



March 13, 2019

Councilmember Phillipe Cunningham
Chair, PECE Committee
City of Minneapolis
350 South Fifth Street
Room 307
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Chair Cunningham,

The Victory Neighborhood Association (ViNA) has been in operation for 25 years and is proud of the work we have accomplished for our neighborhood and the greater Fourth Ward.

We developed vacant land along the eastern shore of Ryan Lake, resulting in North Minneapolis's second lakefront park. We created a rebate program to encourage small business owners to open in the neighborhood and leverage funds offered through the City's Great Streets program. We help seniors stay in their homes longer and give neighborhood youth their first job experience by pairing the groups to tackle household chores like lawn mowing and snow shoveling. We created more affordable pathways to home ownership by partnering with organizations like the City of Lakes Community Land Trust and the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation. And, on a day-to-day basis, we are an on-the-ground resource for connecting neighbors to critical services like mortgage modifications, GED attainment, rental vacancies, Meals on Wheels, and more. We're proud of the legacy we created over the last three decades and look forward to our next three decades.

It is in the interest of our neighbors and our future work, that we share with you and other members of the Public Health, Civil Rights, and Engagement (PECE) Committee our commentary on the Neighborhoods 2020 framework and process. We base this feedback on our decades of experience offering place-based community engagement, organizing, and programming in the Victory Neighborhood.

First, we appreciate the Neighborhoods 2020 framework's focus on accountability for inclusiveness. We recognize that for Minneapolis to be thriving and healthy, all City stakeholders need to work intentionally to break down systems of white supremacy. In addition to reporting the diversity of neighborhood board composition, we request reporting requirements also include demographics on factors like neighborhood organizations' general membership, committee membership, and program participants. Membership on neighborhood boards changes annually. During ViNA's history, the board has been comprised of renters, homeowners, directors of color, members of the LGBTQ community, seniors, low-income directors, and small business owners. Most of our board members began their path by volunteering on committees or participating in a ViNA program, then desired to be of more service to the community and joined the board of directors. We believe the approach of expanding demographic reporting metrics will lead to more authentic engagement, resulting in a diverse pipeline of candidates to sit on neighborhood boards; and giving the City of Minneapolis a more informed picture of who participates in and benefits from neighborhood organizations.

Next, we share our criticism that the framework published by the City's Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) department does not adequately reflect the feedback collected during the Neighborhoods 2020 world café and work group process. Specifically, many work group members

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reported that their work was co-opted by city staff and consultants and the outcome of their discussions were a foregone conclusion not to be determined by the participating community members. Additionally, hundreds of Minneapolis residents participated in world cafés about the future of neighborhoods. Much of the feedback collected in those sessions is not reflected in NCR's published framework and over simplifies the outcomes Minneapolis residents expect from their neighborhood organizations. We request the PECE committee to delay its vote on Neighborhoods 2020 until a framework is published that truly reflects the input of the people.

Finally, and most importantly, the framework published by NCR relegates neighborhood organizations to community engagement contractors. Community engagement is the first activity undertaken by neighborhood organizations to identify its residents' needs and challenges. However, VINA and other Minneapolis neighborhood organizations have successfully used their Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funds to develop solutions that address those needs and challenges (like those outlined in the beginning of this letter). For this reason, the Victory Neighborhood Association requests that the City of Minneapolis advocate for the extension of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to support neighborhood organizations and to use TIF resources to continue funding NRP. **Community engagement without the ability to provide community solutions is meaningless, and continuing NRP funding will ensure that Minneapolis residents have agency in their communities.**

In summation, we request the PECE Committee, the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, and the City of Minneapolis to:

- develop more comprehensive metrics to account for neighborhood organization diversity
- delay voting on Neighborhoods 2020 until a framework is established that adequately reflects a community-driven process
- advocate for the extension of TIF to continue funding the Neighborhood Revitalization Program

We appreciate your attention to these requests and look forward to working with you and the City to continue delivering meaningful results to the residents of Victory and the Fourth Ward.

Sincerely,



Brandon Knez, Chair
Victory Neighborhood Association

CC:

Ariah Fine, NCR
Steve Gallagher, NCR
Karen Moe, NCR
David Rubedor, NCR
Jaime Makepeace, Office of the Mayor
Councilmember Cano
Councilmember Gordon
Councilmember Jenkins

Councilmember Johnson
Councilmember Schroeder
Senator Patricia Torres-Ray, NRP Policy Board
David Boyd, Neighborhood & Community
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Jeff Strand, Neighborhood & Community
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Danielle Tietjen, Northside Neighborhoods Council