

# our streets MPLS

---

## Bring Back 6th Housing & Community Development Benchmarks & Policy Platform

To repair the harm caused by Olson Memorial Highway, the Bring Back 6th campaign seeks to reverse the impacts of racist and classist policies that dictated the highway route and shaped the current economic and environmental realities of Near-North neighborhoods along the corridor. Throughout Minneapolis' history, intentional policy decisions helped some neighborhoods prosper at the expense of others. Redlining and racially restrictive covenants dictated where anyone considered not white could live, and where public and private investments were distributed. Lending and marketing strategies were aimed to exclude people of color, immigrants, and Jews, [forcing them to locate in specific areas designated as “hazardous” or “definitely declining”](#) by the Homeowners Loan Corporation.

As a result, Near-North was one of the only areas in the city where people of color and Jews could own property. When highway planners decided the route for Olson Highway, they intentionally targeted Harrison and the Near-North communities for demolition—displacing residents and businesses, destroying generational wealth and devastating the existing black, immigrant, and low-income communities. Despite the repeal of explicitly racist housing policies and transportation planning practices, the effects of such decisions are still felt today in Harrison and are reflected in the Twin Cities' [worst-in-the-nation](#) racial disparities.

Intentionally harmful government policymaking and public disinvestment created these disparities; it will take intentionally reparative policymaking and active public investment to reverse them. This is why the Bring Back 6th vision is centered in a reparative justice framework that calls for large-scale public investments and policies capable of solving the large-scale problems caused by Olson Memorial Highway.

**We will continue to organize community around the following policies and benchmarks as part of our vision to Bring Back 6th:**

### **Using Public Land for the Public Good**

The Bring Back 6th campaign opposes the sale of public land for private profit. Any publicly-owned land vacated through the highway removal process should remain publicly-owned and be developed as mixed-use public housing and commercial space.

### **Expand Public Housing**

- While policies like rent control (see below) provide a much-needed mechanism for controlling rent increases in the private rental market, the best way to ensure long-term housing stability and affordability is to build more public housing.

- Over half of Minneapolis' low-income tenants, and over a third of Minneapolis' moderate-income tenants, are considered "cost-burdened," meaning over 30% of their income is spent on housing.
- Public housing is not only attainable for low-income residents, but it guarantees affordability by capping rental payments to 30% of the tenant's actual monthly income, thereby ensuring tenants are not cost-burdened.
- The Bring Back 6th vision seeks to rebuild public housing units that were destroyed by the Hollman consent decree of 1998 which demolished 770 units of public housing and displaced over 400 families from the Near-North communities along Olson Highway.

### **Publicly-Owned Commercial Real Estate**

- Commercial space developed on vacated highway land should remain publicly-owned and provide low-cost lease opportunities for local entrepreneurs and small business owners.

### **Community Gardens**

- City-owned community garden lots provide much-needed access to fresh and healthy produce as well as space for residents to build community connections. Unfortunately, these city-owned garden lots are under constant threat of sale for private development.
- Bring Back 6th seeks to protect existing community gardens as a public health asset by advocating for a moratorium on the sale of city-owned community garden lots within the 6th Avenue North corridor.

### **Equitable Community-Driven Development**

Development of privately-owned land within the new 6th Avenue corridor must benefit existing residents and serve the needs of the Harrison and Near-North communities.

### **Inclusionary Zoning**

- Inclusionary zoning is a common policy both locally and nationally for promoting mixed-income housing. Developers of new multifamily housing are required to include a certain percentage of affordable units in their buildings and put long-term affordability protections in place.
- Minneapolis' current inclusionary zoning policy does not require developers to build enough affordable units for low or moderate-income renters. The requirement of 8% of units at 60% AMI or 4% of units at 30% AMI has produced very few affordable units within the Harrison neighborhood. Of the nearly 1,000 units of housing built, under construction, or currently proposed in Harrison since 2018, roughly 50 are affordable for the median Harrison household earning \$34,000/year.
- The Bring Back 6th vision calls for an inclusionary zoning policy that would require at least 30% of all new housing units developed on privately owned land

be affordable to and occupied by households with an income at or below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) with affordability requirements guaranteed for a minimum of 30 years.

### **Residential and Commercial Community Land Trusts**

- Community Land Trusts provide perpetually affordable residential and commercial ownership opportunities by acquiring land and removing it from the speculative, for-profit, real estate market.
- The Bring Back 6th campaign advocates for expanded government funding for Community and Commercial Land Trusts to enable the acquisition of privately-owned land within the 6th Avenue corridor and to prioritize homeownership and commercial property ownership opportunities for local BIPOC residents, entrepreneurs, and business owners.

### **Local Business Incubator Program**

- Bring Back 6th supports the creation of a government-funded program to help local entrepreneurs and small business owners establish and grow their businesses and utilize the economic opportunities created by a renewed 6th Avenue North.
- Funds should be prioritized for local BIPOC businesses and entrepreneurs to repair the deep historic disinvestment that communities along the corridor have faced from all levels of government.
- Government funds should be leveraged to assist businesses in ensuring that their spaces are fully accessible and ADA-compliant.

### **Anti-Displacement Policies and Tenant Protections**

All too often, public infrastructure improvements in areas of historic disinvestment lead to the displacement of existing residents and businesses. To ensure that the benefits of highway removal and a revived 6th Avenue North accrue to current residents, we need to enact strong anti-displacement policies and tenant protections.

#### **Rent Control**

- A strong rent control proposal that reins in the greed of corporate landlords, developers, and land speculators, caps rent increases to no more than 3% a year, applies to all units regardless of age or size of building, and prohibits vacancy decontrol will help keep Harrison and Near-North renters in the community and ensure that, after years of disinvestment, current residents get to benefit from the infrastructure improvements and new investments that will accompany highway removal.

#### **Just Cause Eviction**

- Just cause eviction eliminates a landlord's ability to terminate a tenant's lease at-will and instead requires landlords to give a justifiable reason for not renewing a tenant's lease.

### **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Agreement (TOPA)**

- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase gives tenants the right to purchase their building when their landlord decides to sell.
- Decades of redlining and racial covenants in Minneapolis prevented BIPOC residents from becoming homeowners and the results of those policies are reflected in our wide racial gap in homeownership rates.
- Increasingly, affordable homeownership opportunities are being stripped away from would-be BIPOC homebuyers as corporate investment firms buy up single-family homes and convert them to unaffordable rentals.
- Bring Back 6th supports a strong TOPA policy that applies universally to all units regardless of the size of the building or number of rental licenses held by the landlord seeking to sell the property and that allows tenants to sell or assign their rights to another buyer.

### **Inclusive Hiring Goals**

**The Bring Back 6th project should include construction labor hours of 30% women and 48% people of color, with one third of the total workforce recruited from the surrounding neighborhoods of the Bring Back 6th project corridor. Furthermore, at least 10% of the project labor hours should be conducted by people with a disability and substandard wages for disabled workers must be eliminated.**

#### *Rationale:*

- Hennepin County currently has a benchmark of project labor hours 20% women and 32% people of color. Given the specific neighborhood demographics of the Bring Back 6th Olson Memorial Highway project corridor, we should set a higher bar than these goals
- In 2019, Governor Walz signed an [executive order](#) tasking Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) with developing best practices for recruitment and retention for individuals with disabilities.
- These goals are needed to ensure that project job opportunities actually benefit the local neighborhoods and spark a diverse workforce that can advance our region's effort to increase diversity on construction projects
- Accountability should be built in to ensure contractors and agencies deliver on these goals. A [recent Star Tribune report](#) showed that no penalties are currently in place for failing to meet inclusive hiring goals and that participation goals are rarely met.
- Investment in workforce partnership is needed to achieve these goals. Construction workforce training programs already exist across the Metro. MnDOT and project partners

must adopt best practices for attracting and retaining diverse candidates in the trades, including listening to local communities' experiences with workforce programs and employers.

- MnDOT should also support local construction business owners as a strategy for developing the local workforce.
- Construction businesses owned by women and people of color are best positioned to mobilize diverse workforces and change the industry.
- Partnering with existing small business support organizations and lenders also can help diverse entrepreneurs build their capacity for growth.

### **Universal Design**

- All project design features should be fully accessible and comfortable for all ages and abilities and should abide by the principles of [universal design](#)
- These features include but are not limited to:
  - Wide sidewalks and pathways (10 feet minimum)
  - Attenuated acoustic environment
  - Areas for socializing, including protection from the elements
  - Quiet places of enclosure
  - Multi-modal transportation options
  - Perpendicular tactile paving to clearly indicate hazards and provide clear wayfinding for all users
  - Well-lit and consistent lighting
  - Pedestrian safety islands and frequent, comfortable crossings
  - Frequent public seating with arms
  - Green infrastructure

### **Construction Impacts**

- A fund should be established to support existing businesses along the project corridor throughout the project construction process
- MnDOT, Metro Transit and all project partners should collaborate to ensure that transportation access along and cross the corridor, whether by walking and rolling, biking, public transit or driving, is preserved for local residents throughout the construction process
- In advance of the project start date, a plan for mitigating these impacts should be developed and presented to the public
- This plan must include a specific focus on the potential impacts on disabled residents within the project corridor

### **Municipal IDs**

- Providing municipal IDs can promote public safety for our most vulnerable communities, which include unhoused residents, youth, low-income elderly, and undocumented

residents. Lack of identification is a huge barrier to resources from both public and private entities.

- Fear around the lack of identification can inhibit undocumented residents from interacting with law enforcement when they are victims of crime or workplace violations like wage theft.

### **Licenses for All**

- Excluding undocumented residents from obtaining a driver's license has significant impacts that are beyond just driving. It excludes people from a range of opportunities such as jobs, quality housing, and harms the public safety system by creating pockets of communities vulnerable to criminalization for participating in our communities
- Research supports that licenses for all can have positive effects for the community as a whole. Increased access to businesses for both consumers and employees strengthens the local economy.

### **Zero Fare Transit**

- A new rapid transit line with dedicated lanes along 6th Avenue North would significantly expand transit access for residents along the corridor
- This transit line should be used to pilot zero-fare transit, also known as fare-free transit, to encourage ridership, eliminate transportation barriers and address inequities in fare enforcement, as has been demonstrated in cities like Kansas City and Boston
- Fare enforcement is often used as a pretext to stop and harass Black, brown and Indigenous transit riders. [Data has shown](#) that Metro Transit police issue citations at a higher rate to people of color, while white transit riders are much more likely to receive a warning.
- Transit fare enforcement costs far more than the value of the fines that are issued
- Investing in public transportation access by eliminating fares is a far better use of tax dollars than criminalizing the access of those who cannot afford it
- The new transit and connecting lines should be fully accessible and designed to close the gap in public transportation access for people with disabilities

### **Public Engagement & Community Consent**

- All project information and updates should be communicated to local residents and businesses via a variety of mediums and all major languages along the corridor
- Public comments should be actively solicited throughout the project process in a manner that is accessible and understandable to all, including accessibility best practices that allow for all members of the community to participate. These include but are not limited to: ASL and language interpreters as needed, alternative forms of communication for non-speakers, closed captions and physical accessibility as needed.
- MnDOT project staff should not use leading or confusing questions during public engagement and should fully explain all of the potential project alternatives and the costs and benefits associated with them

- Public comment sessions should be more frequent and should be held during varying times of the day and week to make it easier for working class people to attend.
- Project leadership and staff should make themselves available for public forums and comment sessions at the request of community groups and advocacy organizations
- A community working group should be created to oversee the engagement process and ensure that the project is effectively meeting community needs. Membership should include advocacy organizations that work on issues of transportation, housing, accessibility or disability justice and environmental justice, neighborhood organizations from the project corridor and community members. Membership should be representative of the project area in race, income and disability.
- 100% of the households in the project area should be contacted in writing and electronically in advance of key project deadlines, including the selection of the preferred alternative. Written notice should be written in plain language to allow for ease of understanding and accessibility.
- Through this engagement, project staff should achieve and be able to publicly demonstrate a minimum 60% approval rate from a population representative of the project area in race, income and disability before selecting a preferred alternative.