
Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative

Annual Report

July 1, 2007 to July 1, 2008

Mission

**CTC is dedicated to providing affordable, comfortable,
Well-maintained, safe housing units to
University of Minnesota students and their families**

Values

**Community Cooperation
Family Happiness
Integrity
Responsibility
Achievement
Economic Stability**

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2006-2007 Audit

Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative, Inc.

Organization

Date Organized 1970

UNDER THE LAWS OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Purpose:

The purpose of CTC is to provide low-rent family housing on a cooperative basis to students registered at the University of Minnesota, to obtain and maintain any property and facilities needed for providing such housing, and to provide any other related services which members require. CTC shall conduct its affairs on a democratic and non-profit basis consonant with the provisions set forth in the Articles of Incorporation.

Number of Employees 8

Year End June 30

CTC Board of Directors Report 2008

Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative is a very unique student family co-op where members elect a Board of Directors made up of members who hire a General Manager, sets policy and rules that the management enforces and the members live by. The Cooperative would not work without the active participant of the members as well as our dedicated board members, ward representatives and committee members who volunteer their free time to contribute to CTC.

In January 2008, the members had a special meeting, at the time due to unsolvable conflicts our board was not functioning and the general manager resigned. At the meeting the community elected all committee chairs to act as an interim board that would form a “study group” to examine and recommend change to the structure of CTC. The newly elected board members suddenly found themselves in charge of a 3.5million dollar business without help or guidance of previous board members.

As part of the leaning process we had to understand our responsibilities and commitments while keeping CTC in a good operating condition. Despite the difficulties, this period has been full new experiences for the board. All board members had an extraordinary time serving the CTC community and it has been a learning experience for all of us.

The board has being working very hard to meet the primary goals it was elected for. Following are some of the issues the board has completed:

- ✚ Forming a study group and supporting it through the process. The board would like to thank all study group members for their hard work and long hours invested into this project, their recommendations is currently being reviewed and will be reported to the community in the next community meeting
- ✚ Approve the 2008-2009 budgets with 5.5% rent increase while adding new user fees to prevent an even bigger rent increase. Utility costs and the cost of living continue to drive up rent, which has not been significantly raised for the past few years. CTC continues to offer a highly competitive affordable housing in comparison to other housing communities in this area, including other University owned housing.
- ✚ Approved 2007 Commonwealth Terrace Annual Audit.
- ✚ Formed F&O duties list.

Working closely with management to:

- ✚ Formulate the monthly management report including a Financial and maintenance reports to better inform an inexperienced Board of Directors.
- ✚ Support ongoing training for the CTC Community by Inviting National Association of Student Cooperative Organization (NASCO) to train the community in topics like: What is a Cooperative, how does it work, what are committees for and How does a Board of Directors work.
- ✚ Plan New Resident Orientation to occur bi-monthly
- ✚ Establish a communication protocol to clarify the communication channels between board, management and the community.
- ✚ Created a board calendar so work can be anticipated by board members

- ✚ Plan ongoing meetings with management, ward representatives and committee chairs to work together evaluating and setting new goals to improve CTC on an ongoing basis.
- ✚ Review MacGray laundry contract with F&O committee.

Goals for 2008-2009:

- ✚ Currently working with F&O to analyze our energy and utility costs that must include education of the residents about the use of energy.
- ✚ Continue with the changing process that the study group started.
- ✚ Improve communication between Residents, Board of Directors, Management and Committees.
- ✚ Complete procedures regarding management evaluation.
- ✚ Form procedures to record the history of CTC, enabling a collective memory for the next generation.
- ✚ Plan training sessions for standing committees and ward representatives.
- ✚ Design a job description and hire a full time activity person to be in charge of community activities and education.
- ✚ Create a new and improved user friendly resident handbook.

As a Cooperative, our social and economical operation depends on member's involvement. An active and involved community allows the co-op to stay affordable and keep its unique community feeling. Despite the challenges we have as a volunteer based community, we are positive that the cooperative members will continue to work together in a democratic and respectful fashion to make CTC a pleasant home to return to at the end of the day.

This was a challenging yet rewarding period for the board; we are in a transition time in which the community will have to make some significant decisions for the future of the cooperative. Those decisions will affect us as well as the future generations that will come to live at Commonwealth Terrace Cooperative. Our hope we can be united as a community in these very challenging times.

We would like to thank Fred Frogner the former University of Minnesota liaison who retired this year after 34 years of service to CTC and we welcome Scott Creer the new University liaison we are looking forward to working with him.

Also, we are especially thankful to our manager Kris Graham and CTC staff for supporting us and providing recourses time and effort thought the year. Finally, we are grateful to all participating members for their enthusiasm and commitment to our CTC Community.

Sincerely,

Nili Makovski, Board President
Pablo Olivera, Vice President
James Suokup, Treasure
Kollin Stiner, Secretary

Finance and Operations Annual Report

We started off the year with work on the annual audit. The audit is conducted by an outside accounting firm that looks at how CTC uses its funds. It is crucial for CTC to use Generally Accepted Accounting Principles in the daily work. The audit tells how we are doing and tells us that our accounting practices are good and offers suggestions if needed. The 2006-2007 audit took much longer than anticipated, there was a change in computer programs and during the summer of 2007, before the new program was implemented, there was a loss of information that caused a delay in providing information to the Auditors. In the end we were able to provide the Auditors what was needed that allowed them to finish their job.

Finance and Operations was consumed with the budget this year. A new Manager was hired at a crucial time for the budget to be created. To assist the process, a budget was created by the University of Minnesota that reflected costs over a five year period and the General Manager; Kris Graham worked at putting a budget together from that information so we could appropriately adjust rents. Because the budgets have not covered the costs of operations for several years, this year, the board was forced to use funds from the reserves. To date \$209,000 has been used to cover short falls in the operations that included the unpredictable soaring energy costs and for 2008-2009. After much discussion about how to cover the costs, we did have to recommend that the rents increase, but we were able to avoid major increases by establishing fees for the residents who use extra resources. The fees have caused some tension because the costs are so high. The unpredictable nature of the utilities in 2007 caused an increase that was unprecedented and will most likely continue to increase. The cost of parking a second car was taken from discussions with the University Parking Facilities who suggested a larger increase than was done because of the scarcity of parking on the St. Paul Campus. The air conditioner fees were suggested from discussions with Excel Energy regarding apartments in the area that are the same size and age as CTC. Most of the control if any in the use and cost of energy is a direct reflection of how the residents use the utilities.

After the budget was created and approved by the Board of Directors, the F & O Committee looks over variance statements that are provided monthly. These reports are crucial to our ongoing success and budget efficiency. If we know the variances and can control costs, we can keep rents affordable and fair for everyone.

Future work of F&O:

Work with management on the laundry contract. We want the laundry to remain affordable for CTC without entering into long-term contracts. Once again the cost of utilities is affecting the overall cost of laundry. Heating water, drying clothes cost more. In addition, we are looking closely at utility costs to make sure that the rents appropriately match usage by units. Our goal will always remain to make CTC affordable and fair for our residents.

James SouKup
Treasurer

Sustainability Committee Annual Report - 2008

The Sustainability Committee has experienced quite a bit of change, particularly with losing our leadership multiple times. I think we have achieved stability over the past year and have a dedicated core of individuals that are interested in working on many different projects. I have no problem with the size of the group but we feel it is important that people join because they have an interest in environmental issues (as well as financial; using less means that we have to spend less) and not because they are being forced to join a committee.

We have been able to complete:

- CTC Sustainability Committee Wiki: <https://wiki.umn.edu/view/CTCsustainability>
- Composting
 - Three compost bins have been installed in various locations around CTC. These are currently being put through a trial period in order to ensure that the composting process can start properly without an overload of organic waste from residents. Future plans are to have composting training sessions in individual wards because it is very important that trash does not get placed in the bins.
- Computer Recycling
 - **Distributing Opportunities and Equipment to Students Internationally Takes Time** - <http://www.doesitt.org/>
- Environmental DVDs and books to share with the community
 - Currently trying to figure out the best way to allow community access
- Fluorescent lights for entry and exits of CTC townhomes
- Attempted hazardous waste disposal day and disposal information placed in laundry rooms
- Low flow shower heads (installed in updated units)
- New trees planted
- Map for groceries and businesses within walking distance
- Recycling/Waste dumpsters
 - An on-going issue is confusion between the two types of dumpsters at CTC. It is still confusing to know what can or cannot be recycled. One step we have made is to have the trash company paint the recycling dumpster green and post a list of items that can be placed in the dumpster.

Future plans:

- More outreach via the website and easier to access information through the CTC website
 - One issue that we are dealing with is that information can change throughout the year (i.e.

what can or cannot be recycled). We have plans to create a sustainability section for the resident's handbook but need to get more word out about the website so that people can get the most updated information available.

- Automatic lights in the laundry rooms
- Currently, lights left on in the laundry rooms have created an energy drain. A temporary solution is going to be to post notices on the doors of the laundry room, reminding people to shut the lights off.
- Battery recycling
- Bike tours to nearby locations
 - A variety of grocery stores, shopping and parks are very close to CTC. We hope to increase the number of trips via public transportation and cycling by illustrating ease of access. Other ideas include proper bike maintenance and storage and cycling in traffic lessons provided by teachers via the new Minneapolis bike ambassadors program.
- Carpooling list
- Energy usage metering
 - One of the few ways we have to control rent prices is to reduce consumption. Ideas include education on the problems with leaving on appliances and even a friendly competition between wards or buildings of who can use the least energy.
- Furniture and computer disposal options
 - While we have been able to provide information on proper disposal, the number of items left out by the dumpster's shows that we still have a lot of work to do. We know that the bigger items are removed and placed elsewhere (unsure where?) by grounds workers. We would like to propose a system whereby items can be picked up on a weekly or monthly basis (dependent on storage available) by non-profit groups that are willing to come to CTC.
- Hazardous waste disposal
 - Chemical items are left out by the dumpster which are a hazard for the adults and children coming near the dumpsters and also for the environment, as the containers may be leeching. We attempted to have a hazardous waste day which did not have much response but allowed us to become familiar with the system that is used by Ramsey county. We looked into staging a monthly collection but this would not be permitted under Ramsey County without proper training and fees for inspection. Our hope is to continue to promote carpooling to the hazardous disposal sites during peak moving in/out times in order to stem the flow of these items into the trash. We are also looking into having a 'trash day' where residents can come and learn what can and cannot go into the trash with help from Ramsey county waste educators.
- Increased bike racks
- More information for incoming residents
 - This would be a sustainability section for the resident handbook.

- Pesticide reduction
 - This is an on-going issue that we would like to work with the Grounds committee on.
- Rain barrels

I feel that we have accomplished quite a bit despite the turnover in the group. The new leadership at CTC, both board and managerial, have been very supportive of our plans and goals. I feel we have accomplished more over the last six months than ever in previous years. I hope to work more with the Financial and Grounds committees in order to make progress on some of our plans.

Thank you,
Nicole Waxmonsky

Committee Members:
Nicole Waxmonsky*
Jun Ai
Hua Cheng
Cynthia & Todd Digby
Jonneke Koomen
Mahajabeen Padamsee
Karen Reilly
Diego Rother
Adriana Telias
Lachelle Smith
Binu Velyudhan
Kim Yeonsoo
Wei Zhou

Programs Committee Report

We would like to thank the members of the Programs Committee for their dedication, time, and energy to make a wide variety of programs happen at CTC this year. We would also like to thank their families for helping their spouse or parent make such a big commitment to the community.

Andrew Bailey	Mauvalyn Bowen	Ting-Lan Chiu	Peter Cutter
Abigail Gadea	Elaine Nunes Garcia	Carolina Gutierrez	Gertrude Hewapathirana
Xia Ji	Boonchai Kijisanayotin	True Lee	Jana Lindbloom
Joanna Lukas	Resty Namata	Pilar Rojas	Saibu Sharma
Marisol Soto	Wendy Wirtz		

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMS

July	4 th of July Parade Planning Meeting, Teen Club Ice Cream Social
August	National Night Out, International Summer Camp with Minnesota International Center (4 Fridays), Welcome Get Together Party, Peace Garden Planting
September	Karaoke Party, Community Potluck
October	Costume Party, Movie Night
November	Panera Bread Program Started, CTC Workshop: K-12 Education Resources in Twin Cities, Thanksgiving Get-Together Potluck & Movie Night, CTC 4-H Club bi-weekly meetings (through May)
December	Winter Celebration Party, Family Music with Maureen Hunt (six classes through winter), Movie Night
January	Play Room Open Hours & Early Childhood Activities (through April)
February	Beach Party, Community Potluck
March	Talent Show, Movie Night
April	Soup & Stitches (Quilt-Making) Project (6 Fridays), Movie Night
May	Gardening Class with a Master Gardener, Community Potluck, Community Garage Sale, Movie Night
June	Summer Party, Textile Center Summer Camp

We would like to thank Eduardo Christ and Kris Graham, the previous and current CTC Managers and the management staff for providing excellent logistical support for our programs. The Programs Committee greatly appreciated their timely and flexible assistance to make our programs happen as planned!

Respectfully submitted,

Kaoru Kinoshita Adachi & Silvia Alvarez
Co-Chairs, Programs Committee

Grounds Committee Annual Report

The grounds committee's main challenge during the past year has been finding a structure that is appropriate for the new organization of CTC's members. When CTC redefined the membership organization, the ground committee faced a big challenge in coordinating and monitoring a crew of over 100 members. Assigning activities in a calendar basis, motivating, and monitoring the progress of the crew kept the committee busy during the past year.

Thus, our goal this year has been to find a grounds crew structure that would encourage crew members to complete their duties, have an impact on CTC (financially and physically), and be easily monitored. Additionally, we have had much discussion with the office (manager and maintenance staff) on what the crew duties should be. Overall, the grounds committee and crew are still in transition, with the change in CTC structure and management over the last year. Currently, we are in the process of restructuring the crew once again, and we expect to have a concrete structure in place within the next month or two.

Grounds committee also has been aware of improvements that can be done in CTC grounds:

- ✓ Keeping playgrounds clean and safe
- ✓ Possibility of planting additional trees
- ✓ Fixing and painting cloth hanging lines
- ✓ Maintenance of 'Peace garden' and 'fruit tree gardens'

Overall we hope to have a settled structure in place soon, which will have a positive impact on the physical and financial aspects of CTC. Thanks to all the grounds committee and crew members for their help and work this year, and to CTC as a whole for being patient through the entire process.

Grounds Committee Co-Chairs

Noelle Nelson

Pablo Oleivera

Committee Members

Dianlong Wang

Rita Kaikati

Ji Hyun Park

William Hsu

Ying Chen

Hospitality Committee Final Report

Committee Members:

Terri Whitaker (chair)	Sarah Hansen (minutes)	Yogesh Chander
Yasmin Sagiv	Dorothy Rombo	Xiaoqiao Wei
Md Abedin	Sumitha Nallu	Yunhua Fan
Na Wang	Naixia Zhang	

Goals & Accomplishments:

The Hospitality Committee was a new committee this year. Without having any precedent, we have worked to create a committee that serves to welcome new residents to CTC in the most effective and efficient way. We've had some challenges along the way—four different chairpersons over the course of one year, and significant turnover in the committee members, but we've succeeded in getting a welcome committee up and running. Some of the things we've worked on this year:

Creation of welcome packet, which includes:

Welcome letter

New resident orientation to the community: what's where?

Top Ten tips for living at CTC

Campus map

Community map

\$5 Gift certificate to Mim's Café or Lori's Coffeehouse

Monthly assembly of packets, which includes:

Obtaining list of new residents each month

Printing various letters, flyers, and maps

Purchasing folders, maps, and gift certificates

Personally welcoming new residents, letting them know we're glad they're in our community, and providing an opportunity for them to ask questions.

We also coordinated with the Programs Committee to organize two Coffee Hours this spring, which involved planning, purchasing, and preparing food, setting up the room, welcoming new members, answering questions, and cleaning up afterwards.

Proposals for 2008:

There are many things we can improve on as a committee. In the following year, we would like to:

- Create a written set of guidelines to help committee members know what to say when they go knocking on new members' doors. This document would also deal with related issues, such as how many times to go back when a neighbor is not home, what to do when failing to make contact with a new resident, and how to get into the 1 bedroom apartments.
- Find or create a better, more legible map of CTC to include in the welcome packet. CTC can be a confusing place to navigate at first, and a clear map might help new residents.
- A flyer with selections from the Handbook, to make the most essential requirements more accessible, and to encourage new residents to read the Handbook.

- An improved “troubleshooting” flyer to help new residents know how to deal with old residents’ mail in their mailbox, documenting status of their apartment when they move in, instructions on how to get a work order, where to go to access the campus connector and local buses, etc.
- Possibly include a current update on the current events (and a brief history?) at CTC so members know what has been going on.
- Improve contact and communication with current management to more effectively welcome new residents, not overlap duties, and work together on orientation meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Whitaker
Chair, Hospitality Committee

Safety Committee

Current Committee Members:

Sebahattin Cureoglu	Sushmita Dasgupta	Jonathan Bauchet	Weimin Deng
Clinton Gudmuson	Yongjae Kim,	Sahban Ozair	James Park
Stephan Singleton	Mark Shaeck	Liyong Sun	Linli Yan
Karen Johnson	Andrea Yin.		

The committee has been established for the last one year. Since then, the last one year has been full of new experiences and commitments for the Safety committee. We had a wonderful time serving the CTC community with all members and it has been a learning experience for all of us. Overall, the Safety committee has been playing very important role in terms of safety issues in our unique community. All safety problems have been discussed in the context of the policies and regulations governing all residents of the community.

The committee meets every first Thursday of the month to assess the safety needs and issues for CTC. The committee has worked in partnership with management to educate residents on safety, in creating a strong neighborhood watch and served as liaison to University of Minnesota Police Department. The committee has developed a great relationship with the University of Minnesota Police to have a positive impact on the safety at CTC. We have collected and provided information that needed to be shared between committee and Police. We have invited U of M Police department and Saint Paul Fire department several times to give a talk about the common safety issues. Their experiences have been shared with CTC community during certain week-ends. During these activities, the committee members have worked as volunteers. Residents of all ages have participated in those educational fun events. The committee has organized and coordinated the CTC property patrol during the state fair. Finally, we would like emphasize that CTC is a wonderful student community and the Safety committee has tried to provide a safety environment for the residents of this unique community.

Respectfully submitted,
Sebahattin Cureoglu
Safety Committee
CTC
September 2008

2008 Manager's Report

CTC Management has faced uncertainty for several years and it seems that it was at its worst in the fall of 2007. It was not a good time for many of the board members at that time and it surely was not a good time for the CTC members. When I arrived in January 2008, I was the forth manager in the past 3 years. I was challenged with helping to resolve a complicated situation by preparing for a meeting of all of the members where the board of directors would be removed was my first task. None of us had experienced that before; the next was to inform a new and inexperienced board of directors about what it means to be a board member and what is expected of them. I has surprised and pleased me to see how well the board has come together for the good of CTC. They have been faced with a lot this year and they continue to come together and make difficult decisions.

The work of the General Manager has been challenging, it is a position that requires a little knowledge about a lot. I oversee all operational, financial and legal aspects of the business as well as human resources. When I arrived, in addition to all of the board work, I was faced with a maintenance staff that was uneasy from all of the uncertainty, and there were some employees who had resigned in the face of the unending politics and insecurity. I spent time trying to reassure the team that as far as I knew, their jobs were protected. The way they kept on working during all of the stress showed me that they were committed to CTC. The office atmosphere was the same except there were two key positions vacant and work was at a standstill. I rehired Hadley Adkins, a valuable assistant manager, and promoted another to the position of Housing Coordinator, to help keep the key work of renting units up to date. We did not lose much time in that process and were able to catch up almost immediately. In order for me to get my arms around the needs of the office, I hired a temporary person to sit at the front desk until I could see what was needed.

When I started at CTC, the office moral was at a low point and the work was being done in overcrowded conditions. The University of Minnesota was requesting that the office be updated to reflect a more professional work atmosphere and that is what we worked on. We replaced floors, painted walls, reorganized the offices and updated the office furnishings. In April we renovated the Fireplace Room by replacing floors, counters and sink, painted the walls and in August the Board of Directors dedicated the Fireplace Room to Fred Frogner, a representative of the University of Minnesota who attended the board meetings and assisted the board and staff for 28 years. It is now called the "Fred Frogner Fireplace Room". We also cleaned up the main Hallway in the Community Center, replaced the floor molding along wall and floor, painted the trim in the hallway and around the office door in an effort to make the office more easily identified. The Community Center Stucco (siding) was resurfaced and the concrete and sod was replaced around the building next door to the community center as well as the replacement of the parts of the sidewalks throughout CTC for easier access for strollers, bicycles and other wheeled vehicles. Painting of the exteriors was continued and almost completed and the grounds were cared for by the University Land Care. For those of you who were not living at CTC 3 years ago when the grounds were bare, it is an extraordinary difference. The U of M land Care also cares for the sidewalks in the winter. Last year there were no reports of people slipping and falling on ice compared to years before the Land Care took over. The cost is a little more, but the amount of work and commitment is much larger.

Our work is varied and always changing. The issue of current utility costs is high on the lists of the concerns of some committees. The costs of heat and electricity are fixed and the only thing that can really change anything about the costs is the way we all use the utilities. In 2009, staff is looking at some ways to try to control the costs of the lighting. We have installed lights on sensors in rooms where lights are needed and where they are usually left on, like the copy room. In 2009, we intend to install sensory lights in all laundry rooms; they turn on when there is activity in the room and turn off when 10 minutes of non activity occurs. Management is also looking for ways to educate residents about how important it is to turn off items that use electricity. It is not unusual for our maintenance techs to enter an apartment that has lights, TV, computers and other items turned on and using electricity. It is a big problem that we cannot ignore.

Along with the new board of directors, we have worked hard to bring some stability to the organization and find that our hard work is paying off. After an in House Audit of the office the number of employees, practices, procedures and staff evaluation by the provider of Risk Insurance for Workman's Compensation, the costs have been reduced by about \$16,800 annually because our insurance provider was able to remove CTC from Risk Insurance. The new Insurance Company is more confident in the new board and my experience and abilities and that management is more secure and predictable, they feel that the staff is less likely to be stressed and careless causing accidents.

There seems to be a greater understanding of the rules and regulations that is reflected in the reduction of the C&E cases that we have seen. There are fewer complaints and rarely is there a work order that is not done within 24 hours. If it takes longer, it is because the maintenance tech has to wait to enter the unit until the resident is available. The morale of the staff is now at a high point as they feel like they have been heard and changes have been made to their working conditions that reflect the respect that the New Board of Directors has shown by approving the improvements.

We are currently in discussions with Comcast regarding the internet and the options for the community. It is a process that we have been working on and we hope that we will soon have a favorable plan.

The consensus of the staff is that they enjoy the work at CTC and now that the stressful times are behind them, they are smiling. Mostly, they all like the diversity of people from all over the world and the respect that they are shown on a daily basis from the members of CTC. The work at CTC is meaningful and rewarding and we are all anticipating more changes as the board manages the direction of the CTC governance.

2008 Audit