Memorandum

Date: March 21, 2007

To: Policy Board Members and Alternates

From: Robert D. Miller, Director, NRP

Subject: Summary of Results from the Community Engagement Report Review
Process

On November 20, 2006 the NRP Policy Board received the Community Engagement
Report prepared by staff of the City of Minneapolis. The report reviewed the findings
from 18 previous reports and studies that related to community engagement and provided
some principles and recommendations for discussion. Copies of the report were part of
the Policy Board packet for the Board's November 20 meeting.

At that meeting, the Board passed the following resolution:

> **BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program
> (NRP) Policy Board ("Board") directs the NRP Director to organize and conduct
> a series of inclusive and open public meetings that are geographically coordinated
> and cover all neighborhoods in the City to gather input and feedback from
> neighborhood residents and NRP neighborhood organizations concerning the
> "Community Engagement Report", NRP, citizen participation, and community
> engagement; and

> **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the NRP Director shall provide staff
> support to the community meetings to ensure inclusive and open sessions where
> residents and neighborhoods can be heard; and

> **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED** that the Director shall prepare and provide a
> summary of findings and recommendations from the neighborhood meetings for
> the March 2007 Board meeting.

We worked jointly with the City Coordinator to schedule and conduct eight public
meetings during the last week of January and first week of February, arranged for sites
and secured audio system support, developed with the city a survey that was conducted
concurrently, made the survey available on line and co-facilitated the community
meetings. We also conducted a major outreach effort that included contacting every

neighborhood organization, more than 80 non geographically based organizations, securing translators for six languages to attend three of the meetings and arranging for bus transportation from community pickup locations. There was no charge to passengers for the bus service.

After the discussions were completed, NRP staff compiled the small group and individual comments, analyzed the survey responses and drafted major portions of a summary report.

Three hundred forty five (345) residents attended the community meetings on some of the coldest evenings of the winter. More than 840 residents submitted completed surveys.

The attached report provides background and history, reviews the process used to gather input, summarizes the data that has been collected and suggests next steps. Although we have worked with the City coordinator, City Community Engagement Coordinator and a Senior Program Manager from CPED throughout the review process and development of the findings in this report, the end result being presented to you is the product of NRP staff. We cannot, and are not, speaking for the City in our discussion of the process or outcomes that occurred from this review. All of the original information is also attached so that you may review it also.

The NRP staff involved in conducting these meetings and the survey and in doing the analysis worked to ensure that an objective and comprehensive process was conducted that would provide high quality information to the Board. Peg Mountin, Jack Whitehurst, Stacy Sorenson, Willie Willis, Bev Banks, and Carsten Slostad made major contributions to the success of this effort. Most of all, however, we need to thank Barb Lickness, Joe Horan and Robert Thompson for the extra efforts they made. These events, and this report, would have been impossible without them.

Executive Summary

The Community Engagement Process Review Report prepared by NRP contains:
- four sections,
- an appendix with document references,
- attachments with original information from the community meetings and survey, and
- charts visually displaying some of the results from the survey.

Section I, Background and History (p. 1-4), provides information on City Council and NRP Policy Board actions since 2003 that provide a context for the current community engagement process discussion.

Section II, The Public Meetings and Survey (p 4-6), describes the outreach effort by NRP and the City designed to generate responses to the survey and attendance and participation in the community meetings.

Section III, The Results (p. 6-13), contains the outcomes of the community meetings and survey. The results include the following.

Participants: 345 different individuals participated in the eight community meetings
847 different individuals completed the survey

Comments: 590 comments were generated from the small group discussions at the community meetings
147 written comment cards were received from individuals
30 comments were submitted from on line forums or blogs
21 letters (12 with the same resolution) were received from neighborhood organizations and their Boards
6 written submissions were received from individuals
4 comments were submitted by a City Board, Commission or department.

Main Themes: **1) Citizens want and deserve a culture of respect.** Perhaps above all else, participants want to be part of a city that they can trust and that respects and values the voice of its residents. Elected officials and city staff need to become more effective listeners. Neighborhoods want to be asked – not told – what is best for them. Community engagement should be built into all that we do.

2) Feed back and two-way communication are essential. Participants report <u>receiving</u> volumes of information – but they're not certain that the city either receives or takes into account the information provided by residents. Residents want to understand what happened after they submitted input and why.

3) Small is beautiful and effective. Truly meaningful community engagement occurs when issues are specific, relevant and close to home.

Minneapolis is a city of neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations make a difference. At the community or city level, efforts become more generalized and neighborhood knowledge gets lost in the shuffle.

4) The city's community engagement policy and practices must be improved. Residents want community engagement processes that are timely, clear, and appropriate to their neighborhoods. Residents want "front-end" engagement that allows more voices to be heard.

The city should build on what is already present. The achievements of the existing system, or the acknowledgement that a system presently exists, have been ignored and slighted. The accomplishments of neighborhoods need to be recognized.

5) Engagement will not happen without funding for neighborhoods. Unless the city is willing to fund neighborhood organizations and their priorities, discussions about two-way communication and respect are ultimately meaningless. The infrastructure that supports community engagement and neighborhood organizations is critical.

The vast majority of participants indicated that they support neighborhood organizations, even though they often acknowledged their faults. Further, they support funding for neighborhood organizations through NRP. NRP works. It should be continued.

Section IV covers recommendations for Next Steps (p.13-14) and the way those steps should be conducted. The next steps were identified as:

1) Provide the results from the meetings, comment cards and survey to the people that have participated so far in this process, and

2) Determine what an improved system that builds on existing structures and processes could look like.

A "work group" is proposed to draft a Community Engagement model for community discussion.

Before any effort is made to develop a more effective Community Engagement system, however, the level of support for the continuation of NRP and the neighborhood groups from elected officials from both an authority and a financial resource perspective needs to be determined. **Both the future Community Engagement Process and the role of NRP in helping to shape an improved process will be affected by the answer to this question.**