

STRATEGY REPORT

NRP FUNDED STRATEGIES

(Evaluation and recommendation for completion of the Neighborhood Action Plan, NAP)

HOUSING

Recommendations in this section result in the neighborhood allocating over 52.5% of its total allocation to housing. This will not have any significant impact on NRP Phase II planning. However not having reached that percentage will have some impact on implementation of Phase II funds allocated for non-housing related projects.

The only significant work for the organization to do based on the recommendations below are to coordinate the notification and broad-based support for the plan modification. The Housing Committee will need to modify the existing or create a new scope of services for the existing home improvement program contract with Project for Pride in Living (PPL). If however the organization wants to go back to a program that has loans as a component and other party will have to be added as an institution capable of underwriting loans. PPL may be able to do this.

Recommendations

Home Improvement Program: This program has had various incarnations over its six-year life. The program started as a combination of loans a (participation loan, matching grants and grants). The applicants' household income was used to determine in which category they could apply. The most recent incarnation of this program is the "rebate" program, which reimburses the participants for a percentage of the cost with limits.

On Saturday 21 October the Board agreed to modify the Action Plan by moving \$150,000 from the Future Improvements to Central Avenue strategy to the rebate" program strategy. According to NRP policy this action will require 30-day notice to the neighborhood and broad-based support. I suggest the organization send a neighborhood-wide mailing announcing the action as 'proposed', provide reasoning for the action and invite organization members to attend a 'public meeting' dedicated to the subject. The meeting need not be a normally scheduled organization meeting. Assuming there is broad support for this plan modification, a simple plan modification form is filled out and submitted to the NRP. Because this amount (and including all amounts indicated following) is less than 10% of the entire plan allocation, final approval rests with the NRP director, Bob Miller. He has the option to request the policy Board Approval.

This proposed modification would put the neighborhood over the 52.5% threshold for housing allocation. And as the other modifications are extremely small in comparison, there is little reason he should request a Policy Board approval. On the other side, the funding is coming from improvements to a commercial corridor that the City has

identified as a priority. The organization might do well to indicate that the significant funding has already been dedicated to the current improvements and that as the next Phase II will not take place until 2002 or after, there will be time to dedicate funding from the neighborhood's Phase II allocation for these improvements.

Once the plan modification is final, the existing contract will need to be modified. If the \$150,000 is to be used to continue to fund the program with no changes, a simple contract modification will suffice. If the program is to change, then the Scope of Services will need to reflect any programmatic changes.

Property Maintenance Education: This strategy has seen no activity. It is contracted directly through NRP and has some remaining uncontracted funds. If the organization intends to implement this strategy, ask NRP staff to increase contract #15284 (Action Plan Activities) by \$200. If not some other use of these funds should be determined and proper steps taken.

Rehab of Distressed Properties: The preliminary review of NRP funded strategies revealed that while the Board and Housing Committee thought that the funds allocated to this strategy had been used, they had in fact, not been utilized. The Board on 21 October directed the Housing Committee to develop a plan to use the \$100,000 allocated here for a targeted improvement effort for residential properties between and including Central Avenue and Fillmore Street. As the 'spirit' of this strategy is essentially the same as the existing home improvement program administered by PPL, a contract modification of the existing contract will be sufficient to contract these funds. A separate scope of services for these funds or a modification of the existing scope will be necessary. The Housing Committee and PPL can work this out. Once that is complete, the new scope can be sent to MCDA and they will be able to move the contract modification forward.

Demolition: To date, the neighborhood has participated in the demolition of two houses: 2642 Polk and 2512 Pierce. Both of these lots have new single family houses on them. Currently, the neighborhood has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between it and the Inspections Department. This MOU states that the neighborhood has the remainder of the allocated funds (\$37,000) available for housing demolition and will split the cost with the Inspections department. This technically contracts these funds. If the organization desires, in the future, to use some of these funds for property acquisition, the MOU can easily be modified to reflect a new, lesser amount. The funds used for acquisition will likely need to be contracted on a case by case basis. However once the first contract is complete, it should be able to serve as a template for future acquisitions.

Citizen Inspection Program: There has been some work to establish this program by the organization in 1997. If it is the intention of the organization to continue, or re-establish this program ask the NRP staff person to increase contract #15284 (Action Plan Implementation) by \$150. (Not contracted funds). If not, some other use of these funds should be determined and proper steps taken.

COMMUNITY & YOUTH

Recommendations

Block Club Grants: Again if the neighborhood intends to move on this strategy, ask NRP staff person to increase contract #15284 (Action Plan Implementation) by \$4,000. Once the plan modification is final. If not, some other use of these funds should be determined and proper steps taken.

Because this is a grant program, guidelines should be developed and approved by the Board before any implementation begins.

Resource Clinic at NE Middle School: The last reimbursement request on this contract was June 24, 1998. According to both Minneapolis public school project Compliance personnel and the Resource Center Coordinator, the Center is complete. The recommendation is two-fold. The first step is to ask the NRP staff person to proceed with an amendment to contract 11752 that reduces the amount of the contract by \$1,391.12. This will 'close out' the contract.

On 21 October, the Board agreed to transfer this balance to the Youth Employment strategy.

Youth Employment Opportunities: No work has been done on this strategy. There is some current thinking about how to get some movement here and what partners will be necessary. To contract these dollars, the typical scope of services and budget will have to be created.

Improvements to Audubon Park: The last reimbursement request for this strategy was on September 3, 1999. The playground equipment installation is complete. However there is an issue of maintenance. Therefore, the recommendation is to request from NRP staff person a contract amendment that reduces the amount of contract # 11424 by \$5,782.11. This action will 'close out' this contract and prevent the Park Board from requesting funds for maintenance purposes.

Further, I suggest seeking a plan modification that moves this amount to the Expand Park Events/Programming strategy. Again, the Implementation Activities contract will have to be modified (increased) by a similar amount. This maintains the spirit of the initial allocation by keeping it for park improvements, but gives the organization more control over how it is used, as you will contract the funds directly.

Expand Events/Programming: After the plan modifications are final, ask NRP Staff person to increase contract # 15284 (Implementation Activities) by \$8,282.11 (\$2,500 from the initial allocation and \$5,782.11 from Park Improvements strategy). Consolidating funds in this strategy/contract will allow the organization more funding and flexibility to implement activities related to the park.

Neighborhood Bulletin Board: No action has been taken. All allocated funds are contracted.

Establish a Community Market: There appears to be an outstanding issue of the disposition of three 8' folding tables and three 'EZ up' canopy tents. While this does not affect the recommendation, the issue should be resolved.

The \$1,341.94 remaining in this strategy is already contracted in the Implementation Activities contract. Further, and again on 21 October, the Board agreed to use this remaining amount to provide funding to the Eastside Coop. There are two options. One is to simply write the Coop a check for this amount and contract the remaining amount of support funding through the MCDA. The other is not as straight forward, but 'cleaner.' That is to ask for the Implementation activities contract (#15284) to be reduced by this amount and include in the plan modification the transfer of these funds from this strategy to the Central Avenue Improvement strategy. This latter route will essentially remove this item from the organization's books and make for a more clear effort of support for the Eastside Food Coop.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations

Future Improvements to Central Avenue: \$150,000 from this strategy is to be moved to the home improvement strategy. That process is addressed in that strategy recommendation. Another recommendation increases this strategy by slightly over \$1,000. That process is dealt with in the source strategy. The neighborhood has also dedicated \$100,000 for the lighting project on Central Avenue. Lastly the Board agreed to provide \$25,000 to the Eastside Food Coop for their continuing efforts to establish a Coop in Northeast Minneapolis. These funds are to be used for consultant services.

The recommendations for this strategy are mainly administrative. First, given the amount of time that has past since the neighborhood dedicated funds for the lighting project, having made at least two office moves, had staff changes. Now looking forward to Phase II planning, I think another letter (an MOU if you will) indicating the support of the neighborhood directed to the Director of Public Works with copies to the NRP Director and Ward 1 and 3 Council members would be warranted.

Lastly, as both the Holland and Windom Park neighborhoods seem to be taking the lead on the Eastside Coop action, a letter to the NRP indicating support and any contingencies, with copies to the Eastside Coop, and other neighborhoods, will be sufficient to move forward the contracting of Audubon's portion.

Future Improvements to Johnson Street: The organization has agreed to reserve all but \$10,000 allocated to this strategy to help fund the revitalization of the Hollywood Theater. (When that decision was made is not clear. However, several Board members and Council member Paul Ostrow confirm that this is the understanding). It is unclear if

this constitutes an agreement to actually provide these funds for the project, or merely to hold them in case they are needed. In either case, there is little else pressing that would require access to these funds.

The other ongoing effort relating to Johnson Street is the work by the Johnson Street Shopping Center Association (JSSCA) to do some planning for streetscape improvements. They intend to hire a consultant to help them through the planning. It would make sense, on first thought, for funding for this to come from this strategy. Using this strategy as the source of planning funds would require at the least a contract, and perhaps a plan modification as well. However, they also are interested in administering the 'Commercial Paint-n-Fix' program for the neighborhood. For this they will charge an administrative fee. As they also receive funding from the MCDA for operating support and that there is only \$10,000 immediately available for work on Johnson Street, it is not unreasonable to ask the Merchants association to fund the consulting services themselves. This will allow the neighborhood to dedicate a greater amount to the actual future improvements.

Business Loans: There has been no progress made on this strategy. This type of program takes a significant amount of work on the part of several necessary partners. The fact that no work has been done on the program may indicate that a reallocation of these funds is an appropriate action. Even without contracting this strategy, the neighborhood will be near or at the required 95% contracted amount in order to move forward with Phase II planning.

Commercial Fix-n-Paint: The JSSCA has indicated a desire to administer this program for the neighborhood. Once the neighborhood and the merchant's association agree upon a scope of services, the NRP staff person can be asked to begin the contracting process.

Hollywood Theater Revitalization: Depending on one's view, either no progress or much progress has been made in revitalizing the Hollywood Theater. There is no recommendation for this strategy as these funds are dedicated to the pending revitalization of the theater other than a 're-commitment' letter to the MCDA Mr. Finley and Council member Ostrow.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Recommendations

Clean Sweep: The neighborhood has had Clean Sweep events the last several years, but has not allocated the costs to this particular line item. As there is still uncontracted funds in this strategy, the recommendation is to ask the NRP staff person to increase the Implementation Activities contract by \$1,850. This will contract the entire allocated amount. Further, the Board may want to consider amending their past expenditures relating to this program to have it more accurately reflected in the contract reports.

Gateway Signs: This strategy has been completed there are 'Audubon Neighborhood' signs posted on the first or second block of the major entrances to the neighborhood. The

entire allocated amount is contracted. There are unspent funds. There are two options. Leaves the funds alone and have them available to purchase more signs, or move funds to another strategy/program. The recommendation is to leave them alone.

Tree Planting: This contract is scheduled to end. Whether all of the funds will have been used by that time is unknown. On 21, October, the Board agreed to transfer remaining funding from the Habitat Restoration Project in Audubon Park to this strategy. I recommend that the neighborhood meet with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Forestry staff to review and refine the scope of services for this contract to include the additional \$18,615. Once that is complete, ask for NRP assistance to increase the existing contract by this amount.

Commercial Streetscapes: At one point there was an expense related to this program. If the organization wants to continue, ask NRP staff person to increase the Implementation Activities contract by \$70 (allocated but not contracted). If not, some other use of these funds should be determined and proper steps can be taken.

Restore Habitat in the Park: This project was never fully implemented. The neighborhood contracted with NRP to hire a consultant to plan and oversee the project. He was only paid a portion of the contract amount because the plan was never implemented. The neighborhood worked with a Park and Recreation Board 'ate' the costs of the plants and other materials. There are no reimbursement requests on either of the two contracts with the Park Board that indicate they 'charged' the NRP. On 21, October, the Board agreed to transfer the remaining (uncontracted) funds to the tree planting strategy/contract. (See the tree planting strategy for the specific recommendation.)

There remains a balance of \$1,385 in the line item in the Implementation Activities contract. I recommend asking NRP staff to further amend this contract to decrease the line item by this amount, include the funds in the modification, and finally increase the Park Events/Programming line item by the same amount. This maintains the spirit of the strategy and works to 'clean up' the Implementation Activities contract by removing a line item.

TRANSPORTATION & SAFETY

Recommendations

Traffic Study: Move forward on developing a comprehensive traffic study of the neighborhood. The lively discussion of late regarding proposed median closure on Central Avenue, the increased traffic resulting from the Quarry development and the level of concern indicated in even the preliminary survey result indicates this is a topic that the neighborhood is concerned about. Someone from Minneapolis Public Works, Transportation department should be able to help design a comprehensive study. Another option would be to publish a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure the services of

consultants to do the same thing. Either way, some amount of work will have to be done before contracts can be developed.

Bike Lanes: The neighborhood should implement something from the study it completed a number of years ago, even if the action is limited to simply installing signs indicating certain streets as bike routes. Public Works will be the contracting department of the City for this strategy.

ADMINISTRATION

Recommendations

Implementation and Staff Support: There are still uncontracted funds available in this strategy. As the neighborhood is looking towards NRP Phase II planning and will be required to fund the planning process, in part, from remaining Phase I dollars or from its Phase II allocation, the recommendation for this strategy is two-fold. First the organization need to develop a multi year budget that will get it through the Phase II planning process.

The new budget will be based on the current budget, but will incorporate planning activities.

Recommendations and information from the forthcoming Citizens Participation Review can be used to help develop this budget. Once a budget is developed, ask NRP Staff to amend the Staff Support contract (10651) by increasing the amount by \$24,344.87. This will bring the total Implementation Staff Support contract to \$194,000.

Action Plan Implementation Activities: Recommendations for this contract have been addressed in each of the applicable strategies.

CONCLUSION

Recommendations

If the recommendations above may appear to be complicated, it is only because there is a three-step process for a number of them (contracting amendment, plan modification, and contract amendment). Others have two-step process. And the others just one step.

Key to a number of the recommendations is the intent of the organization to continue, or start these projects. These are the projects found in the Implementation Activities contract (# 15284). While they amount to a small percentage of the overall plan allocation, they are the projects that will require the most time (with the possible exception of the Home Improvement Program). NRP Phase II planning will also require significant time resources. With the recent hiring of staff, the organization has increased its time resource. The question that will come up before the Board is “Are the current and secured resources enough to meet these needs?” The development of the (Phase II Participation Agreement will help answer this question.

While this report focused on NRP funded strategies, much of the same can be said for the non-funded strategies contained in the Action Plan. That is, there may have been some activity, but it was years ago, and nothing has been done since. The “disposition” of these strategies should be given some thought. Some of these strategies could be utilized as community/capacity building tool. But to do so will require resources.

Once the Board agrees on which recommendations to accept and what other actions might be taken, (including demonstration of broad-base support for the plan modification) a letter to the NRP Director outlining and requesting the change must be sent. Once that is done NRP staff will be responsible for moving the paperwork through the system. That process should take a few weeks to accomplish. After plan modification and contract amendments are complete, the neighborhood will be at least 95% contracted and eligible to move forward with Phase II planning.

Report

Citizen Participation and Phase II Planning

And The Survey Said

Attachment #1 contains the results of the most recent survey and those of the two previous surveys. While this does not offer a true longitudinal study, the results do offer some insight into how the perceptions of people in the neighborhood have changed over the years. One interesting item to note is that the response rate has steadily declined. General attitude about the neighborhood's delivery methods, and timing can all affect response rates. It is unclear how the first survey was delivered. The last two were directed mailed. The 1994 survey included text about the upcoming two million plus dollars the neighborhood was going to be getting and the last survey suffered some unfortunate timing in its delivery and deadline. Also, the mailing list they used differed. The list used in 1994 survey included labels for individual apartments within multi unit buildings and labels for landlords not living in the neighborhood. The list in 2000 contained none of these. Regardless, the results from previous surveys are a significant aid in understanding the latest results.

2000 Survey Observations

Generally people feel their immediate area is doing the best and that the further out one goes, the worse things are. The respondents in the 2000 survey feel their immediate neighborhood is not doing as well as North East in general. Several things have happened that could account for this: the Quarry, proposed development of the Lupient auto site, proposed development of the Grain Belt Brewery, and the redevelopment of the milling site on the Mississippi west bank.

The number of people that had no opinion about the quality of public education is not surprising given the numbers of people without children. This is however, an opportunity to build more of a partnership between the neighborhood and the school system, particularly NE Middle school. Much of the same can be said for the results of the similar public transportation question.

The quality of restaurants question is a bit puzzling. There are more award winning restaurants in and around the neighborhood now than before with more opening every month. The question is why is it that 66% of those who responded still feel the quality is only fair to poor? One answer may be that the respondents were very specifically thinking within the neighborhood boundaries. Another answer may be that the respondents are more traditional in their choice of menu items. This would be a good area for more research, especially with the continuing and pending efforts to revitalize the Central Avenue corridor.

The quality of block activity is most concerning, only 19% of the respondents consider it good, 28% consider it fair, 23% consider it poor, and 28% don't have an opinion. One is inclined to say that Community Crime Prevention /SAFE has failed in their job of organizing block clubs. However as neighborhoods are made up of blocks, there is a great benefit for neighborhood organizations to have well-organized blocks. There were strategies in the Action Plan to do just this. This might an area where some energy would be well spent.

Similar comments could be made about the quality of the neighborhood association question. While almost two-thirds of the respondents feel the organization is fair to good, a full third have no opinion. This is somewhat odd in light of the number of people that have benefited from the neighborhood's home improvement program. Perhaps if this third of the neighborhood knew about the organization, getting volunteers and developing leadership would be easier. A good goal is to have everyone in the neighborhood to have some, any, opinion about the organization in order to contribute to the neighborhood's improvement.

The results of the types of homes (low number of multi unit and rental) and whether or not they own are not surprising given the mailing list used to deliver the surveys.

Of considerable note is the high number of people who have and plan to make improvements to their properties. The estimated costs will be useful for the housing committee in developing future programs.

Nothing in the seriousness "issues set" of question stands out. The items of most interest The crime and vandalism question. While not thought to be serious, they are thought to be the most serious of issues facing the neighborhood. The overall crime rate in Minneapolis has remained stable and declined over the last few years, and the rate of violent crimes (murder, rape, aggravated assault) has definitely declined. That makes one think that the crimes, people in the neighborhood, are concerned about are more along the lines of burglaries, vandalism, disturbing the peace (quality of life crimes) etc. While not much can be done about these types of crimes, programs like the home improvement program could include safety improvements and landscaping improvements that meet CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) guideline as eligible projects.

The income category questions were rewritten for the 2000 neighborhood survey to match those used in the 2000 Census.

Comparison Observations

It is exciting to note that many more people feel better about their neighborhood, Northeast and Minneapolis now that they did in the past. The lower crime rates, strong economy, and more active neighborhood organization all likely contributed to this change.

The lack of opinions about the quality of public schools and transportation is an ongoing issue. This is an opportunity that has been consistently missed by the organization.

Another exciting observation is that people now seem to feel much safer in their own neighborhood that they have been in the past. Again this is likely attributed to the overall lower crime rate.

In general it appears people feel better about their neighborhood now than they have been. People are investing in their homes and a larger percentage of respondents say they both plan to stay for at least 5 years and would recommend the neighborhood to others as a good place to live.