

Statement of the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission

March 26, 2019

The Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (“NCEC”) hereby submits the following comments and recommendations for the Minneapolis Neighborhoods 2020 future program funding, guidelines, governance, and citywide engagement system. The NCEC members sincerely hope that reports of our demise are premature. We find it curious and discouraging that the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, with which NCEC has partnered and collaborated for the past decade, chose to suggest in its recommendations, “The NCEC reflects the time it was developed and has served its purpose, but it does not meet the current needs of the City.” The NCEC wishes to note that this declaration came without any advance consultation from NCR, as might be expected in a system adhering to IAP2 principles, that it was to be reformed into oblivion.

Perhaps the City Council and Mayor are uninformed about the large body of work developed by the NCEC, such as reports and recommendations on Diversity and Inclusion of City Boards and Commissions; City Department Engagement recommendations; Crime and Safety task force recommendations; program documents for the One Minneapolis Fund, the Community Investment Fund, revised Grievance Policies, etc.

It should be noted for the record that the NCEC began work around Neighborhoods 2020 in March-April of 2015, with foresight and intention to complete the multiple tasks in its work plan. The NCEC completed a revision and was working toward Neighborhoods 2020 recommendations for the City Council. The NCEC had in collaboration with NCR and outside consultants conducted extensive engagement at five citywide engagement sessions using the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter world cafés model, attracting upwards of 600 participants and generating over 842 comments. In the midst of that process the NCR abruptly announced it was developing a new “Roadmap” using its own internal committee process. The NCR then determined to proceed with three Work Groups, whose volunteer resident members are largely dissatisfied and disenchanted with the way in which their valuable time and recommendations were, and were not used to inform the NCR Neighborhood 2020 Recommendations.

The NCEC wishes to restate and resubmit for thoughtful consideration its earlier document, the “Recommendations for Recalculating the 2020 “Roadmap” and Funding Recommendation.” The link to the online document:

<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@ncr/documents/webcontent/wcmsp-212000.pdf>

The NCEC had 16 specific recommendations, including but not limited to:

- ✓ “Clearly defined roles and expectations” among the neighborhood organizations, the NCR, the NCEC, and the City.
- ✓ “Multi-year allocations (5-year) with ability to repurpose unexpended funds into the next cycle.”
- ✓ Recommending \$6M to \$8M annually, not unreasonable considering a City budget of over \$1.3 Billion.
- ✓ NCEC calls for increasing base level funding from \$25,000 to \$35,000.

The NCEC does NOT support the NCR Recommendations that as proposed result in a 25% funding cut for neighborhood organizations. Instead, the NCEC calls for increased funding to support BOTH neighborhood organizations and community and cultural based organizations! The NCEC supports funding for One Minneapolis Fund programs, the program which it helped to develop and foster.

The funding recommendations also called for the City Council to develop a participatory budgeting mechanism for neighborhood organizations to submit requests into the City's capital budgeting review process (e.g. at the level of \$5M annually) so that residents would have the ability to help facilitate impactful infrastructure changes as under the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

The NCEC calls for a short delay and reconsideration of how this most recent NCR process has not worked. We have concluded that the latest Work Groups were but a smokescreen for the NCR Department's plan that had been formulated in-house since early 2018 (reference "Neighborhood Program Options for Consideration, May 2018 Update). It appears to some that NCR turned away from true collaboration into obstruction of the NCEC's Neighborhoods 2020 process in order to co-opt the same and to insert its own, not the communities, recommendations. Further, if the City reforms its advisory board or commission for neighborhoods and community engagement programming, the NCEC believes it's critical to retain seats for residents and to retain seats that are elected by the place-based neighborhood organizations.

The NCEC supports the statements of the Northside Neighborhoods Council and its call for a short delay and reworking of the Neighborhoods 2020 process in an authentic manner, consistent with the IAP2 Principles of Community Engagement the City has adopted. The NNC concluded that this latest process has revealed "a continual effort by NCR to centralize their role and deep their department at the center of control, where we believe residents and NO's should be." The NCEC also supports the statement of the Longfellow Community Council, as follows: "For over 25 years, independent nonprofit neighborhood organizations have continually worked to identify and address the priorities in their respective communities. The Neighborhood system serves as a connective tissue between residents, City staff and elected officials, while also managing the needs, priorities and challenges faced by Minneapolis neighborhoods."

The NCEC calls for the City Council and Mayor to support a transformative process to improve the neighborhoods and community engagement programs while not destroying all forms of shared power with its neighborhoods residents. **The NCEC is, on behalf of our constituents and stakeholders the residents of Minneapolis, hereby requesting a short delay not-to-exceed 6 months in order to finish the Neighborhoods 2020 process using an independent, fair and impartial third party such as the University of Minnesota CURA.**