

City of Minneapolis

Community Engagement

Track 2 Task Force Report

to

Define roles and funding of neighborhood, community and cultural organizations as parts of the community engagement system

August 2007

Please note that none of the recommendations or information included in this draft report has been approved by the Task Force. At this point, this document is a working document only.

Track 2 Task Force Report

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Introduction

In May 2007, the Minneapolis City Council approved a [three-track work plan](#) to bring the city's community engagement system into its next generation, including finding clear ways to support what is currently working and explore new ideas to enhance what's being done. The task Force that developed this report was assembled to work on Track 2. The Track 2 Task Force met throughout the summer of 2007 to generate options that the city could take to the broader public for input.

Track 1: Implement consensus recommendations for immediate improvements to the community engagement system.

Track 2: Define roles and funding of neighborhood, community and cultural organizations as parts of the community engagement system.

Track 3: Determine the focus, funding and governance of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and Action Plan activities after 2009.

Task Force Structure

The Track 2 Task Force was facilitated by GrayHall facilitators, Karen Gray and Nora Hall. Jennifer Amundson, the city's community engagement coordinator, organized the meetings.

The task force was co-chaired by Council Vice President Robert Lilligren and Task Force Member Matt Perry who was elected by the group. City Council President, Barbara Johnson, authorized the final list of task force members.

The task force met for ___ two-hour meetings at city hall. During the meetings, the task force members met as a large group and worked in small groups.

Track 2 Task Force Members

Neighborhood Organizations:

Chris Morris
Elena Gaarder
Jeffrey Strand
John Bernstein
Matt Perry (co-chair)
Shirley Yeoman

Block Clubs:

Anne McCandless
Diann Anders

Ethnic/Cultural Organizations:

Jessie Saavedra
Justin Huenemann
Mohamed Ali
Long Yang

Issue-focused Organizations:

Don Fraser
Russ Adams

Business Associations:

Diana Hawkins
Joyce Wisdom

Community Development Corporations:

David Rubedor
Mary Keefe

Community Engagement Innovator:

Repa Mekha

Civic Participation Advocate:

Jeremy Iggers

At-large residents:

Kathleen Anderson
Mark Fox

Total Voting Participants: 22

Non-voting Participants

Council Members:

Council Member Cam Gordon
Council Member Diane Hofstede
Council Member Robert Lilligren (*co-chair*)

Mayor / Mayoral representative Cara Letofsky

Staff Resources

Task Force Support

Track 2 Task Force Charge

The Minneapolis City Council approved the following charge for the Community Engagement Task Force in May 2007.

1. Identify **types of community organizations** that the City should recognize as **formal participants in its community engagement system**.
 - Consider all organizations that may participate in city improvement including both geographic (planning districts, neighborhoods, blocks) and non-geographic (business, ethnic, cultural, issue-specific) organizations.
2. Develop a **clear set of expectations** about what these organizations should expect from the City and what the City should expect from these organizations as participants in the **City's community engagement system**.
3. Describe the **connection points** between the City and these community organizations that would be needed to meet these expectations and support more effective participation.
 - Consider both systems and practices.
4. Develop alternatives for an **improved organizational structure** that supports the connection points and identifies responsibility for action.
 - Review the strengths and weaknesses of the current structure.
 - Consider national models and best practices.
5. Describe the **official support** (financial or otherwise) necessary for this organizational structure to succeed.
 - Consider national models and best practices.

Track 2 Task Force Charge Summaries

Charge #1 - Types of community organizations

Charge: Identify types of community organizations that the City should recognize as formal participants in its community engagement system.

The Task Force brainstormed a list of possible community organizations (Appendix E) that *could* be recognized as formal participants in the city's community engagement system. There was extensive discussion about the definitions of "formal" and of "community engagement" and members never identified, as a group, specifically which organizations should be recognized. The group did develop "Characteristics of organizations that can receive funding to engage the community" (Appendix A) and included approval of the characteristics as one of its recommendations.

Charge #2 - Clear set of expectations

Charge: Develop a clear set of expectations about what these organizations should expect from the City and what the City should expect from these organizations as participants in the City's community engagement system.

Through out the discussion of the Task Force the group discussed expectations for how community engagement should happen in Minneapolis. Many of the expectations were included in the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Core Values of Public Participation. IAP2 is an association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world. A task force member recommended this organization as a source of potential information. The group developed a set of "Core Principles of Community Engagement" using [IAP2 Core Values](#) as a base and adding to them. These Principles became the framework the task force used to develop its recommendations.

Charge #3 - Connection points

Charge: Describe the connection points between the City and these community organizations that would be needed to meet these expectations and support more effective participation.

The Task Force identified several potential and existing connection points. It was noted that not everyone had the same definition of what a connection point is. While some consider connection points as where in the process engagement happens other see connection points as how connections are made:

- City departments/staff
- Policy decisions
- Neighborhood organizations
- Block clubs
- Ethnic groups
- Opportunities for engagement should happen at various times and at various locations (not necessarily at city hall in the middle of the day)
- City's Web site
- WIFI
- Existing media
- Interactive media such as a blogs, online forums
- Ombudsperson
- Grass roots groups
- Use existing resources, CCP/SAFE, virtual block clubs
- A place in the community - go to where people are already meeting and gathering
- Non-meeting formats
- Internet information that is enable for cell phones
- Political organizations
- City Council
- Mayor's office
- Events (parades, etc.)
- Community meetings
- Newsletters
- Social/cultural groups
- Business Associations
- Approved NRP plans
- 311
- When a decision is pending or it is a staff priority

Charge #4 - Improved organizational structure

Charge: Develop alternatives for an improved organizational structure that supports the connection points and identifies responsibility for action.

Several themes for recommended improvements emerged through small group discussions. These themes represent high level recommendations for improvement to community engagement system. Under each theme specific recommendations were developed, which became part of the groups overall recommendations. Themes:

- Inter-jurisdictional collaboration
- New department or commission of community engagement
- Improved accessibility to information
- Processes are well defined, well documented, provide community input at meaningful points throughout the process and provide feedback to the community at its conclusion
- Entities within the community engagement system must have well defined responsibilities and well understood relationships to each other
- Entities within all aspects of the structure are driven by consistent expectations and good customer service
- Block clubs incorporated as a basic building block of the system
- Build on what works

Charge #5 - Official support

Charge: Describe the official support (financial or otherwise) necessary for this organizational structure to succeed.

Track 2 Task Force Recommendation

Based on the discussion around the five charges, the Track Two Task Force has developed a set of recommendations based on core principles of community engagement. The Task Force recommends that the City Council approve these Core Principles of Community Engagement and the recommendations that are attached to each.

Core Principles of Community Engagement

Principle #1 – Right to be involved

Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a **right to be involved** in the decision-making process.

Qualities of this principle:

- Community engagement should be a **fundamental value** and should be part of the regular culture of how things are done.
- Community engagement should be **consistent** regardless of who you are or who is in charge at any given time.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Document the value of and commitment to community engagement by approving "Core Principals of Community Engagement"

Principle #2 – Contributions will have influence

Public participation includes the promise that the public's **contribution will influence the decision**.

Qualities of this principle:

- Engagement should happen as **early in the process** as possible - before momentum is difficult to redirect.
- All participants should be humble and open to different viewpoints—**all views should be "thoughtfully considered."**
- Community engagement should include a **deliberative process** of weighing pros and cons.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a)

Principle #3 – Recognize the needs of all

Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by **recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants**, including decision makers.

Qualities of this principle:

- Engagement should be **about what the community needs** not only about what the city needs input on at any given time.
- The process must be fair—not everyone gets their way, but **everyone has a place at the table**.
- Communication must be **two-way**.
- Notifications should be **broad**.
- **Formal and informal** relationships should be identified, recognized and valued.
- The city should **coordinate with other jurisdictions**, such as parks, schools and libraries, on community engagement.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Develop a formal way to include independent government boards in the community engagement system (ex. School Board, Park Board, County, etc.)
- b) Informally connect with the County, schools, parks, and libraries by inviting them to community organization meetings.
- c) Develop a system for citywide engagement regarding citywide issues.
- d) Develop a system to coordinate input from the Neighborhood Revitalization Program to City departments.
- e) Develop a system to get citizen input into the planning process.

Principle #4 – Seek out involvement

Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.

Qualities of this principle:

- Potential community engagers should be **creative** in their techniques to gain participation.
- Efforts should be made to identify barriers and **make the path to participation easier** for those who are least likely or able to participate.
- **Resources** should be allocated or available to groups with community engagement mandates.
- Groups that receive resources to provide participation should have **accountability and measurable outcomes** including how the group is representative.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Develop a system to allocate resources to organizations that are asked to engage the community
- b) Approve "Characteristics of organizations that can receive funding to engage the community" (Appendix A)
- c) Develop a system of accountability for organizations that receive funding to engage the community
- d) Utilize and support current community engagement projects and initiatives including the Neighborhood Revitalization Program
- e) Formally integrate block clubs into the community engagement process and consider an outreach plan to new block residents – welcome packets, welcome teams/committees
- f) Host an annual or biennial gathering/celebration of the community that includes community organizations, city departments, libraries, schools and parks
- g) Implement a system of field hearings - to holding more meetings at times and locations that are convenient to the affected community
- h) Identify or create locations around the city for meetings, etc.

Principle #5 –Participants design participation

Public participation seeks **input from participants in designing how they participate.**

Qualities of this principle:

- There should be **established expectations and roles.**
- There should be **clear expectations and mutual accountability** for core principles.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Require all partners involved in the community engagement process to incorporate the Core Principles of Community Engagement in their work.
- b) Seek out and include community engagement partners in decisions regarding changes to the community engagement system.

Principle #6 – Adequate information

Public participation **provides participants with the information they need** to participate in a meaningful way.

Qualities of this principle:

- There should be a **systematic way to regulate** community engagement—a clear understanding of what will be communicated and how.
- Communication should be **well-defined, timely, fair, clear and transparent.**
- Communities should be **made aware of how decisions will affect them.**
- **Legal requirement** for notice should be clearly stated and understood by all.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Create a department or commission for public engagement within the City of Minneapolis with adequate staffing
- b) Provide more information “on demand” (more video recordings of meetings)
- c) Utilize technology, including the Web and WIFI, to provide information to encourage and increase informed community engagement
- d) Create a central location that informs people of the various avenues and resources available for participation

Principle #7 – Known effect of participation

Public participation **communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.**

Qualities of this principle:

- There should be two-way **follow-up to “close the loop”** about what happened and why.

Recommendations related to this principle:

- a) Establish policies that require reporting the results of a decision, particularly to those who provided input.

Appendix A – Characteristics of organizations that can receive funding to engage the community

(Note: these characteristics are the ones used in the City's [Citizen Participation Guidelines](#) for neighborhood associations. We listed them here as a starting point for developing a citywide set of guidelines for community engagement. * There were a couple pieces that were added because it seemed like from what we've heard, the Task Force may supportive of the additions)

The City may provide resources including administrative funding, training or staff assistance to eligible groups that desire to work to engage the community.

Characteristics:

1. Represent a **geographically defined neighborhood** (in its entirety) within Minneapolis as identified by the most current Minneapolis Communities and Neighborhoods Map as amended and approved by the City Council, *or be another type of organization that represents a community, but not necessarily geographically.
2. Represent, and **provide for the participation of, the interests of all segments of the entire community**, including, but not limited to, homeowners, renters, property owners, business owners, immigrants, non-English speakers, low-income residents and communities of color. Groups that primarily represent the interests of one segment of the community or concentrate primarily on one issue are not eligible.
3. * The group must be able to demonstrate how it is representative.
4. * The group must incorporate the Minneapolis Core Principles of Community Engagement in their work.
5. Ensure that membership is open with **no barriers to participation** or membership (such as membership dues, requiring attendance at a certain number of meetings before voting rights are conferred, etc.).
6. **Hold regular open meetings** and take positive steps to encourage all interested parties in any issue to attend and participate. Also, all written information of the organization (including books, minutes, membership lists, etc.) must be available for review by any member of the organization. A group may deviate from this rule only in case of labor and legal disputes.
7. The group **must be incorporated** (or identify an appropriate fiscal agent) and have adopted by-laws. The group must also have a grievance procedure by which its members may have their concerns addressed by the organization, and a conflict of interest policy and procedures.
8. The group **must have a board of directors** elected annually by the membership of the organization. The board must represent a fair cross-section of the community; neighborhood residents must comprise no less than 60% of the organization's board. An elected board must be in place for a minimum of one year prior to the beginning of the contract year to be considered eligible for funding.
9. The group must have the **ability to properly manage and account for grant funds**. This includes, but is not limited to, being current on all reporting on previous grants.

Appendix D – Additional Comments Related to Charges

1. Identify **types of community organizations** that the City should recognize as formal participants in its community engagement system.

Additional comments related to this charge:

- By trying to be inclusive you can be exclusive by developing a list.
- Some people don't identify with their neighborhoods and should have other options for community engagement.
- Identifying different types of organizations as formal would provide the potential to reach more stakeholders and tap into the wisdom and experience of groups/individuals/institutions not organized geographically.
- Neighborhood organizations have been an effective mechanism for disseminating and engaging residents in decision-making through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.
- Non-geographic community engagement could result in people who don't live in a community speaking for the community.
- Increased formal non-geographic community engagement could weaken the ability of neighborhood organizations to be representative.
- Increasing the number of formal participants without significantly redesigning the city's community engagement system may overwhelm the system and work against efficient and effective governance.
- Types of organization(s) should be dependent on the type of issue or opportunity that is being addressed.
- There should be a continuum—the more people a decision is expected to effect, the more formal the influencing groups must be.
- We could identify some qualitative means by which to measure the value of economy of scale and validation for an organization to be formally recognized.
- Basing community engagement on decision making is more palatable if we explain that the best way to engage people over a pending decision is to establish a habit of interaction even when no decision is pending.
- The level of engagement from a community can be dependent on the level of trust with who is doing the engaging.

2. Develop a **clear set of expectations** about what these organizations should expect from the City and what the City should expect from these organizations as participants in the City's community engagement system.

Additional comments related to this charge:

- If you're strengthening silos, you're not necessarily addressing the bigger issues – schools are an example of this.
- Consider requiring positive assent for action: if an issue is not important enough to inspire a quorum of stakeholders to weigh in, the action will not be taken.

- It's not always about the number of people voting - "why disagree with the experts" (i.e. whether to replace a bridge, etc.)
- Engagement implies an interaction that is flowing more from the city to a stakeholder. Empowerment suggests giving both rights and responsibilities that the city currently has to a stakeholder.
- The city should set up a timeline for each issue the community is involved in.
- Community groups need to develop trust among their stakeholders.
- Community groups should also represent feedback that may represent minority opinions on an issue.

3. Describe the connection points between the City and these community organizations that would be needed to meet these expectations and support more effective participation.

Additional comments related to this charge:

- The connection points should reflect the type of issue or opportunity that is being addressed.
- Fix broken connections such as between block clubs and neighborhood groups.
- There should be a policy relationship between neighborhood groups and city zoning and planning decisions.
- The city should connect with the approved NRP Action Plans when establishing citywide plans.
- Community engagement should reflect that not everyone has a computer.
- Meetings at city hall can make the building, which is a community building, feel more accessible.
- Technological communication is not a replacement for face to face relationship building.
- Consider impact: citywide, community, local.
- The city needs to identify situations that require affirmative outreach.

4. Develop alternatives for an improved organizational structure that supports the connection points and identifies responsibility for action.

Additional comments related to this charge:

- Bring more citizens to city hall in a fun way – food and transportation
- 80+ groups can be administratively heavy, but it creates a different level of input
- Neighborhood groups: some are naturally consolidating
- A consistent and widespread community engagement system could be useful in dealing with unprecedented crime in some parts of our city
- Citizen committees at 13 planning district level, 80+ too many
- Review what funds the city gives to the schools
- Community schools are better for community engagement and communication in general
- Put in place requirements of communication engagement in order for schools to receive city funds
- Schools consistent expectations throughout the district
- Gap in neighborhood action plans and funding
- If the community engagement system holds neighborhood action plans as value, then resources and staff should be provided for those action plans
- A Commission of Community Engagement should have limited taxing authority

5. Describe the official support (financial or otherwise) necessary for this organizational structure to succeed.