

**Community Engagement Meeting
Comments
From Comment Cards**

Question: What can the City do to help you (and your community) better participate in decisions? What is working now? What needs to change?

January 29: Van Dusen

1. City press releases need a longer lead time-not just the same day! (Even though this may not always be possible).
2. What problems are being addressed by the Community Engagement Report?
3. Will the adoption of the Community Engagement Report mean that neighborhood organizations will have to merge or that neighborhoods will have to merge with the ending of NRP dollars in 2008?
4. “Community Engagement” is NOT limited to input on decisions-ideas come from the community/neighborhood groups as well.
5. Section II, Principle 4: Observations: 6) Neighborhood group participation and leadership is not always representative of the community. True. Solutions? Only a handful of residents show up at meetings and elections. Residents are angry about decisions and fiscal irresponsibility by a small group of board members who are “running the show”.
6. All neighborhoods must be held in equal regard. City Council seems to have power to arbitrarily nix projects/ideas/neighborhood responses. Makes it seem hopeless to participate. Inspections seems to have inordinate power-can be intimidating. City of Minneapolis website is really inscrutable.
7. What if a type of decision doesn’t fit a process that’s now established (the definition of thinking outside the box)-such as “wireless” who decides when to go the extra mile? And can “going the extra mile” be used (just as the present “system” is) to enact a decision that doesn’t necessarily reflect the best for all. Is it a game of “keep the game going until we outlast the naysayers” or true consensus, or Strategic Development of Informed Consent (which I favor)? Somewhat rhetorical question.
8. Listen to what neighborhoods think and say. Send City staff to every neighborhood meeting.
9. If NRP goes away, how will the City for Minneapolis fund neighborhoods?
10. Fund neighborhood groups. Without dollars, grassroots activity as we know it is doomed. From citizen and political standpoints, neighborhood groups are crucial to a healthy community.
11. Eliminate so called neighborhood groups (i.e. Whittier Alliance) because they are controlled by persons with their own agenda (i.e. architects, builders and business owners who’s only interest is profit at the expense of all. Nonprofits need to generate cash, so favors are sold and bargains are made that only

- benefit those interests who pay cold hard cash for favors. It's not fair that a few board members drive decisions for their own reasons (i.e. work and business conflicts).
12. (1) Give neighborhoods the power and influence to effectively engage.
(2) Fund not only the engagement process but also the ability to conceive and direct the projects subject to decision.
 13. (1) Schedule hearings and meetings when working people can actually attend. (2) For the most part, the neighborhood organizations have done a good job of bridging the gap between City government and the citizens. Groups like the SSCO have done an amazing job of actually serving the community. (3) However, some of the neighborhood organizations have been less successful (and less interested) in working with renters. But the biggest problem is that City government seems to favor downtown developers over actual citizens and ignores citizen concerns.
 14. Change/improve the way in which the City recruits or communicates with residents to involve the diverse residents of neighborhoods. Diversity of Minneapolis is not properly represented at meetings or in the groups (voters) that make decisions that affect everyone. Invest/work to include youth and the younger people of the city. City Council people need to know their neighborhoods-learn what types of program, organizations, businesses, and services are available. Work to improve the services in the neighborhood. Utilize current business organizations to reach residents-schools-parks, etc. Consistency-Listen to the people. Accountability from the City.
 15. Foster greater participation by citizens in their local neighborhood organizations.
 16. (1) The City needs to take genuine awareness in the initiatives undertaken by individual neighborhoods. Neighborhoods each have unique identities that are not reflected in City decisions. (2) Would like to see consistent follow through after a decision has been made and be told Why.
 17. (1) All City staff need to know all neighborhoods and provide adequate notification to all who may be impacted by projects "just across the border". (2) Neighborhood groups are working well! Restorative Justice Community Action. (3) It all needs to begin in the community: before any licenses, zoning changes, etc. are granted, discuss them at the neighborhood level.
 18. The City must keep laws that notify residents and businesses affected by developers plans to gentrify a given area. And the residents and businesses affected must have power to stop the plan if they so choose.
 19. (1) Timelier notices, equal access to commissioners, staff and elected officials. (2) NRP makes things work in both directions. (3) City staff should be instructed to return phone calls. City staff should be instructed to notify neighborhood organizations before scheduling public meetings on zoning, developments etc. City staff should be required to remediate or respond to an issue or problem within a certain time frame.
 20. Explanation of decision-making process by City when community organization recommendation is not followed. Community org. needs to know it has been heard.

21. The City needs to reach families through the schools.
22. Realize that the closer an organization is to its residents, the better understanding it has of the needs of the community. The City cannot hope to generalize the needs of more than 60 diverse neighborhoods within its borders. It is grassroots and neighborhood organizations that translate and actively address these needs through programs and events specifically tailored to their residents. If the city would further investigate such programs, it would realize the enormous but often overlooked support it receives from neighborhood organizations. Please keep the NRP funding going!
23. Some City departments engage the community well-others don't even try. Have the best teach the others how to do it right.
24. Make a commitment!!!
25. Inform the citizen and ask for input before decisions are made. Agencies should listen to and help citizens obtain their goal. If they can't, then tell them why.
26. Make clear the line of authority, who has the power.
27. Redue property taxes. Proper control over license fees. Street lighting. Provide help to small businesses. Fight graffiti.
28. Continue to support NRP. NRP works.
29. I love being involved with my neighborhood organization (SSCO). The SSCO provides a great way for me and my neighbors to come together and engage in our local community in an empowering way. I really hope the city of Minneapolis realizes the value of neighborhood organizations and brings them to the decision making table.
30. Outreach and education liaison. Neighborhood organizations work. More liaisons work.
31. I think the most important thing the City can do is actively seek participation, communication and conversation with all constituents in all communities; additionally, the city needs to respect and empower its communities following the conversation. Please recognize that all of us are important in the decisions that affect our city and hence our lives. Thank you.
32. East Phillips meets in empty apartments-you can help us fund a community center so we have a place to meet! NRP is working well-we have accomplished a lot. We need more funding at the local level. Also I'm worried about families and Minneapolis. We must have great schools and safety for families to stay. With 32 kids per class I'm pulling my kids out of Mpls. next year. We desperately need more youth programming. Our neighborhood has hundreds of aimless youth on the street.
33. NRP works, but sometime the funding gets "stuck" in pockets, and NRP meetings, i.e. funding should involve all citizens in the geographic area. Snow emergency phone calls work very well. Thanks. What needs to change: Fixing a "why" that some individuals have that prevents them (you, me, us) from participation. Realizing that participation is growth.

34. The City could do a better job of acknowledging responses formulated by citizens, particularly in zoning and planning decisions. I would also highlight the importance of neighborhood organizations in engaging the community.
35. (1) Allow for more of a “choice” than “1”. (2) Inform people that there is a cost of the “City’s improvements” through this program. (3) Allow residents to decide their needs rather than being “directed” by NRP staff. (4) Shift funding to more “needy” communities. (5) Cut “strings” that are endemic to government programs. (6) Remind staffers that this is a “community” program and not theirs. (7) Allow for open feedback so staff knows what works and what doesn’t. (8) Identify how NRP is supposed to improve the quality of life for poor people of color. (9) Don’t allow for “elitist” leadership to take control (i.e. Whittier). (10) Minimize staff. Nothing worse than being “top heavy”. (11) Hear from the communities. (12) Hire people of color.
36. I believe City government should let community organizations have more influence in the realm of land-use planning. Free-market development driven planning will (with time) gut the most powerful community comebacks. The city needs to work more closely with active neighborhood organizations to create long-term plans for economic development and cultural preservation.
37. (1) Support capacity building in neighborhoods to ensure widespread engagement, especially around planning. (2) Funding = empowering neighborhood organizations. (3) Grow stronger relationships between partners and move funding to neighborhoods.
38. Listen and communicate with the people who live here. Value our opinions in regard to new development. Always give us a voice and a vote. I’m getting the feeling that big developers are taking over and we’re beginning to lose our stake in some fabulous neighborhoods. Just look at uptown (and they’ve only just begun!). We as a neighborhood have had to remain extremely vigilant in order to prevent some really horrendous things from happening (i.e. loss of Soo Line gardens to developers, loss of Vera’s Garden to developers, destruction of Salem English Lutheran Church all of which would have been tragic losses in my opinion so continuing to give the community and its individuals a voice and a vote is imperative.
39. City staff needs to know boundaries (-) when City staff comes to neighborhood meetings (+). Squeaky wheel gets heard by bombarding Council members (some other way needed) (-). Public meetings before Council meetings are a sham (decisions have already been made) (-). Why ask for recommendations and then not listen (-). Know you’ve been heard-know why decisions are made (-). Work with schedules-don’t say “jump” now (-). Requests for input-but have at bad times and can’t get there. Impractical scheduling (-). Utilize TV better (-). NRP funds disappeared in 2nd phase (-). Communicate clear info about how to do community engagement (-). Don’t acknowledge letters (-). Democracy at work (+). Hard to know process (-). Neighborhood groups so valuable and are working (+). Neighborhood is effective convener of meetings-government doesn’t need

