

September 17, 2020

Meet on the Street
Jeanelle Austin
Marcia Howard
Madi Ramirez-Tentinger

Dear Jeanelle, Marcia and Madi:

Thank you for providing a thorough resolution “What Justice Looks Like,” received by the City on August 8, 2020, with an addendum provided on August 12, 2020. Thank you for meeting with City elected officials and staff to discuss the resolution and list of demands. We are providing this letter of response in acknowledgement of receipt of these documents, and to provide information on the City’s efforts to develop policies, practices, and to make strategic investments to eliminate racial disparities. We have engaged in this review and in-person and written response in the spirit of working together toward a more equitable city.

The demands listed in your resolution are extensive and include actions that are under the jurisdiction of the City, County, and State. We have focused our response on the items that are within the jurisdiction of the City. We encourage you to continue your work with County and State officials for responses and resolution on items outside of our City purview.

We share below additional investments and actions the City has taken to advance race equity and invest in the intersection of 38th and Chicago and the surrounding neighborhood. The City of Minneapolis is committed to continue to seek ways to bring justice and equity to our entire community, and it will require all our efforts, energy and dedication to make it happen.

Response to resolution demands in the purview of the City

10. Invest \$400,000 into the George Floyd Square Zone through the neighborhood associations to create new jobs for young people, which will help deter violence

The City of Minneapolis Employment and Training team is currently funding and working with four community-based providers in South Minneapolis to provide youth and young adults access to skills training, career navigation, and internships and job placement at Minneapolis/metro employers. Pillsbury United Communities, American Indian OIC, Avivo, and PPL, all either blocks from 38th and Chicago or within a mile of the George Floyd memorial site, operate programming to respond to young people facing barriers to employment and economic instability. Beyond the services available at these four partners, employees within the City’s Employment and Training group work with and fund many more community-based workforce development providers throughout the city to deliver employment and training to those facing joblessness.

These four providers receive just over \$1 million annually in federal funds for services for young people, citywide.

11. Invest \$300,000 into the George Floyd Square Zone through the neighborhood associations to provide

Undoing Racism training for the black community provided by the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond;

The Department of Neighborhood and Community relations has two community facing funding programs: Neighborhoods and the One Minneapolis Fund. While both are fully committed for 2020, the City could look at how the One Minneapolis Fund could be reprioritized for some of these efforts for 2021. The current amount in this fund is \$182,000.

12. Adopt and implement the 2019 Livability and Safety Platform Proposal submitted by the South Minneapolis Public Safety Coalition to the City Council;

The city is actively reviewing their proposal and will continue to collaborate with the South Minneapolis Public Safety Coalition and other stakeholders who bring a community voice to the table.

13. Allocate funds for integrative health services to support residents of the George Floyd Square Zone through the ReCAST grant managed by the Division of Race & Equity;

The Division of Race and Equity's ReCAST program is now concluding year four of a five-year grant aimed at addressing stress and trauma as it arises in community as a result of structural and persistent violence. Throughout the duration of this program, ReCAST has been intentional about addressing community needs as it relates to trauma and healing and has also focused on building the capacity of frontline staff to ensure that they do not re-traumatize community in their work. ReCAST Minneapolis programming is driven by a community-informed strategic plan developed in year one of the grant. A core component of that plan ensures we focus on building long-term community capacity to address trauma, and not incident-based response. The City's Office of Violence Prevention in the Health Department designs and delivers on such methods to provide supports in the wake of traumatic events.

14. Establish a temporary suspension of property tax increases for residents of the George Floyd Square Zone for 2 years;

A broad moratorium on property taxes for the zone would require a State law change. The City's assessor's department can meet with individual property owners to review options to reduce the market value of the property that currently exist. This would be on a parcel by parcel basis.

15. Include a rent-to-own option in new housing construction for renters;

The City is making many investments to help stabilize housing for low income renters and create paths to homeownership. The City's investments in homeownership are focused on eliminating the racial disparity in homeownership between white residents and BIPOC residents. City staff will work proactively with community organizations to help connect them to these resources.

The City is piloting two programs to support renters on a path towards homeownership. The City's Small Medium MultiFamily (SMMF) program can be used to assist community organizations to purchase smaller multifamily property toward the goal of tenant ownership and/or affordable housing preservation. Rent to own programs are more challenging for new construction because of financing requirements, but the City is interested in exploring this with community. There is \$1.5 million in the 2020 budget for the SMMF program.

The City's Minneapolis Opportunity for Homeownership (HOM) program provides up to \$10,000 in down payment assistance loans (0% interest, repaid when the home is sold) to homebuyers with incomes of 80% or less of the area medium income. The City funds community based non-profit organizations to provide homeownership counseling and financial capacity building to Minneapolis residents. The HOM down payment assistance funds are reserved to residents participating in these programs. The annual HOM budget is \$700,000.

New policy and proposed policy, including the City's new Minneapolis Homes program changes, the establishment of Cultural Districts (described in more detail under "other information below"), and a new proposed preference policy will help to better serve residents of this community.

Four City Council Members introduced their intention to create a new ordinance to give tenants and/or non-profit organizations the right of first refusal to purchase when rental property is sold. Staff is working on the ordinance and expects that it will be presented to City Council for consideration this Fall.

The Minneapolis Homes program re-design is focused on serving low income BIPOC households throughout the City. Currently our rate of service to BIPOC households is more than 70%. The Minneapolis Homes changes allow for deeper subsidy levels to serve lower income households, expands the geographic area where investments can be made, and creates a new permanent affordability model. There is \$2 million in the 2020 budget for the Minneapolis Homes program. An RFP will be issued later this year.

City staff is working on a "preference policy", which will allow the City to give "preference" to residents or former residents of neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment and now face gentrification pressures for homeownership opportunities provided through Minneapolis Homes. All four neighborhoods touching 38th and Chicago are included in the defined geographic area for the preference. The policy is currently out for public comment and will be considered by the City Council this Fall.

The City Council Policy, Oversight, and Governance (POGO) Committee considered and passed recommended funding proposals for the Housing Stabilization Pilot program on Thursday, August 20. This program is designed to provide housing stabilization services, including pathways to homeownership, to households in one to four-unit rental housing. Staff recommendations are based on an evaluation of proposals received from the City's Housing Stabilization Pilot Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA), using criteria that includes: Cultural, geographic, and/or an income-based model that stabilizes communities most at risk of displacement; organizational staff and/or board representation reflective of the community being served; priority given to projects that serve communities where other City resources have not already been directed. Recommended awards to organizations serving the 38th and Chicago area include:

- Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research (\$55,000) - With a focus on the Phillips and Powderhorn communities, the organization will expand on the advocacy work that they're already doing with tenants.
- Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association (\$300,000) - Providing direct renter assistance along with counseling services, the organization has a strong structure in place and builds upon the capacity building grant previously funded by the City of Minneapolis.
- Lutheran Social Services (\$265,000) – The organization has a strong rate of service to single Black mothers in south Minneapolis. They propose to provide direct payment to program participants.

16. Allocate a facade grant to George Floyd Square to improve the aesthetics of the business corridor;

The City has an ongoing contract with the Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization (CANDO) to administer facade improvement grants to businesses and commercial properties at the 38th and Chicago intersection. However, funding is not currently available in our existing program.

The 2020 City budget includes \$200,000 to expand the façade improvement program to interior improvements for businesses in Cultural Districts, as well as \$100,000 to support murals and arts programming in Cultural Districts. Program criteria have not yet been developed or authorized by the City Council for either of these funds.

Staff are working on program criteria and expect to have funds available later this year. The City will consider removing the match requirement for façade grants.

17. Establish and distribute a contingency fund for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) businesses located in the George Floyd Square according to the needs of each business owner, not their landlords, to ensure the preservation of black-owned businesses and promote race equity;

The City's Small Business Team has started to reach out to business owners at 38th and Chicago and the broader area to assist with assessing their individual needs. Of the 9 business properties in the district, about half are BIPOC owned or led.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved a disaster declaration for areas in Minnesota impacted by the recent civil unrest. Minneapolis businesses, non-profits, property owners, and individuals are now eligible to [apply](#) for **low-interest disaster loans** directly from the SBA. This resource will provide needed assistance for many businesses, but it does not meet all business needs.

18. Provide Agape Movement a space for their operations within the George Floyd Square Zone;

City staff are currently working with Agape on their needs.

19. Gift 612 M*A*S*H a blood bank bus or a coach bus to continue care for anyone who enters the memorial site during the winter months;

The City Council has, on occasion, considered donations of vehicles scheduled to exit the City's fleet to established non-profit organizations. The City is willing to work directly with 612 M*A*S*H to understand their needs.

20. Release the death certificate of Dameon "Murphy Ranks" Chambers;

Complete.

21. Open and complete an investigation of the murder of Dameon "Murphy Ranks" Chambers;

This was ruled accidental (self-inflicted) by the Medical Examiner based on the investigation and witness statements.

22. Hold law enforcement accountable for impeding EMS response and the mishandling and delay of Dameon "Murphy Ranks" Chambers case within the zone;

EMS was unable to access the scene. Officers attempted to render aid and ultimately had to pull Mr. Chambers to an area where the ambulance could access the area, to then bring Mr. Chambers to the hospital.

23. Drop the charges against non-violent protesters from 2016-2017;

All cases have concluded. The expungement process is governed by state law.

24. Continue the closure of the intersection of 38th Street East and Chicago Avenue South until after trial of the four former officers charged for the murder of George Floyd.

The City recognizes the call for justice, and the physical space at 38th and Chicago that serves as a gathering point. A phased re-opening considers that space may need to be held for this purpose, even as access is restored to the neighborhood and business. A phased re-opening also considers an interim design that preserves as much of the community art as possible.

Additional Initiatives and Investments

- The City Council recently passed a resolution declaring racism a public health emergency and has [committed to a series of action steps](#) to dedicate more resources to racial equity work.
- The Minneapolis Forward: Community Now Coalition is a cross-sector coalition that will help transform Minneapolis into a stronger, equitable, inclusive, resilient, and innovative city. Participants reflect leadership from Twin Cities businesses, cultural institutions, community organizations, and foundations. This coalition is rooted in the expertise and experiences of Historically Black people, Indigenous communities, People of Color, and Immigrants, including youth, in coalition with other leaders within private, philanthropic, and public sectors. Together, the coalition is leading with civility, justice, and an intentional approach to delivering systemic solutions while doing this work differently.
<http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/minneapolisforward/WCMSP-225515>
- Cultural Districts. On Friday, August 14, the City Council considered and approved 38th street as one of seven designated Cultural Districts. Cultural Districts aim to further racial equity, prevent displacement, preserve cultural identity, and fuel economic growth through the creation and prioritized implementation of new investment tools, policies, and practices historically disadvantaged neighborhoods of Minneapolis. Establishing these districts allows the City to prioritize these areas in the creation of tools and the deployment of resources to equitably advance cultural and linguistic identity, commercial vitality, stable housing, and infrastructure within the cultural districts.
- The City recently approved a new Commercial Property Development Fund (CPDF). The CPDF was created to fill significant funding gaps by providing forgivable patient debt capital for commercial real estate development and acquisition in the city, with a focus on economically challenged areas. The City of Minneapolis initially capitalized the CPDF with \$2.7 million in its 2020 budget with expectations to grow the fund through its partners.
- The revised 2020 City budget includes \$100,000 to support initial community engagement in the co-creation of a vision for a permanent memorial for George Floyd.
- The revised 2020 City budget includes \$150,000 for the Creative City Making program to hire a diverse team of artists and healers to create, implement, and lead community engagement processes to guide the City's community healing and rebuild with racial equity efforts for areas most impacted by civil unrest.
- A recommendation to rename Chicago Avenue between 37th Street East and 39th Street East to honor George Floyd is also moving through the City-approval process.
- The City will accelerate funding to reconstruct the street and intersection to build the community vision.
- The City is continuing to work with Metro Transit on design and implementation of the forthcoming [Metro D-Line bus-rapid transit project](#). 57% of the population within ½ mile of the route are people of color, while 44% of the population within ½ mile of the route are low income. 22% of the population along the corridor are zero car households.
- The City is preparing to adopt the 38th Street Thrive Plan, a plan prepared together with the community and which sets a vision for 38th Street.
- The City is currently piloting a program with Jamez Staples called "Renewable Energy Partners". The City is exploring ways to bring this opportunity to Sabathani Community Center to provide greater access to the program for southside youth.

