

Memorandum

Date: December 11, 2007

To: Policy Board Members and Alternates

From: Robert D. Miller, Director

Subject: Materials from the Discussion of the Future

At the last Policy Board meeting on November 19 the Board continued the discussion from its October meeting about the future of NRP. The discussion focused on generating responses to eight questions that had been previously distributed to Board members and alternates for their consideration and perspectives.

The discussion lasted for almost two hours and all of the members and alternates present participated. Members were also asked to provide their written comments as well for inclusion in a summary that would be prepared by NRP staff.

The summary of that discussion, and the written comments that we received, is attached for your information and use as the deliberations on the future of NRP proceed. I thought that these might be useful as potential criteria against which to assess options that may be provided for consideration.

The work group established by the City Council to discuss NRP and its relationship with the City has been working diligently since October 18 to address the possibilities for the future. The results of their efforts will be presented to the Committee of the Whole on December 20, with a plan for public discussions in January. Council Vice President, Policy Board alternate and Work Group Chair Robert Lilligren will give an overview of the Work Group's progress and next steps at the Policy Board meeting on December 17.

Questions About the Future of NRP

Responses from Policy Board members and the Discussion on November 19th

Summary of discussion that occurred at the Policy Board Meeting on November 19th from Bob's notes on flip charts. Additional responses, submitted in writing by Policy Board members, are in *italics*.

1a. **Based on your experiences with NRP and the neighborhoods, what has NRP done well since the program began operating in 1991?**

- *Gave residents and business owners a seat at the decision making table by empowering them with real funds to implement their projects and programs and meet their priorities*
- *Empowered residents to work together to revitalize their neighborhoods and the City*
- Established neighborhood identity
- *Created an infrastructure of neighborhood involvement which is an asset to neighborhoods and the City*
- *Organized residents into functioning neighborhood groups*
- *Taught residents to be good stewards of city resources*
- Developed leaders and enhanced their leadership skills
- *Helped neighborhoods build the capacity of their residents by educating, informing and training them*
- *Provided training that is both general and specific i.e. recruiting volunteers and Board duties and responsibilities*
- Generated good ideas
- Leveraged additional funding / time / resources / people / social capital
- *Leveraged more than \$1 billion in additional public and private investment in the City*
- Vehicle for residents to engage about neighborhood's future
- *Supported neighborhood ability to mobilize residents to address tough issues like crime and falling property conditions*
- Improved the housing stock and increased the tax base
- *Housing Loan Programs that have revolved several times and provide program income to neighborhoods*
- Tied funding and decision making together for a geographic area
- Liaison with neighborhoods and city departments / others
- *Built bridges between City staff and neighborhood residents*
- Empowered diverse group of residents
- Brought neighbors together
- Residents have continuity over time
- Fostered partnerships between neighborhoods and encouraged neighborhoods to work in other public/private partnerships

- *Created and sustained public and private partnerships and neighborhood coalitions that continue to work to make improvements in the neighborhoods and the City*
- *Served as the catalyst for creating partnerships between various groups to solve problems or address issues at the neighborhood level.*
- Geographical funding based on need which avoided competition for funds
- Retention of residents
- Increased resident participation
- Huge capitalization of resident resources
- *NRP had to build the ship while it was being sailed and continues to change to meet changing demands and expectations*

1b. Based on your experiences with NRP and the neighborhoods, where has NRP failed or could have done better?

- Better effort to connect neighborhoods to each other to work on similar issues
- More sharing of ideas / projects
- Organize and expand participation from diverse population groups
- Failure to get a guaranteed funding source
- Too focused on administration instead of building neighborhood capacity
- *Too busy working on specific projects and not enough attention to building capacity*
- Redesign of public services
- Loss of leveraging and loss of continuity as a result of funding uncertainty
- Lack of publicity about what neighborhoods have done well
- *Has not done a good job of marketing its participation in projects and programs*
- Greater public awareness of accomplishments that occurred because of NRP
- Haven't told our story well
- Financial glitches that cost dollars
- Diversification of funding sources
- Could have been a more congenial relationship between City / NRP and other government agencies
- Problem solving mechanisms that address issues before they become grievances
- Policy Board failure to adhere to housing percentage in Phase I
- Could have provided more assistance to neighborhoods in program implementation by developing generic forms for contracts and scopes of service
- Better way to implement projects / manage contracts.
- Overspending in Phase I
- Failed to change the priorities / workings of central bureaucracies
- *Without intending to we helped establish or maintain some "fiefdoms" and created powerful Executive Directors*
- *No way for neighborhoods to opt out gracefully when there was no desire or interest in participating*
- *Has not done a good job of identifying the demographics that a particular project or program served*

- *Could have created regional technical assistance centers to help neighborhood associations with accounting, personnel, legal and other “corporate” or admin needs*

2. What changes in the program components would you recommend, based on your experiences with neighborhood groups and NRP?

- Greater flexibility around spending
- *Remove mandate percentages*
- Capture efficiencies through greater use of centralized services (e.g. accounting/ printing of newsletters/ websites/ D & O insurance)
- Simplify administrative tasks
- *Provide more generic forms to neighborhoods to simplify implementation of programs and projects*
- Set ranges for spending in key areas
- City embracing of CE principles / report
- More “off the shelf” programs
- Improve timelines on contracts
- Create a more formalized role for neighborhoods with City / County etc.
- *Develop networking opportunities between jurisdictions, NRP and neighborhood staff*
- *Small / all volunteer / no paid staff neighborhoods should be required to work more closely with NRP staff to minimize problems and maximize efficiency and effectiveness.*
- *Have NRP actively work to bring neighborhoods together to work on specific problems or issues that they have in common*
- *More networking opportunities for neighborhood staff*
- *Better pay for NRP staff*

3. What should be the primary functions that neighborhood groups perform for the city and residents?

- *Continue to pursue the original vision/goals for NRP:*
 - Build neighborhood capacity*
 - Create a sense of place*
 - Redesign public services*
 - Encourage intra and inter governmental cooperation and collaboration*
- Empower neighborhoods to address needs of residents
- Maintenance of neighborhood infrastructure
- Conduits for collecting and using individual energy
- Vehicle for legitimate discussion of issues that need public discussion
- Create forums for community discussion
- Communicate to and from residents

- *First and foremost they need to be the organizing unit to get information to the residents and provide a place for resident information to be gathered for the City*
- Determine visionary needs of neighborhood for services
- Disseminate information and contribute neighborhood perspective to City and other plans impacting neighborhoods
- *Neighborhoods should have a formal role in City processes that involve Public Works projects, Land Use, Zoning, Planning, and Development*
- Establishing neighborhood identity and pride
- Focal point for engagement on local issues
- Influence what happens directly / control use of resources
- Be representative of the diversity in the neighborhood / community
- Organizing of neighborhood residents to address specific issues and problems

4. Should neighborhoods receive operating support funds? Who should those funds come from?

- Unanimous “Yes” to “Should neighborhoods receive operating support funds?”
- If neighborhoods assist the City with City functions or business then funds should come from the City
- *Issues that neighborhoods face (especially in the areas of zoning, planning, transportation, and infrastructure) take a lot of time and resources*
- City and whoever wants to help
- County and others because of the types of need being addressed
- Sources should be ongoing and significant
- *Possible sources are many and varied and were addressed in the NRP Task Force on Continuing Funding for NRP*
- Extend TIF districts
- Use new tax base that occurs after decertification
- Capture the expected LGA reductions after 2010 and dedicate those dollars to NRP and neighborhoods
- *Yes, but continue to use a population and need based funding formula similar to our current allocation system*
- *Operating support from CDBG funds*
- *Dollars to neighborhood groups validates their existence and value to the City. They provide a place where individuals can invest in their civic life and feel like they are making a difference. When this validation happens residents are more willing to “stick it out” through tough times.*

5. Should neighborhoods receive funds to implement priorities in their action plans? Who should those funds come from?

- *As Fergie says: “If you ain’t got no money, take your broke ass home”. Without discretionary funds for implementation volunteers would not bother to leave their couches. What would be the point?*
- Share of municipal budgets

- Same sources as #4 above
- *Someone has to get the projects in action plans done-neighborhoods have the greatest interest in doing so.*
- *There has to be more “buy in” by the implementers before plans are adopted and there need to be consequences when commitments to implement aren’t kept*

6. Should the governance of the program be changed? If so, what changes would you recommend?

- Unanimous “Yes” to “Should the governance of the program be changed?”
- Neighborhood Reps should continue to be elected not appointed
- Increased City funding should mean bringing the program into the City admin structure
- Independent but closer to city
- More seats for the City / CE commission from the CE Report?
- Significant value in having multiple jurisdictions represented
- Where funding comes from should not be the only factor in determining governance structure
- *Should continue to be governed by an independent body such as a quasi-joint powers board*
- *Board could be smaller and just include the funding entities and neighborhood reps*
- Citizens fund government-NRP should be independent and a partnership
- Maintain Policy Board as is with other jurisdictions as members
- Community partners represented on Board should be real partners
- Governance model is not necessarily the problem
- *Fewer members on Policy Board or among them more who take it seriously and attend every meeting.*

7. Should NRP continue to be an independent organization with a quasi-joint powers board, be a division of a city department, be a city department or have some other standing? Why?

- *Billy Joel said “I love you just the way you are” and I agree with him!*
- *Independent as is with a funding stream or not at all*
- *Independent organization with a quasi-joint powers board is the better option because it would provide an administration that is independent of political issues and ensures that all neighborhoods are treated equally*
- Structure hinders ability to redesign public services
- Should be integrated into the City (dept or division)
- Should remain independent but increase cooperation and collaboration
- *Multi-jurisdictional aspect keeps the program unique and balanced*
- Plans developed need a better path to City departments and accountability for implementation
- Should remain a quasi-joint powers board

- Need to remember “separation of powers”
- Concern about centralization of control and power-absence of balance
- Everyone is paying for NRP and the funds the City uses come from the residents

8. Do you think NRP should continue after 2009? If so, why?

- *I think in fairness to the wonderful successes we have had as a program, we need to put a positive end to the program, as we know it now. UNLESS we carry the same independent program into a Phase III, it is not fair for the implementation of the Phase II plans and the final planning of the neighborhoods that do not have a phase II plan to be “transitioned” into some other structure of administration. This would create additional frustrations /ambiguous regulations / power struggles etc.*
- *Close the current program at a specific date, probably December 31, 2009 with the goal of getting all neighborhoods to have approved Phase II plans or working with the neighborhoods not interested in Phase II to give them a way out. Once all the planning is completed and plans have been approved, as that was the programs original mission, then transition the “administration of implementation” to a new entity not called NRP.*
- *It is important to keep the integrity of this unique program intact. If we go into a city department, in order to make that decision look good, the failures of our current program will be used to make all sort of changes and charges against our work. We should NOT be a party to the “downgrading of NRP” in any way. We need an intact program start to finish.*
- *If the city wants to create a department then call it something other than NRP. It can take over implementation contracting / administration of \$\$ to fund neighborhood organizations. It can oversee implementation of plan modification processes but CALL IT SOMETHING ELSE. Then when and if it has problems they can say “well..it sure was a lot better when we had NRP”!*
- *When this program was created in 1990 the city recognized that revitalization was going to happen only if residents of the neighborhood were involved to make it happen. MCDA described this in 1989 as neighborhoods functioning as “the basic building blocks of revitalization” and “the engine that will make revitalization a reality.” That is exactly what happened. But revitalization is not a static goal-it is an ongoing process.*
- *NRP has been a one-of-a kind program that has provided so much for the neighborhoods and the city. If we don’t continue it, it is likely that in a decade or so people will start looking at troubled neighborhoods or neighborhoods in decline and say-“maybe we should come up with a program that would put power and energy back into the city at the neighborhood level.”*

- *Although we may need to evaluate and modify NRP, it should be retained as an essential part of an on-going neighborhood revitalization effort.*
- *Yes, Yes, Yes. It is a world acclaimed program that others salivate over.*