

# **Corridors of Opportunity: A Partnership for Sustainable Communities in the Minneapolis - Saint Paul Region**

CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT  
May 17, 2011

## **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this Consortium Agreement is to demonstrate a shared framework of understanding of the partners within the Corridors of Opportunity initiative (CoO). This framework will support the partners and guide the implementation of the initiative. The signatories of the Consortium Agreement are organizations represented on the Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board, and organizations receiving sub-recipient grants under the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. By signing this agreement, these signatories agree that:

- (1) They assent to goals, structures, operational protocols, and other aspects of the initiative, as described below,
- (2) They commit to fulfill the responsibilities agreed to by their organization, participate in the Corridors of Opportunity evaluation and hold other consortium members accountable for their responsibilities, and
- (3) They will identify and implement opportunities to align their organizations with the principles and approach described in this Agreement.

## **II. Signatories**

The signatories to this document include the organizations that are (1) Corridors of Opportunity Lead Agencies, (2) voting members of the Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board, (3) represented by the leaders of the Community Engagement Team, and (4) sub-recipients of the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant:

- Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, Community Engagement Team organization
- Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, Policy Board member organization
- City of Apple Valley, Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- City of Minneapolis, Policy Board member organization
- City of St. Paul, Policy Board member organization and Sustainable Communities sub-grantee

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- Counties Transit Improvement Board, Policy Board member organization and Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- District Energy, Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- Family Housing Fund, Policy Board member organization
- Hennepin County, Policy Board member organization and Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- The Itasca Project, Policy Board member organization
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation, Policy Board member organization
- The McKnight Foundation, Lead Agency and Policy Board member organization
- Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, Policy Board member organization
- Metropolitan Council, Lead Agency and Policy Board member organization
- Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing, Community Engagement Team organization
- Minnesota Housing, Policy Board member organization and Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- Neighborhood Development Center, Policy Board member organization
- Nexus Community Partners, Community Engagement Team organization
- Northstar Rail Development Authority, Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, Policy Board member organization and Sustainable Communities sub-grantee
- Regional Council of Mayors, Policy Board member organization
- The Saint Paul Foundation, Lead Agency and Policy Board member organization
- Twin Cities Community Land Bank, Policy Board member organization
- Urban Land Institute – Minnesota, Policy Board member organization
- University of Minnesota, Sustainable Communities sub-grantee

### **III. Background**

“Corridors of Opportunity” (CoO) is an initiative in the Minneapolis - Saint Paul Region to promote sustainable, vibrant, and healthy communities, using the region’s emerging transitway system as a development focus. The Metropolitan Council and a

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broad consortium of policymakers, foundations, community organizations, and leaders will be engaged in these efforts from early 2011 through 2013. The initiative has two funding sources: (1) a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and (2) funds from Living Cities, a collaboration of 22 of the nation's largest foundations and financial institutions. The Corridors of Opportunity initiative brings these two funding sources together under one vision, a combined governance and management structure, and a common set of goals.

The activities funded through HUD and Living Cities are complementary. Put simply, the HUD projects advance *strategies* for sustainable development in our region, and the Living Cities projects advance the *implementation and construction* of sustainable development. Consortium staff ensure that all of the activities within the Corridors of Opportunity initiative are carefully coordinated with one another.

The governing body of Corridors of Opportunity is a Policy Board.. The Policy Board determined that the focus of our grant-funded strategies, implementation and construction would be the region's existing and emerging transitway corridors. Accordingly, it adopted the following vision for the initiative on March 30, 2011:

*Transitway corridors will guide our region's growth, vitality, and competitiveness. Development along transitways will create distinctive places and strengthen local assets while increasing ridership and expanding access to jobs, affordable housing, and essential services for residents of all incomes and backgrounds.*

## **A. Goals and Principles**

On March 30, 2011, the Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board adopted the following goals that are aligned with the HUD Sustainable Communities Outcomes and Living Cities Integration Initiative goals:

- Develop a new model for transitway development by aligning transit planning and engineering with land use planning, affordable housing, workforce development and economic development.
- Engage historically-underrepresented communities in transitway planning and decision-making.

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- Use transitway development to expand access to jobs and affordable housing, particularly for low-income populations and people of color.
- Enhance the region's ability to compete in the global economy.
- Secure and align public, philanthropic, and private resources to attract robust private investment to the vision.
- Accelerate expansion of the transit system.
- Incorporate lessons learned from this approach to transitway planning into the Regional Plan for Sustainable Development.

The Policy Board also adopted the following six principles to guide the work of the consortium:

- **Equity:** The work of the initiative aims to advance the well-being of low-income people and families.
- **Economic Competitiveness:** The initiative will increase the region's ability to compete in the global economy and benefit local people, businesses and communities.
- **Transparency:** Active communication about our process and clarity about our results will enhance the value of our work and strengthen our inclusivity.
- **Sustainability:** An integrated approach that unites economic, environmental and equity concerns will lead to long-term solutions.
- **Collaboration:** Wedding the collective power of regional stakeholders and local community leadership to effectively address shared challenges and opportunities.
- **Innovation:** We are creative and entrepreneurial in our outlook, aiming to develop flexible solutions and practice cutting-edge thinking.

### **B. Regional Plan for Sustainable Development**

HUD provided the Minneapolis-Saint Paul Area with a "Category 2" grant to be used for "the preparation of more detailed execution plans for an adopted Regional Plan for Sustainable Development" (Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant FY2010 NOFA, p. 15). It did so on the basis of our application, which focused on the components of the Metropolitan Development Guide, currently known as the Regional Development Framework, and

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indicated that this guide is the statutory foundation of regional planning in our area and the statutory responsibility of the Metropolitan Council. It further explained that in approximately 2012, the Metropolitan Council will begin working on a 2040 Metropolitan Development Guide. As directed by state statute, this collection of documents will be the “guiding planning document for the region.”

### **C. Sustainable Communities Grant Work Plans**

The work plans for the HUD-funded portions of Corridors of Opportunity detail the objectives, team members, budget, activities, tasks, and other aspects of the 21 projects. Dozens of consortium staff members and Policy Board members developed these work plans collaboratively over a period of several months. In many cases, the consortium members consulted community members and organizations to guide and refine the development of the work plans.

The CoO Policy Board approved the work plans in a meeting on March 30, 2011. The version submitted to HUD on April 1, 2011 is found here: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/COO/CoODetailedProjectWorkPlans.pdf>

Consortium staff will use the work plans to monitor the progress of the individual projects, and to coordinate interactions and connections among them. As stated in the Cooperative Agreement between HUD and the Metropolitan Council, and the Sub-recipient Agreements between the Metropolitan Council and partners, these work plans may be amended by staff in consultation with the Metropolitan Council and HUD staff. All changes must also be approved by the Metropolitan Council and HUD staff. It is anticipated that the work plans will change throughout the 3-year grant period, as the consortium responds to currently unforeseen circumstances and learns from on-going feedback.

### **IV. Organizational Structure, Roles and Responsibilities**

Dozens of organizations and hundreds of individuals are engaged in Corridors of Opportunity in pursuit of the shared vision. To achieve the maximum impact of this engagement, the consortium has created a collaborative network as described in the organizational chart below. Like the project work plans, the organizational structure of the consortium is subject to change, based on feedback of its members and the results of their work.

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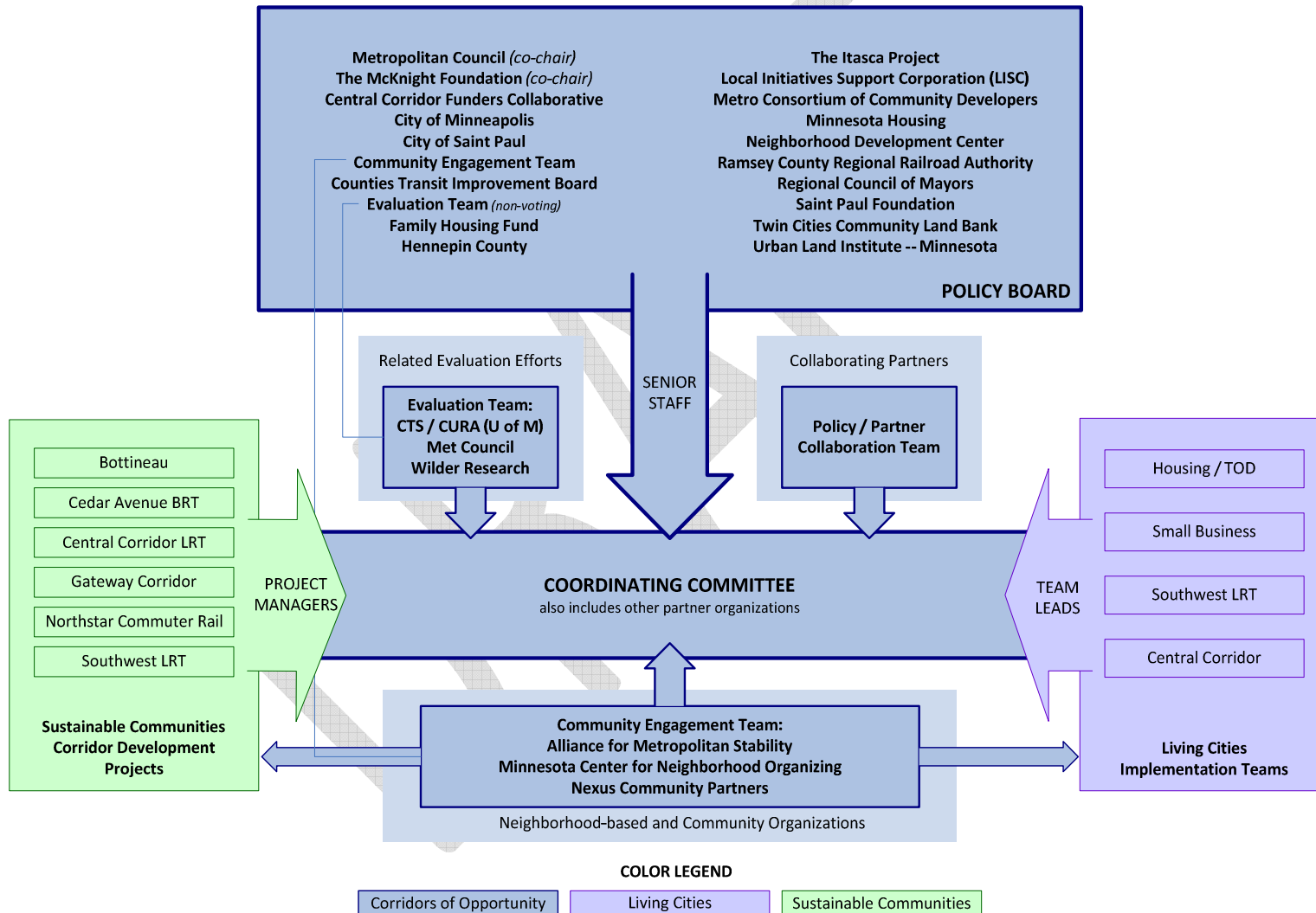
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## Corridors of Opportunity Initiative



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## **A. Lead Agencies**

The Metropolitan Council, the planning agency for the 7-county Minneapolis-Saint Paul region, is the lead agency for the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. The lead applicant during the application process, the Metropolitan Council now manages the \$5 million grant. Together with the McKnight Foundation, it also serves as a convener for Policy Board meetings and other events.

The McKnight Foundation and Saint Paul Foundation are the co-lead agencies for the Living Cities Integration Initiative.

A “Core Staff” team, comprised of staff members from these lead agencies and others, meets at least once a week and staffs the various organizational entities within the consortium.

## **B. Policy Board**

The Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board is the primary decision-making body for the consortium. On March 30, 2011, the Policy Board adopted the following “charge” to describe its role:

1. Ensure the quality implementation of Corridors of Opportunity vision and goals, particularly including active community engagement and outreach.
2. Establish strategic direction and core principles, then authorize staff to prepare and implement action plans to carry out the work.
3. Deliberate on tough strategic policy issues.
4. Participate with a spirit of innovation and solution-driven action. Connect the dots across the region, crossing both jurisdictional boundaries and programmatic silos and bring other public, private, non-profit and voluntary leaders into the conversation.
5. Bring together the resources of the organizations represented on the Policy Board to support the implementation of the Corridors of Opportunity vision.



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6. Be willing to undertake systems redesign, both collectively and within each participating organization's individual programs and policies.

The Policy Board is co-chaired by representatives of two lead agencies in the initiative: Susan Haigh, Chair of the Metropolitan Council, and Lee Sheehy, Director of the Region and Communities Program at the McKnight Foundation. The Policy Board is currently comprised of representatives from the following organizations:

- Central Corridor Funders Collaborative
- City of Minneapolis
- City of St. Paul
- The Community Engagement Team:
  - Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
  - Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing
  - Nexus Partners
- Counties Transit Improvement Board
- Evaluation Team
- Family Housing Fund
- Hennepin County
- The Itasca Project
- Local Initiative Support Corporation
- The McKnight Foundation
- Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers
- Metropolitan Council
- Minnesota Housing
- Neighborhood Development Center
- Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
- The Saint Paul Foundation

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- Twin Cities Community Land Bank
- Regional Council of Mayors
- Urban Land Institute --Minnesota

Policy Board members are expected to attend the monthly meetings carry out the Policy Board charge, uphold CoO principles, and advance CoO goals. The Policy Board makes many decisions on a consensus basis. When votes are needed to clarify a decision, they must pass on a 2/3 majority.

The Policy Board may seek new members as necessary and will respond to requests by organizations that wish to appoint a representative to the board. All new members must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the board. Criteria for evaluating prospective members of the Policy Board include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. The organization plays a leadership role in the region in an issue area closely related to sustainable development.
2. The organization has committed to fully participating in the consortium, as outlined in this agreement.
3. The organization meets a need that is not met by a current Policy Board member organization.

### **C. Senior Staff Coordinating Committee**

A Senior Staff Coordinating Committee consisting of (1) staff members from each of the organizations represented on the Policy Board, (2) project managers from the five corridor development projects, (3) the Community Engagement Team, and (4) other partners. This committee discusses and prepares items for the Policy Board and seeks to coordinate activities within the initiative. Organizations represented on the Senior Staff Coordinating Committee commit to providing a staff member to regularly attend the meetings, which usually occur once or twice per month.

### **D. Evaluation Team**

The Corridors of Opportunity Evaluation is intended to provide both formative/developmental and summative feedback to the Policy Board. Formative/developmental feedback will provide an ongoing stream of input and

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information to the Policy Board as the Corridors of Opportunity Initiative unfolds and allows partners to adjust strategies according to the information received. Summative feedback will assess the outcomes and impacts of the effort. The Evaluators hope to provide information that helps the Policy Board make key policy decisions and reinforce or modify the strategic direction given to the Living Cities Working Groups and Sustainable Communities funded projects.

The Corridors of Opportunity Evaluation Team integrates funding and evaluation activities from the Living Cities Integration Initiative and the HUD Sustainable Communities Grant. Consequently, the Corridors of Opportunity Evaluation now integrates the local evaluation activities originally envisioned in the Living Cities application and the HUD grant proposal. The Living Cities Integration Initiative has a national evaluation as does the Ford Foundation Metropolitan Opportunity Program, also envisioned to leverage the Corridors of Opportunity. With the Corridors' focus on transitways, additional evaluation, analysis and data-gathering activities have now been brought into what is informally known as the Evaluation Collective, the group of local evaluators who are now regularly meeting to coordinate evaluation and minimize duplicative data-collection efforts.

### **E. Community Engagement Team**

The Community Engagement Team seeks to ensure that underrepresented communities are engaged in the Corridors of Opportunity initiative and that leadership within these communities is developed. Its purpose is also to assure that engagement leads to systematic change in the decision-making process beyond the three-year time period of the grant. To accomplish these goals, the consortium established a Community Engagement Team (CET) to advise the consortium on matters of community engagement and on how to use these funds.

The leaders of the CET are: (1) Repa Mekha, Nexus Partners, (2) Russ Adams, Alliance for Metropolitan Stability, and (3) Margaret Kaplan, Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing.

The objectives of the CET are the following:

- Advise the Policy Board on issues of equity and community engagement

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- Develop a community based working group to advise and support the CET
- Design and implement the sub-grant process
- Build capacity of community organizations
- Support equity in engagement and leadership
- Build capacity of government agencies to engage underrepresented communities
- Conduct on-going and iterative evaluation

The CET will achieve these objectives with the support of a Metropolitan Council staff member as a coordinator, and with the assistance of an advisory board of community organization representatives.

### **F. Partner Collaboration Team**

The Partner Collaboration Team is comprised of organizations and agencies that have a direct interest in improving the livability in the region and around transit corridors. These groups are not necessarily directly involved in the programs funded by the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Program but have experience and expertise that can significantly add to the success of the various Sustainable Communities programs. The focus of the Partner Collaboration Team is to share expertise and lessons learned that will be helpful to the programs around the multifaceted topics of affordable housing, land use and transportation infrastructure through quarterly sessions. Initially these learning community sessions will focus on information and best practices that can inform the programs as they start their work, later the sessions will include discussions of what is being learned, issues, and opportunities encountered.

### **G. Implementation Teams, Work Groups and Sub-committees**

Specific implementation teams have been created to further the work funded through the Living Cities Integration Initiative. These teams include:

**Affordable Housing/TOD Implementation Team:** Led by the Family Housing Fund, this team has representation from LISC, Twin Cities Community Land Bank, ULI-Minnesota, Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, The Saint Paul Foundation, and top housing officials from the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the Metropolitan Council,

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and Minnesota Housing. The team is focused deploying the Living Cities loan resources for housing and TOD projects along the corridors as well as identifying opportunities to align resources, policies, and programs in this area.

**Small Business Implementation Team:** Led by Neighborhood Development Center and the Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, the team provides façade matching grants, technical assistance, loan-making, marketing and business support, to small businesses along the Central Corridor. The team will make small business expansion and building ownership loans with Living Cities PRI resources as well as identifying core strategies that will allow businesses to plan, survive, and thrive during major public infrastructure projects.

**Southwest LRT Implementation Team:** The combined work being advanced with Living Cities and HUD resources is being carried out by the Southwest Community Works Technical Implementation Committee. This team has representation from Hennepin County, ULI-Minnesota, the Metropolitan Council and the corridor cities of Minneapolis, Saint Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Edina, and Eden Prairie. The team is focused on creating a TOD Investment Framework, furthering the integration of land use planning with project engineering, and developing a strong public-private partnership along the line.

**Central Corridor Implementation Team:** Convened by the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative, this team will complete and begin to implement the Central Corridor Investment Framework.

Other work groups and sub-committees will be formed on an as-needed basis, and will be dissolved when their function is complete.

### **V. Community Engagement and Public Input**

Engaging the community is a fundamental element of Corridors of Opportunity. The primary vehicle for community engagement is through the Community Engagement Team, described above.

In addition, most projects funded under the HUD Sustainable Communities grant contain a community engagement activities or components.

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The Policy Board meetings also provide an opportunity for public engagement. Meeting agendas and information are posted on the Metropolitan Council website. This website also includes the contact information of key CoO staff members. Interested members of the public are directed to contact these staff members with questions and comments; the staff members then either respond to the inquiry, or direct the person to whoever can best respond to the inquiry. Policy Board meetings are open to the public.

**VI. Effective Date**

This Consortium Agreement will become effective upon signature by the parties. The provisions of the agreement may be reviewed, as appropriate, and amended or supplemented if mutually agreed upon in writing by the parties. Unless extended by written agreement of the parties or previously terminated by agreement of a majority of the signatories, this agreement will expire at the end of the three-year grant period, on January 31, 2014.

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**VII. Signatures**

By my signature below, my organization/agency becomes a signatory to the Corridors of Opportunity Consortium Agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization/Agency

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name, Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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