

# Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission

September 17, 2015

To: Jack Byers, Kjersti Monson

CEAC would like to offer our thanks and our appreciation for your presentation at the July CEAC meeting describing the proposed Comprehensive Plan process. We are grateful to hear of the status and draft process at this early point in the process. Moreover, we are pleased that CEAC can play a role in the process and can even help define its role as the process is finalized and implemented. The Comprehensive Plan is the policy foundation for all the City's programs, strategies, and investments, and we believe that the City can continue, in the formation of this Plan, to meaningfully address sustainability and resiliency issues in City policy and administration.

As this process is only conducted every ten years, CEAC emphasizes the critical importance of deliberately engaging the full range of stakeholders and acknowledging the varied priorities held by the full diversity of Minneapolis residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. In CEAC's role as the environmental and sustainability advisory commission, CEAC also wants to ensure that sustainability and resiliency concepts are incorporated through each section of the Plan.

We have reviewed the draft process and offer several recommendations for clarifying Committee roles, enhancing opportunities for engaging stakeholders, and integrating sustainability and resiliency goals throughout the Plan. Our recommendations are based on the following principles:

1. **Emphasize the Plan as a policy document.** The Comprehensive Plan is a policy, rather than a technical, document. The Plan includes technical information and analyses, but is not foremost a technical document. Residents, businesses and other stakeholders should not only have substantial opportunity for input, but should deliberately be included in the decision-making roles for the formation of the draft Plan. Elected and appointed officials will, as described in statute, oversee the final approval and adoption process after the draft Plan is completed.
2. **Ensure an inclusive community engagement process.** The Plan describes the long-range desired future conditions for the City, and should reflect the full breadth of perspective held by city residents, businesses, property owners, workers, and visitors. Just ensuring opportunity for input is not enough; in the end, the process needs to demonstrate that community members from all racial and cultural groups provided direction, that the most vulnerable in our community were engaged and that their input shaped the vision of what Minneapolis should be.
3. **Emphasize cross-cutting sustainability principles and goals.** The Plan should incorporate principles of sustainability (economic, environment, and equity) across the substantive sections of the Plan. The process should ensure that cross-cutting goals shape each of the substantive sections of the Plan. Example of cross-cutting principles and goals include:
  - a. Community engagement
  - b. Resiliency
  - c. Climate change mitigation
  - d. Accessibility/mobility
  - e. Livability
  - f. Economic opportunity
  - g. Equity
  - h. Natural systems/greening

## **Recommendations and Potential CEAC Role.**

1. **Community engagement process.** We understand that a community engagement plan will be assembled in the coming months. CEAC endorses the development of a community engagement plan. Furthermore, CEAC emphasizes the importance of creating a process before the Task Forces are formed in order to inform the membership and participation on the Task Forces and other roles identified in the organizational chart.

CEAC would like the opportunity to discuss the community engagement plan as it develops, and to explore the opportunity to help shape how the community is engaged.

2. **Community representation.** The draft schedule and proposed process organizational chart described a variety of ways that input will be gathered and decisions made. The draft process includes five specific roles, each with a different place and set of decision-making or information-gathering responsibilities. The roles included:

- Steering Committee
- Technical Committee
- Core Staff Team
- Task Forces
- Community members

CEAC recommends that each of these roles, except for the Core Staff Team, include representation from the community. CEAC members have expressed interest in participating in one or more of these roles, and can bring community representation and technical expertise to the process.

3. **Task Force themes.** CEAC supports the concept of setting Task Force themes that require a cross cutting examination of the theme across Comprehensive Plan sections or elements (transportation, land use, natural resources, etc.). A task force with a theme of “storm water” will take a more narrow perspective, and one that is constrained by technical standards and meeting minimal compliance with rules, than a task force with a theme of “natural systems.” We are pleased that a number of the suggested themes from the presentation materials fit well into this cross-cutting concept, but others focused more specifically on specific technical topic.

CEAC recommends that the Task Force themes focus on cross-cutting goals or principles, as suggested in Principle 3 (previous page). Moreover, the City should strive to include a balance of technical and non-technical representation on each Task Force. CEAC members have expressed an interest in helping to define the Task Force process and the Task Force themes, particularly as those themes address sustainability, environmental justice, and resiliency.

4. **Technical Committee role and definition.** In reviewing the definition of the Technical Committee from the presentation, it seems that this committee will be tasked with interpreting content from both the Task Forces and the Steering Committee. Much of this Committee’s work product and recommendations appears to be identifying and shaping policy priorities and actions. This seems less like a technical review and more like policy interpretation. We are concerned that the prioritization process will fail to reflect the aspirational and transformative vision of the community engagement process and the Task Forces if guided primarily by technical experts. We believe that technical review is

an essential component of the process, but not the appropriate lens for policy prioritization.

CEAC recommends that the process representation on the Technical Committee have less emphasis on technical experts and more emphasis on community stakeholder representation and policy prioritization. Moreover, the name of the committee should similarly reflect its integration role. The Core Staff Team can and should provide technical guidance in guiding both Task Forces and the prioritization process. If the City believes that additional technical review is needed, we recommend that it be a separate process from the prioritization decision-making.

5. **Steering Committee membership and role.** The definition of and membership on this committee appears to be limited to elected and appointed officials and city staff. CEAC is concerned that this gives the Plan process the look of a black box where critical decisions and guiding principles are formed outside the public eye. If this committee is actually serving as the Steering Committee, it should have representation from the community; residents, businesses, non-governmental stakeholders. City staff are appropriately engaged in the process via the Core Staff Team. Planning Commission and City Council are appropriately engaged in the process in their statutorily-defined role in the approval process after the draft plan is completed. Moreover, City Council has standing subcommittees that will be likely be engaged directly in the process. Elected and appointed officials should have a place on the Steering Committee, but should not define the entire committee.

CEAC recommends that either the Steering Committee membership be changed to keep city (elected, appointed, staff) representation to no more than half the committee, or what is now defined as the Technical Committee be redefined as the primary committee for making policy recommendations (as noted above in recommendation 4).

CEAC greatly appreciates the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations on the draft Plan process. We have great confidence in the ability of city staff and officials to manage the process in a transparent, inclusive, and welcoming manner. We also gratefully acknowledge the historic and ongoing commitment that city staff and officials have made to meaningfully incorporate sustainability goals into the fabric of decision-making and planning. We respectfully request that CEAC be updated as the Comprehensive Plan process is formalized.

Sincerely,



Anna Abruzzese, Chair

cc: Councilmember Lisa Bender  
Councilmember Lisa Goodman  
Councilmember Cam Gordon  
Gayle Prest, Director of Sustainability  
Brendon Slotterback, Sustainability Program Coordinator