

Lao American Community  
Thursday July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Question 1

“How do city leader work better with neighborhood and community organizations to make access to decision making opportunities more equitable and accessible to all residents?”

This question had to be reworded work better understanding to the community too, “Do you know who the community leaders are?”- *Questions handed out seem more geared toward organizational leaders rather than regular residents.*

- *Residents don't know who represents them – their point of contact is the LAC.*
- Community go to the LAC for help
- *Residents don't feel connected to City government, although Blong Yang and Linda Higgins have come to the Center.*
  - *City leadership should spend more time with the community*
    - *Many don't show up come only when they're up for elections.*
  - Most public official don't know where the LAC is located at
- Lao Americans feel no relationship with the city government
  - *City leaders should be out the Lao community more often.*
- Many feel like city doesn't value opinion of Lao community
- Many feel like there's no relationship building
- City need to build trust in community
  - Many trust LAC
- LAC needs funding from city
  - *LAC gets overused for surveys, etc. LAC staff gets overused.*
  - City need to invest in trusted community organizations
  - In the Lao Community (LAC) there is only 3 staff members that serving 12,000 residence
- City needs to invite community members to the table
- More authentic engagement that happens away from elections possess
- Community is fragile and vulnerable.
  - City engagement is a new concept for community.
  - Trust is important to build in a community level
- All communities are diverse and culturally different
- Maintain engagement in community make them feel like there involved

- Don't simply ask people in the community to just show up to support a positions or movement
- Community comes for war-torn country
  - Some feel like they can't speak up
- Would like to have an informal discussion so community can feel welcome and value
- Follow through on commitments that are made to community
- If decision makers make an effort to understand culture it a starter
- Have other city leader acknowledge the community to spread information
- Have all city leaders get information to Lao community to keep them connected
- Community has a selected leader to provide information as an access point for communities and information's
- Knowing who community leaders are
  - Selected informal leaders
- Community leaders are lacking some literacy skill
  - *Elderly Lao residents leads lack literacy skills; new leaders need to be developed.*
  - *A grant from the City is helping develop young professionals.*
- Communication capacity building for all residents
- Not just having volunteers at the table
  - Have financial incentives so members can show up

#### Question 2

“What can city and neighborhood leaders do to help ensure that neighborhood organizations and all city boards and committees better reflect our communities?”

This question had to be reworded work better understanding to the community too, “What does the Lao community assistant center need to be a good place for the Lao community?”

- There needs to be models that works for the Lao community
- Building youth generation of Lao professionals to build and represent the community
- Support from the City of Minneapolis
  - More resources
  - Tools for Access
- If public broads and commissions are not present in the community you will not see youth Lao professionals at the table
- Would like City of Minneapolis to be more present at organizations to welcome the community
  - Always have elders and youth present in conversations for translations and interpretations

- City of Minneapolis need to understand that the Lao community have translation barriers
  - Making translation and interpretation are understandable and accurate for Lao Community
  - When translating from English to Laotian format wasn't understandable
  - Need for elder and youth from Lao community for proper translating and interpretation (tag-team)
  - Finding way for other city departments to review Lao translations before sending it out to the community
  - Professional translation services are too technical for understanding basic Laotian Language
- Promoting more communities of colors to work in city Fields
  - Providing opportunities and training to make sure access is there
  - Notify Lao community if there are city opening
- Wish Council member Blong Yang was more engaging for the Southeast Asian community
  - City Officials Leaders in city should connect with community more
  - *City Officials need to recognized leaders designated by the Lao community.*
- *Most Lao community members don't have enough knowledge to be on a City board*
  - Invite whole community so community can feel welcomed
- Have partnership with different community for outreach and communication
  - Have city/commissions leaders at events
- City need to provide a space for community (accessibilities)
  - Community would rent out temples (costly)
  - Would like space to be free ( human rights issues)
  - Difficult to celebrate culture when cost of space is expensive
  - *Some programs are open only to City residents – and the Lao community is spread out beyond the Minneapolis city limits.*
  - *The Lao community needs to be able to hold events (for free) in City parks*

### Question 3

What would get you/others more involved in the community/neighborhood organizations and in the civic life of our city?

This question couldn't be completed because of limited time. Questions 3 will be sent by email to the Lao Assistance Center

