two churches and an extended care facility, and the management at the Seward Towers high-rise. A disappointing failure was the hoped-for collaboration with the Playwrights' Center, which withdrew as the project's coordinator after a few months.

During the second year, participants will research, write and produce a community play. The project coordinator is attending CBC meetings to get help with recruitment and input.

Seward artists work to develop studio arts space with community pay-back

The studio arts space is another NRP strategy with community-building goals. The vision is to have studio space where neighborhood artists can work, interact with each other, display their creations, and offer classes and exhibits to community members.

The artists are intending:

- ◆ to buy and rehab a building with a present use "incompatible" with land use and livability,
- ◆ to provide reasonably priced studio space for lease by local artists,
- ◆ to "pay back" the community with service in the form of classes, exhibitions or mentoring, and
- ◆ to promote safety by providing an "eyes and ears" presence.

A core group of artists has worked on the project, putting in many hours researching possible sites, legal structures, and partnerships or collaborations. They have been disappointed not to find a site that can be developed with the \$200,000 in the NRP Plan, and reluctant to take on a larger project. Some fear this project will never be completed.

As a temporary measure, the artists are now interested in leasing space in the neighborhood at their own expense. They hope in this way to gain more visibility, generate more support, and learn some things about doing a business project. They will be incorporating as a non-profit corporation, Seward Arts, Inc.

New SNG/school/park collaborations emerge from NRP dollars

The renovated park building is perhaps not as ideal as the residents would have wished. However, the process whereby it happened might be one of the most important outcomes of the NRP program: that neighborhoods can now sit down at the table as equal partners with City agencies.

Matthews Center Interior Renovation

The NRP Plan set aside \$261,000 for interior improvements to Matthews Center, which is owned by the Minneapolis Park Board. From the outset, the planning process was fraught with difficulties. The Park Board admittedly saw the resident group as purely "advisory," whereas the residents saw themselves as determining what the renovation would look like. Many issues divided them, and after one or two confrontational meetings the planning process broke down entirely for more than six months. The "advisory group" simply refused to release the NRP funds.

But ultimately a new contract was reached between SNG, the Park Board, and the Seward School as well. As an advisory group member reflects,

We formed a totally different relationship with the Park Board. They had never considered letting other groups use their space, and now they have agreed to lease us space for 40 years.

The new contract was a critical beginning point for a year of additional compromises as the renovation plans took shape in a spirit of friendly cooperation. Because of under-funding and last-minute cuts, the renovated building is perhaps not as ideal as the residents would have wished.

However, the process whereby it happened might be one of the most important outcomes of the NRP program: that neighborhoods can now sit down at the table as equal partners with City agencies.

Seward Montessori Media Equipment Purchase

The NRP Plan provided \$20,000 for the purchase of new equipment for the Seward Montessori School Media Center, to be accompanied by public access to use of that equipment. To date, two video cameras have been purchased at a cost of about \$4,000, and Youth program participants have used the Media Center facilities and one of the cameras for a video they produced.

But many questions arise in further implementation: What kind of computer equipment should be purchased? (the schools use Macintosh, which some say are virtually obsolete) Who will be responsible for the equipment? Who will take charge during the after-school hours the Media Center will be open? How frequent will those hours be?

SNG staff and the advisory group that has volunteered for this project are inclined to delay it until after the proposed Matthews Center Activities Council has come to some more generic agreements among the partners sharing the school/park facility.

Matthews Center Activities Council

The NRP Plan provided for a new staff position, the Community Resource and Activities Coordinator. One of the job duties would be building a new council that will forge effective working alliances among the various users of the school/park complex. While not as yet implemented, this is most likely the next step before the other NRP funds for the complex can be spent, including another \$20,000 for sports equipment.

One important asset that SNG has so far developed with the partners in the school/park complex is a spirit of cooperation and good will. SNG has learned that building effective relationships is critical to successfully implementing the school/park strategies.

But a perhaps more important lesson has been that those relationships are even more valuable than the strategies themselves.

PART I. COMMUNITY BUILDING IN SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD

SEWARD NEIGHBORHOOD GROUP

The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG), founded in 1960, is one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis. The scope of SNG's activities changed dramatically when the City of Minneapolis decided to spend millions of dollars on neighborhoods in its innovative "Neighborhood Revitalization Program" (NRP).

The Seward Neighborhood Group (SNG), founded in 1960, is one of the oldest neighborhood organizations in Minneapolis. It is recognized by the City of Minneapolis as the official citizen participation organization within the boundaries of the Seward neighborhood.

Star Tribune articles of 1993 and 1995 linked Seward's relatively high property values to its "resident support and strong community identity." SNG has contributed to building a sense of community identity for 37 years.

SNG has historically sponsored various programs of neighborhood-wide interest, in addition to providing citizen input to City officials on development projects. (At times that input has included stronger measures that have changed the very face of neighborhood development). Among these are a crime prevention program, a youth program, and annual events. SNG has been largely a volunteer organization, with a small staff engaged to facilitate the policies and programs set by a Board of Directors elected by the neighborhood.

The scope of SNG's activities changed dramatically when the City of Minneapolis decided to spend millions of dollars on neighborhoods in its innovative "Neighborhood Revitalization Program" (NRP). In 1995, the Seward Neighborhood was awarded 4.7 million dollars over the next five years to implement its NRP Action Plan. NRP is funded by property taxes from downtown development in an effort to revitalize neighborhoods. It came into existence by approval by the Minnesota State Legislature in 1990. In April 1995, the city approved Seward's NRP Action Plan.

The Plan provided for increased staff in the existing Youth and Community Building programs to implement the new strategies, as well as additional staff for new program areas of Natural Environment and Social Environment.

The past several years have seen rapid growth in both programming and staff, including the addition of new program areas called Social Environment, Natural Environment, Housing, and Transportation. Staff size has doubled within the last year and a half, and program activity has quadrupled as the NRP strategies have begun to be implemented.

SNG has several permanent committees of long standing: Community Building (formerly Neighborhood Issues), Development, Finance, *Seward Profile*, and Personnel. Newer committees are Housing, Environment, Youth, and the NRP Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC). Each committee is charged with overseeing the operation of one or more program areas.

Seward residents become members of SNG simply by filling out a registration form. In the last year, new members were recruited in a door-knocking membership drive, a *Seward Profile* ad, letters sent out to former members, and a sign-up table at the Annual Meeting. SNG presently has about 700 members (those on record since its database crashed in 1995).

There is no fee for membership in SNG, although donations are requested. The only special privileges of membership are the right to vote for the 20 Board members elected at the annual meeting, and one free advertisement per year in the *Seward Profile*, SNG's monthly publication.

Vision statement

SNG has never formally adopted a vision statement, except for those included in the NRP Action Plan. The Articles of Incorporation define SNG's purpose as:

Implementing a comprehensive plan for the Seward Neighborhood, maintaining and improving our property, and making the area where we live and do business a more desirable place in which to live, work, play, and shop.

This statement of purpose still seems remarkably apropos.

THE COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAM

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement from the NRP Social Environment Plan, while not formally a vision statement for SNG's Community Building program, imaginatively captures the elusive quality of "community" that SNG wishes to preserve and foster:

Seward is a neighborhood with a strong sense of community, where all people feel welcome and safe. Children and youth are nurtured. People and property are safe from crime and violence. The arts and culture are celebrated. Diversity is respected. Each individual is encouraged to achieve his/her full potential.

Program Scope

More than any other SNG program area, the Community Building Program has the most projects, the most new NRP-funded projects, the most participants, and the most staff.

If one were to ask a Seward resident, even one who is a SNG member, about the "Community Building" program, they most likely would not understand. The concept was created after many of the projects under its purview were already established. The idea of calling this collection of projects "community building" was developed by staff in 1995 to describe the organization's changing focus.

The Community Building program has undergone rapid change in the last two years. It was formerly called Crime Prevention, and the SNG standing committee for overseeing it was called Neighborhood Issues. Its tasks were crime prevention, resolving problem property complaints, and sponsoring annual events. Today the program is a conceptual framework for many activities and projects aimed at strengthening both a fabric and a perception of community.

More than any other SNG program area, Community Building has the most projects, the most new NRP-funded projects, the most participants, and the most staff. Staff positions include one full-time and one half-time Community/Block Club Organizer, a half-time NRP Coordinator, and a temporary consulting team of three people facilitating NRP Social Environment projects. Participants include perhaps a hundred regular volunteers in the various activity areas, as well as thousands of others who attend the activities, workshops, classes, and events. It might be helpful to define program scope in terms of at least three full-time staff equivalents who support thousands of hours of volunteer time.

This report reflects the self-study findings of all those SNG activities which fall under its "Community Building" umbrella. It also includes the strategies in the NRP Social Environment Plan. It covers projects which have been going on for several years as well as newer projects that are in the early stages of implementation.

The key activity areas are outlined below.

Community Building Committee

This subcommittee of SNG's Board is responsible for oversight of the Community Building program activities.

Community Building Committee (CBC), a subcommittee of SNG's Board, is responsible for oversight of the Community Building program activities. It meets monthly and is open to all neighborhood residents or other interested person. CBC is commonly perceived as the entry point for participation in neighborhood activities. Until recently called "Neighborhood Issues" and focusing principally on anti-crime efforts, its role is being re-defined.

Outreach Initiatives

The aggressive outreach initiatives during the past year have included:

- ◆ a door-to-door *membership drive*,
- ◆ new *block and apartment club organizing*, including block leader training and ongoing support and incentives to block clubs
- ◆ assembling a *Welcome Wagon* packet, and
- ◆ a special *diversity building* effort.

SNG is conscious of the changing neighborhood demographics, and wants to try to bring in new constituencies, or old ones which have traditionally not participated

Crime and Safety Initiatives

- ◆ **Crime and problem property reports:** SNG records crime reports from neighborhood businesses and residents. These reports form the basis for the joint actions of the CCP/SAFE Crime Team.
- ◆ **The "CCP/SAFE Crime Team":** SNG staff has met regularly with City staff including Seward's "beat cops," housing inspector, and CCP/SAFE partners, a civilian and police employee who work together at crime prevention in six neighborhoods. This working group is usually called the "CCP/SAFE Crime Team," At weekly meetings crime problems and problem property complaints are reviewed for potential joint actions.
- ◆ **Crime Resolution Activities:** The CCP/SAFE Team works singly and together to resolve complaints from residents or businesses about crime and problem properties, using the block club as the medium wherever possible.
- ◆ **Crime Prevention Activities:** Crime prevention activities include dissemination of crime statistics and crime prevention tips.
- ◆ **Stroll Patrol:** A more recent anti-crime initiative is the Stroll Patrol, a group of residents who walk together at set times, to create a peaceful and non-threatening presence that hopefully deters crime.

Events

The traditional events sponsored by SNG are:

- ◆ **Clean Sweep:** a city-sponsored garbage pickup event every spring. SNG finds adult and youth volunteers to go along with the garbage trucks and assist residents with the heavy lifting, so they can clean out garages and basements.
- ◆ **Garage Sale Daze:** SNG organizes a neighborhood-wide Garage Sale, with 80 to 100 households participating. The event is advertised in the metro papers, and lawn signs and maps are provided for shoppers. Often, SNG also holds its own larger sale as well, with donated goods and proceeds going to the Youth program or others who help out.
- ◆ **King's Fair:** the main event, this biannual celebration of Seward's history draws 1,000 or more people in late September. It takes place in the Matthews Park, centrally located in the neighborhood, which was also the site of the original Minneapolis Fairgrounds. Guests enjoy an afternoon of many amusements under bright carnival tents: games of skill and chance at the Midway, Bingo, prizes, a raffle, two stages of live entertainment as well as roving jugglers, dancers and storytellers, historical exhibits and information booths about programs of interest to Seward dwellers, food sold by local vendors, and the chance to buy hand-made local arts and crafts.
- ◆ **Other Special Events and Neighborhood Traditions:** In addition to these, SNG participates through its Youth program in the annual *Halloween Parade*, which has been going on for 32 years. SNG lends its help to block clubs for *National Night Out* and other block club parties, and over the past year has sponsored several new events. These include an *Earth and Tree Fair* attended by hundreds of people in the spring of 1996, which promises to become a regular event on alternate King's Fair years. Another recent innovation where SNG helps out is the *Seward Follies*, a series of mid-winter events designed to get residents out of their houses and do fun activities such as skiing and dancing, sponsored by adult Community Education. In 1996 SNG also organized a *planning retreat* at Wilder Forest for staff, Board, and volunteers.

Seward Profile

The Profile is the official vehicle for informing the neighborhood of SNG's activities, meetings, and important upcoming decisions that affect residents.

The *Seward Profile* is published 11 times a year in tabloid format and delivered to each household (except in the large multiple dwellings where copies are left at the entry way), as well as principal business locations. It is the official vehicle for informing the neighborhood of SNG's activities, meetings, and important upcoming decisions that affect residents.

The *Profile* contains two or more pages written by SNG staff. The rest of the paper contains news, photos, letters, and feature stories of local interest. SNG publishes the *Profile* but contracts out its production.

NRP Social Environment Strategies

The principal NRP Social Environment strategies that have begun implementation to date are:

- ◆ **Theater Project:** The arts are a new program area for SNG; arts projects fall under the "Arts and Culture" heading of the NRP Social Environment Plan. The theater project also embraces all of the goals of community building: bringing the generations together, exploring and promoting Seward's history and identity, offering performances and events of appeal to diverse audiences, and networking with churches and institutions to broaden participation. In 1996 it offered free classes and workshops in theater-related skills to all who are interested, and sponsored two performances.
- ◆ **Studio Artists Project:** This is also an "Arts and Culture" strategy with community-building goals. The artists are to buy and rehab a building with a present use "incompatible" with land use or livability, to provide reasonably priced studio space for lease by local artists, to "pay back" the community with service in the form of classes, exhibitions or mentoring, and to promote safety by providing an "eyes and ears" presence.
- ◆ **School/Park Collaboration:** Actually a number of NRP strategies fall under the umbrella of school/part collaboration; those that we looked at in the self-study are:
 - ⇒ *Renovation of the interior of Matthews Center*, the community space jointly used by the Minneapolis Park Board, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and SNG.
 - ⇒ Purchase of new equipment for the Seward Montessori School *Media Center*, and opening public access for use of that equipment.
 - ⇒ *Matthews Center Activities Council*: building a new council that will forge effective working alliances among the various users of the school/park complex.

The Four Program Outcomes

Staff identified four broad outcomes they would like to achieve for the Community Building program. They are:

1. **Participation:** *Diverse, broad-based participation in activities, events and projects at the block and neighborhood levels,*
2. **Reduced Isolation:** *Reduced anonymity and isolation of separate groups- -by age, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, income level, social class, own/rent, business/resident, etc.*
3. **Networks:** *Increased connections and networks built among community agencies, resources, businesses, and residents.*
4. **Relationships:** *Build relationships = people face to face.*

THE SELF-STUDY PROJECT

This report identifies intended program outcomes and documents recent progress for SNG's Community Building Program.

This report identifies intended program outcomes and documents recent progress for SNG's Community Building Program. We, the Study Team, hope it will help volunteers, SNG members, Seward residents, and governmental and private agencies to understand how Community Building Program is evolving and responding to the changes and opportunities afforded by the NRP Action Plan.

The Study Team

Because of our close SNG connections, the Study Team decided to approach the project as a "self-study."

The Study Team was composed of a cultural anthropologist, an evaluator who is former Associate Director of Rainbow Research, and a Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) intern provided by the University of Minnesota.

Nancye Belding: The evaluator, Nancye Belding, is presently NRP and Finance Coordinator for SNG. She was the principal investigator for the project. Nancye has a BA in Sociology, almost-M.A. in Mass Communication, and many years of experience in research and program evaluation.

Marybeth Neal: The anthropologist, Marybeth Neal, is also a Seward resident and block club member. She has been a volunteer in the Community Building program. Marybeth has a Ph.D. in Anthropology and served as project manager for the self-study.

Marina Kosyakovsky: The CURA intern, Marina Kosyakovsky, is a Ph.D. candidate in Evaluation Studies and has been working as research assistant for SNG one-quarter time since the fall of 1996. CURA paid for Marina's time from its *Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization* project funds.

Because of our close SNG connections, the Study Team decided to approach the project as a "self-study," and SNG staff also provided many hours of input for our generation of outcomes and qualitative data, much more so than in a traditional "outside evaluator" approach.

In fact, the self-study began in the spring of 1996 when staff decided to embark on a process of self-reflection. In the midst of the infusion of NRP funds and the rapid expansion of staff and of project activities, staff felt it would be helpful to take time from their weekly staff meetings to look at the bigger picture. Staff especially involved with the project and frequently consulted have been Executive Director Debbie Wolking, Community Organizers Linda East and Donna Sanders, and two consultants working on the Social Environment Plan, Nan Kruse and Sally Granath, both of whom are former SNG Board members.

The Study Design

Objectives: "How Are We Doing?"

The study, entitled "How are We Doing?" was designed by Nancye Belding and submitted for funding to CURA in the summer of 1996. It was, and is, envisioned to be part of a larger report encompassing all of SNG's key program areas, including Citizen Participation, Youth, Housing, and Natural Environment. Its scope includes providing feedback through this report, and others to follow in each program area. Perhaps more important, however, are the following objectives identified in the research proposal:

- 1) *We want to become truly a "learning organization," able to respond with flexible programming to the changing needs identified by our providers and users as well as our broader constituency of the Seward neighborhood.*
- 2) *We will be building evaluation principles and activities into our daily operations.*
- 3) *We hope to expand our membership base and to build broader community participation as we ask for help in finding out, "How are we doing?"*

Methodology: Qualitative and Eclectic

The study was designed to produce largely qualitative data using the following methods, rather eclectically drawn from a variety of disciplines: self-reflection, personal and phone interviews, surveys, document review, and participant observation.

Identification of the Four Outcomes

The four outcomes were the first "product" of the study. As a tool for self-reflection, they have been helpful already in recent months as staff, Board and volunteers have been struggling to focus on priorities and build program work plans.

Measures of Success To Emerge From the Data

Staff were asked early on what they felt success would look like for their programs-- to define benchmarks that could measure how well they were succeeding in attaining their vision. This was a helpful exercise as SNG began its self-reflection process.

However, the Study Team decided not to define any outcome measures in advance, but first to gather substantive and detailed information about the various projects and activities which comprise the Community Building program from the perspectives of key stakeholders.

An assets-based approach to evaluation was used in the data analysis, and indicators of success are identified throughout these findings.

Identification of Multiple Stakeholders

The biggest challenge in this self-study project is the proliferation of both stakeholders and activities in the multi-faceted Community Building program.

Stakeholders include:

- * *Staff*
- * *Board members*
- * Members of the standing committees, ad hoc task forces, subcommittees and advisory groups which form *SNG's substructure*
- * Representatives from the various *agencies* with whom SNG collaborates
Hundreds of *volunteers* who now and in the past have shaped and carried out SNG's programs,
- * The *members at large* of SNG who annually elect its Board,
The business community in Seward including absent landowners
- * Seward's 7,000 plus *residents*, who may or may not be aware and take part in SNG's activities.

The Study Itself: Process and Instruments

The data collection phase spanned a period of about six months, beginning with the staff meetings a year ago last spring.

Data collection spanned a period of about six months, beginning with the staff meetings a year ago last spring. Because of SNG's rapidly changing structure, staff and activities, it has been necessary in this report writing to continually check back with stakeholders and interviewees to update these findings. However, the following instruments comprised the "formal" data collection phase of this study:

Self-Reflection

Staff were introduced to the concepts of outcome evaluation and encouraged to think about their programs in terms of outcomes and indicators. The process of reflecting on each program area was itself a helpful exercise.

For eight weekly meetings, staff discussed their individual program areas with each other and the Study Team. At the first meeting, staff were introduced to the concepts of outcome evaluation and encouraged to think about their programs in terms of *outcomes* and *indicators*. We distinguished these outcomes from the *indicators of an outcome being attained*. An example of the difference between an *outcome* and an *indicator* is that "reducing anonymity and isolation" is an outcome. An *indicator* of that outcome having been accomplished is the increase in the number of blocks organized into block clubs.

With the entire staff present at these meetings, program area staff (Environment, Housing, Community Building and Youth) described their programs. Everyone joined in brainstorming outcomes and indicators for each program.

The process of reflecting on each program area was itself a helpful exercise--not only did staff mutually inform each other about their particular program areas, staff discovered and cleared up misconceptions, and also learned from each other how they might improve collaboration between program areas.

Interviews with Key Stakeholders

1. **In-depth Interviews:** Nine people most closely identified with the program were interviewed in-depth. They included program staff, Community Building Committee members, and key partners/collaborators from other agencies. Many of those interviewed participated in several of the Community Building activity areas, and they were asked for feedback about each one.
2. **Phone interviews:** Fifteen shorter interviews were conducted by phone. Interviewees represented other important program constituents from Seward: institutions (Augsburg College, Seward Montessori School, churches), businesses, block club leaders, high-rise residents, Board members, and participants in the various activity areas such as Stroll Patrol, Welcome Wagon, King's Fair, theater project, artists group. In most cases, they were familiar only with one or two activity areas, and their feedback was limited to their knowledge about those areas.

3. Interview Questions

The interview questions for both the in-depth interviews and shorter interviews were the same. They were aimed at finding out the interviewee's role in the activity, their perceptions of what the activity was about, their knowledge as to how the activity was promoted, their assessment of its success and suggestions for improvements, and their views about the *Seward Profile* as a means of informing residents.

These were the actual questions asked:

- a) What is the activity/project about?
- b) Who else takes part?
- c) How often are the activities?
- d) What happens at the activities (meetings)?
- e) What part do you play?
- f) What was the experience like for you?
- g) How did you find out about the activity?
- h) Did you read about this project/activity in the *Seward Profile*?
- i) What have you heard about it from others?
- j) What has changed as a result of this project?
- k) Can you think of any changes that would make this project better?
- l) Overall, do you think this project/activity was a success in the past? Why or why not?
- m) In general, do you use the *Seward Profile* to find out about activities and projects going on in the neighborhood?

Survey Data

1. **Resident Survey:** Data also include a general survey of residents given out during the fall membership drive, and included in Appendix A. This survey was administered by volunteers going from house to house, who may not have received the intended training in how to explain it. In many cases, it was not explained or was left behind to be mailed back to SNG. Its purpose was to find out how much residents at large know about SNG's Community Building program activities. About 40 surveys were returned, a much small sample than hoped for.
2. **Outreach Survey:** A special survey was administered to persons of color, asking about their perceived barriers to participation in the SNG. This tool was designed and used by the Community Organizer as part of her outreach effort. Although only 18 surveys were done, they make a good random sample of under-served constituencies because she simply door-knocked at random in the dwellings where the ethnic populations mostly live in Seward.

Other Data

1. **Document Review:** SNG staff compiled a packet of documents for review by the Study Team. These included the notes from the staff evaluation meetings in the spring of 1996, meeting minutes from 1996, stories from the *Seward Profile* about community building activities, the NRP Action Plan, and the principal non-NRP grant supporting the Community Building program, funded by the Minnesota State Office of Drug Policy (MN ODP).
2. **Participant-Observation:** The technique of participant-observation was used at various meetings: weekly staff meetings, the monthly Community Building Committee (CBC) meeting, the monthly NRP Implementation Oversight Committee (IOC) meeting, and the two-day strategic planning retreat at Wilder Forest in November of 1996. Informally, this technique was used much more often as two members of the Study Team were also on SNG's staff, residents of Seward, and block club members.
3. **Preliminary and Follow-up Phone Interviews:** A series of preliminary interviews was done before the survey instruments were finalized, to help the Study Team comprehend the wide scope of community building activities. Also, a dozen or more follow-up phone interviews were conducted during the winter and spring of 1997, to insure that data collected were accurate and to keep up-to-date on changes during the six-month period between data collection and completion of this report.

THE SEWARD COMMUNITY: PAST AND PRESENT

This section introduces the reader to the Seward Neighborhood. To understand the SNG and its programs, including Community Building, it is helpful to know something of Seward and its history of community building.

Neighborhood Boundaries

Compact rather than sprawled, Seward possesses an intimate environment.

The Seward neighborhood's boundaries are well defined, lending a strong sense of community to the area. The eastern border follows the Mississippi River to the Soo Line Railroad, which makes up the southern boundary of the neighborhood as it moves west from the river. The western boundary is marked by Hiawatha Avenue, and to the north is Interstate Highway 94. Compact rather than sprawled, Seward possesses an intimate environment.

A Short History Lesson

As one of the oldest neighborhoods in Minneapolis, the history of Seward dates back to the first rapid expansion of the city in the 1870's and 1880's. The northern edge of the neighborhood (north of Franklin Avenue) lies within the original corporate limits of the Town of Minneapolis, established in 1856.

A major influence on the early growth of the neighborhood was the construction in 1870 of the Iowa and Minnesota Division of the Milwaukee Railroad, the line paralleling Hiawatha Avenue on the western border of the neighborhood. As a result, the western part of Seward developed as a working-class residential area, oriented to the railroad shops and nearby Minneapolis. Development in Seward received a further impetus from the Milwaukee Railroad "Short Line," built between Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1881. It came to form the southern boundary of the neighborhood.

In the 1870's and 1880's, residential development remained confined to a relatively small but densely built area adjacent to the railroad and industrial district. A large tract of land, south of Franklin Avenue between 26th and 30th Avenues, was a fairground during these years. During the 1890's, the fairgrounds were abandoned and much of the eastern part of the neighborhood was settled.

In 1888, the Franklin Avenue Bridge spanning the Mississippi River opened, fostering the commercial development of Franklin Avenue. Also that year, Seward School was built at the corner of 24th Street and 28th Avenue South, on the old fairgrounds. Between 1902 and 1905 the Park Board acquired the entire West River Road Park, and began improvements which would eventually make it the desirable residential location it is today. By 1930, the neighborhood was essentially built up.

Seward's Demographics and Crime Stats

Racial/Ethnic Mix

Many new immigrants have settled in Seward, bringing their rich native traditions as well as non-English speaking residents.

According to 1990 census data, there were 7,020 people living in 3,664 households in Seward. In 1990, 87 percent of the population was white, seven percent African American, two percent Native American, and three percent Asian American.

At this writing in 1997, the 1990 census data inadequately represent the number of non-white households, and most likely the total population as well. Many new immigrants have settled in Seward, bringing their rich native traditions as well as non-English speaking residents. While we can't actually count the changed numbers, the Study Team and SNG are aware of the need for new kinds of outreach to welcome these newcomers to the Seward family.

Income Level

People living below the poverty level in Seward were 19 percent, close to the city-wide average.

In the Seward Neighborhood during 1990, 17 percent of households had children under the age of 18 compared to the city-wide rate of 24 percent. This is most likely explained by the number of older residents who have lived in Seward for much of their lives. People living below the poverty level in Seward were 19 percent, close to the city-wide average. The median household income in 1990 was \$20,948, or about 82 percent of the city-wide median.

Households

There are 1,574 residential buildings in Seward, with single family structures accounting for two-thirds and duplexes just over 20 percent. Larger units comprise only about five percent of the buildings, but a great many of the units

One-third of Seward's housing is subsidized, approximately 1100 units, a higher ratio than normally seen, largely due to three large high-rises and two residential facilities.

There are 1,574 residential buildings in Seward, with single family structures accounting for two-thirds and duplexes just over 20 percent. Larger units comprise only about five percent of the buildings, but a great many of the units. North Seward is the location for most of its subsidized housing units; these include: over 1200 units in five high-rises, a leasehold townhouse cooperative, and a number of Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA) scattered site houses.

The rate of owner-occupied property in Seward is close to the city-wide average of just over three-fourths.

In the 1990 census, there were 261 substandard buildings, a rate of 17 percent compared to the city-wide rate of 10 percent. These figures may have been changed by the infusion of NRP dollars into housing.

Because it is an old neighborhood, most of Seward's housing (65 percent) was built before 1920, compared with a city-wide average of 42 percent. Nonetheless, despite its greater than average number of substandard and older housing, Seward was one of the few inner-city areas where housing values rose 10% or higher in the 1990's.

Commerce and Resources

Seward is home to 195 businesses. Most of these are "clean industry."

The retail corridor extends along Franklin Avenue between the Soo Line Railroad and the Mississippi River. Seward is home to 195 businesses, 100 of which are light industrial, located mostly in the southwestern area of the neighborhood. Most of these are "clean industry," with an increasing influx of film, photography, and other media technology firms. Seward Redesign, the neighborhood's community developer, works hand-in-hand with SNG to invite and attract desirable new retail and commercial businesses.

Seward may also have a larger-than-average number of people who work out of their homes either as self-employed or as stay-at-home parents. This is an indicator of neighborhood strength because more people are at home during the day and have a greater chance for interaction with their neighbors.

Matthews Center, Matthews Park, and Seward Montessori School (K-8) offer residents educational, cultural, and recreational activities located in the heart of the neighborhood. Matthews Center houses adult Community Education, Minneapolis Park Board programming and staff, and SNG's Youth Program staff.

Seward is rich in many resources. There are two licensed child care centers located in the neighborhood and one licensed school age child care program. Seward is also home (or near) to some large institutions like Augsburg College, the Fairview medical complex, University Good Samaritan Center (a long-term care facility), and the University of Minnesota. All of these institutions have community outreach programs that link with SNG. Seward's churches, especially Bethany Lutheran and Faith Mennonite, have strong ties to the neighborhood and its traditions.

Crime

Seward maintains a public perception of safety and stability. However, Seward's crime rates are closely comparable to all of the six neighborhoods comprising the Longfellow community

Like all inner city neighborhoods, Seward contends with increased crime as a daily fact of life. However, newspapers usually describe Seward in such terms as "an oasis of safety and stability." It is more accurate to say that Seward maintains a public perception of safety and stability. Seward's crime rates are closely comparable to all of the six neighborhoods comprising the Longfellow community, according to CCP/SAFE crime

statistics. This includes the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, where crime is perceived as a far greater problem and gang activity is publicly apparent.

Statistics provided by the Minneapolis Police Department regarding crime in Seward are confusing, and sometimes changed by the department after they are issued. Seward's community organizers have observed that many crimes go unreported, and that in some cases residents have said they reported crimes that did not show up in the official statistics. Residents say frequently that "petty" crimes such as vandalism, garage and auto break-ins, and graffiti, are on the increase. These crimes are often attributed to youthful offenders.

It was in response to a rise in youth crime, and encroachments by gang activity and recruitment, that SNG's Youth program was launched in the late 1980's. This program continues to provide youth from Seward and the surrounding neighborhoods of Cedar-Riverside, Phillips, Powderhorn and Longfellow with positive alternatives to criminal behavior, including job training and placement, fun activities, family support, roles in all of SNG's events, and incentives for community service. SNG is proud of the achievements and service contributions of its Youth program participants. Nonetheless, one or twice every year Seward's youth are bombarded by aggressive gang recruiters. SNG's Youth program has won widespread praise for its effectiveness in keeping Seward gang-free, including testimony from the youth themselves.

SNG's History

Urban Renewal

In the 1970's, neighborhood residents became increasingly active in reacting to urban renewal plans.

In 1960, SNG was formed to act as a community-based group in response to the City's urban renewal process, which did not include citizen input. In the 1970's, neighborhood residents became increasingly active in reacting to urban renewal plans. This included saving an area of pre-1900's houses from demolition by successfully lobbying for their placement on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1975, SNG merged with another Seward group, the Seward West PAC and became a nonprofit corporation.

Creation of Matthews Community Center

Matthews Center became Minneapolis' first school-park collaboration.

An early accomplishment was the creation of Matthews Center, which was the park grounds and building adjoining Seward School (now the Seward Montessori magnet school). This became Minneapolis' first school-park collaboration. Collaborating in this effort was Pillsbury-Waite, a community service agency. Pillsbury-Waite invested in the original renovation of Matthews Center, located their offices there, and supported five full-time staff members, including the Matthews Center Director. Pillsbury-Waite was an active part of the neighborhood until it relocated to the Phillips neighborhood in 1980.

Community Programming

Over the last decade, SNG has developed programs for disenfranchised people, especially at-risk youth and their families and crime victims, and housing programs to rehabilitate the old housing stock in the neighborhood.

By the middle 1980's, SNG had begun to expand into other areas. By 1985, SNG had hired its first Director. Over the next decade, SNG developed programs for the disenfranchised—notably at-risk youth and their families and crime victims—and housing programs to rehabilitate the old housing stock in the neighborhood. This was at a time when the neighborhood was perceived to be increasingly plagued by youth violence, and when the social service program staff supplied by Pillsbury-Waite were no longer at Matthews Center. In 1987, the Community Crime Prevention (CCP/SAFE) initiative of the Minneapolis Police Department began, and became active in the neighborhood with a focus on block club organizing (the precursors of our present CCP/SAFE Team).

SNG has shared office space in the Norwest Bank building at 2600 Franklin Avenue with Seward Redesign for some years. With the help of NRP funds, the two organizations are moving in April of 1997 into a nearby office building. They will jointly own, and share space with an arts organization new to Seward, Northern Clay Center (NCC).

PART II. FINDINGS FROM THE KEY ACTIVITY AREAS

In this section of the report, findings from the data are presented according to the key activity areas of the Community Building program. These include the comments and impressions of all the people interviewed, as well as the survey data and observations by the Study Team.

COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE (CBC)

Origins

The Neighborhood Issues Committee was created to pay attention to the social aspects of the neighborhood.

The Community Building Committee (CBC) was renamed in 1996 from "Neighborhood Issues Committee." The change reflects the organizational shift from a focus on problem properties to a proactive approach of crime prevention broadly defined to include positive community building activities.

The Neighborhood Issues Committee emerged around the time, in 1985, when SNG hired its first full-time director. Up then, SNG had focused primarily on housing development issues and improving the physical quality of the neighborhood. The Neighborhood Issues Committee was created to pay attention to the *social* aspects of the neighborhood. Also, at this time, Community Crime Prevention (CCP/SAFE)—an initiative from the Minneapolis Police Department—was interested in finding ways to reach out to neighborhoods, chiefly through organizing blocks into block clubs. The Neighborhood Issues Committee served as a good forum for CCP/SAFE to connect with residents—both to share information about their crime-fighting programs as well as to hear residents' concerns. Thus, in the early days the committee's focus was on crime prevention and discussions of problem properties.

In 1996, new NRP-funded projects were being launched. The NRP Plan, designed by residents over a period of 18 months, emphasized proactive projects rather than reactive ones. Instead of a focus on crime, these new projects focused on helping neighbors get to know one another by creating positive situations in which neighbors can interact. The opportunity to engage in proactive projects funded by NRP helped to shift the CBC's focus.

Activities of CBC

The CBC has several overlapping functions:

- ◆ **Overseeing Events:** CBC oversees the arrangements for long-standing events like the annual neighborhood spring clean up "Clean Sweep," the National Night Out block club parties, and the annual neighborhood garage sale weekend.

- ◆ **Open Forum:** CBC acts as a forum for block club leaders, the Community Crime Prevention Specialist and Police Officer, as well as anyone coming with a concern. CBC also sponsored a candidates forum last November, and has hosted other public policy debates in the past.
- ◆ **New Project Ideas:** A recent example of a project which originated from CBC discussions is the Seward "Welcome Wagon" packet for new residents.
- ◆ **Project Oversight:** Some projects undertaken by a group of interested volunteers, such as the Welcome Wagon and the Stroll Patrol, report regularly on their progress to CBC. Most recently, the NRP-funded community theater project has begun reporting to CBC as a means of gaining input into what the community wants from its intergenerational theater programming.
- ◆ **NRP Social Environment Oversight (Proposed):** CBC and NRP's oversight committee, IOC, are presently considering a proposal from the "Retreat Follow-up Committee" that CBC be charged with oversight of all the NRP strategies falling under the Social Environment Plan. This proposal is still under discussion at this writing.
- ◆ **Task Forces:** The CBC also may, from time to time, appoint a task force to make recommendations to the SNG Board. For example:
 - ⇒ **Community Policing:** For the past six months a task force has studied the alternatives for a *Community Policing* project in Seward (another project funded by NRP). Its preliminary findings were approved by CBC, and subsequently also by the SNG Board.
 - ⇒ **Block Club Incentive Fund:** A similar task force last spring met to develop the criteria for block clubs wishing to apply for funding through the *Block Club Incentive Fund*, a project funded by the MN ODP crime prevention grant.

Let's Go to a CBC Meeting

People greet one another as they help set up chairs. Clearly there is a core group of people who attend regularly and who know and like each other.

The Multi-purpose Room

The CBC meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Multi-purpose Room at the school/park complex, which lies between the school and the park buildings.

The Multi-purpose Room itself reflects a long history of inter-organizational collaboration. In addition to being built as a result of the first school/park collaboration in 1969, this room is used as the school's lunch room and various programs during school hours. After school, it is used by several groups including adult Community Education classes and programs, and the public school's extended day program. It is usually the location for the larger SNG meetings.

Setting up Chairs and Tea Things

Racks with metal chairs are rolled out, usually by the Community Education staff person, whose office is nearby in Matthews Center. As people come in, they help him arrange the chairs in a circle of about 30 chairs. Off to the side, he sets out a wide variety of tea, instant coffee and hot chocolate and starts the hot water going. People greet one another as they help set up chairs. Clearly there is a core group of people who attend regularly and who know and like each other.

Introductions

The meetings average from 15 to 25 attendees. In addition to the residents who come, CBC is chaired by an SNG Board member. SNG staffs the committee. Staff from CCP/SAFE (the specialist and police officer), Community Education and the Park Board (Matthews Park Director) may also attend.

The first order of business is introductions. Everyone seated in the circle gives their name and identifies themselves as a resident, block club leader, or as a staff person from one of the various agencies attending. Sometimes introductions are repeated for latecomers, to ensure that everyone knows each other and feels welcomed.

CCP/SAFE Report

One of the regular features of CBC meetings has been that the CCP/SAFE partners share the most recent information about criminal activity. Often, they also offer opportunities to receive various forms of training in crime prevention to block club leaders and other interested persons. People frequently leave the meeting with several pieces of paper: handouts on the various programs offered by the Park, SNG, Community Education, CCP/SAFE, and the CCP/SAFE monthly crime maps with symbols to indicate the type of crime and its location in Seward.

Other organizations may also send along handouts to advertise their meetings and programs, or ask CBC to put them on the agenda. Usually these groups want to tell the community what they have to offer, or to recruit volunteers, or both.

Entree Point to SNG

Since its early days the committee has served as an entrée point into SNG where people could voice their concerns, get assistance in solving neighborhood problems and obtain information about the neighborhood. The Committee continues to be an open committee where everyone is welcome to participate. On the rare occasions where a vote is taken, everyone present is eligible.

The Relationship of CBC to the SNG Staff and Board

SNG's community organizers serve as staff to CBC. This means they are responsible, with the Chair, for setting the agenda and for seeing that agendas and minutes are mailed out to people who have signed up to be members at the Annual Meeting. They also make recommendations, do research in preparation for new projects, inform the attendees about events and opportunities, and in general serve as resources to the residents who attend.

The CBC makes recommendations to SNG's Board and staff. Occasionally and increasingly more often, they are asked to vote.

Interview Responses

Many of the 24 people interviewed for the study had connections with CBC, as block club leaders, regular attendees, SNG and school/park staff, or volunteers for activities under its purview. Their comments are summarized by category below.

An Attendee's Perception of CBC

One regular long-term attendee describes the CBC:

The CBC is a group of residents and our Community Crime Prevention workers getting together to talk about how things are going in the neighborhood. Sort of a clearing-house for people that would like to see changes happen, to support a place where block club leaders can come and learn what other block clubs are doing and exchange information. It's the group that sets up activities like the Candidate's Forum that we had last month, things that would be useful to the neighborhood.

This respondent goes on to describe the participants:

There are usually a couple of people from the Board. A couple of people take part regularly because they are block leaders, and they enjoy it for that reason. There are some people who come occasionally or regularly because they live in the neighborhood and are trying to get more involved, or because they have particular concerns. There is the CCP/SAFE team which are not neighborhood people, but the Crime Prevention worker and the police officer. We have the SNG staff, the community organizers trade off but frequently they are both there. And the [SNG] Youth Worker comes but that may or may not continue...Occasionally parents of the youths in the youth program come. That's pretty much the folks that come.

Last, the respondent describes what happens at a typical meeting:

The staff puts together the agenda. It generally includes a report on community safety from CCP/SAFE, so there is a brief update about what is happening in terms of crime. There's usually a report on what block clubs are doing. And there's a report from the Stroll Patrol. There may or may not be a report from Red Cross, Way to Grow or some other social service agency. They may tell us about their programs for informational reasons, or to get input from us about their programs, or asking for partnership. Hopefully we try to begin each meeting—and we didn't last time—with some community building activity. At least with introductions. That's one area that I'd like to see us get better at, but just that we have introductions is really good at this point. We try to be relatively informal, not run by Robert's Rules of Order. It's more like having a bunch of people who are good friends get together.

The Change to Proactive Focus

Two respondents mentioned that the change to a more proactive focus helps prevent the open-forum discussions from becoming negative and rumor-mongering:

I am very pleased how the CBC has shifted. I used to go to meetings when it was Neighborhood Issues. It dealt more with problem houses. It was disheartening to see only the underbelly and the problems. But to deal with things that are hopeful, to build some things, to construct some hopeful situations, you want to do some healing—things that charge the battery and are social and fun.

When I first started it was still called the Neighborhood Issues Meeting. And, to tell you the real truth, it sounded like an awful meeting to go to. All they were doing was talking about the bad stuff. So, when they did change it over to community building, I felt a lot better about coming.

The Open Forum

Most of those interviewed had favorable comments about the CBC's function as an open forum.

One person mentioned how the open forum helps people to become involved, and how enjoyable it is to get to know one's neighbors:

It is an opportunity for people in the Seward neighborhood to come and talk about some issues of their interest. People can get involved through the CBC. It is a welcoming place to be. For example, I sometimes run into people that I have gotten to know from the committee around the neighborhood. I enjoy that.

Another person mentioned her appreciation of the information and also the support she feels the CBC has given her because it allowed her to voice her concerns:

It was good at building community—you learn what is happening in the community, in the neighborhood. It is very informative. When I have had problems, I brought them to the community. They supported me like a good family. I am glad I live in Seward, we have the SNG to support us.

Park staff expressed appreciation for how representatives from the different organizations and Seward residents meet together at CBC meetings to share information about their various projects and to learn from each other's experience:

It's good in that we have residents who come in, people from SNG come, the Community Education person comes, I go, and we just try and share all of our programs that are coming up. Share experiences, if one person has a problem, somebody else may have already been through that before and may be able to help the person through it. It is a place where problems in the community still come up and are discussed. But I don't believe that this is the focus anymore. I think it is more welcoming.

More Outreach Needed

There was concern that, despite the open forum where everyone is welcome, renters, persons of color and immigrants seldom participate at CBC meetings. One woman stated that:

There is no approach to attract people from other countries. Community building means to improve race relationships in the neighborhood.

Perceptions of CBC as Slow, Unfocused

One respondent emphasized the need for focus in the following way:

I'd like to see more focus. I'd like to see us being more goal oriented, more outcome oriented rather than just have a potpourri, a variety show every month, because so many different things are falling under community building.

Slow Process

While valuing the open forum, other interviewees also voiced some concern and frustration with the CBC.

I enjoy the group. It serves as a good entree to SNG. Sometimes, though, I get frustrated because I want a way to participate more, to get involved more, and so far, it has not happened. I was initially very excited about the idea of the Welcome Wagon. The committee did not take any action for more than six months; and now, when they plan it, they schedule the meetings in the daytime when I am unavailable.

Cumbersome Size

The size of the group was mentioned by one person as to why decision-making seemed slow:

When you've got smaller groups it is much easier to make fast decisions. When you've got 20 to 25 people in a meetings and you've got to try to reach some kind of conclusion about things, it is a slower process. It is interesting to watch. There's a balance. There are some people who approach things really cautiously; they try to put a lot of thought into their decision-making. And then there are others who say, "let's get on with it."

Inconsistent Attendance

One respondent suggested that one reason for slowness is that new people continually show up but are not consistent attendees of the CBC:

It takes a long time to get a project pushed through, because it originally starts at the CBC meeting, and then people discuss it. Then, at the next meeting, there is a different set of people, and they discuss it. Then it goes to the Board and they discuss it. It takes months to get anything passed. It is really cumbersome. Everyone finds it important, but they drag their heels.

Setting Boundaries for CBC's Role

After all, in a neighborhood organization building community is one of the goals of all program areas.

A respondent voiced frustration with how unfocused the CBC has been:

We don't work toward the goal and accomplish it, and then move on with another project. There are always three or four things that are going on at the same time, without really being able to focus on one thing and have a feeling of getting a goal accomplished. The Environment Committee, for example, deals with the environment and they know what they are going to do, they have certain objectives and strategies, the things they work under. And with the CBC it is like "whatever is considered a community-building event."

This comment suggests that the CBC's mission encompasses too much for one committee to handle. After all, in a neighborhood organization building community is one of the goals of all program areas. Yet CBC has been called upon to help with what is perceived to be "Community Building" in other programs areas. For example, while the Environment Committee sponsored the Earth and Tree Fair held at Matthews Park in April 1996, CBC and its staff (the SNG community organizers) helped to recruit and organize volunteers for the registration tables. At SNG, events and activities do tend to "piggyback" on one another; the Earth and Tree Fair seemed like a logical opportunity to register new SNG members and find new block club recruits.

In a similar example, CBC and the Community Organizers have been charged with creating an association of landlords, which appears in the NRP Plan both under Social Environment and Housing. The boundaries between CBC and Housing issues are sometimes unclear, especially when dealing with problem properties.

CBC Status in SNG--Low?

An individual who is not SNG staff wondered if CBC might not have the priority it deserves in relationship to other SNG committees:

CBC has been a valuable stepping stone. I don't know if it has been given enough serious priority. I think that maybe other committees, the ones that have more money allocated to them, are taken more seriously. For a neighborhood organization, the ideas behind the CBC are so pivotal, so fundamental, that I would think CBC would be a major committee.

It's difficult to point to any factual data that would support this perception; CBC is one of SNG's standing committees charged with a healthy chunk of SNG's programming dollars. The perception itself, however, is interesting, and this respondent is not the only one who has expressed similar sentiments.

Balancing Priorities

One SNG staffperson voices concern about how to balance requests from other committees with what Community Building has committed to do with funders, and at the same time continue being responsive to new projects which emerge from grassroots discussions at CBC meetings. She says:

We could do the work of every program, but our grants say we should organize 90 percent of Seward into block clubs in a two year period of time. That is not happening. I am going to the block club leaders training. I have yet to organize a block club. There are too many other calls. I have been going to the lobbying meetings. It is all really interesting, but it seems that everything that comes down the pipe requires that I am going to work on it. Because it is "Community Building" in some way, shape or form.

Using Community Resources to Help Out

The Community Education coordinator recognizes how stretched CBC and its staff are, and suggests that the CBC could make more use of what he has to offer. This includes:

- ◆ help in organizing and publicizing events,
- ◆ space to hold events, and
- ◆ staff time.

He feels he can offer this support because he views his own job as primarily community building:

Community building is an exact fit with what I see community education is supposed to be doing, working with block clubs--not just working with school kids but the neighborhood. The community has given to the school and now I think the school should give to the community to find ways to open up its facilities and share them. I want to make sure I continue to facilitate that.

The CBC Work Plan

At the planning retreat held last fall at Wilder Forest, the staff, Board members, committee members and volunteers who attended expressed concerns very similar to those of the interviewees, in terms of needing to focus and prioritize work.

A recommendation coming out of the retreat was that staff and committees work together to make an annual work plan. This would set priorities for the coming year, and would shape the program's budget and fundraising needs as well. At this writing the follow-up proposal from the retreat has not been formally adopted, but all of the committees including CBC have begun to build a work plan for 1997.

The community organizing staff suggest getting more input from attendees and putting aside what does not interest CBC attendees:

The ideal thing regarding a work plan for us is to involve our volunteers in sitting down with our projects, and the things that have been outlined staff to do. Let the committee members look at those and decide what they would like to work on with

us. Because you can have the most wonderful things in the world but if you don't have people to carry them out you've got nothing. First find out what people are interested in doing, and what will bring them to the table, and then plan around that. What we don't need to be working on, just throw it out. When we have accomplished those tasks, then let's look at what we have put aside and decide what to do next.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON OUTCOMES

Organizational Goals Identified for CBC

Included here are some goals that SNG is committed to achieve through its two primary funding sources for the Community Building program: the NRP Social Environment Plan and the two-year grant from the State of Minnesota Office of Drug Policy (MN ODP).

For CBC, *all* of the goals set forth in these two documents could be said to comprise a list of strategies that CBC needs to either fit into its work plan, or decide to postpone or discard. However, the following in particular suggest broad and overarching principles for the committee's work:

Networks

Network and increase connections among block clubs, youth program, schools, CCP/SAFE, Community Education, colleges, churches, care facilities, arts groups businesses and others.

Community

Goal: *Build a strong sense of community.*

Objectives:

Increase citizen participation in the neighborhood.

Increase pride in the appearance of the neighborhood.

Promote Seward as a good place to live and work.

Increase "neighborliness" in Seward.

Nurture cultural diversity within the neighborhood.

These goals also very closely mirror the four outcomes identified by staff for the Community Building program: diverse, broad-based participation; reduced isolation, increased connections/networks; and face-to-face relationships.

How are We Doing?

Having reviewed the data from our interviews and observations, and looked at some goals or outcomes for CBC, what can we say upon reflection about CBC's success in achieving them? From the interview responses and other data, we have extracted some indicators of success that emerged.

Accomplishing Tasks

In the past year, CBC has nurtured the new community-based Stroll Patrol, the Welcome Wagon, a Community Policing task force, and it has provided support for a teen video project, the Earth and Tree Fair, and the NRP theater project.

In what ways can CBC point to its success in getting tasks accomplished? Among its functions, we have seen, is the nurturing of new grassroots projects. Another is supporting new projects such as NRP strategies, and third is support of long-standing projects.

1. Nurturing grassroots projects

One of most exciting areas of accomplishment involves CBC's ability to nurture new projects which come from the grass roots of the community. In the past year, CBC has nurtured the new community-based Stroll Patrol, the Welcome Wagon, and a video project involving teens from the Youth program. In particular, the Stroll Patrol has become an ongoing project with a solid core of participants.

In the survey given to residents during the fall membership campaign, the Stroll Patrol, while then barely a year old, ranked higher in name recognition than the long-standing King's Fair.

One of the community organizers describes the process of how the Stroll Patrol began:

A neighbor was assaulted in the Park and this brought out almost 70 people to a public meeting. Afterwards, we broke into three focus groups and one of them became the actual Stroll Patrol. It's made a tremendous impact on the community.

2. Support of New SNG Projects

In the past year, CBC has supported several new SNG initiatives. These include:

- ◆ Helping find volunteers for the Earth and Tree Fair,
- ◆ Providing door-knockers for the first annual membership drive,
- ◆ A candidates' forum before the November elections,
- ◆ Providing community input for the NRP intergenerational theater project.

3. Support of Long-standing Activities

CBC continues to help organize long-standing annual events including Clean Sweep, the Garage Sale Daze, and block club parties on National Night Out.

One member commented that she felt Clean Sweep went particularly well last year:

Clean Sweep has always fallen under Community Building. Staff did a lot of work, but the Committee talked about what it should be, what are the parameters for running it. This year we had a really solid base of new people, new in that they had not participated in anything before. We tried contacting people who had written thank you letters for having had their junk

picked up years before, and some of them did indeed come. People had a fun experience, it's actually fun to go around picking up junk.

Outreach

The evidence of the data on outreach and participation at the CBC does point to growth in both numbers and diversity. However, some respondents would like to see even more.

A friendly and welcoming committee would encourage new participation in Community Building program activities, and that has happened. Success would be indicated in commitment by CBC members, and consistency of attendance. However, as an open forum to anyone who wishes to come, finding consistent members may be a difficult balance to achieve. Ideally, there would be many and diverse participants.

Number and Diversity of Participants

The number and diversity of participants at meetings has been gradually increasing over the past two years, including some new members who are non-white renters from the Seward Towers high-rise. When the committee was Neighborhood Issues, average attendance was 12 to 15, with sometimes fewer than 10 people. In 1996 the average attendance has been 20 people at the monthly CBC meeting. The number of meetings has also risen dramatically, from the single monthly meetings of CBC in past years to 169 meetings in 1996, which include the activity-based subgroups.

A CBC member notes a general increase in the number of people coming to CBC meetings:

Yes, I think more people are participating. They may not be coming to every meeting, but I think if you charted over the course of the year the number of different people that have come to two or three meetings, it's probably a greater number than five years ago.

New Participants

The number of new participants with new ideas continues to grow, according to one long-term CBC member, who views the CBC as a success for its ability to be a "gateway" which welcomes new participants and values their input:

We still get new people coming to meetings. So that is successful. We get people showing up with new ideas. I think that's successful. Because that tells me that people still see this as a place that isn't so mired in tradition.

In addition to attendance at CBC meetings, the peripheral committee participants--Stroll Patrol members, block club leaders, and volunteers for projects like Welcome Wagon--represent an entirely new growth of participation.

At the Wilder Forest retreat, many people recommended that SNG move away from a "meeting-based" model of participation toward a model that offers many different kinds of opportunities for volunteers to take part in community activities. CBC has already taken giant steps in this direction.

Outreach and Participation: The Challenge

Some feel that there continues to be a problem with outreach and participation. Various respondents comment:

I place a great value on outreach. I know SNG is trying to do something in that direction. So far, I don't have a feeling they are trying hard enough.

Yes, I think CBC is successful. Some projects, like Stroll Patrol, started good, but there's not enough participation.

I have heard comments that CBC isn't what they want it to be yet. Sometimes, they say, the meetings are long, dry, boring. I am sorry to hear that. If the CBC is such a vital tool, I want those meetings to be seen as energizing so that people would be drawn to them.

Process Vs. Product: Collaboration as Outcome

One of the most important accomplishments of the CBC is not something that can be quantified: it is a process that involves collaboration between agencies and individuals.

One of the most important accomplishments of the CBC is not something that can be quantified: it is a process that involves collaboration between agencies and individuals. For example, although it existed in the NRP plan, the Stroll Patrol actually evolved out of meetings where there was interaction between residents, CCP/SAFE, SNG, the schools and the park. It was the CBC which provided the forum for the idea to take root.

CBC affords the opportunity for good information flow and collaboration on a regular monthly basis. The principal agency collaborators include the CCP/SAFE Team, SNG staff and Board members, and the school/park staff, as well as any other agencies who wish to be invited. The individuals are regular committee members, project or task force members, and block club leaders.

The Stroll Patrol's success reflects the responsiveness of the collaborating entities to community interests. It also shows an ability to take that interest and help "massage" it into an actual project—a nice blend of resident enthusiasm with the organizational skills and resources of SNG and the other collaborating organizations such as CCP/SAFE, Community Education, Seward School and Matthews Park.

Recommendations

The Retreat Follow-Up Proposal

The proposal by the Retreat Follow-up Committee demonstrates that SNG is committed to being a "learning organization" and adapting with flexible new structures that will accommodate growth and change in organizational priorities.

After the Wilder Forest retreat last November, a Retreat Follow-up Committee drafted a proposal to streamline SNG's operations. It includes a more defined focus for the CBC. At this point in time, this proposal is being discussed at the committee and Board meetings and has not yet been adopted. However, the changes it proposes do address some of the concerns expressed by our interview respondents.

The CBC would in most respects operate as it does now, but it would take on some new functions, particularly primary responsibility for the annual membership drive, and oversight of the Social Environment strategies from the NRP Action Plan. This would add to the already heavy "work load" of the committee that has been described above. And in the case of NRP oversight, committee members would need regular training in the Social Environment Plan. They would also be expected to develop an "NRP Impact Statement" with an annual budget for each task that used NRP funds. This is a safeguard to insure that the NRP funds would be spent as envisioned by the neighborhood.

The committee would continue to act as "gateway" for people with issues to bring before SNG, to oversee and collaborate with the CCP/SAFE crime prevention activities and block clubs, and to continue responsibility for the ongoing community building activities and events like King's Fair and National Night Out.

Two other changes, which actually would formalize recent practice, would be:

- ◆ To use a *work group structure* to accommodate the many projects like the Stroll Patrol, theater project, and the community policing task force, and
- ◆ To develop an *annual work plan* that sets the CBC's priorities and budget for the following year.

The work group structure provides for small groups of people committed to following through on single tasks (instead of sporadically attending meetings). This structure would allow the CBC to maintain the "gateway" function at its open monthly meetings while insuring that tasks get accomplished .

The proposal by the Retreat Follow-up Committee demonstrates that SNG is committed to being a "learning organization" and adapting with flexible new structures that will accommodate growth and change in organizational priorities.

Many other helpful suggestions were made during the retreat. While applying to SNG generally, some ways of implementing them would involve the CBC. The following recommendations of the Study Team include some of these.

Recommendations from the Retreat

- ◆ **Generally support the Retreat Follow-up Committee's proposal.**
We recommend that the CBC support the Retreat Follow-up Proposal, with the possible exception of taking on the oversight of the NRP Social Environment Plan.
- ◆ **Consider whether to take on NRP Social Environment Oversight.**
We recommend that CBC and the existing structure for NRP oversight (IOC) meet together to assess whether CBC has the capacity and the interest to assume this heavy new responsibility. This recommendation is based on our interviews, specifically the indications from staff and committee members that CBC already bears too much of SNG's burden of work.
- ◆ **Provide more child care and transportation to increase participation.** Note: SNG has a policy of reimbursing child care, but few people use it. Child care could also be provided on-site at the meeting or event, and occasionally it is. Offering transportation might encourage seniors to come.
- ◆ **Offer many ways to participate besides attending committee meetings.**
The work group structure is one way of doing this; there are many others: for example, volunteers could do projects at home or write for the *Profile*.
- ◆ **Do fun projects, don't just deal with issues.** Fun IS part of community building! The Ice Follies were one example. Spaghetti suppers at different neighborhood locations might be a fun way to raise extra money. Recognize that participation can be doing fun things together, not just volunteering, and seek out ways to make that happen.
- ◆ **Ask for mentors to help orient new committee and Board members.** One of the best ways to feel included in a new organization is to have someone who invites you to lunch, or goes out of her way to make friends. Keep a list of people who might be willing to do this on hand.

Other Recommendations to the CBC

Welcome and Outreach

- ◆ **Aggressively seek more diverse participation**
Continue to welcome and seek new participants aggressively, particularly members of under-represented groups such as the elderly, people of color, immigrants and renters.
- ◆ **Make special efforts to welcome newcomers**
 - ⇒ Once at the school/park building, it is difficult for newcomers to locate the meeting. Have signs directing people to the meeting.
 - ⇒ Make special efforts to help newcomers feel welcome and included, before and after the meeting itself as well in during the discussion.

◆ **Open new channels for participation**

- ⇒ Publicize CBC meetings as a forum for neighborhood concerns.
- ⇒ Publicize and have a voice mail box for people to call with concerns. SNG receptionists can write down those messages and convey them to the appropriate staff.
- ⇒ Note: Records of the number and type of calls can also be used for evaluation purposes.

Sharing Work

- ◆ **Make more use of the resources offered by Community Education.** In volunteer organizations, it is rare to get offers of free help from other agencies! Take advantage of the willingness of Community Ed staff to help out, with time and publicity especially.
- ◆ **Initiate dialogue with other SNG committees.** All of the work of SNG is essentially "community building." Begin to explore how the other committees might take on some tasks of CBC, or at least help out.
- ◆ **Increase CBC attendance by collaborating organizations.**
 - ⇒ Encourage partners from collaborating organizations such as CCP/SAFE and Community Education to attend CBC regularly.
 - ⇒ Give them a regular spot on the agenda.
 - ⇒ Find ways to ensure that their participation is appreciated and that these partners feel it is worth their time to attend.

OUTREACH

Examined in this section are strategies used by SNG for initiating and maintaining contact with residents. These include block club organizing, Welcome Wagon, membership drive, and special efforts aimed at welcoming diverse participants.

Block and Apartment Clubs

At the present time there are 38 block and apartment clubs, nine of which have started in the past year.

Origins

Multiple Dwellings

While Seward is primarily single family homes, there were rooming houses, duplexes in the early part of the 20th century. Most tenants worked in the railroad yard or at the small factories around Seward. Larger apartment complexes were built, some of which are still standing.

In the 1960's high-rises for low-income people were built, using federal funds from the Department of Housing and Development (HUD). There were four of them: Seward Towers West, Seward Towers East and two public housing high-rises. The residents of the public high-rises have always been a mixture of young and old. In contrast, the two Towers' first residents were primarily senior citizens. In 1990, the Towers were bought by the Seward Housing Corporation, a non-profit organization sponsored by Common Bond Community and Seward Redesign. The new owners brought in more new residents of different ethnicity and ages.

Block Clubs

SNG has taken a leading role in supporting Seward block and apartment clubs for the past 20 years.

Block clubs are a primary way in which residents come into contact with each other and with SNG. The oldest known block club began in the late 1970's. But before then, neighbors would gather informally for shared meals and other activities. A long time resident mentioned that every Saturday morning in the summer, neighbors gathered in a school art teacher's back yard and received lessons in how to paint. An elderly resident (born 1910) was fond of telling how in her girlhood during the early part of this century, her neighbors held an annual "pig roast" down by the Mississippi River.

The idea of having block clubs was started through Community Education. SNG hired its first staff person in the late 1970's with the purpose of organizing the neighborhood into block and apartment clubs. In 1987, CCP/SAFE also began to help organize block/apartment clubs, as a key part in their initiative to prevent crime. At the present time there are 38 block and apartment clubs, nine of which have started in the past year.

Support of Block and Apartment Clubs by SNG and CCP/SAFE

Organizing new block clubs has become a priority.

CCP/SAFE Role

CCP/SAFE supports block clubs in a variety of ways. These include:

- ◆ Eight hours of block club leader training.
- ◆ Dissemination of current information on safety and criminal activity via monthly mailings to block club leaders, and in presentations at the CBC. Mailings include information on recent neighborhood crime trends, crime prevention tips, examples of successful anti-crime initiatives in other neighborhoods, and information about other CCP/SAFE services.
- ◆ Grants to blocks to put in safety lighting and to conduct community building activities, such as a weekly sports night with snacks for adults and youth.
- ◆ By request, evaluation of safety on a block, workshops on personal safety and in-home consultations on how to make homes and neighborhoods safer.
- ◆ Helping neighbors deal with problems on their block. They might visit homes where there have been complaints from other residents, and try to secure any needed social services. They will help organize block club meetings to find solutions to the problem.

SNG Role

Since the beginning of 1996 SNG has again assumed the lead in block club support and organizing, with grant support from both NRP and MN ODP.

Organizing new block clubs has become a priority, and nine new block/apartment clubs were organized in 1996 by SNG's Community Organizer.

For the last year, SNG has also offered grant money to blocks for community building activities and events, called the Block Club Incentive Fund. The grants are of two types. One type is simple to apply for and gives \$25 to existing clubs and \$50 for new clubs. The purpose is to stimulate block activity and can be used for refreshments, sports equipment, or entertainment at block and apartment club parties. The second type of funding involves a more formal application process and is intended for purposes similar to grants offered by CCP/SAFE. So far, no block or apartment club has applied for one of these grants.

SNG staff organized an annual meeting for block club leaders. They try to attend as many of the block club parties as possible. They also provide staff support to help blocks deal with problem property and crime complaints. They provide a forum, through CBC meetings, that is especially useful to block club leaders.

Apartment Club Organizing

Tenants of the high-rises and larger apartment dwellings have never participated as heavily in SNG activities as the homeowners. In fact, most apartment residents have had any contact with SNG. However, organizing efforts have been made by SNG staff in conjunction with CCP/SAFE, and more recently on their own initiative. Two of the new clubs organized in 1996 were apartment clubs.

Interview Responses

Block Club Organizing

The membership survey data showed that nearly half (19) of the 40 respondents had heard of block and apartment club organizing efforts. The only activities scoring higher were the long-standing annual neighborhood events, the hand-delivered *Seward Profile*, and surprisingly the relatively new Stroll Patrol.

Only seven had heard of the Block Incentive Fund, which was new in 1996 and has been publicized mostly through the block clubs themselves. Five rated the organizing efforts as "very good," four as "okay," and three as "needs improvement." The Incentive Fund was rated "very good" by three and "okay" by one.

The CCP/SAFE specialist described three ways that block clubs get started: organizing around problem complaints, call-ins expressing interest, and door knocking.

The first way that we get new block clubs is through problems. Sometimes the neighbors call about problems, and we encourage them to gather some neighbors together and try to get a block club started. Sometimes, people call in and want information on how to get a block club started on their block. The third way we have used to get most blocks started in Seward is just by door knocking.

She went on to describe the geographic makeup of block clubs:

It's an association of residents on a block--it could be people on both sides of an avenue. Or, it could be organized through the alley, so people from the odd side of 29th Avenue could organize a block club with the even side of 30th Avenue. In Seward we have more of the bigger block clubs; we have one block club where there are four blocks, with a leader from each block.

She also described what a block club does:

What a block club does, at a minimum, is meet twice a year. The main purpose is to provide an opportunity for people on a block to get to know their neighbors. It does not mean to be a neighbor's best friend, it just means knowing who they are, and being able to meet.

A block club leader describes her large and successful block club:

We organize two parties a year, including a National Night Out. We have a block map, which includes five full sides of a block. Sixteen years ago we started to get to know each other through organized parties in the spring and summer. In spring, we would have a potluck for the neighbors. The summer party is the National Night Out. Usually we also organize some activities around a particular theme (like Christmas). There are some elderly people, 80 to 90 years old, who love to get together and have a potluck. We also have a Sunshine Committee (like a Welcome Wagon) which welcomes new people to the neighborhood and gives them a list of people on the block.

Block Club Outreach Strategies

Block club leaders and members mentioned a number of techniques that have been successfully used in welcoming diverse attendance (such as homeowners, renters, different income levels and ethnicity). These include:

- ◆ Potlucks.
- ◆ Activities for every age group, including, music, and singing.
- ◆ Basketball tournament.
- ◆ Birthday club (where children and youth receive a card on their birthdays).
- ◆ Winter caroling.

In one block, the block club co-leaders invite each new family to their homes to become better acquainted. They explained:

We have a lot of renters and people of color. About six times a year, we visit newcomers and invite them for dinner or dessert. We find that this helps increase the chances that they will participate in block club activities--because they already know some of us by the time they attend their first block club event.

Block club leaders described the special ways they reach out to youth:

We let neighbor kids play in our yard and invite them into our house. One boy practically lives here. He lives with his sister and aunt in Matthews Townhouses and his mother doesn't see him much; she lives in Brooklyn Park. This summer he was always asking to pick the apples from my apple tree. This fall, when I picked them, we made some of them into a pie and invited him over to have some, to thank him for being so patient and not picking the apples this summer. He said that he had never had apple pie before.

We have a lot of kids on our block and we always have games for them at our parties. They are always welcome, even if they come without a supervising adult. It is important to get to know the kids and some of them really need more contact with caring adults. "It takes a village to raise a child."

Others mentioned that they pay special attention to knowing the names of the kids who play on the block, and to greeting passers-by when they are outside in the yard.

Problems Mentioned by Block Club Leaders

Seward block clubs have at times experienced problems. Those mentioned by our interview respondents included:

- ◆ Neighbors tend to be only interested if there is a problem. It's easiest on some blocks to get people to come out to meetings over a complaint.
- ◆ Most often because of busy schedules and lifestyles, some people simply do not participate at all.
- ◆ Unsupervised children may come to block club parties. If their parents don't take part in neighborhood activities, should the children be excluded from coming to a party? This difficult question has caused some hard feelings.
- ◆ When there are crime complaints, or efforts to document a "drug house" activity or other problems, people just don't call 911 to report them. They may say they are afraid of repercussions, or may simply think it does no good to call.

High-Rise and Apartment Club Support

Two of the nine new clubs organized in 1996 were apartment clubs. Nonetheless, one high-rise apartment resident feel that there has been prejudice in SNG and with Seward residents generally concerning high-rises:

The general feeling among the apartment residents is that the high-rises are forgotten. I heard people on one of the SNG committees saying "horrible high-rises," "we have to get rid of it." When I worked with the NRP, sometimes I felt like a minority. The people weren't interested in renters and seniors in public houses. Public housing has a bad image. The people in Seward are not fond of high-rises.

The CCP/SAFE specialist offered her perspective:

It has always been harder to organize apartments; the standard observation is that the people who rent are less tied to the community, that they care less. That is kind of a general stereotype.

Apartment clubs, called resident councils, exist in the three largest high-rises. Recently one 120-unit apartment complex has organized an apartment club with the help of the SNG community organizer.

CCP/SAFE has engaged in several strategies to organize apartment clubs, or in lieu of that, to offer to set up meetings, events and organize safety committees. The CCP/SAFE specialist describes her efforts:

We tried to get apartment clubs organized. Last year we would flyer all the apartment buildings along Franklin Avenue and about two blocks on either side of Franklin, trying to get people to come out and learn how to get an apartment club started in their building. We will organize the new clubs and train the new leaders; we also flyer for meetings and come out to speak at the first meetings. Working on the different addresses, all these things take

out a good portion of our time, considering the fact that Seward is just one of the six area Neighborhoods that we work in.

The CCP/SAFE specialist describes some other organizing efforts she has undertaken to support apartment clubs:

For some of the real big buildings like Seward Towers, I started the safety committee, because the building is so huge. The safety committee acts like the block leaders. Their job is to make sure that people have the opportunity to get together at least twice a year. And actually, after the first crime prevention meeting, when people got their packets and so on, they would go on and do social things, like have potlucks. They do National Night Out, the first Tuesday in August, which is Block Party Night in Minneapolis.

Another CCP/SAFE activity promoted for apartment block clubs is "Operation Lookout." Operation Lookout is designed to help apartment residents prevent crime. It is offered to all high-rises. One high-rise resident describes how Operation Lookout works for her high-rise apartment:

One of my ideas is blossoming; we finally have the Operation Lookout. The residents of the building do patrol. We work every other Thursday and on weekends. There are 10 people participating on a regular basis. We try to do different things than the guards. We videotape and patrol all floors. We also organize some social activities; recently we had a picnic in Matthews Park. We also had a digital workshop, about e-mail. We operate under the umbrella of the High-Rise Council.

The High-Rise Resident Councils

The three largest high-rises have organized resident councils supported by the building management. The Towers have had residents councils since 1984. Most residents don't perceive a connection between SNG and the resident councils, although there have been several attempts by SNG to create links.

The resident councils hold an annual bake sale and salad luncheon. Many other activities that might be considered within the purview of an apartment club have been sponsored by the new Towers' owner, Common Bond. The buying of Seward Towers by Common Bond in 1990 has brought not only a more diverse population, but also a system of resident social services. Some of their activities include: a National Neighborhood Night Out party, a group that goes to movies together, a children's' Christmas party, a Parents Council, an exercise group, and monthly bingo and card playing.

One resident described her council this way:

Resident councils exist as a way for residents to ask and receive answers to their questions. They can ask questions of their floor representative. The floor representatives meet together with the officers one week before each monthly general meeting to find out the answers. Then, the next week, the residents can attend the general meeting and receive the answers.

At the general meeting there is a business meeting, followed by a speaker or entertainment, and refreshments. The Post Office Band and Bethany Lutheran Women Singers have performed recently. About 80 people might show up for the Residents Council meeting if there is a really good program. They are mostly older white women who come. Very seldom do we get young moms and those of other ethnicity.

A resident of another high-rise describes her council, both its benefits and some serious problems she sees:

It is a democratic way to make decisions. Unfortunately, often it doesn't happen this way. The relationships are abusive and very political. The seniors behave like kids having tantrums. Once in a while we have a good president of the Council. We had a nice trip to the Orpheum Theater. The president also organized a garden activity and our garden became pretty. She got some kids from the restitution program, they cleaned the grounds, We also had a holiday dinner with the kids from the neighborhood.

Welcome Wagon

A work group of five people developed a packet of information useful to new residents, both homeowners and renters.

The Welcome Wagon is one of the newest SNG projects, begun in September 1996. A work group of five people developed a packet of information useful to new residents, both homeowners and renters. This includes information about building contractors, local businesses, child care and other useful resources. The packets became ready for distribution in early 1997.

The strategy for distribution is to provide realtors and rental property managers with cards which they can give to people moving into Seward. The newcomers are instructed to bring in their card to the SNG offices and receive the information packet. In this way, newcomers are given an incentive to come and visit SNG.

In addition, one real estate agent who specializes in selling Seward houses announced the availability of the Welcome Wagon packets in her annual Valentine's Day flyer which she distributes throughout Seward.

One committee member describes the Welcome Wagon:

The idea is to communicate the extent of neighborhood involvement of SNG to the new neighbors. A Welcome Wagon is a document or a handbook telling about our neighborhood organization. We are trying to make people feel welcomed in our neighborhood. It is a piece of material to bring to the newcomers to the neighborhood. There are some advertisements from the business community.

Membership Drive

Last fall, the first annual door-to-door membership drive was launched. The primary goal of this year's effort was to educate residents about SNG and its importance to their quality of life.

SNG has always recruited new members through a mailing to former members and a registration form in the *Profile* in the month before each Annual Meeting. Last fall, however, the first annual door-to-door membership drive was launched. Forty-two residents volunteered to be door-knockers.

Recruitment of door-knockers began during the August National Night Out parties. A special sign-up session was held at the Seward East and West Towers. The need for volunteer door-knockers was also advertised through the *Profile* and communicated to block club leaders. Recruits were subsequently trained and began door-knocking in October.

The membership drive is primarily responsible for the 416 new and renewing members who signed up between August and December. This is a 50 percent increase over last year. While fund-raising was not the primary focus, the new members made donations of \$2,858, in contrast to donations in the previous year total of \$1,441. Eleven businesses also joined SNG during that period, resulting a \$625 in donations.

The primary goal of this year's effort was to educate residents about SNG and its importance to their quality of life. As one long-time SNG member said:

People don't understand what a neighborhood group is. It doesn't get a lot of publicity. It is not in the "government course" as one of the building blocks of our nation.

The idea for a membership drive came from a new task force of the SNG Board, called Strategic Planning. One member of this task force described the Membership Drive:

The membership drive is initially to explain the relevance of the organization to the neighborhood. The second objective is to, over time, increase the membership, and to encourage greater participation, perhaps also a greater financial participation in the future.

The SNG staff member primarily responsible for the membership drive writes:

It is recognized that this drive was to sign members up and raise the community's awareness of the SNG and not to use the drive as a fund raiser. This drive was conducted to show SNG funders that the neighborhood supports its neighborhood group.

One SNG member reflected on the need to be more focused on membership:

We have to be more intentional about membership. Before this membership drive we would do outreach by putting an add in the Profile and potlucks. The only other time we went to the neighborhood it was for an appeal for money, and we were amazed at how much money appeared. There are a lot of people who respect SNG though they aren't involved, and who would support SNG financially.

The Board's Strategic Planning task force also helped develop a new SNG brochure and a special T-shirt featuring a map of Seward. They are currently working with staff to develop a computer data-base of membership information, so that residents with particular interests and concerns can be kept informed.

Diversity Building

One of the SNG organizers did a random door-knocking survey of 18 people of color in Seward. Respondents indicated that they mostly keep to themselves, and do not get involved in neighborhood activities.

As a first step, one of the SNG organizers did a random door-knocking survey of 18 people of color in Seward. She asked about their perceptions of the neighborhood and of SNG.

Barriers to Participation

Respondents indicated that they mostly keep to themselves, and do not get involved in neighborhood activities. Various reasons were given for not participating, including:

- ◆ **Language and culture:** For some of the non-native English speakers, the language and cultural barriers are the source of separateness.
- ◆ **Students:** Others are students and are too involved in their studies to undertake additional commitments.
- ◆ **Renters:** Renters also keep to themselves as they do not feel invested in the neighborhood. Staff note that it is especially difficult to find ways to attract renters.
- ◆ **Not Being Welcomed:** Long term residents have also isolated themselves from participation. One homeowner who has lived in Seward 21 years said that she would like to become more involved with the neighborhood. She tried once to attend a meeting at Matthews Park and felt unwelcome. The other people attending the meeting ignored her, meaning that they did not include her in the discussion and did not give eye contact. This resident has since been invited to attend the Annual Meeting. At that meeting, she was introduced to the youth worker to discuss possible involvement in the youth program.

Feeling Left Out

While some residents offered no negative views about isolation, others clearly expressed their desire NOT to be isolated. Like the long-term resident noted above,

many indicated that they would appreciate being invited to become more involved. One resident mentions not being invited to his neighborhood's block party.

Perceived Racism

Some residents have felt singled out because of their color. Two respondents told of being stared at by whites in parks and viewed suspiciously in local stores. One respondent spoke of being harassed because they own a dog, pointing out that their white neighbors also have dogs but no one complains about them. Another resident noted that the *Seward Profile* is delivered to her door in a haphazard manner; she suspects it is because they know that a person of color is now living at the address.

Follow-Up

Where respondents have indicated interest in getting involved in a particular aspect, such as the youth program, the Community Organizer has helped facilitate involvement. She made plans to follow up with respondents by inviting them to participate in a discussion on housing and economic segregation. However, she recently left SNG for another position, and a replacement has not yet been hired. The Study Team hopes her successor will continue her aggressive outreach efforts.

SNG Board Representation

Getting a more diverse representation on the SNG Board is also an effort that has met with increased success. During the last board elections in November 1996, five people of color were elected, or one fourth of the total membership. This probably approximates the racial composition of the neighborhood today.

REFLECTION ON OUTCOMES

Organizational Goals Identified for Outreach

All of the four broad program outcomes identified by staff relate directly to outreach: diverse, broad-based participation; reduced anonymity and isolation; increased connections and networks; and face-to-face relationships.

In addition, the organizational goals specifically related to outreach as identified in the NRP Action Plan and the MN ODP grant are:

- ◆ **Block & Apartment Clubs Organizing:** organize 90 percent of blocks into block clubs and encourage increased participation in apartment clubs.
- ◆ **Block Club Support:** Support at least two block activities per block each year. Provide coordination, training, technical support, and materials to neighborhood volunteers.
- ◆ **Block Activities:** Build community and discourage anonymity through continuous block activities.
- ◆ **Leadership Training:** Develop problem-solving and leadership skills among block club/apartment club leaders, and utilize leaders to resolve conflicts, build community, promote crime prevention.
- ◆ **Apartment Security:** Work with building management and resident councils to increase security and build community in high-rise and other residential buildings serving low-income, elderly and disabled persons
- ◆ **Linking Clubs to Each Other:** Promote networks or links among block/apartment clubs to increase safety and spread information about crime or threatening activity.
- ◆ **Linking Clubs to Resources:** Network and increase connections among block clubs, youth program, schools, CCP/SAFE, Community Education, colleges, churches, care facilities, arts groups, businesses and others.

How are We Doing?

Block and Apartment Club Organizing

There are at least five apartment buildings which have apartment clubs: Seward Towers West, Seward Towers East, the public housing high-rise, and the two new apartment clubs organized this year.

Seven new block clubs, and two new apartment clubs, were organized in 1996, bringing the total of block/apartment clubs to 38. There are 65 blocks in Seward, not counting the large apartment complexes and high-rises. Where possible, the membership drive volunteers also door-knocked at the large apartment buildings. Often security did not permit access, and then membership brochures were left in the lobby.

There are at least five apartment buildings which have apartment clubs: Seward Towers West, Seward Towers East, the public housing high-rise, and the two new apartment clubs organized this year. Broad-based participation will hopefully increase in the future because of the expanded representation on the Board by renters and people of color.

The diversity outreach survey revealed some of the barriers to participation by renters and people of color. Our interviews with neighborhood residents and high-rise residents hopefully also provide indicators for SNG to pursue in its ongoing efforts to increase broad-based participation.

Block Club Support and Block Activities

Incentives were provided to blocks and apartment clubs through SNG's Block Incentive Fund.

Incentives were provided to blocks and apartment clubs through SNG's Block Club Incentive Fund. The fund was used for refreshments and entertainment for 15 National Night Out parties and two other events. SNG organizers have attended block club parties wherever possible, and worked with CCP/SAFE to encourage safety inspections.

A new SNG activity was offered at the Seward Towers this year, on-site theater workshops as part of the NRP intergenerational theater project.

Block activities have generally increased, due to some SNG new initiatives. The kick-off for organizing was the April 1996 Earth and Tree Fair, followed by the planing of 300 new trees and an "adopt-a-tree" campaign. The Welcome Wagon and membership drive have also increased communication at the block level.

Leadership Training

In 1996, ten block club leaders participated in the leadership training offered by CCP/SAFE.

Apartment Security

Though a perception may persist that SNG ignores the multiple dwellings and high-rises, aggressive efforts during the past year have been launched to build new links.

SNG staff met regularly this year with interested residents at the three high-rise buildings to work on crime and security issues. CCP/SAFE has started "safety committees" in the Seward Towers. The public housing high-rises also have a group organized by CCP/SAFE specifically dedicated to crime prevention called Operation Lookout. Staff report that some of these residents are now also attending CBC meetings. Though a perception may persist that SNG ignores the multiple dwellings and high-rises, aggressive efforts during the past year have been launched to build new links.

The high-rises have other organizations which serve similar functions to apartment clubs, including the building management. The resident councils do not provide the organizational structure to include all people and all concerns within their respective buildings. At Seward Towers they were started primarily as a social organization serving elderly residents. The new tenants are younger, include children, tend to have less schooling, and are more ethnically diverse. SNG has begun important new outreach efforts to this population.

Linking Clubs to Each Other

The monthly CBC meeting is a place where block club leaders can exchange information. SNG staff have also been working to link block club leaders on the Internet, and to exchange ideas with other block clubs city-wide. SNG's membership drive focused on the block as the primary organizing unit, and brought block leaders together in the training sessions.

Linking Clubs to Resources

During the past year, SNG has encouraged block and apartment club leaders, particularly new ones, to take advantage of the resources available through CCP/SAFE and SNG's Block Club Incentive Fund. Organizers have asked blocks to help support the NRP tree planting by "adopting" new trees.

Addressing Barriers to Outreach

SNG has taken some important first steps toward overcoming perceived barriers by under-represented groups, but much more needs to be done as Seward becomes increasingly diversified. The 18 initial contacts need to be followed up by the new organizer, especially where people complained of perceived discrimination based on skin color. The outreach survey can also be used as a tool to meet more of the residents of color.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Keep a list of block activities:** The community organizers could keep a checklist for recording activities and numbers of participants at block/apartment club events as a way to judge increased participation.
- ◆ **Nurture new leadership:** Target individuals in apartments, and nurture as them as new leaders in SNG's outreach efforts. This could help in overcoming some of the perceived barriers to participation uncovered in the random survey.
- ◆ **Support block grant applications:** Support fledgling block clubs by helping and encouraging them to apply for CCP/SAFE grants, and the SNG Incentive Fund while it lasts.
- ◆ **Coordinate mailings:** Explore coordination with CCP/SAFE to mail SNG information to block club leaders. Make sure that CCP/SAFE lists of block club leaders are kept current.

- ◆ **Involve volunteers in outreach:** Design specific job tasks for volunteers, like welcoming new residents, or staying in touch with realtors and schools to find out when new people move into Seward.
- ◆ **Encourage participation at block events:** Offer food and child care for block events. Encourage block club leaders to greet and welcome newcomers, and introduce them to neighbors.
- ◆ **Aggressively follow up initial outreach contacts:** Pair newcomers with volunteer mentors, to help orient them and make them feel welcomed and valued. Invite them to attend CBC meetings. Keep in touch after the first contacts.
- ◆ **Work with existing high-rise resources:** Where possible in high-rise outreach, use and work with the resident councils, Operation Lookout, management resources, and other existing structures.

CRIME AND SAFETY

The CCP/SAFE Crime Team

Without regular communication with CCP/SAFE, SNG's ability to obtain effective assistance in dealing with crime is limited.

CCP/SAFE is a city-wide program aimed at supporting neighborhoods in fighting crime. CCP/SAFE provides a police officer and a civilian specialist assigned to the Greater Longfellow District which includes Cedar-Riverside, Seward and four areas to the south of Seward.

The cornerstone of SNG's crime prevention initiative for the past 10 years has been called the "CCP/SAFE Crime Team." It has included several other people as well as the two CCP/SAFE staff assigned to Seward/Longfellow: SNG's community organizer, the Franklin Avenue "beat cops," and Seward's housing inspector. For years, this group has met weekly to discuss particular crime and problem property complaints, supplemented with frequent contact by phone and visits to the SNG office.

SNG has worked closely with CCP/SAFE as its conduit into the community, especially for initial contact with residents. When neighbors call SNG to report crimes or problem property complaints, the CCP/SAFE Team has nearly always been called in to help resolve them.

Interview Responses

Member Survey Mixed

In the short membership survey, 16 of the 40 respondents had heard of SNG's crime reports, and 14 had heard of its problem property resolution activities. Five rated the problem property resolution as "very good," three as "okay," and two as "needs improvement." Similarly for the crime reports, four rated them "very good," four "okay," and three as "needs improvement."

This rather mixed review of a program which for many years SNG pursued aggressively certainly does not mean that residents are not concerned about crime. In fact, for those who answered an open-ended question asking about top neighborhood concerns, crime and safety concerns were by far more frequently mentioned than any others. One resident's comment referred to "covert" meetings about a property that was not kept clean. When CBC was still Neighborhood Issues, SNG sometimes received complaints about heavy-handed tactics. Perhaps some of these perceptions still linger among residents.

Former CCP/SAFE Specialist Leaves Seward

The former CCP/SAFE specialist worked with the Seward neighborhood for many years, but was transferred last summer. This was an important loss to the crime team, as she knew more about crime statistics and the history of problem properties than anyone else. She reflected on her work with the SNG:

Seward has always been unique among the areas I worked in, because of the strong neighborhood group. They have always had a youth worker, which is very helpful. They have always been very proactive, and they always had a community organizer. The community organizer would do a lot, because we have so many cases, whereas the community organizer has to worry only about one neighborhood. We have had community organizers who have found jobs for problem kids, or have found other housing for problem families.

These relationships and the ensuing understanding of what each other has to offer have enabled the CCP/SAFE staff, SNG staff and residents to mutually assist one another. For example, the former CCP/SAFE specialist helped SNG staff organize the first Stroll Patrol and joined the Patrol in walking the neighborhood. She also provided the Stroll Patrol with crime maps to help them determine their weekly walking routes. In turn, the Stroll Patrol helped the specialist to find residents willing to have their homes become "McGruff Houses," meaning houses identified as safe for children to come to for help.

With the transition to a new team of CCP/SAFE specialist and police officer, communication between SNG and CCP/SAFE staff has become more limited. The new CCP/SAFE staff have not been consistently attending the monthly meetings of the CBC, or the weekly crime team meetings. This means that much of the direct knowledge that SNG staff have is no longer being exchanged and passed on. This problem was recently exacerbated by the resignation of both SNG organizers in March of 1997.

The new CCP/SAFE staff do not feel that the weekly team meetings are necessary. Instead, they communicate with SNG staff by telephone. Without regular contact with SNG to help them reach out to the community, CCP/SAFE's ability to be effective in their job in Seward is becoming more difficult.

Conversely, without regular communication with CCP/SAFE, SNG's ability to obtain effective assistance in dealing with crime is limited. The former specialist provided timely and detailed information on crimes from police reports. Her skill at reaching out to people living at problem property addresses and working with neighbors and landlords to find solutions was critical in SNG's successful resolution of many complaints. She also provided access and connections to social services for families in need, and helped to arrange mediation if appropriate.

New Preventive Anti-Crime Initiatives

Community Policing Task Force

In addition to activities done in conjunction with CCP/SAFE, the NRP Action Plan provided funding for community policing. Over the past year, a special task force of the CBC has met to decide how best to use that money. A trial program was approved for a three month period, to hire off-duty police to patrol potential problem spots and also to test the use of surveillance cameras at a business site. Critical to this trial process is finding a way of evaluating its success, before deciding to spend any more of the community policing money. A staff person explains:

We can have a special assignment, like they did in Phillips and other neighborhoods, and actually get some results. The police monitored the problem property and whatever they had to do, and they get the problem solved. And then we don't have a problem property going around in a big circle: calling us, then calling to CCP/SAFE; the police go out to visit the property.

Restorative Justice

In another new thrust, the CBC recently approved the use of the Community Organizer's time to develop a plan to implement a restorative justice system in Seward for first time offenders. A staff person describes this vision:

You take a perpetrator and a victim, who both agree to have a meeting. Attending will be a perpetrator support group, a victim support group, and the mediator. The whole idea is for the perpetrator to see that there was a human being behind a victim and that someone was hurt. It is to give the perpetrator a chance to apologize and show some remorse for the victim. For the first time offender, especially for a younger person, it is a preventive measure, and he would not be thrown into the criminal justice system.

Stroll Patrol

Seward residents are remarkable in their willingness to participate in the activities that make the neighborhood more livable and safe. The Stroll Patrol is one of the initiatives that makes the neighborhood so appealing and unique within the limits of the inner city.

Seward's Stroll Patrol, the Seward Strollers, will celebrate their second birthday this year. They are the highly successful product of a real grass-roots organizing effort. While the Stroll Patrol was included in the 1995 NRP Plan, it started independently of it, as a response to an assault in Matthews Park. In the fall of 1995, SNG called for a meeting at Matthews Center to discuss public responses to the assault. The meeting was announced in the *Seward Profile* and approximately 70 people attended. The participants broke up into three smaller discussion groups, and one of these recommended a citizen patrol.

Interview Responses

For a relatively new project, the Stroll Patrol has achieved high visibility. Thirty of the 40 people returning the membership survey had heard of it, more even than the traditional King's Fair. Fourteen rated it "very good," three "okay," and one "needs improvement."

"The Stroll Patrol is a social group of concerned residents, who enjoy walking and care about their neighborhood," says an SNG organizer.

One participant describes the Stroll Patrol:

The Stroll Patrol is a community group of local residents who want to keep the neighborhood safe. It is our choice to go out once a week for an hour. We have a cellular phone if there is a need to call the police. We have three purposes: 1) is to prevent the mischief and crime by being out and visible in the neighborhood; we patrol different parts of the neighborhood at random; 2) is to help police apprehend the people who are creating mischief; 3) to be able to socialize with neighbors. The latter is definitely met. I have met people who I would have never met before. For purpose number one, the numbers are too small to say that we have met the goal. We have to recruit new people.

A stroller emphasizes the friendly, proactive aspects of the Stroll Patrol. Their intent is not to be confrontational with people creating mischief, but to act simply as "the eyes and ears for the local police department." This participant describes the Stroll Patrol walks:

They stroll around the community, making themselves accessible to the neighborhood in looking out for crime, looking out for any graffiti that needs to be reported, going out and meeting new business owners, maintaining a relationship with current business owners and people in the neighborhood who may be out and about strolling themselves.

The Stroll Patrol meets up at Matthews Center. At this writing, there is only one stroll per week, but they anticipate more participants and thus more strolls as the weather gets warmer. At the front desk in the park building their materials are stored, including log book, cellular phone, neon hats and badges, and the most recent crime map from CCP/SAFE. The group decides on their route and walks, usually for about an hour, returning to Matthews Center at the end.

Each stroll has someone who serves as a coordinator. Stroll Patrol participants also meet approximately every two months to discuss various issues related to the Stroll Patrol. These include how to recruit more participants, how to deal with potential problem situations, how to be of mutual support to SNG, Community Education and CCP/SAFE, and what kind of attire to wear in order to be a visible presence.

Connections with SNG

Community Education co-sponsored the strolls together with SNG. SNG's full-time Community Organizer provided extensive support in the formation of the Stroll Patrol. She obtained organized the planning meetings, obtained information from CCP/SAFE and strolled with them for several months. She provided patrollers with a cellular telephone and organized the special log book where patrollers sign their names before each patrol. Stroll Patrol members participate in the monthly CBC meetings, where they periodically report on their operations.

A Clear Identity

To distinguish themselves from just a group of people walking together, the Strollers decided to wear bright neon colored hats and T-shirts in the summer to identify themselves. In the winter, Strollers wear neon colored badges.

A Friendly Presence

Seward residents are remarkable in their willingness to participate in the activities that make the neighborhood more livable and safe. The Stroll Patrol is one of the initiatives that makes the neighborhood so appealing and unique within the limits of the inner city. Organized and "staffed" by the neighborhood residents and SNG, the Stroll Patrol epitomizes the essence of life in Seward--volunteers who care about the place they live in and try to make it as safe and livable as possible.

A member of the Patrol defines it as "a community group of local residents who want to keep the neighborhood safe." One of the interviewees called the Stroll Patrol a "positive presence" in the Neighborhood. The Matthews Park directed commented, "They try to maintain a presence so that the neighborhood feels a little bit safer. I think they are doing a really good job of it."

A Community Building Tool

One of the goals of the Stroll Patrol is to build community, "to be able to socialize with other neighbors." All of the interviewees noticed that the Stroll Patrol is a very friendly and sociable group of people, who walk around the community and socialize within themselves and with the neighbors. Here are some of the participants' comments:

We talk and socialize a lot. In the summer, we would talk to people outside -- somebody working in his garden, a youth sitting in his backyard. Somebody always wants to talk with us.

I really enjoy the people on the Patrol.

Two park staff people commented:

I think the Stroll Patrol is a wonderful idea. They come by two, three nights a week. They walk around the community. I've gone on these walks before. It's pleasant, it's great to socialize and get to know the neighbors better. You get to know people along the way. It is a friendly thing.

Some people may see the Stroll Patrol as just vigilantes wanting to stop crime but I think that more than that, the Stroll Patrol is trying to build community, trying to make people feel friendly, warm and safe. When they go on a stroll, they are pretty friendly, they greet people and walk...It is a friendly group, they are not afraid to go up to people and talk to them and introduce themselves.

It is clear from the overwhelming response of the interviewees that the Stroll Patrol plays a big part in the neighborhood's effort to build and maintain a strong sense of community in Seward. An observer gave an example of how the Strollers frequently observe and recommend things that become tools in building a stronger sense of community in Seward:

Last night, the Stroll Patrol went out. They heard some teens asking for a football from us, and because the lights were on, they were able to play football. They were just kids from the neighborhood, and the lights were on because there was a soccer game going on. These were big scraggly teens, but they did just fine. The lights helped create a healthy dynamic, making the community safer, people want to be there, it makes it a center. The teens want to go out and play football, it is just black out there otherwise. It really adds to our chances to socialize and get together and have some positive experiences. I appreciate the Stroll Patrol in observing how the lights helped set up a healthy dynamic. They were alert enough to catch that.

The members of the Stroll Patrol try to reach out to a variety of Seward residents, they walk around the neighborhood, meet people, introduce themselves and what they represent, and make connections with Seward residents.

A Crime Deterrent?

The Stroll Patrol was created as a crime prevention strategy, primarily a deterrent. In terms of measurable impact on decreasing crime, both Strollers and associated staff find it difficult to say, due to the relatively short time the patrol has been in operation. One participant said:

So far we used our cellular phones to call the police only twice. In November, the Monday group has used it to call 911 for a fellow who passed out on the street. Our Thursday group saw a person in the process of stealing a bike, but we were not fast enough to call the police, so that when the police finally arrived the fellow was already gone.

Participation and Frustration:

One participant feels that to meet the goal of crime prevention, the Stroll Patrol has to have more people. Others say there are not enough participants from the community. Since it was created in the fall of 1995, the core group has stayed essentially the same. Occasionally, somebody else joins the group for a while, but it usually does not last long. This stroller observes:

For a short while the people we recruit come, but then they stop. I want to be more effective. I am very disappointed in recruiting, in preventing crime, we are not out there enough... I started the Stroll Patrol on Tuesdays. We need three committed people. So far we have only two regulars (a husband and wife), but it is not enough. This group on Tuesdays was not viable, so we stopped it.

The Community Organizer echoed the same frustration:

We started a Tuesday walk and it died, we started a Wednesday walk and it died. It seems like for whatever reason we are not getting a lot of participation. We still just have the same core group of individuals, walking on Mondays and Thursdays.

A participant suggests:

We should think of how to recruit people better. We need more effort to do that. I am getting worn out.

One of the participants mentioned that perhaps the CBC "maybe did not take ownership of the Community Stroll project." This person referred to the attempts by the Stroll Patrol to expand participation in the group. She thinks that the CBC should use its resources and access to the community to increase recruitment and participation.

REFLECTION ON OUTCOMES

Organizational Goals Identified for Crime and Safety

- ◆ Increase the safety of persons and property.
- ◆ Increase the sense and appearance of safety in the neighborhood.
- ◆ Organize a citizen patrol.
- ◆ Reserve 1/2 page in the *Seward Profile* for monthly crime prevention tips.
- ◆ Increase community policing by hiring volunteer paid police and establishing a "cop shop."
- ◆ Rent a sandblaster to remove graffiti.

How Are We Doing?

Increasing Safety and Appearance of Safety

Much of SNG's reputation for fighting crime has resulted from its understanding that crimes sometimes termed "nuisance crimes" in the justice system heavily impact a neighborhood's livability.

Strong Perception of Safety Maintained

The "appearance of safety" has clearly been strengthened by all of the new block-based activity over the past year and a half.

Seward has successfully maintained its public perception as "an oasis of safety and stability," though surrounded by two neighborhoods where crime is thought to be a serious problem. Crime statistics probably don't mean very much in Seward, in large part because most of Seward's crime is the sort that often goes unreported--garage break-ins, car thefts, vandalism and graffiti. Seward residents generally seem more reluctant to call 911 to report crimes than their neighbors in Phillips, according to the "beat cop" who works in both neighborhoods.

The "appearance of safety" has clearly been strengthened by all of the new block-based activity over the past year and a half. The visible presence of the Stroll Patrol, the formation of new block clubs and encouragement of existing ones to have more activities, the organizing efforts at large apartment dwellings and high-rises, the door-to-door membership drive, the intergenerational theater project--all of these have increased the number of people who are talking to each other, getting to know each other, creating a safety net of "eyes and ears."

Many other activities sponsored by SNG have tended to encourage this "strong community" effect, though they occur in other program areas. These include:

community gardens, Eco-Teams, tree planting, river walks, creating a traffic plan, and the home repair lottery.

The plans to explore a restorative justice program for first-time offenders represent one more step in the direction of increasing both safety and the appearance of safety, by addressing the needs of crime victims as well as facing offenders with the consequences of their behavior.

Much of SNG's reputation for fighting crime has resulted from its understanding that crimes sometimes termed "nuisance crimes" in the justice system heavily impact a neighborhood's livability. In this, SNG has strongly advocated for Seward residents, at times confronting law enforcement officials. One example of this was the 1995 assault of a resident in Matthews Park. Although the Park Police treated it as a minor incident, the beating brought Seward residents out in force and resulted in our Stroll Patrol as well as better lighting and activities at the park.

Crime and Problem Property Resolutions Limited

SNG receives fewer complaints than it used to, averaging perhaps one new complaint a month now compared with four or five or even more in previous years.

SNG has continued its practice of keeping track of crime reports and helping to resolve problem property complaints, although the focus has shifted toward the preventive approach spelled out in the four outcomes--continuous block activity, reduced anonymity and isolation, and increased connections and relationships.

SNG receives fewer complaints than it used to, averaging perhaps one new complaint a month now compared with four or five or even more in previous years. This might be a direct result of increased activity at the block level, or simply that SNG's image has shifted away from problem property resolution. SNG also continues to provide a strong Youth program--offering positive opportunities for at-risk youth to participate in educational, work, service and recreational activities.

The loss of the former CCP/SAFE specialist and two police officers in the past year, as well as SNG's two community organizers has temporarily, at least, limited the ability of SNG's crime team to take effective actions in crime and problem property disputes.

Citizen Patrol

The one-year-old Stroll Patrol has been a great success so far, and also promotes the appearance of safety with its friendly and brightly dressed strollers.

The one-year-old Stroll Patrol has been a great success so far, and also promotes the appearance of safety with its friendly and brightly dressed strollers. Members would like to find some new recruits who will stay with it, and this is probably necessary for its long-term survival. Its accomplishments so far include:

- ◆ A reputation for being a friendly group, not a vigilante group.
- ◆ "We still exist, and this is a success."
- ◆ Since joining the Stroll Patrol, some members have become more active in the community, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

- ◆ Securing donated clothing and cellular phone.
- ◆ Putting together a flyer to hand out.
- ◆ Helping the Police of the Third Precinct by handing out crime alerts.
- ◆ Good organization, with weekly coordinators and periodic meetings to keep up-to-date on crime information and other issues.

Crime Prevention Tips

The new Welcome Wagon packets, as well as the materials now being disseminated to the new block club leaders, contain a wealth of information.

The community organizers and several volunteers from CBC have written regularly each month for the *Seward Profile*, interesting and informative articles about their many community building activities. These articles have sometimes focused on crime prevention tips, and especially encouragement to call 911. The new Welcome Wagon packets, as well as the materials now being disseminated to the new block club leaders, contain a wealth of information on these subjects. Block and apartment club leaders are strongly encouraged to pass on safety information.

Community Policing

Because opinion was divided on how to implement Seward's NRP strategy funding community policing, the Community Policing task force was formed.

There has been considerable debate the neighborhood about what "community policing" means. The NRP-funded program offered by the Minneapolis Police Department will supply off-duty police, but not in the form of a regular "beat cop" who would get to know the neighborhood.

Because opinion was divided on how to implement Seward's NRP strategy funding community policing, the Community Policing task force was formed. Its recommendations for a trial period of off-duty police patrolling "hot spots" and testing a surveillance camera should shortly be put into effect. After three months, the results will be evaluated before taking further action.

Graffiti Removal

NRP funds are being used to pay a part-time person to paint over some of the graffiti in public places.

This was not a subject that respondents were asked about in the self-study, but we include it here because it has been seen as part of SNG's anti-crime program in the past, and because many residents and business owners frequently express their concern that graffiti makes the neighborhood look bad.

There were funds for graffiti removal in the NRP Action Plan, but not a significant amount (\$630 per year to rent a sandblaster). SNG staff and Youth program participants used to remove graffiti for businesses, but stopped doing it because of possible health hazards with the chemicals.

SNG set up meetings with the business community to deal with graffiti, and discovered other resources they can use (community service provided by offenders, free materials available at fire stations). However, as it turns out, these resources have not worked well in practice. Recently the neighborhood's business association voted to work with the City to implement the "South Carolina model" whereby convicted offenders are trained as graffiti removal crews, supplied with equipment, and called within 24 hours of spotting. Quick removal is said to be the key to discourage repeated spraying.

Meanwhile, the NRP funds are being used to pay a part-time person to paint over some of the graffiti in public places, and one concerned staff member has spent many hours working with that person and removing graffiti on his own initiative. The problem is much bigger than they can handle in spare hours.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Improve communications with new CCP/SAFE staff.** Try to re-establish the excellent working relationship that Seward previously had for many years. Obtain the job description for the CCP/SAFE staff. Ensure that regular communication and attendance at CBC meetings are a part of the CCP/SAFE specialist's job description. Research what is done in other CCP/SAFE districts. Possibly discuss concerns with higher level CCP/SAFE staff.
- ◆ **Increase 911 calls by residents.** Address the problem of residents' inability and/or reluctance to report crimes and document evidence through 911 calls. Provide suspect description forms and other advice for 911 callers, such as documenting license plates numbers.
- ◆ **Define and publicize a simple process for addressing problem situations with neighbors.** This recommendation is a corollary to those above, and is important because of the recent turnover both of SNG organizers and the CCP/SAFE specialist. Make it clear what residents should do in addressing problem situations. Involve the block clubs in the process. Follow up.
- ◆ **Write stories about block clubs.** Publish examples of activities conducted by block clubs, introducing new clubs, describing grants received, and generally just passing on neighborly happenings.
- ◆ **Increase collaborations with Community Education and the Stroll Patrol.** The Community Education staff wants to promote Stroll Patrol through his publicity and to help with flyers. "I get paid to do this, and they could use me better," he says.
- ◆ **Upgrade the "gear" for the Stroll Patrol.** Some ideas suggested by respondents are very creative:
 - ⇒ Get vests to make themselves more identifiable.
 - ⇒ They have hats that are fluorescent, but they need something else in cold weather.
 - ⇒ They need some better gear. Maybe there should be some perks—a nice fanny pack or something fluorescent, some sort of nice polar fleece neck gear. Just ways of making it fun and identifiable.

- ◆ **Stroll Patrol could distribute flyers or do other tasks.** Posting flyers for Community Education and SNG activities was suggested by a respondent.
- ◆ **Help Stroll Patrol recruit new people.** CBC should participate in recruiting Stroll Patrol members. Consider inviting SNG Youth program participants on strolls. Invite new residents to join the Stroll Patrol as a way to get to know neighbors and the neighborhood. Do this through the Welcome Wagon packet and through Block club leaders as part of their welcoming of new residents.
- ◆ **Make Stroll Patrol meetings fun.** Continue having periodic meetings of the Stroll Patrol to discuss issues and to reflect, but also plan something fun, like a picnic or dessert.

EVENTS

The Seward Neighborhood is famous for its community events. Volunteers and staff from the neighborhood group feel that the events for the community as a whole bring the neighbors together in an atmosphere of festivity, friendship and caring. The events like the King's Fair draw thousands of people from the neighborhood and beyond, putting Seward on display.

"I am very struck by the long tradition of community involvement here at Seward neighborhood," commented a Matthew's Park employee. "Most of the events in Seward are the result of the creative and hard work of Seward's residents who are devoted to the neighborhood and try to make it as livable and friendly as possible."

King's Fair

Origins

The King's Fair is Seward's largest event. One of the founders of the King's Fair described its beginnings:

King's Fair started in 1979 as a result of a history committee, that did a number of projects and had a number of concerns. As a result of the concerns, we decided to put together a Fair that had a large component part of history. We hired someone to do some history activities, and she did some research. We developed a lot of photographs from the early fairs of the 1870's and 80's. We patterned our contemporary Fair after these fairs. We called it King's Fair after William F. King, who was a prominent person in the City of Minneapolis. We started in 1979, and continued it every other year since. We adopt different themes and encourage people to wear costumes of the era. We do things that relate to history, as well as just have a good old fun time. We have been very successful at putting our neighborhood on display over the years.

A Magical Carnival

The King's Fair is a biannual community event which is organized around a particular theme. One of the interviewees described the day of the King's Fair as follows:

People have loved the King's Fair, we heard glowing remarks about what a wonderful carnival, and how festive it is. For a moment Seward becomes a village, a warm connected place. It is a magical time. King's Fair has a special quality to it. I am speaking very glowingly of it, but it is very well received.

The 1995 King's Fair was devoted to remembering the 1940's. Since there are quite a few of people living in the neighborhood who actually remember the 40's, this event was really engaging.

The Fair is scheduled on the second or third Saturday of September at Matthews Park, and it lasts from noon to five. The atmosphere is full of music and entertainment. There are always four to six different bands playing on two stages. Magicians, jugglers, tight rope walkers, clowns and wandering minstrels or storytellers show their talents. The martial arts specialists, like Aikido and Chinese Tempo, put together shows. Sometimes there are dancers and people join in. There are also a lot of games; some are organized by the SNG and some are purchased. There are prizes and midway games for the children and teens. There is a preschool area where young children have an opportunity to play games suitable for their ages. There are many different kinds of food sold by local restaurants.

Usually, there is a veterinarian, who judges animals and awards ribbons. SNG encourages people to bring their animals and learn more about them. There is also a gardening competition, where flowers, flower arrangements and homegrown vegetables are judged.

The Fair is an opportunity for artists and craftspeople to sell the things they produce. A variety of non-profit organizations use the Fair to hand out literature so that people become better informed.

A Community Gathering

One of the most important goals of the King's Fair is to bring people from the community together--letting them get to know each other at a fun, social event. The hope is that the neighborhood where the neighbors know each other will be a better place to live.

A former King's Fair organizer said the event "matters to the neighborhood." He added, "It is an opportunity for people to mingle."

Oddly enough, King's Fair was only recognized by 26 of the 40 people returning the membership survey, less than Clean Sweep, the Stroll Patrol, the garage sales, *Seward Profile* or National Night Out. Considering that 1,000 people--or one seventh of Seward's population--is usually the *minimum* attendance, this is hard to explain. No one who knew about it, however, thought that it "needs improvement."

Financing the Fair

King's Fair usually operates without a budget. SNG has used many strategies for raising the money. One year a hot air balloon ride was raffled, where the money not used to pay for the ride itself helped with Fair expenses. In 1995 the total bill for the Fair was about \$5,000, not including staff time. Money for the direct expenses was raised through business donations, raffle sales and ticket sales on the day.

SNG also hires a part-time person for the summer to coordinate the Fair, and the money for that person usually comes through a grant. One of the interviewees was the part-time staff person hired for the last King's Fair to organize it. He was a community resident who found the advertisement for the job in the *Seward Profile*.

To organize the Fair, SNG gets help from many people and organizations. Some people donate paper. Community Education donates some things like games. The Park Board has a small budget to pay the band. SNG also asks the local businesses for donations. More than a hundred volunteers are needed for planning, set up, overseeing the activities, and taking down.

Help From Businesses

The interview with the past staff person of King's Fair revealed the importance of businesses in the neighborhood and their relationships with SNG. For years, SNG and Seward Redesign, the community-based developer, have been trying hard to support the businesses in the area. King's Fair is one of the times the community asks for some help in return. The interviewee commented that:

People in the Seward neighborhood are not always aware how important the business complex is for them. SNG and Seward Redesign try hard to make businesses thrive. The businesses want to be a part of the neighborhood. They are ready to donate a lot of money to support the neighborhood. At King's Fair SNG asks businesses for donations. Many businesses get help from SNG and they are grateful. I did not have to beg for money. They contributed gladly, saying, "SNG has done so much for me I want to help SNG". My opinion is that SNG has created a very positive climate for businesses in the area.

The interviewee also suggested that the Neighborhood Group could start organizing of the King's Fair earlier than it usually does:

I would start to organize it earlier. I did not really know what to do at first, because it was my first time organizing the Fair. For example, I contacted only 60 percent of the businesses.

High-Rise Residents at King's Fair

SNG has a goal of building community within the neighborhood, connecting the neighbors, allowing them to know and respect each other. The ultimate goal is, by creating community, to reduce the incidence of crime.

People who live in the high-rises do not participate in the community events, for a number of reasons. One barrier is transportation. At the last King's Fair organizers decided to provide a van to bring people from the high-rises to Matthews Center. One suggestion that the last King's Fair coordinator made was to start earlier and to reach out to more high-rise residents in 1997.

CBC and King's Fair

Someone suggested that the organization of King's Fair should be under the close supervision of the CBC. Traditionally there has been a King's Fair committee with the part-time staff person to assist them (although no SNG staff person or volunteer entirely escapes participation in King's Fair). This respondent suggested:

I would think that the CBC would have a pivotal role in the King's Fair. King's Fair is a real gem. I would think the CBC would be there working with King's Fair, that would be right in their area of expertise.

Clean Sweep

On the day of Clean Sweep the volunteers go in the City garbage trucks on a route through the neighborhood. They walk behind the truck, pick up the trash, and throw it in.

Clean Sweep is relative well-known, according to the membership survey. Twenty-seven of the 40 respondents (68 percent) had heard of it. Eighteen rated it "very good," five "okay," and none "needs improvement." Clearly, neighbors like this event.

Clean Sweep happens yearly, on a Saturday in the spring. The City of Minneapolis offers the service of having trucks coming around, allowing the residents to pick up some old junk from their houses and basements. SNG puts an announcement in the *Seward Profile* to let people know that they can get rid of old and useless stuff like construction debris or old furniture. SNG asks people to put their trash out in the alley or at the curb. SNG actually has to educate people about that, because sometimes residents think that the people from the truck will come and clean up their basement. There is also a need to educate people about hazardous waste; the trucks cannot take it.

On the day of Clean Sweep the volunteers go in the City garbage trucks on a route through the neighborhood. They walk behind the truck, pick up the trash, and throw it in. Here is how a CBC member describes the Clean Sweep:

It is a good program because it makes people clean up. It makes it easy for them. They know that if they put stuff out it will disappear. It also provides a lot of good will for the neighborhood group and the city because the trash goes away. It makes the volunteers feel good; it's work, but it's also exercise and you feel that you've accomplished something concrete. There's no doubt that when you're done that you have done something. (laughter) Which doesn't happen very often! It also gives the staff and neighbors a chance to walk down the alleys, and that is really interesting.

Good, Clean Fun

There are usually 15 to 20 adult volunteers and a dozen youth participating in the Clean Sweep. At the last Clean Sweep (of 1996) there were actually too many volunteers. The volunteers get coffee and some treat; it's very nice because people have a chance to come back and eat, and talk, and socialize. It makes the activity a fun social thing.

One of the interviewees has described the Clean Sweep as:

A good event. It's healthy and it accomplishes something. It's an event we could make more of if we spent a little more time up front, but it happens at a busy time of year.

Another person interviewed expressed his opinion about Clean Sweep in the following way:

Clean Sweep has been a beneficial program in the Seward Neighborhood. I have participated and helped with it. It gives an opportunity for people to help clean out their garages or basements. I personally wonder why they need a special day -- every pickup day you can set stuff out. But it has proven over the years that people needed and wanted it. Sometimes paid staff have wondered why they should put time on it. But it has proven to be helpful in keeping our neighborhood clean and make it more livable and attractive. If the neighborhood is attractive, people want to live there, and people do want to. It is not only attractive, but the location is good and the crime is relatively moderate. It is a good place to be. I think Clean Sweep should continue. We have done it so long, it doesn't take much time to do it.

Timing a Concern

Usually, the City lets the neighborhood pick the date of the Clean Sweep, but does not confirm it until very late. It is hard to announce in the *Seward Profile* if the date is not confirmed. Currently, the Neighborhood Group is trying to work on that and change that, and this year's date is in fact already set.

Involving the Youth

Over the years the SNG has tried to involve participants in the SNG Youth program in Clean Sweep as community service. Seward adults are often afraid of these youth, because they are usually perceived as creating mischief in the neighborhood. The intermixing of the adults and youth in some intergenerational activities like the Clean Sweep is aimed at creating connections between the generations and building more harmony. One of the interviewees offered the following suggestions:

I think it's a great opportunity to get the kids involved. It would be a great time, instead of having a team of youth going on a garbage truck, to instead have two youths go with two adults so you could do some intergenerational bridge building. In the past it has been just a clump of kids who always want to go together.

So you need to do some advance work to create intergenerational teams. We need to do some team building with kids and adults ahead of time. I went one year with a clump of kids and there were two adults. It was really frustrating because the kids didn't do anything. We weren't introduced the kids ahead of time

They would feel like they have really accomplished something when it was over. And it would be a way to get them involved with other adults.

Clean Sweep as Outreach

One of the interviewees remembered that on a few occasions, the people who took part in Clean Sweep got interested in SNG activities and showed up at the Annual Meeting or at other events. On another occasion, a volunteer suggested ways of salvaging the junk instead of throwing it away. Now CBC as well as the Environment Committee are talking about how to do more salvaging in future Clean Sweeps.

Garage Sale Daze

There is a festive atmosphere, where the alleys and streets are buzzing with activity as people buy and sell and spend time catching up with their neighbors after a long winter of being mainly indoors.

Garage Sale Daze had been heard of by 31 of the 40 respondents in the membership survey, the third-most recognized of SNG's community building activities. Twenty rated it "very good," three "okay" and one "needs improvement," making it overall the second-most highly rated activity.

The Seward garage sales happen yearly during a two-day period in May. Neighborhood residents who want to have garage sales register with the SNG office. SNG makes a map of all the sales, which is delivered along with a yard sign to each address the night before the sale. The sales are advertised in the metro papers as well as in the *Profile*, so people come from all over the Twin Cities. It's an opportunity for Seward to promote itself as a great neighborhood, as well as clean out a lot of basements.

There is a festive atmosphere, where the alleys and streets are buzzing with activity as people buy and sell and spend time catching up with their neighbors after a long winter of being mainly indoors. In addition to the garage sales of individual households, SNG in previous years sponsored a large sale at Riverside Market. People would donate items to SNG to sell as a fundraiser. Last year, the Youth program participants sold donated goods at Matthews Park to raise money for youth activities.

One write-in response to the membership survey suggested, "A good idea is for banners across the street at gateways to the neighborhood. Solicit businesses to take part, and make it a fun weekend to buy."

The interviewees had positive comments about the garage sales:

The Garage Sale is another good thing. It involves a lot of people, we have between 75 and 100 people participating in having garage sales during a two-day period in May. It's a neat thing, I don't participate too much, I'm not much of a buyer. But I've let other groups use my garage to have a sale.

Garage Sales are a big community building effort. Last year we dedicated the profit to the Youth Program. People dropped the stuff at Matthews Park, the youth sold it, and the profits were dedicated to them.

The Garage Sales usually happen in May. It is advertised in the Seward Profile, they send a notice. Everyone who wants to can register. It is a good community building event, there is a good community spirit. People meet people, find great things. It is a great idea.

National Night Out

The block clubs in Seward vary in their level of participation and activities, but the minimum thing every block club does is to have an annual event for National Night Out.

More people had heard of National Night Out than any other SNG-sponsored activity (34 of the 40 survey respondents). It was also highly rated (19 "very good," six "okay," and no "needs improvement.")

Strictly speaking, National Night Out is not sponsored by SNG, but indirectly it is because of the intensive support SNG provides to its block clubs, including the Incentive Fund which can be used to buy refreshments or games. For the past two years, SNG staff and Board members have visited each block club party to talk with residents, sell raffle tickets, seek new volunteers, and let people know what staff are doing.

The National Night Out is a nationwide anti-crime initiative. When blocks have a party the neighbors hopefully come to know each other, care about each other. The idea is for people to actually know the name of their neighbor next door and call the police if they see something wrong is going on.

The block clubs in Seward vary in their level of participation and activities, but the minimum thing every block club does is to have an annual event for National Night Out. Usually there is a pot luck supper, and discussion of issues of concern. Often there are games for the children, music or other entertainment. For those parties that actually take place in the street, barriers close it off to through traffic and firefighters arrive driving a fire engine that the children can climb on. CCP/SAFE uses the event to distribute some safety information about the crime rates in the community and the safety workshops.

A block club leader commented on the usefulness of the National Night Out:

SNG support for National Night Out is really useful, in terms of making it an event that connects all the block clubs in Seward. They work with CCP/SAFE at the neighborhood level, so that I feel that if there was a crime we needed to know about, be alerted to, they would send out a notice. That is one of the strengths of the block clubs: it gives the police a way to send out an alert, so that you don't have to read in the newspaper about it first.

REFLECTIONS ON OUTCOMES

Organizational Goals Identified for Events

By their very nature, Seward's events build community and achieve the four program outcomes. They appeal to universal interests and thereby invite broad-based participation. They get people out on the streets. They demand a lot of work and cost money, so they bring together all of the resources of the community in making them happen. Most important, they get people talking to each other.

Some specific organizational goals that relate to the events described here include:

- ◆ **Support Block Activities:** Support at least two block activities per block each year.
- ◆ **Build Connections:** Network and increase connections among block clubs, youth program, schools, CCP/SAFE, Community Education, colleges, churches, care facilities, arts groups, businesses and others.
- ◆ **Expand Recreational Activities:** Improve expand, and promote a full range of educational, recreational and social opportunities for people of all ages.
- ◆ **Enhance Visual Character:** Protect and enhance the visual character of the neighborhood.
- ◆ **Build identity:** Build a strong sense of community.

How are We Doing?

Block Activities

SNG uses National Night Out as an opportunity to visit residents, inform them and seek new members or volunteers.

SNG's support for National Night Out is one of the keystones of its block organizing efforts, because most of the neighborhood is having parties on one single occasion. SNG uses National Night Out as an opportunity to visit residents, inform them and seek new members or volunteers. Special incentives are offered for new block clubs.

Build Connections

Virtually every business, agency, school and institution is asked for help with King's Fair.

SNG events are the primary means by which businesses, churches, schools and institutions are involved in community activities. Virtually all of these are asked for

help with King's Fair--either financial support for a midway game, or donation of a raffle item, or even taking charge of one of the games or tables themselves.

A medical facility sponsors a first aid tent. Park staff especially get involved with King's Fair. Youth program participants take charge of the teen midway. It's also a chance for small arts and crafts vendors and agencies with information for residents to set up their own booths, and for area restaurants to gain some extra visibility by selling food. CCP/SAFE comes to King's Fair, as well as police from the Third Precinct and the park. Dancers, actors, storytellers and musicians have the opportunity to perform. SNG also uses King's Fair to have an exhibit, sign up new members and talk to people about all of the many programs and activities it sponsors. And King's Fair would never happen with thousands of hours of volunteer support.

To a lesser degree, the same thing happens with the other events. Block club events are like mini-fairs scattered among neighborhood streets and alleys. Businesses and residents donate items for the SNG-sponsored garage sale. Residents also take part also by having their own sales all around the neighborhood. For Clean Sweep, the main help that SNG asks for is volunteers, both adult and youth.

Expand Recreational Activities

The community organizer received letters of thanks from each of the block club leaders who used the Incentive Fund.

The main thrust of SNG's organizing activities is at the block and apartment club level. Many of the new activities on the blocks as well as in some of the large apartment buildings have resulted from SNG's organizing of nine new block/apartment clubs. Also, offering incentives for existing clubs to have events, or to spice up an event with some entertainment, has been an encouragement. The community organizer received letters of thanks from each of the block club leaders who used the Incentive Fund; these letters are direct testimony of new activity.

With the advent of NRP in Seward, many more new activities are going on than can be described here, although some have been mentioned. These other activities also create new connections. For example, the Earth and Tree Fair brought about 50 environmental groups, lawn and garden vendors, and other agencies together at Matthews Park. Gardening is everyone's hobby in Seward, and many people turned out. Some of the other NRP-sponsored activities will be described later in this report.

Enhance Visual Character

King's Fair is especially a visual treat, turning the park into a fantasy reminiscent of medieval European fairs.

Among the purposes of Clean Sweep and the garage sales is making it easy for residents to get rid of their trash and unwanted junk. Residents who simply put their trash on the curb can feel they are doing their part to keep Seward attractive.

Events also brighten up the streets, as people stroll about. King's Fair is especially a visual treat, turning the park into a fantasy reminiscent of medieval European fairs.

Build Identity

Events that have become traditions help to create the unique identity that is Seward. The next Fair, with its theme of "Immigration," will be a celebration of immigrants old and new.

Events that have become traditions help to create the unique identity that is Seward. Also, the "tradition" that for King's Fair every major constituency takes part in making it a success builds a sense of connectedness between young and old, business and resident, homeowner and renter, and people of all colors and cultures.

But King's Fair also helps to build Seward's identity in another important way: the historical theme that is chosen for each Fair. The last one, "Remembering the Forties," brought back people who used to live in Seward fifty years ago. The next Fair, with its theme of "Immigration," will be a celebration of immigrants old and new, especially appropriate because of the influx of people from other countries in recent years, such as Somalia and Ethiopia.

Another special project that has brought and will continue to bring some new events to Seward over the next three years is the intergenerational theater project funded by NRP (discussed in a later section). One of its goals is to create theatrical events with themes drawn from Seward's past, and especially from the living memory of Seward's elders.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Use the Immigration Theme creatively to attract diverse participants at King's Fair in 1997.** Music, songs, dances, games, arts, crafts and food could all reflect the different immigrant cultures in Seward. This theme is a great opportunity to attract new volunteers and exhibitors as well as people coming to have fun.
- ◆ **Pair youth with adult mentors at Clean Sweep.** Have a meeting of Clean Sweep volunteers, both youth and adult, before the event, so they get to know each other and can work together better. Make the meeting fun.
- ◆ **Encourage block clubs to close their streets to traffic for National Night Out parties.** Night Out parties held in someone's yard behind the alley don't feel as welcoming to everyone as those where the street is closed. It requires a little more planning to get the City permit, and also permission from the residents. But it's a good way of creating a more festive atmosphere as well as being more open.
- ◆ **Use banners at gateways to promote King's Fair and Garage Sale Daze.** This is a fun and attractive way to make visitors to the neighborhood aware that special things are happening here.

- ◆ Use the *Profile* aggressively to publicize events, before and after. Don't just announce events or have an article asking for volunteers--write for several months about the theme of King's Fair and how it will be used. Make a special little story or two every month about all the fun events and activities going on. Feature some volunteers, or newcomers to the neighborhood. Record the events in a photo essay. Make sure that SNG gets credit for all the great work it does in putting together events, and the people who make them happen.

SEWARD PROFILE

"I find that the Profile is superior when it comes to just reporting the needs and concerns and the day-to-day business of the neighborhood." - a resident

The *Seward Profile* is a neighborhood newspaper which began in 1970 as a newsletter of SNG activities. It is now a tabloid paper, but it remains the official SNG publication and is owned by SNG. Eight thousand copies of the newspaper are published monthly. They are distributed to every Seward business, household and apartment building lobby.

The *Seward Profile* is the primary way that SNG conveys neighborhood news and information to residents. The *Profile* announces all meetings and events. SNG staff also write monthly reports, including news from CCP/SAFE, crime prevention tips, block club news, and updates on SNG projects in every program area. SNG contracts production of the paper to a desktop publishing firm, MicroHorizons, which also produces other neighborhood papers. MicroHorizons raises money through selling ads, and also seeks help from sponsors and subscribers. SNG and MicroHorizons staff work closely together, and SNG provides an editorial policy board (the *Profile* committee) to give feedback and support.

SNG reserves at least one page a month for official notification of meetings and other services it offers. Usually one to three additional pages are also paid for by SNG, and used for the articles written by staff. The remainder of the paper, usually 12 or 16 pages in all, is written by MicroHorizons staff or freelancers on subjects of interest to neighborhood. There are several regular columns, including gardening tips and "Earth Rap," which discusses environmental issues. There are photos of people and places and happenings in Seward and nearby locations.

CCP/SAFE staff use the *Profile* for most of their publicity. The former CCP/SAFE specialist explained:

We do most of our publicity through the neighborhood newspapers, like the Seward Profile. At least six times a year we publish an article about the block clubs and when there is going to be a training.

The *Profile* is a primary way for residents to learn about and get involved with NRP projects. For example, the *Profile* was used as a source of updates on various NRP projects and public meeting times. In speaking about the Matthews Park renovation project, one interviewee commented:

Every Profile edition has had an article on it, since before conception. We published the controversial or questionable aspects...and then we had public meetings. Anybody could jump into the NRP at any point, that was one of the basic rules.

The *Profile* had the second-highest name recognition of any activities listed on the member survey; 33 of the 40 respondents had heard of it. It had the most people rating it "very good" (21), with four "okay" and one "needs improvement."

All persons interviewed for this study were asked for their perspectives concerning the *Profile*. The response in the interviews, as in the survey, was very favorable.

One long-time resident described the *Seward Profile* in the following manner:

The Seward Profile is one of the best neighborhood newspapers in the city of Minneapolis. It ranks above almost all of them. We have a fine editor and staff, the paper is well written, has many photographs and is current. It combines announcements with newsworthy articles. There are some newspapers that are only announcement-type newspapers and some are only political. The Profile is a wholesome combination that includes making announcements from various groups to inform people, as well as telling stories about the people who live here.

We are a very active neighborhood and lots of things happen. People need to be informed before they happen, and then they have to hear about the results. It is a very good combination. It is read a lot. There could be a delivery problem, but people can call and complain.

Another resident commented:

The Profile is an excellent paper. I am very impressed with the Profile. I used to be on the Board of the Alley newspaper which has gotten a lot of recognition for being an excellent neighborhood newspaper. I'm impressed with The Alley, they did some very good investigative journalism. But I find that the Profile is superior when it comes to just reporting the needs and concerns and the day-to-day business of the neighborhood. The Profile really serves as an essential informational arm. I think that if you really want to know what's going on, the Profile is an invaluable tool for the neighborhood.

The interviewees felt that the *Profile* is a very useful newspaper, as well as being interesting. One interviewee found a job through the *Profile* (as a part-time coordinator of the King's Fair). Another bought her house through an advertisement in the *Profile*.

The information about community meetings and events was considered very useful. One SNG volunteer has noticed that she sees new people coming to meetings. The reason they come is because the *Profile* has announced the meeting, and they have concerns about the neighborhood that they want represented. The use of the *Profile* by residents as a chief neighborhood information source was demonstrated after the 1995 assault at Matthews Park. The story was reported in the *Profile* and a community meeting announced; 70 people attended on very short notice.

REFLECTIONS ON OUTCOMES

Organizational Goals Identified for *The Profile*

The Profile has a far more important function than SNG's legal obligation—it is the primary community building tool in terms of the written word.

The *Profile* is used by SNG when official notification of the neighborhood is required, and timing is appropriate. Sometimes, if the timing is off, flyers must be delivered door-to-door to satisfy SNG's obligations as the official citizen participation agency for Seward.

Yet the *Profile* has a far more important function than SNG's legal obligation—it is the primary community building tool in terms of the written word. Some parts of this function have been expressed to SNG's funders:

Reserve space for NRP initiatives:

- ◆ Reserve 1/2 page in the *Seward Profile* for school, park and community education news and calendars.
- ◆ Reserve 1/2 page in the *Seward Profile* for monthly crime prevention tips.

How Are We Doing?

Profile a Success

The *Profile* is one of the Community Building program's most important assets. It is effective in announcing meetings and community events. It meets or exceeds the requirements of SNG's funding sources for announcing meetings and events, and disseminating information related to crime prevention.

Recommendations

Use the *Profile* creatively and extensively, as much as staff time for writing permits. Given the favorable image of the *Profile* in the community, no opportunity should be wasted to take advantage of its wide dissemination. There is almost no limit, other than available staff time and the money to pay for the space, to what the *Profile* might be used for. The cost of the space is relatively small compared with the payoff. All of the exciting SNG activities going on are "grist for the mill," as are the people who make them happen and the people who take part in them. A way of expanding staff energy is to invite "guest" volunteers to write on specific subjects. A regular "Youth Program" column would be most welcome, especially if it included articles and/or photos by youth.

Invite neighborhood feedback in the *Profile*. Find new ways to use the *Profile* as an open forum to discuss neighborhood concerns and their possible solutions. One suggestion would be the format of a "Dear Abby" column. Another is a "suggestion

box" that might be used by fax or e-mail and would be easier to access than the official "letter to the editor."

Promote the free *Profile* ad for members. The free ad is not only a way of getting new members to sign up; it's also a vehicle to connect people through employment, service, rental, and bartering opportunities. Encourage members to use this free benefit.

NRP SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT STRATEGIES

Children and Families, and Arts and Culture, have not in the past been program areas where SNG has focused.

The NRP Social Environment Plan was divided into these subcategories: Children and Families, Crime and Safety, Arts and Culture, and Community Building. Children and Families, and Arts and Culture, have not in the past been program areas where SNG has focused. The categories of Crime and Safety and Community Building are in many cases similar or even identical to SNG's organizational goals. In this report we have already looked at several strategies from this section of the Plan, including community policing, citizen patrol, and block club organizing.

Seward's five-year NRP Action Plan is now nearing the end of its second year of implementation. Many strategies are either in early stages of implementation, or have not yet begun to be implemented. This report is not intended to evaluate Seward's NRP Action Plan, except insofar as it reflects current activities of the Community Building program.

The NRP Social Environment strategies we included in the self-study are the ones where implementation has proceeded beyond the planning stages. These are the intergenerational theater project, the studio artists project, and some strategies aimed at enhancing community participation in the school/park complex which houses SNG's Youth program, the Park director, the Community Education coordinator for the public schools, and Seward Montessori School.

In looking at these three areas, we will first identify the specific Plan strategies that funded them and then review progress to date.

Theater Project

The Strategy

Provide a grant for the Playwrights' Center to produce annual community performance projects that specifically involve youth and seniors. Seward youth will be at the center of approximately four annual projects. Participants will select and research themes in Seward's history (primarily by interviewing seniors). Small groups will then develop original scripts and stage performances guided by theater professionals and adult volunteer mentors. Performance sites could include Playwrights' Center, Matthews Center, and additional non-traditional sites. Activities would also include social gatherings (ethnic meals, award ceremonies, etc.) to promote the project and where youths can gain self-esteem and teamwork skills.

The First Year

There was concern that the project needed to proceed more slowly in order to generate more resident participation. However, two small but enjoyable

performances did result from the spring class series, one at the Playwrights' Center and one at Matthews Park.

The Theater Project was funded for \$50,000 over four years in the Arts and Culture section of the Social Environment Plan. It was proposed by the former director of the Playwrights' Center, an organization of theater artists located in Seward. His proposal received support from various contingents of people who worked on the Plan. As someone involved in the NRP plan reflected:

It had three purposes. The cultural arts people liked it because it had theater in it, those interested in family and children liked it because it brings people together, and the crime and safety people liked it because of the proactive, preventative type of programming from the intermixing of people and bringing them together. I believe it only went through because of the crime angle.

Implementation of the project began in the spring of 1996 under the direction of a resident advisory group and Playwrights' Center staff. During the first three months, several sites were located for youth, seniors and in-betweeners. About six or eight playwrights taught weekly classes at these sites. Sites included Bethany Lutheran Church, Seward Towers, University Good Samaritan Center, Matthews Center, and the Playwrights' Center itself. Attendance at these early groups was small, despite much organizing activity by SNG staff and the advisory group, and there was concern that the project needed to proceed more slowly in order to generate more resident participation.

However, two small but enjoyable performances did result from the spring class series, one at the Playwrights' Center and one at Matthews Park. These performances included both youth and seniors. One segment was a two-part play about Wonderland, an amusement park once located on Lake Street near Seward. The other segment included stories and memories as told by the seniors, and readings from oral interviews about Seward's past collected several years ago by residents.

The Playwrights' Center, under new management, withdrew from the project in the summer of 1996. The advisory group continued to work on its own, hiring one of the playwrights who had taught the spring classes to help plan and coordinate a new program for the fall. SNG has taken over as the contract administrator for NRP, with input from Community Education. It will be SNG's responsibility to hire theater professionals or others to carry out the project. IOC, the NRP oversight committee, wants to review progress at the end of each year.

One of the goals for the fall program was to assess community interest in the project, before planning what would happen for the remaining three years.

During the fall, the project coordinator organized three community workshops on mask-making, acting, and song writing, as well as a party for the community to give its input. He also helped SNG Youth program participants to create their traditional "Haunted House" for the annual Halloween Parade and Party at Matthews Center.

The Second Year and Beyond

This year, the project will research Seward history in the spring, write a play based on the research over the summer, and produce the play in the fall or winter.

Accomplishments

Continuity in Fall Workshops

Despite setbacks, the advisory group continued with a fall program of workshops designed to keep the first groups of participants and attract some new ones. This did happen to a great extent. The 20 to 25 workshop participants included some from the spring and some newcomers.

History and Identity

The advisory group's research on Wonderland was woven nicely into the two short plays performed during the spring. They enhanced the intergenerational theme as the children took a "ghost train" into the past, where one of them met her own grandmother. The group has also made progress by collecting existing oral history interviews, and by forming a research committee for themes to use in the new play.

Haunted House for Youth

Involving the Youth program participants with the new playwright/project coordinator to create the Halloween Haunted House was an important first step toward bringing the youth closer to the project in the future.

Breakthroughs in Outreach

One of the greatest successes of the theater project so far has been that people from two hard-to-reach populations have participated. These are Seward's youth and elders. Partly because Seward has no community school, there is no "list" of youth that can be contacted and recruited. This is also true of seniors, who may live in scattered homes around the neighborhood, or in Seward Towers where participation has traditionally been limited. Yet a dozen or more people from each these groups did take part during the first year.

Connections

Another success has been the connections built with two churches and the nearby extended care facility that permitted use of their space, and even helped with outreach. Also, SNG found a new and productive way to work with the management at Seward Towers. Management provided convenient meeting space, assistance with finding interested participants, and articles in the residents' newsletter.

Community Involvement

One goal from the outset has been to have a theater "presence" at community events. There were mini-appearances at the Earth and Tree Fair and the garage sales. The performance at Matthews Park was held jointly with the Seward Concert Band.

The advisory group resolutely sought community input before proceeding with plans for future years. The plans for the 1997 project are realistic, given the small amount of money allocated in the Plan. The product, a play researched, written, produced and acted primarily by residents, promises in itself to generate new enthusiasm and support.

Positive Feedback

One SNG staff person commented:

We have fun, we fight, it sounds like a family...This is one of the best groups I have ever had."

The project's advisory group has remained fairly constant, six to eight people meeting twice monthly or more. It includes staff from Community Education, SNG staff and community volunteers with an interest in theater and/or Seward history. The group's plan for 1997 was approved by the neighborhood at the January CBC meeting and the February IOC meeting. This year, the project will research Seward history in the spring, write a play based on the research over the summer, and produce the play in the fall or winter. One of this year's goals is, once again, to find more people to get involved. There is hope that more people will want to be part of the play.

At the end of each phase, an evaluation review will take place. Depending on what happens this year, the project may decide to expand or simply to continue at this level of programming for the remaining two years.

The advisory group's research committee is currently collecting historical research. Where possible, they hope to pair young people with senior citizens in the collection of oral histories. They will record memories of experiences from past times, as well as the experiences of people in current times. This fits with the King's Fair immigration theme. The goal is to underscore that Seward is a neighborhood with a tradition of having immigrants which continues today.

The goals of the 1997 project are:

- ◆ To build community,
- ◆ To produce plays with the purpose of helping Seward see itself,
- ◆ To develop and maintain an ongoing presence, and
- ◆ To research Seward's identity, past and present.

Regarding whether or how the group may become self-sustaining, one advisory group member said:

Our plan is that when the NRP money runs out, we still will be able to continue. We do this by gathering knowledgeable people and some volunteers. During the four year project we want to plant seeds that will continue to grow.

How are We Doing?

The theater project has survived some major obstacles during the first year, and has had some notable successes.

Disappointments

Losing the Playwrights' Center as the project coordinator meant the loss of \$8,000 of funds spent in the first three months, and the necessity to start from scratch in terms of planning. Another disappointment in the first year was low participation, despite extensive writing of Profile articles and many hours of outreach efforts by SNG staff and the advisory group members.

Another staff person noted,

One of the reasons it is successful is because it is very multi-generational, and that makes a lot of difference. It is really charming.

One participant said:

At the January CBC meeting one elderly resident said of her experience: "It's just been a real rewarding, enlightening time that brought back my own natural curiosity for creativity, and I've noticed this in others too."

Recommendations

- ◆ **On the Right Track:** The Study Team is impressed with the efforts and success of this project, despite formidable obstacles. "More of the same" is the main focus of these recommendations: continued strong presence in the community, continued outreach to residents and agencies, continued weaving together of Seward's history and identity, continued intergenerational connections, continued fun.
- ◆ **Schedule regular appearances in 1997:** Opportunities for short appearances coming up include: Garage Sale Daze, Clean Sweep, King's Fair, National Night Out, and the Halloween Parade. These are times when recruitment potential is high because many people are out on the streets.
- ◆ **Plan a big "cast party" for all the people who work on the play.** Here's a natural opportunity to say "thank you," celebrate, and do a little self-reflection.

Studio Artists

The Strategy

Work with community developers to create a non-profit cooperative community studio arts center with working studio space in the neighborhood. Provide opportunities and facilities for arts education and production. Locate an interested community developer and a suitable site for use as a public arts facility and working studio space (including possible subsidies for artists and on-site public arts programs and displays). Identify a bank or professional arts organization to manage the coop funds and the site.

Progress

The vision is to have studio space where neighborhood artists could work, interact with each other, display their creations and offer classes and exhibits to community members.

In the Arts and Culture section of the Social Environment Plan, \$200,000 was allocated to buy and develop a building to use as a studio arts space for neighborhood artists. The vision is to have studio space where neighborhood artists

could work, interact with each other, display their creations and offer classes and exhibits to community members. The studio space so envisioned would make Seward a more attractive place to live by helping to promote Seward's identity as a place where interesting, creative things happen.

One of the interviewees explained how the project would also link to a proactive approach to crime prevention:

It would be a community building, it would also spread safety. It would create more spaces in public areas that people would care about, and the participants would also care about residents. People could take classes in the community. Working artists would provide the security of having "eyes and ears" both days and evenings.

Someone else linked the project to improving Seward's economy:

It is good economically: artists are people who run small businesses, and the businesses are good for the community. It could give the neighborhood a new identity, to improve the perception of Seward. We would also have a communal space, people who are interested in different arts related projects could participate and express themselves.

A core group of five or six artists began meeting in the summer of 1995, designing a survey of neighborhood artists that was mailed out and also distributed at King's Fair. About two dozen artists responded, indicating strong interest in reasonably-priced studio space in Seward. Some of these artists have since joined the work group; others have been kept advised of progress.

The artists have done a lot of research about similar projects in the metro area. They have met with two arts developers, and the City's development staff person most involved with arts development projects. All of these meetings have shown a strong probability for economic success of this venture.

Seward Arts, Inc.

The structure proposed is a non-profit organization for the purpose of furthering the arts in Seward neighborhood.

The artists sought legal advice, and decided to incorporate as a Minnesota non-profit corporation in order to purchase a building as a legal entity. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws have been drafted. The structure proposed is a non-profit organization for the purpose of furthering the arts in Seward neighborhood; the corporation would lease space to working artists who would present proposals for how they would "pay back" the benefit of the space by providing a service to the community. The fledgling organization has been named Seward Arts, Inc. It has contracted with an arts developer to provide consultation on assessing potential sites.

Finding a Site

The biggest problem faced by the group has been finding a suitable building in Seward.

The biggest problem faced by the group has been finding a suitable building in Seward. Many sites have been looked at, and the only one that seemed suitable so far was purchased by the Northern Clay Center and SNG. This was a great disappointment to the artists, and some people dropped out of the project, believing that it will never happen. One of them said:

We should have hired someone from the outside. There are other arts developers. We had hoped to work with SNG and Seward Redesign. Originally SNG wanted to help with purchasing the building, but then the Northern Clay Center seemed more important and they purchased the building we wanted.

The other available sites are either too small for both studio spaces and a community classroom and gallery, or they appear to require more substantial renovation than the NRP funding permits.

The artists don't feel they have enough people or staff support at this time to try to raise more funds. They are considering leasing some space together in the inexpensive Ivy Building, and saving the NRP money until they generate more support and/or a suitable site opens up. They feel that taking this step would give them added visibility in the neighborhood, and they could afford to lease enough space to begin offering classes and exhibits.

Other Setbacks

"It's been difficult to keep participation going, and we have had new people jumping in and out of the group."

Because of the difficulties faced by the work group, including having little staff support and the disappointment over losing the site they wanted, there have been people who come and go, or attend irregularly, or are such new members that they don't fully understand the goals and history of the project. An interviewee noted, "It's been difficult to keep participation going, and we have had new people jumping in and out of the group."

Another person who worked on planning the project noted,

I have a feeling that the project does not seem to be very important to SNG. We have had difficulties in getting the work group staffed.

It is not successful. I don't think it will ever be realized. We had invested some money before. If we were able to purchase the building the Northern Clay purchased, it would be different. Now we have to start all over again.

How are We Doing?

A Major Obstacle

Like the theater project, the arts project has suffered setbacks and persevered. However, the primary obstacle for this group is that to date there has been no appropriate building that could be fixed up (with existing funds) to meet the vision for this studio arts space. Unless either a suitable space comes on to the market, or the

artists feel they can find additional resources for extensive rehab, this obstacle might not be surmountable.

Making Important Choices

Some important choices have been made by the artists, based on their research. These include: keeping the project to a scale that is realistic for a small neighborhood group of working artists, becoming a Minnesota non-profit corporation rather than a cooperative that is owned by the artists or other possible legal entities, and looking for a space that is large enough to hold classes and exhibits as well as providing tenants with work space.

The artists have most recently decided that for an interim period they wish to lease space together in a neighborhood building, and see how it works. They want to begin offering classes and exhibits in an effort to build visibility and increased support. The remaining NRP funds will be reserved for purchase of a building when it seems feasible.

Resources Stretched Too Thin

This project requires a high level of skill in business planning and development to implement; in fact in the NRP Plan it was contemplated that the artists would work with a "community developer or bank."

Because SNG has been overburdened and understaffed, the artists have received little staff support. This project requires a high level of skill in business planning and development to implement; in fact, in the NRP Plan it was contemplated that the artists would work with a "community developer or bank." While they have received some support and advice from Artspace and Seward Redesign, it has not been at the level required to do a significant business development project. This has meant that, despite the many hours put in by the artists themselves, little visible progress has been made. The ensuing disappointment has caused some of the original artists to drop out of the group.

Hiring a Consultant

The artists don't want to "hand over" the project to a consultant, but rather to use her skills and advice to do most of the work themselves.

The most positive step taken so far has been the hiring of an experienced arts developer to work with the group. This person has also written a book on how to do arts development projects, which some members of the work group have been studying. However, the artists don't want to "hand over" the project to a consultant, but rather to use her skills and advice to do most of the work themselves. This means that until a potential site has been identified and determined to be workable, there is little that the consultant can do.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Get staff support:** The artists need skilled staff to help them complete the incorporation process, develop a business plan, find a suitable site, find potential partners and/or funders, and put together a workable business development project. They need to define their staffing needs, and ask for help from SNG and/or Redesign.
- ◆ **Further explore the potential of some existing sites.** Some possible sites have been discarded because it was felt that the money available in the NRP Plan would not be enough to cover extensive rehab costs. There might be ways to put together a development package that would include grant and/or government support, a mortgage, and anchor tenants.
- ◆ **Aim for visibility and solicit community support.** This kind of effort takes time and energy. Perhaps some former members of the group might agree to help. Here are a few ideas the artists might consider:
 - ⇒ Exhibit at events or community locations (like the Birchwood Cafe).
 - ⇒ Look for opportunities to get the group's presence felt. For example: designing sets or costumes for the community play, donating art work for the King's Fair raffle, having a "grand opening" at the Ivy Building, having a street fair at National Night Out.
 - ⇒ Write an article for the *Profile* every month.
- ◆ **Preserve records and document history.** Have a set of historical records that are made available to new members. These could include: the Arts and Culture section of the NRP Action Plan, the survey of artists, a logbook that includes minutes of all meetings since inception, By-laws and Articles of Incorporation, and articles in the *Profile*. Ask newcomers to review the records, and also to read the book on how to do development projects.

School/Park Collaboration

Origins

Matthews Center is the oldest school/park collaboration in Minneapolis. SNG's Youth program is based at Matthews Center. SNG uses Matthews Center for most of its regular meetings, and big events such as King's Fair and the Earth and Tree Fair. SNG works closely with Community Education, which is also housed in Matthews Center. Many SNG events are co-sponsored with Community Education, such as the Stroll Patrol, the Seward Ice Follies, and the Halloween Parade and Haunted House.

The Community Education staffperson describes the relationship with SNG:

The Seward Matthews Community Center is located in the center of the Seward neighborhood. If you look at this map here, you see we are very centrally located. SNG uses us as a central meeting place and that's great. I find them a very valuable asset for working with the neighborhood. SNG and the neighborhood folks valued us so much that they put \$261,000 towards renovation and making the park more user-friendly. So that's wonderful, they really value us.

The Matthews Park director echoes a similar view. She said that through SNG, park programming reaches out to the community. The SNG youth worker recruits people to participate in Park programs, in particular the youth programs they sponsor:

The SNG Youth program is a complement to the Park Board's programs: YMAP and Youth Line. SNG's program does youth employment, directs youth to other programs which might be useful to them, and engages the youth in community service.

The Park Board's YMAP and Youth Line programs are not neighborhood-specific, but the SNG Youth program is. The SNG staff get to know the kids over a long period of time. The length of time that the current SNG Youth Program staff member has spent here is a huge asset to us (the Park Board).

With the opportunity presented by NRP funds, the residents writing Seward's Action Plan decided that NRP money should go into the school/park collaboration in some major areas: renovating the Matthews Center building, improving the Seward School Media Center, purchasing sports equipment, and putting in a new gym floor and parking lot (already completed using Early Access funds). The renovation of Matthews Center was intended to make the space more usable to the neighborhood. The purchase of media equipment for the Seward School Media Center with NRP funds intended to make the Media Center's resources more accessible to Seward residents.

Matthews Center Renovation

The Strategy

Renovate the interior of Matthews Center. Plan and implement interior renovations to Matthews Center including accessibility improvements for handicapped users, life safety improvements, and energy efficient improvements.

The Painful Process

The Park Board admittedly saw the resident group as purely "advisory," whereas the residents saw themselves as determining what the renovation would look like.

The renovation of Matthews Park falls under the Social Environment Section of Seward's NRP Plan. The \$261,000 in NRP funds was to be supplemented by money from the Park Board, including an NSP grant for energy improvements. This money was in addition to NRP early access funds for a new gym floor in the school/park building, and a new parking lot. It will later be supplemented with another \$20,000 for equipment, but implementation of this strategy awaits more coordination among the users of the school/park complex.

From the outset, the planning process was fraught with difficulties. This led one resident who stayed through the process the entire time to say:

If I had to do it over again I would work through the process and determine, what are the policies that will make it difficult to make decisions. The park is supposed to be open soon, and I will force everyone to have a party. I wish I could say, I lost weight over it, but I lost a lot of brain cells!

The troubles began soon after the Park Board sent around a mailing to residents of nearby blocks, requesting their input for the renovation plans. The residents who showed up were surprised to discover that an architect had already been hired, and preliminary plans drawn up. These plans did not include many of the things that park users had been hoping for, including additional storage space and meeting or activity space, and they did not provide for private offices for staff. The Park Board admittedly saw the resident group as purely "advisory," whereas the residents saw themselves as determining what the renovation would look like.

In some ways, the differences pointed to a typical clash between official policy-makers and grass-roots people. But in other ways, there was a difference, specifically that this time, the grass-roots people held the purse-strings.

At the heart of the issue was not having private office space. But other concerns included:

- ◆ The Park Board thought it appropriate to use NRP funds to replace water heaters and other facilities. SNG thought that money for facilities should come out of Park Board maintenance and not NRP funds.
- ◆ The Park Board did not coordinate or communicate renovation plans very well to its own staff. For example, a year before the scheduled renovation, the Park Board had added very expensive windows (that could not be opened!) without consideration of the fact that in just a year the windows might be replaced by the renovation.

After one or two confrontational public meetings, the planning process broke down entirely. The advisory group firmly refused to release the NRP funds. And so matters might have remained permanently, and did remain, for more than six months.

Forging New Partnerships

The renovation itself represented a series of compromises, and is perhaps not as ideal as the residents would have wished. However, the process whereby it happened might be one of the most important outcomes of the NRP program.

While the Park Board was difficult to work with, they had been unused to collaboration with community groups. The fact that the community had control over a significant amount of money greatly increased its ability to negotiate and to invite the Park Board to reconsider the way they have dealt with community groups.

One or two far-sighted Park Board officials helped to facilitate a negotiation process that resulted in a very satisfactory lease agreement, whereby the Park Board agreed to provide office space for the SNG youth worker for 40 years in exchange for the NRP contribution toward renovation.

From the experience in working together with the community on the Matthews Center renovation, a new basis for interaction has emerged. As one SNG staff member reflects:

We formed a totally different relationship with the Park Board. They had never considered letting other groups use their space, and now they have agreed to lease us space for 40 years.

This new contract was only a beginning point, but a critical one. Over the next year, the advisory group and Park Board staff met in a spirit of friendly cooperation to plan the renovation. There were hurdles still to be overcome. These included underfunding of the project as envisioned in the joint meetings of the neighborhood advisory group and the Park Board, and last-minute funding cuts that were unacceptable to the neighborhood. But the advisory group, and especially its unofficial chair, persevered. Ultimately, the Park Board staff as well as NRP staff came up with the funds needed to complete the project in a way that was acceptable to the neighborhood.

The renovation is now complete, and the grand opening of the renovated Matthews Center is scheduled shortly after this writing.

The renovation itself represented a series of compromises, and is perhaps not as ideal as the residents would have wished. However, the process whereby it happened might be one of the most important outcomes of the NRP program: that governmental agencies traditionally steeped in bureaucracy and ill-equipped to respond to grass-roots needs have sat down at the table with residents and really talked to them, and really listened to them.

Seward Montessori Media Center

The Strategy

Establish a media center community access program at Seward School. 1) Provide public access to educational opportunities, computer networks and equipment, and 2) Facilitate neighborhood based media related projects. Purchase video equipment, a photocopier, a color printer, a computer, and a fax machine to supplement equipment at the Seward Montessori media center. Provide public access to the media center.

Implementation Slow

Implementation of this strategy, which provides \$20,000 in NRP funds to purchase video and computer equipment for the school's Media Center, began with a work group of interested people, like most of the other NRP-funded projects. The group of about eight to ten people includes some neighborhood residents who like media technology and are knowledgeable, as well as staff from the school/park complex, including the Media Center director, a teacher, and the Community Education coordinator.

Two video cameras have been purchased so far at a cost of about \$4,000, and one of these was used by SNG's Youth program participants to make "Jump Shot," a video using basketball as a metaphor for life in Seward. The project has otherwise proceeded very slowly. Part of the problem is that the advisory group cannot decide whether to invest in computer equipment by Macintosh, IBM, or something that is compatible with both. But more seriously, SNG staff and volunteers want to insure that hand in hand with the new equipment purchase comes a new process for opening the Media Center's resources for use by the neighborhood.

One member of the advisory group reflected on origins of the NRP strategy:

When the Seward neighborhood got the NRP money, I agreed to be on a steering committee. The people from the high-rises kept coming up saying, I really want to learn how to use computers. During this time, the school built an addition—the Media Center. I came to the principal and said, people want to learn about computers, so why don't we use the Media Center in the evenings for the people in the neighborhood?

Another advisory group member describes the present use of the Media Center by Seward residents:

We have two components in the Media Center—video production and computers. The Youth group has used the video production equipment for their projects. We also have had a Media Center Open House. Some retired people have come to use the computers. The money for the open house has come through Community Education. I teach people sometimes, and there is also the Apple Computers Users Group to answer questions. I would like to see the Open House every week.

The idea of regular use of the Media Center has been a slow process to implement. One volunteer interpreted this as resistance, due to concerns about theft:

There has been a lot of resistance on the part of the school. The school officials are afraid that somebody will steal their computers.

SNG staff have decided to move cautiously and to tie further equipment purchase to a definite plan for community access.

Matthews Center Activities Council

The Strategy

Increase Matthews Center Activities Council membership, fundraising, and community involvement.

There is another, related strategy that is even more far-reaching; that is:

Establish an association of local organizations and individuals (Matthews Center, SNG, PTSO, Seward School, seniors, youth, etc.) to assess needs, develop resources, and implement social, arts, recreational, and educational programs to better meet the needs of all residents.

The Matthews Center Activities Council, according to people who worked on the NRP Social Environment Plan, was intended to be the cornerstone of the other projects involving the school/park complex. For the remaining funded and unfunded strategies, the various players in the complex need to work together to decide how best to use the money.

The Community Resource and Activities Coordinator

The intention of the NRP planners was for the funded position of Community Resource and Activities Coordinator to work on making the other, unfunded strategies happen with the help of a group like the Matthews Center Activities Council.

The two remaining funded strategies are the Media Center equipment/access project, and \$20,000 for purchasing new sports equipment. The intention of the NRP planners was for the funded position of Community Resource and Activities Coordinator to work on making the other, unfunded strategies happen with the help of a group like the Matthews Center Activities Council.

The coordinator position was reduced from full-time to three-quarters time, and has not yet been filled by a permanent staff person. For the past six months, three independent contractors have been doing some of the work contemplated for the permanent staff, but only one-quarter time has been devoted to bringing together the various agencies and groups in Seward, and much of that contractor's time has been devoted to the membership drive.

Therefore, the Matthews Center Activities Council project may be considered as still in infancy, or even embryonic.

Because SNG holds the purse-strings for NRP-funded projects, it has emerged as a key player in the collaborations with the Park Board, Community Education, and Seward Montessori School. However, the links between SNG and its partners are not all the same.

Links with Community Education

"Community building is the foundation of Community Education. So, it's an exact fit with what Community Education is supposed to be."

The Community Education coordinator, who is employed by the Minneapolis Public Schools, feels that the SNG's Community Building program is an exact fit with his own job:

I've been working at Minneapolis Community Education for about nine years. Community building is the foundation of Community Education. So, it's an exact fit with what Community Education is supposed to be doing, working with block clubs—not just working with schools, not just working with the school kids but with the neighborhood kids.

Seward Montessori is not a designated "community school." But there are a lot of community volunteers who come in here, community money has been given to the school by the NRP to enhance it and get more video and computer equipment. So, the community has given to the school and now I think it is important for the school to give to the community, to find ways to open up its facilities and share them with the Seward Neighborhood. And I want to make sure I continue to facilitate that. These facilities are used well, and not just during the school day but in the evenings, late into the evenings on a regular basis, on the weekends, etc.

The Community Education coordinator participates at all CBC meetings and supplies the refreshments, in addition to many other SNG activities where he participates and lends the resources at his disposal.

Links with the Park Board

A new kind of relationship with the Park Board has emerged from the NRP renovation planning.

The Matthews Park director also attends CBC meetings, and arranges space for CBC events. The primary nexus for interaction with SNG comes with SNG's Youth Program. As was mentioned, the Park director values the SNG youth worker because of her ability to organize the youth to participate in Park activities. The youth worker is able to do this because she knows the youth well, having worked with them for more than five years.

A new kind of relationship with the Park Board has emerged from the NRP renovation planning, in which all the players at the school/park complex including the day care program called Rec Plus, which has those with no direct connections to SNG, sat down to work with Park Board planning officials to negotiate a lease and design the new interior. This new working relationship will hopefully continue under the auspices of a stronger Matthews Center Activities Council.

Links with Seward Montessori School

There is less interaction with the school than the other partners.

There is less interaction with the school than the other partners. School facilities were used by SNG extensively during the Matthews Center renovation process. The basis for interaction is mostly centered around negotiating space for meetings after school hours. The Media Center project has been slow to develop.

The school does have a person with the title of "Community Liaison." However, since most of SNG's community building activities happen when school is not in session, the Community Liaison has little opportunity to interact with SNG on jointly sponsored activities.

As was pointed out in the interviews, Seward Montessori is not a designated neighborhood school. Only about one-fourth of Seward children attend it. Nonetheless, because of its location in the heart of the community, residents would like more kinds of interactions and collaborations to happen and this was clearly the intent of the Media Center strategy in the Social Environment Plan.

How are We Doing?

One Outstanding Success

The primary and outstanding accomplishment to date is the new partnership forged with the Minneapolis Park Board. The Study Team hopes that in all future encounters with City officials, whether Park Board, police, MCDA, Public Works, or any other department or agency, SNG will build on this unprecedented success. We hope it will provide a model for other neighborhoods who are in many cases for the first time taking an important say in what decisions are made for their future.

The primary and outstanding accomplishment to date of the various NRP strategies aimed at increased school/park collaboration is the new partnership forged with the Minneapolis Park Board during the renovation of Matthews Center.

The interior renovation of Matthews Center is the least of what was accomplished here. A small advisory group of residents and school/park users succeeded in sitting down at the table with the Minneapolis Park Board as equal partners in the planning process. They negotiated a new 40-year lease, and they established and maintained significant input into the renovation plans. The Study Team recognizes this feat as one of the major accomplishments of the NRP Action Plan to date.

We hope that in all future encounters with City officials, whether Park Board, police, MCDA, Public Works, or *any* other department or agency, SNG will build on this unprecedented success. We hope it will provide a model for other neighborhoods who are in many cases for the first time taking an important say in what decisions are made for their future.

A Fount of Good Will

One important asset that SNG has developed with the partners in the school/park complex is a spirit of cooperation and good will.

While implementation of the other strategies that involve school/park collaboration are proceeding slowly, there is one important asset that SNG has developed with the partners in the school/park complex: a spirit of cooperation and good will that will certainly further progress when the staff has been hired to augment the existing Matthews Center Activities Council, and subsequently to complete the other projects including the Media Center and the sports equipment purchase.

A Road Map

The work done to date to enhance communications at Matthews Center and Seward Montessori School has been primarily facilitated by one staff person; she has, in essence, written the road map for the other players to follow.

The work done to date to enhance communications at Matthews Center and Seward Montessori School has been primarily facilitated by one staff person who has served on virtually every work group. She also was a designer of the NRP Social Environment Plan and a former SNG Board member. In these roles, and as temporary staff assigned to specific projects she has, in essence, written the road map for the other players to follow. What remains to be done would be best accomplished by filling the staff position for the Community Resource and Activities Coordinator.

Some Media Center Outreach

Although implementation of the Media Center strategy has proceeded slowly, there have been some clear accomplishments. These include:

- ◆ Creation of the Media Center advisory task force to approve equipment expenditures and plan for public access. The meetings of the task force have

been attended by a consistent group of about eight neighborhood residents and school staff.

- ◆ There have been two public Community Education classes for residents interested in learning to use the Internet via the Media Center's Apple computers.

Recommendations

Hire the Community Resource and Activities Coordinator. This position, funded at three-quarters time through the NRP Social Environment Plan, is critical to the accomplishment of all of the objectives related to increasing school/park collaboration, and also to many of the other strategies in the NRP Social Environment Plan. A qualified and competent person, whether an employee or an independent contractor, could make great progress toward implementation in the remaining three NRP years. The person we envision hiring or contracting with would require little supervision and would build upon progress already made. This person might also be responsible for implementing the Arts and Culture section of the Social Environment Plan.

PART III. CONCLUSIONS

KEY THEMES

Rapid Changes Resulting from the NRP process

NRP, bringing major dollars and responsibility to the neighborhood level, is a cultural as well as a social innovation which requires extra effort to communicate--both what it is about and how to participate in it. NRP has impacted on the SNG in two primary ways:

- ◆ First, there are many challenging new projects that the SNG must now implement in addition to continuing its own organizational agenda.
- ◆ Second, because control of the NRP funds rests with the SNG, SNG has more power and political clout in its dealings with other organizations than it had before NRP. SNG now offers a new channel to interact and participate in the decision-making process that affects Seward neighborhood, both for residents and also for other organizations.

Major Organizational Stress

The NRP Action Plan did not provide for sufficient staff and resources to carry out its ambitious strategies, nor even to try to leverage additional funding support.

SNG is experiencing major organizational stress. Its relatively small staff is coping with more projects and activities, just in the single program area of Community Building, than can possibly be accomplished, in one year or even over the five years of NRP funding.

There has been high staff turnover; all of the five new people who were hired over the last year and a half to help handle the increased work load have left. Volunteers are also being asked for more and more time commitment. At the 1996 planning retreat, 338 volunteer "slots" were identified as required simply to carry out the routine monthly activities of the various committees, work groups, and task forces. At a minimum, filling a "slot" means attending one or more meetings monthly. This does not include all of the additional volunteer effort needed to do block club activities, the membership drive, and the many events.

The NRP Action Plan did not provide for sufficient staff and resources to carry out its ambitious strategies, much less to find time to leverage additional funding support. Many of the NRP and MN ODP strategies which comprise the "work list" for the Community Building program have not yet even been attempted. Many of those that have begun still are far short of being completed and are suffering from too few

resources, in terms of time, money and skills. And Community Building is only one of SNG's five major program areas, all of which are experiencing similar stresses.

Astonishing Successes

It is probably correct to say that every single household in Seward has been touched by some community building effort.

Nonetheless, many impressive successes have been achieved during the almost-two years since NRP began implementation. The Study Team, on reflection, finds these successes astonishing, given the scope of the tasks being attempted.

Simply to describe the multitudinous activities supported by SNG under the one program of Community Building has been daunting for the Study Team (as this long report indicates!). It is probably correct to say that every single household in Seward has been touched by some community building effort.

Dedicated Support

The residents of Seward have provided incredibly dedicated volunteer support, numbering in many thousands of hours, to the array of projects, activities, committees, work groups, events, and task forces that have been busily changing the face of Seward.

.All things considered, staff have made relatively few complaints about the burdens of their work. And most important, the residents of Seward have provided incredibly dedicated volunteer support, numbering in many thousands of hours, to the array of projects, activities, committees, work groups, events, and task forces that have been busily changing the face of Seward.

Nonetheless, the list of problems identified at the Wilder Forest planning retreat makes it clear that SNG's resources are stretched too thin. Other obstacles are finding ways for staff, Board and volunteers to communicate effectively and define clear roles for one another. The Retreat Follow-up Proposal attempts to address many of these concerns, and yet it also demands even more volunteer and staff time if it is to work effectively.

Organizational Reflections

The Study Team is convinced that SNG cannot achieve all of its stated organizational goals, either for the Community Building program or for the NRP Action Plan over the five NRP years, without additional resources.

The Study Team is convinced that SNG cannot achieve its all of its stated organizational goals, either for the Community Building program or for the NRP Action Plan over the five NRP years, without additional resources. This means more staff, more outreach to new volunteers and participants, and especially raising more money.

The only other alternative would be to scale down the level of activity and cut programming. Some attempt to do this was made in putting together the draft

committee work plans for 1997. In the case of CBC, giving low priority to the Social Environment strategies under Children and Families and Arts and Culture has called into question whether CBC should be responsible for these areas. In another program area (Environment), the work plan for 1997 was realistically limited according to what the half-time staff person might be expected to accomplish, and it became clear that at this rate of activity the NRP Action Plan cannot possibly be implemented in the time remaining.

The Study Team, based on its interviews and participant observation, believes that cutting back on activities and/or programs would not be acceptable to the many constituencies in the neighborhood who look to SNG for leadership and support. However, if this is what is ultimately done, there needs to be a neighborhood-wide process to decide where the cuts will be made, especially if NRP funds are involved.

The Four Outcomes

We commend SNG for the consistency with which the four outcomes are pursued in the multitudinous activities of the Community Building program.

The Study Team, after examination of all the community building activities currently being implemented, concurs strongly with staff in its selection of four broad outcomes for programming. Also, we commend SNG for the consistency with which these outcomes are pursued in the multitudinous activities of the Community Building program. The following summary mentions only a few of the many ways that SNG pursues, and achieves, these four outcomes.

Diverse, broad-based participation in activities, events and projects at the block and neighborhood levels.

During the year of this self-study project the Seward neighborhood has been buzzing with organized activities, open to all, at the block level as well as the neighborhood level. The activities are widely promoted through the *Seward Profile*, which is delivered door-to-door, and sometimes by flyering. Virtually every one of these activities has been either sponsored by, or supported by, SNG's Community Building program.

To name a few of these, they include:

- ◆ Block and apartment club parties, especially on National Night Out.
- ◆ The traditional neighborhood-wide events, and some new ones as well.
- ◆ Monthly CBC meetings for residents, agencies, and others to express views.
- ◆ New opportunities to participate in projects of personal interest, such as theater, arts, and community gardens.
- ◆ New opportunities to participate in decision-making task forces such as community policing, media access, and park renovation.

- ◆ New work groups for residents and others to work together to build community, such as Welcome Wagon and Stroll Patrol.
- ◆ Door-to-door membership drive to inform residents of SNG activities and invite them to take part.

Reduced anonymity and isolation of separate groups--by age, gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, income level, social class, own/rent, business/resident, etc.

Isolation and anonymity are reduced when people meet with one another and feel welcomed. Targeted groups for increasing diversity of participation include persons of color, senior citizens, renters, and youth. During the past year, outreach activities to these groups have included:

- ◆ An outreach survey, aimed at identifying barriers to participation for residents of color.
- ◆ New apartment club organizing at multiple apartment buildings with high target populations.
- ◆ Door-to-door membership drive using a block map of Seward.
- ◆ Launching of the intergenerational theater project with intensive recruitment of youth and seniors.
- ◆ Links to SNG Youth program and the business community in all Community Building activities.
- ◆ Increased diversity of staff and Board makeup.
- ◆ Changing both staff and Board membership to reflect the changing neighborhood demographics.

Increased connections and networks built among community agencies, resources, businesses, and residents.

SNG's long history and tradition have always brought together diverse elements of the Seward community, but there will never be enough networks built to sit back and relax. This is the nature of community building.

Collaborations exist between SNG and Seward Montessori School, the Park Board, Community Education, CCP/SAFE, the police department, some neighborhood churches, and institutions including Augsburg College, Fairview Hospital, and Smiley's Clinic. Everyone in SNG's business community is invited to participate in its activities, either through financial support, providing jobs for youth, or helping with events. SNG's long history and tradition have always brought together diverse elements of the Seward community.

There will never be enough networks built to sit back and relax; this is the nature of community building.

Build relationships = people face to face.

SNG staff spends about 99.5 percent of their time building relationships. Face-to-face relationships are the interwoven warp and woof that make up the community fabric.

Face-to-face relationships are the interwoven warp and woof that make up the community fabric. SNG staff spend about 99.5 percent of their time building those relationships. Every phone call or person stopping in to the office asking for information means people talking to each other about the neighborhood. No one is ever too busy to talk to a caller or visitor. At SNG the administrative work always takes a back seat to the people who live, work and play in Seward.

Other ways that the Community Building program supports relationships are:

- ◆ **Block clubs:** The block clubs, the basic unit of SNG organizing, are a vehicle for residents to meet and get to know one another.
- ◆ **Community Building Committee (CBC):** The CBC provides a regular forum for face-to-face encounters among residents and other stakeholders in the neighborhood.
- ◆ **Stroll Patrol:** The strollers make a practice of greeting people who are out working in their yards or walking along the street.
- ◆ **Welcome Wagon:** This new initiative is aimed at making newcomers feel welcomed, both homeowners and renters.

And More of the Above

Not only does SNG outreach to other organizations, it is also used by those organizations as their link to the "grass roots."

SNG is used by other organizations as the primary way they can connect to the community residents. This happens at the monthly CBC meetings, and on many other occasions as well. At King's Fair the organizations set up their informational booths. They use the *Profile* to advertise their programs, job openings and other opportunities. The NRP projects have provided a chance for them to reach out to residents--most notably so far, the Earth and Tree Fair and the theater project. The Park director and Community Education coordinator both use SNG to recruit participants for their programs.

The CBC provides a forum for new ideas to be brought to the community and take root. If there is interest CBC will help massage an idea into an actual project, bringing to bear both resident enthusiasm and the skills of SNG, CCP/SAFE and the school/park staff.

Summing Up

SNG uses its organizational skills and resources to help residents make the vision and the values a reality.

This self-study has hopefully opened a window into the heart of SNG, and revealed the processes whereby it creates and nurtures programs that the community wants.

SNG's Community Building program has a sense of values expressed in the four outcomes of diversity, reduced isolation, building network, and bringing people together face-to-face. The NRP Action Plan has contributed a vision of the future (a mix of all incomes, ethnicity, business, homes and apartments, with access to parks, recreational and educational opportunities and bike transportation). SNG uses its organizational skills and resources to help residents make the vision and the values a reality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Neighborhood groups as a whole, and especially NRP, are new cultural and social institutions which require creating new ways for people to interact with each other.

Neighborhood groups as a whole, and especially NRP, are new cultural and social institutions which require creating new ways for people to interact with each other. SNG's Community Building program in some ways uses a model similar to an old-fashioned village or small town, rather than the anonymity and isolation typical of inner cities.

However, the average small town did not have people from many cultures, not all of them even speaking the same language, or a constant turnover of new residents, or widely disparate life styles. If the model is to work, much attention has to be paid to communicating SNG's goals and activities to diverse audiences. Also, special effort has to be made to show residents how these activities relate to their lives, and to invite their participation.

In a small town it is the weight of popular opinion, rather than an organizational directive, that leads to change, and change occurs very slowly. In Seward, change must be rapid and dramatic to respond effectively to the influx of NRP projects and changing demographics.

Organizational Recommendations

At the organizational level, SNG is suffering from stress created by too-rapid growth, too many goals and priorities, and a scarcity of resources. The Study Team's recommendations for steps that can be taken to address the stresses are:

- ◆ **First, write a 2-Year NRP Progress Report.** We recommend that a report similar to this one be prepared to summarize the progress made in the first two years of NRP implementation, the funds spent to date, and the remaining funds and tasks left to be implemented in the next three years. This report will help staff, Board and residents to make further decisions and choices.
- ◆ **Second, make leveraging additional NRP funding support a priority, create a fund-raising plan, and re-visit all of the remaining strategies at a neighborhood level.**

- ⇒ First, review with the community at large what parts of the Action Plan may at this mid-point in implementation be eliminated, delayed, or made less ambitious. We recommend that, to avoid later disappointments and misunderstandings, this effort should begin immediately. The NRP Coordinator, the IOC, and the four affected program area committees should share this responsibility.
- ⇒ Second, create a clear fund-raising strategy that identifies specific areas where more staff or project dollars are needed if the NRP Action Plan is to be completed on time. For those strategies that the community identifies as still needing implementation, we recommend that intensive efforts be made to fund-raise and leverage additional grants and other support to match the NRP funds.
- ◆ **Third, increase staffing to the appropriate level to complete tasks and nurture volunteers; be realistic.** We recommend that staffing be increased to a level appropriate to accomplish the work required by SNG. This might be done by "contracting out" certain tasks rather than adding to the administrative burden of hiring and supervising new employees. The new work plans should be helpful in assessing staffing needs.

Also, in considering what is an appropriate staff work load, a realistic picture needs to be drawn of the amount of time required in neighborhood community building that drains efficiency--the constant meetings, interruptions for phone calls, typing minutes, setting and mailing agendas, not to mention the noise level that distracts from getting any work done.

Improving Communication

Develop or adopt existing mission statements for SNG and the key program areas. Have a clear description of how Community Building Program relates and collaborates with other SNG program areas, and record in minutes and staff reports the updates on collaborations as they evolve.

- ◆ **Use regularly scheduled meetings for essential communications.** The weekly lunches of the CCP/SAFE Crime Team are a good example of how a regular time facilitates and fosters a good working relationship. Pick and choose carefully, including all the stakeholders you would like to have working together on a specific project or activity for these occasions.
- ◆ **Develop or adopt existing mission statements for SNG and the key program areas.** Have a clear description of how Community Building Program relates and collaborates with other SNG program areas, and record in minutes and staff reports the continual updates on collaborations as they evolve.
- ◆ **Have a clear organizational chart, and program area work flow charts, that everyone uses and can find.** It would be nice to post these charts in the new Resource Center.

- ◆ **Re-define the crime fighting strategies with the CCP/SAFE Team, and then clarify what callers can expect from SNG.** Because of staff turnover at SNG and CCP/SAFE, the old systems of reporting crimes and problem properties need to be re-defined and made clear to residents and businesses. Also, a good working relationship with the CCP/SAFE Crime Team, including the police and the housing inspector, needs to be re-established and actively involved in problem resolution. Newer ideas such as restorative justice and mediation might be discussed at these meetings. Also, begin to work with the team on the community policing project. Try engaging their help to develop a system of identifying hot spots and directing police to patrol them.
- ◆ **Find ways to orient and mentor new participants.** Orientation and ongoing education of new participants to the roles and goals of the projects is a critical step, both for outreach to underserved groups and for making best use of volunteer help. A buddy or mentor system might work best. Provide mentors with orientation packets, including information about democratic participatory methods, the committee work plan, and the NRP Action Plan. Explain how the meetings work, what is expected of members, and all the ways participation in SNG activities can happen outside of meetings.
- ◆ **Use big visuals and the arts to advertise events and create a sense of ongoing neighborhood presence.** Increase visibility of the neighborhood with large signs or banners at the entrances to Seward for King's Fair, Garage Sale Daze, etc. Encourage CBC to come up with some other creative ideas for visual outreach, such as floats about SNG programs in the Halloween Parade. Let artistic volunteers create lots of visual displays for the program areas (look to Housing, Youth and Environment for good examples). Encourage interested people to do videos that can get shown at events, that "show off" the programs (like the Mississippi River video made by two long-time residents).
- ◆ **Continue to use and expand *Profile* coverage.** Continue to further develop the *Profile* as the main organ for the dissemination of neighborhood information. Use as much space as staff and volunteer time will permit. Add photon essays, opinion pieces, and features about SNG activities. Encourage *Profile* staff to cover more activities. The *Profile* is not just a communications tool; it is our best historical record.

Improving Participation

Define participation as participation in community, not in SNG. Don't forget about newcomers; let someone find a time to share food and talk.

- ◆ **Create a "Participation Coordinator."** The title of Participation Coordinator suits the need better than "Volunteer Coordinator," because it invites breaking down barriers between participants and volunteers. The goal of the position is to increase participation by residents in all ways and at all levels of commitment. In this way, the sense of ownership of residents is increased.

Models for this approach include the Heart of the Beast May Day Parade where individuals can participate at any variety of commitment level from planning the year's theme, to putting the finishing touches on a costume and marching in the parade, to being a bystander at the parade. Even the bystanders are often engaged by the Parade marchers as they pass by. Another model is a family holiday celebration where everyone in the family has a role to play, and there is less a sense of having service-providers and service-receivers. "Outreach" Coordinator is a possible term, but it seems less directional and focused. Also, it does not give enough ownership to residents who might feel like recipients of services rather than participants.

- ◆ **Make participation paramount over other goals such as efficiency or simple recruitment of labor.** The goal of getting residents involved may sometimes conflict with the goal of getting tasks done efficiently or even correctly. The coordinator needs to exercise judgment as to which tasks should be left to experienced staff members and volunteers. The coordinator must also work closely with all SNG staff to determine what kinds of participation are wanted, and when participation is needed. The coordinator should assist staff in any training and supervision of participants.
- ◆ **Offer lots of opportunities for participation, and invite and welcome participants.** Provide a variety of opportunities for meaningful participation and leadership—not just committee work. This suggestion came from the Wilder Forest retreat. Participation might be viewed as a continuum from the highly skilled volunteer to a resident who simply shows up at an event. Participation could mean anything from serving on a committee to simply attending a block club picnic. Define participation as participation *in community*, not in SNG. The ideal coordinator will seek ways to involve every SNG member (and ultimately every Seward resident!) at their personal level of time, skill, interest and commitment. The coordinator needs to insure that new participants are given adequate guidance and supervision to ensure their comfort level and to minimize any possible frustration in doing something new.
- ◆ **Let people support SNG in lots of ways.** Find ways for people to be supportive of SNG and its agenda, even if they are not personally active in their support. For example, wearing a SNG button, or signing their name on a petition, or participating in a fund-raising drive, or attending a performance event. Buying a calendar or pasta to support the Youth program, attending a spaghetti dinner to raise money—these are all ways residents can help. Let them feel that by doing this they are part of SNG.
- ◆ **Find ways to keep the door open for new participants.** After initial involvement, the coordinator needs to find ways to keep the door open to continued involvement. This might be done by personally following up with each new participant, or finding a mentor to do that. Help them process their experience, and thank them for helping the neighborhood. Just don't forget about them; let someone find a time to share food and talk.

- ◆ **Work with block club leaders to develop participation strategies.** Whenever possible, the Participation Coordinator should encourage block club leaders to develop their own strategies for increasing participation within their block clubs. Taking individual block club leaders out to lunch seems like a good opportunity to thank them as well as engage their help.
- ◆ **Continue with the outreach survey.** Periodically repeat the outreach survey of residents of under-represented groups to determine barriers to participation and how to overcome these barriers. Ideally, the person conducting the survey should be of a background similar to the population being surveyed.

Ongoing Self-Reflection

The work plan is the best evaluation tool; it sets the goals and priorities and timelines. But the committees and the SNG Board need to take time out at the end of the year before putting it away in the archives to look at it, step-by-step, and assess progress. This assessment can go into the minutes and become the official record.

SNG needs and wants a system for regular and ongoing self-reflection. It's especially important, because there are so many diverse stakeholders, to ensure regular communication about program goals and activities. Moreover, SNG is truly "making history," especially with the ambitious NRP Plan, and a record of that needs to be preserved.

On the other hand, the already overworked staff has little time to set aside. Certainly a project as time-intensive as this self-study can't be undertaken again.

Here are the Study Team's suggestions for making record-keeping, evaluation, and ongoing learning simple:

- ◆ **Choose tools for evaluation that have multiple uses.** The tools suggested here all will be useful for other things than "just" evaluation. Communication--disseminating information to stakeholders--is what community building is all about, and a lot of it is already being done. Even a job description can be helpful in evaluation. Copies of flyers that were delivered for the theater project, or the transportation task force, will provide useful information for future evaluators. SNG's membership brochure tells a lot that is useful for setting goals and priorities.
- ◆ **Use existing reports and communications for evaluation purposes.** Each staff person knows what things they already have to do to keep people informed. Most often these are: regular progress reports to funders, *Profile* meeting notices and articles, and the typical kinds of things people are always calling in to ask for information about in relation to their program areas. Other items that may or may not exist include mission statements, current job descriptions, organizational charts, work flow charts, copies of financial statements, and lists of outcomes for program areas such as those generated by staff at the beginning of the self-study project. All existing data should be included!

- ◆ **Make a scrapbook of these "required" documents, and keep it up to date.** All existing data should be included! Look through it periodically. One of the ways the scrapbook can be used for periodic self-reflection is to put in the committee work plan as the first entry at the beginning of each SNG year. This becomes a statement of desired outcomes for the year. Then, stop before closing out the scrapbook to archives to see what the "record" shows of how much was accomplished.

If time permits, it would be nice to keep two copies of the scrapbook, one for the staff person to keep handy, and one that anyone who was interested could page through to find out what is going on at SNG in that work area. Otherwise, a single copy can be shared.

- ◆ **Do monthly staff reports to the program area committees.** Add these reports to the scrapbook. They will also be useful to staff at their annual performance evaluation, and to the committees in assessing progress on their work plans.
- ◆ **Make regular use of work that is already being done in creating future evaluation reports.** Primarily, this means keeping good track of things, so they are easily to hand when needed. Having already "invented" a scrapbook for each committee or program area, add to this major grant proposals that have been funded, especially appropriate sections of the NRP Action Plan. Add agendas and minutes of meetings. Add handouts from the meetings. Add brochures and flyers for projects and activities. Add photos taken at meetings or events. Don't go out of your way to make up things, but be sure everything you have is kept. Keep your scrapbook organized by sections (monthly, alphabetical, whatever works for you).
- ◆ **Do annual evaluations at the committee and Board levels of the previous years' work plans.** The work plan is the best evaluation tool; it sets the goals and priorities and timelines. But the committees and the SNG Board need to take time out at the end of the year before putting it away in the archives to look at it, step-by-step, and assess progress. This assessment can go into the minutes and become the official record.
- ◆ **Write an Annual Report for SNG.** This report can include summaries of progress in all the work areas, photos of activities, pie charts of financials, and photos of staff, Board members, and committees.
- ◆ **Have annual planning retreats to set broad, overarching goals and principles that can be translated into work plans.** In this report we have seen the usefulness of the four outcomes as a guide to whether the Community Building program activities have been on the right track. But in a learning organization, even the broad goals will gradually change over time. A retreat composed of staff, committee members, Board members, volunteers and key stakeholders is a good place to reflect on major changes in direction. Then their goals can be translated into future work plans.

APPENDIX A: MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Analysis of membership survey (N=40) in October, 1996 by the SNG to study the SNG Community Building Program.

	Heard of	Very good	Okay	Needs improvement
Community Building Committee	15	6	0	1
Seward Profile	33	21	4	1
Stroll Patrol	30	14	3	1
King's Fair	26	11	6	0
Garage Sale Daze	31	20	3	1
Clean Sweep	27	18	5	0
National Night Out	34	19	6	0
Block Club Incentive Fund	7	3	1	0
Block Club Organizing	19	5	4	3
Problem Property Resolution	14	5	3	2
Crime Reports	16	4	4	2
Theater Project	15	2	3	0
Matthews Center Renovation	18	7	3	1
Artists Project	6	3	1	0
Media Center Access	3	1	1	0

Analysis of Membership survey

In order of most mentioned:

Heard of:

1. National Night Out (34)
2. *Profile* (33)
3. Garage Sale Daze (31)
4. Stroll Patrol (30)
5. Clean Sweep (27)
6. King's Fair (26)
7. Block Club/Apartment Organizing (19)
8. Matthews Renovation (18)
9. Crime Reports (16)
10. CBC and Theater Project (both had 15)
11. Problem Property Resolution (14)
12. Block Club Fund (7)
13. Studio Artists Project (6)
14. Media Center Access (3)

Thought "very good"

1. *Profile* (21)
2. Garage Sale (20)
3. National Night Out (19)
4. Clean Sweep (18)
5. Stroll Patrol (14)
6. King's Fair (11)
7. Matthews Park Renovation (7)
8. CBC (6)
9. Block Club Organizing and Problem Property Resolution (both 5)
10. Crime Reports (4)
11. Studio Artists Project (12)
12. Block Fund and Studio Artists Project (both 3)
13. Theater Project (2)
14. Media Center Access (1)

Thought "okay"

1. King's Fair and National Night Out (both 6)
2. Clean Sweep (5)
3. Crime Reports, Block Club Organizing, *Profile* (all 4)
4. Stroll Patrol, Matthews Park Renovation, Theater Project, Problem Property Resolution, and Garage Sale (all 3)
5. Block Fund, Studio Artists and Media Access (all 1).

"Needs Improvement"

1. Block Club Organizing and Crime Reports (3)
2. Problem Property Resolution (2)
3. CBC, *Profile*, Stroll Patrol, Garage Sale, and Matthews Renovation (all 1).

Comments on first page of the survey:

- ◆ Something missing! People (neighbors) helping each other out for home improvement projects.
- ◆ Prefers IBM over Macintosh because she owns IBM
- ◆ On problem properties: covert meetings for clean property good intentions but not necessarily in best interest for everyone (unclear).
- ◆ Assistance to home owner concerning precision grinding machine upgrade was useless.
- ◆ Your clean sweep never happens when I can participate - more notice is needed
- ◆ The Matthews Renovation has been going on forever and ever. The city makes it hard on kids. It's done in a mish-mashed way.
- ◆ The studio artists project: It is a good thing. Northern Clay a good asset to business.
- ◆ For Garage Sale Days: A good idea is for banners across the street at gateways to the neighborhood. Solicit businesses and make it a fun neighborhood weekend to buy.
- ◆ Make people more aware that they can call SNG for concerns
- ◆ I am enjoying my new driveway and sidewalk so want to thank you for making it possible..

What are your top neighborhood concerns?

- ◆ clean neighborhoods
- ◆ neighbor awareness
- ◆ crime and safety
- ◆ youth volunteer
- ◆ safety and security
- ◆ community safety
- ◆ keeping the neighborhood safe and friendly
- ◆ attracting interesting businesses and people to the neighborhood, like the Birchwood Cafe.
- ◆ A strong SNG
- ◆ Crime - problem around Zipp's and the whole block between 26th and 27th on Franklin (loitering and begging)
- ◆ Traffic at 26th and Franklin is pushing me away from neighborhood – I'm terrified to cross there and must to get home from bus-stop
- ◆ loss of pedestrian traffic on Franklin - I walk a lot, so really have noticed decrease over the years-
- ◆ problem properties, boarded up houses and buildings
- ◆ Franklin Ave. upgrade and development
- ◆ graffiti
- ◆ crime!
- ◆ crime
- ◆ programs for youth (especially teenagers)
- ◆ lack of street lights
- ◆ crime problem properties lighting
- ◆ youth activities

- ◆ appearance is very important. We'd like to encourage the SNG to concentrate on the appearance of neighborhood housing in particular and lawns, etc. in general.
- ◆ safety is another top concern
- ◆ youth activities
- ◆ crime (mostly the "petty" stuff - car break-ins, vandalism), but I also worry about my kids walking and biking to the park alone and that is an awful thing to have to worry about
- ◆ bar traffic (via foot) on their way home through our alley leaving bottles, cans, etc.
- ◆ activities for older youths (good that we have a youth worker)_
- ◆ Matthews Park (basketball) accessible to all
- ◆ Crime, closing 24th St., speeding down 24th St., walk bridge from Hiawatha
- ◆ Crime - car break ins
- ◆ noxious odors from "DeVries Bar Grinding" on Minnehaha
- ◆ Safety/Crime
- ◆ Rejuvenation of Franklin
- ◆ Schools

What are the special skills of areas of interest you would like to contribute to the neighborhood?

- ◆ good organizer, great clean up person, litter, buildings, parks.
- ◆ Community service through Augsburg!
- ◆ No time!
- ◆ My spouse is already active, I'm really too busy to do much
- ◆ helped to organize
- ◆ cultural awareness, social worker, working with Asian, Hmong and Ethiopian cultures
- ◆ gardening
- ◆ serve on a committee