

August 19, 2008

Anissa Hollingshead
Council Committee Clerk
304 City Hall
350 South 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Ms. Hollingshead,

The Corcoran Neighborhood Organization board of directors met on Monday, August 11, 2008 to discuss the revised *Framework for the Future* document. We would like to submit the following comments into the record.

We appreciate the NRP Work Group's attempts to revise a flawed draft, and some of the concerns expressed in our February 11, 2008 reaction to that draft have been addressed.

The July 24 *Framework* is still very vague—especially with regards to dollar amounts—and in some ways provides less definition of the NRP Work Group's proposal for future neighborhood funding than did its draft predecessor.

- Like the draft that preceded it, the July 24 *Framework* fails to define final dollar amounts for neighborhood funding, but on page 5 announces the forthcoming release of a tax increment revenue analysis in August 2008—after public input on the *Framework* is received—that will apparently provide more definition. The request for public input on another vague proposal just weeks before releasing hard numbers is disingenuous.
- “Approximately \$3,000,000 per year” is the only numerical funding definition given in the July 24 *Framework*. This amount is not sufficient to sustain Minneapolis’ “capacity to organize at the neighborhood level.” Divided equally between the 61 neighborhood organizations, each neighborhood would receive approximately \$49,180. This amount is not sufficient to maintain professional staff with taxes and benefits. The average salary for an Executive Director with a budget less than \$500,000 in Minnesota in 2006 was \$54,724 and the average salary for a Community Organizer in the metro area in 2006 was \$40,755, according to the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits’ *2007 Salary and Benefits Survey*.
- The “weighted formula” used to allocate funding is not defined. This formula should reward existing organizations’ efficacy in leveraging funds.
- The usual time frame for projects funded by the two vaguely-defined “investment funds” (NIF and CIF) should be defined. The “biannual” priority setting by elected officials described on page 5 suggests a continuation of the regretful trend toward 6- to 9-month “mini grants” by the City of Minneapolis. Such tight time frames will not produce meaningful work that reflects local, resident-defined issues, and are not conducive to sustaining neighborhood organizations or Minneapolis’ “capacity to organize at the neighborhood level.”
- The “technical support” proposed for neighborhood organizations represents a duplicative use of funds better spent on discretionary neighborhood projects. Adequate

technical support for neighborhood and non-profit organizations is already offered through the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, MAP for Nonprofits, the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhood Organizing, and others.

Neighborhood autonomy should be maintained for the benefit of the City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis residents.

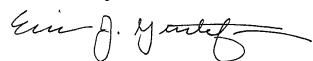
- The *Community Advisory Board* should be an independent board and should not be overseen by the City or the City Coordinator's office. This was a widely-shared criticism of the draft *Framework* as well; the NRP Work Group's response described on pages B3 and B4 that "the majority of the Work Group agreed that it was preferable to make the program fully a part of the City" is not surprising since five out of six Work Group members are Council Members or Mayoral staff.
- All *Community Advisory Board* members should be elected by neighborhood organizations, with none appointed by the Mayor or City Council. The *Framework* calls for appointment of half the advisory board membership by elected officials; this scenario does not describe a resident-driven program.
- The *Community Advisory Board* responsibilities described in Attachment C are too extensive for a group of 18 uncompensated individuals meeting just 2 hours per month.
- The process for review and approval of neighborhood plans is not clearly defined, and seems to involve extensive review by numerous parties. The review process should be defined clearly and such that neighborhoods can expect that if they follow the process, their plans will be approved.
- Hiring priorities for paid staff of the *Community Relations Department* should aim for candidates with at least 5 years experience as staff of Minneapolis neighborhood organizations.
- The draft document called for an exorbitant \$1 million annually for "administrative costs to support this new structure," while the July 24 *Framework* fails to set a dollar amount for administrative costs.

As Attachment D and page 4 suggest, participation in Minneapolis decision making processes should reflect the demographic makeup of our city.

- The call for Neighborhood Organizations to "involve all demographic groups" without making the same mandate for *The City* does disservice to the numerous Minneapolis demographics who are rarely engaged in today's City decision making processes. The *Framework* should also define how the City expects to measure the "inclusiveness" of engagement.
- The *Framework* states on page 6 that the City's new *Community Relations Department* will remove "barriers to full civic participation and meaningful engagement," an unrealistic charge for a new department of city government.

On behalf of the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization, I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the *Framework* proposal.

Sincerely,



Eric Gustafson
Interim Director

Cc: Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizations