

Ventura Village Wellness, Gardening & Greening Committee 2011 Year in review Highlights!

Committee formed – January

Local Food Resource Hub Participation



(Seed and Plant distribution day I outdoors at the PCC)

Committee Members Ian McNamara, Bob Albee and Bill Kingsbury led local participation in the Phillips branch of this city-wide effort which was facilitated by Gardening Matters. The goal of the program was to improve participants' access to gardening and healthy food. The main feature of the program was the distribution of seeds and seedlings to members on two dates in the Spring. The Phillips Hub ended up with 68 individual and 23 community garden members. City-wide, 618 individuals, families or community gardens participated and the program is growing for next year. Classes for beginning gardeners were held



(Seed and plant distribution day II indoors at the PCC)



(Hub members enjoy the July 30 BBQ)

in the spring and summer at the East Phillips Community Garden with about 10 to 15 participants. The hub also hosted a barbecue in July which had about 30 participants. Bill Kingsbury has been selected to serve on the Stewardship Council for the program. The program looks like it will continue to grow through 2012 and beyond.

Neighborhood Beautification

Ventura Village joined the Minnesota Horticultural Society's "Minnesota Green" program in 2011. This program gives members, which must be community organizations or non-profits, access to free flowers and plants throughout the growing season. One neighborhood resident planted several kinds of flowers and plants along 18th Street at the end of 13th Avenue, we also got plants for a garden at the Maynidoowahdak Odena community. We recommend participation in this program again next year as the grounds of the new PCC, as well as other neighborhood sites, will provide more opportunities to use the available plants and flowers.

Supporting gardening/farming education

The committee was approached by the Women's Environmental Institute with a request to support scholarships for 2 residents to WEI's 2nd annual Growing Power training weekend. \$500 were allocated for this purpose, however due to timing issues no residents were available to take advantage of these scholarships. We look forward to more advance notice in 2012 and the ability to support this unique urban farming education opportunity. More information at www.growingpower.org or www.w-e-i.org.

24th Street Urban Farm Coalition



Activity: Urban Farming on land adjacent to PCC

The 24th Street Urban Farm is a coalition project whose intent is grow healthy food locally for residents, and to create the culture and practices of healthy food production close to home. Coalition member organizations include Ventura Village, Indigenous Peoples' Task Force, Women's Environmental Institute, Waite House, Indian Health Board, Native American Community Clinic, and Dream of Wild Health.



Our vision is to create an urban farm where people in the area will have access to healthy food. We will build on the traditional and cultural values so rich among the Native Americans living in the Phillips community while welcoming any residents who wish to participate in our work/share farm. The 24th Street Urban Farm will educate and serve as a training ground for organic farming; developing compost sites, growing out ancient heritage seeds and connecting young and old alike. We will plant, tend, harvest, distribute, market, preserve our good food and continue to develop community bonds between people and organizations.

In 2011 the Coalition formed at an invitation from Karen Clark. We met for 3 months and then



began building a raised bed garden, largely with youth from the Native Chat program of Indigenous Peoples' Task Force. Given the late start to our growing season actual food production was minimal, but initial benefits can be seen in the connections between individuals and organizations which have existed in physical proximity but never had significant interaction.

The coalition has continued to meet and plan into 2012 and has is developing documentation that will allow it to easily apply for grants to fund an expanded program. Bill Kingsbury has taken a leadership role in facilitating meetings and activities.

Phillips Food Justice Round Table

This group was convened in December, 2011, with a broad variety of groups represented, to address food justice issues in Phillips. Elisabeth Geschiere and David Boehnke have taken leadership roles, and Bill Kingsbury and Steve Dreyer have participated. The group is pursuing several initiatives including land acquisition and soil improvement, celebration, economics, resource mapping, political education, composting, mobilizing residents and anti-oppression work.

Conclusion

The Wellness, Gardening and Greening Committee adopted the following statement of purpose for itself, which was ratified by the neighborhood association general membership:

The purpose of the Ventura Village Wellness, Gardening & Greening Committee is to enhance the wellness of Ventura Village residents through optimized physical activities, social networking, support for home and community gardens, urban farming and healthy eating initiatives. We design these activities and infrastructures with sustainability, community involvement, and environmental justice as core values. This statement will provide direction in the years to come.

Forecast/Recommendations

Access to abundant, affordable healthy food in city cores will remain a mid to front-burner issue for the foreseeable future. The City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council both have initiatives to address issues related to food. Also, many local individuals and groups have taken it upon themselves to begin significant food production within the borders of Minneapolis and many other cities around the country. Working in concert with individuals and groups our committee has the potential to guide the direction of an affordable healthy food supply for our residents, as well as promote wellness in other areas of life.

We envision residents and local organizations embracing all aspects of the food cycle, from composting and soil building, through planting, tending and harvest, to preservation, distribution, healthy meals and composting again much closer to home than presently occurs. We are bringing diverse communities together around food through specific activities such as community gardening,

urban farming, soil improvement, shared celebrations and learning opportunities around healthy food, and the physical activities involved in its production.

Thanks to all participants:

Neighborhood residents Ian McNamara, Lotus Lofgren, Bob Albee, Bill Kingsbury, Elisabeth Geschiere, Kathy Faringer (sp?), David Boehnke, Jude Ortiz and others. Coalition Partners Sharon Day, Karen Clark, Suzanne Nash, Rachel Henderson, Francisco Segovia, Tami Didion, Kate Hemker, Andrea Nettles, Shannon Fahey, Valerie Martinez, the youth of IPTF's Native Chat program, CM Robert Lilligren and others.