

City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County Housing & Community Development Benchmarks & Policy Platform

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. The effects of such decisions are still felt today 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 our advocacy 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 past decisions.

We will continue to organize community around the following policies and benchmarks as part of our advocacy on City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County projects:

Using Public Land for the Public Good

We oppose the sale of public land for private profit. Any publicly-owned land vacated or otherwise impacted by a transportation project 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.

Publicly-Owned Commercial Real Estate

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

Community Gardens

- City and County 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 garden lots are under constant threat of sale for private development
- We seek to protect existing community gardens as a public health asset by advocating for a moratorium on the sale of City and County owned community garden lots

Equitable Community-Driven Development

Development of privately-owned land along new transportation investments must benefit existing residents and serve the needs of the surrounding community

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 neighborhoods where they are most needed.
- We are calling 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
- Land trusts are an important tool for preventing the gentrification and displacement that often results from a major transportation investment
- We are advocating for expanded government funding for Community and Commercial Land Trusts to enable the acquisition of privately-owned land within major project corridors and to prioritize homeownership and commercial property

ownership opportunities for local BIPOC residents, entrepreneurs, and business owners

Local Business Incubator Program

- We support 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 major City and County transportation investments
- Funds should be prioritized for local BIPOC businesses and entrepreneurs to repair the years of deep historic disinvestment
- Government funds should be leveraged to assist businesses in ensuring that business 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 transportation investments like new transit lines and street reconstructions 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 existing renters in the community and ensure that current residents get to benefit from the infrastructure improvements and the new investments that result.

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.

- We support 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

City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County transportation projects should implement robust benchmarks for construction labor hours by people of color, women, people from surrounding neighborhoods and disabled workers. Furthermore, substandard wages for disabled workers must be eliminated.

Hennepin County currently has a benchmark of project labor hours 20% women and 32% people of color. We ask that these goals be updated to include targets that one third of project labor hours be conducted by workers from the surrounding communities and and 10% of project labor hours be conducted by people with a disability. These benchmarks should be increased to reflect neighborhood demographics for projects in diverse communities.

Both the City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County Public Works Department should provide regular reports on the status of these hiring targets for each project.

Rationale:

- 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 metropolitan area. The City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County must adopt best practices for attracting and retaining diverse candidates in the trades, including listening to local communities' experiences with workforce programs and employers.
- The City and County 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
- These features are essential and must be prioritized for every City and County street reconstruction project

Construction Impacts

- For major projects that disrupt local access, a fund should be established to support existing businesses along the project corridor throughout the construction process
- 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

- We ask that the City create municipal IDs for Minneapolis residents
- 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

- The City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County should make Driver's Licenses for All a priority policy issue at the state legislature
- 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

- The City of Minneapolis and Hennepin County should work together to pilot zero-fare transit, also known as fare-free transit, to encourage transit 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