HO #4

# The Minneapolis Community Engagement and Community Building Project

## Background

The strength of Minneapolis is rooted in the health, stability and active involvement of its communities. There is no more powerful force for meeting our goals of safety, stability, affordability, and investment than the strengthening of our communities. The importance of strong communities engaged in the decisions affecting them can be seen in the fact that:

- crime is more likely to be lower in areas where neighbors know each other
- domestic violence is more likely to occur in situations where families are isolated
- juveniles are less likely to engage in delinquency when an adult other than their parents is involved in their lives
- residents express a greater sense of satisfaction with, are more likely to invest in, and are less likely to move from where they live when they feel they can influence what is occurring around them
- city projects experience high planning costs and dissatisfaction when residents are not effectively engaged
- crime issues and neighborhood disputes are more likely to be resolved more easily when neighbors know each other.

In the City of Minneapolis, the specific functions of building community and effectively engaging our communities are dispersed, disconnected, and not well developed. Consequently, budget allocations designated for community engagement and community building are often the first cut during hard economic times. Given the importance of communities and the limits of municipal budgets, it is important to be intentional and strategic to ensure that limited resources are spent in a manner that best supports the engagement of residents and businesses in building strong, healthy communities.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Minneapolis Community Engagement Project is to develop a plan for increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the community engagement and community building efforts and programs in Minneapolis to ensure:

1. The creation of a cost effective community engagement and community building system that leverages human, financial, and intellectual capital of Minneapolis communities and the City.
2. Ties together all the current efforts going on in the city around the issue of community engagement. These include the work of CPED staff on service delivery models, NRP staff on the future of NRP, and the work of the Center for neighborhoods.

3. The creation of clear, shared community engagement responsibilities, expectations, and accountabilities for Minneapolis communities and the City.
4. The integration of formal and informal opportunities to ensure ongoing, meaningful participation by Minneapolis residents and their communities in mutual efforts to achieve common goals with the City.
5.

**Areas of Analysis**

The following areas will be included in the project's analysis:

- *Current community engagement and community building efforts and players.* There are many community engagement and community building efforts occurring throughout the city. This analysis will provide an inventory of the many efforts in the city.
- *Current funding sources.* There is a considerable amount of resources expended on community engagement and community building. This analysis will provide an inventory of private and public sources, level of investment, and the target of their funding.
- *Aspects of Community Building*: Community engagement and participation are not the only components of community building. The analysis will look at the full scope of community building.
- *Overlapping responsibilities and functions*: The MCDA Citizen Participation Department, NRP, Planning Department, Police Department, and the Department of Health and Families all have staff dedicated to working on engaging the communities. The analysis will examine how these City staffing roles and responsibilities can be best coordinated and how overlapping functions can be reduced or eliminated.
- *Cross Jurisdictional*: In addition to the City, the Park Board, School Board and Hennepin County also provide community engagement staff support. This analysis will examine opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness through shared intentional planning and coordinating among such efforts.
- *Unclear responsibilities and unshared expectations*: There is limited shared understanding of the role and responsibility of governmental jurisdictions, community organizations, business organizations, and other individuals and organizations in the area of community engagement and community building. The analysis will recommend ways to create shared expectations between the city, communities, and other players.
- *Lack of accountability*: Numerous dollars are spent on community building and community capacity building without clear, measurable outcomes. The analysis will offer recommendations about how the outcomes of community building can be better understood and evaluated.
- *Effective leveraging of private dollars and resources*: Millions of dollars are spent by the private sector on community building and community capacity building. There is inadequate communication between these private sector funders and the City about how private sector investments can most effectively leverage limited and decreasing public investment. The analysis will offer recommendations about

how to best maintain and increase the active, long-term participation of the philanthropic community in a clear, coordinated City community building system.

- *Effective facilitation and involvement*: Effective community engagement and community building efforts require an understanding of what motivates and supports people to get involved and stay involved in working with others to better their community. The analysis will provide models and strategies for engaging and supporting residents and businesses and continuing their involvement in their community.
- *Comprehensive models*: By reviewing national models for community engagement, the analysis will provide recommendations about which models may have the greatest relevance and benefit for the Minneapolis communities and the City.

**Potential Phases of the project**

The project will have four phases each guided by a community advisory board.

*Phase One: Approval*
A draft of the project proposal design and description will be circulated for feedback from three stakeholder groups: City Council members, City staff, and community leaders. The draft will be rewritten to reflect concerns and opportunities identified by these stakeholders.. The final version of the project proposal will then be presented for approval to the City Council. This phase is estimated to take one month.

*Phase Two: Scope and Design*
A project advisory committee of community leaders, staff, and foundation representatives will help guide the project by advising on the scope, content, and focus of the study. This phase is estimated to take one month.

*Phase Three: Evaluation and Analysis*
Project consultants will work with the advisory committee as they compile and aggregate existing data, conduct interviews, and develop scenarios and possible options for the creation of a City system of community engagement. This phase is estimated to take approximately three months.

*Phase Four: Recommendation Development*
Based on stakeholder feedback, the most valuable scenarios identified will be further refined and linked to recommendations on operational changes, budget consolidations and restructuring, policy changes, and investment opportunities by the philanthropic community in a comprehensive system of community engagement for the City. This phase is expected to take one month.

**Staff Direction:**

Request that Health and Family Support Staff coordinate the Minneapolis Community Engagement and Community Building Project. Staff should draw upon the expertise of local individuals and/or organizations active in the area of community engagement and community building. Report back in one cycle on how they will proceed with implementing the project.