

# Recommendations

Throughout the Neighborhoods 2020 outreach and engagement process, some themes emerged as high priorities. Our analysis of the [Draft Summary of Findings](#) report identified the following themes in response to the questions asked throughout this process. These themes had the most comments and ideas and were weighted the highest. Specific action items have been included below.

## **QUESTION #1 – WHAT SERVICES, OPPORTUNITIES AND INFORMATION SHOULD NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE?**

- Improve the Social and Physical Environment of the Neighborhood – Neighborhood programs for safety, youth development, and housing Issues: beautification, immigrant services; respond to local issues.
- It's important to note that many neighborhoods still have [Neighborhood Revitalization Program funds](#) and these funds serve as the primary source for neighborhood projects based on the specific Neighborhood Action Plan.
- Neighborhood projects are often a key way to get diverse residents to participate in civic programs and projects.

### **PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #1:** NCR recommends the continued use of NRP funds in perpetuity.

Neighborhoods are making good use of these funds and undertaking regular updates to their plans.

- NRP Neighborhood Action Plans have hundreds of strategies regarding: community building, community safety, housing, economic development, environment, transportation and infrastructure, livability, and much more.
- If the City makes changes to the funding or programmatic structure of engagement grants to neighborhood organizations, those organizations may need to rely more heavily on remaining NRP funds.
- On average, City of Minneapolis neighborhood organizations have made modifications to their NRP Plans 20 times per group over the last 20 years.
- In November 2015, the City Council adopted the [Policy for Expenditure of NRP Funds](#). Every residential neighborhood in the City has an approved Neighborhood Action Plan. In a review of the implementation of these plans, we have found that:
  - 97.03% of Phase I dollars have been contracted and 95.2% have been spent
  - 90.92% of Phase II dollars have been contracted and 76.02% have been spent
  - Since the policy noted above was enacted, the City Council has returned \$9.141 million dollars of previously frozen NRP funds. During this same period, neighborhoods have received over \$3.8 million of NRP Program Income. This has greatly impacted the applicability of the seven-year period for contracting/expending that is included within the policy.

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #2:** NCR recommends updating the Policy for Expenditure of NRP Funds to focus on an annual check-in and review of NRP fund expenditures. NCR also recommends sun-setting the seven-year threshold in this policy.

## **QUESTION #2 – WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION?**

- Clear Mission, Vision and Leadership – Effective goal setting, leadership development, honesty, transparency, trustworthiness.

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #3:** NCR will work with neighborhood organizations and others to improve the recruitment and retention of board members and will ask neighborhoods via grant reporting how diverse participants are allowed to determine expenditures of neighborhood funds (NRP or other).

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #4:** NCR recommends streamlining additional neighborhood and community grant funds to support this effort.

## **QUESTION #3 – HOW CAN NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS EMPOWER ENGAGEMENT?**

- Increase Opportunities to Volunteer to Make a Better Place – More diversity across ages (youth, childcare, incentives, cultural awareness).

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #5:** NCR will assist neighborhood organizations in expanding outreach to diverse participants and encourage ways to support more inclusive engagement – such as child care, stipends, streaming meetings, etc.

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #6:** NCR recommends streamlining additional neighborhood and community grant funds to support this effort.

## **GENERAL ANSWERS THAT CROSSED ALL QUESTIONS – VARIOUS EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE INFORMATION**

Many ways to communicate beyond just meetings: two-way communications: partnerships with other agencies (public and non-profit).

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #7:** NCR will support neighborhood organizations in expanding their outreach and engagement strategies via technology, partnerships and other creative means.

## **City of Minneapolis Engagement Policy**

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #8:** In June 2018, a workgroup will be convened to revise and expand a City-wide Community Engagement Policy to be adopted by the City Council.

In 2009 the City Council passed recommendations on creating a City of Minneapolis Community Engagement Policy via the [Framework for the Future](#). The City has followed the Framework in the creation of the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC), creating the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department (NCR), and in the implementation of the Community Participation Program (CPP).

Attachment D to the Framework is the section that outlined how neighborhood organizations and the City each have unique roles in identifying and acting on City and neighborhood priorities and how they could partner to accomplish better two-way communications. Attachment D outlines the responsibilities of each party and the CPP Program contractual relationship.

- Include a city-wide Community Engagement Policy that outlines expectations for City department community engagement. This includes appropriate notification on policies, programs and projects that respects the community and is based on the Core Principles of Community Engagement.
- Identify staff within each department to oversee adherence to the policy and work with NCR on engagement planning and outreach.
- Collaborate with neighborhood and community organizations to establish city-wide goals and budget priorities.
- Provide feedback to those who submit input on how their input was or was not used.

## Advisory Board for Neighborhood and Community Engagement

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #9:** NCR recommends reforming the existing advisory governance structure for neighborhood programs. Currently there are two governing bodies overseeing the neighborhood and community engagement programming at the City. In June 2018 a work group will be convened to develop recommendations to the City Council.

The NRP Policy Board oversees the City's NRP funds and Neighborhood Action Plans. The Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission oversees the City's Community Participation Program, Community Innovation Fund and One Minneapolis Fund.

The City Council acted in 2017 to have both bodies explore merging or reforming: the final result was that no changes were made. The evaluation of neighborhood programming and support commissioned by the City Council also recommended reform and; again no changes have been made.

The NRP Policy Board does not always meet quorum. All of the City's neighborhood organizations have completed their NRP Phase I and Phase II plans. The board is currently meeting a legislative requirement to meet four times a year. There are few items to bring to before the board.

The NCEC has grown in scope and currently has eleven task forces and subcommittees. In order to staff every committee or task force and meet the commission's expectations, a majority of NCR's work plan would need to be dedicated to staffing the Commission.

Residents mainly run uncontested for elected seats on the Commission because the election process is complicated and requires neighborhood delegates from every district to attend a mid-week, evening election.

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #10:** As long as there are NRP funds, there is a requirement to have the NRP Policy Board in place. NCR recommends keeping the seven elected officials represented on the NRP Policy Board - Mayor, City Council, Hennepin County, School Board, Park and Recreation Board, State Senate and House representatives as required by State Statute and adding eight community seats that serve at-large. The eight at large seats would be elected by the community at a neighborhood congress or at NCR's annual Community Connections Conference.

The benefits to this reform is having contested races for community seats, alleviating a complicated NCEC election cycle with neighborhood electors needed, and having an engaged and active NRP Policy Board who oversees the NCR funded programs along with community representatives.

## Grant funds beyond the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) and Community Participation Program (CPP)

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #11:** NCR recommends reforming the additional grant funding available to neighborhood organizations and non-profit community groups that currently have a broad scope of services to more directly support the outcome of equity and inclusion in neighborhood organizations.

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #12:** NCR recommends any additional grant funds be available for partnerships between neighborhood and community organizations to increase diversity in leadership and decision-making. Funds should be available on a similar cycle to the larger engagement grant program with similar reporting requirements and programmatic procedures.

There are currently two discretionary funding programs. The Community Innovation Fund (CIF) and One Minneapolis Fund (OMF).

CIF was originally recommended in the Framework for the Future as a way to allow neighborhoods to propose innovative and locally-relevant approaches to City identified goals or problems. As implemented, the CIF guidelines placed a priority on collaborations and proposals were reviewed by the NCEC for approval by the City Council. Projects varied widely and the only requirement was that the initiative supported a City Goal. (CIF was funded once in 2015; \$300,000 was awarded for a two-year project scope and budget).

OMF was originally created in 2013 to support community-based non-profit organizations (neighborhood organizations are not eligible for funding) whose work advances the City Goal, One Minneapolis—Disparities are eliminated so all Minneapolis residents can participate and prosper. The proposals are reviewed by the NCEC for approval by the City Council. (\$182,000 each year is awarded for a two-year project scope and budget).

OMF funds are available to support two types of projects. Group A funds are available for projects that develop and prepare leaders to serve on City boards and commissions and on neighborhood organization boards. Group B funds are available for projects that connect diverse residents to the City and engage communities, beyond neighborhood borders, in specific targeted audiences.

While the City of Minneapolis has made progress on [diversifying the City's Appointed Boards and Commissions](#), the neighborhood organizations have not made as much progress on [diversifying their boards](#). Grant programs should support our mission of helping neighborhood organizations increase equity and inclusion goals and should assist with creating more diverse leadership in the neighborhood organizations.

## Funding, Program Guidelines and NCR

**PROPOSED ACTION ITEM #13:** In June 2018, a Neighborhood Funding, Guidelines and Implementation work group will develop funding options for neighborhood organizations. This work group will include policy makers who have the ultimate decision making authority on programs and funds.

Current funding (CPP) will support the neighborhood organization support and programs through 2020, ending December 31, 2020. The existing funding resource (the Consolidated TIF District) will be decertified December 31, 2019. The total funds needed for NCR staff and programming (including CPP

and OMF) is approximately \$8 million per year; this is the amount needed to maintain the current level of service to the community and to continue to forge a strong system of support for neighborhood organizations.

The work group will also look at NCR programs and neighborhood support for improvements that will support positive neighborhood outcomes and impact.

