



April 30, 2018

David Rubedor
Neighborhood and Community Relations
City of Minneapolis
105 Fifth St. - Room 425
Minneapolis MN 55401

Dear Mr. Rubedor:

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft document: *Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap - A guide for conversation*.

Neighborhood organizations are poised to identify community assets, assess threats and stressors, and build community cohesion. In the case of CIDNA, it is organized for the purposes of:

- promoting cooperation among its members;
- ensuring its members a voice in civic affairs affecting the community;
- developing a sense of individual involvement in the community;
- maintaining and improving the physical, social and cultural environment of the neighborhood;
- acting as a contact between the neighborhood and other agencies;
- reviewing, studying and making recommendations regarding issues of concern affecting the neighborhood and area

Neighborhood organizations are a vital asset to the residents of Minneapolis. With that in mind, CIDNA respectfully submits the enclosed comments to further the conversation on the Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap. We look forward to being involved with next steps in developing a plan to support the sustainability of neighborhood-based engagement.

Sincerely,

Amanda Vallone
Interim Chair, CIDNA Board
P.O. Box 16270
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

cc: Council Member Lisa Goodman



Relevance of Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizations

The Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA) and other neighborhood organizations were bolstered by Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), which was established by the City of Minneapolis in 1991. The NRP was a response to the decline of Minneapolis, which included the degradation of housing stock, crime increase, failing schools, and apparent blight.¹ Additionally suburban flight and poverty increase were a concern for the City of Minneapolis. Specifically, the loss of 14 percent of Minneapolis's population occurred during the 1970s and the number of people in high poverty census tracts tripled during the 1980s. A survey of Minneapolis residents conducted in 1986 showed a fear of deterioration of residential environments and an increase in people wanting to leave the city.² The NRP provided a formal construct for citizen participation in community development for the purpose of improving the quality or livability of residential neighborhoods and to stimulate resident participation in their communities.

Public critics claim neighborhood organizations to be protective of housing stock and neighborhood community connectivity. Yet it should not be a surprise as this was the charter given to neighborhood organizations by the City and continues to be important to the health of Minneapolis and Hennepin County. Further the Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap (Roadmap) and its supporting documents such as the Biko Report identify some deficiencies with neighborhood organizations' programming and the demographic representation of neighborhood organizations' leadership team - yet in the main neighborhood organizations have operated with integrity and in a manner that has supported the comeback and stability of neighborhood housing stock along with community livability and cohesion.

Neighborhood organizations evolve and are often on the leading edge of community issues such as pedestrian safety, transportation concerns, and green space preservation and enhancement. In the case of pedestrian safety, CIDNA adopted this as a neighborhood priority in 2010 which was well in advance of the Vision Zero Minneapolis³ policy, adopted in September 2017, which aims to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries resulting from crashes on city streets. Further neighborhood organizations have a history spanning decades of investing community funds to support the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) regional and neighborhood parks. In the case of Minneapolis neighborhood parks, the City of Minneapolis and MPRB joined forces in 2016 to establish a plan to fund maintenance and improvements for neighborhood parks over the next 20 years.⁴

Additional opportunities exist for communities to benefit from neighborhood organizations as they have not been adequately utilized to support community responses and resiliency when facing catastrophes such as weather related incidents, chemical spills, fires, and other community traumas. Providing support and training to neighborhood organizations and their membership, including evacuation planning, is relevant to community emergency preparedness as described by the Sendai Framework.⁵ Additionally neighborhood organizations have not been engaged to address public health concerns associated with urban life including noise/vibrations, light pollution, and air quality.

As in times past, the City of Minneapolis views itself in transition. Improvement in city communications, trainings and staff support can serve to equalize the efficacy of neighborhood organizations throughout the Minneapolis community. Initiatives must be transparent and garner broad support as opposed to special interest driven initiatives. Neighborhood organizations can and will continue to play a vital role to facilitate resident supported priorities and to gain synergies with other community/cultural organizations and governmental units. Neighborhood organizations serve as a funnel for resident members' concerns, provide a platform for collaborating with other community organizations, and interface with the City and other governmental units. While not all members will agree on all issues, neighborhood organizations can provide a forum and a process to reach consensus. Where there is difference there need not be division.



CIDNA's Proposition for the Future of Neighborhood Organizations

Structure, Community Engagement and Staffing:

- CIDNA **supports the continuation of autonomous neighborhood associations (i.e., Option #3)** with the continuation of the Community Participation Program (CPP) funding model coupled with purchase of pooled services such as insurance, legal, accounting, etc. as outlined in Option #2.
- CIDNA agrees with the City of Minneapolis that **neighborhood organizations are a vital link to the civic and community life of the City**. Neighborhood organizations are also in a unique position to identify local issues and opportunities in their communities and mobilize local resources. (Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap, p.15). Connecting over a sense of place creates strong bonds, and neighborhood organizations are in the best position to engage residents on the local level.
- The City has 70 neighborhood organizations, each representing approximately 5700 residents. For historic, geographic and other reasons, the character and needs of these 70 neighborhoods vary considerably. **Neighborhood organizations are positioned to "serve communities that are demographically unique and face very different challenges."** (Roadmap, p. 15)
- Grouping neighborhood into districts is not helpful to residents as it would reduce their opportunity for participation in the system and increase the complexity for volunteer leaders. While St. Paul is organized around a system of 17 district councils, Minneapolis has considered the district model, ultimately concluding that a system of more numerous **neighborhood organizations, each representing a far smaller number of residents, created a stronger sense of community and more opportunity for civic engagement**. Further there is nothing prohibiting neighborhood organizations from collaborating on projects now. Efforts to foster collaboration between neighborhood organizations should continue. The idea of "sister" neighborhood organizations with support from City staff could go a long way in sharing lessons learned, increasing cultural sensitivity and improving sense of City wide community.
- The 70 neighborhood associations offer **individuals of different backgrounds the opportunity to coalesce around a shared geographic community**. Cultural, affinity and single-issue groups can all play a role in representing the needs and aspirations of smaller groups of residents within a given neighborhood, or of larger groups of residents that span multiple neighborhoods. **Neighborhood organizations are an indispensable part of the mix and are best able to take both the broad view and the long view for their residents to ensure that different does not mean divided**.
- CIDNA concurs with the listed **benefits of pooled resources in Option #2**. CIDNA has experienced the benefits and look forward to **continued access to the city's resources**, such as insurance, legal and accounting advice, training labs and knowledge transfer, and direction on policy and procedure. We appreciate the timely and well-informed help from the NCR Department.
- In addition to pooled services being offered by the City, **neighborhood organizations can share a Coordinator**. CIDNA and East Calhoun Community Organization (ECCO) have shared a paid staff Coordinator for several years, an arrangement that has been successful for CIDNA, ECCO and the City. A training program to develop additional Coordinators would be beneficial to support neighborhood organizations that do not have a paid staff person.



- While respecting the knowledge and responsiveness of our NCEC Commissioner when he has been called upon, we feel that the **role of the commissioners is poorly defined**. We support strengthening and clarifying their role and extending that information to the neighborhoods.
- CIDNA supports the recommendations in the Biko Report that indicate a need for **more neighborhood specialists and NCR engagement** in the field.
- CIDNA requests that NCR staff create and provide an **organizational chart** that shows how the City departments and boards (such as NCEC) relate to each other and the areas over which they have influence.
- CIDNA requests that NCR staff distribute a **roster of contact information** for all 70 neighborhood associations to facilitate communication among the groups.

Funding & Accountability/Oversight:

- CIDNA supports the NCR recommendation of **“continuing the use of NRP funds into perpetuity** as neighborhoods are making good use of these funds and undertaking regular updates to their plans.” (Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap, pg. 6)
- CIDNA proposes a change to the Action Item of an annual check-in and **review of NRP Fund Expenditures (pg. 6) to an every-other-year check-in**. A yearly schedule is too labor-intensive for NCR and smaller neighborhoods.
- Overall, **neighborhood associations have been good stewards of NRP funds and CPP funding**. Expenditures are critically evaluated prior distribution by the City. If this process is to change, a fiduciary certification may be advisable. Further explanation and implications of directly issuing grants to organizations is needed.
- NRP and CPP were structured with a formula for calculating neighborhood funding based on a set of factors. While CIDNA is on the lower end of dollars received under the formula for both programs, we believe that the formula is an equitable way of allocating funds. We **support the continuation of a minimum allocation to support the hiring of a neighborhood coordinator**, as has been the case with CPP in recent years.
- The current annual funding for CPP (\$4.1 million) represents 0.0028% of the City’s \$1.4 billion annual budget. **CIDNA proposes that the value neighborhoods provide to the City more than offsets the very minimal fraction of the City budget that CPP funding represents**. The Roadmap points out that neighborhood organizations provide “thousands of volunteers with an annual value to the City of over \$1.9 million dollars” (Neighborhoods 2020 Roadmap, p.3) – this is above the value of services garnered with the \$4.1 annual CPP budget.



Reflection on the Roadmap Critical Issues

- **Neighborhoods are already addressing Roadmap Critical Issues** - CIDNA has supported affordable housing by extending a loan, using NRP funds, to Propel Nonprofits, an organization that supports affordable housing projects, and we provided a grant to the *Bridge for Youth* to provide housing for homeless youth.
- CIDNA sees the **value in distinguishing between critical issues that call for specifically designed and funded efforts and critical issues that arise from social forces inherent in our communities** and which are addressed within the natural course of our increasingly diverse society learning to live together.
- Based on our current capacity and funding, **CIDNA will be challenged to marshal significant amounts of time and money on our own for efforts that may be required to address many of the critical issues in the Roadmap.** We are also compelled to state that, while the Roadmap places special emphasis on these critical issues, there is a notable absence of information about what the neighborhoods can expect from the city regarding its role in addressing them and **how the community was engaged to define the critical issues.** CIDNA has not been asked to participate in any such process.
- As capacity allows, CIDNA will work to address the city-wide critical issues listed in the Roadmap. By the same token, we feel strongly that the city needs to recognize and respect that many neighborhoods, including CIDNA, have identified critical issues of our own. **We would like to see more city support of efforts at the neighborhood level to address these neighborhood-identified critical issues.**

By way of example: *at one of the 2020 forums held with NCR leadership, a representative from CIDNA questioned the city's seeming lack of interest in issues identified as of critical importance in our neighborhood, such as the harm that will be caused to this neighborhood by the Kenilworth Corridor co-location of freight and light rail and the surge of new development with its concomitant traffic issues. The response was, "Yes, it's a neighborhood in transition." The Roadmap directs us to address the issues that the city has designated as critical, while the city seems to expect the residents of CIDNA to just learn to live with our "transitional" and strongly articulated neighborhood concerns.*

The development of critical issues should not create winners or losers but should serve to benefit all and provide opportunity of cultural healing and reconciliation. Additionally, the prioritized critical issues should not put profit motives ahead of the good of community residents.

Consideration of the Blueprint for Equitable Engagement

The importance of neighborhood organizations is eloquently stated in the Blueprint⁶, pages 6 and 7:

Neighborhood organizations are an asset to the City. In addition to the project-based work carried out over the past two decades through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP), neighborhood organizations are an increasingly integral part of the City's engagement efforts. To be effective in this work, the City and neighborhood organizations must work in partnership to enhance engagement and employ strategies that connect diverse residents with each other and with City efforts. We recognize that no two neighborhoods



have the same demographic profile, and that not all strategies will be appropriate in all neighborhoods. We also recognize that neighborhood organizations are in a unique position to identify local issues, opportunities, and to mobilize local resources.

- Currently the 12-member CIDNA Board is comprised of 33% renters, compared to the overall CIDNA total of 44% renters. All CIDNA members are welcome to join the board and concentrated effort has been made to recruit renters to volunteer. **The modern day work and family demands often impede community participation and volunteerism at a leadership level.**
- The 2016 Compass⁷ demographic data for CIDNA indicates 89% white and 2% Hispanic. With the help of city resources dedicated to Critical Issues, **CIDNA strives to include representation from the full scope of neighborhood's residential and commercial makeup**, and to broaden our communication outreach.
- The CIDNA Board is **seeking ways to collaborate with other neighborhoods**, particularly where we can bridge a cultural divide, on projects of similar interest and gain. Support from City staff to achieve this would be welcomed.
- CIDNA and other neighborhood associations already work with cultural organizations, affinity groups, human services non-profits, and governmental units. CIDNA aims to **deepen these community relationships and would like to see NCR engage in helping to facilitate this process.**
- CIDNA is interested in learning how Neighborhoods 2020 will address changes (i.e., turn-over) in cultural organizations and neighborhood leadership. **Relevant trainings need to be offered throughout the year to allow engagement of new leaders and volunteers.**

Follow-up Questions

- The Roadmap does not address whether NCEC and NCR will continue to exist or if another city resource will be developed to provide trainings, communications, support and oversight to neighborhood associations beyond 2019. **What city resources and structures are envisioned for the support of neighborhood organizations?**
- NRP funding likely will not be fully distributed by 2020 – **how will the city provide oversight to this program until the funds are drawn down by neighborhood organizations? What happens to NRP Phase II funds that are not allocated due to lack of a neighborhood Phase II plan being submitted?**
- Based on review of articles of organization and by-laws, CIDNA and other neighborhood organizations are independent 501(c)(3) entities much like certain cultural organizations in Minneapolis. **How can the City assist in helping neighborhood organizations gain access to available grant funding including the Community Improvement Fund, the Metropolitan Council grant funding, etc. in the manner that many cultural organizations receive at large grant funds?**
- **How can the City improve constituent communications?** The City's official newspaper for public announcements is Finance & Commerce, which requires a subscription and is behind an online pay-wall. Further not all constituents have ready access to internet services and do not receive notifications posted to Nextdoor.



CIDNA - A Case for Ongoing Engagement of Neighborhood Associations

All CIDNA Board meetings and committee meetings are open to the full CIDNA membership. Meeting times and locations are posted on the CIDNA website and published in the Hill & Lake Press which is distributed to residences, both owned and rented, in the CIDNA geography and other adjacent neighborhoods. At least once a year, a postcard notice is sent to each residence within the CIDNA geography promoting opportunities to volunteer and to get involved. Guided by membership input through surveys and direct dialogue, CIDNA successfully activates neighbors to work toward goals that support the livability of their neighborhood. Neighborhood priorities have emerged for Housing, Community Building, Neighborhood Safety, and Environment⁸.

CIDNA has worked independently as well as partnered with other neighborhood associations and local non-profit organizations to deploy NRP and CPP funds for issues and projects that improve neighborhood livability and align with City goals. Examples of CIDNA projects to support and improve our neighborhood and community at large include:

Housing and Land Use:

- During NRP Phase II, CIDNA evaluated neighborhood housing issues and determined that the housing and rental stock within the neighborhood is generally stable and in good repair. Given this situation, it was determined that the best initiative for the limited CIDNA housing funds was **to issue a loan to Propel Nonprofits to support affordable housing projects in Minneapolis.**
- CIDNA along with six other neighborhood associations **issued a grant to the *Bridge for Youth* to open an intentional community** for those between the ages of 18-21 who are homeless or at a high risk for homelessness.
- CIDNA Land Use Committee **engages collaboratively with developers/architects and communicates with the City's Planning Department to increase density along West Lake Street.** The efforts are conducted in a manner that respects neighborhood livability and promotes safe, quality and sustainable construction.
- CIDNA board works with residents and City Hall on variance requests. CIDNA continues its collaboration with the City to **improve the livability of our area while respecting property rights of owners and concerns of neighbors.** Property owners, including landlords, have made a substantial investment in the community, as was one of the initial goals of NRP. Careful consideration of impacted stakeholders and a transparent and fair process is observed when evaluating variance requests.
- The CIDNA board has been deeply involved for over 30 years with the proposed Southwest Light Rail Transit project, whose proposed Kenilworth Corridor alignment will bi-sect the neighborhood. (See "Light rail transit through neighborhood is temporarily derailed," Hill & Lake Press, October 1984.) Since 2013, when co-location of freight rail and commuter light-rail trains was announced, the **CIDNA board has advocated strongly for the safety of residents, the livability of their homes, and the cohesion of the neighborhood.**
- CIDNA worked with other neighborhood associations and community environmentalists to **implement the Shore Land Overlay District⁹.** This code serves to preserve, protect, and enhance the use of and



access to the unique natural assets of the Minneapolis lakes and shoreline for the enjoyment of all city residents and regional visitors. As requested, CIDNA represents the interest of the neighborhood community stakeholders in balance with the desire for aggressive development of green space and air rights.

- The CIDNA board helped to **facilitate community awareness** of the Metropolitan Council Environmental Services (MCES) Hopkins - St. Louis Park Regional Sanitary Sewer Improvements project, along with supporting a MCES easement on MPRB property and assisting membership with property issues. While this sewer project does not serve Minneapolis residents and was disruptive to the CIDNA membership, it was a necessary infrastructure project to support the development of numerous new apartment buildings along the Hopkins – St. Louis Park corridor. The new sewer line goes through the heart of the neighborhood and the construction project lasted from 2012-2014 causing disruption to traffic flow, property damage and the temporary closing of a popular neighborhood park. CIDNA worked with MCES and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) to transform the MPRB Park Siding Park's playground after MCES used the park and its playground as a staging area for the project. Additionally CIDNA supported residents to gain restitution from the Metropolitan Council for collateral damage caused to private property during the construction.

Community Building:

- CIDNA conducts its business at board and committee meetings, which are open to all CIDNA residents. **Notifications and reports on these meetings are conveyed to membership via our e-newsletter, postcard mailings, publications in the community newspaper the Hill & Lake Press, and postings on the CIDNA website.** All CIDNA residents are encouraged to participate on the Board and committees via postcard mailings and call for volunteers in the Hill & Lake Press.
- Opportunities to **deepen community connectivity** are provided at events such as the Fall Festival, the Annual Membership Meeting, the CIDNA Speaker Series, and numerous board-sponsored neighborhood activity events.
- CIDNA **collaborates with other neighborhood groups** to co-sponsor events such as the annual ice-skating party, candidate forums during election years, and an annual wine-tasting fundraiser that has been held for over 30 years. In 2017 CIDNA and several other neighborhoods pooled resources to update the 20-year-old warming house on Lake of the Isles, which is used by city and regional residents.
- CIDNA considers the **Jones-Harrison Residence (JHR), a senior living community, a neighborhood asset and partner.** Specifically JHR offers community meeting space for CIDNA board meetings, annual meetings and special events. This is especially helpful to CIDNA, as CIDNA does not have a neighborhood school or MPRB Recreation Center. CIDNA includes JHR in special programming such as the May Day Basket event and Speaker Series.



Neighborhood Safety:

- Historically **CIDNA has cooperated with the Fifth Precinct Crime Prevention Specialist** in recruiting block captains and in participation with quarterly meetings or special events. The Fifth Precinct has a new Crime Prevention Specialist who has been invited to present at the May 2018 Annual CIDNA Membership Meeting.
- CIDNA **elevated community concerns related to pedestrian traffic fatalities** at the intersection of Market Place and West Lake Street and the crossing at Dean Parkway and West Lake Street. The efforts resulted in a joint Pedestrian Safety Committee with WCNC. Engagement with city and county officials has resulted in traffic light modifications, including improved light timing and left turn control. CIDNA membership expresses that pedestrian safety and traffic flow will be an ongoing concern as population density increases and traffic complexities develop due to SWLRT construction and operation.
- As part of the road replacement associated with the MCES Hopkins-St. Louis Park Regional Sanitary Sewer Improvements project, CIDNA **successfully championed for the creation of a new pedestrian sidewalk and new bike lane** along Sunset Boulevard originating from Cedar Lake Parkway/Depot Street. This improvement allows for safer walking and biking on a busy thoroughfare that previously did not have a pedestrian walkway or dedicated bike lane.

Environment:

- CIDNA has **funded major enhancements to neighborhood parks** such as playground equipment, outdoor ping-pong table, and community gardens.
- CIDNA actively recruits membership to **support annual Earth Day projects at Cedar Lake area.**
- The CIDNA board is proud of the success of **the long-term effort to rebuild Cedar Lake South Beach.** The grand re-opening will occur on July 19, 2018. Cedar Lake South Beach is a part of the Chain of Lakes Regional Park and is much used by CIDNA residents and visitors from the entire city and throughout the region. The first redesign concept was initiated by the neighborhood approximately 20 years ago. A neighborhood public engagement process was developed and followed to set priorities for the project. This collaboration with the MPRB has been funded by a combination of CIDNA's NRP dollars and Park Dedication Fees received from new apartment development in our neighborhood.
- For over 20 years, in collaboration with MPRB, the CIDNA board has sponsored a neighborhood-wide volunteer **gardening crew at Park Siding Park**, as well as a recently established **cleanup crew at Cedar Lake South Beach.**
- CIDNA members have a long history of **participating in Community Advisory Committees**, including, in recent years, the North Lake Calhoun Design Charrette, the Cedar Lake-Dean Parkway CAC, the Wirth Park Rehabilitation CAC, the Metro Transit Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis, and the Calhoun-Harriet Master Plan CAC.
- CIDNA has historically partnered with Metro Bloom to develop community **rain gardens and to provide pollinator friendly landscaping plans.**



Sources

¹ Fagotto, Elena, and Archon Fung. "Empowered Participation in Urban Governance: The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no. 3 (2006): 638-655.

² Filner, Matthew F. "The Limits of Participatory Empowerment: Assessing the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program." *State & Local Government Review* 38, no. 2 (2006): 67-77.

³ Vision Zero Minneapolis
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/TransportationPlanning/WCMSP-205002>

⁴ 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan
https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/about_us/budget__financial/20-year_neighborhood_park_plan/

⁵ Amina Aitsi-Selmi and Virginia Murray, "The Sendai framework: disaster risk reduction through a health lens" *Bulletin of World Health Organization*, Volume 96, No. 6 (June 2015)
<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/93/6/15-157362/en/>

⁶ *Blue Print for Equitable Engagement* adopted by Minneapolis City Council (May 2016)
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/initiatives/EquitableEngagement>

⁷ Minnesota Compass 2016
<http://www.mncompass.org/profiles/neighborhoods/minneapolis/cedar-isles-dean>

⁸ CIDNA NRP Phase II Plan
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@ncr/documents/webcontent/wcms1q-071432.pdf>

⁹ Minnesota Code § 551.480 Height of Structure
http://minneapolis-mn.elaws.us/code/coor_apxid59747_title20_ch551_artvi_sec551.480