

Metropolitan Council Community Development Committee Discusses 2021 Budget

The Metropolitan Council's Community Development Committee (CDC) is reviewing its current budget and impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic as it plans a 2021 operating budget. The committee discussed the budget, the Metro Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and parks funding on August 17.

The Metro HRA continues to face a structural deficit. Federal funds for housing assistance lag one year and rental rates continue to rise. In 2020, the Council adopted higher rent limits and allowed small area fair market rents, recognizing rent variances throughout the region. The Council placed a hold on new voucher issuance, as of July 9, meaning no new vouchers have been issued in the past month. Council staff have also received additional change requests due to household income changes, likely due to COVID-19.

For 2021 the Council will decide how to spend federal housing funds to meet regional needs. As in previous years, decisions include determining rent limits, whether to reduce the number of vouchers issued and whether to reduce choice in where in the region voucher holders can rent a home. The Council will set two budget items in October, rent standards and a utility allowance, that will inform the 2021 budget.

The CDC also looked at parks interest earnings. Prior to 2018, all parks interest earnings were statutorily dedicated to support North Mississippi Regional Park. Since 2018, all interest earned on Regional Parks system appropriations to the Met Council are directed to be used for all open space lands under the Council's jurisdiction. There is currently \$1.4 million in one-time funds available that can be used for operating costs or capital purposes. The funds can be passed through to the regional park implementing agencies or spent by the Council. Councilmembers discussed possible spending options before they will finalize a decision that will be made later this year.

The CDC and other Council divisions will continue to discuss capital and operating budgets this fall before passing a final 2021 budget on December 9. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-366-7564 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

MN Brownfields Accepting Applications for Brownfield Redevelopment Awards

Minnesota Brownfields is accepting applications for recognizing brownfield redevelopment projects. If your city has a project it would like highlighted, consider submitting it for this year's ReScape Awards.

Award Categories

Community Impact Award: Projects achieving notable community benefits, placing a high value on community outreach, incorporating equitable approaches, improving quality-of-life issues, and/or using other social innovations or public policy initiatives.

Economic Impact Award: Projects modeling positive economic impacts for cities and neighborhoods involving community wealth creation, job or housing creation, increase in tax base, and/or promotion of smart growth.

Environmental Impact Award: Projects innovatively preventing environmental contaminant exposures, incorporating engineered barriers, sustainable building approaches, and/or natural resource restoration.

Promising Project Award: Projects currently underway or even stalled, which have shown innovative solutions to complex challenges, and promise substantial community, economic or environmental impacts upon completion.

Innovation Award: Projects employing unique and innovative approaches to redevelopment challenges related to engineering, financing, legal, community outreach, or other issues.

Minnesota Brownfields will also develop brief, professional promotional videos about the winning projects to disseminate information about brownfield redevelopment and the positive transformations it creates for individuals and communities, across the state.

Cities may submit [Letter of Interest nominations](#) and talk with Minnesota Brownfields staff before submitting full applications. The deadline for letters of interest has been extended into late August. More information can be found by emailing rescapeaward@mbrownfields.org.

TAB Approves TIP, Hears Updates on ABRT and Regional Solicitation

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) approved the 2021-24 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) this week. By federal regulation, the TIP must be developed at least every four years. The Metropolitan Council revises its TIP every year in conjunction with the Minnesota Department of Transportation's State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Federal law requires that all transportation projects that will be partially funded with federal funds must be in an approved Transportation Improvement Program and meet the following four tests: fiscal constraint, consistency with the adopted regional transportation plan (TPP), air quality conformity and opportunity for public input.

The TAB was presented with public comments on the TIP. Staff noted that they received a higher than usual number of comments. Staff explained that many comments related to policy and project selection and will be used to make adjustments to the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP). To view the final 2021-2024 TIP, click [here](#).

The TAB also heard an update on the Regional Solicitation including the Network Next process and Regional Solicitation Policy work group. The group is made up of TAB members and is considering a request by staff to delay the selection of the F Line ABRT route. Network Next is a 20-year plan for the Metro Transit bus network. Due to the pandemic and its impact on public engagement, the working group recommends delaying selection of the route that will become the F Line from December 2020 to April of 2021, to allow more time for public outreach. The ABRT program was created in the last Regional Solicitation and is intended to fully fund an ABRT project in the current Solicitation, which included the creation of a public outreach strategy and timeline. Many TAB members expressed support for extending the timeline for a decision on the project until April. The recommendation to delay a decision until April will be before the TAB at their September meeting. To view the presentation presented to the committee, click [here](#). Staff also presented an update on the Regional Solicitation scoring process to the TAB. The application deadline was May 15th. The eight scoring committees have been meeting in June, July and August. Scoring committees have done some outreach to applicants for clarification on projects. The Final draft of scores will be considered by the Funding and Programming Committee

of the Technical Advisory Committee. Applicants will be able to appeal before scores are finalized by Funding and Programming in September.

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