

# 2010 Annual SNG Environment Committee Report

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NOTE THAT ALL PROGRAMS ARE ONGOING EXCEPT THE CLIMATE CHANGE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM, WHICH WAS COMPLETED IN DECEMBER OF 2009.

## I. SUMMARY/HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Provided Environmental Education for the neighborhood by means of: e-mail and newsletters, flyer postings—particularly on the Birchwood Bulletin Board, webpage additions and links, community environmental event postings, and Environment Committee meetings, including informational presentations.

2. Collaborated and networked with task groups, city and state agencies, adjacent neighborhood groups, and other non-profits to advance community sustainability information and practices.

3. Continued to monitor the Matthews Center photovoltaic project. Continued to investigate technology for upgrading the computer data acquisition and display system and adding PV capacity. The goal is to make the data available on the internet for all students to use it. Replaced defective harddrive, doubled memory capacity, and reinstalled operating system.

4. Initiated, promoted, and researched funding to undertake a pilot program in Seward and other Minneapolis neighborhoods to collect compostable wastes and test out a new recycling model, which will use two containers for recyclables. Worked extensively and will continue to work with Hennepin Co. Waste Management and Minneapolis Solid Waste and Recycling to market and promote the success of this program. Individual committee members volunteered at the baseline data collection waste sort starting the project. The city has distributed organic collection bins on selected routes in Seward. (check maps at Environment Committee display.)

To highlight this program, we will be collecting compostable materials during the annual meeting (food scraps, compostable plates and cups).

5. Developed and initiated a program to reduce air and water contaminants in Seward, primarily: woodsmoke, problematic cleaning products entering the sanitary system, and lawn chemicals entering the storm sewer system.

To highlight this program we will be awarding “Great Green Yards” recognition certificates to homeowners and businesses who employ minimal if any yard chemicals, provide water sequestration around their homes, use native plants, provide wildlife habitat, and/or raise food in their home gardens.

6. Continued to promote both the MN Energy Challenge and Windsource: updated the neighborhood on our status in regard to these programs. Currently Seward is in fourth place for neighborhoods: 148 Members - \$91,559 saved expenses - 1,018,521 lbs of CO2 prevented. Only 5 members added since this time last year. The neighborhood should be doing better. Find out what your neighbors are doing for the Energy Challenge. The Seward Page on the Minnesota Energy Challenge is: [http://www.mnenergychallenge.org/Teams/Neighborhoods/Seward\\_Mpls.aspx](http://www.mnenergychallenge.org/Teams/Neighborhoods/Seward_Mpls.aspx) Forty-eight Seward residents have signed up for the challenge by “Harnessing the Wind”.

7. Worked on waste and pollution prevention projects with other groups: Pentachlorophenol treated power poles; Hennepin Energy Recovery Expansion proposal; Provided continuing communication to neighborhood about arsenic project.

8. Worked on additional air quality issues: Air Quality Index information, no-idling rule, industrial emissions.

9. Tried but so far have not been able to work with Seward towers on waste and pesticide use reduction; will update communication with them about this in future. Seward Towers experienced a great deal of employee turnover.

10. Worked with the Development Committee and SNG Board to update the neighborhood about the Xcel Hiawatha project and continue encouraging more energy conservation in the area and a more acceptable solution to power distribution.

11. Provided an ongoing forum for discussion about:

\*Local food issues—promoting Buy Local Programs and the Growing Lots Urban Farm (<http://growinglots.blogspot.com/>), and discussing the potential for composting and anaerobically digesting organic wastes from the Seward Neighborhood.

\*Residential and neighborhood green spaces: Community Garden, Seward Montessori Garden, Boulevard Tree Trimming, Minneapolis Department of Inspections regulatory behavior relating to residential yard projects.

\*Sustainability issues as relating to neighborhood development and transportation.

12. Continued to promote conservation and renewable energy opportunities. Completed last steps of the Climate Change Innovations Grant (2009). See the final report on the Environment Committee webpage, as referenced below. We are beginning work with the SNG Housing Coordinator on the energy conservation component of the Housing Program.

## II. DETAIL

**Sustainable Communities Conference:** A block club from Seward participated in a green design charette at this event. (3/13/10, 8:30 to 4:30, Central Lutheran Church ). Thanks to our neighbors near the intersections of E. 22<sup>nd</sup> St. and 28<sup>th</sup> Ave. So. Seward has been invited to participate in the

upcoming sustainable communities Transition Towns and Neighborhood Sustainability Networking Fair by tabling and leading a discussion about our projects. Sat Nov 13 - Twin Cities Transition Fair - Richard Heinberg Talk Saturday, November 13, 2010, 12:00 to 5:00 pm  
<http://www.afs.nonprofitoffice.com/>

**Pentachlorophenol Power Poles:** No action taken during 2010 other than to track this issue locally and nationally.

**Hennepin Energy Recovery Center Expansion:** Thanks to volunteer Mark Sulander we continue tracking the process for opposing this proposal by Covanta International, the operator, and Hennepin Co. We are working with a number of other neighborhood groups and non-profits on this. The PCA has agreed that an Environmental Assessment Worksheet will be required. Activists on the issue are pushing also for an Environmental Impact Statement as well. It is likely that HERC will be required to participate in a full review and revision of their air permit. There are legislative proposals (state and federal) to redefine biofuels so as to exclude garbage and wood.

**Climate Change Innovations Grant:** We completed distribution of drawing prizes to Energy Conservation Workshop attendees in December. The four workshop videos are available online at: <http://sewardprofile.posterous.com/tag/environment> The final report about this grant is available at: <http://www.sng.org/env.html> .

**Audit/Energy Conservation Funding:** Continued to plan with the NRP Housing loan project and the new Housing Coordinator to market and facilitate audits and energy conservation work by Seward homeowners. Promoted workshops put on by Center for Energy in the Environment to recruit Seward residents to participate in the Community Energy Services Home Visit program. For \$30 participants receive audit services valued at over \$150 plus home energy conservation products such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, switchplate insulation inserts, low flow showerheads, and low flow faucet aerators.

**Worked with SCCA and neighborhood businesses** to disseminate information about energy conservation and renewable resources. Worked with neighborhood businesses on getting energy conservation information and materials into the hands of homeowners. Special kudos to Jim Welna and Welna II for donations of materials for energy conservation and promotion of other green products.

**Green Space:** Continued communication with the Hub of Heaven community garden coordinators; No update on their efforts to purchase the plot or obtain insurance. Provided a venue for discussion of ownership plans and insurance for the gardeners, and supported garden volunteers in their effort to obtain the insurance.

**Birchwood Bulletin Board:** Maintained the environmental education and community event section of the outdoor and indoor bulletin boards at the Birchwood Cafe.

**Outreach:** Attended conferences, presentations, meetings, and events to stay informed about trends and projects with an impact on Seward. Worked at maintaining and growing relationships with non-profits with similar goals and with media. Hosted presentations by Take Back the Air, Linden Hills Power and Light, Campuses Beyond Coal, Growing Lots Urban Farm, and Seward ReDesign.

**Promoted recycling/reuse** during the Seward Garage Sales by providing information about reuse outlets in the community.