

**Proposal for
Continuing and Restructuring
the Existing Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP):
A Resident Response to the “Framework for the Future”**

Background

In the mid 1980's the City of Minneapolis was a City in the midst of major challenges. The downtown area had been the subject of massive infusions of public money to help renovate, rescue, and revitalize its deteriorating buildings and businesses. The city government was focused on rebuilding the image of Minneapolis as a major employment and commercial center. That revitalization had a cost. Neighborhoods throughout the city were seeing increasing crime, declining homeownership, significant movements of the middle class to the suburbs, little new private money being used to improve homes or business locations, and minimal government investment in local public spaces and buildings. To many, downtown's improvement was coming at the expense of the residents and the places where they really lived.

Homeowner surveys conducted by the City showed that a significant part of the Minneapolis population planned to leave within five years. How would the City be able to maintain the tax base needed to meet its needs if its population continued to decline? In 1950 the City's population was 521,718. By 1990, even with the same geographic boundaries and the same number of households, the City's population had declined to 368,363. Clearly, something had to be done to change these trends,

Two City Task Forces examined the condition of the City in the mid and late 1980's and determined that a massive revitalization of the neighborhoods was needed if Minneapolis was to regain and retain its vitality. One of those Task Forces estimated the total cost (public and private) to “physically revitalize Minneapolis neighborhoods” to be “approximately \$3.2 billion” – in 1987 dollars! Faced with these trends, problems, and recommendations the leaders of the City worked with the State Legislature to allow Minneapolis to conduct a truly unique and unprecedented effort to change its course. The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) was authorized by the legislature in 1990 to revitalize the neighborhoods of Minneapolis.

At that time, neighborhoods were a neglected creature of the Minneapolis Planning Department. Few residents knew that they lived in a neighborhood or could identify the neighborhood they lived in. Although some neighborhoods had organizations of residents, most of these had never been incorporated, did not have federal tax numbers, had very limited resident participation and few resources, and almost always operated in a reactive mode.

NRP was established as an independent quasi Joint Powers entity, with the participation of partners such as: Hennepin County, the Minneapolis School District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Library Board, members of the Minneapolis delegation of the State Legislature, United Way, labor, the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, foundations, neighborhood residents, and others.

NRP's mission was to help residents make their neighborhood a better place to live, work, learn and play. To accomplish this mission, two of the primary goals of the NRP were to give residents a sense of place and build neighborhood capacity.

The State Legislature provided the funding source and authorization for the program and NRP developed a planning and implementation effort that eventually became part of every neighborhood in the City. The original commitment was that NRP and the neighborhoods would receive \$20 million per year for every year through 2009. This total of \$400 million would never meet the need that the City Council Task Forces had identified but it was hoped that it would be a start.

And that was how NRP began.

The Successes of NRP

During their first 18 years, NRP and neighborhoods have used the NRP's resources to do important work that had been neglected or overlooked by the City:

- Invested more than \$130 million in improving existing and developing new housing;
- Invested more than \$10 million in improvements to seven major commercial corridors;
- Invested more than \$20 million in improving parks, more than \$6 in improving schools and almost \$1 million in improving libraries;
- Approved 597 public safety strategies that allocated more than \$10 million to increased public services and innovative public safety strategies that ranged from bike and beat patrols to neighborhood organized walking groups;
- Provided more than \$1.5 million to support alternative transportation approaches and improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists and mass transit;
- Conducted projects to stabilize river and lake shores and helped finance improved pedestrian and bicycle paths in parks;
- Promoted art in public parks throughout the city;
- Conducted neighborhood cleanups;
- Planted thousands of trees in public spaces;
- Established and maintained community gardens;
- Promoted energy conservation and recycling;
- Helped improve water quality in Minneapolis lakes and streams;
- Built playgrounds, tot lots and trails;
- Provided Computers for Schools and Libraries to help bridge the digital divide;
- Funded programs for youth, seniors, and new Americans;

- Funded community health clinics, immunization programs, disease screenings and parenting classes;
- Financed building improvements for small businesses;
- Conducted thousands of community gatherings and events.

Revenues and Leverage

In 2001 the State Legislature made some significant changes to the property tax laws. That action reduced the level of revenue expected in NRP's second ten years from the original promise of \$180 million to less than \$85 million. In 2003 the Minneapolis City Council and Mayor took actions that removed another \$ 22 million from the Common Project that was the revenue stream for NRP.

Despite these significant changes, the program and the residents have continued to invest in the improvement of their neighborhoods. NRP and the neighborhoods have leveraged more than \$ 1 billion of additional private and public investment in neighborhood improvements, increased the City's tax base, fostered neighborhood stability, and involved thousands of resident volunteers in improving their neighborhood and the City.

Recognition

In 2000, NRP was selected as one of the 100 best programs in the world for "improving the living environment" by the second Habitat Conference of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) and the Dubai Municipality of the United Arab Emirates. This was an award for which programs had to be nominated and for which they could not apply. Two separate teams of experts reviewed the program in 1999. The first team of international reviewers narrowed the list of nominated programs that would be "finalists" and the second, which was led by local consultants, submitted the reports from which the Technical Advisory Committee of international representatives selected the best 100.

The framed certificate hangs in the downtown NRP office and the inscription reads: "The UN Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) and Dubai Municipality in the United Arab Emirates certify the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program was selected as a Best Practice by an independent Technical Advisory Committee". The award was for "Outstanding Contribution Towards Improving the Living Environment" and was given in September 2000 as part of the international Habitat II Conference. In their report, the Technical Advisory Team, cited NRP's contribution to empowering residents and achieving real change in local areas as the basis for their award.

NRP was recently honored by the Ash Institute and Harvard University and asked to present on resident empowerment at the international Community Innovations Conference in Boston. It has also been invited to present at the October 2008 International Conference on "Learning Democracy by Doing: Alternative Practices in

Citizenship Learning and Participatory Democracy”, being hosted by Canada and the University of Toronto.

While NRP has been the model for other cities around the country and the world, it is now fighting with the Mayor and City Council for its life and the values and approaches that have made it unique and effective.

The Threat

In 2006, after receiving the report of the NRP Policy Board’s multi jurisdictional Task Force examining options for the continuation of NRP and further investment in the improvement of neighborhoods after 2009, the City Council and Mayor decided that discussion of NRP’s future would be part of the City’s community engagement review process. The process started with a background report prepared by City staff in the fall of 2006 and has now progressed to producing a blueprint for major changes in NRP called the “Framework for the Future” (“Framework”).

The City requested public comments on the background report and during the collection of those comments in January and February 2007, residents voiced (in surveys and public meetings held throughout the City), overwhelming support for continuing and funding the existing NRP program. They wanted any community engagement system to be built upon the existing programs.

Unfortunately, the “Framework” being proposed by the City provides a much different vision of the future.

The NRP Working Group, consisting of four City Council members, a Policy Aide from the Mayors Office and the Director of NRP, has developed and submitted a vision in the “Framework” for the future organization and function of a city Community Engagement system that was supported by a majority of its members. A great deal of that vision is derived from the existing NRP program but there are also many significant components of NRP that are missing.

After spending the introduction to the “Framework” praising the work of neighborhood organizations and NRP over the past 18 years, the “Framework” proposes the elimination of the program and establishing a new program, with many of the same features, as part of a brand new City department. The question that the Framework fails to address is: Why?

From the comments submitted on the draft “Framework”:

“The Framework is a step backward for the neighborhoods and the City.”

“The City has never been able to adequately include neighborhoods in its processes, so why do they think they can do it now?”

“It centralizes the money, power and control downtown and out of residents hands.”

“Framework for the Future appears to replace an enviable program which is desired by other cities. Some of us have worked in other cities and wanted what Minneapolis NRP does because it works so well.”

“The Framework document should not use the term NRP at all. It replaces NRP with a City program with unclear purpose and uncertain funding. The assertion that the Framework is a sensible replacement for NRP is insulting to the intelligence of the citizens of the City of Minneapolis.”

New Legislation

Earlier this year, the neighborhood residents in Neighbors4NRP worked with several state legislators to draft legislation to fund NRP beyond 2009. Residents worked hard to explain the problem and the proposed solution. Many residents testified at legislative committee hearings in support of future funding for NRP. The City of Minneapolis lobbied hard against the proposed legislation. Subsequently, the Legislature enacted legislation authorizing the City of Minneapolis to establish new tax increment financing districts (Transformation Districts) that could be used for existing bond obligations of the Target Center and “neighborhood revitalization purposes”.

The legislation authored by Representative Jim Davnie and Senator Scott Dibble in the Tax Conference Committee, with the City’s support, uses the language “neighborhood revitalization purposes” instead of the originally proposed “Neighborhood Revitalization Program” in an effort to avoid providing funding specifically to NRP. The change in language was more than semantic.

The Minneapolis City Attorney opined on July 24, 2008 that the language in the new statute does not allow the revenues from the proposed Transformation District to be used for administrative costs for neighborhood organizations or for any use outside of the very limited uses provided in the Tax Increment Financing statutes. NRP was created through a special law that greatly broadened the authority and eligible uses for TIF revenues. Removing the reference to NRP has resulted in much more restrictive limits on the type of improvement efforts that can be paid for from the new revenue stream. Additional work at the legislature will be needed if these potential revenues are to fulfill their purpose and contribute to the improvement of Minneapolis neighborhoods.

The new statute offered the hope of a source of money that could potentially continue neighborhood revitalization. Even though the language provided by the City has limited that potential, the City is proceeding with the effort to adopt the “Framework” and restructure NRP’s functions, governance, and operation.

The Process for Input

On July 24th, the City Council set a public hearing on August 20th for the final report of the Working Group (the proposed “Framework”). The City is preparing to take action on their version of major changes to the proposed structure of the current Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

With the report of the Working Group being submitted on July 24th and the only public meeting input on the proposed “Framework” being scheduled for August 20 at 5 p.m., residents and their neighborhood groups were given only 18 work days (during the dog days of summer) to review, discuss and comment on a proposal that will dramatically change NRP and the relationships between City departments and residents of Minneapolis! The City Council has scheduled action to adopt the proposed “Revised Framework” for September 12. Why the rush?

From the comments submitted on the draft “Framework”:

“To date, our comments, and the continual support of NRP from many residents across the City, have yet to be equally weighed into, included without bias, or even acknowledged in any report regarding this City process.”

“There is great concern that the City will eliminate the true power of this program: the creativity that arises from grassroots initiatives. The citizenry of this City does not need another reason to disinvest and take a passive approach regarding the future of Minneapolis.”

“If it is an ‘NRP’ work group, it should seriously support NRP, respect and acknowledge the accomplishments that NRP has achieved in the neighborhoods and find a way to continue the program.”

“We see the city administration increasingly disengaged from its neighborhoods and their residents. It is not a matter of organizational structure that keeps residents’ concerns from being heard. It is a matter of organizational culture.”

Establishing a new advisory board and a new department can occur at any time.

The questions about NRP’s future were raised more than 4 years ago by the NRP Policy Board. Changes to the City’s community engagement system could have occurred at any time in the past 18 years if it had been a City priority. In the nine months since November 2007 when the Community Engagement Task Force provided its 36 recommendations to the City Council and Mayor, only one has been adopted: the seven principles of community engagement. Another 60-90 days that would allow fuller vetting and discussion of the “Framework” will not derail, and will probably improve, decisions about the future of NRP and community engagement. It would also be consistent with Principles 1 (“Right to be Involved”), 2 (“Contribution will be Thoughtfully Considered”), and 4 (“Seek Out Involvement”) of the Minneapolis Core Principles of Community Engagement.

It certainly appears that this “rush to judgment” is intended to produce a City controlled community engagement system without the participation or ownership of the community.

To justify the short time period for comment the Council Vice President and Working Group Chair has repeatedly and publicly stated that residents and especially the neighborhood activists in Neighbors4NRP have raised concerns about current public input processes and supported shorter time lines and fewer opportunities. He has used this argument to defend the City’s single hearing and timeline for adoption of the “Framework”.

This is a gross misrepresentation of the positions taken by Neighbors4NRP. Neighbors4NRP wants residents to have the opportunity to provide input and supports review schedules that allow enough time for the gathering of different opinions, the discussion and development of a community perspective and the preparation of reasonable and rational input. We want a real community input process – not one hearing 27 days after publication of a 27-page report. What Neighbors4NRP does not support are hearings that are for appearance only, repeated requests for comment and input that produce few or minimal changes in the final reports, and public rhetoric that suggests that the community perspective matters while the decisions that are made clearly indicate that it does not.

An Alternative Proposal for the Future of NRP and Community Engagement

Despite concerns about the process that has been used to develop the “Framework” and issues with the timelines for a hearing and approval, Neighbors4NRP has conducted a review of the proposed “Framework” and prepared this alternative as our response. We believe that the approach that we are presenting preserves the best of NRP, builds on the existing community engagement system, responds to the concerns expressed by residents and neighborhood organizations, minimizes future administrative costs, and makes reasonable and achievable recommendations for change.

The following is a resident-driven proposal to restructure and continue NRP beyond 2009 and to reform the way the City works with its residents.

General Principles

This alternative is based on the following principles and beliefs:

1. Sustainability- Neighborhood organizations are critical components of the City’s civic infrastructure and have been recognized in the “Framework” as a basic City service. As such, the funding for a neighborhood revitalization program must be stable, committed, and sufficient.

2. Participation- The community engagement system should encourage involvement by all elements of the community and support the empowerment of residents.
3. Funding – Beginning in 2010, and continuing for the duration of the Transformation Districts authorized by the 2008 legislature, at least \$10 million per year should be placed into a fund for improving neighborhoods, with all future interest and program income credited to the fund, to finance the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and the continued revitalization of Minneapolis neighborhoods. **This fund should be in addition to at least \$3 million from the General Fund of the City that is appropriated annually for the operating expenses of neighborhood organizations as basic City services and any funds that the City appropriates for grants to neighborhoods.**
4. Governance – The NRP Policy Board should be reorganized and reestablished as the NRP Governing Board and its membership changed to increase neighborhood representation and encourage continued participation by, and collaboration with, the City, County, Schools and Parks.
5. Staffing- The Director of the NRP should be hired by, and report to, the NRP Governing Board. The Director’s commitment and purpose must be to assist, support and advocate for neighborhoods in the development and implementation of their Neighborhood Action Plans. Other NRP staff would be hired by the Director.
6. Community Engagement – The City should establish a Community Engagement Commission, as recommended by the City’s Community Engagement Task Force.
7. City Support – The City should establish multi department teams from their existing staff resources to facilitate improved connections between City departments, NRP, and neighborhoods. The City’s elected officials should make a concerted effort to change the existing practices, procedures and attitudes of City departments toward residents. That change in attitude and organizational culture should begin at the top.

The Details

In the “Framework”, the City has spent a great deal of time emphasizing that one of the major outcomes from the new organizational structure, and one of the reasons the new structure is being proposed, is that there will be better relationships between neighborhoods and the City. This appears to be the reason for proposing the new Neighborhood and Community Advisory Board and the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department.

There is nothing in past or current law that would prevent the City from establishing either the Neighborhood and Community Advisory Board or the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department. In fact, either of these groups, or both, could have been established any time within the past 18 years: **if improving these relationships had been a City priority and a new Board and Department was needed to accomplish this goal.**

In the “Framework’s” detailed description of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Neighborhoods and the City, not one of the City actions described requires this new structure. The Community Engagement Task Force, which was established by the City to review and make recommendations for the community engagement system, considered the possibility of establishing a new City department but did not include any such recommendation in its final report. They could not agree with those who advocated for a new department.

The only organizational elements that appear to be supporting this addition to the current community engagement bureaucracy are the City Council and Mayor. Before incurring all of the costs and confusion involved with creating a new department, the City’s elected officials should make a concerted effort to change the existing practices, procedures and attitudes of City departments toward residents. That change in attitude should begin at the top. Only after such efforts have been made and only if they have failed should consideration be given to incurring the additional costs to the taxpayer that will result from adding a new component to the existing City bureaucracy.

To date, some City Council members and the Mayor have used the rhetoric of “increased cooperation”, “increased collaboration”, “greater accountability”, “improved relationships”, etc. as arguments for the proposed new structure. Yet the new organizational structure has only the “potential” to achieve any of these results. There is no evidence to date that suggests that the City commitment is present to make these possibilities a reality.

Therefore, the existing NRP program should be modified and retained while the City proceeds, if it wants to, with formation of the new Neighborhood and Community Advisory Board and Community and Neighborhood Relations Department and demonstrates its commitment to the goals of the Framework and the seven principles of Community Engagement that were adopted last fall by the City Council. Before throwing out the bathwater, we need to be assured that the baby is not in it.

Two of the major elements of the “Framework” (the funding mechanisms and the governance and administrative support structure) should be clarified and modified.

The “Framework” should be clear about the sources, purposes and methods of distribution for each of the funds that it is identifying as part of the new Community Engagement system. The language used to describe those funds and their names should also be revised to remove negative connotations (such as “Innovation” being the

purpose only of the City directed grant fund) and more accurately and clearly describe their purpose.

The City should include all of the parcels in the pre 1979 TIF districts in the new Transformation District to maximize the revenues available for neighborhood improvement and the leveraging of these public funds.

The revenues generated from the Transformation District should be used as follows:

- a. Up to \$ 10 million for the restructured debt of the Target Center
- b. At least \$ 10 million for the Neighborhood Improvement and Implementation Fund (NIIF) (see below)
- c. The remainder allocated to a Phase II Gap Fund to make up the difference between the neighborhood allocations for Phase II approved in April 2004 and the amount of revenue actually received by NRP from the Common Project.

If the NIIF is not funded at the minimum level in a given year, the difference between \$ 10 million and the amount provided in that year will be treated as a future debt of the Transformation District or the City's General Fund if the Transformation District revenues never satisfy the sum of the shortfalls during the duration of the Transformation District.

Funds will continue to be accumulated in the Phase II Gap account from the "excess revenues" of the Transformation District until the Phase II shortfall is completely covered. When that amount has been reached any additional revenues from the Transformation District that exceed the \$ 10 million for the NIIF will be reserved for a Discretionary Development account that can be used by the City for neighborhood initiated projects requested by REOs.

Resident Empowerment Organizations (REO's) would be the vehicles for meeting a portion of the City's community participation mission and the implementation vehicles for NRP. The REO is a new designation that would be conferred jointly by the City and the NRP Governing Board and there would be only one organization representing any specific neighborhood. An organization, however, could apply for designation to represent more than one neighborhood.

The criteria used to select these organizations would be developed by the City, NRP and the neighborhood organizations and would be based on the current Citizen Participation and NRP criteria. The REO designation will be used to identify organizations that will be an officially recognized part of the City's community engagement infrastructure. Receiving this designation would be required for an organization to be eligible to receive administrative, NIIF or CIIF funds. Existing neighborhood organizations and associations will be given the opportunity to apply first for this designation and any conferred designation shall remain in place unless there is a challenge based on criteria developed by the City, NRP and neighborhood organizations or organizational performance issues occur.

The Neighborhood Improvement and Implementation Fund (NIIF) (identified as the “Neighborhood Investment Fund” in the “Framework”) should be capitalized from the new Transformation Districts and should be funded at a minimum level of \$ 10 million for each of the ten years the Transformation District is to be in place. Only designated REO’s would be eligible to receive these funds.

The funds in the NIIF should be allocated to each and every neighborhood organization that is recognized as a Resident Empowerment Organization (REO). The NIIF funds would be used to address neighborhood priorities in accordance with a Neighborhood Action Plan approved by the neighborhood, NRP Governing Board, and the City. Neighborhood action plans would continue to identify which City goals each of the neighborhood goals, objectives and strategies support.

The Neighborhood Improvement and Implementation Fund allocation to the neighborhoods would be based on a funding formula similar to the ones used by NRP during Phases I and II. The formula would be developed and approved by the NRP Governing Board.

The City Improvement and Implementation Fund (CIIF) (identified as the “Community Innovation Fund” in the “Framework”) would be established and administered by the City and funded from its General Fund, CDBG or other non Transformation District resources. It would be monies that are over and above the Neighborhood Improvement and Implementation Funds identified above and would have no impact on the neighborhood allocation formulas. The City will determine the amount of dollars in this fund and its uses. The projects, program, activities, and services funded by the CIIF would be selected by the City based on responses to a Request For Proposals sent to all Resident Empowerment Organizations. Only designated REO’s would be eligible to compete for these funds.

The Resident Empowerment Organization Operating Support Fund (REOOSF) would be established as a City fund with a base appropriation of at least \$3 million. This amount would come from the Property Tax supported General Fund of the City. Each year the amount of this budget item would be established as part of the City’s regular budget process but it would never be lower than the base level of \$3 million. Only designated REO’s would be eligible to receive these funds.

Concerns about governance appear to be another reason for the proposed “Framework.” The City appears to want more control of the neighborhood improvement program. It is the belief of many neighborhood organizations and residents that the existing NRP Policy Board is already performing the functions proposed for the new Neighborhood and Community Advisory Board.

The NRP Policy Board, in its Joint Powers Agreement, exists through the end of 2011. Because the funds used in Phase I and Phase II became NRP funds after Neighborhood Action Plans were approved, the Policy Board and NRP staff will be

overseeing contracting, planning, and evaluation activities for many years to come. The life of the Policy Board should be extended to at least 2020 and its composition and name should be changed to more accurately reflect its purpose and constituencies.

The new NRP Governing Board would be comprised of the following 17 members:

- a, 8 Minneapolis residents elected by neighborhoods (2 from Redirection Neighborhoods; 2 from Revitalization Neighborhoods; 2 from Protection Neighborhoods; and 2 At Large)
- b. 1 Minneapolis resident selected by the Hennepin County Board;
- c. 1 Minneapolis resident selected by the Minneapolis Park Board;
- d. 1 Minneapolis resident selected by the Minneapolis Public Schools Board;
- e. 5 Minneapolis residents selected by the City Council and Mayor.
- f. 1 Minneapolis legislator selected by the Minneapolis legislative delegation.

The current Policy Board is established and governed by a joint powers agreement and bylaws adopted by the Board. The Joint Powers Agreement does not expire until January 1, 2012 and can be extended by the agreement of the participating jurisdictions. An extension through the end of the term for the newly authorized Transformation Districts that will be generating revenue for neighborhood revitalization would appear to be both reasonable and appropriate, given that there will still be NRP contracts with neighborhoods for the expenditure of Phase I and II funds.

Each of the existing signatory jurisdictions will be asked to support a revision to the Joint Powers Agreement that endorses the new composition of the Board and makes any corresponding changes to NRP's by laws.

The Director of the NRP would be an employee of the Governing Board and would be hired, fired and evaluated by that Board.

Establishing Better Relations With the City

The proposed "Framework" appears to assume that creating a new City department will improve the relationships and responsiveness of City departments to neighborhoods and their Neighborhood Action Plans. Unfortunately, this is another unproven assumption.

From the comments submitted on the draft "Framework":

“Creation of another powerless Board may result in blurring of accountability and increased bureaucracy.”

“Why would the City replace a successful program like this with an unknown, untried, centralized top heavy bureaucracy.”

“The City has a reputation of moving slowly and having bureaucracy. Not adaptive or responsive to immediate neighborhood needs or encouraging of creative problem solving.”

“There is nothing in the proposal that leads us to believe that the City would be more responsive to neighborhood needs than they are now.”

As an alternative, the City should commit to developing multi-department and multi-jurisdictional teams for each City planning district to serve and support the neighborhoods in that district. The composition of the Teams would be based on the specific priorities and concerns of the neighborhoods in the District and the requests of the designated REOs. The City departments on the Teams could include, for example, Public Works, Police, Regulatory Services, and CPED. Representatives from the Park Board, Minneapolis Schools, Hennepin County Library, Minnehaha Watershed District, Hennepin County Attorneys Office and others might be included if their services and support were identified by the neighborhood organization as important for meeting neighborhood priorities. The Team would be available to assist with development of Neighborhood Action Plans and review proposed Neighborhood Action Plans before they are submitted to the NRP Governing Board to facilitate coordinated planning and identify opportunities for partnerships.

The Teams should be established as a portal for resident groups to use to gain access to City department professionals and vice versa. The current system of developing neighborhood programs is extremely complex when City departments are involved. These Teams would be able to help present the neighborhood position to the City Council, help neighborhood organizations with special needs (such as interpreters, legal support, grant writers, and marketing), and ensure the two way communication that residents want.

Restructuring the use of existing resources should be used to try to achieve this objective before new boards and departments are created.

Advantages to Continuing and Restructuring NRP Rather than Adopting the City's New Program

- Continuing NRP builds on a successful program with a track record of accomplishment over 18 years. It is tried and true, not new and uncertain.
- The NRP program supports programs, projects, services and activities that help accomplish both City and neighborhood goals.

- Costs for revising the existing structure will be less, in both the short and long term, than those required to build and maintain a new program/department.
- The alternative being proposed is in the best interest of the residents and recognizes that residents interact and work with private and non-profit organizations as well as governments in addition to the City.
- Other governmental jurisdictions that are important to residents are kept at the table and treated as important partners. Money may be one indicator of level of interest and a basis for a “seat at the governing board table” but it is not the only one.
- Much of the program proposed in the “Framework” is based on the existing NRP program and its policies and practices. The only major changes being proposed in the “Framework” are in the governing and control structures for NRP. It is those governing and control structures, however, that have helped NRP achieve its results
- NRP has a positive image in the neighborhoods and with most residents. It is a “brand name” with credibility.
- Continues to build on already established relationships between neighborhoods and multijurisdictional partners.

Final Comments

The “Framework” presented to the Committee of the Whole on July 24 (and published after amendment during the July 24 meeting) is an expanded version of the draft initially presented in December 2007. Details have been added and roles and responsibilities have been fleshed out. Unfortunately, the components that were the most controversial in December and solicited the most negative comment from neighborhood organizations and the other responders have been retained without much change.

The circumstances within which the debate on the future of NRP is occurring have significantly changed since December. The potential for having a new long-term source of funding for neighborhood improvements makes discussion of the future meaningful and appropriate. The time to make modifications to NRP and move toward a City that values, respects and works with its residents is now.