

From: [Erica Christ](#)
To: [Council Comment](#)
Subject: Final NRP Plans and Restoration of \$10 million to 66 NRP Plans on HECE Agenda on Monday
Date: Monday, January 30, 2017 12:37:36 PM

To the members of the Health, Environment, and Community Engagement Committee:

Please support the action to restore the frozen NRP funds to the NRP plans of the neighborhoods of Minneapolis at today's meeting. These much needed funds will be put to use on a very local level, in ways determined by the community in which they will be used. This is not only an extremely effective and cost-efficient way of addressing community issues and needs, it is also a clear message that the city puts its money where its mouth is about community engagement.

Neighborhoods have used these funds over the last twenty years to restore housing stock, build schools, work on community policing, create opportunities for youth, preserve the history of Minneapolis, and a thousand other efforts, large and small. The goals and the strategies come from the community itself and the rewards are reaped by both the individual neighborhoods and by the entire city.

In the Whittier Neighborhood for example, the Whittier Alliance used a significant part of its Phase One plan money to work with Minneapolis Public Schools to conceive of and built the Whittier International Elementary School. Children in Whittier had been being dispersed over a wide part of the city, which was a significant hardship for parents who were primarily low-income renters. They were not easily able to attend meetings and functions at the distant schools. The closer schools filled up fast with children from more affluent neighborhoods and the majority of Whittier children were pushed far away. The Whittier Elementary School is now and International Baccalaureat School and itself draws children from all over the city.

The Alliance also set up low interest loan funds for homeowners, for rental property owners and for businesses. These loans were used to make exterior, mechanical, energy efficiency, and historically accurate improvements to properties, thereby preserving housing stock and the quality of rental opportunities in the neighborhood. The loans were also used to start new small, locally owned businesses. In over twenty years over a million dollars on loan money made available in one of the poorest and densest neighborhoods in the city. The funds continue today to offer low interest assistance to the neighborhood.

When the property market ebbed low six years ago, the Whittier Alliance funded a small project called Artists in Storefronts. A resident of the neighborhood rallied artists to populate vacant storefront windows with artwork installations for a small stipend. Each round of Artists in Storefronts also included one permanent art installation, co-funded by the business on whose property the artwork would live. No round of the project cost more than \$12,000 and the Los Angeles Times named it one of the best public art projects in the country in the project's second year. By the end of the Artists in Storefronts run, over half of the storefronts that had been vacant at the beginning of the run were leased or sold and new businesses had opened up in those spots.

These are all examples of NRP dollars at work. They are also examples of people in a community, given the resources, addressing community problems in creative, determined, and thoughtful ways. There is no more effective way to keep the city vital and its residents engaged.

Thank you for considering this action and I hope you vote in favor of it.

Erica Christ
Board Chair
Whittier Alliance