From the Board of Directors of the Near Northwest Neighborhood

Tuesday, July 28, 2020

Neighbors and Members of the Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. –

In the context of our work, of our neighborhood, of our City, and of our community we have often proclaimed and celebrated that one of the greatest assets of the NNN is the diversity included within this community. We take pride in this, we encourage it, we truly desire it and we celebrate it.

However.

However, we have spoken too infrequently about the disparities in our community, and the differences of experiences amongst our neighbors. Unequal housing opportunities and economic opportunities shape who we are, what we can expect, and our very health and future.

We despair in the recent murder of George Floyd, and locally of the killing of Eric Logan. We despair that this has been the “normal,” that we are all trying to not become numb. We have assumed an understanding of a system that won’t change; that our community doesn’t have the will to change. We share an understanding of long-term wounds that we don’t know exactly how to approach or heal; even as we resent them, abhor them, and desire to heal them.

Our mission at the NNN has always been to revitalize this neighborhood. This organization was created in 1974, and we have had many shared successes, and also shared sorrows. We know that we love our neighbors, and that our neighbors pride themselves in the diversity and inclusiveness of the neighborhood.

However.

Neighbors call the police when they are worried about people of color walking on the sidewalk. Recently, we were told this happened to a father, pushing his baby in a carriage. How is this father to feel? Included? Welcomed? That this is his neighborhood? That the very sight of him is suspicious?

This is one, singular, example – and not at all the shared experience of neighborhood revitalization that we strive for in our Mission.
So, as the Board members of the Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc., we want to say some things about our mission very clearly:

- Black Lives Matter.
- Until this is a clear understanding of our community, and yes, including the NNN community – we are failing in our mission.
- We are committed to this, and re-committed to centralizing this work in our organization. The flourishing of the NNN depends on it.

Reflecting on this, we propose and have prepared for a membership vote on adjusting our mission language:

- **Our Current NNN Mission:**
  The Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. is an organization of citizens dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of the neighborhood through:
  - providing affordable housing to low-moderate income households,
  - organizing and empowering community residents, and
  - promoting the neighborhood’s interest within the neighborhood and the entire community.

- **Our Proposed change to the NNN’s Mission:**
  The Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. is an organization of citizens diverse members dedicated to the preservation and revitalization of the neighborhood through:
  - providing affordable housing to low-moderate income households,
  - organizing and empowering community residents,
  - promoting the neighborhood’s interests within the neighborhood and the entire community - and
  - fostering an inclusive community that values diversity

Additionally, we are committed to moving forward in these three ways:

1. Because police accountability and racial justice are vital to the health of our neighborhood, and our greater South Bend community, we will make these issues a top priority for our Community Organizer to address, and facilitate spaces for neighbors to join in this work.
2. We will seek additional opportunities to have the difficult but necessary conversations required to move toward healing. We have been granted an opportunity by the Sisters of the Holy Cross to host a series of restorative justice circles focused on race. We are already putting together a planning team for this effort and will be in contact about ways you can participate.

3. We will seek to ensure that known disparities of housing opportunities and economic opportunities within the NNN and the community are addressed. We know this is, and shall remain, a major challenge for us all.

This work must be a shared calling, and we look forward to partnering with you, our neighbors, in the days ahead. We look forward to this work, where we can truly work to enjoy a community where all are invited to belong, where each and every person is seen, and where there is enough for everyone.

We are open to dialogue and your thoughts and reactions to this statement and our proposed mission changes. If you’d like to share your story with us, hear more about our conversations about this, or would like to dialogue about this, please email us at nnnassistant@nearnorthwest.org. Visit the Questions and Comments link on our webpage at www.nearnorthwest.org to keep the conversation flowing. A FAQ page can also be found on that site.

We are your elected Board of the Near Northwest Neighborhood, Inc. and we have written and approve the sharing of this statement to our members.

Clark Glover, Board President
Michael Hebbeler, Vice-President
Mark Gould, Treasurer
Twila Newbill, Secretary
Edenys Deynes
Jess Hunter-Bowman
Muhammad Shabazz
Jessica Dieter
Kelsey Lantz