

RECOMMENDATIONS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION TASK FORCE*Self  
Evaluation*INTRODUCTION

The Citizen Participation Task Force was proposed by Community Development staff members, William Q. Patton, Deputy Director of Community Development, and Jerry Jenkins, Citizen Participation Coordinator, to the Finance Committee of the City Council, June 12, 1986, at the time the City Council was considering 1986-87 funding for Citizen Participation.

The staff proposal grew out of concern for the heavy reliance on federal dollars (Community Development Block Grant funds) to support Citizen Participation in a period of steadily decreasing CDBG dollars, the decline of other City funding sources, and the fact that changing federal regulations no longer mandate a formal Citizen Participation process.

The City Council, and subsequently the Mayor, agreed that it was time to establish a task force of concerned citizens to examine the City's Citizen Participation process, its future, and to make recommendations by May of 1987 to the Mayor and City Council regarding the process and how it should continue to be funded.

TASK FORCE MISSION

The first step for the Citizen Participation Task Force was to understand and agree on its mission. The group agreed to the following mission statement: The Citizen Participation Task Force mission is to examine the City of Saint Paul's Citizen Participation process and its funding and to recommend ways to maintain an effective Citizen Participation process into the 1990's. This mission is important and timely and is primarily in response to the City's significant reduction of CDBG and other financial resources, but the task is not restricted only to funding and maintenance issues. Broadly,

the Task Force goal is to recommend ways to build on the strengths of the existing Citizen Participation process and to stabilize and strengthen the role of neighborhoods in the City's future.

#### PROCESS

The Citizen Participation Task Force followed the Twin Cities' Citizen's League model in conducting its meetings. Resource people were invited in to provide background on the Citizen Participation process - its beginning, its financial support, its planning role and where other sources of income might be tapped. These presentations were followed by Task Force discussions of the strengths, weaknesses and essential elements for an effective Citizen Participation process.

#### CONSENSUS

Consensus was reached on the following issues:

1. Saint Paul's Citizen Participation process serves a public purpose; therefore, it is appropriate to use public dollars to support the process.

In a democracy, citizens have the right and responsibility to be informed and to participate in governmental decision-making.

Basic costs of providing access to information and assuring an effective participation process are properly borne by the public which is served.

2. Saint Paul's Citizen Participation process is flexible and offers opportunities for growth and change over time.

The Task Force concluded that there were no compelling reasons to specify changes on any of the following:

- a) number and boundaries of Citizen Participation Districts

- b) the Early Notification System
- c) the advisory role of the District Councils.

The Task Force clearly supports continuation of a Citywide network of community councils for participatory planning and communication as set forth by City Council Resolution.

In 1987, it is, however, appropriate to formally recognize a broader role for the 17 District Councils than planning and communicating and to recognize the inherent responsibilities which accompany this growth and change.

- 3. An equitable formula provides a satisfactory way to fairly distribute Citizen Participation funds among districts.

The formula factors are 1980 population, 1979 Saint Paul median family income, and 1981 Housing Condition Survey. The base amount for each Citizen Participation District is currently at \$18,400. The Task Force sees no reason to change the factors.

#### OVERALL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Citizen Participation process should be continued. The long-range goal is for a stable base of funding which is not totally dependent on the political process.

#### Major Conclusions About Existing Process

- 1. The process serves a public purpose; therefore, it is appropriate to use public dollars to support the process.
- 2. The Early Notification System is an essential element in the process.
- 3. The number and boundaries and the process for changing boundaries of the Citizen Participation Districts are satisfactory.

4. The position of Citizen Participation Coordinator is essential to the process and is appropriately a Civil Service position.
5. The District Councils serve an important advisory role in Saint Paul's decision-making process.
6. The District Councils choose issues and organize Citizen Participation activities in an inclusive and nonpartisan manner.
7. The District Councils participate in planning and are an essential part of Saint Paul's communication network.
8. Important initiatives in planning, program development and implementation rise up from neighborhood groups, coalitions of neighborhood organizations and District Councils. (Some examples: recycling, Block Nurse Program, alley cleanups, block organizations, crime prevention programs, job training and maintaining a neighborhood Skills Bank.)
9. Funding for District Councils is determined by formula so that District Councils do not have to compete for an equitable, stable base of funding.

#### Summary of Recommendations for Modification

1. A clear statement of district roles and responsibilities will strengthen and stabilize the Citizen Participation process; therefore, the Citizen Participation Task Force recommends that each of the seventeen (17) Citizen Participation Districts adopt the following statement by July 1, 1987:

"The District Council's roles and responsibilities beyond planning and communication should be stated as follows:

The Citizen Participation Districts will be the geographic unit for articulation to City government of neighborhood priorities.

The District Councils will serve as a clearinghouse for all interested groups in the district, making sure that there is broad participation by individual residents and community organizations in the identification of neighborhood needs. The District Council, in the process of establishing its priorities, will explicitly define the neighborhood issues, projects, programs for which the District Council will directly manage and/or monitor, and those that are more appropriately managed and/or monitored by other neighborhood organizations. Those issues, projects and/or programs for which the District Council is directly accountable or that require District Council approval will be monitored by the District Council."

2. The Citizen Participation Task Force recommends that chairs or designated representatives of Citizen Participation Districts meet together within this calendar year to reach agreement on which operating documents are essential in maintaining healthy, fundable organizations. Standard policies and procedures regarding personnel issues, conflict of interest, nonpartisanship, financial management, accountability, representation of area served, and political candidacies of board members, for example, would be considered. The Citizen Participation Task Force recommends that the Citizen Participation Coordinator call the first meeting.
3. The Citizen Participation Task Force recommends that the present funding formula be recalculated when new, usable data is available. (Presently, the factors are based on 1979 Saint Paul median family income, 1980 population and the 1981 Housing Condition Survey which may not be

precise but are usable and available.)

4. The Citizen Participation Task Force (CPTF) recommends that the base amount of the formula should be adequate to support the equivalent of a full-time organizer in each of the Citizen Participation Districts.
5. The CPTF recommends that the current base amount (\$18,400) of the funding formula should be adjusted each year to reflect the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index (CPI).
6. The CPTF recommends that the Saint Paul Department of Planning & Economic Development prepare a request to private funders to hire an expert to research ways to increase financial support for the Citizen Participation system and the administration and distribution of those new funds within the Citizen Participation system. This request should be completed and distributed to private funders by October 1, 1987.
7. The CPTF recommends that the City of Saint Paul establish a policy that unused space in public buildings will be a low-cost option for rental by District Councils. Further, the Mayor and City Council are encouraged to ask the School District and the County to provide this option also.
8. The CPTF recommends that the City of Saint Paul provide access to a series of appropriate training courses for Community Organizers and citizen participators on a regular, rotational basis through the Community Development Division.
9. The CPTF recommends that the City of Saint Paul establish a policy to assist District Councils in capital expenditures for equipment purchases through group purchase discounts and/or deferred payments.

10. The CPTF recommends that a City-wide task force be established by the Planning Commission to review the Early Notification System, its legal constraints, its notification requirements and other related factors and to recommend changes (if any) to further strengthen the system and process. This work should be completed before January 1988.
11. The CPTF recommends that the goals, objectives and activities be submitted along with District Councils' annual budget requests and that the District Councils also submit an annual review and report to the Mayor and City Council on their previous year's goals, objectives and activities.
12. The CPTF recommends that District Councils make a good faith effort to raise additional funds from the people who live and work within their district boundary lines. This effort provides the opportunity to acquaint people with the Citizen Participation District's service to the community.

#### NEXT STEP

Copies of these recommendations of the CPTF will be distributed through the Early Notification System and the District Councils and will be available in the Community Development Division, 14th floor City Hall Annex.

Consideration and approval to implement these recommendations will be requested of the Mayor, the City Council and the District Councils during the period of May 1, 1987 - July 1, 1987 which coincides with the period of consideration of the Citizen Participation District budgets for 1987 - 1988.

The Citizen Participation Coordinator and members of the CPTF will be "on call" to receive comments and answer questions.

The CPTF members will serve as advocates of these recommendations.

April 23, 1987

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