

**Dayton's Bluff Community Council Resolution
Regarding Reconsideration of Dorothy Day Center
Adopted March 17, 2014**

The Dayton's Bluff Community Council (DBCC) supports the March 10 decision by the City of St. Paul and Catholic Charities to listen to neighborhood concerns and reconsider their proposal for siting a new Dorothy Day Center. We believe that the process up to that point had been flawed, and the question could not be reduced to whether or not a new center should be located at 321 Grove Street. Some of our criticisms of the process are explained in the attached draft resolution that had been under consideration by the Council's Equity Committee.

DBCC will continue to address housing issues such as the proposed Dorothy Day Center in light of our mandate to advance equity and to consider adverse impacts to groups of people who may be historically subject to discrimination. As we said in our draft resolution, "We are distressed our economy has produced so many homeless, and continuing income inequality leaves many more in poverty. There are over 10,000 poor people in Payne Phalen and Dayton's Bluff, and it is a disgrace that a country so rich can do so poorly."

**Dayton's Bluff Community Council Resolution Regarding Proposed Dorothy Day Center
Adopted//Adopted As Amended//Not Adopted March 17, 2014
(Draft 3, March 10, 2014)**

Summary

The Dayton's Bluff Community Council believes that the Catholic Charities/City of St. Paul process for consideration of a new Dorothy Day site has been flawed. We further believe that it cannot be reduced to the simple question, "Are you for or against a new Dorothy Day center for the homeless at 321 Grove Street?"

The Council has considered the issue in light of two policies that drive our work. The first is our Mission Statement: "To advance equity and enhance quality of life through partnership and community engagement." The second is our Equity Impact Assessment which requires that we identify and engage stakeholders and consider adverse impacts to them viewed through an equity lens, that is with specific attention to groups of people who may be historically subject to discrimination. Our conclusion is that the process has been inadequate with respect to balancing equity considerations for three important sets of stakeholders that we have identified: (1) neighborhoods, (2) those who have experienced homelessness or may in the future, and the (3) "elephant in the room," large downtown businesses.

Neighborhood stakeholders

The March 3 Dayton's Bluff Land Use Committee that was called for the purpose of considering the Dorothy Day Center meeting drew 15-20 people who were not associated with Catholic Charities or part of the committee. This group consisted almost exclusively of Dayton's Bluff homeowners, with communities of color and renters essentially unrepresented. Some of the attendees voiced concerns about the proposed site and its possible spillover onto parks and businesses in the neighborhood. Others said the community should not shun the poorest among us and that many of us are only a step or two away from homelessness ourselves.

Many of the neighbors also voiced concerns that they only learned about the proposal by reading about it in the newspaper. In fact, by the time most neighbors learned of it, the St. Paul City Council had already approved a resolution asking for \$22 million in state bonding requests. In January, the council appointed a task force to hear community concerns, but it seems apparent that the task force will treat the site at 321 Grove as a fait accompli. (St. Paul Pioneer Press, January 2, 2014.)

We note, however, that the legislators representing our community also appear to have been left in the dark. It is our understanding that Sheldon Johnson, Tim Mahoney and Fong Hawj were not consulted when this project first became public in May 2013. At any rate, none of them were on the task force convened by Mayor Coleman to formulate the proposal.

Homeless stakeholders

Catholic Charities CEO Tim Marx has said numerous times that his organization has surveyed its clients who feel they are "on display" at the current site. Knowing that it's easy to cherry-pick results, we would like to see the rest of the survey and how it was conducted. We'd also like to hear directly from people who have been or might be clients of Dorothy Day, particularly in light of new information that an adjacent and likely more convenient site at 411 Main Street is available and could be built on more quickly than at the proposed 321 Grove site.

Further, no information has been provided as to whether proximity to the Union Gospel Mission (about

700 feet away from the proposed site) is in the best interest of either clientele. And, although Tim Marx has cited proximity to Ramsey County law enforcement as a plus for the site, the St. Paul Police Federation is worried about "tripping across suspects they've recently arrested." (St. Paul Pioneer Press blogs, March 4, 2014.) Homeless people who are routinely viewed as suspects would undoubtedly find such proximity a mixed blessing.

Large downtown business stakeholders

The other group of stakeholders, the large downtown businesses, has been referred to as the "elephant in the room." (Twin Cities Daily Planet, January 6, 2014.) Their position has not been articulated at the community meetings, but they are reportedly interested in commercial development for the site and worried about the conspicuous presence of the homeless in downtown St. Paul. The task force* that chose the site had a significant number of downtown business members and was co-chaired by the head of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Matt Kramer. He said the site could be used for retail or business and that:

"Twenty-thousand people coming from all over the metropolitan area, and their first introduction -- the first introduction -- when they get off the highway to the city of St. Paul, because we haven't provided a place where people can congregate with dignity during the day, is people sitting on the sidewalk, people sitting on the curb, people laying in the grass," . . .
"And you say -- this is our capital city?" (MPR News, December 20, 2013.)

We agree that seeing the homeless on entering downtown is a distressing sight, but not because these people are homeless. We are distressed our economy has produced so many homeless, and continuing income inequality leaves many more in poverty. There are over 10,000 poor people in Payne Phalen and Dayton's Bluff, and it is a disgrace that a country so rich can do so poorly."

In addition, although there has been some indication that Catholic Charities intends to use the downtown site for permanent affordable housing, there's also evidence that there is no definite plan to do so. At any rate, the permanent housing proposal is part of a third phase of development for which funding is not being requested at this time. (MinnPost, December 20, 2013.)

Generally

Catholic Charities is late to the game in seeking funds for projects addressing homelessness and we are puzzled by the manner in which this project has been fast-tracked, given that the situation at Dorothy Day has been dire for many years. In fact, it was only in May 2013 that St. Paul's mayor announced a task force to look into the center's future. (Minnpost, May 2, 2013.)

Nonetheless, by December 2013, the task force had determined that it was necessary for the agency to request some \$39 million in public funding for the initial phases of the project, potentially jumping ahead of other services providing for the homeless.

Representative Tim Mahoney found their action "surprising," and Representative Alice Hausman, chair of the House Capital Investment Committee, said that the proposal for state bonding funds for the homeless would have to compete with others like the Wilder Foundation and Lutheran Social Services which have been waiting in line for years to get funding. (Pioneer Press, December 20, 2013.)

It is an open question whether Catholic Charities would be the best steward of this funding, given that its representatives openly admit that the current Dorothy Day site is badly managed. We are not convinced that things would improve at a new facility despite their assertions to the contrary.

Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, we do not believe that we have enough information to fully evaluate the equity issues that confront us with this proposal. Nonetheless, the hurried nature of the timeline for this project, along with its lack of transparency, lead us to have doubts about whether the proposed project will be the best solution to the crisis of homelessness.

***Mayor's Task Force on Overnight Shelter Membership** (Dorothy Day Center ReVision, December 20, 2013, page 10)

Chris Coleman, Mayor, City of Saint Paul

Matt Kramer, Co-Chair President, Saint Paul Area Chamber

Carleen Rhodes, Co-Chair President and CEO, The Saint Paul Foundation

Jim Adams Senior Vice President, Real Estate Investments, Travelers Companies

Toni Carter Ramsey County Commissioner District 4

Phyllis Goff Civic Leader (Board of Directors, Mardag Foundation)

Tom Handley President & COO, Ecolab

Bill Lester Retired (Metro Sports Commission)

Tim Marx CEO, Catholic Charities

Jon McTaggart President, MPR/APM

Chris Tolbert City of Saint Paul, Councilmember – Ward 3

Paul Williams Deputy Mayor, City of Saint Paul