

Groundwork Proposal for Minneapolis

1.
 - A. **Why is your community interested in exploring development of a Groundwork Trust?** The Minneapolis/St. Paul region has a reputation for strong and organized neighborhood groups and community-based planning efforts. Minneapolis, in particular, is ten years into an innovative experiment of granting neighborhood organizations unprecedented control over community funding priorities. Many neighborhood groups have created long-term visions and development plans to guide public and private investment. These plans often include identification of brownfield and other blighted sites that, if cleaned up and restored, would increase community livability through creation of green space, affordable housing, or other community assets. Given the complicated nature and high financial risk of brownfield assessment and remediation, however, neighborhood groups often lack the funding and professional expertise to lead a project through the “red tape”, and the site assessment, clean up and redevelopment stages of a project. Government agencies have the expertise, but have limited staff time and often have more pressing priorities and larger projects. Developers are seldom interested unless the project is part of some larger commercial, residential or industrial project. Existing non-profit organizations are hesitant to address the risk associated with a brownfield or blighted site. Public sector funding for assessment and redevelopment have, until recently, focused on job and tax base creation rather than creating community assets. Resources exist, but there is no entity to fill the administrative role of matching resources to the community, and demonstrating how neighborhood priorities serve the City as a whole. Neighborhood visions and plans are unrealized for lack of 20, 40, or 60 hours of staff time.

The Groundwork Trust can bridge this gap in neighborhood and community-based planning efforts by connecting neighborhood groups with technical expertise, funding sources, and project management capabilities.
 - B. **What role would it fulfill?** Groundwork Minneapolis will support neighborhood and community groups wishing to convert brownfield or blighted properties to community-oriented space. Working with the owners of such properties, neighborhood organization and the substantial network of contamination assessment and cleanup resources available in Minnesota, Groundwork Minneapolis will assemble expertise and staff to identify viable projects and project partners, write and obtain grants and other financial support, and provide project management assistance. Working with neighborhood and community groups, Groundwork Minneapolis will bring brownfield-to-community space projects to completion. Groundwork Minneapolis will also work to mobilize neighborhood organizations to help offset the costs of projects with sweat equity where appropriate for deconstruction, reconstruction and on-going maintenance.
 - C. **Are there other organizations or agencies already doing the work which you envision for the Trust to be doing?** No. The goal of a local Groundwork is to fill a gap in the services that are already being provided by government agencies and non-profit organizations. Until very recently, government programs focused on brownfield redevelopment that would generate jobs or additional taxes. Open space restoration or parks scored low in grantmaking criteria, and therefore had a difficult time being funded. Now a few government programs have recognized this need, but help is still needed to connect neighborhood groups to the funding sources and manage these projects. Non-profits operating in Minneapolis have all carved a specific niche and the projects they take on are either limited in scope or geographical area. Groundwork would work directly with neighborhoods throughout the city, from concept to implementation, for development of community use facilities or open space, on projects that are "falling through the cracks" of existing services. Groundwork would strive to collaborate with existing programs, leveraging their work to get good projects on the ground faster. Please refer to attached chart “Finding a Niche for Groundwork.”
2.
 - A. **How would a Groundwork Trust support the clean-up and reuse of brownfields in your community?** Groundwork Minneapolis would support clean-up and reuse of brownfields by enhancing the relationships between neighborhood groups and the network of contamination assessment and cleanup resources available to Minneapolis.
 - Neighborhood Groups- Minneapolis has an organized, funded structure for improvement of its 81 neighborhoods called the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). Presently in its eleventh year

this program has committed some \$400,000,000 over a 20 year period to a broad range of neighborhood-directed improvement projects from affordable housing to street lighting and traffic calming. The neighborhood organizations that develop, approve and implement these plans and projects are also a key source for candidate Groundwork projects, citizen labor and financial matching support. The first example is the “B.F. Nelson” site, currently ready for cleanup/redevelopment, on the Mississippi River proposed by the Saint Anthony West neighborhood. Many other possibilities also exist, including those on the preliminary list below (paragraph 2.B) and in attachment “Potential Sites for Groundwork Minneapolis” gathered from the NRP and non-profit community developers operating in Minneapolis.

- Contamination Assessment and Cleanup Resources- The community active in the cleanup and reuse of blighted and brownfield property in Minneapolis and Minnesota is both experienced and accessible. In terms of experience, Minnesota (via the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency-MPCA) initiated the United States’ first “VIC” (Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup) program for brownfields in 1992, became a model for the rest of the country and received a Ford Foundation award in 1994 for its innovative leadership. Today, with the MPCA’s VIC program providing technical guidance and legal assurances to developers and financial institutions, and government agencies providing over \$30 M annually in the form of contamination assessment and cleanup grants, over 200 former Minnesota brownfields are being cleaned up each year (1700 sites since inception). The main “actors” at the various organizations responsible for making these programs “work” are committed, accessible, well known to the Groundwork Minneapolis Steering Committee and also have working relationships at many levels beyond specific projects. For example, it is not uncommon to see MPCA VIC personnel, State, County and Metropolitan grant program managers and City staffers meeting together to discuss ways to improve grant programs, technical requirements for investigation and response action plans, or new efforts such as brownfields to greenspace or for affordable housing.

B. How would it enhance local action to improve your community’s environment, economy and quality of life? Groundwork Minneapolis would enhance local action by working with Minneapolis’s unique infrastructure of neighborhood organizations to meet the neighborhood’s community-space and redevelopment goals. Minneapolis neighborhoods have distinct decision-making power for many public investment and management decisions in their neighborhoods. Neighborhood organizations, however, have little expertise in managing brownfield assessment and remediation, or in accessing the number of funds and technical assistance programs for addressing environmental challenges. Groundwork Minneapolis would facilitate the implementation of community-based plans for community green space and community facilities using existing resources that are typically under-utilized by community groups.

C. What types of projects would be undertaken? Groundwork Minneapolis envisions concentrating on the reuse of contaminated and/or blighted sites as neighborhood green/recreational space. We would also explore doing such work in “manageable pieces” as a part of larger scale redevelopments including residential and light commercial/industrial. Examples follow:

Small Sites – During the feasibility study we will survey our neediest communities for specific projects. Listed below are examples of the types of projects neighborhoods have requested and allocated funding for in their Neighborhood Action Plans.

- Community gardens on vacant lots
- Playground establishment and renovation
- Streetscapes (vegetation, art, benches, etc)
- Wetland Restoration
- Vegetative buffers for industrial areas

Medium, Large Sites

- B.F. Nelson riverside greenspace
- SEMI/Bridal Veil area (or portions thereof)
- Upper River Terminal (or portions thereof)

Affiliated NRP Organization

- Saint Anthony West
- Como, Marcy Holmes, Prospect Park
- McKinley

Additional sites are listed in attachment “Potential Sites for Groundwork Minneapolis Projects.”

3. Does your community have unique community redevelopment and greening expertise that would enhance the abilities and effectiveness of the Groundwork USA network? Please explain. Yes, Minneapolis has unique resources and expertise represented by both government agencies and existing non-profit organizations, that, through partnering with a local Groundwork office, would enhance the Groundwork USA network. A Minneapolis Groundwork would collaborate with these existing programs in order to pass along information about their successes to the Groundwork USA network, and to add value to their services in Minneapolis without duplicating programs. Among them are:

- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's award-winning Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup Program and Voluntary Petroleum Investigation and Cleanup Program offer fee-for-service investigation and cleanup technical assistance for brownfields. PCA also has a site assessment unit that conducts investigations on some tax-forfeited properties. PCA has also proposed a new Brownfield to Green Space Grant Program to start in 2002, which would fund assessment & cleanup, and for which non-profits would be eligible.
- Hennepin County recently started a Environmental Response Fund that receives a percentage of mortgage registry & deed tax revenues to fund assessment and remediation on sites for parks & open space, which score low for other grants. Non-profits are eligible recipients. A Groundwork Steering Committee member heads this unit. Hennepin County is also administers a Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund, and is one of the few agencies in the country to actually loan money to projects.
- City of Minneapolis' Neighborhood Revitalization Program is a neighborhood based planning approach whereby over eighty neighborhood organizations receive funding and technical assistance to first write then implement Neighborhood Action Plans. \$20 million/year for 20 years is allocated to help build neighborhood capacity, redesign public services, increase government collaboration and create a sense of community. Groundwork will work closely with neighborhoods and this program.
- The Brownfields to Green Space Initiative is an ad hoc group of agency representatives and other professionals whose work is related to brownfields. The group, facilitated by the Metropolitan Council, has been meeting for over a year to share expertise and look for ways to better address this issue. Groundwork will be a part of this initiative.
- The Minnesota Environmental Initiative's Resources for Redevelopment Program facilitates investigation and helps with cleanup and redevelopment of sites owned by non-profits, usually redeveloped for a charitable service facility, or affordable housing.
- Other non-profits: Several other non-profits with expertise in a specific aspect of brownfield redevelopment work in Minneapolis, including: Trust for Public Land (acquisition), Great River Greening (reforestation along the Mississippi), Friends of the Mississippi River (public awareness and outreach along the Mississippi), and the Sustainable Resources Center (community gardens). Groundwork will collaborate with these groups to share information and partner on projects.

4.

A. Who are the partners interested in exploring the Groundwork model? Only active

Steering Committee:

- Minneapolis Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC)
- Minneapolis Environmental Management (Mpls Env)
- Hennepin County, Contaminated Lands Unit (Henn Cty)
- St Anthony West Neighborhood Association (St. Anthony West)
- Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition
- National Park Service (NPS)

Additional details about this group can be found in the "Steering Committee" attachment.

Others who will be actively involved:

- (Middle) Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO)

- Minneapolis Park Board (Mpls. Park Board)
- Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA)
- Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP)
- Other Neighborhood Associations
- Minnesota Environmental Initiative (MEI)
- Brownfields to Greenspace Initiative (BF/GS)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Local Foundation Staff (example: McKnight Foundation)

B. Have they worked together before? Yes, in many and varied situations. Some examples follow (acronyms refer to above-named organizations):

- American Heritage River Initiative (State of Minnesota, Metropolitan Council, City of Minneapolis plus CEAC, NPS, BF/GS, MPCA and others);
- Brownfields to Greenspace Initiative (State of MN, Henn Cty, Met Council, CEAC, City of Minneapolis, MEI, MPCA, and others);
- Upper River Master Plan (Mpls. Park Board, MCDA, neighborhoods);
- Industrial/Residential Conflict Resolution (NRP/St. Anthony West, CEAC, Mpls Env, State of MN);
- Open Space Policy Assessment facilitated by the Trust for Public Lands (Henn Cty, Met Council; MPCA)

C. Who will be the lead organization? The Minneapolis Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC) will lead the feasibility phase of Groundwork Minneapolis:

- CEAC, whose members are nominated by the City Council and the Mayor, serves to provide citizen input on environmental matters to City senior management who meet quarterly as the Environmental Coordinating Team (ECT). The ECT includes the Directors of Minneapolis Planning, Public Works, Park Board, Community Development Agency, Regulatory Services and Health & Family Support. Formed in the early 1990's, CEAC is comprised of citizen members from neighborhoods, industry, advocacy groups and environmental professionals. CEAC projects have included helping to resolve industry/neighborhood conflicts over environmental emissions and emergency preparedness, transit and energy incentives for downtown redevelopment and citizen input to the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization.
- Four members (David Byfield, Randy Kouri, Brian Ross and Lorrie Stromme) of the Groundwork Minneapolis Steering Committee are CEAC members, as is Marjorie Terrell, City Environmental Management Staff assigned to support CEAC.
- CEAC, along with Holly Larson of the NPS, has lead and assembled this proposal and supporting documentation.

5. What type of public and private sector resources could your community leverage to complete the feasibility study/strategic plan? Please be specific.

Public Sector Resources

- Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) – NRP staff and some 81 individual neighborhood plans to obtain a complete list of sites/projects appropriate for consideration by Groundwork Minneapolis. See attached letter of support from NRP Director Robert Miller.
- Minneapolis Empowerment Zone (EZ)- EZ staff, Board and project contacts in challenged areas of the City. See attached letter of support from EZ Director Kim Havey.
- Hennepin County- Identify tax-forfeit properties with potential for Groundwork activity, cleanup requirements and funding possibilities from County Environmental Response Fund.
- Minneapolis Community Development Agency- Identify potential Groundwork projects in areas of ongoing MCDA housing and commercial redevelopment activity. See attached letter of support from MCDA Director Steve Cramer.

- Mississippi Watershed Management Organization- Identify potential Groundwork projects in areas of proposed MWMO projects, including potential funding. See attached letter of support from MWMO Board Chair Councilmember Joe Biernat.
- Minneapolis Environmental Management- Staff support (Marjorie Terrell) and comprehensive environmental file data on Minneapolis properties. See attached letter of support from Bill Anderson

Private, Non-Profit Sector Resources

- CEAC ties to business, including urban and regional planning (Brian Ross, Biko Associates); environmental consulting and cleanup (David Byfield, Peer Environmental & Engineering Resources, Inc.); horticulture (Lorrie Stromme, Master Gardener).
- Community Non-Profit Organizations- Steering Committee ties to community developers with current “on the ground” understanding of neighborhood needs which might be met by Groundwork Minneapolis. Examples include Project for Pride in Living (PPL), a \$12M housing/jobs/self sufficiency organization where David Byfield is a Board member, the Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition, where Randy Kouri is a member and the City Tree Project, where Lorrie Stromme is a Board member.
- Minneapolis EZ Board- Connections to top management of Minneapolis banks, foundations and industry.

A chart of available resources is included in attachment “ Potential Funding Sources”

- 6. How would you secure a 3-year funding commitment on the local level to help support Trust operations, if the Groundwork steering committee decides to establish a Groundwork Trust? Please be as specific as possible.** The steering committee plans to further study this issue during the feasibility study. Many potential resources have been identified and some funding/support has been secured. The St. Anthony West Neighborhood Association has agreed to provide \$10,000 of their NRP funds to Groundwork Minneapolis for operational costs. In addition, three other neighborhood plans allocate funding for an organization or individual to provide technical expertise and assistance to the neighborhood for implementation of environmental projects. The steering committee believes that as other neighborhood groups are informed about Groundwork Minneapolis, additional funding will become available. In addition, the City of Minneapolis is providing the services of Environmental Management’s Brownfields Coordinator (25% of an FTE, approximately \$20,000) to assist with the establishment of Groundwork Minneapolis. Actual financial assistance from Minneapolis is difficult to commit at this time, as our City is experiencing a political shift. Seven of our thirteen council-members are being replaced, as well as our mayor. During the feasibility study, our new political leaders will be approached about financial assistance.

Additional funding sources listed on the attached document “Potential Funding Sources” will be explored during the feasibility study. This is by no means an exhaustive list, merely a sample of the funding sources that may be available for Groundwork Minneapolis.

- 7. Is your city government willing to administer the Groundwork USA pilot funds and participate in the phase 1 planning process while allowing the steering committee to direct the process?** Yes, the City of Minneapolis has agreed to administer the pilot fund on behalf of the steering committee.