

September 18, 2020

Dear Community Partners—

Thank you for reaching out to our offices.

The killing of George Floyd sparked worldwide outrage and led to destruction from civil unrest on a scale seldom experienced in our nation's history. It was an unprecedented situation which local and metro resources did not have the capacity to control, and which proved difficult even for a full deployment of the Minnesota National Guard.

As the civil unrest unfolded, the City of Minneapolis worked to respond on multiple fronts to aid in recovery beyond first responder roles. This included closing off intersections, hauling debris from streets, shutting off utilities to impacted properties, and restoring basic services as fast as possible.

City staff immediately began the task of assessing damage, evaluating more than 850 impacted properties and determining what resources could be pursued to help, from property tax relief to aid under the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Within days we coordinated with our legislators to organize tours of the damage for State and Federal officials and pushed for support for the impacted businesses, residents, and property owners. We continue that lobbying effort and were happy to see the Minnesota House pass the PROMISE Act, which establishes \$300 million in support and implements other helpful measures, including those aimed at preventing displacement of the many beloved small businesses. Unfortunately, the Minnesota Senate has refused to provide these needed resources despite the solid support of the Governor and our Minneapolis Senate delegation. Additionally, we coordinated with many entities to help restore vital community assets as quickly as possible, including access to groceries, medicine, and postal delivery and service. Much of this work has been in partnership with community-based organizations, other government entities, and officials at every level, with whom we continue to collaborate with full appreciation for the many significant contributions these partners bring to our communities. More information on our response to date is posted and updated here: www.minneapolismn.gov/recovery.

In June, the Mayor and City Council acted to waive fees, speed up internal business processes, and prioritize individuals and entities affected by the civil unrest. As part of both the response to the pandemic and to the civil unrest, the City provided thousands of hours of technical support to 645 businesses, of which 79% are owned by Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) residents. At the onset of the pandemic, we allocated emergency gap funding which included forgivable loans targeted for BIPOC businesses hit hardest by COVID-19.

The Mayor and Council Vice President launched the Minneapolis Forward Community Now Coalition that worked to create solutions, strategies, and tactics for immediate and long-term economic transformation, recovery, and healing of Minneapolis. This work centers racial equity. That coalition includes leaders from regional businesses, cultural institutions, community organizations, and foundations who are rooted in the expertise and experiences of our BIPOC and immigrant communities. Their work includes retaining existing businesses, supporting entrepreneurs, preserving housing, addressing the immediate needs of impacted residents, reimagining public spaces, and more. The Coalition announced its first set of recommendations in August. You can find more information on the Coalition and review their work here: www.minneapolismn.gov/minneapolisforward.

We know Longfellow Community Council and other partners are launching an effort to plan for the rebuilding around Lake & Minnehaha. We have also been brought into conversations led by several property owners, an effort calling itself Longfellow Rising. This is exciting work and we are interested in supporting such community-led efforts as well as exploring what a formal City recognition of this work could look like. A potential immediate next step might be to move a resolution through the Council to formally recognize these organizing efforts and commit City participation and support to these important, community-led efforts. We would be happy to work with you and the other community stakeholders who are providing leadership at this intersection on this potential resolution and know that conversations have already started outside of this letter. We also want to express our appreciation and thanks to the community groups who are leading these important efforts.

We agree the building which housed the MPD 3rd Precinct is a critical consideration for the future of this area. Staff is still assessing the damage to that building and will make a recommendation on whether the structure is salvageable. No official decisions have been made as we await this report. That said, we recognize that the building has a lot of traumatic associations both for community and for City staff. We are committed to partnering with community to seek diverse input before any decisions are made on future land use for the site.

Related to these many recovery and rebuilding efforts is the need to resolve longstanding racial disparities in policing which have caused harm and pain, ultimately helping to create the conditions for the civil unrest we saw. The Mayor and Council both share a commitment to realizing transformational change in policing and utilizing a racial equity lens in this work. The actions taken to this point, only some of which are highlighted in this letter, reflect the beginning of what must be a committed, long-term, holistic transformation that involves the direct participation of community. Our journey has only begun. This is a start, and our City must and will continue to move forward, and we welcome your partnership in this work.

As we promised, the City will be engaging residents over the next year to seek their input on how to reimagine our public safety system. Ensuring that engagement with over 400,000 residents is authentic, actionable, reaches people in different ways, and centers the most oppressed voices is an enormous undertaking and requires significant thought, infrastructure, and resources. While many individual elected officials have already begun engaging on this topic with their communities, the formal and centralized City effort to carry this work is expected to launch this fall. The Mayor and Council are uniting together to begin to implement this city-wide engagement effort. Our shared vision for public safety depends upon all voices being heard in this comprehensive engagement process.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that there have been areas where all levels of government, including the City, have fallen short of expectations. The pandemic has challenged our City in unprecedented ways, from the largest revenue shortfall in history, which created a budget crisis, to the difficulties of many staff working remotely who must also now deal with the additional workload of supervising distance learning or providing childcare. None of us expected that on top of this extraordinary state of emergency we would face another crisis, and on a scale of destruction larger than anything seen before in our state. The horrific events of May and June greatly exceeded the limited capacity of local government to respond. Unfortunately, and very frustratingly, so much of the support that would normally come from the state and federal government is being blocked by what appears to be partisan politics. All of this, taken together, resulted in some things moving far slower than any of us wanted, or things we would have liked to have happened not being possible. We know that the best forms of change must be built on a solid foundation. We stand together in our commitment to create this solid foundation. And when it comes to communication, we recognize more needs to be done to share the many things we have and are doing, which is why we greatly appreciate you reaching out with your letter and giving us the opportunity to share.

We remain committed to helping recover and rebuild stronger than before and we welcome any direct feedback from you or any residents on how we can do better.

Thank you again, and please let us know if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Mayor & City Council
City of Minneapolis