

MINNEAPOLIS

# Minneapolis council committee puts brakes on controversial neighborhoods plan

U may help revise the plan for neighborhood organizations.

By Miguel Otárola (<http://www.startribune.com/miguel-otarola/396828811/>) Star Tribune |

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A Minneapolis City Council committee voted Monday to revise a controversial proposal to change how the city's 70 neighborhood organizations operate.

Neighborhood leaders worried about increase governmental control and potential funding cuts had criticized the plan, which has been years in the making and was released (<http://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-wants-to-tie-funding-of-neighborhood-groups-to-their-diversity/504949652/?refresh=true>) earlier this year. The vote followed a lengthy public hearing dominated by residents who criticized the plan as a threat to the groups' survival and a missed opportunity to support their work.

The city now plans to bring in the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota to revise Neighborhoods 2020, an initiative to restructure the organizations once their current source of municipal funding dries up next year. The full City Council is expected to vote on the collaboration next week.

"We have a good framework but there's still more work to do," said Council Member Phillipe Cunningham, the chair of the engagement committee that held Monday's hearing. "We're ... building on it in a different way and making sure we're addressing some gaps."

Cunningham said he made the push to partner with the center, known as CURA, after hearing the concerns of neighborhood organizations in his ward in north Minneapolis.

In order for neighborhood organizations to have the same amount of funding in the future, the city would have to set a 7.5% increase in the property tax levy, Cunningham said. Delaying approval of the framework, he continued, allows the city to research where the group's long-term funding will come from.

Members of neighborhood associations who packed the council chambers, a majority of whom had urged the council to reject the current plan, rejoiced after the vote. Most spoke in favor of delaying approval of the plan, saying it was too bureaucratic and diminished the grassroots power of their organizations.

"This doesn't have vision. This is what a regulatory agency would give," said Becky Timm, executive director of the Nokomis East Neighborhood Association. "We have this many [public] comments (<http://www.startribune.com/after-criticism-minneapolis->



RENEE JONES SCHNEIDER — STAR TRIBUNE

Council Member Phillipe Cunningham, seconds from right and the chair of the committee that held Monday's hearing, said he

[cases-proposed-rules-for-neighborhood-groups/508926012/?refresh=true](https://www.startribune.com/cases-proposed-rules-for-neighborhood-groups/508926012/?refresh=true)), but where are those voices here?"

Most people were supportive of the plan's efforts to improve representation of people of color and renters on association boards, but wanted to make sure it was done in a way that was more organic and less punitive. C Terrence Anderson, CURA's director of community programs, said it's important to have a plan that supports groups that are already working to improve their demographic makeup and engagement.

"Goals around diversity are absolutely important, but we also have to recognize they're not the destination," he said during the public hearing. "We can talk about diversity, but we can also envision something greater than that, too."

Council Member Andrew Johnson, former president of the Longfellow Community Council, was strongly critical of Neighborhoods 2020, saying there has been "a huge lack of trust" regarding the plan.

"Some of the strongest leaders across our city came out today and spoke," he said. "It was nearly unanimous that this plan is a flawed document."

Collaborating with CURA, he said, is an "opportunity to take the step back, to work to rebuild and repair that trust."

Yet not all council members were dismissive of the plan's current goals. Council Vice President Andrea Jenkins, who voted to approve the framework, said she was saddened that there is an "us versus them" mentality between neighborhood organizations and the city.

"It really disheartens me that this is always seemingly an adversarial relationship," she said. "I hope that we all have the same goals, and that is to make our city the best city that it can be."

If approved by the full council, the city's Neighborhoods and Community Relations (NCR) department would come back with a revised plan by Oct. 28.

NCR Director David Rubedor said he was confident that the council would still vote on adopting the full plan by the end of the year.

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