



Only **Minnehaha** residents can vote for this candidate for a Neighborhood Election.

Name: Anni Murray
Neighborhood: Minnehaha
Currently Serving on the NENA Board: No

1. Tell us about yourself and your experience in the Minnehaha neighborhood and in Nokomis East?

My name is Anni, hello! I am a single mom with two girls, Mabel (8) and Fern (5), a dog named Willow, and a cat named Bruce. We live on 50th street along the Monarch Mile. We have moved around quite a bit in the area but finally found our forever home here in Nokomis East and we couldn't be happier. We are a very outdoorsy family and love living right near the creek, Minnehaha Park, the lake, and all the amazing bike trails that take us anywhere we want to go. It's really important to me to give my girls a real nature-based education and to instill in them the love I have for the natural world, and I think our neighborhood is the best possible place for that! You'll often find us running around the park or kayaking down the creek enjoying a little picnic while we ride the current. We have so much natural beauty here and so much biodiversity. We counted 15 species of birds on a recent walk. I couldn't believe it! And yet, we're close to the city and all the amazing art and culture it has to offer. What a perfect combination. We love our neighborhood so much.

I love to be involved in community organizations — I was an active member of the Environment committees in Longfellow and over in Merriam Park — and find so much purpose and meaning in building community and putting my energy towards projects that improve everyone's quality of life. I learned all about NENA when we were house hunting and have been excited to throw my hat in at the first opportunity.

I would bring a deep love of nature; quite a bit of science know-how; passions for conservation, habitat restoration, and the ways in which that work intersects with inclusivity and social justice; and a whole lot of positivity. Thanks for your consideration!

2. Why are you interested in serving on the NENA Board of Directors? Describe your interests, skills, experience, hobbies, volunteer work or community involvement that will help your service on the Board?

I'm a strategist for an education technology startup and love coming up with creative solutions to tricky problems – making complex projects happen with limited resources is a big part of my job. I'm skilled at brainstorming, navigating group dynamics, and marshaling people around a common goal.

I also have quite a bit of biology training and spent a couple of years working with wildlife biologists studying bats in New York State. I enjoy grappling with the environmental and social implications of conservation work, trying to find solutions that improve habitat but also bring nature closer to people.

I read and think a lot about climate science. I attended Al Gore's Climate Reality Leadership Training a few years ago and was involved in Transition Longfellow — a local chapter of a national organization focused on creating more climate resilient communities. I think resilience comes from community connection and want to help build more of that here. When I was working with the Environment Committee (part of the Longfellow Community Council) I participated in many events aimed at building more social resilience. We made pickles, mended clothes, had game nights, and really tried to build safety through community. It was wonderful. I also participated in Chard Your Yard, a project organized by a friend of mine to put in very low cost raised garden beds so folks could grow food. But I think my favorite project was with my neighbor, Dan Schultz, helping people create habitat in their yards. After I moved out of the neighborhood, Dan went on to get all of Longfellow certified as a habitat with the National Wildlife Federation. It's one of the first neighborhoods in the country to get that designation! We already have so much habitat here, I think we could probably achieve that designation within a year or two. I'd love to work on that!

In all of this work, I'm always thinking about racial justice and inclusivity — trying to find ways to make every project open and welcoming to every person, and thinking about ways to bring nature and nature education to places where it has been lacking.

Generally, I'm excited to bring a loving, inclusive, optimistic lens to whatever I work on.

3. What hopes, goals and concerns do you have for the Minnehaha neighborhood and Nokomis East?

One of my big environmental concerns for our neighborhood is our water quality. We spend a lot of time on and around the creek and it's clear there's a lot of work to do to improve that habitat. One of the big elements of this is education — helping folks understand the impact of things like sidewalk salt on the watershed, and helping them find workable alternatives. It's been awesome to see so many pollinator gardens going in but rain gardens would make a bigger dent in the water quality issues we're dealing with. The drought last year also got me thinking a lot about fresh water resources in our community.

I'm also concerned about helping people live in better balance with the green spaces we have. I often see people walking around with their dogs in the tall grass and reeds where many birds nest and raise their young. Small educational placards could help alert folks to the animals around them and help people live a bit more gently on the land.

And then, when I get "out of the weeds" (literally) and look around, I realize what a privilege it is to spend my time thinking about the environment. I'm so determined, in whatever I'm working on, to reach out broadly, to think about accessibility, and to find ways to bring this work to the places and people that need nature most.

4. What hopes, goals and concerns do you have for NENA?

When I think about NENA as an organization, I think about both its role in bringing more community, safety, and equity to Nokomis East, but also about its role in the broader city and state. I'm deeply concerned by the racism and polarized political landscape we're all existing within. What role can we play, as a neighborhood organization, in addressing these issues?

I believe nature and place are things that connect everyone. They can be political but they can also just be human. I think conservation and social healing go hand-in-hand and believe focusing on our shared space and environment can help bring us together. I also think building some climate resilience as a community

builds a sense of safety and can make us all feel more invested and connected. How can we create projects that are truly inclusive? And can we be a model for other neighborhoods? Can we partner with leaders across the city and state to bring larger initiatives to life?

5. How will you reach out to the community during your Board term?

At work, I'm used to creating project plans, presenting them to stakeholders, gathering insights, revising my approach, and getting alignment before moving forward. I believe true "buy-in" (for lack of a better, non-corporate word) is critical for any project, and that's doubly true when the project is intended to serve the community. I think time for community feedback is critical, and then would always leave time at the end to review the work and assess success so I could conceive of the next project with those learnings in mind.

In my community work in the past I learned that something that seems so simple — putting out a notice about a meeting, for example — is itself fraught with potential inequity. Posting on social media only reaches a sliver of the neighborhood. Real, inclusive outreach requires a multi-faceted approach: social media, flyer, posting to neighborhood bulletin boards, taking out ads in the Messenger, notifying local organizations (churches, senior living facilities, etc.) are all ways I've reached out to the community in the past, to be sure people with all different methods of information gathering see what we're working on and can participate.

I also make art and have lots of ideas for environmental art that could help us educate, delight, and inspire the neighborhood. I think installations are a great way to reach a broad cross-section of people!

6. What additional organizations, programs and events are you involved with?

At the moment, I'm most involved in my childrens' schools (Seward Montessori and Bright Prospects Preschool – a coop preschool run by the parents). But I've been involved in various projects over the years: She Climbs Mountains (a non-profit for motherless daughters); Transition Longfellow, a local chapter of a national organization bringing climate resilience to communities; and one-off projects like a large ash tree treatment initiative (I mobilized city funds to help residents treat healthy trees, since the cost of removal was prohibitive and keeping the trees around, even temporarily, protected water quality and habitat). I was also involved in organizing social events and I served on the Environment Committees in both Longfellow and Union Park (St. Paul).

7. If elected, I will be able to complete the full term of service of 2 years? Yes

8. If elected, I will support NENA's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement of Purpose? Yes

9. I affirm that I meet the requirements of serving on the NENA Board of Directors and the information given in this Nomination Form is factual and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that should the nominee become an elected Board Member, any false statements, omissions or other misrepresentations could result in immediate dismissal. Yes