

Best Practices for a Neighborhood Council Newsletter

Stellar Examples –

- The Greater Valley Glen Neighborhood Council (GVGNC) sends out an 8-paged colored newsletter to all residents within their boundaries (about 6,000 homes) 4 times a year at a cost of \$2,5000.
- The Mid City West Community Council (MCWCC) distributes 35,000 newsletters quarterly to all stakeholders for \$6,000 an issue. Soon, the Friends of Mid City West will be funding the distribution of this 6-paged newsletter.

Many people may argue that communicating through a newsletter is an archaic way in the era of the Internet. Ken Draper, editor of the MCWCC newsletter believes that “although the website is the center of communications, *the newsletter drives people to the website.*”

The newsletter distributed by GVGNC and MCWCC *engages the community at large*, especially those who care about their neighborhood but do not have the time or means to be involved. After every issue, MCWCC receives a 20% increase in e-mails and phone calls.

Greatest Lesson – A year ago, GVGNC decided on a printer program and provided for one person to be trained at \$800, who is now no longer in the GVGNC. Either use a simple program or make sure that more than one person is informed about the logistics of the newsletter producing process.

Special Perks – MCWCC is lucky to have a talented group of people involved, ranging from attorneys to writers, and Ken who had published newsletter for Homeowner’s Associations before NC were created!

Occasional Challenge – keeping the publications steady despite elections, board turn over, holidays, and NC hiatus! However, remember to stagger the newsletter with other community publications.

Special thanks & acknowledgement to those interviewed:

Carlos Ferreyra, Chair of Communications Committee, GVGNC
Ken Draper, Vice-Chair of MCWNC & editor of newsletter

Interpretation of interviews & creation of “best practices” by DONE intern: Helen Leung

Best Practices for Neighborhood Council Newsletters:

- ❖ **Separate website & newsletter responsibilities**
 - Both may have overlapping contents, but each require a lot of time
 - Websites can become very detailed, while newsletters are limited in content
- ❖ **Encourage stakeholder & non-board members to be involved**
 - Members of the communications committee may not be fully representative of all interests & concerns
 - Don't let the committee do all the work
- ❖ **Establish continuity**
 - Make sure newsletters are published regularly despite board elections, meeting hiatus, and the coming and going of volunteers
- ❖ **Eye-catching headline**
 - If the headline is boring, than no one will read the article
 - If the headline is striking, everyone will be inclined to read the article
- ❖ **Basic contents**
 - Committee reports, Council office updates, a calendar of community events, Neighborhood Council functions, meeting info, projects & accomplishments...and NC website!
 - Extras can include editorials on new local shops and restaurants, a list of active developments in the area, pieces written by students, community trivial...
- ❖ **Include pictures**
 - A picture is worth a thousand words!
 - Especially artistic photos! Have a contest.
- ❖ **Allow community input**
 - Giving certain local organizations a small space (like homeowner associations, neighborhood watch groups...)
 - Have a 'communications coupon' or 'constituent issues form' that readers can return to NC with comments & opinions.
- ❖ **Leave extra newsletters at key locations!**
 - Community centers, schools, libraries, churches, local supermarkets, Council office...
- ❖ **To print in color or not?**
 - The MCWNC choose to print in black and white because amidst a pile of colorful junk mile, it will stand out like an intriguing sore thumb!
 - On the other hand, color makes the newsletter look more aesthetically pleasing & of higher quality
- ❖ **Measuring success**
 - Of a publication is through the number of readers
 - Therefore, make it interesting and fun, as well as informational!

Remember to check in with your **DONE Project Coordinator** for regulation updates, new info, and other resources!