

SUMMARY REPORT: MACC Community Meetings March 20 and 24, 2010
RE: Three Cs Initiative: Community. Consensus. Communication.

Prepared by
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Exciting developments are underway in Morningside – popular seasonal activities, new businesses, new residents, the development of the Morningside Elementary School and so much more! MACC wants to more effectively communicate – to each other as well as to the broader Pittsburgh community -- about Morningside and its many assets.

MACC has engaged communications partner Diane Wuycheck to work with us to build a communications strategy and a mechanism for implementing it. This initiative is being funded by a grant from the City's Urban Redevelopment Authority. Diane has 30+ years of marketing and communications experience. She has worked on projects for the Pittsburgh Partnership for Neighborhood Development, Manchester Citizens Corporation, Diakonia Ministries in Homewood and the Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in East Liberty.

MACC encourages the involvement and input of all! The communications strategy will be built *by you and for you* through a series of interactive methods with multiple opportunities for the community to come together, provide insights and ideas about communications. We will work toward consensus on how we communicate about Morningside

The process started in March. Twenty-six Morningside neighbors – from 10 different streets in Morningside -- participated in two community meetings held on March 20 and 24 at the VFW. In addition, Diane interviewed several others by phone and continues that process.

The following report captures key points expressed by residents in answer to four key questions.

Please plan to attend our third community meeting – whether or not you are a MACC member. If you live or do business in the neighborhood you are invited! Bring your family and friends.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2010
6-8 p.m.

VFW building at 1820 Morningside Avenue
Light refreshments provided by MACC. Door prizes, too!

This will be a **facilitated discussion with a specific goal:** To **prioritize the input** collected from the neighborhood in this process and **come to consensus on what the MACC 2010 communications priorities** should be **based on YOUR input.**

Questions?? For MACC: Contact Grant Ervin, MACC president, at grant_ervin@gmail.com. To offer feedback on this report, contact Diane Wuycheck at wuycheck@wuycheck.com or 412-471-4495.

March 20 Community Meeting

How do you currently get your news about MACC?

- Post-Gazette
- Tribune-Review
- MACC Newsletter
- St. Raphael's Bulletin
- Barbershop and hair salon
- AARP
- Senior News – Allegheny County publication
- Highland Park ListServ
- MACC Monthly Meetings
- Morning Glory Café
- Neighbors
- TV (Bad news – e.g., crime)
- Lutheran Church
- Union Project
- VFW (Cross generational)
- Morningside Senior Center
- Email
- Community Flea Market
- Real Estate Offices
- D -----List (Similar to Angie's List)
- Neighborhood card clubs
- Neighborhood sports teams

What are the strengths of MACC/Morningside?

- Core group involved
- Able to meet people at MACC meetings
- Newsletter
- Core business district
- St. Raphael's
- Lots of "institutions" – infrastructure still exists
- MACC – Current group more engaging, willing to listen

What are the weaknesses of MACC/Morningside?

- Same people to do all the work
- How do you "plug in" to MACC, neighborhood network and activities?
- Inconsistent messages – messenger is a factor
- Newsletter (labor intensive so less frequent)
- Geography (Some streets are more active/"plugged in" than others.)

What can be done to improve MACC communications?

- Need to engage African Americans, other minorities
- Coordinate lists, emails – lots in place -- needs to be coordinated
- Follow up – personal contact needed
- Newsletter strategy – how can MACC optimize its use?
- Homeowners vs. renters – need to engage renters more – may be affected by geography, certain streets more plugged in

What works?

- Block captains
- Community events

What doesn't work?

- Hand delivery of newsletter

What communications means do you personally prefer (newsletter, email, phone, social media) for MACC and neighborhood news?

- Highland Park ListServ
- Email (4)
- Calendar – in newsletter and online (MACC Web site)
- Newsletter
- Send information TO people vs. asking them to search for it on the Web site
- FaceBook groups
- MACC Web site
- Reputable source – be it person, newsletter, email

Community/Other Issues

- How to engage if you're not part of specific constituencies
- Community development vs. community-based issues (make clear what MACC is, does)

What do you want to hear more about?

- Cross-generational activities
- Neighborhood happenings – Mural, environment, etc
- Grants, operations issues
- Progress of projects (Bulldog Grill, legislative office opening, etc.)
- What's everybody else (other organizations) doing – in order to collaborate
- Cool things residents do that impact neighborhood – profiles in newsletter perhaps
- Issues – safety, prevention (*before* something happens)
- Diversity of neighbors – celebrate the richness we have

What do you want to hear less about?

- How to get volunteers

Information from the "PARK" sheet – Issues tangentially related to meeting topic to be considered by MACC separately

Morningside issues you want to hear more about/issues for MACC?

Bulldog Grill (community development)
Engage African American "new Morningsiders"
Central North Side (new vs. old) – how does this community manage?
MACC priorities (MACC Community Outreach 2121)

Potential Constituencies to Focus More Attention on

Realtors – Hanna, Rockwell
Public officials – Costa, Preston, Ferlo
African American neighbors, churches
Homeowners AND renters

Upcoming Opportunities

- AARP – April – Contact: A. Greco
- March 27 Spring Celebration

Ideas

- Retreat
- “Porch Parties”
- Soup Class
- Garden “how to”
- Farmer’s Market – St. Raphael’s, Open Door
- Centennial Committee

March 24 Community Meeting

How do you currently get your news about MACC?

- Word of mouth/Neighbors
- MACC
- Newsletter
- St. Raphael’s
- Morning Glory Cafe
- Bus riders from neighborhood
- Email/Highland Park ListServ
- MACC Web site

What are the strengths of MACC/Morningside?

- There is a small group driving the neighborhood (seen as positive but burnout can result)
- MACC liaisons = churches, merchants

Why did you get involved in MACC?

- New to community – came to MACC meeting via neighbor’s invitation
- Specific issue was of interest
- Morningside issues
- Meet people
- Find commonalities
- Relevance of issues being discussed
- More members – need critical mass
- Depends on the street – some just won’t be involved
- Institutional memory (of neighborhood) not there

What are the weaknesses of MACC/Morningside?

- Word of mouth (can be filtered depending on messenger)
- Email overload
- Not everyone has email

What do you want to hear more about?

- More on safety – crime statistics
- Add/develop affinity groups (like Angie’s List resource; Highland Park has this feature on their Web site):
 - Walking group
 - Babysitters
 - Exchange information re: contractors, painters, etc., in neighborhood
- What about Bulldog Grill?

What can be done to improve MACC communications?

- Short messages
- Summarize at front end
- Link to web ala Polish Hill e-blast
- Phone – email, texting?
- Liaisons to businesses
- Traffic (Greenwood and Morningside when new building opens)
- Sports schedules – Heth's and Natoli fields
- Connector – Heth's to Zoo (Bob Haney was former contact)
- Strengthen MACC advocacy role
- Continue to communicate the role and purpose of MACC
- Maintain public discourse regarding projects affecting the neighborhood

Consultant's Initial Observations and Insights

Observations

Morningside has demonstrated **remarkable enthusiasm** in general for MACC's work and specifically for the Three Cs communications initiative.

It is particularly refreshing to see that the **long-time residents are embracing the energy of the younger leaders and vice versa**. The younger and newer neighbors respect and acknowledge the benefit senior residents contribute to the stability and family-friendly nature of the neighborhood.

There appear to be **a number of communication hubs** that would be willing partners of this communication initiative, namely the churches, the senior center, businesses (Morning Glory, barbershop and hair salons), among others.

There is **visible support and enthusiasm for MACC among public officials** and the Zone 5 police.

In addition, there is the **encouraging support from surrounding communities**, esp. Highland Park and Stanton Heights.

There is **a community vitality evident at various levels**: VFW and churches (multigenerational), community activities including popular sports teams, new development projects, a variety of neighborhood events – Spring Celebration, Farmer's Market, etc.

Insights

Two apparently popular and effective modes of communication were identified by residents at both meetings: **MACC newsletter and email**. The MACC Web site's recent updates will support both modes as well as the third – word of mouth.

Word of mouth (WOM) was recognized as a significant communications asset, especially in a neighborhood the size of Morningside. Despite the many technological advances, WOM consistently ranks high in polls about communication. FaceBook and Twitter are really the hip versions of good old word of mouth!

There is **an information infrastructure loosely in place** – witness the way the Marketing Committee soared when asked to spread the word about the community meetings. Each member took a piece and ran with it! Consistency of message streamlined the process – once they had **WHAT** to communicate they knew **HOW** to get it out **FAST!** (That effort suggests a network with a trigger point that can be integrated as a component of the Communications Plan).

Having done many a **newsletter**, I can vouch for the chore it can become. However, the feedback from these meetings seems to present ideas that may assist at least in the information gathering. I will have further discussion with Amy Ervin about the current process. Some organizations choose to "job this out" on a contract basis. In this economy, it is not hard to find bargains in that regard. There seems to be enough of a case to be made for the newsletter's value to warrant an expenditure of this nature if necessary. However, I'm not sure it will be once we get implementation of the Communications Plan underway.

Opportunities

A number of relatively simple-to-implement **ideas** were presented – e.g., walking or gardening groups/clubs, porch parties, etc. -- that can foster diversity, **the involvement of ALL** streets, new/long-time residents, and owner/renters.

Enhancing the **community calendar** to more regularly and consistently publicize events and sports schedules, significant activity in neighboring communities (the Zoo, for example), should result in **broader involvement and neighborhood camaraderie**.

Next Steps

The format for the **April 14 community meeting** will be designed to identify priorities in each category (questions above) and the resources (volunteers, time, money) it will take to make the recommendations happen. Again this will be a discussion facilitated by Diane. Diane then will use the input from this meeting to present **a draft Communications Plan to MACC for approval (May meeting)**. The **approved Plan will be presented to the community at the June MACC meeting**. At that time MACC may want to consider establishing a small communications advisory committee to work with the MACC Marketing Committee to assign **accountability and responsibility for the implementation of components of the 2010 Communications Plan**.