



**DOWNTOWN
MINNEAPOLIS
NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION**

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March 28, 2019

Mr. David Rubedor
Neighborhood and Community Relations
105 5th Ave South, Suite 425
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Re: Response to the Neighborhoods 2020 Framework

Dear David:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association with regards to the NCR Department's Neighborhoods 2020 Framework Recommendations. We have had the opportunity to review and discuss both the Work Group Recommendations, as well as the Framework. We have some concerns, as well as things we like about the proposed Framework that we want to share with you. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this feedback.

Concerns:

1. The Framework recommends an appointed advisory body as opposed to an elected body. We support an advisory board that is similar in nature to the current Neighborhood Community Engagement Commission; one that has a combination of members elected by neighborhoods and others appointed by the Mayor and City Council. Neighborhood organizations need a seat at the table, and the City should recognize the voice of the community.
2. The Framework indicates that the City will base funding allocations on the types of outreach and engagement strategies a neighborhood organization uses. One of the suggested strategies is door-knocking, which we believe would be impractical downtown; we have experienced great difficulty in even getting access to common room facilities in condo and apartment buildings. The DMNA hopes the City will recognize that what works in one neighborhood, isn't always reasonable and practical in another. We appreciate the NCR report that suggests options like "tabling at events" which would be much more practical for us.
3. The Framework suggests that neighborhood organizations will have to make changes to their bylaws to make them function more similarly. While we understand and appreciate the robust engagement and diversity goals the City is trying to achieve with this recommendation, neighborhoods across Minneapolis are quite different in geography, demographics and economics. Neighborhood organizations were set-up as individual, 501 (c) (3)'s to meet the distinctive needs of the communities they serve. Is there a way to achieve the desired goals

while supporting and embracing the unique character of each Minneapolis neighborhood? What works in one part of the city may not work in another. We can certainly learn from one another, but do not make us look the same. We encourage the city to prioritize only the very most important goals and allow a great deal of flexibility in how each neighborhood association achieves them.

The DMNA, for example, holds monthly board meetings, as well as monthly Land Use Committee meetings. We promote these meetings via our Website, Facebook page and weekly e-blast. We get a good turnout of people at our regular monthly meetings. We hold our annual meeting in October. This is when elections to our board of directors takes place. We routinely get between 50 and 100 people that attend this meeting. We believe we are already working hard on outreach and participation.

We are not in favor of term limits. Our recent challenge has been finding willing candidates for open seats. We do recognize the importance of diversity on the board, and support periodic changes in leadership.

4. The Framework proposes that the City will fund the new program out of the general fund. The DMNA has strong apprehension about this source of revenue. The DMNA is concerned that funding the program out of the City's general fund could pit neighborhood organizations against City Departments. It could also making the funding allocation process very political. The DMNA supports an objective funding methodology that is consistent and long-term. We need stability in order to continue the good work we have been doing over the past 20 years to address the needs of the rapidly growing downtown community.

The Framework also proposes to fund Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in addition to Neighborhood Organizations. We have some concerns about this aspect of the program, because of the lack of detail about how Neighborhood Organizations will compete against CBOs. Will Neighborhood Organizations have to compete against CBOs from across the city, or just within their neighborhood boundaries? This seems diametrically opposed to other areas of the Framework that ask Neighborhood Organizations to work collaboratively with CBOs. Instead, could Neighborhood Organizations and CBOs apply together for a specific project or program? For example, the DMNA has provided funding to St. Stephen's Human Services and YouthLink to support their street outreach programs.

Regardless, to make the proposed funding structure work - 25% for CO's and 75% for Neighborhood Organizations split between base funding, discretionary funds, and project funds – the new program needs to be funded at a minimum level of \$10 million per year. Moreover, with the new expectations for diversity and outreach, base funding for Neighborhood Organizations must absolutely continue at least at the current level.

5. The Framework recommends unspecified proposed improvements to NRP funding. What are these improvements? The DMNA wants assurance to know that the balance of our NRP dollars are secure.

Things we like:

1. The Framework aims to increase involvement in civic and community life. We will continue to look for ways to engage with residents who live in the downtown community. This past year, we held meetings at three residential buildings and YouthLink. We intend to do this again at different locations in 2019. We also facilitated a meeting with a group of residential building managers and homeowner association (HOA) board members. We hope to help this group establish more regular meetings. We also conducted a community survey seeking input from community members about what they feel our priorities should be. The community identified crime and safety, green space, affordable housing and homelessness as the most important issues.
2. The Framework promotes collaboration between neighborhood organizations, community organizations and the City of Minneapolis. This is a strength of the DMNA. Since our inception, we have been working collaboratively with adjacent neighborhood organizations, the Minneapolis Police Department, CPED, NCR, Council Members Steve Fletcher and Lisa Goodman, the Minneapolis Downtown Council – DID, Green Minneapolis, the East Town Business Partnership and the many nonprofit, human service organizations that work to improve the well-being of people who have experienced homelessness. We look forward to continuing this tradition.
3. The Framework continues to allow neighborhood organizations to identify and find creative solutions to neighborhood problems. We very much like the funding proposal that includes the opportunity to apply for discretionary funds for enhanced outreach and for specific neighborhood improvements.
4. The Framework states that the City will provide training, technical assistance and tools and resources to neighborhood organizations. One example of this that we are appreciative of is the newly established relationship with Attorney Jess Birken.
5. The Framework encourages collaboration between neighborhood organizations to pool services. The DMNA welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with adjacent neighborhood organizations. The Downtown Neighborhood Leaders Group (reps from DMNA, EPNI, Loring Park and North Loop) meets regularly, and if there are opportunities for efficiencies, we will discuss them. We will also look for more opportunities to collaborate on events and activities.

The DMNA already hosts regular community cleanups along Washington Avenue with the North Loop Neighborhood Association. The DMNA works collaboratively with the Citizens for a Loring Park Community on crime and safety issues on Hennepin Avenue, and with Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc., to review development projects on bordering properties. The downtown neighborhood organizations routinely cross promote events and activities via our Websites, Social Media and e-blasts. And finally, the DMNA and EPNI are discussing the possibility of co-hosting a National Night Out event at The Commons this year.

6. We appreciate that the Framework recommends the continuation of the NRP Policy Board. It is important that this body, with its institutional memory, remain in place until all neighborhood organizations have completed implementation of their Neighborhood Revitalization Program Action Plans.

7. We are grateful that the Framework advocates providing dollars for food. Neighborhoods typically hold meetings after work, in the early evening. We know people are hungry at this time of day. Offering food at meetings would be a great way to increase participation. Food is a very powerful way to build community and a demonstrated successful strategy in promoting participation.

In closing, the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association respectfully requests that the City thoughtfully review and reflect upon the feedback and recommendations you receive from neighborhood organizations regarding the Neighborhoods 2020 Framework. We also ask that you allow for more in-depth conversation and collaboration before taking any action on it. Finally, we hope that you can recognize the good work that the DMNA and other neighborhood organizations have done across the City over the past 20 years. We all want the best for the city of Minneapolis. If we work together, we can build upon our groundwork for years to come.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me at christie@thedmna.org, or 320-583-4573.

Sincerely,

Joe Tamburino
DMNA Board Chair

Christie Rock Hantge
DMNA Neighborhood Coordinator

CC: Council Member Steve Fletcher
Council Member Lisa Goodman
Steven Gallagher, NCR Specialist