



## **BROOKLYN CENTER MASTER PLAN PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT NARRATIVE**

### **1. Problem Statement**

In April 2018, the City of Brooklyn Center awarded a Preliminary Development Agreement to Alatus for 35 acres of EDA-owned property within the Opportunity Site. In 2019, the scope of Alatus' focus narrowed to a smaller 15-acre area known as Blocks 11, 12, and 13 of the Opportunity Site. Additionally, since early 2019, the City, along with its consultant team, have spearheaded a public engagement process centered on developing and refining a Master Plan for the entire 80-acre area known as the Opportunity Site that aligns with and reflects the desires and needs expressed by local community members. In January 2021, the City Council expressed points of particular concern related to the Opportunity Site Master Plan public engagement process to date, and the corresponding Alatus development of Blocks 11, 12, and 13.

These concerns are outlined below.

#### *Opportunity Site Master Plan*

Concerns:

- Quality and quantity of engagement done to date
- Potential gaps in the targeted groups and individuals included and/or informed in the public engagement process
- Lack of trust in the process and the people involved
- Lack of clarity regarding where the City Council is leading and/or making decisions in the Master Plan process

#### *Alatus Development (Blocks 11, 12, and 13)*

Concerns:

- Lack of information on the preliminary development plan
- Conflation of the Master Planning process and Alatus site approval process
- Lack of clarity about where there are City Council touchpoints in this development approval process

## **2. Macro Strategy**

In order to address these concerns, City staff is working in consultation with NEOO Partners to develop a public engagement strategy that will provide 1) tools for deeper levels of transparency between the public, City staff, and the City Council, and 2) clarity of the roles and responsibilities of City Council, City staff, selected Community Partners, the public, and any prospective development partners. The goal for this higher level of transparency and a shared vision is to ensure that a robust, comprehensive, and meaningful public engagement process happens, and that residents, stakeholders, and the City Council are all aware of the anticipated community benefits from private investment on the Opportunity Site.

The following pages outline a proposed Master Plan Public Engagement Framework developed and led by NEOO Partners, the Engagement Manager, to guide the City through a process and enable concrete decisions to be made about the appropriate engagement process, timeline, and monetary investment. Additionally, this framework seeks to aid the City Council in establishing specific parameters regarding the content for engagement and the goals related to the metrics that will measure robust community input in the Master Plan process.

## **3. Role of the Engagement Manager**

NEOO Partners is a burgeoning local MBE with a growing national practice at the intersection of community engagement, commercial real estate development, and urban planning. The firm uses a Racial Equity and an Environmental Restorative Development framework to center their work on people through a place-based strategy lens.

A core element of their work is community engagement. The NEOO Partners team believes that community engagement is best done through a capacity building framework called "Raise the B.A.R.R." This framework builds upon the idea that community members are the best people to engage their communities. The NEOO Partners team also holds that community engagement has traditionally been done in an extractive manner where community members give all sorts of information to organizations and in return they receive little value or personal capacity building in the process. This is why the B.A.R.R. model represents a shift in thinking about community engagement.

B. = Balance: In almost every community the aspirations for "what could be?" typically outpace the availability of financial resources or technical expertise to make it happen. In this portion of work, the NEOO team focuses on creating balance in the mind of community members and community partners between Reality and Aspirations.

A.= Awareness: Secondly, most community members tend to have affinity towards certain programs, event spaces, and places of commerce. This preference has the tendency to impair individuals' ability to see other locations which provide amenities, resources, or options for commerce as valuable, or "for them". The work is truly focused on understanding community member preferences while also supporting an increased awareness of existing assets to prevent the dilution of resources for items that are already provided in the community.

R&R. = Relationships and Resources: Lastly, capacity building as community engagement would be remiss without intentional relationship building and resource allocation in support of community members / partner organizations in leading the engagement in their community.

#### **4. Role of Community Partners / RFQ**

The Public Engagement Framework begins with the understanding that empowering trusted Community Partners to lead the public engagement process is a critical avenue for convening strong, rich and meaningful dialogues that value and respect stakeholder feedback.

Developing transparent and authentic dialogues between community members and City leadership will result in actively shaping the priorities not only for the Opportunity Site Master Plan but also the direct community benefits residents can expect from private investment.

In light of this, the public engagement strategy involves working with the Engagement Manager, to identify trusted Community Partners that will work alongside the City Council in reaching different pockets of the Brooklyn Center community. These Community Partners would be tasked with the important work of developing community engagement tools, messaging, and methods for engaging the targeted community groups; some of which are the hardest to reach through traditional planning engagement processes.

Along these lines, City Staff will work with the City Council to outline the specific engagement content, a clear list of preferred engagement methods / priorities, and target populations for engagement.

These conditions will inform a Request For Qualifications process which will allow for community members, including individuals, churches, for-profit and nonprofit organizations to apply to be a community partner for the next phase of public engagement on the Opportunity Site Master Plan. The RFQ process provides transparency around what the City intends to get out of a community engagement process, and the roles and responsibilities of all parties.

The respondents will be evaluated, and selected respondents to this RFQ will be entered into a Pre-Approved Community Engagement Pool. The City then would have the ability to select targeted respondents based upon their ability to reach hard to reach communities. The Engagement Manager would work with each respondent to right size scopes and responsibilities during the engagement process, and ensure the progress made by the selected Community Partners is done in a timely manner.

## 5. Engagement Content / Education

An important aspect of the Public Engagement Framework involves the Public Education component mentioned in NEOO Partners' Balance and Awareness phases of the B.A.R.R model. Ultimately, the City Council would set the parameters, boundaries, and limits of the engagement to take place.

To prepare for the larger engagement framework process, the Engagement Management Team has created three focus areas for public education.

1. **History:** This content will involve educating the local community on the engagement work done to date, particularly related to the land uses and the processes of engagement already achieved to inform the current draft of the Master Plan and the initial concepts presented in the Alatus preliminary site plan for Blocks 11, 12, and 13. This component will likely involve a centralized website managed by the Engagement Manager that serves as a clearinghouse of information related to prior work done around community engagement, as well as draft stages of the Master Plan and preliminary development plans for Blocks 11, 12, and 13.

2. **Master Plan:** This content will be focused on continuing to identify and refine the desired and prioritized uses and goals for the Opportunity Site Master Plan in alignment with expressed community values, additional shaping and programming of the public spaces in accessible and equitable ways, and further determining the scale and impact of the Master Plan goals within the broader community.

3. **Community Benefits:** This content will work to provide direct linkages between the Master Plan's goals and priorities and how these are operationalized to meet tangible outcomes/benefits for residents in the Brooklyn Center community. Content focus areas within community benefits might include jobs, housing, parks, infrastructure, amenities, revenues, tax disparities, and opportunities for entrepreneurial catalyztion.

City staff anticipate working with the City Council to develop a prioritized list of content areas for focused public education and engagement as it relates to each of these outlined focus areas.

NEOO Partners will synthesize the community feedback gathered from Community Partners and create shareable summary documents for community stakeholders and the

City Council to see their engagements reflected in tangible results, and, furthermore, how those tangible results are reflected in the strategies for achieving community benefits.

## 6. Methods of Engagement

There are varying degrees of public engagement to be addressed through the outlined Public Engagement Framework. These fall into three categories, which have been termed as light touch, medium touch, and deep dive.

1. *Light touch*: This level of public engagement is the least involved and represents a methodology for generally informing the public through trusted messengers while providing opportunities for voluntary response. This approach does not ask for direct input or feedback from targeted community representatives or in relationship to specific components of the process or plans. Examples of light touch methods could include:

- a. City-controlled Master Plan website as a clearinghouse of information related to work done to date, drafts of the various plans / benefits, and options for submitting comments and questions via email or a website form.
- b. Facebook Live events as a means for sharing City staff presentations or Council work discussions with the broader public and allowing for public comments during the event that could be collected to inform the Master Plan.
- c. Mailers delivered to constituents that include information such as:
  - i. Overview of the Master Plan
  - ii. Link to the City Master Plan website
  - iii. QR code for general survey questions

2. *Medium touch*: This level of public engagement involves proactive and targeted sharing of information with particular groups / community constituents with specific requests for constituent input related to particular components of the Master Plan.

Examples of medium touch methods could include:

- a. Online forums for specific resident / business groups within an identified geography that address:
  - i. Overview of the Master Plan
  - ii. Opportunities for gathering individual comments / feedback related to specific components of the Plan
  - iii. Follow up link to targeted survey questions
- b. Door knocking within specific geographies to discuss Master Plan and ask targeted questions to gather constituent input.
- c. Targeted surveys with most impacted target groups.

3. *Deep Dive*: This level of engagement involves highly focused conversations with specific groups of community representatives. These conversations are meant to be directive in shaping the goals and priorities established in the Master Plan, as well as setting the appropriate guidelines and metrics for how the goals and priorities are

operationalized and achieved through specific Community Benefits standards set forth in individual development projects pursued within the Opportunity Site. Examples of deep dive methods could include:

- a. Convene working groups with most impacted target groups that involve deliberate discussions and asking detailed questions to shape the Master Plan and Community Benefits.
- b. Attend specific community task force meetings to share information, lead deliberate discussions and ask detailed questions around the Master Plan and Community Benefits. This might include venues such as school board, chamber of commerce, neighborhood associations, rotary, and others.
- c. Developing a Citizen Advisory Engagement Task Force that consists of community voices tasked with receiving and distilling the reports from the Community Partners in order to provide the Council and City staff with a series of informed options related to a Community Benefits Plan and an equitable development scorecard.

| Engagement Level                                   | Light Touch  | Medium Touch                                     |   | Deep Dive  |  |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
|  | <i>Inform</i>  | <i>Consult</i>                                   | <i>Involve</i>  | <i>Collaborate</i>   | <i>Defer</i>   |
| <b>Community Engagement Goals</b>                  | Provide community with relevant information  | Gather input from the community                  | Ensure community needs and assets are integrated into process and inform planning | Ensure community capacity to play a leadership role in implementation of decisions             | Foster democratic and equity by placing full decision-making in the hands of the community; bridge divide between community and governance |
| <b>Potential Activities</b>                        | Flyers / Mailers, Fact sheets, City Council presentations, Facebook Live community meetings, Explainer videos, Website updates | Public comment, Community forums, Surveys, Other | House meetings, Interactive workshops, Polling, Focus groups, Other               | Working groups, Community Organizing, Citizen Advisory Committees, Open Planning Forums, Other | Community-driven planning, Consensus building, Participatory action research, Cooperatives, Other  |
| <b>Oversight / Support</b>                         | City Staff & Consultants, NEOO Partners  | City Staff & Consultants, NEOO Partners          | City Staff & Consultants, NEOO Partners   | City Staff & Consultants, NEOO Partners  | City Staff & Consultants, NEOO Partners  |
| <b>Timeline</b>                                    | 8-12 weeks w/ ongoing updates  | 10-16 weeks                                      | 16-20 weeks   | 16-24 weeks  | 24+ weeks / ongoing  |
| <b>Budget / Contract Max Per Community Partner</b> | \$15,000   | \$25,000   | \$25,000  | \$50,000   | \$50,000   |

\*Adapted from *From Community Engagement to Ownership*, An Urban Sustainability Directors Network Innovation Fund Project conducted by Facilitating Power, Movement Strategy Center, and the National Association of Climate Resilience Planners

## 7. Implementation

Implementation of the Public Engagement Framework will be directed by City staff in accordance with the processes, timeline, and costs approved by City Council. Furthermore, in support of City staff, NEOO Partners will serve as the Engagement Manager. Initially, in consultation with City staff, NEOO Partners will develop and lead the Community Partners RFQ process. Following the selection of Community Partners by the City, NEOO Partners will directly manage the Community Partners and public engagement master task list to ensure the engagement efforts are coordinated, well-implemented, and reported clearly to the City.

The Community Partners selected through the RFQ process will take the lead in identifying the appropriate methods of engagement that align with the City's established parameters for public engagement standards. Each Community Partner will be tasked with designing the necessary engagement tools and materials as well as implementing the specific engagement work particular to their target groups for engagement. Additionally, the Community Partners will be responsible for collecting and collating the response data to provide clear reports on the process, responses, and metrics they have achieved with their public engagement work.

NEOO Partners will provide a comprehensive document that synthesizes the public engagement work led by each of the Community Partners, highlighting the goals and priorities that should inform the Master Plan as well as providing recommendations for operationalizing Community Benefits in regard to particular developments.

*Citizen Advisory Task Force Option:* In addition to the on-the-ground engagement work led by the Community Partners, a Citizen Advisory Task Force could be convened to play a role in distilling the community engagement reports produced by the Community Partners into a series of informed options that help guide the City Council and City staff in the formulation of a Community Benefits Plan and an equitable development scorecard. A successful Citizen Advisory Task Force will need to have a clear definition of and direction on their role, specific mechanisms for group management and/or touchpoints with City staff and NEOO Partners, and expectations related to any deliverables.

## 8. Timeline

The proposed timeline for implementing this Public Engagement Framework is as follows:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| March 2021 | - City staff presents Master Plan Public Engagement Framework strategy / process |
|------------|--|

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City Council approves Master Plan Public Engagement process, budget, timeline</li> <li>- City staff and NEOO Partners develop and issue RFQ for selecting Community Partners to lead public engagement</li> <li>- <i>City staff and NEOO Partners develop selection process and issue RFQ for Citizen Advisory Task Force (option)</i></li> </ul>   |
| April 2021      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City approves pool of Community Partners</li> <li>- NEOO Partners coordinates master engagement strategy and supports Community Partners in identifying appropriate engagement strategies and tools</li> <li>- Community Partners begin public engagement work with NEOO technical assistance</li> <li>- <i>City Council selects / approves Citizen Advisory Task Force members (option)</i></li> </ul>   |
| May - Sept 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Partners implement public engagement work with NEOO technical assistance</li> <li>- <i>City staff and NEOO Partners support Citizen Advisory Task Force with technical assistance related to Master Plan and frameworks for Community Benefits Plan and equitable development scorecards (option)</i></li> </ul>  |
| Sept 2021       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Partners report on engagement work</li> <li>- <i>Citizen Advisory Task Force distills engagement reports into a set of informed options related to the Community Benefits Plan and equitable development scorecard, which are presented to City Council (option)</i></li> <li>- City Council makes decisions on the parameters of the Community Benefits Plan and equity development scorecard</li> <li>- NEOO Partners collates results of engagement work and compiles a comprehensive report that outlines goals and priorities for the Master Plan along with the proposed Community Benefits Plan for operationalization with particular development work</li> <li>- City staff share drafts with City Council for discussion and approval</li> <li>- NEOO collaborates with Community Partners <i>and Citizen Advisory Task Force (option)</i> to determine the requisite scope for the next phase of community engagement</li> </ul> |
| October 2021    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City drafts / incorporates community feedback into Master Plan</li> </ul>   |



During March - September 2021, City staff will share relevant reports and discussion points every 2 weeks at City Council work sessions to review corresponding components of the Opportunity Site Master Plan and the engagement work being accomplished.

## **9. Pilot Project Approach**

Community Engagement, especially within the context of capacity building can be very nebulous during a Master Planning process. Oftentimes, we have found it to be more beneficial to ground the community engagement efforts in tangible and more present programs or development scenarios. In the City of Brooklyn Center, the Opportunity Site represents a minimum of 10 years of visioning, planning, recalibrating, and implementation. It is not realistic to engage the public in the present with forecasted minds for ten years. The present needs are too great, the pressure from civil unrest, America's collective racial consciousness, and tremendous downward pressure on "normal" social interactions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, will cause blockages in all relative ability for rational residents to "dream, forecast, or plan."

The NEOO team is proposing to use the existing Master Plan, but more specifically the planned development along blocks 11,12, and 13 by Alatus, along with Project for Pride in Living (PPL), and Resurrecting Faith World Ministries (RFWM), to focus the engagement process on tangible projects, with prospective partnerships and real-time community benefits.

Not only will this ground the community with real projects and partnerships, but it will also intentionally assist City Council along with the City's Planning and Development Staff to set benchmarks and precedents for public engagement on the entirety of the Opportunity Site Redevelopment, as well as forthcoming Community Development and Planning projects in the City of Brooklyn Center.

## **10. Role of Community Partners**

Similar to the community engagement process prescribed for the Opportunity Site Master Plan, NEOO Partners, the Engagement Manager will work with the City to determine the appropriate Community Partners from the Pre-Approved Community Engagement Pool to help reach most impacted target groups for engagement. These selected Community Partners will work alongside the City and Alatus, PPL, and RFWM to maintain an open and transparent dialogue related to the development of Blocks 11, 12 and 13. NEOO Partners will provide technical review of the team's plan for community engagement and ensure the plan and processes align with the City's standards. Additionally, oversight by NEOO Partners will make sure that the appropriate feedback loops are being captured and considered for refining the Alatus, PPL, and RFWM development along with operationalizing the corresponding community benefits to be achieved.

## **11. Engagement Content / Education**

The content specific to the Alatus, PPL, and RFWM development will be centered on Blocks 11, 12, and 13. In particular this will include providing information and collecting input on the proposed housing components, business incubator, community theater, public spaces, public art, parking, and connectivity of the blocks. This process will include creating mutual understanding for the development of a Community Benefits Plan that will ensure accountability and be included into the Development Rights Agreement between the City of Brooklyn Center and Alatus. The Development Agreement will serve as a template for future development phases and projects on the Opportunity Site.

## **12. Methods of Engagement**

Particular methods of engagement will be decided upon in collaboration and consultation with Alatus, PPL, and RFWM, selected Community Partners, City staff, and NEOO Partners. NEOO Partners will provide oversight and direction to ensure that acceptable levels of participation and engagement are achieved according to the standards set forth by City staff and City Council. These might include components of light touch, medium touch, and deep dive methods as described in the Opportunity Site Master Plan Public Engagement framework.

## **13. Implementation**

The Community Partners will lead the implementation of this engagement work in partnership with Alatus, PPL, and RFWM , with oversight from NEOO Partners and City staff. The engagement will result in a formal report back to the City Council as well as direct improvements and alterations to the Master Plan blocks 11,12 and 13.

## **14. Timeline**

The proposed timeline for implementing this Pilot Project engagement strategy in relationship to the Master Plan Engagement Strategy is as follows:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| March 2021      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City staff presents Master Plan Public Engagement Framework strategy / process</li> <li>- City Council approves Master Plan Public Engagement process, budget, timeline</li> <li>- City staff presents Pilot Project Approach for Blocks 11, 12, &amp; 13</li> <li>- City Council approves Pilot Project Approach</li> <li>- City staff and NEOO Partners develop and issue RFQ for selecting Community Partners to lead public engagement</li> </ul> |
| April 2021      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- City approves pool of Community Partners</li> <li>- NEOO Partners manages the selection of Community Partners and the corresponding engagement strategies and tools to guide Pilot Project community engagement with Alatus, PPL, and RFWM</li> </ul>   |
| May - Aug 2021  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alatus, PPL, and RFWM work with Community Partners to implement public engagement work with oversight by NEOO Partners and the City</li> </ul>  |
| August 2021     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alatus submits for Entitlements</li> </ul>  |
| Aug - Sept 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alatus, PPL, and RFWM refine development plan for Blocks 11, 12, and 13 and presents corresponding draft of the Pilot Project Community Benefits for discussion, review, and approval by City staff and City Council</li> </ul>   |
| Sept/Oct 2021   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Entitlements received for Blocks 11, 12, and 13</li> </ul>  |

# Master Plan Public Engagement Framework – Proposed Draft 03.03



- Approve engagement process, timeline, and costs
- Define roles and responsibilities
- Identify goal metrics for the process
  - % of pop reached with light touch, medium touch, deep dive
  - # of representatives from targeted demographics
- Specify content for engagement
  - Elements of Master Plan
  - Operationalizing Community Benefits Plan
  - Blocks 11, 12 & 13
  - Other?

**BC City Council**

**BC City Staff**

- Guide the public engagement implementation strategy in accordance with the City Council’s identified goals.
- Provide feedback loops between public engagement, Council sessions, and development of the Master Plan
- Inform Council on specific interaction points and policy making decision points

**Citizen Advisory Task Force (option)**

- Receive engagement reports
- Distill engagement reports to provide informed options on:
  - equity development scorecard
  - Community Benefits Plan
- Provide options for ongoing engagement / oversight processes after September

- Identify appropriate engagement methods
- Design engagement tools and materials
- Develop timelines for particular engagement work within the overall process identified by City Council
- Implement engagement work
- Collect / collate response data
- Report on process, responses, and metrics

**Community Partners (identified via RFQ Process)**

**NEOO Partners Engagement Manager**

Community Leaders    Membership Orgs    Advocacy Groups    Religious Leaders

- Develop master engagement strategy and RFQ in consultation with City staff
- Track master timeline / tasks
- Train the trainers
- Orient community partners to desired goals / metrics
- Provide technical assistance and support to community partners
- Collate master process / info for City staff to report to Council

**Pools of Engagement (TBD)**

Other    Residents    BIPOC    Local Agencies    Youth    Local Business Owners