



SECIA

(see-key-ah)

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The Southeast Como

Improvement Association

works to maintain and enhance the

physical, social, and economic

environment of

our neighborhood.

Through programs that serve our

community's present and future

needs, through communication,

stewardship, and citizen

involvement, we strive to foster a

sense of community and to promote

the neighborhood as a vibrant place

to live and work.

July 29, 2005

Mr. Bob Miller
Neighborhood Revitalization Program
Crown Roller Mill, Suite 425
105 5th Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Dear Mr. Miller,

This letter is in regards to the enclosed report from the Southeast Como Improvement Association (SECIA) detailing our experiences with NRP and more specifically Phase I. This review highlights the major achievements of SECIA, details the obstacles we've faced, and sets the foundation for what we hope to accomplish in Phase II.

The report includes information on how SECIA has used NRP funding to leverage more than \$1,000,000,000 in proposed plant improvements at the Xcel Highbridge and Riverside Power Plants. It details how \$1,465,000 in leveraged funds refurbished Van Cleve Park and made Tuttle Middle School a reality. The report contains budget line breakdowns, maps of the community and our projects, as well as the most current updates on our on-going programs. Enclosed is also a copy of our July Comotion, the neighborhood newsletter published monthly by SECIA, which provides a brief overview of what programs, projects and initiatives SECIA is currently engaged in.

The Phase I Review was conducted by the standing committees of SECIA (Board, Executive, Environment, Safety and Livability, History, Zoning, Party Task Force), targeted interviews of community members, and the SECIA staff. This report has proven to be an excellent and necessary step as we look towards beginning our Phase II planning and in continuing to make SE Como an ideal place to live, work and play.

Please feel free to contact myself or the SECIA staff if you have any questions or concerns regarding this report.

Sincerely,

Lee Hibbard
SECIA President

SOUTHEAST COMO NEIGHBORHOOD: THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF MINNEAPOLIS



NRP PHASE I REVIEW
SOUTHEAST COMO
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

JUNE 29TH, 2005

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SE Como Improvement Association's Neighborhood Revitalization Program Timeline



1996

- ☰ NRP Kick-off Town Meetings: 150 attendees, 8 task forces formed, survey results shared.

1997

- ☼ Elm Street public tree planting event & training - 1st of many tree programs totaling 278 planted trees.
- ☰ "All Southeast Neighborhood Celebration" began at Van Cleve Park with a clean-up then progressed to E. River Flats.

1998

- ☰ 1st neighborhood coordinator hired.
- 🏠 Tuttle School playground demolition & construction (\$50K NRP, \$120K project).

1999

- ☰ Como Tuttle Shebang community event (170 attendees).
- ☰ NRP Action Plan Town Migs (150+ attendees).
- ☰ Hired Resource Center Coordinator to provide residents with information about community and programs.
- ☼ 1st Annual "Como Cleanup" Spring litter pick-up (33 attendees).
- 🏠 Como Thoroughfare Study started.

2000

- ☰ SECIA website www.secomo.org unveiled; Como Tidbits e-newsletter started
- ☰ Resource Center opens; welcome guide distributed.
- ☰ 1st of five Annual Como Community Garages Sales with an average of 40 sales per year.
- ☼ 1st Community Garden Organizer hired; Community supported "Accolade" gateway garden & sculpture built in Van Cleve Park.
- 🏠 1st NRP home loan program informational meeting. Over-occupancy town meeting.
- 🏠 1st year of 6 where SECIA co-sponsors the South Minneapolis Housing & Home Improvement Fair.
- 🏠 Van Cleve Park renovation celebration; 1st Van Cleve Park Youthline worker hired w/NRP funds.

2001

- ☰ Sponsored events at Van Cleve Park: Como Kite Day (Spring) & Hayride and Bonfire (Fall).
- ☰ Comotion newsletter published monthly, circulation increases to over 2,000.
- ☰ Extra police patrols purchased with NRP funds. 1st noisy-party notices sent to residents and property owners.
- ☼ Environmental Coordinator hired; Public meetings addressing air quality begin in earnest (i.e. Xcel Riverside).
- ☼ Como Corner Community Garden received 1st place Blooming Boulevards Award. Water available at hydrant for the 1st time.
- 🏠 "Save the bus" e-mail campaign which resulted in maintaining a route along Como Ave. SE.

2002

- ☰ Garden Gala: 10th anniversary celebration of Como Corner Community Garden (150 attendees).
- ☼ Environmental Inventory completed: a one-of-a-kind online database detailing local toxic emitters.
- ☼ "Clean Energy Now" lawn sign kickoff. Xcel agreement to convert to natural gas.
- ☼ Vegetable garden alliance: Museum Services Inc., U of MN Como Student Community Co-op & SECIA.
- ☼ Bridges newsletter introduced: communicating collaborative opportunities between businesses & Southeast.

2003

- ☰ History group re-started resulting in postcards, tours & increased neighborhood pride.
- ☰ "Student Survival Guide" distributed by the U of MN and SECIA detailing landlord issues, property responsibilities and resources.
- ☼ 1st Good Neighbor Agreement (Ritrama, Inc.) signed at 1st Meet-n-Greet between businesses and residents.
- ☼ Community gardens break ground: Gateway Garden (12th & E. Henn) and Van Cleve Park Youthline Garden.
- ☼ Environmental Grants: Bush Foundation (\$84K), Office of Env. Assistance (\$22K) & Como Corner (Hort. Soc. grant).
- 🏠 Targeted sweep identifying exterior code violations via the Citizen Inspector Program.
- 🏠 3 University students die in a house fire, initiating a safety inspection sweep of rental properties.

2004

- ☰ 2 student organization seats added to the Board; SECIA increases visibility by moving next to Van Cleve Park.
- ☰ SECIA joins the Restorative Justice Program bringing accountability for community livability offences.
- ☰ 2nd annual Como Cookout celebration and student outreach event grows to nearly 600 attendees.
- ☰ Matching Business Grant Program continues w/15 businesses (\$53K NRP \$119K leveraged).
- ☼ Como Corner C. G. awarded Fiskars tool grant & vegetable garden alliance receives Hort. Society awards.
- ☼ 25% of Como's public trees surveyed via "iTree". Memorial tree planted for house fire tragedy.
- ☼ Rock-Tenn Corporation signs a Good Neighbor Agreement eliminating 670 tons of hazardous releases.
- 🏠 SECIA funds science lab (\$140K NRP) for Tuttle School allowing them to become K-8.

2005

- ☰ Pansy & Peace Coffee fundraiser & outreach event.
- ☰ 1st Annual Ping Pong tournament has 51 entrants & many spectators.
- ☼ "OWLS Garden Shares" vegetable donation program founded.
- ☼ Bridal Veil Pond Habitat Renovation executed utilizing \$39K watershed grant from MWMO.
- ☼ Community Power grant awarded to implement organic lawn care program.
- ☼ Prospect Foundry public meeting addressing neighbor concerns regarding iron dust.

Key

- ☰ Community
- ☼ Environmental
- 🏠 Housing
- 🏠 Parks, Transportation Schools

Overview

The Southeast Como Improvement Association (SECIA) has been representing the Como neighborhood of Minneapolis for the past four decades. In 1994-95, Como's Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) process began when Southeast Como Improvement Association developed and entered into a Participation Agreement with the City of Minneapolis. Throughout the summer of 1995, SECIA distributed fliers and recruited volunteers to serve on the NRP Steering Committee. The first Town Meeting was held on October 5, 1995 at which time the process and purpose of NRP were introduced, issues were brainstormed, more volunteers were sought, and the Steering Committee was elected.

In 1996, a survey was developed by the Como NRP Steering Committee to solicit input from all residents. About 2500 copies of the 16-page, 57-question survey were delivered to each household in Como in May 1996. A total of 388 residents (17%) returned completed surveys. The respondents consisted of 289 identifying themselves as owner occupants (34% of Como's owner occupants) and 92 identifying themselves as renters (6.5% of Como's renters). The survey respondents were 73% white, 5% Asian, 4% Native American, 1% African American, and 6% not answering that question.

Over the next four years, volunteers and staff developed the NRP Phase I Action Plan. Based on the needs and desires of the community, the plan revolved around several key areas: Housing, the Environment, Schools, Parks, Safety, and the overall sense of pride in the neighborhood. These areas would form the backbone of the NRP Phase I Action Plan as committees formed around these key ideas and goals.

A key to the overall success of SECIA has been the continual employment of dedicated staff and a central office, all of which wouldn't have been possible without NRP funding. SECIA, in conjunction with Prospect Park (PPERRIA), hired the SE Minneapolis Environment Coordinator. This hiring is directly responsible for two separate Good

Neighbor Agreements between local industries and the community, as well as taking a lead role in organizing the Clean Energy Now Coalition, which resulted in the scheduled 2009 conversion of the Xcel Energy Riverside Plant from coal to natural gas. This wouldn't have been possible without knowledgeable and passionate staff.

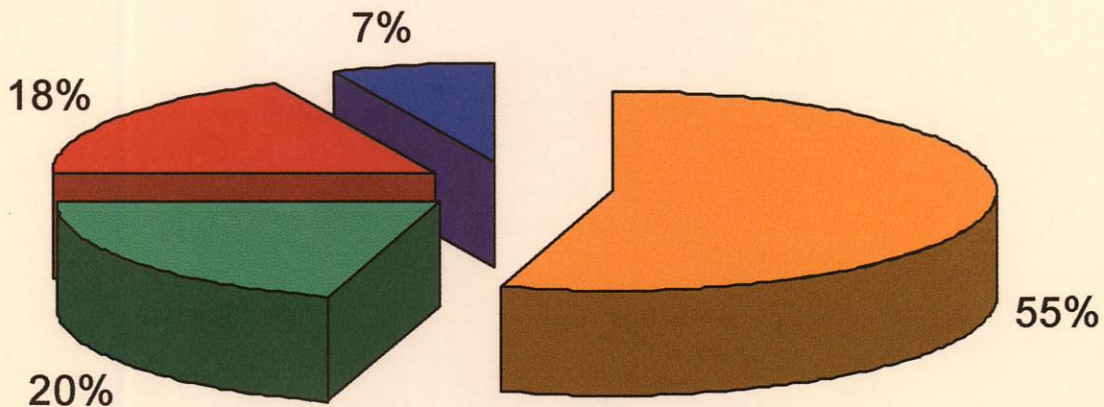
Method

The NRP Phase I Review was conducted primarily through soliciting the opinions of community members who had been, or currently are, involved in SECIA and the NRP process. This included the input of current and past SECIA Board members, current and past SECIA committee chairs and members, as well as key volunteers from the community. The review was augmented by documents archived by previous SECIA staff, an informal interview process, and a brief questionnaire administered at the Peace Coffee and Pansy Spring Spectacular in April of 2005.

Inclusivity

Overall the NRP dollars in the Southeast Como neighborhood funded a wide variety of programs that served the varied constituents of the neighborhood. Programs that targeted business owners were started, assistance was given to the elderly through the Southeast Seniors program, children were served through the upgraded Van Cleve Park and Tuttle School, and community events promoting inclusivity among all residents have been held. Special efforts have been taken to engage the University of Minnesota students living in the neighborhood, such as establishing SECIA Board seats for the Minnesota Student Association and the Graduate and Professional Student Association, working with the Panhellenic Council and hosting the 1st Annual Southeast Como Ping Pong Tournament. There is always room for improvement when it comes to inclusivity, and it has been a continual goal of SECIA to find innovative and effective strategies for engaging all of the community.

Where NRP Dollars Were Spent



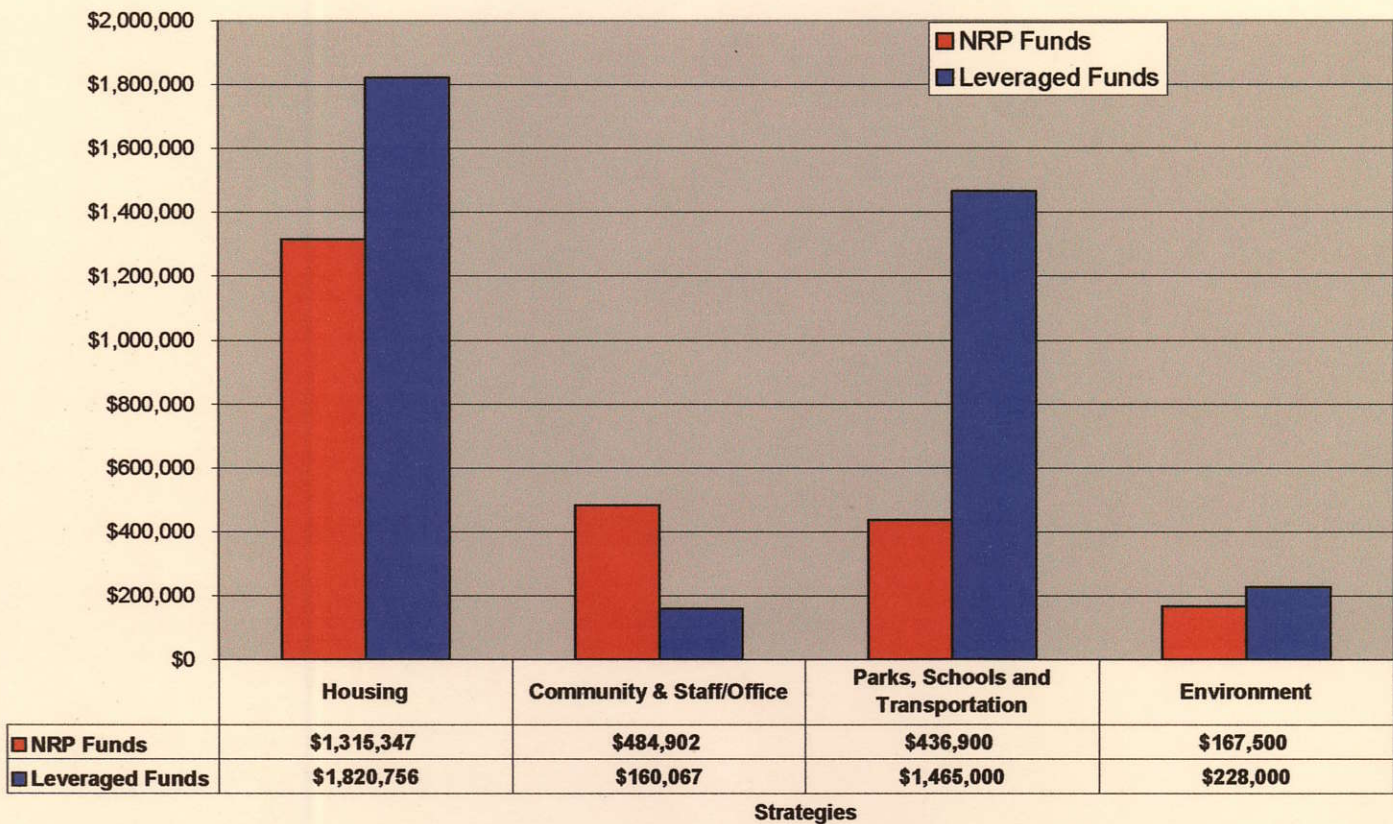
- Housing
- Community & Staff/Office
- Parks, Schools and Transportation
- Environment

SE COMO'S TREASURES



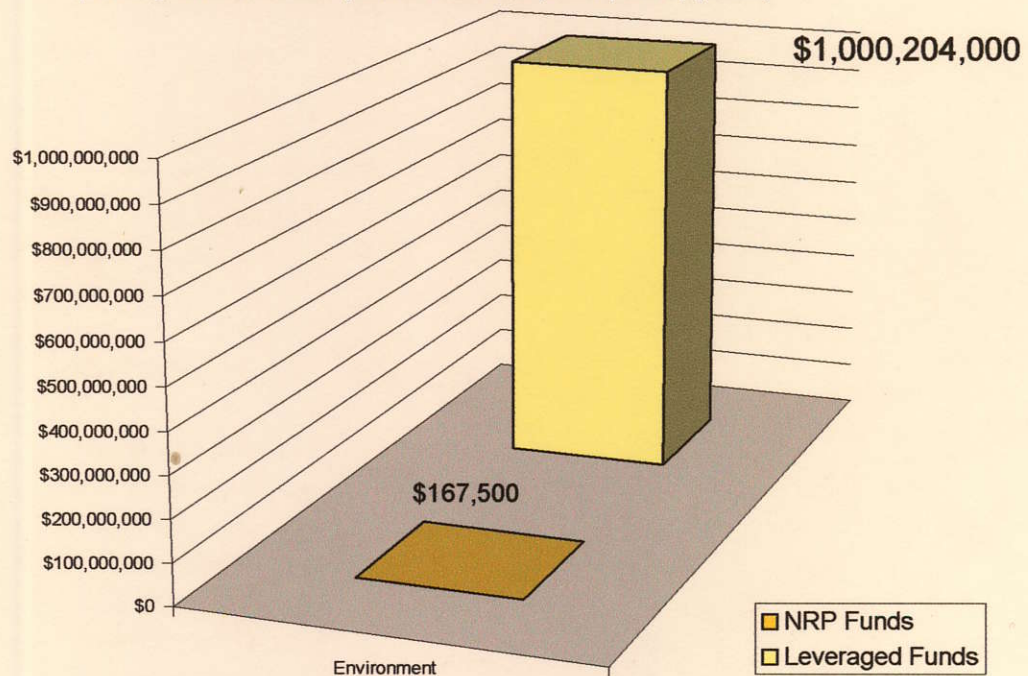
This map represents areas where significant NRP activity took place in Phase 1 and coincides with the timeline. Not all items are pictured and several locations have had activities occur several times (e.g. Tuttle School, Van Cleve Park, Como Corner, etc...). Some improvements are clearly visible when driving by like the community gardens and business exterior improvements.

Leveraged vs. NRP Funds



Leveraged Funds vs NRP Funds: Environment

(Leveraged funds include planned 2009 Xcel power plant upgrades)



Housing



There is probably no more important component of a neighborhood's health and well-being than the condition, quality and type of housing. For families wishing to raise children in traditional single-

family homes, for seniors wishing to remain independent, for student tenants who deserve safe and fair rental opportunities, housing has the highest impact on every aspect of their daily lives. This fundamental premise, built into the NRP guidelines is the foundation of our vision for Southeast Como. From our first neighborhood meeting, through two surveys and in subsequent town meetings, housing issues ranked at the top of neighbor's concerns. In fact, before the NRP housing guidelines were enforced, Southeast Como allocated 55% of its Phase I dollars to housing initiatives.



The blue Home Improvement Program sign seen throughout the SE Como neighborhood. The steps of this home were reconstructed through NRP funds.

Inclusive Opportunities

Southeast Como is an eclectic community with households representing a broad range of incomes, age groups and household types. In addition to our broad homeowner base, we enjoy an element of constant change due to the transient nature of our student renter neighbors. This broad and vibrant nature of our neighborhood is both a

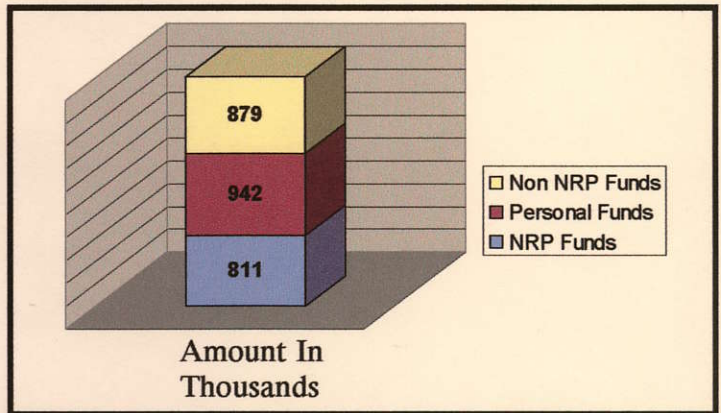
NRP \$ Spent = \$810,663

Leveraged Funds = \$1,820,756

Total # of Loans Awarded: 263

of Citizen Inspectors Trained: 44

source of strength and a source of ongoing challenges. Because we recognize the need to be supportive and responsive to current residents while building opportunities for future Southeast Como residents, we defined four principals as a base for our housing programs.



- Everyone should have some level of access to funding for property improvements; communities are built by being inclusive not exclusive.
- Those with the fewest resources should have the greatest access to program funding and support.
- Programs needed to be flexible to meet changing needs.
- Funds must be returned to the community for other property owners to use.

These principles support and preceded from a vision that balances neighborhood needs, fund availability, and close monitoring of program usage from year to year. While this approach requires a higher level of staff and volunteer involvement, it

allows Southeast Como to meet resident's stated expectations and creates a solid housing program that the Center for Energy and Environment has presented as a model to other communities.

The level of achievement of Southeast Como's NRP housing program can be shown briefly by a couple of key indicators. Most of the program funds went to lower-income households with 52% of housing loans going to households with restricted incomes while 18% of housing loans went to households for major improvements. Because non-owner occupied property owners were not responsive to the initial Rental Low-Interest Loan program, Southeast Como adjusted the guidelines which encouraged 11 participants to apply for the new Rental Matching Deferred program.

Quick fact: 67% of loan recipients surveyed said they would not have been able to complete their projects without the NRP program

2000-2004 Contract Year Loan Activity Totals	# of Loans	Dollar Amount
I. Low-interest Loan	19	\$139,586
II. Subsidy for MHFA Discount Loan (29)	**	\$15,468
IIIa. Rental Low Interest Loan	3	\$23,662
IIIb. Rental Matching Deferred Loan	11	\$48,089
IV. Matching Deferred Loan*	40	\$157,994
V. Non-Matching Deferred Loan*	63	\$286,979
VI. Value Added Matching Deferred Loan	35	\$138,885
Total NRP Loans	171	\$810,663
Non NRP Loans	92	\$878,737
Total Loans	263	\$1,689,400
* Restricted Income programs		
** These 29 subsidies match up with 29 of the 92 non NRP Loans		

From Supportive...

Beginning any home improvement project can be intimidating and stressful. It is more difficult for people with fewer financial and physical resources.



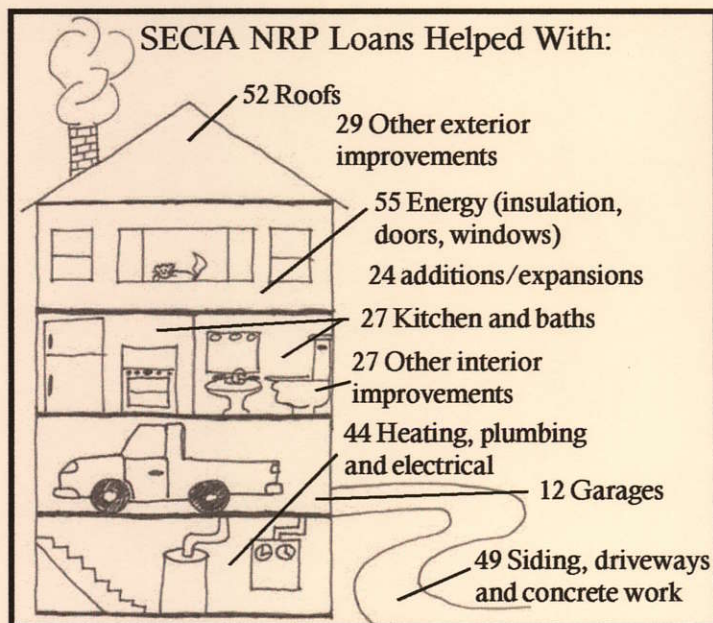
For that reason, SECIA created very supportive programs and services for its community members. We first created a Resource Center office and funded a part-time staff position. Our Resource Center serves as a critical component of our NRP housing programs. Without our Resource Center we would not have been as successful and wouldn't have been able to reach as many people. Resource Center staff actively market the programs, advertise and plan annual Loan Information meetings, answer questions and host office times for loan closings in the neighborhood. In fact, in our efforts at outreach we have sent the Southeast Como NRP housing program information to property owners as far away as California and Puerto Rico.

Quick fact: Primary ways neighbors learned about the housing programs:

- 43% saw it advertised in the Southeast Angle news paper
- 35% read about it in the Comotion newsletter
- 35% saw it in a direct mailing
- 20% were referred by a neighbor

Respondents could choose more than 1 category (total equals more than 100%)

The importance of the neighborhood office and staff is clearly shown by the feedback on the Loan Recipient Survey where 80% said the advertising was good to very good and 93% rated the materials and guidelines as very clear.



While the SECIA Resource office and staff provide the community-based outreach and support, Center for Energy and Environment (CEE) provides the individualized project administration. CEE has helped many people start, work through and complete projects that they may not otherwise have had the courage to tackle. 90% of those surveyed rated the quality of the services provided by CEE as good to very good. As one neighbor summed it up, "fast, uncomplicated, friendly service, thank you very much."

Quick fact: 225 neighbors received whole house inspections and energy audits

One of our most successful programs has also required the least funds. All property owners were provided access to a non-threatening, independent analysis of their property. The goal was very simple: to help people make informed decisions by giving them critical information about the structure and workings of their property. In later loan cycles, Operation Insulation was added as an option for neighbors to receive whole-house energy audits that look for ways to provide energy savings for homeowners.

...To Substantial

The scope of housing projects in Southeast Como ranged from small maintenance projects to whole house rehabilitation. With the phase out of the "This Old House" program at the State level, Southeast Como's Value Added Deferred Loan program



One of the many homes that have been improved and maintained through the SECIA Home Improvement program through CEE.



provided an incentive to middle and upper income property owners to make major improvements to their properties. In return, these participants committed an additional \$446,691 dollars by matching NRP funds three to one. This represents an average of almost \$12,000 of non-NRP funds per household invested into these properties. One single-family home for example had project improvements totaling over \$51,000 (\$5,000 of that being NRP dollars). This resulted in a meticulous rehabilitation and restoration that has turned the house into a showcase for the whole neighborhood which demonstrates the potential rewards of investing in our well-constructed and detail-rich older homes.

Code Enforcement

In the 1996 survey, Southeast Como residents and property owners identified property condition and maintenance as one of the top priorities. Of particular concern were rental properties primarily housing student tenants. Safety for these tenants and livability for neighbors near these properties were and continue to be a great concern for many neighbors.

Given that code enforcement is under the legal jurisdiction of the City, the scope of what SECIA could do was limited. SECIA decided to focus on providing information to the community. SECIA further directed staff to work as the central point of communication for concerned community members, tenants, homeowners and landlords alike. Neighbors could call the office and receive support, information on available resources, find out who to call at the City regarding their particular issue and help in facilitating that communication when needed. Phone numbers for the City Inspections Department and other City information have been published on a regular basis in the neighborhood's monthly newsletter, the Comotion, in the on-line Tidbits newsletter, and on SECIA's website.

Quick fact: 44 residents volunteered for the Citizen Inspector Program



SECIA has also sponsored town meetings, and other on-going dialogues with City officials over concerns brought to our attention. SECIA organized and supported Southeast Como's participation in the Citizen Inspector Program.

Neighborhood volunteers (24 in 2003 and 20 in 2004) were trained by the Inspections Department to identify a limited number of exterior code violations. Volunteers worked in teams of two to inspect two-block assignments several times each summer. Owners were asked to correct the problems or face the eventuality of being reported to Inspections. About 50% of identified problems were corrected at the request of the neighborhood without having to report the problem to Inspections.

Unfortunately, of all the goals requested by Como residents, code enforcement and rental property improvements have had the least success. While we asked for increased inspections of rental properties and the implementation of the rental licensing inspection requirement it took a tragedy to begin to see some changes.

In the fall of 2003, three students died in a tragic fire in Southeast Como. These deaths, along with pressure from the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) and the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GAPSA), triggered a safety inspection sweep. For many rental properties this was the first internal inspection for even basic safety issues. The sweep uncovered hundreds of violations proving the concerns voiced by many in the community. Following this sweep, the City is working to reorganize how rental properties are inspected and hopes to be able to implement the rental license inspection requirement on a five-year cycle.

Future Housing Challenges

Housing concerns will continue to be a major focus for Southeast Como in the coming years. SECIA will continue to explore alternate housing programs and look for additional sources of funds to provide to community members. SECIA plans to continue our rewarding partnership with Center for Energy

and Environment and will also continue to support the Resource Center office and the staff that provides so many valuable services to the community.

There has been a significant evolution in housing issues during the past few years that will affect future housing plans. Soaring housing values have proved to be a hardship for many moderate-income and first-time home buyers. This dynamic is one factor in the decrease in the number of owner-occupied housing units within the community. Historically, the neighborhood had been able to rely on a balance of owner-occupied and non-owner occupied to keep the community healthy and stable. We were also a neighborhood that provided home ownership options to young families with access to a good park and community school.

Returning Southeast Como to a balanced community and providing housing options to more people with moderate incomes is a goal of the City. SECIA will continue to keep a focus on this goal as we move forward into Phase II planning.

We will need to encourage and help moderate-income families purchase housing within the community. We need to provide the resources needed to new home purchasers to help rehabilitate poorly maintained properties. In addition, we will strive to continue the support, encouragement and outreach that we have been able to provide to current property owners and that has been so effective in the past.

Other Housing Items of Note

- Participated in South Minneapolis Housing and Home Improvement Fair for 6 years
- Provided annual Loan Information sessions to the community
- Provided office space for loan questions and answer sessions with CEE and loan closings

Environment: Air Quality



The environment committee of SECIA has been very active on a variety of fronts to improve the Southeast Como neighborhood since 1998 when funds were first allocated. Important accomplishments include dedicated efforts on neighborhood tree planting, gateways, community gardens, air toxics reduction and even Como signs. The committee and staff leveraged significant funds for its numerous projects while committed volunteers made it all happen during Phase I. Projects have been well thought-out and constructed. Part of the success of the environmental initiatives is due to the fact that there are two staff dedicated to implement projects which are divided into *Air Quality* and *Gardening and Greening*.



Neighborhood volunteers work on restoring and improving the community through tree planting.

Environmental Coordinator

The position of the Environmental Coordinator was originally a joint initiative between the environmental committees of SECIA and PPERRIA (Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association). The Como neighborhood identified through a survey in 1996 that air quality was one of the top concerns. Citizens for a Better Environment, which was attending Como environment committee meetings, recommended that a consultant be hired with sufficient expertise to deal with the industries

NRP \$ Spent = \$86,757

Leveraged Funds = \$125,000: Headwaters Foundation (20k), Bush Foundation (84k), Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (21k).

Tons of solvents reduced = >750 (Ritrama and Rock-Tenn Corporation—Good Neighbors)

\$ Value of power plant equip. upgrades = \$1 billion, reducing millions of tons of pollutants locally each year.

Air Permits publicly commented on = 30+

(see zoning map of Como) that surround the Como neighborhood. It was determined that a full-time staff position should be created instead for this novel position aimed at working collaboratively with local industries. This project has been very successful and became a model for City engagement on environmental issues. The project has also leveraged more than \$125,000 in grant support to continue the work of the environmental coordinator and the collaborative Good Neighbor Approach. The project also was aided by two interns who helped create the first Minneapolis neighborhood on-line Environmental Inventory which identified over 70 facilities and their impacts in and around Southeast Minneapolis (see below).



The Southeast Como On-line Environmental Inventory, a tool created so the community could better understand activities in and around the neighborhood that impact air quality. It has been used as a model by both the City and State. Two interns helped with this project, contributing more than 200 hours each towards completion. www.secomo.org