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Frey, Jenkins, Cano, and Ellison Push for Cultural Districts in 2040 Comprehensive Plan

Areas to be designated as Cultural Districts strengthen neighborhoods made up largely of people of color, indigenous, and immigrant communities by accelerating economic development and housing affordability strategies

On Monday, November 26, provisions to begin establishing Cultural Districts in Minneapolis will be introduced in the form of a new policy for the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan; New policy will complement goals in 2040 Plan by further advancing racial equity, preventing displacement, and fueling economic growth through inclusion

MINNEAPOLIS – Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, Council Vice President Andrea Jenkins, and Council Members Alondra Cano and Jeremiah Ellison are pushing to amend the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan to include a new policy aimed at establishing Cultural Districts in Minneapolis. Areas to be designated as Cultural Districts strengthen neighborhoods made up largely of people of color, indigenous, and immigrant communities by accelerating economic development and housing affordability strategies.

"Cultural Districts function both as a driver for equity and inclusive economic growth," said Frey. **"Areas like East Lake Street and West Broadway are packed with potential – potential that can and will be realized by galvanizing the very communities and people presently contributing to and rejuvenating them. Our Cultural Districts can be more than an undesignated, imprecise area. They can be sought-out destinations with thousands of different tastes, smells, sounds, and people – all of which make our city great."**

On Monday, November 26 at the Committee of the Whole meeting, Council Members will introduce a new policy setting the foundation to establish Cultural Districts as an amendment to the 2040 Plan.

“Cultural District designations pave the way to create destination communities by building on the cultural assets and through encouraging investments in housing, economic development, cultural centers and cultural activities that serve to build community and counter displacement,” said Jenkins.

Vice President Jenkins, through her leadership on the Strategic Racial Equity Action Plan has also introduced amendments to the 2040 Plan centered on racial equity.

The new Cultural Districts policy will complement goals in 2040 Plan by advancing racial equity, preventing displacement, and fueling economic growth through inclusion.

“This work has been fomenting over the years,” said Cano. **“The framework grows from the decades long effort by the Indigenous community to establish a cultural corridor on Franklin Avenue. This City effort is meant to partner and support their work while expanding the vision to welcome additional diverse communities to thrive and lead with culture first.”**

“The purpose of Cultural Districts will be to equip creative, powerful, and resilient communities with the tools to build wealth, solidify the historic roots that have defined different parts of our city, and remedy the harms caused by longstanding disinvestment,” said Ellison **“It’s no secret that all over the country major cities are facing various forms of displacement—of people, or local businesses, and of cultural identities of whole neighborhoods. Minneapolis has an opportunity to get ahead of this problem before it drives out the character of our city. In everything we do as a city, we must ask ourselves: who benefits? If it’s not the people who have made a place a place, then it’s not the solution we need. Cultural Districts will stand as one of our many anti-displacement strategies.”**

Full text of the policy establishing Cultural Districts is available below:

Cultural Districts: Strengthen neighborhoods by prioritizing and accelerating economic development, public transit, and affordable housing policies, practices, and resources to protect the racial diversity and uplift the cultural identity of the city’s areas where a significant portion of the population is comprised of people of color, Indigenous people, and/or immigrant (POCII) communities.

Given the history of redlining and economic exclusion, the City will designate Cultural Districts to prevent the displacement of low-income residents while nurturing thriving commercial corridors. A Cultural District is a contiguous area with a rich sense of cultural and/or linguistic identity rooted in communities significantly populated by people of color, Indigenous people, and/or immigrants. The City of Minneapolis’ Cultural Districts designation will allow for the creation and prioritized implementation of new investment tools, policies, and practices that directly respond to the needs of POCII communities to stop the displacement of these communities and advance racial equity in Minneapolis.

Action Steps

The City will seek to accomplish the following action steps to strengthen neighborhoods by prioritizing and accelerating economic development, public transit, and affordable housing policies, practices, and resources to protect the racial diversity and uplift the cultural identity of the city’s areas where a significant portion of the population is comprised of people of color, Indigenous people, and/or immigrant (POCII) communities.

- Partner with the Cultural District residents, cultural workers, artists, entrepreneurs, businesses, institutions, and other levels of government to develop multi-faceted strategies that elevate the district's cultural and linguistic identity.
- Partner with POCII entrepreneurs and business owners to create new tools that help them retain and expand commercial activities.
- Provide more flexible response to and support for efforts that help Cultural Districts thrive. This includes, but is not limited to, facilitating increased street activation by addressing regulatory barriers and amplifying the impact of Special Service Districts and the City's Great Streets Program.
- Current City policies, resources, and departmental work will be prioritized to accelerate racially equitable outcomes in commercial vitality, stable housing, and infrastructure within the District area.
- Help create and prioritize the implementation of cooperative-based economic and housing development strategies such as cooperatively-owned housing and commercial land trusts to secure long-term affordability and greater equitable outcomes for POCII.
- Promote Cultural Districts as prime areas for ethical tourism by aligning and leveraging funding and programs with key regional partners such as Meet Minneapolis and Greater MSP.

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