Dania Partners Round Table
Memorandum of Understanding
August 30, 2006

Context:

The Cedar Riverside Neighborhood of Minneapolis is home to many recent immigrant communities. It is the fourth poorest neighborhood in the City and has obvious signs of physical blight but has been unable to attract public funds to address its problems. At the same time, neighborhood democratic institutions have faltered and failed to include immigrant communities in their processes.

Several existing immigrant-focused organizations are well suited to engage their own constituents in a broader democratic process but lack the resources to move beyond their present focus to participate in neighborhood-wide, cross cultural process.

The Dania Hall site is an important symbol of the neighborhood’s history of welcoming immigrants and building community across many cultures. The planned renovation of historic Dania Hall, which ended in a tragic fire before the work was done, envisioned a new community center for all groups and was widely supported in the community. The Dania Mosaic Pillar project also honored the spirit of the diverse community and enjoyed wide spread support.

The site is now vacant but owned by the City. If a building is built there that truly reflects the aspirations of our immigrant communities, it would make a powerful positive statement about who we are as a community.

Concepts

Many Languages/One Voices: If the neighborhood is to develop the political influence needed to attract resources, the diverse communities within it must find a way to talk to one another and come to agreements among themselves that will create unity. The often challenging task of planning for action is complicated by the diversity of languages and culture; a process of multicultural conversation must be developed that will allow this single voice to emerge. This voice will express a vision for Dania and create the political influence to realize that vision.

Community Links/Round Table: To be successful this conversation must include outreach to people in their everyday lives and to community leaders who can engage in strategic discussions with leaders from other groups. There are many people places, like ESL classes and coffee shops, where people gather and are usually willing to talk. To reach people in these places, the process needs language and culturally specific link people to ask questions and deliver information. The process also needs a place where these link people can report their findings, exchange information with others and develop neighborhood-wide responses. We call this place the Round Table. It will occur in the form of regularly scheduled meetings with link people and community leaders.
Movement not organization: It is the goal of this effort to create an authentic multicultural conversation that will create unity of purpose in the neighborhood around the future of the Dania Site but also about other issues that arise. No new organization is needed. If this conversation truly reflects the people of the neighborhood, it will naturally tend to change existing democratic neighborhood institutions and improve communication with the City and others.

Goals

1. Many languages/One voice
   a. Our goal is to empower the Cedar Riverside neighborhood to be pro-active by creating a way to unite our great diversity in collective action.
   b. We are a neighborhood with great needs that is being overlooked by possible sources of help because we are fragmented and
   c. because existing neighborhood institutions have not been able to incorporate active participation from our immigrant communities.

2. Honor the Spirit
   a. Historic Dania Hall made a positive community statement by welcoming new immigrants throughout the ages. The site
      i. symbolizes the spirit of welcoming and embracing diversity,
      ii. is viewed by many in the immigrant communities as an important community space and
      iii. is owned by the City of Minneapolis.
   b. It is a good place to begin working together.

3. Community Links
   a. To create unity we must engage both immigrant-focused organizations and individuals.
   b. We can do this by creating a partnership with those organizations and
   c. by talking to individuals in places where they normally gather and in their own language.

4. Round Table
   a. We must also create a place where representatives can meet
      i. to discuss what is being said in the community,
      ii. to exchange ideas and
      iii. to mold consensus.
   b. The place where many languages becomes one voice.

5. New Resources
   a. Existing immigrant-focused community organizations are well suited to guide this process but they are all dealing with demanding problems within their own communities and lack the resources to actively engage in this neighborhood-wide effort.
   b. The partners are therefore committed to jointly seeking resources to fund both the overall group effort and the direct costs of the participating partners.

Dania Partners Memorandum of Understanding
Activities

Phase I
The Process Plan would be developed by the existing Partners in consultation with other interested parities. It would identify methods of outreach to people places (links), how the Round Table would be set up and who would sit at it, staff requirements and costs, operational structure and oversight, outcome measurements & evaluation and a budget for all activities.

Phase II
The Development Plan would be created by the community using the Process created in the Process Plan. It could describe uses for the Dania Site and development activity needed in the immediate area to support those uses. It may include architectural plans and operating plans for the building, including building ownership, program providers and program funding needs. It could also include other things that emerge from the Process that were not contemplated beforehand.

Phase III
Implementation of the plan would include securing necessary funding, creating any needed development entities, developing final plans and construction of required facilities.

Funding

We would first seek funding to support the development of the Process Plan. This would include funds to pay for staff time to organize the meetings and develop presentations that rise out of the meetings. We would also provide funds to each partner organization to pay for the time it puts into the process. This phase would last 6 to 12 months and would cost less than $50,000.

Funding for the Development Plan phase would be based on a budget developed by the Partners in Phase I. It would include the cost for cultural link people, staff support, partner participation and organizational support. The Development Plan phase would take one to two years.

Phase I Administration

The West Bank Community Development Corporation will be the lead organization for Phase I. It will convene regular Partner meetings, provide staff support, draft documents and receive, disburse and account for funds.

Partner organizations will participate in planning meetings, review draft materials and approve the final process design.

Dania Partners Memorandum of Understanding
Initial Partner Organizations are:

West Bank Community Development Corporation (CDC)
Cedar Riverside Business Association (CRBA)
African Development Center (ADC)
Somali Action Alliance
Riverside Plaza Tenants Association (RPTA)
Coyle Community Center
Confederation of Somali Communities
Oromo Center of Minnesota
Korean Service Center
Family Opportunity and Literacy Collaborative (FOLC)
Dar Al-Hijrah Cultural Center
Abubakar Center
Women of Africa Resource Development Association (WARDA)

Partner Organization compensation:

Many Partner organizations are stretched financially to do what they already have on their plate and it will be difficult for some of them to join us at the Round Table because of competing demands. Without funding from our effort, they will have to basically borrow time and money from other issues to participate with us. On the other hand, a relatively small amount of money might at least make their participation with us a revenue neutral activity.

Compensation will occur as follows:

1. We will establish an hourly rate for Executive Director participation based on the average salary of Executive Directors as identified by the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits Salary Survey ($35/hour) and a separate, slightly lower rate for non-Executive Director participation ($30/hour).
2. Stipends will then be issued to each organization based on their attendance at each meeting, the duration of the meeting and hourly rate as established above. (More than one person from each organization could attend meetings but only one would receive a stipend.)
3. Organizations that do not feel a need for a stipend can waive it up front (ADC, CDC and Coyle Center have already done this).
4. Stipends will be provided as long as the funds held out.
5. Any unused stipend money will be folded into the next phase of planning.
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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

Dar Al-Hijrah Cultural Center
By Abdishakur Ibrahim Date 8/30/06
Its Executive Director

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

African Development Center (ADC)
By Hussein Santafe Date 08/30/06
Its EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

Somali Action Alliance
By Hariri Abdi Date 08/30/08
Its EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Riverside Plaza Tenants Association (RPTA)
By Fadlan Seid Date August 30, 2006
Its EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

Family Opportunity and Literacy Collaborative (FOLC)

By Africa Abdi Date 8-30-06
Its Associate Director

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

Confederation of Somali Communities

By Date 8-30-06
Its Executive Director

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Coyle Community Center

By Date 8/30/06
Its

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West Bank Community Development Corporation (CDC)

By Date 8-30-06
Its EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have each duly executed this agreement as of the date indicated above:

Korean Service Center

By  [Signature]  Date  9/26/06

Its  Executive Director