

Community Engagement Report

Prepared for the Minneapolis City Council

November 8, 2006

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Executive Summary

On May 12, 2006, the Minneapolis City Council directed a staff work group to review and summarize previously documented feedback, reports and recommendations on the City's current community engagement activities. This report presents the results of that work.

Section I describes the current Minneapolis community engagement system, outlining the different types of activity that comprise it. They include the activities of elected officials and their offices; standing committees of the City Council; formal public hearings; official advisory boards and commissions; temporary advisory groups; citywide communication and engagement activities; planning activities; department- or program-specific activities; citizen participation contract activities, and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP). This section also describes the Community Engagement Process Model that was introduced in January 2006, and the process of implementing this new model.

Section II summarizes observations and recommendations about the current community engagement system that the City has received from a wide variety of stakeholders. These observations and recommendations are organized according to eight principles of effective community engagement that were identified at the Minneapolis City Council Study Session in July 2003. This section comprises the bulk of the report, and contains a wealth of valuable community feedback and insight.

Section III condenses the observations and recommendations in Section II into five summary recommendations. In order to improve its current community engagement (CE) system, most internal and external stakeholders agree that the City of Minneapolis should:

- 1. Explain the decision-making authority for each type of city decision;**
- 2. Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all official advisory groups;**
- 3. Establish predictable, base-line CE expectations for each type of decision;**
- 4. Develop accessible, consistent, two-way communication systems; and**
- 5. Coordinate planning and priority setting with other public jurisdictions.**

Of course the community input summarized in Section II may suggest other improvements to the City's community engagement system that the Mayor and Council will also want to consider.

This report concludes with a recommendation that any engagement activities designed to inform the implementation of these recommendations – or other improvements – should be completed during the first quarter of 2007, in order to allow time for the resulting decisions to influence the 2008 operating budget, which the Mayor will recommend to the City Council in August 2007.

Introduction

In light of changing demographics, declining Community Development Block Grant funding and the approach, in 2009, of the final year of authorized funding for the 20-year Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), the Minneapolis City Council has begun an analysis of the City's community engagement activities and related organizational capacity and resources.

On May 12, 2006, the City Council passed a resolution directing a staff work group, under the direction of the City Coordinator, to review and summarize recent, previously documented feedback, reports and recommendations on the City's current community engagement (CE) system and activities. While the City Council did not direct the work group to conduct extensive additional community engagement activities as part of preparing this summary report, it did ask the work group to review local and national CE models and to interview representatives of the City's governmental partners and other stakeholders.

This report summarizes the findings of the staff work group, which included Community Engagement Coordinator Clara Perrin (Communication Department), Senior Policy Manager David Fey (Community Planning and Economic Development – CPED), and Research Intern Molla Reda (CPED Research), under the direction of City Coordinator Steven Bosacker. The report is organized in three sections:

Section I: The Current Minneapolis CE System

- Definition of Community Engagement
- Introduction of the CE Process Model
- Description of Current CE Activities
- When CE Activities are Used

Section II: Recent Reports and Recommendations

- Summary of Recent Reports and Actions
- Additional Stakeholder Interviews
- Observations and Recommendations

Section III: Improving the Minneapolis CE System

- Summary Recommendations
- Next Steps

An appendix to this report includes a list of official boards and commissions, information on emerging public participation technologies, and a copy of the 2006 City of Minneapolis Citizen Participation Program guidelines.