



*Draft Report*

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### City Goal:

Strengthen City government management and enhance community engagement

*Community Engagement:* The voices of individuals and the community are valued and will be heard and involved at appropriate points in the City’s decision-making process. The City will be more effective and efficient in how we communicate with and engage communities, and will work to include those who are typically under-represented in public dialogue. We will focus our engagement in a manner that supports the long-term strength of a community.

### Community Engagement Principles

- Decision processes must be clear, open, and predictable
- Roles and authority must be clear and well understood
- Communication must be two-way and consistent
- Representative participation is needed at all levels
- Participants at all levels must be held accountable
- Genuine engagement (not just input) is essential
- Local and citywide plans should be related, consistent
- Change must occur to build trust and participation

-City Council Study Session, July 18, 2003

## The Current Problem with Community Engagement

The City of Minneapolis has clearly stated the value of community engagement as a tool for strengthening city government. And yet, through the eyes of the community, the current community engagement system lacks cohesion, accessibility, and accountability. The experience of many is characterized by frustration, confusion about roles and responsibilities, and systemic barriers to meaningful participation, especially by communities of color and by low-income people.

The lack of both a City-wide definition of what is meant by *community engagement* and a clear statement of the principles that should guide community engagement often results in what stakeholders perceive as a lack of consistency, accessibility and accountability in their relationships with the City. The absence of systemic accountability for clear outcomes prevents the meaningful, effective matching of human and financial resources with desired outcomes.

Simply improving the quality of individual opportunities or increasing resources will be insufficient for addressing the issues of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of most of the City's current community engagement opportunities. To provide the best experience for all stakeholders, a wide range of community engagement opportunities need to be organized and coordinated into a comprehensive, user-friendly system. In turn the system should be guided by strong community engagement principles and values that are broadly accepted by diverse stakeholders in the City.

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### 🔑 Key Points

1. There is a lack of defined roles and responsibilities for those involved in community engagement.
  - There is lack of shared understanding of which processes and procedures involve what type of community engagement and how this engagement is to be achieved.
  - Information which would make roles and responsibilities meaningful is often not timely or is not accessible due to vernacular, format, and/or language.
  - Particularly valuable to the development of a system would be the development of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders to each other. For example, developing responsibilities for the boards and commissions to interact with the neighborhoods, and for the neighborhoods to interact with affinity organizations.
2. There is a lack of meaningful involvement in the development of City priorities, policies and procedures, particularly by people of color and low income people, their community and neighborhood-based organization.
  - Focus on geographic community involvement to the exclusion of non-geographic communities has hindered the ability of either community's to effectively provide meaningful engagement for their constituents.

- The topic matter most often supported by community engagement opportunities often limits participation by class and color.
  - There are numerous examples of effective engagement of communities of color and low income communities that can be built upon.
3. Measures of accountability for community engagement processes and product outcomes need to be improved, enhanced or created.
- Metrics of accountability for what defines meaningful participation would support an overall improvement of the current options and the system as a whole.
  - Contracts for community engagement with measurable outcomes would allow for the development of best practices and an articulation of the added value of a community engagement investment.
4. In current engagement opportunities it is often difficult to connect human, technical, and financial investments with deliverable outcomes.
- During a time of increased budget pressures and budget prioritization, the inability to articulate the costs of deliverables limits the ability to increase the efficiency of the system.
  - There is an essential investment in community capacity to ensure meaningful engagement. The case for how much is enough, and where this investment should be made is hampered by the lack of a connection between investments and outcomes.

## ➤ Next Steps

1. Commit to organizing the disjoint components of community engagement into a coherent Community Engagement System.

## Definition of a City of Minneapolis Community Engagement System

The Minneapolis (City) Community Engagement System is a clear, comprehensive, and coordinated range of options that: (1) are user-friendly and easily accessible to City stakeholders; (2) provide requested and/or necessary information about issues affecting City stakeholders and their communities; and (3) ensure meaningful, respectful participation by all stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving in order to achieve City goals to the greatest degree possible within clear and reasonable parameters as established by City community engagement principles policies, and practices

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### ★ Key Points

1. The *definition* establishes a common understanding and provides an opportunity for outcome-based accountability in function and budget
  - Provides a common purpose and the opportunity for coordination and context.
  - Outlines scope, parameters, boundaries and provides the basis for accountability.
  - Communicates what community engagement is *not*: community building or community organizing.
  
2. By identifying the system as a *range of options*, the definition acknowledges that different opportunities are needed in order to build the most appropriate and meaningful engagement.
  - Recognizes diverse groups of people and communities, diverse situational conditions.
  - Individuals may choose when, where and how to participate.
  - Greater flexibility to engage diverse stakeholders' needs.
  
3. The definition is *stakeholder-based and community inclusive* because Minneapolis is a city of individuals, organizations, and communities with varied interests and experiences.
  - *Stakeholder* is the most inclusive term to describe the various relationships individuals have with the city.
  - *Communities* includes both geographic and non-geographic communities
  - Neighborhood scale is a vital resource for providing meaningful engagement to stakeholders around geographic interests.
  - Non-geographic communities include, but are not limited to, African-American, Native-American, Asian-Americans, Somali or Latino populations who find their

primary experience through ethnic identity. This also includes issue-based groups such as affordable housing advocates or renters.

4. The *Community Engagement Principles* are incorporated into the definition to provide a value-based approach to the development of a system.
  - Creating a foundation in shared values that are easily communicated to the broader community increases access and accountability to the system.
  - Value-based principles present an opportunity for additional options to be integrated in a manner that maintains the integrity of the system.
  - The use of nationally recognized standards increases availability of resources by integrating common language, understanding, and technical assistance.
  
5. Explicit identification of *shared decision making* emphasizes the importance of involving stakeholders as much as possible in the stewardship of their community.
  - Acknowledges the legal responsibility of the Council to make Quasi-Judicial decisions yet allows numerous opportunities to participate in the decision making process.
  - Sharing the decision making builds broader stewardship and increases ability to leverage non-governmental partners' resources.
  - Explicit parameters of shared decision making are essential for building broad-based support for a system.

## ➔ Next Steps

1. Community reviews definition and principles of community engagement.
2. Council adopts definition and principles of community engagement
3. Use the adopted definition to establish the foundation for the development of a community engagement system

## **Recommended Framework for a Minneapolis Community Engagement System**

A framework for a Minneapolis Community Engagement System is a guide for navigating the range of options described in City's definition of a Minneapolis Community Engagement System. It provides the parameters within which diverse stakeholders can understand their relationship to the system as a whole and determine the particular opportunities and strategies for their involvement that best suit their goals for engaging with the City. It is recommended that this framework include four kinds of relationships: (1) individual; (2) affinity group; (3) contractual; and (4) structural.

The four kinds of relationships in the framework can be thought of as "channels" through which stakeholders including renters, property owners, representatives of neighborhood and community organizations, community developers, or business owners (among others) can access the City in mutual efforts. These channels have both formal and informal options and stakeholders may choose to use more than one channel when engaging the City on particular issues.

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### **✪ Key Points**

1. *The Individual Channel:* Provides access and opportunities for individuals.
  - Includes notices of public hearings and a variety of City communications
  - Informal engagement includes direct access to Council members and City staff
  - Concerns about timeliness, accessibility, and culturally appropriate relationships are among the most common challenges in the individual channel
  - Neighborhood and community organizations can play an important role in facilitating individual involvement
  
2. *The Affinity Group Channel:* Provides opportunities for people with a common interest in specific issues to work together in engaging the City.
  - Focused subject matter advisory boards, such as the Police Community Advisory Board and the Mayor's Latino Advisory Board, are examples of how the City attempts to provide significant access and involvement to affinity groups
  - Neighborhood and community organizations could play an important role in connecting people to affinity groups representing particular issues, and in helping to organize new affinity groups as necessary

3. *The Contractual Channel*: Provides a wide variety of organizations and the City with legal definitions, parameters, and expectations for community engagement.

- The primary contractual relationship for community engagement is with neighborhood associations that have received *Citizen Participation Contracts*
- The process for identifying outcomes and deliverables within contractual relationships is often problematic

4. *The Structural Channel*: Provides ongoing, institutional relationships for community engagement

- The City's appointed boards and commissions serve as part of the structural channel of a community engagement system
- These boards and commissions provide useful common methods for individual and affinity groups to work together with the City on particular issues
- Many boards and commissions lack the accountability to the broader community (for example, non-electronic contact information for the almost 1000 representatives on these Boards and Commissions is not considered public data)

## ➡ Next Steps

- Authorize the use the proposed framework as a guide for development of the community engagement system.
- Adopt the framework, with modifications as appropriate, as a guide to be used in implementing the process recommendations for a Minneapolis Community Engagement System as noted in this report.

## **Recommended Process for Designing a Community Engagement System**

The City Council, Mayor, City staff, representatives from community and neighborhood organizations, and other stakeholders as appropriate collaboratively engage in an open and deliberative process to design a community engagement system. The process should integrate current community engagement opportunities into a system that is user-friendly, coordinated, and comprehensive. This should be done in a manner consistent with established community engagement principles and should include incentives to ensure the active participation of diverse stakeholders.

The recommended process includes three phases: (1) inclusive conversations for gathering and sharing information; (2) integrating and synthesizing information from these conversations into specific draft recommendations for policy and practice changes in City government; and (3) the formation of focused work teams to resolve differences in draft recommendations and to prepare final recommendations for endorsement by the Mayor and approval by the City Council.

It is recommended that this work begin as soon as possible after January 1 and conclude by June 30 2005. Implementation of policy and practice changes would then begin on July 1 2005 and include additional activities as directed by the Mayor and City Council.

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### **➤ Description of Phases**

1. *Information Gathering Conversations:* A four-month information phase would include parallel processes with community representatives and City staff answering conversation framing questions (see below). This phase would include two kinds of conversations. Staff (City and/or consulting) will support the cross fertilization of the two conversations through regular communication updates.

- a) *Community Conversation* in which individuals, organizations, neighborhoods, and businesses would be provided support to sponsor dialogues addressing the framing questions listed above. Using a “Meet-Up” model, hosts would be provided with accessible background material and a standard reporting form. A special emphasis would be made to ensure that all types of communities are provided opportunities for meaningful engagement. A community-based point person would be assigned to help coordinate these efforts. This work would be made available and integrated with City input during the synthesis phase.
- b) *City Conversation* in which the City officials, departmental leaders, and staff discuss and respond to the same questions posed for the community conversations. These discussions and response would be integrated with the results of the community conversation during the synthesis stage.

c) *Conversation framing questions:*

- (i) After reviewing the City's initial definition of community engagement, what do you think are its strengths? What do you think are its weaknesses?
  - (ii) After reviewing the City's initial definition of a community engagement framework, what do you think are its strengths? What do you think are its weaknesses?
  - (iii) What City policies and practices require community engagement?
  - (iv) How should community engagement provide for shared decision-making in the development and implementation of City policies and practices?
  - (v) What are important measurable outcomes for a community engagement system?
  - (vi) What are important indicators and measures for ensuring accountability within a community engagement system?
  - (vii) What are the best strategies for effectively and respectfully involving lower-income people and communities of color in the development and operations of a community engagement system?
  - (viii) What are the true costs of our current community engagement opportunities?
  - (ix) Are the results and outcomes of current City community engagement funding worth the costs as you can understand them?
  - (x) What funding recommendations should be included in the City's community engagement budget for improvements to current practices?
2. *Synthesis:* Under the guidance of a leadership team including the Mayor, City Council representatives, City staff, neighborhood, and non-geographic community representatives, staff would synthesis the results of the community and City conversations. The synthesis would identify consensus action items for adoption and determine what discrete working groups are needed to find general agreement on outstanding issues. Items would be forwarded for Council consideration and to the leadership team for working groups.
3. *Focused Work:* During the focused work phase, groups of community leaders and staff would meet to resolve significant differences to develop recommendations consideration and approval by the City Council.



## ⊛ Key Points

The *design values* of the proposed process accurately reflect the community engagement principles, including multiple options, diverse voices, and accountability.

The *scope* of the design process is limited to operationalizing the community engagement system definition by answering the framing questions noted above.

The *community conversation* is an opportunity to respect the vital existing capacity within the community in neighborhoods, community coalitions, business associations, and issue advocacy organizations as well as provide a platform for new and emerging communities.

## ➡ Next Steps

- Circulate the proposed process for community and City review
- Appoint the leadership team

## Appendix Contents

*(Ed note: This material is available on CD-Rom or at [mplscommunityengagement.com](http://mplscommunityengagement.com))*

- 1) Project Material
  - a) MCEP Project Overview
- 2) MCEP Produced Background Material
  - a) Community Engagement Framework
  - b) Community Engagement Comparative Models
- 3) Guiding Materials
  - a) Core Values for Public Participation
  - b) Estimated Cost of Engagement
- 4) Gathering Notes
  - a) Immigrant and Refugee Community Input
- 5) Convening Group Material
  - a) Convening Group Meeting 1 - Agenda
  - b) Convening Group Meeting 1 - Minutes
  - c) Convening Group Meeting 1 - Summary
  - d) Convening Group Meeting 2 - Agenda
  - e) Convening Group Meeting 2 - Summary
  - f) Convening Group Key Points
- 6) NRP Convening
  - a) Oct13 CM Niziolek Memo
  - b) CP Survey percentages and totals
  - c) CP Report 10-13
- 7) Survey Material
  - a) Survey Results
- 8) City Work Group reports
  - a) Focus Minneapolis
  - b) Minneapolis Community Engagement Work Group Report
- 9) Background Reading
  - a) CDBG Action Guide
  - b) Strengthening Policy Making and Building Community in America
- 10) July 03 Study Session
  - a) July 18 Cover Memo
  - b) July 18 Presentation
- 11) Ethics taskforce Model
  - a) Ethics Draft
- 12) MUID Model
  - a) MOU
  - b) MOU Report