

Congress Park Neighbors Green Team Meeting
October 15, 2016
9-11 am, Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church

Agenda:

- Sustainable Neighborhood Network Tips - discussion with guest speaker Tom Fesing, President of East Montclair Neighborhood Association
- Sensory Garden at Sewall Child Development Center/REACH Academy - presentation by Catharine McCord, Graduate Student and Project Lead
- Certifiably Green Denver Project - presentation by Liz Goehring about potential collaboration with CPNGT
- Other SNN Projects updates - led by Becky Coughlin

Attendees:

Mary Sullivan
Becky Coughlin
Larry Grimm
Liz Goehring
Yvonne Salfinger
Tom Fesing
Melanie Reber
Susan Bardwell
April Montgomery
Catharine McCord
Matt Lancaster

SNN Tips (Tom Fesing)

East Montclair joined the SNN program in Feb 2016. They've been an RNO since 1972. They have about 10500 residents/2400 single family dwellings. They are one of the most diverse neighborhoods with a large refugee community (SE Asian and East African). They are also one of the most affordable neighborhoods. A consistent challenge has been to get renters involved in their projects.

The East Montclair RNO meets monthly, and typically has about 35 people attending. Their meetings are not too structured, no Robert's Rules. Their typical agenda includes Updates, a Guest Speaker, Reminders of upcoming events, and the last 30 minutes as an Open Forum to capture issues/interests, etc. Meetings involving 'hot topics' such as crime bring in many attendees and new members.

One neighbor, Ann Mathews (a board member) expressed interest in the SNN program, rallied the neighborhood, got the signatures, and submitted the application. And then it took off. Their philosophy - Let residents run with the program and organize the activities.

They do most of their reaching out via Social Media: nextdoor.com, Facebook, Twitter page and Website, but have no printed newsletter.

- The website is mostly static, with background information on the neighborhood.
- They have over 700 followers on Facebook and this is one of their primary channels. Each FB post generates ~200-300 conversations.

- They have about 120 Twitter followers. Useful for reaching folks who use Twitter, but not effective for everyone.
- They use Nextdoor to push out information on events mostly to neighbors but also to surrounding neighborhoods. They used it for Clean-up campaigns.

He suggested always posting Posts rather than Events (same with Facebook) so that it shows up in folks' feeds. He also described techniques to keep posts current (i.e. reply on post to pull it back to the top or pin it to the top until the event has passed). For example, he'll usually post something 3 days prior, then the day before he reposts by changing the title to "Tomorrow", and then he'll do it again the next day at 5:00am reposting with a new title saying "Today." So he essentially updates posts manually to keep them current.

They use email (Mailchimp) to about 200 users, mostly for meeting reminders, upcoming events, averaging about once a week. He mentioned that all past emails can be imported into a database.

They do also go door-to-door, particularly with block cleanups.

To get more folks involved, Tom suggested sending out an email to all of CPN email list inviting them to sign up for the Green Team list. He suggested we write it, include the link, etc, and pass that along to our RNO, to make it easy to do.

He also suggested always having someone from the Green Team at any/all other neighborhood events, using that as an opportunity to tell people about Green Team efforts. Bring business cards. Another suggestion was to always involve public officials and police/fire departments and to have temporary lawn signs that can be placed prior to and during an event to notify neighbors.

He suggested using the app Mailchimp Snap to coordinate posts between FB/Twitter/email.

He then listed the various projects they've done and the points they've earned:

- 3 Cleanups on Colfax (18 blocks)
- 7 Cleanups on N Side of Neighborhood and Alleys too
- 5 Workshops, on composting, Denver Recycles, xeriscaping, water wise plant swap
- 5 Projects, on neighborhood inventories (i.e., #houses/rentals/population/etc.), recording construction history on individual addresses to assess growth patterns. Spreadsheet can be obtained from Taylor.
- 7 Meetings/Picnics/Refugee Picnic/Street Party/Denver Digs Trees
- Special event: Community Art Project (70 credits!), worked with P.S.You Are Here for grants (~\$2000) for a sidewalk mural, with lots of community input. Reached out to refugee community and to schools to get their thoughts for the project, "hired" a local artist, did some crowd funding for paint. Mural has flags from all over including home countries.

Other suggestions included:

- Asking Phil Goodstone re: speaking on neighborhood history or to host history 'walks'
- Considering neighborhood crosswalks as art projects
- Alleyways as art projects
- To concentrate on our section of Colfax for more credits

- To involve local businesses for locations of events and let them donate in kind supplies
- To 'follow' local businesses and schools on Facebook in order to stay up to date with their events that we may participate in
- To find ways to track and welcome 'new' neighbors (possibly through real estate companies)
- Adding a 'Suggestion Box' on social media for neighborhood ideals and feedback

Larry Grimm suggested doing an alley mural along east side of building and then the group discussed various options including sidewalk art. This is an idea that has been suggested in the past.

Tom suggested working with Neddra Niblet, PW Solid Waste - Program Administrator, Keep Denver Beautiful. Becky Coughlin said she's already in touch with her as part of their efforts to organize Alley Cleanups.

Accelerating Climate Action

Larry Grimm informed all of an upcoming "Accelerating Climate Action" event, hosted by CHUN, to be held October 22, 8:30-3:30pm, at the Community Center at 1290 N Williams. The team discussed how we could plug into this event formally, because of the obvious overlap. Yvonne and Larry will attend and represent CPNGT. The new banner and business cards were left at the church (behind the altar, right side) for them to use at that event.

Liz will also send out an event reminder to CPNGT mailing list, this weekend.

Sensory Garden at Sewall Child Development Center/REACH Academy - Catharine McCord

Catharine is a new graduate student in the UCD Landscape Architecture program, working on the new Sewall Child Development Center Sensory Garden project, to be designed and installed on the property at 9th and Fillmore. This location will be the headquarters for Sewall while maintaining satellite locations.

Catharine explained the purpose and benefits of sensory gardens, and explained the plans for the space behind the old Waldorf School. The Sensory Garden would be used by the children during the day, and would also be open to the community in the evening/off hours.

The project is pursuing a \$75,000 Grant from the Colorado Garden Foundation, and has been accepted through the first round. The second round is due end of October. As part of the second round, she needs to include community involvement.

Discussion centered on how the CPNGT could become involved. For example, we could help by providing plants (either from our own gardens in a "dig and divide" event in spring and fall, or through purchases), as well as providing volunteer hours to plant and maintain the garden. We also discussed how we could help liaise with the neighborhood and "introduce" the Sewell group to CPN via newsletter articles. Finally, we discussed needing a CPNGT point person. Emily Hunter and April Montgomery will share this. The Green Team will add a letter of support and will also work on submitting a proposal to SNN for the CPNGT's involvement.

Certifiably Green Denver - Liz Goehring

Liz presented an overview of the Certifiably Green Denver (CGD) program for local businesses, and how the CPNGT could help promote the program as a SNN project. The CGD program is very interested in working with us in helping our local businesses (about 100 in total) become aware of and engaged with the program. We can do this by hosting a workshop in January, and Green Team members can personally invite businesses. Interested Green Team members could also work with specific businesses helping them work through their checklists to obtain certification.

Discussion indicated significant interest on benefits to businesses, community, consumers and the CPGT. A follow up meeting with the members interested in inviting businesses will be scheduled. It was suggested that we continue to do an inventory of all businesses, including businesses in the home, to gain points and also add to our asset map.

Alley Cleanups - Becky Couglin

Becky described how she's organizing an Alley Cleanup for next weekend (Oct 23), working with Denver Recycles, and also with Taylor (SNN office) for a flyer for the event. She has submitted a proposal for this project. She is also planning to capture the process of organizing Alley Cleanups as a Neighborhood Resource, so others can easily organize events for their own block.