



February 14, 2008

Robert Miller, Director  
Neighborhood Revitalization Program  
Crown Roller Mill, Suite 425  
105 Fifth Avenue South  
Minneapolis MN 55401

Re: Cedar Riverside Minneapolis NRP changes

Dear Mr. Miller:

I am writing on behalf of the West Bank Community Coalition (WBCC) Board of Directors to protest actions taken by your staff, Robert Thompson, in relation to the Cedar Riverside NRP process. We believe his actions are disrespectful of hard working neighborhood volunteers and detrimental to the democratic process in the neighborhood. We support some revision to the administrative structure of the Cedar Riverside NRP but those changes should be discussed with the WBCC and the role of any new group should be confined to needed NRP administrative duties. We respectfully request that you help us establish a meaningful, mediated discussion with Mr. Thompson about our concerns. Council Member Cam Gordon has expressed some willingness to facilitate such a discussion and we welcome his involvement.

The WBCC passed a resolution on October 17<sup>th</sup> identifying inequities in the current contract between the WBCC and the Minneapolis NRP. In the resolution, the WBCC proposed three optional arrangements for consideration and invited the Cedar Riverside NRP steering committee (NRP steering committee) to discuss these with WBCC Board members in order to arrive at a mutually agreeable alternative. Mr. Thompson was in attendance at the November 2<sup>nd</sup> NRP steering committee meeting and told the steering committee members that a contract granting full authority for administration of the NRP process in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood to the WBCC, and administration of the Cedar Riverside NRP Action Plan by the Minneapolis NRP were out of the question as far as the Minneapolis NRP was concerned. Without consultation with the WBCC, the NRP steering committee decided to pursue incorporating into an independent organization so that this new organization could contract directly with the Minneapolis NRP to implement the Cedar Riverside NRP Action Plan. WBCC board members attended the NRP steering committee's December 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting and asked Mr. Thompson and the NRP steering committee to provide the WBCC board with an explanation of their decision making process and of the Minneapolis NRP's position.

Mr. Thompson's justification of denying a reasonable contract between the WBCC and Minneapolis NRP is based on his critique of the WBCC's performance detailed in his five-page letter dated January



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15, 2008. This is an important document because it purports to provide conclusive evidence that the WBCC is unfit to administer the Cedar Riverside NRP process. We believe this critique is seriously flawed and recklessly arbitrary. We hesitate to provide an equally detailed response without the benefit of a more deliberative process but we feel compelled by the unfairness of the situation to provide a summary of its shortcomings. That summary is attached.

Our concerns:

1. The WBCC has taken measurable proactive steps to invite members of the diverse population of Cedar Riverside to the table, pro-actively reaches out to residents to keep them informed about actions that affect them, and advocates for the interests of neighborhood residents. We feel that the WBCC has done an admirable job of communicating citizen's input to the City of Minneapolis in the conduct of civic business. We intend to continue to fulfill this role and to expend our activities guided by the vision and concerns of the Cedar Riverside community. The Minneapolis NRP's refusal to work with such a representative, democratically elected neighborhood organization is a sign of a weakness in the implementation of the Minneapolis NRP.
2. Given the Minneapolis NRP's decision to contract with a new organization to administer the Cedar Riverside NRP Action Plan, we believe it would be unwise for the Minneapolis NRP to encourage this organization to expand its role in the community beyond that purpose. The current NRP steering committee is a totally unproven group of community members who have been appointed by the downtown NRP and never been elected by the Cedar Riverside community to represent their concerns. We believe that a new, competitive community organization could further fragment the neighborhood's community organizational infrastructure and would not serve the community or the City well in the long run.
3. We believe that Mr. Thompson's critique is an insult to the hard working volunteer board members that have shown tremendous leadership and fiduciary responsibility. His critique also has the potential to damage the reputation of the WBCC. We believe it is inappropriate for the Minneapolis NRP to conduct its business in a way that allows the personal arbitrary judgments of a downtown staff person to undermine the WBCC and all those who participate in the citizen engagement program through the WBCC.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. As we have said before, we want to see a timely and professional implementation of the Cedar Riverside NRP Action Plan. We also understand that there are a variety of ways that this implementation could be achieved. We do not want to see a new, competitive community organization that would further fragment the neighborhood's community organizational infrastructure. We believe having a frank and fair discussion about these issues in a timely manner is in the best interest of the Cedar Riverside community, the Minneapolis NRP, and the City of Minneapolis.

Sincerely,

Laura Silver, President

Cc Robert Thompson, NRP Staff  
Council Member Cam Gordon  
Commissioner Peter McLaughlin  
WBCC Board of Directors