The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program: An Experiment in Empowered Participatory Governance

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I   Introduction

The United States has, much more than most other developed countries, a robust tradition of local government in its cities and towns. In many of those cities – Portland, St. Paul, Dayton, Chicago, and Los Angeles to name a few – there have been in recent decades further initiatives to invite residents to participate directly in the public decision-making at the sub-local, the neighborhood, level. It is at this level that many residents encounter government at its most tangible, and thus have the motivation and knowledge to engage publicly. Neighborhood governance reforms give them the means to do so.

Within the American local government experience, the city of Minneapolis, Minnesota offers perhaps the most empowered example of citizen participation in neighborhood government. In the early 1990s, the state and city agreed to devolve some $400 million—to be spent over 20 years—to neighborhood level decision-making over priorities, planning, and projects under the rubric of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. Nowhere else in the United States has neighborhood government enjoyed such a level of control over resources.

The Minneapolis experience thus offers an ideal lens through which to examine the institutions, processes, and outcomes of public participation over sub-local issues. In the pages that follow, we will use the Minneapolis experience to examine venerable and on-going questions about the nature and consequences of participatory forms of governance. In the course of this exploration, we will analyze politics within neighborhoods – who participates and who does not? What are characteristic kinds of conflicts, and how are they resolved? Who wins and who loses? Does the participatory mode of decision-making and implementation solve problems better then centralized and hierarchical styles of governance?

But the politics of participation is never limited to the neighborhood. Any local system of participation must inevitably cope with a range of super-local forces that shape the opportunities and resources available for neighborhood decision-making. In the case of Minneapolis, neighborhoods depend upon the cooperation of city agencies to implement various projects and upon the city and state for continued financing and political authority. Importantly, decisions in city hall shape the space within which participation in neighborhoods occurs. The relationships between city and neighborhood in Minneapolis have at times been turbulent, and so we pay particular attention to this second level of political contention.

The following study begins by describing the history and institutional architecture of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program. It then describes the political dynamics between city agencies and city hall on one hand, and the neighborhoods and the office of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, on the other. We then describe the general outlines of participation, deliberation, politics and resource allocation at the neighborhood level in the NRP. Finally, we develop these general features by offering a

micro-analysis of participation and planning under the NRP in five neighborhoods that vary according to both income and diversity.

Our analysis is based on secondary literature, program evaluations, data relative to neighborhood characteristics, allocations and expenditures made available by NRP, and individual and group interviews with around fifty informants, including neighborhood volunteers and neighborhood organizations staff, the NRP director and staff, city administrators and elected representatives, selected jurisdictions participating in NRP, academics, and foundations.

II What is the Neighborhood Revitalization Program: The Program and its History

II.1 Depopulation and Neighborhood Revitalization

In the mid 1980s, suburban flight and consequent central city depopulation ranked high among the concerns of Minneapolis residents and leaders. Over the previous decade, much of the housing stock had noticeably degraded, many neighborhoods faced increasing crime and declining school quality. Some areas were blighted. In this regard, Minneapolis seemed to be following a trend of many American cities: a spatial polarization in which those with means fled to the suburbs and the poor were left behind.[1] During the 1970s alone, Minneapolis lost 14% of its population to growing suburban areas.[2] While the decay of inner-city neighborhoods was driving more and more residents to the suburbs, the downtown area of Minneapolis had significantly benefited from public and private investment.

In the meantime, citizen engagement in community planning had gained momentum as a mainstream policy approach both in national and state programs. The turbulent long decade between the 1960s to the mid 1970s reinvigorated community participation in neighborhood planning. Bottom-up protests denouncing centralized control and calls for minority empowerment combined with top-down federal pressure for "maximum feasible participation" in Community Action Programs and the War on Poverty compelled city governments to adopt initiatives that increased resident participation. These programs gave birth to thousands of neighborhood based organizations who used federal aid for development through programs such as Model Cities, revenue sharing, and housing programs.[3] Additionally, the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), introduced in 1974, channeled resources which sustained participatory planning.[4] Many of these associations continued long after the federal aid ceased, and remain one of the most important legacies of this controversial era of federal urban policy.

By the mid 1980s, many neighborhood leaders that had emerged from the flourishing of citizen engagement in the previous decades started denouncing the decline of Minneapolis inner-city neighborhoods. Their diagnosis was that public investments

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[1] Edward G. Goetz. "The Politics of Poverty Deconcentration and Housing Demolition", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol.22, No.2, 2000, pp. 157-173.

[2] Xavier de Souza Briggs and Elizabeth J. Mueller, with Mercer L. Sullivan. *From Neighborhood to Community*, New York, N.Y. : Community Development Research Center, Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy, New School for Social Research, 1997, p. 37.

[3] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, prepared by TEAMWORKS, submitted June 2000. p. 5.

[4] Susan S. Fainstein and Clifford Hirst. "Neighborhood Organizations and Community Planning: The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program", in *Revitalizing Urban Neighborhoods*, edited by W. Dennis Keating, Norman Krumholz, and Philip Star, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996, pp. 96-111.

had heavily favored downtown interests with little attention to neighborhoods' needs.[5] Investment in neighborhoods –they maintained- could not be procrastinated any longer, in the face of declining home ownership, middle class suburban exodus, increasing crime, blight, and concerns about the quality of public schools.

To address these concerns, a succession of three task forces worked from 1988 to 1990 to create a strategy to address urban decline. The first task force (Neighborhood Housing and Economic Development Task Force) reported that the city was in dire need of physical revitalization, and that the cost of it would amount roughly to $3 billion and over. The task force also suggested a new, more coordinated approach to the use of resources, which should be guided by neighborhood residents and have a duration of twenty years. The second task force (Implementation Advisory Committee) was created to devise ways to finance and implement that project. The group suggested an approach which invested all city neighborhoods dividing them into "protection areas", which were not at risk of decline and were to be preserved, "revitalization areas", which were sound, but at risk of decline, absent any intervention, and "redirection areas" which needed more urgent actions to tackle serious decline. They also recommended that the program be funded through tax-increment financing.[6] The third task force (Technical Advisory Committee) stressed the importance of inter-agency coordination and developed the governance and administrative structure of the Program.

In 1990, The Minnesota Legislature and the City Council translated these ideas into law and policy that established the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. They financed the program at a level of $20 million a year for a period of twenty years, using tax increment funds. The Program was divided in Phase I, for its first decade, and Phase II, for the second one. Clearly, $400 million is a very modest amount when compared to the $3 billion that were needed to revitalize Minneapolis. However, NRP financing was intended to be *seed money* to create neighborhood capacity and opportunities to

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[5] Like other cities, residential and commercial interests came into conflict in Minneapolis. In the 1950s, commercial interests largely controlled the redevelopment agenda through the "Downtown Council"—an "elite group of businessmen [...] with minimal input from neighborhood residents and civic organizations." (Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, p. 99.) This pattern changed in the 1960s with federal requirements for increased public participation, and the 1974 CDBG prompted the formation of district advisory councils. These councils' advocacy provoked a stark reaction from commercial interests and some politicians who reduced the budget for citizens' participation and deprived the councils of their advisory functions.

[6] Generally, tax-increment financing uses additional tax revenues generated by development projects to fund further development. The initial projects are funded through the issuance of bonds, which are repaid by the additional tax revenue generated by development. Any difference between the tax revenue increase thus obtained and the amount needed for debt service could be used to finance other development – including NRP projects. In our case, tax-increment resources went to a fund called "Common Project", administered by the former Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), which has recently been replaced by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED). Common Project resources fund both NRP and MCDA –now CPED- initiatives. (For an explanation of how tax-increment financing was used for funding NRP projects, see Susan S. Fainstein, Clifford Hirst, and Judith Tennebaum. *An Evaluation of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program*, Center for Urban Policy Research Policy Report No. 12, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers-The State University of New Jersey, January 9, 1995, pp.16-17. For a more general discussion on tax-increment financing and its implications, see Kenneth A. Kritz, "Tax Increment Financing: Its Effect on Local Government Finances", *University of Minnesota CURA Reporter*, Vol. 33, No. 2, Summer 2003.)

coordinate city departments and agencies so as to optimize the use of resources in tune with neighborhood needs. The program made resources available to Minneapolis' neighborhoods which differed greatly for size of population, income level, racial composition and needs, and were divided in three categories: "protection", "revitalization," and "redirection".[7]

The central logic of the NRP's design was to accomplish a primary *substantive* objective—revitalizing neighborhoods in order to stem and reverse the residential exodus by making *"the city's residential areas better places to live, work, learn and play"*[8]—through the *procedural* innovation of empowering residents of neighborhoods to set local priorities, design projects, and implement them. Planning should shift from centralized agencies to decentralized neighborhood associations, and associations should be given resources and authority to meet the challenges of reversing residential decline. The success of this participatory process, however, would depend upon meeting many other challenges along the way. In particular, residents would have to be mobilized, associations would have to develop planning capacities, and city agencies would have to create new ways of working with empowered neighborhood associations.

II.2   NRP Today

Today, NRP stands as a rare example of co-production and co-governance, where citizens participate in service delivery and in the governance of various neighborhood-level development activities. Due in part to the NRP, housing stock in Minneapolis has considerably improved. Coincident with the operation of NRP—though causality is difficult to untangle—property values have increased, many neighborhoods are in a much better shape than they were in 1980s, the residential exodus has slowed, and resident organizations have become much more capable.

But the Program has also faced some challenges and come under criticism on several fronts. At this writing, several especially important issues have emerged in the debate about whether and how the second ten years of NRP ought to differ from its first half.

First, NRP is often criticized for its lack of inclusiveness. In many neighborhoods, it has been difficult to involve racial and ethnic minority residents, new immigrants, and renters (as opposed to homeowners) in NRP-related activities. Importantly, one should consider that NRP was confronted with the challenges of an unprecedented demographic shift. Between 1990 and 2000, Minneapolis residents became more African-American, Hispanic, and Asian. The percentage of the city's population that was African-American increased 43.5%, Asians increased by 51%, while Hispanics increased 269%! Meanwhile the white population decreased by 13% (from 78% of the city's residents in 1990 to only

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[7] Neighborhoods self-selected in which category they belonged, therefore it may have happened that neighborhoods with very similar characteristics ended up in different groups.
[8] NRP Primer.

65% in 2000). These patterns are summarized in table 1 below. These changes increased the priority of affordable housing and minority inclusion on the public agenda, and NRP suffered substantial criticism for falling short on these goals. However, these objectives did not figure largely in the initial conceptualization of the neighborhood planning institution, and so it is perhaps not surprising that NRP did not excel on these fronts.

Table 1: Minneapolis Demographics, 1990-2000

Race/Ethnicity	Population 1990	Population 2000	1990-2000 Change	1990-2000 % change	Percent 1990	Percent 2000
White	288,967	249,186	-39,781	-13.8%	78.4%	65.1%
Black/ African American	47,948	68,818	20,870	43.5%	13.0%	18.0%
American Indian	12,335	8,378	-3,957	-32.1%	3.3%	2.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15,723	23,744	8,021	51.0%	4.3%	6.2%
Other Race	3,410	15,798	12,388	363.3%	0.9%	4.1%
Two or more races (2000 only)	n/a	16,694	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.4%
TOTAL	368,383	382,618	14,235	3.9%	100.0%	100.0%
Hispanic Ethnicity	7,900	29,175	21,275	269.3%	2.1%	7.6%

The second concern regards neighborhood autonomy. In Phase I, neighborhoods enjoyed wide discretion in allocating their resources. The main constraint, given that the Program was introduced principally to improve Minneapolis' housing stock, was that 52.5% of all NRP resources be allocated to housing projects. This constraint applied to the Program as a whole rather than to individual neighborhoods. Particular neighborhoods could spend more or less than that percentage, so long as all neighborhood allocations together exceeded the target. Therefore neighborhoods where not required to individually follow the 52.5% rule if they wanted to allocate their resources differently.

Initially, NRP funds came with virtually no strings attached. This structure led to a large variety of projects that ranged from loans for home improvement to renovation of parks and playgrounds, from improved lighting and streetscaping to restoration of libraries and schools, from clean-ups of gardens and lakes to tree planting. Neighborhoods have done an impressive job at mobilizing resources to implement their plans. NRP funds served as catalyst of additional resources from the various city departments, from schools, libraries and parks and from foundations. Furthermore, neighborhood residents contributed substantially with in-kind resources -like their volunteer work- for implementing plans.

But this wide local discretion conflicted with the priorities of various city-wide interests. In particular, NRP has suffered criticism for failing to address the shortage of affordable housing, to provide greater support to police, and for being inattentive to commercial redevelopment. Many NRP detractors have attacked neighborhoods for occasionally funding "futile" projects, diverting resources that could be used for more urgent projects. Furthermore, NRP failed to meet its own benchmark for housing investment. As a result of these criticisms and subsequent political pressures, neighborhood autonomy around public spending has been gradually curtailed. Some of

these constraints appear in the form of special funds for specific priorities. In July 2000, for example, NRP created two reserve funds of $16 million and $4 million to support projects in affordable housing and commercial corridors. Other constraints impose direct requirements on neighborhood Action Plans. In their Phase II plans, for example, each neighborhood is strongly encouraged to allocate 70% of resources to housing, to ensure that the 52.5% threshold for housing investment in the original legislation is met.

The third major issue concerns public revenue declines. Changes in tax law significantly reduced the yield of tax-increment funds and so resources have fallen far short of the projected $200 million in the second decade of NRP. Furthermore, Minneapolis is in the midst of a financial crisis which led to painful budget cuts. Some have argued that the funds dedicated to NRP should instead be channeled to support other lines in the city budget. As a result of the political negotiations taken in this context, NRP will be funded at a rate that is substantially lower that the originally promised $20 million per year. In April 2004, the NRP central office disclosed that the allocations for Phase II would amount to approximately $41 million, a fraction of the $180 million allocated to neighborhoods during Phase I.[9] Not only have resources been reduced drastically, but neighborhoods cannot spend more than 70% of them for the first three years after they entered Phase II, as a measure to protect neighborhoods which will be ready for Phase II in a later moment, in case more resources are needed.

Neighborhoods have mobilized to protect the original Phase II funding, and many resident activists complain about the resource reductions. Most, however, seem to have accepted the result as a reasonable outcome given the city's dire financial situation. Some interviewed residents, however, commented that resources were slashed to push back neighborhood empowerment and lay the ground for going back to the pre-NRP status, where residents did not have much say in city planning.

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[9] It was also lower than the $130 million that many in the neighborhoods had come to expect after the various news about revenue shortfalls had become public.

III   NRP's Institutional Design

III.1 Governance and Administration

The institutional structure of the NRP illustrates how even the most local of participatory programs in complex societies involve many layers of supra-local and centralized structure. As we have mentioned, the NRP is a creature of state law, which itself resulted from political and organizational interests that were constituted at the city-wide level. Neighborhood planning and infrastructure projects, furthermore, inevitably implicate city-wide authorities and departments. In light of these considerations, it is unsurprising that NRP is itself governed and operated through a variety of centralized mechanisms. The NRP is composed of five governing jurisdictions: the City of Minneapolis, Minneapolis Public Schools, Hennepin County, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and Minneapolis Public Library. Representatives from these jurisdictions, together with neighborhood representatives, foundations, labor and business representatives, city councilors and the State Legislature form the Policy Board, which is NRP's governing body.[10] The Policy Board provides direction to the Program and must approve all neighborhood action plans.

The board meets every month to discuss not only action plans, but also plan modification, major re-allocations of resources, and the creation of special dedicated funds, in other words, all decisions that shape NRP's policies. The Policy Board had a rocky start because of conflict between elected officials and neighborhood representatives elected by much smaller constituencies. In addition, "*each of the participating jurisdictions was concerned not to relinquish its autonomy to a body it could not control.*"[11]

The board is the most important decision making body in the program, where the views of all the jurisdictions and interest groups involved in NRP converge -and often clash- to shape NRP's policy decisions. It is during Policy Board meetings that tensions among the different bodies are played out, that neighborhood representatives defend their autonomy in planning against centralizing forces, and the real debate on action plans occurs. Although the final step for plan adoption and fund appropriation occurs at the city council, it is at the board level that the participating jurisdictions evaluate plans, and decide to approve them or send them back for modifications. As a representative from the city put it, "*the city council appropriates the money, and is ultimately responsible to tax payers, therefore the city council approves the neighborhood plans, but most of analysis work is done at the policy board level: once plans get to the city council, they are generally approved.*"

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[10] In 2004, the board included appointed representatives from the governing jurisdictions, a Minnesota House delegation, city council representatives and Minneapolis mayor, community representatives from the neighborhoods, the Minneapolis Foundation, the Greater Twin Cities United Way, the Urban Coalition, the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Minneapolis Central Labor Union.

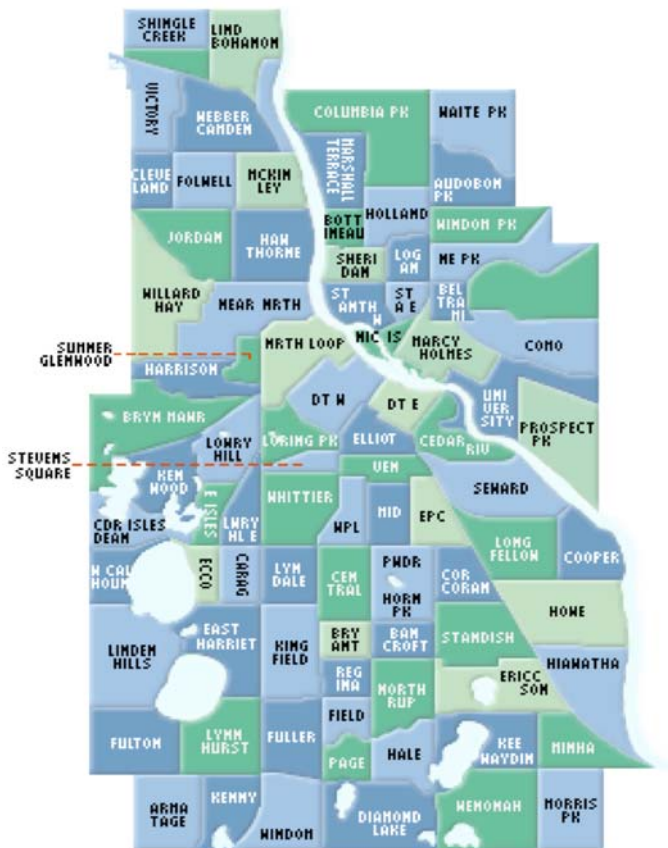[11] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, p. 102.

In addition to the Policy Board, NRP also includes a Management Review Team. Formed by senior managers from the five jurisdictions, the Management Review Team oversees staff involvement, reviews neighborhood action plans –which are eventually approved by the Policy Board- and ensures their implementation.

Operationally, the NRP office is staffed with a Director and ten staff members. Most of the staffs are neighborhood specialists, or liaisons to a certain number of neighborhoods. Neighborhood specialists are NRP's interface with neighborhoods. They have a deep knowledge of the problems and issues of the neighborhoods they are assigned to, participate in many of their meetings, ensure that neighborhood NRP works proceed correctly, and provide assistance and facilitation when needed. As with almost any administrative organization, the staff of NRP has come to have deep interests in the program and its continuation. Interestingly, the decision to have a robust central office to NRP has served not only administrative purposes, but also political ones. The NRP central office is one of the most effective sites of advocacy for neighborhood planning and empowerment. Its Director, Robert Miller, is one of the most knowledgeable and articulate voices for decentralized, participatory planning and development in the city.

III.2 Neighborhood Associations

Beneath these layers of governance, administration, and resource allocation are the neighborhood associations that lie at the heart of NRP. All of Minneapolis neighborhoods (see map) participate in NRP. Some of the original eighty-one neighborhoods combined with one another to create consolidated associations. Now, sixty-seven neighborhood associations, covering the entire city, are active in NRP.

The lion's share of NRP planning activity occurs through these neighborhood associations. In order to participate, they must be incorporated non-profit organizations (501c(3) under the US tax code). They all have elected governing boards, hold periodic general assemblies open to the entire neighborhood, and conduct much of their work through sub-committees. These

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neighborhood associations manage the sub-local processes of interest articulation and deliberation. They also develop projects, coordinate residents' volunteer work to prepare "Neighborhood Action Plans" that articulate neighborhood priorities and development activities and negotiate with city agencies on the details of their implementation.

In order to participate in NRP, neighborhood organizations must themselves be governed by a board elected in neighborhood-wide elections. Each neighborhood organization must also prepare a Participation Agreement. These agreements between neighborhood associations and the NRP office specify how the association intends to maximally include and involve residents in the development and approval of its plan. Generally the agreement describes the modalities of election of an NRP steering committee to oversee the planning process and the mechanisms that the association will use to publicize its activities and recruit residents to participate. Participation Agreements usually include a description of the strategies that associations plan to use -such as surveys, focus groups, and meetings—to solicit the opinions of residents and to inform them of NRP developments. Although NRP provides guidelines and NRP specialists assist neighborhoods in the preparation of the document, neighborhoods have wide latitude in choosing how to ensure participation. These agreements are approved by neighborhood association boards but also require the NRP Policy Board's approval.

Participation Agreements were introduced to diversify participation and control of neighborhood associations beyond the circle of "usual suspects" - the familiar neighborhood leaders and activists- and that resources be allocated on the basis of the self interest of those who participate the most. At the beginning, NRP was under the leadership of an African American director who placed great emphasis in community participation and the need to avoid exclusion patterns. When the current director took over, in 1992, participation requirements where somehow relaxed to expedite the planning process–neighborhoods needed to make just a "good faith effort" to involve all residents. Since 1994, however, NRP has been issuing guidelines and providing assistance to neighbors in preparing their participation agreements.

 In many of our interviews, observers agreed that participation from particular groups such as minorities, renters, absentee property owners, seniors and young people— is commonly low. In nearly every case, however, this biased participation seems to result not from deliberate efforts of some (e.g. homeowners) to exclude others (e.g. renters) but rather from other factors such as lack of resources, low interest, and cultural barriers. Participation Agreements aim to redress these deficiencies in two ways. First, they compel neighborhood organizations to be more reflective and inventive regarding strategies of outreach and recruitment. Second, they constitute a channel through which various kinds of centralized expertise, for example advice from neighborhood specialists, regarding inclusion can be incorporated into neighborhood association activities. According to many informants, those serving in neighborhood associations frequently lacked skills to design effective strategies for community engagement. Some argue that, had NRP provided more leadership and guidance since the Program's inception, the circle of inclusion might have been widened. Overtime, NRP has improved its guidance role; the increase of attention to the extent of participation does seem to have induced many neighborhood associations to adopt additional mechanisms to stimulate feedback

and participation from residents, such as targeted door knockings, meetings, and focus groups to hear from residents who would probably not return surveys. Only time will tell, however, how far these measures can increase participation among groups that have proven very difficult to mobilize in other political contexts.

III.3   Neighborhood Action Plans

The core decision-making activity of neighborhood associations revolves around the formulation of Neighborhood Action Plans. These action plans lay out the neighborhood's priorities and specify the development projects that will be financed in whole or in part with NRP funds. The neighborhood action planning process includes stages of outreach and information-gathering, drafting, plan revision and approval, and implementation.

In the first part of the planning process, individuals in a neighborhood association gather information about the concerns and priorities among neighborhood residents at large. In other words they define "the issues of local importance" to later mobilize residents to act on these issues.[12] Particular steps are laid out in the association's Participation Agreement with NRP. Typically, neighborhood organizations mail surveys to residents. The response rate varies neighborhood by neighborhood, and often this method leads to a self-selection problem where only the most civic and socially active respond. Some neighborhoods also conduct door to door surveys to have a broader feedback. Many organize focus groups to solicit input from demographic groups who are likely to be otherwise under-represented, such as renters, minority groups, seniors, youth, or groups that have very specific interests such as business owners and minority business owners.

Plan drafting follows this open process of assessing priorities. Each neighborhood elects an NRP Steering Committee. This committee draws upon the collected data to distill the neighborhood priorities that the plan should address. The process continues with the actual preparation of the Neighborhood Action Plan, a document that details what are the neighborhood priorities and vision, and lists concrete "actions" to be taken, attaching to each action the expected costs, and what funding will be used for covering them (generally NRP funding, leveraging of other resources, and volunteer work). Action plans vary greatly, some are very lengthy and detailed, while others are more concise documents. Also the planning time differs neighborhood by neighborhood, with some that prepared their plans in little over a year, and others for whom it took over five years, with the average time between the starting on the planning process and the adoption of the plan by city council being 3.2 years.[13]

The planning is lengthy not just due to the gathering and processing of information, but also because the NRP steering committee is composed of volunteer

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[12] Michael R. Williams. *Neighborhood Organizations-Seeds of a New Urban Life*, Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1985, p. 114.
[13] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p. 44.

neighbors who have different backgrounds and varying levels of expertise. Generally, residents must master city standards relevant to their projects—for example details such as the accepted height of light poles and the safety rules for playground equipment. They also need to negotiate with the city departments or other government bodies that will carry out the projects, for example the Department of Public Works, or Minneapolis Public Schools, for project design and implementation. Finally, since NRP resources constitute the seed money for leveraging more funds, neighborhood planners frequently seek funders with whom they negotiate contributions to projects. These challenges, together with the demands of volunteer effort and the need to generate consensus, have made the planning process a long one in many neighborhoods.

After a plan is drafted by a committee –generally the NRP Steering Committee- it must be ratified in a general assembly involving the whole neighborhood. Pending such approval, the plan then goes to the NRP's Management Review Team –a body that includes representatives of the five participating jurisdictions[14]- for an initial analysis of its feasibility. At this stage, the plan is amended to make projects consistent with technical and administrative requirements. After these hurdles, the NRP's Policy Board must review and approve Neighborhood Action Plans. Finally, the Minneapolis City Council must also adopt the plan and appropriate resources.

The projects contained in Neighborhood Action Plans are often implemented by city departments or by some of the jurisdictions governing NRP. In many instances, project implementation requires collaboration among government bodies, as in the case of Minneapolis Public Schools and Minneapolis Park Board, which cooperated in numerous projects involving school facilities and adjacent parks. In other cases, neighborhoods find private contractors to implement projects, as in the case of architectural plans, which are contracted to private firms.

The role of neighborhood residents does not end with the action plan approval, as neighbors stay involved also during implementation. First, neighborhood organizations include several committees reflecting the priority areas around which the action plan revolves. For example, the housing or the public safety committees oversee projects in their areas. Second, in many cases, in order to maximize NRP resources and abate project costs, residents offer their volunteer labor to carry out projects. It is often the case that neighbors volunteer for street or park clean-ups, for public events, for the extension of opening hours of public facilities or for resident patrols, to name a few. Volunteering not only contributes to a part of project costs, but also provides and opportunity for community building as it is often planned as an event to involve many more residents than those who participate in either planning processes or other intensive activities of their neighborhood association.

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[14] See section: III.1 Governance and Administration, above.

IV   Neighborhoods and the City

Proponents of participation have argued that "*there is no better way to ensure the long-term success of public involvement than to institutionalize a decision-making role for that involvement.*"[15] The design of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program institutionalizes the role of neighborhoods in public decision-making for a twenty year period and relies on a host of interactions between individual neighborhoods and various city-wide entities with the objectives of increasing collaboration among government agencies and improving public service delivery. This layer of interactions between neighborhood organizations and city importantly structures the possibilities and limitations of sub-local, neighborhood, empowerment and action. It is here-at the interface between city and neighborhood, then, where we begin our analysis of the dynamics of contention and explore the future of citizen involvement after the completion of the Program, in 2009.

IV.1   *The Interaction between the Neighborhoods and the City Departments*

NRP is a case in which residents, through neighborhood associations, team up with their local government in the co-production and co-governance of services. Neighborhoods work with city agencies to "shape the nature and outcomes of services"[16] by taking on important responsibilities, from their design to implementation.

The vast majority of projects in Neighborhood Action Plans depend upon coordination with, and cooperation from, various jurisdictions and departments, such as the Minneapolis Park Board, Public Schools, and the Department of Public Works. Indeed, one aim of NRP was to enhance coordination among these departments and between them and the neighborhoods. But when characterize their relationships with city departments, residents generally answered that responsiveness depended upon particular personalities and individual officials, rather than on the operating procedures of policies of this or that agency. As an organizational matter, they were generally unable to name a department or agency that was more cooperative than others, or that had adopted specific policies to incorporate neighborhood planning into their routines. Residents felt that the level of openness and collaboration depended not on specific policies adopted by the various departments, but on the responsiveness and good will of the staff they worked with case by case. Some department staff were committed to working with neighborhoods and recognized the value of collaboration; "*citizens have learned a lot more about local government, and local government has learned about citizens and how*

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[15] John Clayton Thomas. *Public Participation in Public Decisions*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995, p.163.
[16] Thomas, 1995, p. 156.

to listen to them", one department staff told us. Others see it as an unnecessary burden added on top of their normal tasks, and make the interaction more difficult. "*I don't get a bigger paycheck for working with neighborhoods*", is what a resident was told by a city official with whom she was working to implement an action plan strategy.

Some residents developed very good relations with forthcoming staff members of city departments, but others received much cooler treatment and had to struggle through project implementation because of limited cooperation from the other side. More than one neighbor pointed out that the higher up you go in an agency's hierarchical ladder, the more you are going to find "*political*" interlocutors who are more hostile to working with neighborhoods.

When they constructed positive relationships, residents found it quite useful to have a "contact" officer whom they could call in case a problem arises in the implementation of some strategy. Being able to "pick up the phone" and call someone they know in the agency was preferable to standard "bureaucratic" channels. Residents treasure the relationships they were able to build with certain officers as a very important outcome of NRP -an emblem of the program's "non-bureaucratic" approach- and are proud of the outcomes of this collaboration, be they a new school, a cleaner lake, or improved street lighting.

Besides the actual outcomes of this collaboration, residents appreciate the symbolic value of allowing them to have "a seat at the table" where decisions are made, so that the neighborhood perspective is incorporated in service delivery and public works. Many long time activists felt that NRP leveled the relationship between neighborhood associations and city agencies – that the associations had become *partners in local development*, not merely advocates for citizens demanding that the city deliver.

It is important to note, however, that the relationship between agencies and neighborhood, and in particular the neighborhoods' "seat at the table," result from the resources that they control rather than from reform of city agencies. City agencies have joined as partners and co-investors in many development projects, and abided by the wishes of residents in many others, because neighborhood associations control resources that enable those agencies to complete projects that they could not by themselves implement. The negotiating power of associations depends directly upon the resources they control. A reduction in those resources would likely also reduce the voice of neighborhood residents in city planning decisions.

There is no consensus, however, that such voice is on balance desirable. Some officials feel that the neighborhoods have become "*over-empowered*" as a result of NRP. Instead of addressing their concerns to traditional bodies such as the city council, many residents seek solutions through their neighborhood associations. Such a sub-local focus may make some areas of politics more parochial and less focused on issues and challenges facing the larger city.

IV.2   The "City" and the Neighborhoods

Beyond such administrative negotiations and skirmishes, there is a larger debate regarding the appropriate *locus* of development decision-making in Minneapolis. Simply put, some proponents favor a decentralized and participatory track, represented by the NRP, while others favor the more centralized and professionalized track that was in place prior to the NRP and which operates in most large and medium sized cities in the U.S.

On the city side, we received opinions that ranged from enthusiastically endorsing a central place for neighborhoods to more tepid approaches that favored limiting citizen involvement. For obvious reasons, no elected official would ever overtly oppose neighborhood planning and participation, however, some of our interlocutors seemed more supportive of it, while others favored it only with a long list of *caveats.*

Some see NRP as a very promising experiment because it "*adds a level of realism to address problems in the neighborhood,*" as a city official said, and would like to maintain and improve neighborhood engagement. Besides the importance of neighbors' opinion in developing projects, "*by involving the people, neighborhoods buy in, and you create a positive spin-off of involved and informed citizens*" that has useful repercussions in other aspects of neighborhood life. Finally, a positive interaction between city departments and citizens builds a "*civic infrastructure*" and trust that enables future collaboration that the city should work to preserve.

Others, however, fear that the neighborhood approach generates parochial outcomes and interests. Some policies need the *vision d'ensemble* promised by a more centralized approach. Besides the belief that the city "*knows better*" how to tackle certain public policy problems, some would like to limit neighborhood powers because of the lack of citizen participation in some neighborhoods. Inevitably, when dealing with neighborhood groups, the "representativeness issue" emerges of "*who does this group of people really speak for.*"[17] Many pointed to the possibility of homeowner domination of neighborhood associations as a reason to limit the decentralized track in favor of a more centralized one that relies upon political representation through broad elected bodies such as the city council. On the other hand, another city official pointed out that lack of participation is often cited as NRP's Achilles heel, but that blaming neighborhoods for it is the equivalent of "*holding neighborhoods accountable to a standard that no one else is accountable to*" because participation in other kinds of politics is also biased in favor of homeowners and other high-status people.[18]

It seems that many on the city council and elsewhere have begun to favor the centralized track. More than one interlocutor opined that the neighborhoods had become "*over-empowered.*" Having gained resources and developed political and planning capacities, neighborhood activists are more vocal and influential; many residents became

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[17] John Clayton Thomas. *Between Citizen and the City*, Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1986, p.97.

[18] More broadly, Thomas identifies four administrative disadvantages in community involvement: 1. unpleasant antagonism; 2. interference with professional judgments; 3. increased dollar costs; and 4. costly delays. See Thomas, 1986, pp. 101-102.

more informed and demanding citizens, and neighborhoods are generally protective of their powers and fear that the city may curtail them. More than one interlocutor suggested that some city officials resent this kind of empowerment and so would like to reduce neighborhood prerogatives.

Regarding the decentralized track, some activists have looked beyond the problems of their own neighborhoods to advocate for the structure of neighborhood planning more generally. More than one resident, for example, expressed dissatisfaction with the current mayor, whom they feel campaigned on a pro-neighborhood platform but, after being elected, reduced support to neighborhoods. Numerous neighbors look forward to the next election cycle as an opportunity to advance the track of decentralized planning. In November 2003, when the city council was debating the parameter of NRP's second phase, neighborhoods organized a lobbying effort in which some 12,000 post cards were sent to city councilors who opposed the program to convince them to switch sides. Some neighborhoods even promoted an attempt, which was eventually aborted, to transform NRP into a permanent program and insert its funding in the city budget. This level of organization might be something that the original planners of NRP had underestimated, and that the city is now afraid of. As an interlocutor from the local public administration put it, "*we really empowered neighborhoods, now they have a political will, and people in city hall may feel uncomfortable with that.*"

Overall, Phase II resources have been drastically reduced as a result of a 2001 Minnesota tax reform which considerably diminished the amount of resources going to tax increment financing. Additionally, the current crisis of Minneapolis' finances prompted the city to try to regain control over its resources. In this climate, some have attacked NRP because it dilutes much needed resources by providing them also to wealthy neighborhoods. In 2003, the NRP Policy Board passed a resolution dedicating $1million of its Phase II resources to community-based policing projects. Many residents were outraged when they found out that their NRP funding was used to pay for police, and saw this as yet another move from the city to carve out resources from NRP's budget to pay for its own expenses. As a department staff suggested, "*there is an administrative cost when you create an individual approach versus a centralized one*", and the current financial situation is certainly not a favorable environment for additional administrative costs.

More than one interlocutor suggested that, with NRP, neighborhoods play such a pivotal role in planning and implementation that "*city councilors see they don't get credit for making this happen.*" A resident commented that since "*NRP is not sexy, it's not fun [...] politicians don't get much direct return from it.*" One political vulnerability of NRP may be that it is difficult for politicians to gain electoral benefits from supporting NRP or making it work well.

Several neighborhood activists and agency officials felt that city departments lack strong incentives to work with neighborhoods or create policies to integrate neighborhood participation and voice into their service delivery practices. As mentioned

above, the main incentives are monetary.[19] One strength of NRP is its non-bureaucratic approach that does not define clearly how neighborhoods are to cooperate with city departments and thus leaves space for creative forms of collaboration. However, in some instances, this vagueness was a drawback for neighborhoods that would have benefited from more stringent guidelines on how departments should interact with them. Early research confirms that, in the absence of a clear mandate, NRP did not succeed in changing the practices of "*bureaucrats [who] intensely dislike changing their routines of yielding their exclusive control of information.*"[20] NRP did not contain specific requirements for involved jurisdictions or city agencies to adopt new procedures nor did it set changes in their budgetary processes. In other words, "*nothing in the legal framework of the NRP positively bound these agencies to give priority to the neighborhood plans not even to act on them at all.*"[21] Since so many of NRP's outcomes depend on the collaboration between the city and the neighborhoods, this relationship might have been better specified in the mechanics of the program rather than being left - case by case- to the good will of those interacting. As research on other cities that adopted models of participatory democracy shows, systems of incentives and sanctions for administrators are essential because "*In the absence of proper incentives and sanctions, agency managers are the "losers" when citizen participation systems succeed*".[22] According to Fainstein and Hirst, agencies would have changed behavior only under the pressure of "*statutory authority […] for revised budgeting processes that would take into account territorial units, for assignment of personnel to places rather than functions, and for job descriptions and incentives that would mandate service to neighborhoods.*"[23]

IV.3   Institutional Power Dynamics (MCDA vs. NRP Model)

The relationship between the former Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA), now Community Planning and Economic Development Agency (CPED), and NRP also manifests this tension between a decentralized, participatory approach to development and a more centralized one.

CPED was created in 2003 as an effort to combine the city's planning and development activities into a single agency. Besides the former MCDA, CPED also includes the Planning Department, the Empowerment Zone office, and the Minneapolis Employment and Training Program. CPED is responsible for planning, housing and economic policy and development, and maintains strategic partnerships that advance

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[19] Under NRP, $5.7 million were allocated to the school district for school-related projects in collaboration with neighborhood planning.

[20] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, p.107.

[21] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, p.102.

[22] Jeffrey M. Berry, Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thomson. *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1993, p. 295.

[23] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, p.107.

community development–including providing technical and financial support to neighborhood organizations and NRP.

Prior to the establishment of NRP, MCDA operated a program for neighborhood engagement. Its Citizen Participation Program, in fact, predates NRP by more than a decade and provides some funding to neighborhood organizations to provide input to MCDA. Its funding for the fiscal year 2003-2004 amounted to roughly $450,000, of which around $350,000 were community development block grant funds. Under this program, MCDA entered into contracts with neighborhood organizations that served as *bridges* between the community and MCDA development projects. MCDA, by contract, had to provide neighborhood organizations with information on possible projects at least 45 days before the activity was presented to the MCDA board, or to city council, to allow neighborhoods to present the projects to residents in meetings or forums, gather neighborhood feedback, and comment on the project. Although neighborhoods did not appear to have a veto power under the program, they were still very involved in MCDA planning. Thanks to this involvement, "*city development projects look better and work better,*" one city official commented. Even though the Citizen Participation Program is still in place, its future is uncertain, and the current contracts with the neighborhoods were extended until the end of the calendar year to allow the city some more time to decide on if and how to maintain the program.

In one way, CPED and NRP represent the two contrary views of how city development can be addressed. Although MCDA and now CPED solicit neighborhood participation in planning and development, they involve neighborhoods more at an *advisory* level, as opposed to NRP, where *communities decide* how to actually allocate resources. Furthermore, CPED is a structured city department, accountable to the city council, whereas NPR was conceived as a light-structured experiment to facilitate a new –non-bureaucratic- interaction between city departments and neighborhoods. Additionally, MCDA and the current CPED have very defined guidelines on resource spending, whereas NRP was allowed ample flexibility. Finally, while MCDA is identified as the artificer of the successful development of Downtown Minneapolis, NRP was created to spread the benefits of downtown returns to help neighborhood development. Although some of MCDA directors favored the creation of NRP, " *it was perceived that the agency [MCDA] was wholly focused on downtown improvements, to the exclusion of the neighborhoods […] With neighborhoods controlling funds and articulating their own priorities, MCDA would be faced with the need to raise its level of responsiveness.*"[24] In talking to many residents it emerged that CPED is still perceived as "the city", in other words the centralized and bureaucratic approach that neighborhoods have to confront, rather than collaborate with.

All the factors described above –from structural to cultural ones- limited MCDA's ability to change in response to NRP.[25] Although MCDA and NRP frequently collaborate–especially on issues of home improvement financing and commercial

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[24] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000. p.125.
[25] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000. p.127-129.

revitalization—many observers still perceive the two entities as antagonists. Furthermore, the fact that both MCDA and the current CPED and NRP draw their resources from tax increment funding –though TIF is just a portion of CPED funding—has created a measure of competition over resources. When a management consulting firm recommended in 2002 that the city fold some functions of NRP's into MCDA, many felt that the centralized development track was ascendant. As one observer from a city department put it, neighborhood participation "*is not a priority*" for the city.

Despite the dynamics involving neighborhoods and the city, NRP has generated a tremendous amount of neighborhood empowerment. This aspect is likely to play a decisive role in determining the future of neighborhood participation *after* the completion of NRP. Depending on the level of empowerment that neighborhoods reach by the end of the Program, they will be able –or not- to mobilize politically and create pressure to preserve citizen participation in planning. The section below analyzes how neighborhood empowerment developed and the role it will likely play in city politics.

IV.4   *Neighborhood Empowerment*

In Minneapolis, the key to neighborhood empowerment is NRP's delegation of the power to design plans and its allocation of resources to neighborhoods to implement them. As research suggests, support from the city is fundamental to solve the collective action problem that afflicts most neighborhoods, since "*the greatest difficulty neighborhoods in local politics face in influencing city hall is simply getting organized in the first place.*"[26] By supporting local organizations across the city and creating an institutionalized space for neighborhoods to participate in planning and resource allocation, NRP laid the building blocks of community empowerment.

For the first time, neighbors felt they had *real* power in planning because they could not only design projects for their neighborhoods, but also use resources to execute them. The fact that NRP made resources available rendered the program "credible" to residents' eyes, and served as a magnet for participation. Many neighbors suggested that they would not have invested so much time and energy in NRP had they not had the power to decide on resource allocation. As a volunteer said, "*residents would not have participated this much if there hadn't been money involved.*"

Resources also gave residents unprecedented power vis-à-vis city departments. Although also prior to NRP neighborhoods were consulted in city planning through the Citizen Participation Program, several residents were doubtful of citizen involvement where people merely formulate recommendations that "*may end up on a shelf*". In the case of NRP, instead, "*when it [NRP] gives this pool of funds to neighborhoods, the neighborhoods feel empowered. They feel as if they have a voice at the table. Whereas they might have always had a voice, it's just that money speaks louder.*" For the first

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[26] Berry et al., 1993, p. 287.

time, neighborhoods could negotiate with agencies and jurisdictions on projects in which they co-invested as "partners".

During their involvement in NRP, residents acquire a variety of skills -from technical to leadership ones- that are needed to advance their neighborhood plans. Citizens learn how to interact with city departments in articulating projects that require the collaboration of more than one department or jurisdictions. They also need to be creative in thinking how to by-pass city regulations that may block their strategies and how to best leverage their NRP resources.

NRP created a strong sense of entitlement in neighborhoods precisely because neighbors dedicated many hours of volunteer effort to NRP activities and used their NRP resources to fund projects. In a way, NRP developed a sense of *neighborhood ownership* in residents, who now identify with the areas they live in. As a matter of fact, many neighborhoods funded street signs and insignia to identify their area and differentiate it from the neighboring ones. For residents, signs are a manifestation of pride for what they accomplished through NRP; especially in areas that used to be very dilapidated, residents are keen to replace the previous bad reputation with a new, more positive identity. Some, however, consider these neighborhood pride insignia as an emblem of the level of parochialism engendered by NRP.[27]

There are several facets to neighborhood empowerment, both at the collective and individual level.

First, at the collective level, "*the strength of the program is that is requires a long term ongoing dialogue among residents*", as a volunteer suggested. The fact that residents work together strengthens their ties, generating cohesive groups of citizens that can organize and mobilize to advance their priorities. Examples of this are the plans that neighborhoods present to prospective developers and the city to illustrate how they want possible development to occur in the area. As a resident described, "*now that we have that structure of skills and experience […] I think we can challenge ourselves, I think the system's ready to become more proactive and more integrated with the planning and implementation aspects of getting projects done […] I think we should work with the city now to take our little mini plans and bring them together with the city plans.*" These plans, unlike the NRP action plans, are not directly prepared by residents but contracted out to professional firms who incorporate neighbors input in their final plans. They show where and what type of housing, commercial areas and infrastructure, residents would like to see in their areas. Some neighborhoods chose to invest part of their NRP resources in these plans to present the city with their vision for their communities and to "market" their neighborhoods to developers. These plans may well be considered the expression of the foresightedness and empowerment of some neighborhoods, which want to have a document articulating the residents' vision to use even *after* the completion of the NRP

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[27] Judith A. Martin and Paula R. Pentel, "What the Neighbors Want, The Neighborhood Revitalization Program's First Decade", *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 68, No. 4, Autumn 2002, pp.435-449.

program. Some of these plans were even adopted by the city council, showing that neighborhoods were successful at incorporating their perspectives in city planning.

Other examples of collective actions include the petition, prepared conjunctly by several neighborhoods, for a referendum proposing to make NRP a permanent program, funded by the city budget. This attempt to institutionalize a program that was conceived as a twenty year experiment is a clear example that residents are not only empowered, but intend to maintain their prerogatives once the program ends.

Similarly, several interviewees expressed disappointment at the current administration because it promised to support neighborhoods during its electoral campaign and failed to deliver what neighbors expected. Some residents mentioned that they would like to organize with other neighbors to support candidates who are in favor of NRP in the next local elections, but it is unclear if and how neighborhoods will reach this level of organizing.

The fact that NRP distributes resources to all neighborhoods created a strong support base for the program. Scholars attribute particular importance to this design feature because "*Programs that are aimed at disadvantaged neighborhoods will not have the same credibility or legitimacy as citywide programs.*"[28] Despite the citywide nature of the Program, it appears that some neighborhoods are more empowered and ready to mobilize, while others accept more passively the city's decisions. In other terms, not all neighborhoods are ready to organize collectively to advance neighborhood participation in planning. From our interviews it emerged that at least some neighborhoods are in favor of working together to promote decentralized planning. Other neighborhoods, however, choose not to form alliances but to address their concerns directly to their city council member. Some suggest that the fact that neighborhoods compete for resources and want to maintain their autonomy and non-partisan character makes them less likely to coalesce to advance their collective interests, and define this as "*the logic of noncollective action*".[29]

At the individual level, residents are empowered by the intense planning and negotiating skills that are required to carry out NRP-related work. Residents become specialists in their action plan area –be that environment, housing, or public safety- and get to interact with many public administrators overtime. Some neighbors became so involved in neighborhood activities that they decided to embrace careers in public service. Some of them engaged in other types of community activities, like community development corporations, others took jobs in local public administrations, and others decided to run for office. Several current members of the city council started being involved in public service by participating in their neighborhoods' NRP activities.

In a nutshell, NRP created a group of "*knowledgeable, vocal, confident residents*" who can sometimes be very demanding with their administrators. Neighbors work with city departments in implementing their action plans, and hold them accountable for executing projects and expending resources as agreed. Furthermore, given that residents

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[28] Berry et al., 1993, p. 296.
[29] Berry et al., 1993, p. 108.

active in NRP often foster contacts in city departments, they also exercise voice during stages of project implementation. Generally, neighbors try to solve possible problems directly with the departments they collaborate with, but in cases where a solution cannot be reached, they consult with the city councilor of their ward to intervene. Therefore, also elected officials have to be accountable to the requests of a more active and vocal citizenry. Some even suggest that NRP changed the "power structure" in the city, because "*elected officials know that their constituents are much better informed about many aspects of planning and development than they were before the NRP was established, and they are consequently much more answerable to more constituents.*"[30] Some residents suggest that the city may not want to be held accountable to such an extent, and is therefore fighting back with strategies to keep neighborhood power at bay.

Undoubtedly, NRP triggered a level of empowerment that went well beyond the expectations of its original creators. Residents consider the fact that they are more vocal and active as a sign of NRP's success, and are surprised to see the city uncomfortable with their level of involvement. Many of our institutional interlocutors praised the program, but also alluded that it often "over-empowerment" residents, giving them a false sense that they could deal with any matter at the neighborhood level. More than one interviewee suggested that "*some neighborhoods get over-energized and have the misperception that they can decide things beyond NRP […] there is sometimes a problem of over-empowerment.*"

The extent of collective and individual empowerment engendered by NRP will be heavily tested when formal twenty year duration of the program ends. Lacking the substantial shelter of legislation, many neighborhood associations may pursue more overtly political effort to maintain, if not expand, their participation in city planning. It is likely that intense organizing and lobbying efforts will be required to convince elected officials that neighborhoods are a cohesive constituency. No one can tell whether such efforts will bear fruit. One longtime neighborhood association participant echoed a common sentiment on this point, "*I can't imagine going back to a city that didn't have NRP, because I think the neighborhoods have done some really good things, they can see a different vision from living there […] I can't imagine going back to not having any say.*"

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[30] Martin and Pentel, 2002, pp.447.

V   Participation and Deliberation in the NRP

The Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program created unprecedented opportunities for the city's residents to engage in sub-local planning and development activities. At the most demanding level, some 1,750 residents throughout the city serve on the governing boards of neighborhood associations, and on the working committees of those associations—that do the lion's share of the work in organizing meetings, composing plans, working with city agencies and private contractors to implement those plans, and monitoring their progress.[31] Many more are drawn in through various mechanisms to solicit their perspectives, ascertain their preferences, and gather feedback. These include participants in general neighborhood meetings, project meetings, specialized focus groups, and respondents to the many surveys that neighborhood associations have fielded. Many residents learn about the activities of their neighborhood associations through phone calls, newsletters, and web sites.

Very often, criticisms of public participation in decision-making revolve around the limited representativeness of bodies such as neighborhood organizations. A complete examination of participation in all of Minneapolis' neighborhoods would be a massive undertaking that lies beyond the scope of this report. In this section, we utilize interviews, targeted observations, and secondary literature to examine several dimensions of citizen participation in NRP: the quantity of participation; patterns of bias in that participation – who seems to have utilized these opportunities and who did not; the character of conflicts and decisions among participants; and measures that might be taken to enhance the quality and quantity of participation in NRP.

V.1   The Character of Participation

How many people participate in NRP? Data describing participation trends overtime are scarce. An early evaluation of the program tracked participation in neighborhood meetings held to ratify action plans. On average, less than 2% of neighborhood residents attended these meetings, with lows of 0.4% and highs of 3.3%; the average turnout was 75 residents per meeting.[32] NRP recorded and combined the numbers of voters in meetings where Neighborhood Action Plans or First Step[33] plans were approved, and attendance varies from 20 voters to over 500. On a total of 93 meetings, 12,585 people participated, averaging 135 individuals per meeting.[34] In order

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[31] According to NRP staff, a very conservative estimate of how many residents are involved in association boards and committees in every neighborhood leads to an average of 25 people per neighborhood. If we multiply 25 times 70 (number or neighborhoods) we obtain 1,750, the number of neighbors who are actively involved in the more demanding and time consuming NRP activities.

[32] Fainstein et al., 1995, p.47.

[33] First Step is a program that NRP developed in 1993 to facilitate planning by providing limited funding to neighborhoods so that they could start working on the most urgent priorities before the completion of the formal planning phase.

[34] Data provided by NRP on Resident Participation to Approve First Step and Neighborhood Action Plan Participation as of 7/10/2003.

to track participation overtime, NRP staff counted participants in neighborhood meetings held during the month of June every year, from 1994 to 1999. These data show a steady increase in citizen participation, from an average of nearly 15 attendees over 131 meetings in 1994, to 57 attendees over 59 meetings in 1999.[35] Citizen participation increased sharply in redirection neighborhoods over this period. Rates of participation for protection areas increased between 1994 to 1996 and then leveled after that, but remained substantially flat in revitalization ones over the same period.[36]

The secondary literature agrees that volunteer work in NRP is largely carried out by white homeowners and that certain groups -in particular renters and minorities—participate much less. As one study put it, "homeowners and business owners became the staunchest NRP participants, dominating the NRP boards and committees."[37] Although program staff strongly encouraged tenants and members of racial minority groups to participate, such residents were much less active in NRP.[38]

Almost all of our informants agreed that white homeowners are most involved in NRP volunteering activities –from planning to implementation- whereas certain resident groups tend to participate less in neighborhood activities. A typical pattern is that a core group of volunteers (15 to 20, 30 to 40, depending on the neighborhood size), most of whom are homeowners, do the bulk of the "heavy lifting" in NRP. Invariably, they described renters and minorities, and, occasionally, groups such as seniors, youth, or business owners as "less involved" or "difficult to involve." Most of the residents we interviewed are homeowners who have been involved in NRP since the Program's inception. All of them lamented the limited participation of renters, minorities, and other groups, but while some argued that "*the door is open to all, you just cannot force people to come to meetings*", others maintained that simply informing the community about meetings is not enough, and that more affirmative measures should be taken to make sure that neighborhood committees and the board reflect the community's diversity.

Finally, recent immigrants such as Somalis, Latinos, and Hmongs are also under represented due to linguistic and cultural barriers. Although Minneapolis residents divide almost evenly between the proportion that owns their homes and the proportion that rents[39] overall, white homeowners –and in some areas landlords- are much more visible in the formulation of Neighborhood Action Plans and, subsequently, in their implementation.

What explains participation patterns in the NRP? Four mutually reinforcing considerations explain the observed patterns of participation: (i) the needs addressed by the NRP program, (ii) the demands of participation, (iii) the "insider" culture that can develop among long-term activists, and (iv) background distribution of resources that facilitate resident participation. Consider these in turn.

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[35] Data provided by NRP on May Meeting Survey Results.
[36] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, pp. 119-120.
[37] Martin and Pentel, 2002, p.437.
[38] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, pp. 96-111.
[39] City of Minneapolis, 2000: Profile of General Demographic Characteristic for Minneapolis (released May 23, 2001).

First and foremost, NRP was conceived, if not explicitly, then certainly implicitly, as a program *for* homeowners. From that conception, it quickly became a program *of* homeowners and *by* homeowners. Its central aim was to improve the quality of residential neighborhoods through sub-local planning. As research suggests, people who own a home are more interested in local policies that may determine the future value of their homes, consequently "*people who own their homes have a significant latent stake in local politics*"; renters, on the other hand, "*lack a comparable stake because the value of their personal wealth is unlikely to be linked as directly to what happens locally.*"[40]

Understandably, homeowners have greater interests in the health and quality of their neighborhoods because the quality of certain public goods—schools, parks, and street fronts—directly impact the value of their properties. Homeowners also face greater costs of "exit" – of moving to other neighborhoods – and so their fate is more deeply intertwined with the fate of the places in which they live. For many, the decision to purchase a home in a particular locale grows out of a preference for that particular place—based on the character of the area, other residents, and a host of intangibles—and so homeowners may acquire greater spatial allegiance, and longer term interests, than those who rent. Because the NRP provides public resources – and to an extent public authority – to make spatially organized long term improvements, it addresses needs and interests that are more deeply felt by homeowners and other long-term residents than others.

Secondly, beyond differences of need and interest, some kinds of participation in NRP impose great demands upon individuals. Those who serve on neighborhood association boards and committees frequently invest many hours each month in NRP activities in countless meetings, planning sessions, negotiations with city agencies, and research.[41] And, as in many kinds of civic organization, the amount of influence exercised by individuals in neighborhood associations grows with their investments of time and energy. NRP, then, unintentionally creates "offices" or "positions" that require great investments and demands from citizens who wish to participate. These demanding offices limit participation in several ways – by drawing those with greater interests, more extensive capabilities, and those who are more comfortable participating under such circumstances. Conversely, these demanding offices pose barriers to participation by those with less interest, capability, and experience.

Consider one of the main tasks of neighborhood associations in NRP: developing neighborhood action plans. On average, neighborhood associations took 3.2 years to have their plans ready and approved.[42] This lengthy time horizon (just for planning, let alone implementation) already favors long-term residents. Action plans are not just lists of *desiderata*, but articulate and lengthy documents that detail development and planning objectives and design strategies to achieve them. In order to construct these plans, neighbors must learn city rules and policies and develop creative solutions to advance

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[40] Thomas, 1986, p. 10.
[41] When asked how many hours they devoted to NRP-related activities, many interviewed residents responded around 5 hours every week. Some residents reported volunteering as many as 10, 15 or even 20 hours per week when working on major projects.
[42] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p.4.

their neighborhood projects. As one volunteer explained, some residents "*offer the best of their talents*" by contributing their professional skills –such as accounting, legal, or engineering expertise- to neighborhood planning. Others, however, have to learn from scratch. The early part of the planning may be particularly arduous because so much is required of residents who must quickly learn skills to enable them to interact with professional planners and other city staff. As the learning process proceeds, however, residents become sophisticated planners with technical knowledge and a network of relationships with various city departments. Over time, the most active residents in NRP learn how to design strategies, know the city rules -and how they can be bent or circumvented, and develop a web of contacts in the various departments that they can call when needed.

Given the level of commitment required to engage in NRP activities, the program is naturally more attractive to people with a strong vested interest in their neighborhoods, and who see themselves living there over the long term. Other residents, instead, may be discouraged by the amount of work and level of technical knowledge required, and may lack incentives to participate, especially if they will remain in the neighborhood for a limited period.

Third, there are also cultural barriers to participation. Some residents we interviewed recognized that, especially for a new-comer, it might be challenging to participate in a meeting "in the middle of a process" where all residents know each other very well because they have planned and worked together for years, and speak a "technical jargon" that might sometimes be intimidating. It is often the case that a resident shows up at a committee meeting once and then gives up because he or she realizes that the planning work is either too complicated or too time consuming. As many neighborhood volunteers said, it is not hard to get residents to show up at a meeting, it is hard to get them to show up again and again –which is the only way to develop and implement neighborhood action plans.

Finally, beyond these factors, political scientists have long recognized that "resource constraints" impose substantial barriers to participation. That is, the background distribution of resources in the city – resources such as wealth, education, status, and time – make it more difficult for those who are less well off to participate in all kinds of political activity compared to those who are better off. Because NRP is more demanding in terms of time, skills, and information costs than other kinds of participation, the lack of resources poses an even greater barrier to those who are less well off than less exacting forms of participation such as voting or casually contacting officials.

V.2   *Neighborhood Capacity*

Despite these biases in participation, there is little doubt that the NRP has contributed to the development of substantial capacities for planning, development, project implementation, and collective action at the neighborhood level. Prior to NRP,

community organizations were present in most Minneapolis neighborhoods. While some were large, well staffed, and effective, others were more informal gatherings of residents meeting to solve specific problems. In many neighborhoods, residents did not even know that an organization existed. The resources, support, and authority provided by NRP, however, contributed to the formation of associations in neighborhoods where there were none, and strengthened existing associations throughout the city.

To measure trends in the capacity of associations, TEAMWORKS examined the formation and staffing of neighborhood organizations in response to NRP. Their research confirmed that, in almost all neighborhoods, organizations were in place before the NRP was introduced, only a handful of new ones were constituted in response to the program, and many, which had a more informal status, were re-constituted as chartered nonprofit organizations to meet NRP criteria. New neighborhood associations formed in only a few neighborhoods: Bryant, Fulton, Standish-Ericsson, Lynnhurst, Hale-Page-Diamond Lake, Waite Park, and Camden. In addition, several associations that pre-dated NRP were reconstituted as a result of the programs' various requirements. Sixty-four neighborhoods spent NRP resources on personnel, and two-thirds of these spent less than $10,000 annually. Redirection neighborhoods spent more than Protection and Revitalization areas on staff.[43]

Though most neighborhoods have functioning associations as a result of NRP, these organizations vary greatly by membership, professionalism, and effectiveness. Generally, large neighborhoods with more generous NRP resources can afford an office and one or more staff persons. Smaller neighborhoods, on the other hand, may not have a physical space for the organization, and hire part time staff to work on NRP matters. Other neighborhoods prefer to save some of their NRP resources by not hiring any staff and have volunteers carry out all the work. Some suggest that there is an inverse relationship between organizational size and volunteer effort; the larger and more staffed the organization, the more NRP work it will be able to carry out with less volunteer work, and vice versa. A few residents even argue that a staffed organization kills the spirit of NRP because neighbors do not have and incentive to volunteer anymore; paid staff do the organization's crucial work. According to others, too large organizations replicate the problems of city administration that NRP was developed to address. Many residents, however, recognized the importance of having a well functioning organization to coordinate effectively all the volunteer work and NRP activities.

For some large neighborhood organizations NRP is but a chapter in their overall activities, but for smaller ones it constitutes the principal, if not only, activity. Neighborhood organizations play an important role in the planning and implementation phases of neighborhood action plans. Although residents volunteer in committees, organizations often coordinate all the work, maintain information and accounts, and prepare final documents. Furthermore, while volunteers may vary, organizations provide a stable point of contact and institutional memory during the lifetime of a neighborhood plan.

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[43] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p.83.

NRP relies upon stable neighborhood organizations with robust planning and implementation capacities to do the work of local development. The evidence shows that professional, paid, staff in neighborhood organizations does indeed pave the way for development under NRP. Almost all neighborhoods spent resources on community organization personnel during the planning phase, but on average less than $10,000 every year. Neighborhoods that spent more money on personnel during the planning phase, had their plans approved faster than other neighborhoods. Redirection neighborhoods, the ones that invested the most in personnel, had their plans approved in 2.8 years, revitalization ones in 3.4 years, and protection ones in little over 3 years.[44]

By and large, organizations with professional staff play a pivotal role in planning and implementation as they aggregate the work of different committees where volunteer residents serve. Ideally, paid staff do not replace the work of volunteers. They should instead coordinate and support that work. Residents should focus on articulating their preferences and needs and the substance of neighborhood development, while staff address administrative matters and facilitate participation.

In addition to the substantial work of planning and implementation, neighborhood organizations are the main venue for resident participation in NRP and their efforts—in providing information, mobilizing volunteers, and creating opportunities for engagement—determine in large measure the character of participation. In the planning phase, neighborhood associations conduct surveys, focus groups, and meetings to incorporate all residents' views in the plan. They also provide information to residents and keep the community connected through newsletters, mailings, flyers, phone trees, and door-to-door canvassing. Finally, they organize events to reach out to all residents, particularly to involve those who do not normally take part in NRP work. Such activities, from park clean ups, to art festivals and neighborhood cook outs, are very valuable to mobilize residents, raise awareness on NRP, and create a sense of community.

As with planning and development, stable and well functioning neighborhood organizations can improve the quality and quantity of citizen participation. As scholars have observed of other contexts, "*People who live in neighborhoods with strong organizations tend to participate more, and people who live in neighborhoods with weaker associations tend to participate less.*"[45] Strong associations have greater capacities to mobilize and offer greater influence on policy through participation, and "*the increased opportunity to participate leads to increased participation.*"[46] Strong organizations are especially important in communities of lower socio-economic status to offset their other barriers to participation. As research suggests, "*The degree of citizen participation is directly correlated with the presence of organizers [....] there will not be self-sustaining organizations among the poor unless there are paid staff to continually breathe life into them.*"[47] In well off and more educated communities, where people are generally more engaged in community life, capable associations have less impact on citizen participation. These claims are confirmed by one evaluation of NRP that found

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[44] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p.86.
[45] Berry et al., 1993, p.95.
[46] Berry et al., 1993, p. 96.
[47] Williams, 1985, pp.252-253.

spending on planning and communication to be particularly important to attract citizen participation.[48] However, because of NRP's decentralized approach, not all Minneapolis neighborhoods decided to put the same emphasis in outreach and engagement. There are organizations that have professional staff working exclusively on community outreach, while others –especially the ones relying only on volunteers- tend to neglect outreach and focus more on plan implementation, with obvious shortcomings in terms of citizen engagement.

If NRP funding contributed to generating considerable neighborhood capacity, the limited resources for Phase II are already starting to negatively impact organizations, which will need to fire staff and scale down on activities. Although several neighborhoods are looking at alternative donors to supplement NRP resources, it is generally the case that foundation grants cannot be used for operating costs, which leaves the problem of financing community organizations unsolved. This downsizing is likely to be particularly detrimental in low-income neighborhoods where community organizations have the largest positive impact in stimulating participation.

V.3   Power and Conflict in the Neighborhoods

While useful, the term "capacity" obscures many dynamics of power and contention that often characterize neighborhood-level decision-making. Neighborhood associations have more capacity to act as a result of NRP, but capacity to do what, for whose benefit, and exercised by whom? Some of these questions were addressed in discussion of participation bias, and we address other dimensions of neighborhood level contention here.

Predictably, the injection of public resources and funds into Minneapolis neighborhoods stirred substantial conflicts regarding the best use of these funds and among contending conceptions of "neighborhood improvement." NRP mobilized a much more substantial body of homeowners to become active in neighborhood development decisions. NRP, then, increased the relative political participation and activism of a particular kind of resident—those interested in neighborhood, spatially-focussed development, often homeowners. To the extent that community organizations compete for members, influence, agenda control, and resources, this new mobilization perhaps came at the expense of other kinds of organizations that had occupied the organizational ecology prior to NRP, such as interest groups devoted to particular issues like affordable housing, social justice, or the concerns of ethnic and minority residents.

Especially in some redirection neighborhoods, the most afflicted with blight and crime, conflict emerged between homeowners and existing neighborhood organizations. As research suggests, neighborhood organizations representing the "have-nots" sometimes come to a struggle with the "haves" when trying to accomplish their

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[48] The evaluation found that organizations with larger spending in communication and planning had higher meeting attendance in the 1994-1998 period. *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p. 121.

objectives.[49] In the most destitute areas of the city, many community organizations had been active well before NRP to build affordable housing and provide social services to low-income residents. Very often, these organizations were well funded and had clear agendas on how they intended to improve residents' livelihoods. People of Phillips, for example, was a large organization dedicated to improving the Phillips neighborhood by creating sustainable economic development opportunities, services, and housing. The Whittier Alliance also acted as a community development corporation with a strong focus in providing affordable housing to residents. By the time NRP came into place, the Alliance had built and administered hundreds of low income lease hold units in the Whittier neighborhood.

When NRP provided funding to neighborhoods and the opportunity for *all* residents to have a say in their allocation, tensions emerged that had ever since remained latent. It was often the case that especially those who had invested resources in the neighborhood –generally homeowners, property owners, and business owners- mobilized when they saw that neighborhood organizations were going to use NRP funding for additional subsidized housing. The coalition opposing neighborhood organizations maintained that, rather than concentrating more low income housing in the same neighborhoods, it should be spread in other areas of the city. Homeowners sustained that the concentration of affordable housing contributes to neighborhood decline because it attracts a transient and poorer population. Some also feared that investments in social services for drug addicts or alcoholics might trigger a vicious cycle of attracting more people with substance abuse problems. In a nutshell, many property owners associated low income housing with a series of negative externalities for their neighborhoods, including a depreciation of nearby property values.[50] The owners' NIMBY (not-in-my-back-yard) argument was that their neighborhoods had had their "fair share" of affordable housing, that new units should be located in other areas in the city, and that strategies to favor home ownership would be the best recipe for neighborhood revitalization. They supported a stabilization policy based on expanding homeownership, rehabilitating the existing housing stock, including rental properties, and strengthening commercial corridors.

According to some of our interlocutors, many residents have a "*visceral dislike*" of rental housing, and NRP allowed "*inherent prejudices (against renters and density) to emerge publicly*."[51] Some of our interviews with activists from Whittier and Phillips – inner city neighborhoods with high concentration of low income housing- confirmed that property owners are still favorable to increased homeownership and to the development of mix income and mix use new housing. It appears that homeowners do not necessarily want to capture resources to improve their properties, but they favor investments to create more homeownership opportunities in their neighborhoods.

As the analysis of Phillips and Whittier in Appendix I illustrates, tensions between property owners and other community organizations became so vehement in

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[49] Williams, 1985, pp.205-206.
[50] Edward G. Goetz and Mara Sidney. "Revenge of the Property Owners: Community Development and the Politics of Property", *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Vol. 16, N. 4, 1994, pp. 319-334.
[51] Martin and Pentel, 2002, p.446.

some neighborhoods that they resulted in the elimination of older organizations. Some earlier studies of NRP examine these tensions between homeowners and property owners on one side and community organizations on the other. An analysis of the impact of NRP on pre-existing neighborhood organizations in three neighborhoods -Whittier (redirection), Stevens Square (redirection) and Jordan (revitalization)- describes a dynamic of white homeowners dominating the NRP planning process.[52] In Whittier, for example, homeowners mobilized in response to NRP when they felt that the neighborhood was at risk of having too many multifamily low-income housing. In Stevens Square, homeowners and landlords started to participate in the works of the Stevens Square Community Organization (SSCO) to fight crime, but when they realized that SSCO did not want to enter the NRP program for fear of gentrifying the neighborhood, and that they were promoting low-income rental units, owners mobilized and took over the SSCO's board. The division in factions did not emerge in Jordan, where the pre-existing neighborhood organization, which was already focusing on housing and crime reduction, took the opportunity of NRP funding for strengthening its actions in these areas. Other literature has criticized NRP for being dominated by white middle-income homeowners.[53] Some local foundations have withdrawn their support from NRP due to their perceptions of bias in favor of property owners.

In contrast to these explicit conflicts, renters and minority residents are less visible in NRP, but also do not seem to have organized themselves as forces within it. Prior to NRP, renting residents were in some measure "represented" by community organizations that focused on low income rental housing and social services. In the NRP era, their presence in sub-local planning largely depended upon the success of neighborhood association outreach efforts. In some cases, where there are no specific strategies to involve renters, this constituency is scarcely represented in planning and implementation. In other cases, however, homeowners support having more renters involved in NRP activities, because that brings fresher ideas and reduces the risk of "tunnel vision". We are unaware than any major renter coalition formed to contrast the influence of property owners in NRP planning. Although minority groups, a category that often coincides with renters, are also underrepresented in NRP activities, we did not observe a dynamic of active conflict among property owners and neighborhood minorities.

The intense organization conflict in some neighborhoods in NRP's early days seems to have faded. But the absence of explicit contention does not mean that groups have reached amicable settlements. In some neighborhoods, white homeowners have literally taken over NRP activities, with limited interest in outreach and participation that would slow down their work. In other neighborhoods, however, measures were taken to reduce the dynamics of inclusion-exclusion, and have a broader representation of all constituencies.

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[52] Edward G. Goetz and Mara S. Sidney. *The Impact of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program on Neighborhood Organizations*, Minneapolis: Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota, 1994.
[53] Fainstein and Hirst, 1996, pp. 96-111.

Beyond the initial clash between two ideologies of neighborhood revitalization—a social justice perspective favoring additional housing and services for low income people and a stabilization perspective favoring measures to increase homeownership and improve the quality of life for long-term residents—neighborhoods did not undergo major "ideological" conflicts. In the course of planning and implementation, controversial issues emerged, but they were generally based on specific projects, amenable to pragmatic resolution, and so did not cause major fractures in communities. Some problems arise due to conflicting priorities. Parents with young children may support a new playground, whereas seniors favor home care investments instead. Similarly, traffic calming measures may be more important to residents living close to major arteries than to people in more secluded parts of the neighborhood. Generally, contentious issues stimulate more resident participation and often hearing the others' perspectives may lead residents to change their initial assumptions. Furthermore, NRP has been a sufficiently capacious initiative to allow log-rolling and positive-sum solutions to many of these conflicts. In most of our interviews, residents could not name major, unresolved conflicts, and suggested that most of them were settled through dialogue and trade-off.

V.4   Improving Participation

There are several ways to build upon the successful dimensions of participation in NRP and address some of the deficits in its quantity and quality. Though whites and homeowners do seem to be over-represented in NRP, and some interests such as affordable housing should receive more attention and investment, we do not regard these problems as incorrigible. Nor should they lead to the abandonment of NRP's decentralized and participatory path of development in favor of more centralized and elite-driven approaches. Consider three kinds of measures.

The deepest challenge for inclusive participation in NRP stems from its very nature as a program to produce spatially focused (neighborhood-level) improvements. As discussed above, this sub-local orientation makes the program inherently more appealing to homeowners over other categories of resident. Nevertheless, it is entirely appropriate that urban government should provide opportunities for residents of the city to participate in decisions and projects that involve their neighborhoods. But such opportunities will always be more attractive to homeowners than to renters. This problem should be addressed not by reducing such opportunities, but rather by creating other influential channels of participation that address concerns that are less linked to neighborhood, and so more appealing to other residents. Other cities, for example, have created opportunities for citizens to participate around strategic planning and budgeting decisions for the city as a whole, around particular "themes" such as public safety, education, and the arts, and around regional planning issues.[54]

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[54] AmericaSpeaks, an organization based in Washington, D.C., has convened Citizens Summits where residents in the District of Columbia discuss the city's strategic plan and identify spending priorities for a two year cycle. AmericanSpeaks has also engaged the American public in a nation-wide discussion on the future of Social Security. Other examples of issues that transcend the sub-local scale are citizen

Within the context of NRP, central authorities such as the city's NRP program office and its policy board might offer more guidance regard both the substance of planning and neighborhoods' participation processes.[55] There is evidence that the NRP office has shifted from a more hand-off approach of its early days to offer more support and guidance regarding matters of both substance and process. In terms of substance, it is entirely appropriate for mandates to require that neighborhood plans address certain social priorities to which neighborhood associations are likely to be inattentive. The current planning process already requires that a certain proportion of investments be allocated to housing programs. NRP might further require that plans invest in affordable housing options, or at least compel them to articulate neighborhood strategies that address the city's affordable housing problem. In this approach, NRP would not be a simple devolution of resources and authority to neighborhood associations, but a partnership in which the city offers those resources in exchange for neighborhood associations' help in addressing a range of city-wide, and not just neighborhood, concerns. Regarding processes of participation, the NRP already requires neighborhood associations to develop participation agreements to encourage them to deploy various mechanisms to solicit diverse perspectives and voices. Neighborhood associations might also be encouraged to reach out to other community organizations that enjoy better contacts with those less likely to participate in NRP. Associations' various mechanisms of outreach and inclusion might also be assessed and compared to identify particularly effective approaches and "best practices".

Third, neighborhood associations should incorporate multiple modes of participation so that those who are unable to invest the enormous energy required at the highest levels of NRP activism can nevertheless participate and be heard. When neighborhood associations first embarked upon the NRP, they were highly focused on developing effective plans. Having mastered plan development, many associations are now developing strategies to include more residents and perspectives in their activities and decisions. As one neighbor described, at the beginning residents were sometimes confused about their mandate: the planning part was complicated and time-consuming enough, yet they also needed to focus on participation. "*It was unclear if neighborhood volunteers were to work on getting the plan out and implementing it, or on reaching out to the community.*" Many neighborhood association staff and activists recognize that residents face various barriers to participation, and that neighborhood organizations ought to be more creative in designing mechanisms for residents to participate.

Neighborhood associations have become more adept at designing surveys, holding focus groups, and meetings where residents can speak their mind on neighborhood issues. Some neighborhoods complement surveys –which sometimes have very low response rates- with door-to-door canvassing, meetings and focus groups to hear from all neighborhood constituencies. Others translate NRP materials into languages spoken by minorities, and use interpreters to facilitate meetings.

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involvement in school governance and policing in Chicago, and, internationally, participatory city budgeting in Brazil and decentralized governance in West Bengal and Kerala, India, to name a few.
[55] Archon Fung has called this approach "accountable autonomy" in *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

During the implementation phase, since not all neighbors may be able to volunteer many hours every week for NRP work, neighborhood organizations set up campaigns to reach out to the whole community. Some examples include neighborhood clean-ups, plantings, cook outs, and art festivals. These events are very useful not only because they provide volunteer labor for NRP projects, but also because they build community and a "sense of neighborhood" that is very valuable for NRP work. As a neighbor suggested, "*if you know somebody as your neighbor you are less likely, when big issues come up, to be like "not in my back yard" and more likely to have a dialogue and understand their point of view*."

Community organizations' staff who organize the events, describe how residents who never show up at meetings decide to join in for specific initiatives. Organizations have to be smart to identify what are the issues that drive the community together, and construct events around those. Generally, neighborhood groups that have staff dedicated to community outreach are particularly skilled at creating "engagement opportunities" for people with different interests and socio-economic backgrounds.

Both during the planning and the implementation phases, newsletters are very important instruments to reach out to residents, maintain good connections among the community, and inform on planning, accomplishments, meetings, volunteering opportunities and special events. Many of the neighborhoods we visited produce newsletters –with varying frequency– and mail them to residents. Besides distributing newsletters, some neighborhood organizations reach out to residents also through mailings, phone trees, flyering and door-knocking.

Accurate data gathering to ensure that all voices are heard in the planning process, combined with outreach and specific events to engage those who have just limited time to devote to volunteering, are very important strategies to offer various "layers of engagement" in NRP activities. Another common criticism is that NRP is too white-dominated – "*it's a white homeowners' thing*", as one interlocutor put it. In many interviews, the lack of diversity was often pointed out as a major limitation. Strategies to reach out to all communities vary neighborhood by neighborhood. A few organizations reserve some board seats to minority groups, and recognize the importance of having at least some minority leaders on board, as they can act as intermediaries to reach out to their respective communities. The McKinley neighborhood board election for 2004, for example, besides having several African American candidates, also had representatives from the Latino and the Hmong communities. In Whittier, some Somali board members bring their community's concerns to NRP planning, and educate their fellow citizens on neighborhood activities. Similarly, the children of Hmong immigrants get involved in NRP neighborhood activities and, thanks to their fluency in both Hmong and English operate as "bridges" between the Hmong population and the rest of the community.

Especially in the current context of changing demographics, certain neighborhoods are becoming increasingly diverse. Minneapolis used to be a predominantly white city, but from 1990 to 2000 this equilibrium was altered with whites dropping from 78% to 65%, and other ethnicities growing exponentially. Minneapolis is attracting great numbers of new immigrants because of its generous welfare provisions,

and a city with a reputation of being liberal, but very homogenous, is undergoing sweeping changes, especially in inner city neighborhoods and in north Minneapolis areas. It is therefore crucial to understand if NRP can serve as a socializing and unifying factor, to get new residents engaged in the community- or as an element that further emphasizes fractures between those who are involved and those who are not. Given the limited time-frame of the program, it is arduous to understand its possible impact in unifying neighborhoods. As mentioned above, the degree of independence left to neighborhoods by NRP leads to a variety of levels of racial and ethnic diversity.

As Berry et al. described in their 1993 classic on citizen participation, extrapolating from Dahl's "A Preface to Democratic Theory", the "*critical elements for strong participation*" can be divided into elements involving the *breadth* and *depth* of participation. The breadth is assured by an outreach effort characterized by open access, full information flow, realistic opportunities to participate (such as resources and sufficient staffing of participatory programs). The depth is defined by the equal consideration of ideas, direct translation of citizen preferences into policy decisions, and implementation of decisions reached through participatory processes.[56]

The creation of the different *modes of participation* described above provides some neighborhood organizations with tools to gather information from the whole community on what are the neighborhood priorities (breadth of participation), and offers opportunities for all residents to take part in NRP activities with varying degrees of intensity (depth of participation). Furthermore, the alternative modes of participation serve as a valuable balance to the influence of those who participate most.

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[56] Berry et al., 1993, p. 55.

VI   NRP's Outcomes

In light of these substantial biases and limitations of participation, one might expect the program to have operated as a machine to generate private benefits for the very segment of Minneapolis residents who participate intensively in neighborhood association boards and committees. Surprisingly, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program seems to have delivered benefits of a much more general, even redistributive, nature.

## *VI.1   Progressive Allocation across Neighborhoods*

Although through NRP resources were distributed to all Minneapolis' neighborhoods, from the most deprived to the wealthiest, not all areas received equal amounts. Resource allocations systematically favored disadvantaged neighborhoods. They were allocated following a formula that included–among other factors- neighborhood size, poverty level and dwelling units' conditions. The resource allocation formula's attention to housing conditions –substandard physical structures and absentee ownership- reflects NRP's strong focus on housing revitalization.[57]

In Phase I (1990-2000), some of the poorest neighborhoods had allocations of $2,800 per household, while some affluent protection neighborhoods received $400-500 per household. On average, protection neighborhoods were allocated around $700 per household, revitalization ones received over $1,200 per household, while allocations for redirection neighborhoods were on average over $1,900 per household.

Chart 1 below plots Phase I NRP allocations for each neighborhood according to the median income of households in that neighborhood. It shows that neighborhoods with the lowest incomes received the highest allocations, while well-off "protection" neighborhoods received much lower allocations. Furthermore, different types of neighborhoods –for example revitalization and protection- falling in the same income levels, got similar allocations. The correlation is not precisely linear—though the inverse correlation is high—because household income is not the only measure of disadvantage used in the allocation formula.

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[57] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p. 70.

Chart 1: Phase I Allocations per Household
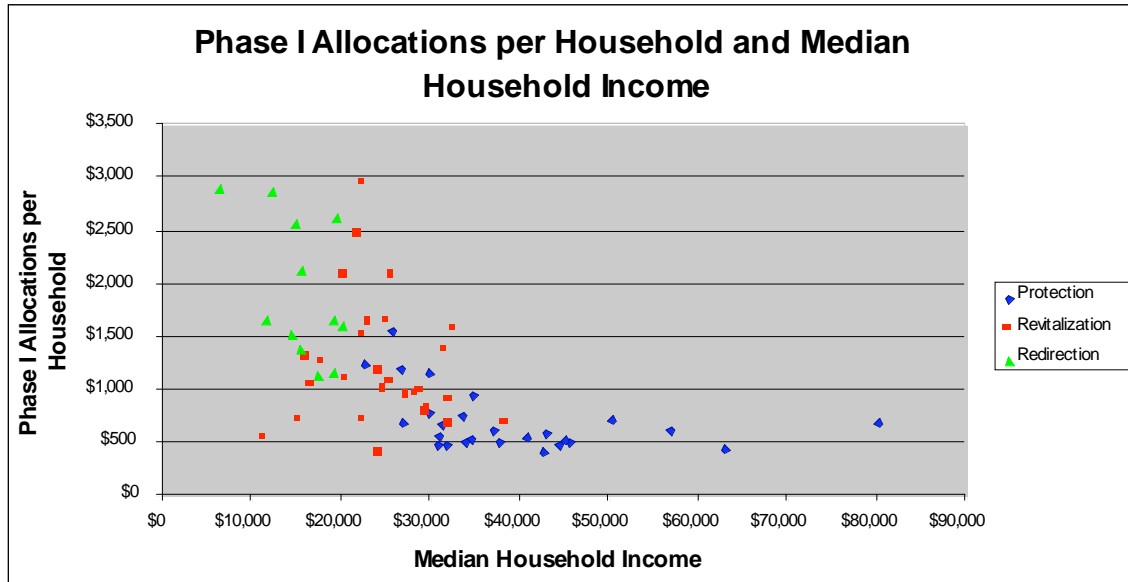
VI.2 Allocations within Neighborhoods

In their Action Plans, neighborhood associations lay out residents' priorities and how they will spend NRP resources to advance those priorities. In some cases, however, initial allocations do not match actual expenditures. Initial plans are sometimes revised to address urgent issues that arise. Sometimes, associations modify their plans because residents realize they can achieve more by concentrating resources in fewer areas rather then spreading them over many priorities. We therefore analyzed data on actual allotments rather than initial resource allocations. Resource allotments include funds that have been expended, or that are under contract or obligated in the form of agreements or memoranda. Although funds under agreement may be redirected, allotted resources provide a faithful picture of how funds are eventually deployed.

In order to examine variations in neighborhood uses of NRP funds, we used NRP data that were up to date as of Spring 2004. Between NRP's inception and Spring 2004, neighborhoods allotted over $168 million. Revitalization neighborhoods allotted a total of $78 million, followed by $61 million for redirection neighborhoods, and then protection areas with a total of $29 million. If we consider allotments by household, redirection neighborhoods got the largest share of resources, the equivalent of $1,715 per household, revitalization ones spent $1,009 per household, and protection only $612 per household.[58] These data illustrate NRP's progressive fiscal allocation; resources did go to neighborhoods most in need and affluent neighborhoods got a fraction of what areas with more urgent problems received.

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[58] Population figures from 1990 U.S. Census.

In order to understand how neighborhoods spent resources, we used NRP's coding system. Neighborhoods use different language and categories when allocating their resources –some may classify streetscape improvements as environmental measures while others categorize it as a way to revitalize commercial corridors, others again as a crime fighting strategy. To increase comparability among neighborhood allotments, the NRP project office has developed a uniform method of classifying neighborhood activities. The organization uses ten standard categories, numbered from 0 to 9, to define the neighborhood strategies present in action plans. Every strategy included in an action plan falls in one of the following categories:

0. NRP Coordination
1. Housing
2. Economic Development
3. Community Building, Art
4. Crime Prevention
5. Transport and Infrastructure
6. Environment
7. Parks and Recreation
8. Human Services
9. Schools and Libraries

NRP is often attacked because of the influence exercised by homeowners, even in predominantly renter neighborhoods. To understand the extent to which resource allotments were concentrated to benefit homeowners, we isolated strategies that generate distinctive gains for homeowners. These are composed largely of home improvement loan and grant programs. We separated these programs from more general housing programs and created a tenth category for them: 1.5, Housing for Homeowners.

One *caveat* is important in understanding category 1.5. These programs consist largely of revolving loan funds such as home improvement loans that residents repay. In some cases, the initial allocation was repaid and re-invested in the form of new loans more than one time. Consequently, for many neighborhoods, the 1.5 "Housing for Homeowners" category may be inflated by revolving loan funds as the same resources were expended more than once time to support home improvements. Since we consider neighborhood expenditures and not their original allocations, category 1.5 faithfully reflects all resources that were *expended* for homeowners, including new loans financed through the repayment of old ones. However, it overstates the fraction of funds *allocated* to this category, compared to other allocations that consist of one-time expenditures rather than revolving funds.

Chart 2 below illustrates how neighborhoods spent their resources in aggregate, while Chart 3 analyzes how neighborhood types (protection, revitalization, redirection) allotted NRP funds according to their different priorities.

Chart 2: Aggregate NRP Allotments as of Spring 2004
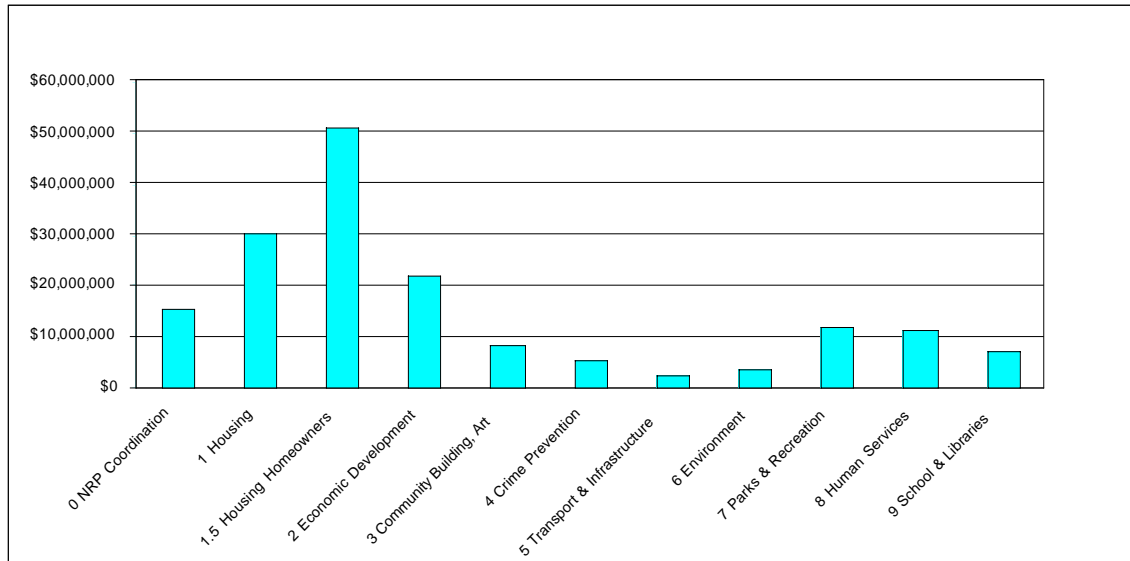
Chart 3: NRP Allotments by Neighborhood Type as of Spring 2004
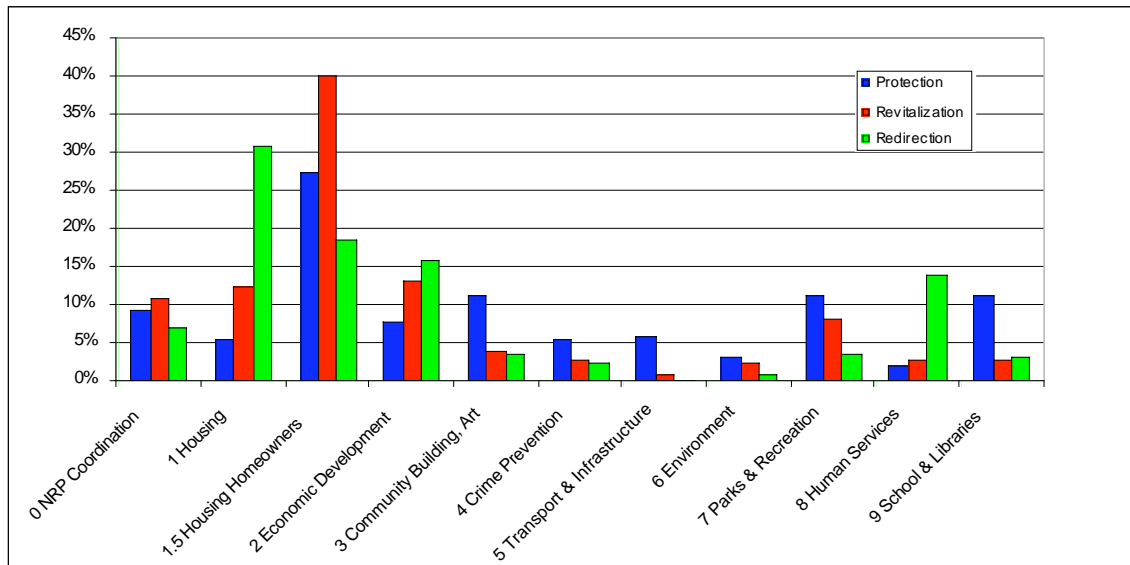
Housing projects benefiting homeowners –mainly in the form of home improvement loans and grants- were allotted over $50 million, or 30% of all NRP resources in this period, making this category the one which expended the most NRP funding. As explained above, this category may be inflated by repaid loans which are returned to residents in the form of new loans. Although revolving funds are expended mainly to support new loans, NRP staff suggested that there were cases where resources were used to finance strategies not benefiting homeowners. Revolving loans have proven

a valuable neighborhood resource, especially in times of curbed funding for NRP, as they provide a reserve residents may utilize when other sources dry out. A prior evaluation analyzing neighborhood allocations confirms that about 30% of all NRP resources were assigned to housing rehabilitation and renovation projects –mostly for homeowners.[59]

In the second largest category, allotments were devoted to a variety of housing projects, such as demolition of blighted dwellings, construction of low income housing, and programs to support new homebuyers with mortgage subsidies, to name a few. More than $30 million were expended for housing projects. Combining categories 1 and 1.5, neighborhoods expended almost half of their resources -48%- in housing projects. Though this fell short of the 52.5% requirement for housing investment imposed by NRP guidelines, overall housing projects –including those addressing homeowners- constitute by far the largest expenditure. It appears that neighborhood associations have conformed with the city program's focus on improving the quality and use of housing in Minneapolis.

Support for homeowners was especially high in revitalization neighborhoods, followed by protection and redirection. Although homeownership rates are higher in protection neighborhoods, residents in wealthier areas may be accustomed to expending substantial private funds to maintain their homes and prefer to use NRP funding for projects that would be difficult to fund individually, such as parks, school and libraries, and community building. The allotments for some protection neighborhoods are also too low to create substantial housing improvement programs. In revitalization neighborhoods, on the other hand, where median household incomes were some $12,000 lower than in protection neighborhoods,[60] home improvement strategies seemed to address more urgent needs. Finally, redirection neighborhoods – which have the highest proportion of renters, spent less on strategies benefiting homeowners and more on other housing projects.

As of 1999, a total of 4,775 home improvement grants and loans were released to home owners under NRP and 675 rental units were built or renovated.[61] Homeownership rates increased, especially in redirection neighborhoods, which also experienced greater home sales. Also housing prices increased from 1990-92 to 1996-98, across all neighborhood types, but especially in protection ones, showing greater consumer confidence. As research found, "*Minneapolis performed well during the 1990s in outcomes related to housing investment that might be expected to reflect stability, confidence, and a sense of a place*."[62]

The third largest expenditure category, with over $22 million, is economic development. This category includes a variety of activities to revitalize commercial corridors and create new businesses and employment opportunities for residents. Strategies vary from enhancing streetscapes and parking improvement projects to make

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[59] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p. 50.
[60] In 1990, median household income was around $24,600 in revitalization neighborhoods, as opposed to $37,000 in protection ones.
[61] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, p. 13.
[62] *Neighborhood Revitalization Program-Evaluation Report-Phase One: 1990-1999*, 2000, pp. 100-101.

corridors more attractive areas for businesses and their patrons, to assistance for commercial rehabilitation and business development. Highly deprived neighborhoods, with few retail establishments and services due to poverty and crime, invested in economic development activities to improve the livelihoods of residents, provide them with more choice, and possibly new jobs. Well off neighborhoods, on the other hand, focused mainly on improving the streetscapes of areas surrounding existing commercial nodes.

NRP coordination expenses follow, at approximately $15 million across the program. This category covers most of the expenses related to the organizational maintenance of neighborhood associations, such as staff, administration and resources for planning and implementing action plans. These investments facilitated neighborhood outreach, mobilization, and planning activities. These funds are probably responsible for stabilizing many neighborhood associations and reinvigorating many others that were dormant prior to NRP. It constitutes a large expenditure item because most neighborhoods have paid staff – though the extent of professional staff use varies widely - to carry out a large portion of NRP-related activities.

Similar amounts were allotted to parks and recreation activities and human services. Around $11 million were allotted to parks for renovating existing parks, construct or expand park buildings and community centers –as in the Whittier neighborhood project described in the next section—to improve playgrounds and bikeways, and plant trees. Some argue that a significant amount of resources went to parks because all neighborhoods have parks and value them as an important amenity. Others maintain that the Park Board was particularly entrepreneurial in capitalizing on NRP resources to fund projects that they could not have financed otherwise.

Allotments of $11 million were invested under the human services category to fund a variety of activities to support youth, families, and seniors, employment training, and community health services.

The remaining activities, including in descendent order community building, school and parks, crime prevention, environment and transport, received less than $10 million each.

The analysis of how different neighborhood types allotted resources, suggests that, by and large, expenditures do mirror neighborhood needs, with more disadvantaged neighborhoods concentrating resources in high priority areas, such as housing, economic development and human services and better off neighborhoods focusing more on neighborhood amenities. Since more affluent neighborhoods do not have very urgent needs to tackle, they distribute funds more evenly across activities to enhance neighborhood environment and amenities. Protection neighborhoods allot more funding to community building activities, to renovate parks, schools and libraries and to improve transport and preserve their neighborhood environment. The surprisingly high expenditures for crime prevention in protection neighborhood do not reflect the general tendency for this neighborhood type; they are particularly high because a restricted group of neighborhoods decided to allot large part of their resources to this priority. While

homeowners are very significant beneficiaries from NRP – 30% of overall expenditures were devoted to programs for home improvement funds – they were by no means the only beneficiaries. In light of Minneapolis' home ownership rate of roughly 50%,[63] it is not at all clear that homeowners are inappropriate beneficiaries of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

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[63] 2000 Census data, see: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/citywork/planning/Census2000/2000-Mpls-ProfileofGeneralDemographicCharacteristics.asp.

VII   NRP in Five Neighborhoods

VII.1 Case Studies and Selection Criteria

Having examined the NRP program as a whole above, we now explore the dynamics triggered by NRP at the neighborhood level. In order to gain insight on questions of sub-local politics—the dynamics of participation and exclusion, and the major outcomes of these dynamics—we examined neighborhood planning processes in five Minneapolis neighborhoods. These case studies illuminate the factors that animate NRP at the micro-level, in particular neighborhood variations in strategies for inclusion and resource allocation. This in-depth analysis highlights the variety or processes and outcomes allowed by NRP's decentralized approach.

In carrying out this detailed neighborhood analysis, we used a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. To capture the *qualitative* dimensions of neighborhood planning, we conducted semi-structured interviews with residents involved in NRP planning and implementation, with neighborhood organization staff, with specialists from NRP's central office, and residents who are no longer involved in planning. Throughout, we were especially sensitive to criticisms of how NRP developed in each area in order to counterbalance the enthusiasm that committed participants naturally possess. We were participant observers in a neighborhood meeting and in a focus group that occurred during our visits in Minneapolis. We also analyzed action plans, Phase I evaluations and, where available, secondary literature. Neighborhood plans and NRP data on resource allocation and spending provided some *quantitative* dimension for our in depth case studies.

In selecting the neighborhoods for our in depth analysis, we considered several factors. First, though resources were limited, we wanted to include neighborhoods that reflect the diversity of Minneapolis as a whole. We therefore selected a protection neighborhood, two revitalization and two redirection areas to explore how different types of neighborhood participated in NRP and developed priorities for resource allocation.

In order to analyze the dynamics of participation and exclusion, we chose both homogenous neighborhoods as well as areas with diverse populations on the dimensions of race, ethnicity, and home ownership. Since the population of Minneapolis is rapidly changing by becoming more racially and ethnically diverse, we also selected one neighborhood, McKinley, that experienced dramatic demographic shifts over the past decade.

We analyzed how size and diversity affected sub-local politics. We therefore chose Phillips, a diverse and very large neighborhood where NRP involvement was disruptive and led to the collapse of the neighborhood organization and to splitting in smaller administrative units, and Longfellow, which on the other hand made of scale its *forte* for more efficient planning.

Finally, in order to analyze power dynamics and the influence exercised by homeowners, we selected the Whittier neighborhood. Several early studies of NRP documented the intense political conflicts in the Whittier neighborhood in NRP's early days, and we used this study as an opportunity to examine that neighborhood at a second, much later, point in the life of NRP.

This section contains brief descriptions of the major developments and issues. Appendix I to this report contains much more detailed accounts of NRP in these neighborhoods.

VII.2 Neighborhoods at a Glance

Table 2 below provides basic information on the neighborhood associations and NRP plans of these five neighborhoods. The table details terms of participation in NRP, Phase I allocations, and allocations per household. The table reports data relative to the percentage of households in poverty because the poverty level was one of the factors included in the formula used to allocate resources among neighborhoods.

Table 3 is a snapshot of the residential demographics of the five neighborhoods. It includes data on population, income, racial and ethnic origin distinguishing among African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Native-American, and Asian, number of housing units, and the percentage of units which are owner- or renter-occupied. The information is based on NRP's aggregation of Census data. 2000 Census data were used when available.

Table 4 illustrates how these five neighborhoods allotted their resources as of Spring 2004. As explained above, allotted resources are funds that are either under contract or obligated in some other form. Allotments are presented in the ten categories used by NRP, to which we added an additional category -1.5 Housing for Homeowners- to distinguish the portion of housing funding where the beneficiaries are homeowners. The final column represents the total amount of NRP funding allotted by each neighborhood from the beginning of its participation in NRP through Spring 2004.[64]

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[64] All the data presented in the tables are available on NRP's website: www.nrp.org.

Table 2: Selected Neighborhoods' NRP Information

Neighborhood Name	Neighborhood Type	Neighborhood Organization Name	Year Neighborhood Organization Established	Participation Agreement Date	Neighborhood Action Plan Date	NRP Phase I Allocations	NRP Phase I Allocations per Household
Linden Hills	Protection	Linden Hills Neighborhood Council	Active since early 1970s	5/2/1994	5/8/1998	$1,762,956	$479.80
Longfellow	Revitalization	Longfellow Community Council	Active since early 1970s	10/18/1993	2/23/1996	$9,299,592	$998.45
McKinley	Revitalization	McKinley Community	1991	1/30/1995	9/26/2003	$505,000	$405.30
Phillips	Redirection	People of Phillips, now four new organizations	Late 1980s-1998, now four organizations	6/10/1991	10/27/1995	$18,089,283	$2,868.13
Whittier	Redirection	Whittier Alliance	1977	3/18/1991	7/24/1992	$7,766,000	$1,146.95

Table 3: Selected Neighborhoods' Demographics

Neighborhood Name	Population 1990	Population 2000	Median Household Income 1990	Percent Persons in Poverty 1990	African Americ 1990	African Americ 2000	Caucasian 1990	Caucasian 2000	Hispanic 1990	Hispanic 2000	Native Americ 1990	Native Americ 2000	Asian 1990	Asian 2000	Number Housing Units 1990	% Owner Occ. 1990	% Renter Occ. 1990
Linden Hills	7,611	7,370	$44,424	2%	1%	1%	96%	94%	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	2%	3,704	63%	35%
Longfellow	21,514	20,602	$28,869	9%	4%	8%	91%	80%	2%	6%	2%	3%	2%	2%	9,654	69%	27%
McKinley	3,280	3,658	$24,205	14%	15%	44%	74%	30%	3%	3%	8%	3%	3%	16%	1,260	68%	27%
Phillips	17,067	19,805	$12,254	39%	21%	29%	46%	32%	4%	22%	23%	12%	8%	6%	7,611	16%	70%
Whittier	12,951	15,247	$17,325	25%	26%	20%	63%	54%	2%	22%	5%	2%	3%	6%	7,628	9%	79%

Table 4: Selected Neighborhoods' Allotment of NRP Resources

Neighborhood Name	0 NRP Coordination	1 Housing	1.5 Housing Homeowners	2 Economic Development	3 Community Building, Art	4 Crime Prevention	5 Transport & Infrastructure	6 Environment	7 Parks & Recreation	8 Human Services	9 School & Libraries	Total Allotted NRP Resources as of Spring 2004
Linden Hills	12.5%	0.0%	14.0%	22.6%	4.6%	0.0%	10.9%	15.8%	2.2%	2.6%	14.8%	$ 1,781,715.00
Longfellow	6%	4%	49%	10%	8%	4%	1%	2%	11%	4%	2%	$ 10,021,578.44
McKinley	27%	26%	8%	4%	5%	9%	1%	3%	0%	14%	3%	$ 882,650.00
Phillips	7%	27%	13%	25%	1%	4%	0%	1%	3%	18%	0%	$ 16,254,006.57
Whittier	9%	42%	9%	10%	1%	0%	0%	0%	13%	3%	12%	$ 8,098,405.25

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 have 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 shows 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 Hmongs 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 then 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."[65]

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[65] Williams, 1985, p. 185.

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 in 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 incorporated a range of other priories 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 Philips as "Minneapolis' 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. Whittier invested part of its NRP resources to build a modern gymnasium, which in turn incentivized Minneapolis 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. Unlike a simple program of neighborhood assistance or devolution, 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 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 prolonged 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 to NRP-related activities 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 de-concentration 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.

Additionally, 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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