

## VII.2.1 Linden Hills (*Protection*)

Linden Hills illustrates how the residents of a quite well off neighborhood, with few urgent needs, can be induced to devote large amounts of volunteer time and energy to NRP activities. The quality of neighborhood life in Linden Hills was fairly high prior to NRP: the neighborhood did not have substantial crime problems or boarded and blighted properties. Yet NRP seems to have mobilized some residents to invest many hours of volunteer time to improve their neighborhood. These Linden Hills activists and other residents fiercely support neighborhood participation in city planning.

From one perspective, allocating resources to well off areas such as Linden Hills diverts public money from places and people who have greater needs. On the other side of the equation, however, lie important political considerations. As a program that is universal in that every neighborhood gets something, NRP has the potential to build a much broader constituency from among residents in every kind of neighborhood in the city. Indeed, many residents of Linden Hills have become vocal advocates for preserving neighborhood engagement against several city attempts to curtail it. Some Linden Hills residents belong to an active city-wide network that fights to preserve and extend the scope of neighborhood voice in city planning and service delivery. The experience of Linden Hills shows how relatively modest public allocations can trigger community mobilization and volunteering even in areas with few pressing needs.

What do such residents gain from participation in NRP? If the Linden Hills experience offers a guide, more affluent areas focus on amenities and aesthetic issues, on which modest investments can make significant impacts, rather than more expensive projects such as housing or business creation. Linden Hills invested substantial portions of its NRP funding to clean its lakes and woods, to improve traffic and beautify its sidewalks and intersections, and to improve access to schools and libraries. Even the large amount of resources categorized as economic development was in reality used to create a better environment for residents by making areas close to stores more pedestrian-friendly and visually attractive.

Finally, the experience of Linden Hills illustrates some of the tensions between neighborhood interests and broader goals such as social justice. Many critics of neighborhood empowerment generally, and NRP in particular, contend that empowered sub-local governance tends to reinforce inward-looking, parochial tendencies, reactionary NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) sentiments, and hostility to broader considerations. On the other side, many NRP supporters in the neighborhoods claimed in their discussions with us that they were not opposed to outsiders or to measures that would alter the neighborhood to advance social justice – such as building more affordable housing. Instead, they were opposed to having such demands and projects imposed upon them without neighborhood input into important questions such as where such projects would be built, what they look like, and how they might fit (or not) into the look-and-feel or long-term plans of the neighborhood. The experience of Linden Hills suggests that the truth lies between these two polar claims.

The Linden Hills association defied the logic of NIMBY critics by developing an affordable housing policy for its neighborhood. Their plan included provisions for several affordable housing units to be built in the area. Why a well-off neighborhood would want to deal with affordable housing in the first place, since it could potentially reduce property values and attract “undesirable” residents? First, many residents of Linden Hills are quite liberal in their political views and have free-standing preferences for affordability and diversity. One of the leaders of the affordable housing initiative favors a return to the neighborhoods earlier days, when it was a stable working class area, with diversity in the professions of its residents and in their income levels. According to this neighborhood leader, Linden Hills gentrification could be reduced by adding back some of the old diversity, and a large majority of other neighbors supports the initiative.

Linden Hills prepared a plan to identify a site and a process to engage the community in a discussion on affordable housing. The plan provides for the construction of townhouses in an area close to a commercial node, relatively marginal to the rest of the neighborhood. The affordable housing initiative has not yet come to fruition, and critics will nevertheless object that such projects are marginal relative to the scale of the housing crisis in Minneapolis. Nevertheless, the Linden Hills experience suggests the potential for reconciling the values of both neighborhood voice and a broader social justice.

## **VII.2.2 Longfellow (*Revitalization*)**

Longfellow is the largest neighborhood in Minneapolis. In forming the Longfellow neighborhood association, residents decided to combine four smaller geographic areas in order to reap economies of scale and develop greater negotiating power vis-à-vis city agencies and other outside entities. In so doing, Longfellow has built a large and solid neighborhood association that efficiently develops and implements its NRP action plan and presents a strong presence in the neighborhood. The association is among the most capable that we encountered. The neighborhood organization used to have as many as five full time staff, and it now has two full time and two part time professionals who are dedicated to administrative work, community development, zoning and planning, community outreach and environmental and transportation projects.

Some suggest that there is a risk that large, professionalized community organizations may become too distant from neighborhood residents and replicate the problems of city bureaucracies in miniature. The Longfellow neighborhood organization avoided this problem, and to the contrary utilized its capacity to enhance participation. Professional staff devote a share of their efforts to increasing community engagement and communication to ensure good outreach and participation. In small, especially volunteer-based, organizations, on the other hand, resource limitations can cause the organizations to focus upon urgent objectives with administrative deadlines—such as the development and implementation of plans—at the expense of community outreach. The size and professionalism of Longfellow’s neighborhood organization did not discourage volunteering. To the contrary, it supported mobilization and inclusion efforts.

Longfellow, with its well developed organization and neighborhood volunteers who overtime acquired strong planning skills, has achieved considerable capacity and is a

good example of neighborhood empowerment. As in Linden Hills, many residents became strong advocates of neighborhood participation in city planning and resource allocation, and are thinking strategically of their neighborhood's future and possible actions to preserve their capacity and involvement in the city planning also beyond NRP.

Despite the fact that four neighborhoods were to share NRP resources, our informants indicated that there were few explicit conflicts during the fund allocation process. This may be explained by Longfellow's relative homogeneity, and by the fact that renters, concentrated in a more industrial area, did not intervene much in planning to voice their priorities. Except for the case of the construction of a community center in a park, a project which was opposed by a portion of the neighborhood, but which eventually was implemented, no other significant conflicts emerged from our interviews.

Finally, informants cite bungalow renovation methods as one of Longfellow's lasting NRP successes. Low-value bungalows constitute much of the neighborhood's housing stock. As part of housing improvement activities under its action plan, the organization and residents have developed a series of architectural guidelines that successfully improve the quality and value of bungalows, and these guidelines have crystallized into something of a regional and national model. In addition to such projects that primarily benefit homeowners, Longfellow invested in its parks, in projects to revitalize its main commercial nodes, and in several community building strategies.

### **VII.2.3 McKinley (*Revitalization*)**

McKinley is a neighborhood in the midst of a sweeping demographic and social change. Until the late 1980s, McKinley was a working class, predominantly white neighborhood that attracted prospective buyers for the affordability of its properties. Between 1990 and 2000, however, many white residents abandoned the neighborhood at the same time that African Americans and Hmong settled there. By the end of the decade, whites had become a minority in the neighborhood. These trends are visible in the city of Minneapolis as a whole, which is also becoming more diverse. McKinley's experience, therefore, offers an opportunity to address an important question about NRP as its demographic context changes. Is NRP a vehicle through which residents can interact and cooperate across lines of racial difference, or does it instead work to fracture residents and reinforce divisive boundaries of race and socio-economic status?

Unfortunately, it is too early to fully judge the impact of NRP in this changing community. From our brief exposure, however, it appears that many African American residents are involved in NRP activities there, and that other minority groups have also begun to engage. Although one might expect a conflict between white homeowners who have been living in the neighborhood for a long time and the new African American residents, such conflicts do not seem central in McKinley. Old time –white- residents appear to be genuinely interested in collaborating with newcomers and integrating them into the neighborhood's NRP activities. This level of openness may be motivated by the fact that white residents are less than half of what they used to be a decade ago, therefore the only solution for those who stayed is to accept new residents and engage them in the community, to create a more harmonious and functional neighborhood for all.

During the neighborhood meeting that we attended, NRP volunteers encouraged new residents to become involved in NRP activities. Furthermore, McKinley makes an effort to transfer planning and implementation skills to new volunteers and to “socialize” them by organizing training sessions for newly elected board members and providing them with a “Board Book” that briefs them on past board activities.

Security and crime are urgent issues for whites, blacks, and Hmong residents alike in McKinley. Such pressing problems often serve to bring communities together. In fact, in the neighborhood meeting, crime reduction was a primary concern for both white and African American residents. There was a strong sense that neighbors needed to be united to fight crime and create a safer community for all. During the meeting, African American and other minority residents were as engaged in the debate as white ones. Additionally, several African Americans, as well as a Hmong resident and a Latino, ran for the neighborhood board.

McKinley invests a large portion of its funds in an after-school program led by a charismatic African-American activist. The program attempts to keep neighborhood children safe and to instill community values in new generations. The after school

program, however, is also viewed as a way to reach out to parents, who would not otherwise be very involved in their community, through their children.

Lastly, the construction of McKinley's school is an example of how neighborhood involvement in planning can improve service delivery and serve multiple neighborhood needs. McKinley residents were very entrepreneurial in lobbying Public Schools when they learned that there were resources available to build a number of neighborhood schools in the city of Minneapolis. Not only did McKinley get its school—the only one in the neighborhood— but it convinced Public Schools to build it in a site plagued with crime, drug dealing, and blighted housing. The school contributed to turning around an area which was in serious decline and it attracted a church which was built in front of it, and a family center which will soon be constructed. Residents also negotiated with the school to have some space in the building to host their after school program, and obtained it. The McKinley school is an example of the value that neighbors can add to a project and to service delivery, as they saw in the school project a potential that administrators alone could not have captured.

McKinley, just like Whittier, as we will illustrate below, saw in strong neighborhood schools an important factor to stabilize their young and changing communities and to prevent crime. As research suggests, “The school, since it convenes large numbers of youth over the years if their maturation, is another key agent of social control in a community.”<sup>68</sup>

#### **VII.2.4 Phillips (*Redirection*)**

Like Longfellow, Phillips is one of the largest neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Unlike Longfellow, however, poverty and diversity conspired to produce much more intense conflicts that, for a time, paralyzed neighborhood governance in Phillips. For several years, neighborhood participation and planning was highly dysfunctional in Phillips. Factions had diverse priorities across issues and parts of the neighborhood, and they could not forge agreement. Eventually, the area split into four separate parts, each with its neighborhood organization eligible for separate NRP project funds. Some argue that People of Phillips (POP), the original neighborhood organization, had become like a city agency with which residents felt little connection and so little compunction to volunteer. POP was, according to many residents, quite diverse and open, but its large dimension and poor management skills eventually resulted in serious financial difficulties and to POP's collapse.

It may also be the case that POP—an organization whose roots predated NRP—had its own community advocacy agenda that did not mesh with the new constituencies—homeowners and long term residents—mobilized by NRP. Some contended that POP's earlier emphasis on advocacy and social justice never successfully

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<sup>68</sup> Williams, 1985, p. 185.

incorporated a range of other priorities around housing and neighborhood improvement. On this view, latent opposition manifested itself when POP's deficiencies and vulnerabilities became visible for all to see.

In Phillips, NRP resources brought to surface a conflict among interests that eventually resulted in Phillips' division. Following the collapse of POP, and the secessionist pressures of some areas of the neighborhood, Phillips split into four smaller units, three of which are administrative regions, while one obtained neighborhood status. Despite the smaller scale, the connection between residents and their neighborhood organizations has not mended. Observers criticize some of the new organizations for being dominated by white homeowners in a neighborhood where minority renters constitute the majority, and also for relying only on volunteers rather than paid staff. The lack of an office and staff can make the connection between neighborhood organizations and residents very fragile. Volunteer residents, for evident time constraints, are more likely to focus on NRP projects implementation to the detriment of outreach, mobilization, and community building activities.

Many informants attributed these participation deficits to high residential mobility. Some characterized Phillips as "Minneapolis's Ellis Island"—the first neighborhood where new immigrants live before moving somewhere else. While high mobility rates no doubt depress participation, some neighborhood associations failed to take steps—visible in the other neighborhoods discussed here—to create a range of invitations and opportunities for residents who face greater barriers to participation. Other associations, on the other hand, were more proactive in engaging all residents.

The combination of weak neighborhood organizations and high diversity proved to be very harmful, at least in some of the units in which Phillips split. In a way, Phillips shifted from an excessively centralized approach to one that is highly decentralized. If initially Phillips had a neighborhood organization so large and structured that it reduced the need for neighbors to mobilize and "take charge" of the process, it now has a loose configuration that, at least in some cases, led to domination by narrow interests. The current structure highlights how—in some cases—more guidance from NRP would be beneficial to keep organizations accountable to their requirements of community engagement.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses in participation, access to NRP resources has considerably improved Phillips in terms of housing investments, crime programs, and commercial corridor revitalization. In particular, the revitalization of Franklin Avenue seems to have given Phillips a renewed sense of place, a place where to walk and gather safely, and a recognizable landmark of Phillips diverse cultural heritage. Beyond the immediate material outcome, it is important to appreciate the symbolic value of recuperating areas from blight and crime, and the sense of restored hope and dignity that revitalization efforts can generate.

## **VII.2.5 Whittier (*Redirection*)**

While Phillips' poverty no doubt posed substantial obstacles to neighborhood governance and planning, the Whittier neighborhood had a very different experience. There, participation from an alliance of homeowners, property owners and business owners quite literally transformed the area.

Prior to NRP, Whittier had a very strong and active neighborhood organization, the Whittier Alliance, which also served as a community development corporation. The Alliance had developed hundreds of low income rental units to serve the neighborhood's poor, to whom it also provided a range of human services. When NRP made resources available, the Alliance led the planning process, and developed a plan centered, among other things, on the construction of additional low-income housing. A group of homeowners, property owners and business owners, whose opposition to the Alliance had since been latent, decided to mobilize and promote an alternative plan. This coalition believed that Whittier was becoming an "institutionalized ghetto," and that affordable housing was to be spread across neighborhoods, rather than concentrated always in the same areas. They favored the stabilization of existing housing, rather than the construction of new dwellings; they also supported increased homeownership, and stronger commercial corridors. After a period of intense conflict, this faction seems to have prevailed on the Alliance's board in the early 1990s, and has ever since played a key role in the Whittier's NRP planning.

Some observers criticized Whittier's organization as the vehicle for advancing the narrow interests of a small group. Although Whittier conducted extensive surveys, meetings, and focus groups to hear from as broad an audience as possible for its Phase II plan and despite its board's diversity, the old leaders still play an important role in decision-making. Allotment patterns do not show that this group directed benefits to homeowner-only program, but they did support an agenda aimed at increasing homeownership, improving the neighborhood and its housing stock and attracting higher income residents. The Whittier association has accomplished much of this agenda, and some say that the neighborhood is becoming increasingly gentrified and less affordable for its low income residents as a result.

Whittier invested its Phase I resources to improve the existing low income rental units and its housing stock in general. They also supported the construction of a gym and a community center, commercial corridor improvements, and new businesses. Human services, generally a strong expenditure category for low income neighborhoods, received only 3% of Whittier's allotments. Some of the activists in the Association may have feared that such services would attract more disadvantaged residents to an already at-risk area. Whittier's Phase II plan is likely to consolidate Phase I achievements, with its focus on stabilization through increased homeownership, projects supporting youth and safety, and expanded business development.

Some of Whittier's Phase I projects, such as Eat Street and the neighborhood school, are considered by many as emblematic successes of neighborhood planning. The creation of "Eat Street" in Nicollet Avenue, required collaboration from three

neighborhoods –Whittier, Stevens Square, and Loring Park, and of residents and business owners, who worked together to improve the commercial corridor and make it more appealing for businesses and customers. What used to be an unsafe area plagued with alcoholism, prostitution, and crime is now Eat Street, an attractive avenue lined with a variety of ethnic grocery stores and restaurants that draw patrons from across Minneapolis. Whittier was one of the pioneer neighborhoods in the realization of this project, which now stands as a landmark of what was achieved thanks to NRP contributions. NRP resources were heavily invested to improve streetscapes. Local business owners were involved throughout the process. Eat Street was also marketed to business in other areas, some of which eventually decided to relocate there.

Like McKinley, Whittier also took advantage of the availability of funding to support new neighborhood schools. Many Whittier residents preferred a local school option to cross-town bussing. Their neighborhood plan attempted to coordinate between several city agencies to construct a neighborhood school. Those on the association invested NRP resources to build a modern public gymnasium, which in turn incentivized the Public Schools to build a new school building nearby – since students could utilize the adjacent gym and so relieve the need for separate construction funding. The Whittier alliance also served as an intermediary between Public Schools and Park and Recreation. Both jurisdictions were involved in the project, which is often cited as an example of how neighborhood governance under NRP can stimulate inter-agency collaboration.

## **VIII Main Findings and Conclusions**

### ***VIII.1 Co-production and Co-governance, Success and Limitations***

The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program is a highly innovative program that involves citizens in planning and delegates substantial powers—more substantial than any other comparable U.S. urban initiative—to neighborhoods. Under NRP, each neighborhood in Minneapolis receives resources according to a formula of need factors and uses them to fulfill priorities identified by the community. The work occurs in neighborhood associations. These associations develop “action plans” that articulate residents’ needs and also strategies and projects to meet those needs. Neighborhood associations work with city agencies, private contractors, and other organizations to implement those strategies and projects. More simply a program of neighborhood assistance or devolution, however, the NRP was conceived as a program to join residents and city agencies in the business of neighborhood improvement. In the mind of its designers, delegating power and resources to citizens would enable a new approach where city departments cooperate with residents and among themselves in the implementation of neighborhood objectives. In this vision, the barriers between residents and agencies, and the silos that separated agencies from one another, would be dissolved in favor of a more cooperative, joined-up, kind of planning. Involving residents in planning would also renovate social fabric and create a sense of ownership of the neighborhood and, more broadly, of the city, since empowered citizens are more vocal and demanding vis-à-vis their administrators.

More than ten years have elapsed since the approval of the first neighborhood plans, and NRP achieved some of these objectives, while it has been less successful on other dimensions.

The plan has revitalized many parts of the city. It has improved Minneapolis’ housing stock and some of its commercial corridors. It has facilitated the construction and improvement of schools, parks, and other public facilities. Property values have risen in Minneapolis, and this may be in part due to NRP activities. Furthermore, citizen planning has brought local knowledge, preferences, and needs to improve neighborhood projects. Bottom-up design has occasionally facilitated synergies—such as opportunities for inter-agency collaboration—between separate city agencies.

Neighborhoods received different amounts of funding from NRP, and different neighborhoods deployed their resources in quite different ways. Poor neighborhoods received more than more affluent ones. Generally, their spending emphasized housing improvements, local economic development, and human services for their residents. More prosperous areas invested in housing improvements as well, but they distributed resources more evenly across projects that improve neighborhood livability and amenities, such as parks, schools and libraries, the environment and transportation. Some criticize NRP for granting funding to *all* neighborhoods, even though wealthier areas received a small portion of overall resources. The NRP’s progressive but universal

allocation formula created a broad-based constituency in favor of the program *across* the city's neighborhoods.

It would be a misunderstanding, however, to view the total monetary allocations as the upper limit of resources available to neighborhoods under NRP. \$20 million per year, divided across sixty-plus neighborhoods, is a paltry sum measured against the challenges of urban revitalization. To their credit, many neighborhood associations have used NRP monies to leverage a range of other resources from varied sources. Funding served as a catalyst for additional resources from the city, because often departments co-invest in projects, and spurred considerable resident volunteering. An imposing amount of volunteer work is in fact required to prepare neighborhood action plans and subsequently implement them. Volunteering, in turn, created a group of socially active and knowledgeable residents. Low- or no- interest revolving loan funds mobilize the private resources of residents to make long term investments in their properties.

NRP also generated substantial associational capacity. All neighborhoods now have organizations to coordinate plan implementation and to mobilize residents. Even though many organizations predate NRP, the program resuscitated many neighborhood organizations, and stabilized and contributed to the growth of many others. NRP created a formal governance role for associations in urban planning. Today, these organizations are a key not only to planning and implementation, but also to building community with events that keep residents engaged in neighborhood life.

NRP has also contributed to the civic and political training of individual residents. Neighbors learned important planning and leadership skills, and overtime interaction also fortified their social ties. By creating a space that directs residents to act for the neighborhood *as a unit*, NRP seems to have increased the extent to which many residents identify with their neighborhoods and feel a stake in neighborhoods' fates. This sense of neighborhood ownership manifests itself in physical gateways, banners and signs that differentiate one place in the city from another, and in a range of aesthetic and symbolic improvement projects.

Many aspects of this collaborative vision, however, remain unrealized. Residents often described their relationship with city departments as "fluctuating." In fact, city agencies cooperate on NRP projects on an *ad-hoc* basis. Some agency staff are very forthcoming and favorable to working with residents, while others seem to consider collaboration burdensome and so resist it. Even though NRP has generated much enthusiasm and involvement at the neighborhood level, it did not transform city agencies. While innovative ways of planning and implementing action plans were created in the neighborhoods, city agencies have not undergone complementary reforms to reorganize themselves in ways to accommodate neighborhood input in their planning and decision-making. Similarly, inter-agency collaboration did occur for a number of projects, as we have seen, but departments did not adopt more integrated approaches to work with neighborhoods. Since NRP's success depends in large measure upon cooperation with and among city agencies, a clearer system of incentives and governance rules would have improved the program's efficacy. Incentives could have been designed for city agencies, such as large pools of dedicated funding to spend exclusively on NRP projects. Similarly,

the governance structure defining the interaction between the city and the neighborhoods should have been spelled out more clearly, assigning agencies precise roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis neighborhoods.

From a political perspective, elected officials have limited incentives to support citizen involvement and NRP. They play quite limited roles in the program and its accomplishments do not confer political credit. Additionally, empowered neighborhoods are becoming a new, vocal constituency that can oppose the programs of elected officials and city agency staff.

Although neighborhood associations have acquired considerable capacity and prerogatives that they will not easily cede, the future of NRP remains uncertain. Funding for the second decade of the program has been significantly curtailed because of changes in the tax legislation, and in times of financial constraints the city is less prone to largesse with decentralized spending. Some may even feel threatened by the competences and leadership developed by certain neighborhoods. It is too early to predict whether NRP will be fully institutionalized into a permanent and robust city program, or if it will be gradually reduced to mere form without substance, leaving no real powers in the neighborhoods' hands. Any attempt to limit neighborhood participation, however, will likely meet the opposition of residents.

### ***VIII.2 Different Layers of Participation and Civic Engagement***

By devolving power and resources down to the neighborhoods, the NRP has increased the quantity and quality of participation and civic engagement among Minneapolis residents. Over time, residents have become increasingly involved in NRP related activities. As the program matured, neighborhood organizations created multiple avenues for residents to engage in neighborhood planning and governance.

Residents can be divided in two categories. The first consists of a small group of highly dedicated and invested activists. These activists devote many hours in NRP and serve in demanding association board and committee positions. Many in this group have been involved in NRP since the inception of the program. This group consists of perhaps around two thousand residents throughout the city. Outside of this group, there is a much wider penumbra of residents who are only occasionally involved in neighborhood activities. They attend the general meetings of the organizations, read their newsletters and websites, answer their surveys, participate occasionally in community meetings, and devote their time to an array of volunteer activities for neighborhood improvement.

The first group of highly motivated and active residents is essential to NRP's success. Since the planning and implementation phases are so lengthy and technically demanding, it is understandable that only a cluster of very committed residents is willing to volunteer many hours every month for neighborhood work. The broader community, on the other hand, is characterized by a more "moderate" participation, which, though far

less demanding, is nevertheless essential to neighborhood life. It provides input to planning, volunteer work for specific campaigns, and neighborhood solidarity.

Both levels of engagement contribute to advancing neighborhood objectives, build a sense of community, and thicken civil society by creating a more alert and active citizenship.

Clearly, there are foreseeable systematic biases and exclusions in the kind of participation that NRP has generated. First, the group of highly active residents generally consists of white homeowners, also in areas where non-whites are predominant. Several reasons, including the local character of planning, demands on volunteer time, background distribution of resources and cultural factors make the program naturally more appealing to homeowners. Homeowners encounter higher exit costs for leaving a neighborhood, and have a more direct interest in volunteering for improvements that increase the value of their properties. Prolonged volunteering, in turn, generates a cluster of expert citizens, creating high entrance barriers for newcomers. For the same set of reasons, renters and minorities are less likely to take part in very demanding volunteer work, but are nonetheless willing to engage in less labor-intensive activities, such as *ad hoc* events and general neighborhood meetings.

Given these general patterns, several neighborhoods take specific measures to ensure that all priorities are considered during planning and that all neighbors are, at some level, engaged and connected.

First, the program should diversify its activist core by cultivating sub-local leadership from under-represented groups and communities. Some neighborhood associations reserve board positions for renters and people of color. Beyond quotas, much more might be done to create connections and draw involvement from other community organizations and to extend special invitations to those who are less likely to participate.

Second, knowing that not all residents respond to surveys, it is important to reach out to those who are likely to remain unheard through alternative methods such as focus groups, outreach, and targeted door canvassing. NRP staff might also help neighborhood association activists to work with organizations that represent these groups because they offer specific knowledge of their needs and can easily reach out to their constituencies. It is sometimes the case that those who are more engaged, namely homeowners, set on visions –such as stabilizing neighborhoods through increased homeownership- that may not be shared by the whole community. Associations should consciously create agendas that are relevant for *all* residents, not just a subsection of them. Issues such as crime and school quality generate broad concern, and these and similar issues might engage the broader community in dialogue and deliberation.

Third, it is important to include many residents in the implementation of projects and their evaluation. Many organizations very actively seek evaluations from residents regarding the fit between their activities and resident priorities.

One clear lesson from the NRP experience thus far is that the activities of neighborhood organizations importantly affect patterns of participation and inclusion. Well staffed and organized associations who make participation a priority have created ways for many kinds of residents to participate, while organizations that rely only on volunteers are less able to reach out to the community because of their limited capacity.

Unfortunately, not all neighborhoods have placed the same emphasis and resources on activities to engage those who do not normally show up. Some limit their approach to leaving the door open, without taking more affirmative steps. Too often, participation was left to the hands of neighbors who lacked specific knowledge to design effective engagement strategies. Although NRP has strengthened its participation requirements overtime, citizen engagement deserves more centralized guidance. Strategies like sharing best practices, or attaching sanctions to neighborhoods that fail to meet certain participation thresholds might enhance the quantity and equity of resident participation. A more formalized structure of guidelines and accountability mechanisms could ensure deeper and more uniform citizen engagement across all neighborhoods.

### ***VIII.3 Are Social Justice and Neighborhood Planning Irreconcilable?***

NRP's detractors often criticize the program for its inability to serve citywide priorities such as affordable housing, provision of social services and incorporation of new immigrants, to name a few. When organized as neighborhood residents, they maintain, citizens express local and highly self-interested priorities. Social justice and equity, on the other hand, requires transcending these neighborhood boundaries. The NRP has not substantially addressed the preoccupations of many activists concerned with equity and justice. Critics fault NRP specifically for failing to advance the affordable housing agenda. It should be noted that NRP was created and designed for a very different purpose—for neighborhood revitalization and to reverse residential exodus—at a time when affordable housing was less urgent on the public's agenda. The appropriate question, therefore, is not whether NRP has advanced objectives that it was not designed to achieve, but rather whether the governance principles of NRP – neighborhood planning and resident participation – are compatible with concerns for affordable housing and equity more generally.

In the case of affordable housing and social services, some opposition emerged from neighborhoods that had already had what they considered to be their “fair share” of low income housing and favored its deconcentration to other areas. In other cases, however, neighborhoods do not appear to oppose affordable housing. In particular, residents of neighborhoods like Linden Hills seem open to cooperating on a more general agenda of social justice if asked to do so, provided that they exercise some influence over characteristics such as design and location. Interestingly, this affluent neighborhood developed an affordable housing policy in order to articulate its own view on the topic and designated an area for possible construction. More than affordable housing *per se*, it is its top down imposition that neighborhoods seem to dislike. Beyond some individual

initiatives, however, there is value in the argument that neighborhoods should address also issues that transcend their borders to advance the well being of would-be residents.

The extent to which neighborhood governance and social justice can be reconciled remains to be explored as a matter of policy and political practice. Several considerations, however, suggest that neighborhood participation can be made to serve goals such as affordable housing to a much greater extent than commonly thought. First, opposition to low income housing and social services often stems from misinformation and prejudice. Public deliberation offers an important tool to educate residents through discussion and exposure to different opinions. Community deliberation may educate participants and reshape preferences creating a more favorable environment for projects that advance social justice. Additionally, NRP could produce a framework under which neighborhoods are required to address issues such as poverty and diversity in their action plans. More than just mandating that neighborhoods allocate a fixed percentage of resources to affordable housing, they should be encouraged to address the issue and develop possible strategies through public dialogue. Like in the case of participation, NRP should play a more active role in providing neighborhoods with guidance on how to include social justice objectives in their discussions and plans. NRP, however, should not merely advise neighborhoods, it should also adopt accountability mechanisms to ensure that all neighborhoods address social justice issues in consistent ways. More than top down approaches, which would likely encounter neighborhood hostility, the accountable autonomy approach that we suggest would use the deliberative model to allow residents to formulate their own preferences within a framework of guidelines and answerability.

#### ***VIII.4 Lessons for other Contexts***

Two elements lay behind NRP's success: the availability of resources and provisions for continuous resident participation at the neighborhood level.

First, providing resources to neighborhoods was critical to NRP's success. Many residents told us how, for the first time, they felt that they were not merely advising public agencies, but had real autonomy to decide how to allocate resources independently as a result of NRP. When residents saw that they were given "a place at the table" where decisions were taken and understood that their involvement would have a real impact, they responded enthusiastically. Power and resources were a tremendous stimulus for citizens to mobilize and participate not only in planning, but also with their "sweat equity" in thousands of volunteer hours. Neighbors would not have been nearly as engaged had they not been provided with resources that afforded them unprecedented negotiating power. Therefore, the availability of resources for citizen allocation is a strong drive to participation and engagement, and those who seek to create robust programs of public participation and deliberation should consider *empowering* participants with resources or public authority.

Second, NRP was designed as program that required citizen engagement *over time*. The collection of neighborhood priorities, the design of action plans and their

subsequent implementation function thanks to ongoing resident engagement over a period of several years. The protracted interaction with other residents and with city agencies created a thick web of relationships and capabilities. Residents enhanced their senses of neighborhood ownership and their commitments to each other and to the areas. In other cases outside of Minneapolis, deliberative programs have produced a burst of initial enthusiasm without generating sustained collective action. A program based on ongoing deliberation and continuous involvement in resource management has greater potential to empower residents and reinvigorate their associations.

Third, the availability of resources for projects with a precise spatial characterization –the neighborhood- led to covert dynamics of exclusion and power control. The program’s initial design led to the dominance of the homeowners subgroup. However, in some cases, the deliberative nature of NRP minimized the risk of zero sum games, and allowed for different interests to be aggregated in solutions that expanded opportunities for the many. Even if resource provision sometimes leads to dominance and capture mechanisms, this is not a sufficient reason to scrap the program. If funding is accompanied by a clear mechanism of guidelines and sanctions to hold neighborhoods accountable, some of the participatory biases exhibited by NRP might be avoided in other programs.

Program objectives, roles and responsibilities should be defined more clearly. NRP has often been criticized for shortfalls in areas that were not included in its initial mandate. Similarly, another area that would have benefited from clearer rules is the governance structure defining the relationship between neighborhoods and city departments. If, on the one hand, autonomy creates space for innovative solutions, it can also lead to lack of cooperation and sub-optimal outcomes. Any program wishing to replicate NRP should devise clear rules, responsibility and accountability mechanisms for the parties involved.

Finally, stricter control and sanction mechanisms should also be exercised to ensure that resources are used to encourage participation and social justice. The pursuit of public participation and social justice should be presented as one of the program’s covenants and as a requirement for access to funding. As stewards of the city’s resources, residents have the responsibility to advance not only their own objectives, but the broader priorities of the city as a whole, including equitable treatment and opportunity for all of its residents. NRP perhaps went too far as a program for neighborhood control and autonomy. The objectives of fair participation and justice might have been better served had the NRP office instead imposed greater requirements for neighborhood associations to be accountable for incorporating additional objectives and participatory considerations into their plans and other activities.

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