



Agenda Item:

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COUNCIL COMMUNICATION City Manager's Office

GENERAL INFORMATION

Agenda Date: 03/28/05
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Communication No.:

Agenda Item Type: Resolution

Roll Call No.:

Submitted by: Larry Hulse, Community Development Director

SUBJECT—

Resolution approving and authorizing the execution of an agreement for professional services between the City of Des Moines and the Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development for an evaluation of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

SYNOPSIS—

The City of Des Moines is entering into an Agreement for Professional Services with the Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development (121 South Pinckney St., Madison, WI 53703, Bill Perkins, Executive Director) for an evaluation of the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development will be partnering with the firm of Stockard Engler Brigham (10 Concord Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, Bob Engler, Principal) who were the original architects of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

FISCAL IMPACT—

The City of Des Moines will contribute \$25,000 towards the cost of the study and related expenses, which is twenty-five percent of the anticipated expenses. The City's contribution will come from Economic Development Enterprise Account. Polk County (via the Polk County Housing Trust Fund), the Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) and the Greater Des Moines Partnership will also each contribute \$25,000 towards the cost of the study and related expenses.

RECOMMENDATION—

Approval

BACKGROUND—

In 1988 the City Council directed staff to proceed with the selection of a housing expert to formulate an effective strategy to prevent further neighborhood decline and to help develop strategies to improve the quality and condition of Des Moines neighborhoods. The result of this Council directive was the hiring of the consulting firm of Stockard & Engler, Inc. to complete an assessment, evaluation and recommendations regarding the housing situation in Des Moines.

The City Council approved the Stockard & Engler's report on housing improvement and neighborhood revitalization on February 16, 1990. As a result of this report (commonly referred to as the Stockard & Engler Report), the Neighborhood Development Division of the Community Development Department was created to administer what is now known as the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The Neighborhood Revitalization Program uses a strategy that calls for neighborhood residents, the City of Des Moines, Polk County, local business leaders, and the Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC) to develop a public/private partnership that addresses revitalization issues in Des Moines. The Stockard & Engler Report also led to the creation of the Neighborhood Finance Corporation, Neighborhood Development Corporation and the Polk County Housing Trust Fund.

In the fifteen years since its inception, twenty of Des Moines' fifty Recognized Neighborhoods have participated in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, which relies on active resident groups to identify critical neighborhood issues such as land use, zoning, housing, infrastructure, economic development and beautification. These issues are prioritized into a neighborhood plan that becomes an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Because of the changing environment in which we live, we are now at a juncture where it is appropriate to evaluate the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. There are many circumstances that have changed since the original Stockard & Engler Report was approved in 1990, and new issues are emerging that will significantly impact the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. Therefore, several key persons involved with the Neighborhood Revitalization Program felt it would be prudent to invite Stockard & Engler back to Des Moines to evaluate the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. They would determine if the City and County's investment has provided both a qualitative and quantitative return on investment, and recommend changes to improve the Program's effectiveness and its future in this changing environment and at a time of diminishing resources.

Stockard & Engler, Inc., now known as Stockard Engler Brigham, LLC, is very interested in working with the City of Des Moines on the project. Stockard Engler Brigham will partner with the Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, which was involved in the original Stockard & Engler Report, for the completion of the project. The Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development will be the contracting entity for this project.

There are several key issues that will be examined by the consultants:

- Are the recommendations from the Stockard & Engler Report still valid?
- Are the structures and organizations the City utilizes to promote neighborhood revitalization successful? (Neighborhood Revitalization Board (NRB), Neighborhood Finance Corporation (NFC), Neighborhood Development Corporation (NDC), Neighborhood Planning, Neighborhood Infrastructure Rehabilitation Program (NIRP), Neighborhood Based Service Delivery (NBSD), neighborhood organizations)
- What has not worked or not been done from the original recommendations from the Stockard & Engler report?
- What strategies should be used to revitalize neighborhood commercial areas?
- What significant changes have occurred in Polk County over the last fifteen years that impact neighborhood revitalization?
- Are there citywide issues, such as abandoned housing, that effect neighborhoods that should be addressed?
- Local lenders' business practices have become more liberal due to Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) regulations, and there has also been an emergence of lending programs that focus on underwriting for high-risk homeowners, but not providing money for renovation. How does this impact neighborhood revitalization?
- Is the capacity of neighborhood organizations adequate to continue the current model of neighborhood revitalization? Are neighborhoods developing new leadership to replace some of the veteran leadership who has been the advocates for the neighborhood movement?
- How have the changes in both the elected leadership and the priorities of local government affected the Neighborhood Revitalization Program?

The evaluation of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program will be collaborative and involve all the key stakeholders who have either invested in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program over the last fifteen years or are significantly impacted by the Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

The City will coordinate the project. The consultant will work with two committees made up of representatives from the stakeholders listed below. The first group consists of fourteen individuals who are either a member of a board identified below or an elected official. These individuals will serve as the Steering Committee and be responsible for oversight and final report recommendations.

- Des Moines City Council– 2 representatives
- Polk County Board of Supervisor–2 representatives
- Des Moines Community Foundation – 1 representative
- Neighborhood Revitalization Board –2 representatives
- Neighborhood Finance Corporation Board - 2 representatives
- Neighborhood Development Corporation Board – 1 representative
- Non-Profit partners – 1 representative
- Des Moines Neighbors –1 representative
- Greater Des Moines Partnership –2 representatives
- Polk County Housing Trust Fund –1 representative

The second group will serve as a Technical Advisory Committee and will work directly with the Consultant to develop the recommendations, identify all the appropriate issues to be addressed, and who should be involved. Possible members for this committee should include but not limited to as follows:

Larry Hulse – Community Development Director
Steve Gunson – Deputy Director, Community Development
Kathy Kahoun – Neighborhood Development Administrator
Gary Dodge – NFC Executive Director
Carol Bower – NDC Executive Director
Shelia Lumley – Polk County Housing Trust Fund Executive Director
Mike Matthes - Assistant City Manager (NBSD Coordinator)
Pam Carmichael - Non-Profit Housing Provider
Mike Frielinger - Polk County

The Consultant will also conduct focus group meetings with special interest groups such as developers, financial institutions, designated neighborhoods and others. There will also be community meetings that will be open to all interested parties.

The City of Des Moines, Polk County (via the Polk County Housing Trust Fund), Neighborhood Finance Corporation and the Greater Des Moines Partnership will each contribute \$25,000 towards the cost of the study and related expenses, which could include production costs, outside research or additional work by the Consultants not covered by this agreement.