

# Equitable Development Scorecard Case Study

## West Side Community Organization



The Alliance partnered with more than a dozen community-centered local organizations to create the **Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard**, which helps communities ensure that the principles and practices of equitable development, environmental justice, and affordability are available to all residents. Intended to be a living document, adapted by communities to meet their needs, **this case study series** shares the many ways the Scorecard is being leveraged and the lessons learned from the communities putting it to use.

### Who is the West Side Community Organization?

The **West Side Community Organization** works to increase the civic participation of residents on St. Paul's West Side by initiating organizing campaigns, providing leadership development opportunities for youth and adults, and by educating and building the power base of residents to tackle civic issues. WSCO works on issues of racial, economic, social, and environmental justice towards systemic change. WSCO also acts as a vehicle to inform and shape issues concerning the "built" environment through community economic development planning, organizing resources to clean up urban blight, and advocating for equitable development.

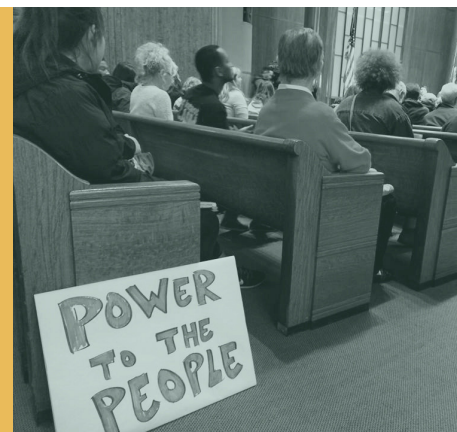
### Why the Scorecard?

For the West Side Community Organization, the creation of its Equitable Development Scorecard was the cornerstone of a broader foundation for all of WSCO's work. In 2016, WSCO completed a strategic planning process that centered equity and self-determination as two of its guiding values and "amplify[ing] the powerful voices of the people of the West Side on issues of equity and justice" as its first goal. As a District Council, WSCO realized its specific and unique advisory role in land use and planning, and specifically set one of its outcomes as "infus[ing] the West Side with development that reflects West Side values."

Executive Director Monica Bravo was familiar with the Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard, created by a host of community-based organizations across the Twin Cities, and saw it as a potentially powerful tool. Working with community to adapt and create a Scorecard specific to the West Side could advance a number of WSCO's goals: engaging residents in the planning process, articulating a shared vision for development, and building up community leaders to participate in and reshape decision making processes that impact their neighborhoods.

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WSCO board member



“Every District Council has a land use committee, and since its existence it’s always been people with technical backgrounds and the luxury of time making these major decisions,” Bravo says. “So many people don’t know about these processes. When there are cranes on their street, that’s when they get interested, but the planning for that project was actually five years earlier.”

In the midst of that disconnect, community members were feeling the devastating impact of those decisions. “I was seeing people that I loved, people I grew up with, being moved out because they couldn’t afford housing anymore,” said Katrina Mendoza, a WSCO board member. “I wanted there to be a way for the community to get in front of a moving process, to be proactive instead of reactive.”

To do that, though, WSCO had to find a way to overcome the legacy of complicated and disenfranchising public processes that left the community feeling frustrated and powerless. “When I moved to the West Side, I was a voting citizen but that was it as far as civic engagement because I didn’t think it was worth the time,” said Monica Marrocco, a WSCO board member. “With the Scorecard I saw a real way we were creating together and planning together and that gave me a lot of hope.”

For Ned Moore, Neighborhood Leadership and Organizing Program Director at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota, the Scorecard was a means to address the sense of overwhelm many residents feel. “Gentrification is such a tidal wave of injustice and oppression that it

can be paralyzing to think through ‘What do we do about it?’” he said. “The Scorecard was a tool, a way to move a conversation within the organization and the neighborhood around gentrification and predatory development and neighborhood identity.”

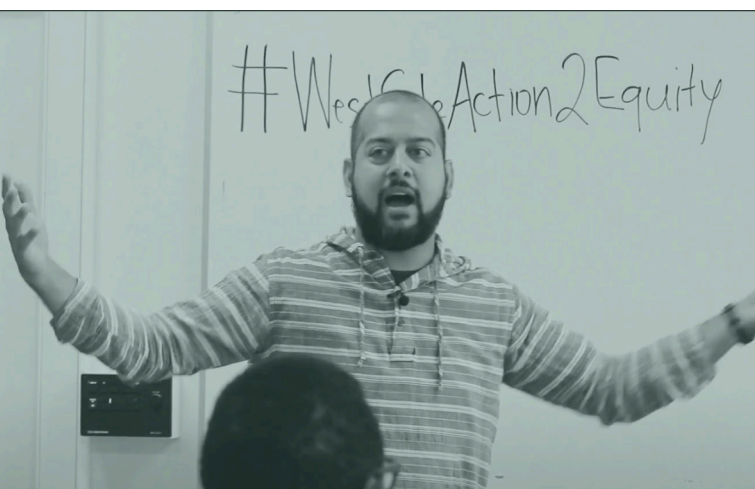
## Setting the Foundation

To start that conversation, WSCO knew they needed to provide a solid base for community members to move forward together with a shared analysis and equity lens. So in 2017, in partnership with CURA, they launched the Action to Equity series.

For Bravo, it was critical to ground any work on a Scorecard in the history and hearts of the community. “For so long in these spaces around planning and development, we were stuck in our heads,” she said. “We realized we needed to get into people’s guts, into why this matters, into the history of our neighborhoods.” The three-event Action to Equity series was a way to catalyze the conversation in a meaningful and actionable context.

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“We started with a deep dive into the history of racial inequity in the Twin Cities broadly, but resonating specifically with experiences of West Siders,” Moore said. “It was important to spend the first session wrestling with that history of white supremacy and structural racism, as context for what we’re up against and why building power is necessary to transform these systems and entities if we want equitable development. The second part was really about lifting up organizing and community power as tools to create change. We



## West Side Action to Equity Series

In partnership with the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), WSCO began its Scorecard process by hosting a three-part series, “West Side: Action to Equity.” Beyond “community conversations,” these Saturday workshops were deep-dive discussions that engaged more than 100 participants over the course of multiple weekends. These created shared understanding and real buy-in from community.

*Pictured left: Neeraj Mehta, former Director of CURA’s Community-Based Research Programs at the 2017 Action to Equity series*

wanted to emphasize that it's not an academic exercise, it's not getting someone to file a lawsuit or provide the social services when people get displaced, but organizing to fight for what we want."

Thanks to the work of WSCO staff and leaders — and neighbors calling neighbors — the Saturday sessions turned out more than 100 participants. It wasn't until the final session that the agenda turned specifically to the Scorecard. To begin that conversation, leaders roleplayed different types of developers and participants broke into smaller groups to use the regional Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard tool to discuss and assess the fictional projects. "That was an opportunity to look at the tool and start to talk about what was missing, what was confusing, what was the language that's not the language that everyday folks are using in the neighborhood to talk about this stuff," Moore said. "But the biggest goal was to get people really bought in and believing in this as a tool to define what type of development we want and don't want."

Even at that early stage, WSCO leaders were intentional about emphasizing that a West Side Scorecard wouldn't simply be a checklist or assessment measure. "We wanted to be really clear that it's less about the teeth of scoring a development and more about making sure the conversation we have with a developer is rooted in our values," said Bahieh Hartshorn, who, at the time was WSCO's community organizer, and is now WSCO's board co-chair. "At the end of that third session, we asked in a commitment form who would be interested

in diving deeper in two Scorecard work groups: Community Engagement and Language and Legality."

Hartshorn knew robust leadership from community members would be critical to the impact and longevity of the Scorecard. "I didn't want this to live just in the hands of staff because that's when it ends up being a document on the shelf," she said. But, according to Bravo, having Hartshorn at the helm was essential in advancing the complicated and lengthy process of creating a truly community-led Scorecard. "Bahieh was an anchor and had so many leaders in place," she said. "Unless you have someone to move and stay with them, you will lose them."

That ended up being a core challenge. When Hartshorn left for a different job at the end of 2018, there was no dedicated staff member focused solely on the Scorecard, which led to some ebb and flow in the process. But even in the best of circumstances, WSCO leaders strongly emphasized the need to move at the speed of community engagement and trust. When the work groups got started, Bravo and Hartshorn imagined the whole process would take three to six months. Maybe a year. Looking back, they suggest organizations shouldn't be wary of setting aside two years to create their own Scorecard.

That time and intention is absolutely necessary. As Moore stressed: "A tool is only as good as the community power behind it."



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## Making Planning Accessible

When Kareem Smith moved to the West Side it reminded him, in all the best ways, of his hometown of Flint, Michigan. “Unfortunately, like my hometown, the West Side was also subject to corporate investment that on the surface seemed good for the area, but ultimately isn’t for the community,” he said. “The opportunity for gentrification was huge, and I decided to be involved in the Residential Development and Land Use committee. After participating in a few meetings, it became apparent that it was important that people of color get involved, so I ran for, and won, a co-leading role.”

Actively recruiting and elevating to leadership more renters and people of color to the Land Use Committee was one key aspect of WSCO’s effort to move the planning process out of the traditional domain of white homeowners and business leaders. In addition to the committee itself, creating the Scorecard provided an opportunity to democratize that knowledge and cultivate many more leaders who were both invested and confident in their role as experts in the destiny of their neighborhoods.

For the Scorecard drafting group the starting point for the document was vitally important. “We wanted to make sure it addressed long-standing systemic racism and how that has affected planning, from redlining to restrictive covenants,” said Martin Hernandez, WSCO’s board co-chair and a member of the drafting group. “That racial equity frame had to be at the forefront: that there’s a long history of wrongs perpetrated against people of color and development has to acknowledge

and address those wrongs through housing, transportation and other policies.”

For Smith, leading with that lens provided the baseline for any conversation about development. “The Scorecard was huge,” he said, “because it was essentially the first step in letting developers know that the West Side is aware of the history of gentrification, abandonment, and displacement — and we are not open to outside interests profiting off of that type of ‘investment’ anymore.”

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Providing a history of the West Side at the outset of the Scorecard document had another benefit. “We wanted to make every effort to speak to the heart of anyone looking at this,” said Monica Marrocco, also a member of the drafting group. “If a developer wonders why we’re asking these questions later in the Scorecard, we wanted to say ‘Here are these important parts of our history and why these issues matter to us.’”

Bridging the frequent divide between developers and residents, the drafting group had to make the Scorecard speak to multiple audiences. “Most of us were very unfamiliar with the developer process,” Marrocco said, “so we were always thinking, ‘Are we using language that’s understandable to community but also effective and taken seriously by these professionals?’ Ultimately, though, we were most invested in trying to make it as community friendly as possible. We asked ourselves many times: ‘Is this bus stop ready?’ Would somebody pick it up on the bus and look at it? How would a regular person feel about this versus what would a developer think looking at it?”



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**.-Monica Marrocco, WSCO board**

That meant creating additional materials to support the Scorecard. Derek Johnson, a member of the WSCO planning committee, knew translating development jargon is essential to community comprehension. "We've been working with city planning to create a one-pager that outlines terms like conditional use permits and variances and zoning," he said. "We're thinking through what are tools that are more accessible to help more people who aren't experts be engaged in the process."

It isn't just community residents who need clear definitions, though. Michael Wade, the Ward 2 Planner for the City of St. Paul, suggested the Scorecard include a glossary of terms to clarify concepts for developers, as well. "You can't assume that anyone else has the same idea about what cultural heritage or cultural landscape are," he said. "It was important for WSCO to share how they define them."

WSCO leaders quickly learned that you can't assume everyone has a shared understanding or reaction to terms like gentrification, either.

## TIPS for Starting and Sustaining a Scorecard Process

### Start from a shared analysis

To chart a shared course, participants must have some mutual understanding of where they're starting and where they want to go. For WSCO, this meant a strong racial equity analysis and hyper-local historical understanding of systemic exclusion and trauma for immigrants and communities of color. This created the foundation that everything else was built upon.

### (Re)frame the conversation

For your organization this process may be about equitable development. But for community this is about having power and agency in creating just and joyful neighborhoods where their families can thrive. Lead with vision and speak from values not policy jargon.

### Dedicate staff

Facilitating a meaningful Scorecard creation process is time intensive and requires community trust. If at all possible, dedicate specific staff and significant organizational capacity to what will be a large *medium-term investment* that pays immense dividends in *long-term community power*.

### Create working groups

Members of your community have different passions and skill sets. Your Scorecard should seek to engage them in ways that inspire and sustain their involvement. For WSCO, that meant creating two working groups: language & legality and community engagement.

### Extend your timeline

How much time do you think it will take to create your Scorecard? Great. Multiply that by three. For WSCO, a process they thought would take a summer took several years. Aggressive timelines and internalized urgency will deplete your capacity and undermine the power of the process and the outcomes.



## Development without Displacement

Correcting the misperception that the Scorecard would be a tool to block development was a core goal of the drafting group. “Especially early on, some people were asking ‘Why don’t you like development?’” Marrocco said. “There was a rumor or belief that that was our stance. We needed to clarify we aren’t anti-development. We want development. But we want development for us. There was a lot of pressure to figure out how to be very specific in what we’re opposed to and what we are for. We wanted to be very clear that the Scorecard is an opportunity for a conversation with the developer.”

At the same time, with the grounding of the organization-wide commitment to equity, WSCO was transparent and unapologetic about whose needs were being centered in that conversation. “We had some people ask ‘Why aren’t you listening to the homeowners,’” Marrocco recalls, “and we were able to say that we are approaching this with a racial equity lens and marginalized voices will be at the forefront of whatever we do. Those voices need to be loud and clear and we need to know how plans will benefit them.”

That dialogue about how to define gentrification and name the benefits and harms of development rippled out beyond the Scorecard. For Johnson, that meant more constructive and nuanced conversations about critical issues facing the West Side.

“One of the things that’s been useful in a variety of ways was sharing this idea that people living in the neighborhood want to see certain things improve and move forward but what does it look like to want those things and not want the neighborhood to become drastically different?” he said. “So if my neighbor says ‘But I’d love to have more restaurants down the street,’ it doesn’t mean you can’t have them, but how can you do that without drastically changing the neighborhood?”

That conversation wasn’t always easy. In fact, misplaced fears about the Scorecard halting development prompted a sign-on letter from several residents to the city planning commission arguing that “WSCO makes the very large assumption that ALL community members are in favor of absolutely NO gentrification.” But Monica Bravo, WSCO Executive Director, took the initiative to reach out personally to several of the signatories to sit down together and talk through concerns. That commitment to a relational approach was successful, with one of the signatories not only shifting her perspective but sending a follow-up letter to their City Councilmember endorsing the Scorecard and emphasizing: “WSCO’s interpretation of ‘anti-gentrification’ is not anti-investment in any sense.”

## Engaging the Community

Crafting the language of the Scorecard wasn’t just the work of the drafting group. A second team focused on deep and extensive community engagement to understand and connect residents stories and dreams to the Scorecard content and outcomes.

Aligned with the organization’s commitment to equity, the community engagement group started by identifying the voices that they believed would be most important to include: renters, seniors, and youth. From there, they crafted engagement strategies that provided multiple ways of drawing out and sharing knowledge. Over the course of more than six months, the team shared the Scorecard in a wide variety of settings.

We were intentional about the fact that people communicate in different styles. We had talking circles, arts and crafts where people could build with their hands, a long scroll where people could draw what they wanted to see. It’s so important to hear and value people’s stories; not just sit down and listen to them but listen to understand. That’s what creates a Scorecard that’s meaningful and actually works for our community.

**- Katrina Mendoza, WSCO board**

“We went to National Night Out, to baseball games and to the Boys and Girls Clubs,” recalled Katrina Mendoza, who was on the community engagement team. “We handed out popsicles and asked kids to draw what type of community they wanted. We were intentional about the fact that people communicate in different styles. We had talking circles, arts and crafts where people could build with their hands, a long scroll where people drew or doodled what they wanted to see. It’s so important to hear and





## TIPS for Community Engagement

### Listen to learn

Authentic engagement is a dialogue, not a presentation. Take a breath. Be present as an active listener with a deep intention to learn and an openness to integrate what you hear.

### Commit to key voices

Be clear about whose voices are essential and make that insight imperative, not just aspirational. Given their mission and values, WSCO centered insight from youth, elders and renters — and made sure their strategies and process were designed with those voices in mind, rather than hoping they'd simply show up.

### Be creative in how you connect

Just because youth are unfamiliar with zoning doesn't mean they don't have a vision for their community. Just because an elder doesn't resonate with a small area plan doesn't mean there isn't significant knowledge in the richness of her lived experience. Create opportunities that immediately inspire people's sense of belonging and power — whether that's a talking circle or an art project — rather than making community conform to systems and language that are exclusive and disempowering.

### Embrace the unexpected

Truly listening and seeking to share power with community often isn't linear. Be humble about and grateful for new directions or course corrections that bring more community creativity, agency and ownership into the process.

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The group also engaged local merchants, recognizing their vital role in the fabric of the community and the impact of development on their businesses, as well. "We learned from some long-term businesses of 30-40 years that thrived on the West Side's predominantly Latinx population that they were seeing a drop in business as those people were being displaced and others were coming in," Hernandez recalled.

Beyond targeted outreach, WSCO integrated the Scorecard into all its public events and meetings, from the farmers markets to monthly gatherings. "We had it printed off on big boards so people could put stickers on aspects they liked and resonated with," Hartshorn said. "But it was less about how to edit the document and more about is this resonating with people?"

A common theme from all the engagements: A desire to feel a sense of agency in their community. "People were really interested in being power negotiators when development or change is coming into their communities," Hartshorn said. "There are so many things that the community is never told about and that they don't get a say in. Even with young people, they could name times they weren't able to make decisions within their school. Everyone had examples of not having power to make decisions when they should and we were able to name this Scorecard as an opportunity to build that power."

In the midst of the creation of the Scorecard, an unexpected opportunity to build power and solidarity across organizations and interests manifested, as well. In 2019, WSCO heard from local union leaders and Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL) that a development underway on the West Side was engaged in exploitative labor practices, including the use of a subcontractor that was subsequently convicted on federal labor trafficking charges. At first, there was tension, since WSCO had initially written a letter of support for the development. But instead of conflict, the organizations turned to collaboration.

“We were asking WSCO to recall their letter of support and let organized workers share their stories,” said Carlos Garcia Velasco, a West Side resident and organizer at CTUL. “We found out that there were 80 members of the carpenters union and CTUL who lived in that zipcode on the West Side, so we were able to bring that data to build constituent power. When we showed up in the space, I acknowledged that WSCO giving us the agenda for their entire meeting, that’s what power building and power sharing looks like.”

For WSCO, the community dialogue exposed a gap in the Scorecard. “Our learning out of that was that the Scorecard didn’t have the depth it needed,” Bravo said. “It had equitable wages and local hiring standards but what it didn’t have was a subcontractor agreement.” In response, WSCO added a subcontractor agreement as an addendum to the Scorecard — and the coalition put so much pressure on the developer that one of the co-founders of the company stepped down and publicly committed to reorienting his focus to affordable housing with equitable labor practices.



## Solidarity with workers

WSCO knew their Scorecard needed to include the interests of neighborhood residents *and* the laborers who worked on development projects. While their Scorecard included local hiring and equitable wages, their deep relationships with other local organizers and immediate openness to share power with Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL) created space for deeper solidarity. By inviting in construction workers to share their stories of abusive subcontractors who stole their wages, WSCO rescinded a letter of support for a development in their district, joined with the workers in their campaign and added an addendum to their Scorecard to hold developers accountable for abuses of subcontractors.

To make sure the Scorecard could truly hold developers accountable, WSCO knew it needed to be more than an advocacy tool, but supported by city policy, as well.

## Working with the City

Working with leaders at the City of St. Paul to integrate the WSCO Scorecard into the planning process was like “building a bike while you’re riding it,” Bravo said. As early as 2017, WSCO began engaging with planning staff and elected leaders on their Equity Action Plan, pointing out assumptions and policies that perpetuated development that wasn’t aligned with the needs of West Side residents. The first and biggest gap to bridge was gaining buy-in from city officials around the value of community leadership. “At the start, we had to push the narrative that our people are the experts of this neighborhood, this land, this experience,” Bravo said. Creating that baseline of respect and recognition of the value of the Scorecard and community expertise took time and staff turnover, but it was essential to the process moving forward.

Another barrier was the widely held paradigm related to “Areas of Concentrated Poverty.” Because the West Side is home to historically marginalized, low-wealth communities, city leaders were wary to commit resources to or advance affordable housing because it would “further concentrate poverty.” To make the vision and values of the Scorecard viable, WSCO leaders had to combat that deficit-based frame to ensure development would serve the affordability needs of current residents rather than focusing exclusively on market rate and luxury units.

The Scorecard itself, though, was a helpful way to engage the city in an actionable and constructive way. As Michael Wade, Ward 2 City Planner, put it: “They brought us something we could evaluate instead of saying what if. They came with a document, an idea and said how do we do this?”

Finding the best way to do it took some time — and consultation with the city attorney to ensure it would pass legal muster. But WSCO’s consistency and persistence in keeping city staff and leaders informed over a number of years built relationships and buy-in at City Hall to be an active partner rather than antagonist. According to Luis Pereira, planning director for St. Paul’s Planning and Economic Development (PED)



department, the city worked through a number of scenarios with WSCO for adopting the Scorecard. For instance, adopting the Scorecard as a Small Area Plan wouldn't cover the entire District of the West Side, but integrating it into the policies of their district plan would have taken it out of a Scorecard format and undermined flexibility over time for shifting needs and priorities. The City itself, including the Planning Commission, couldn't adopt it, because those bodies have to abide by citywide policies, including the zoning code and the Comprehensive Plan, in decision making around issues like permitting.

Ultimately, staff and community agreed the best route was to adopt the Scorecard as an appendix to the West Side Community Plan, which aims to "plan and prioritize improvements for the neighborhood by... steering the changes, policies and investments initiated by developers, the City and its agencies." Importantly, the West Side Community Plan — and thus the Scorecard — is also a part of the City of St. Paul Comprehensive Plan, as well.

"Essentially, adopting the Scorecard into the Community Plan is saying this is WSCO's tool for commenting on development proposals seeking city zoning approvals and gives it more importance," Pereira said. "If a developer is approaching us about a site, it gives the city the ability to point to the Scorecard and say it's an adopted part of the Comprehensive Plan and, in that way, support the efforts of WSCO."

On the one hand, even with the Scorecard adopted into city plans, WSCO's recommendation or evaluation of a development in their district is only advisory — it can't unilaterally advance or block a development. But it does hold significant weight.

Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2 City Councilmember, applauded the Scorecard. "It's a big idea," she said. "We'll let developers know about it when we're having initial conversations with them. And because it's technically part of the Comprehensive Plan, if a developer were far afield of the Scorecard they might be at a disadvantage in being out of sync with the Comp Plan. But more than that, WSCO's score and recommendation matters to the planning commission, because they're ultimately the closest to the community, the closest form of government to the project."

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**-Michael Wade, St Paul City Planner**

The Scorecard isn't just being integrated into current processes; it's also pushing systems change in processes that preclude public participation. For instance, WSCO sought to both co-create any Request for Proposals on any publicly owned land on the West Side and integrate the Scorecard into the review of those proposals. But, by law, responses to such RFPs are confidential. To maintain the integrity of its Scorecard, WSCO has been firm in making sure it is only implemented by community itself, not used in isolation by city staff or developers as a checklist. Thanks to WSCO's advocacy and relationships, now one or two community members can be involved in the process after signing a confidentiality agreement.



## How the Scorecard Influences City Planning Decisions

1. The Scorecard has been adopted as part of the West Side Community Plan, which "steer[s] the changes, policies and investments initiated by developers, the City and its agencies."
2. When a developer approaches the city about a project on the West Side, city staff and elected officials direct them to the Scorecard.
3. Using the Scorecard determines if and how the West Side Community Organization, a District Council, supports or rejects a project in its letter to the City Planning and Zoning Committee.
4. The Planning Committee makes recommendations to City Council.

## Using the Scorecard

Just as the creation of the Scorecard was centered in community, the use of the Scorecard is also intended to widen the circle of residents engaged in the development process. Traditionally, the Residential Development and Land Use committees within St. Paul District Councils have their own meetings, often with very little visibility or input from the wider community. In recent years, WSCO has transitioned discussion about development into its monthly West Side Voices Forum, which includes food and childcare and dynamic discussion about the diversity of concerns and issues residents bring to the table. By not relegating planning to a different meeting, many more community members have weighed in on projects and had dialogue directly with developers.

Even before adoption by the city in March 2020, developers have been proactively approaching WSCO for community engagement and feedback. More than an assessment, the Scorecard provides an entry point. “A lot of times, a developer comes in and says this is our plan, you can sign off on it or not,” Hernandez said. “With the Scorecard we’ve outlined what we want in the neighborhood, so, at the very least, developers know what they’re coming in to?”

That was absolutely true for Reuter Walton, as they started work on a housing development at 84 Water

Street on the West Side flats. Kyle Brasser, a developer at Reuter Walton, recalled learning about the WSCO Scorecard from Councilmember Noecker and going into a first meeting with WSCO leaders feeling equipped for a productive conversation.

“At a high level, the Scorecard gave us criteria up front, so we knew what was important to the entire neighborhood, and it gave us examples within each criteria on how to satisfy them,” he said. “We had a framework from the very beginning to shape a proposal

that would be more attractive to the neighborhood and what they wanted. Oftentimes, we go into a first neighborhood meeting with no idea of what to expect and it gets contentious. The Scorecard did a good job of setting a different tone from the start.”

That helped to set an actionable course for the conversation, as well. For instance, Reuter Walton knew that housing affordability

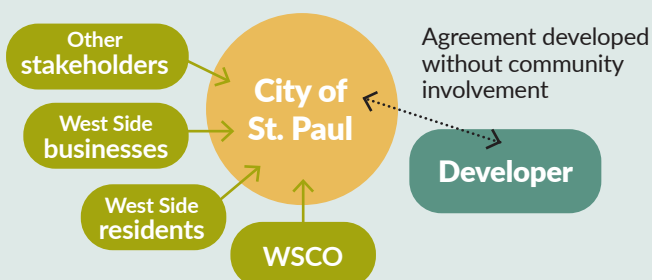
was a key criteria for WSCO, so they originally proposed the inclusion of units at 80 percent of area median income. While private developers often push back on any affordable units in a project without public subsidy, conversations around the Scorecard led Reuter Walton to go back to the drawing board and commit to 10 percent of units at 60 percent of area median income.

Another benefit of the Scorecard, from the developer perspective, was the ability to engage with community in a constructive way. “What we experience a lot of the time working with neighborhoods is there’s a lot of

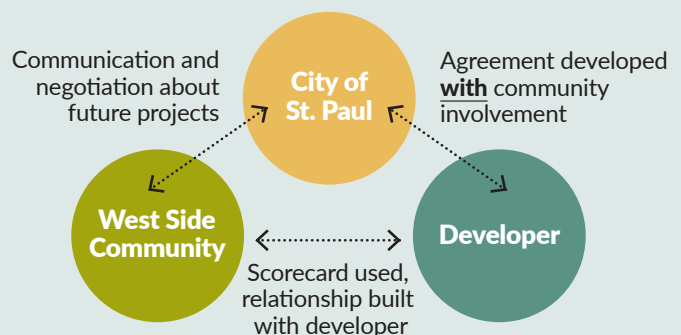
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### Development Without Community Power



### Development With Community Power



varying opinions, which is healthy,” Brasser said. “But it can get dominated by a few loud voices and it can be really hard to boil down input from a wide variety of people to get true directional feedback.” The Scorecard — and the process of engaging with WSCO around it — was a “huge benefit” in getting that actionable input, Brasser said.

In many cases, one of the first steps is presenting their ideas to the community. And, with the venue of the Voices Forum and the tool of the Scorecard, residents new to planning processes have a pathway to meaningful participation. “We’ve had developers come to the Voices meeting and given their proposal to us and want our recommendation,” Marrocco said. “We’re able to use the Scorecard to say, what about this and this? I’ve loved seeing some of these meetings evolve into fine-toothed questioning of developers’ proposals now that we’re more experienced and well-versed in what we should be asking — and there’s more and more of us asking.”

At one Voices forum, two developers were present and residents rotated rooms for 20-minute Q&As with each. In addition to directly engaging with developers, WSCO uses a Fist to Five method of voting. Instead of the binary yes/no of Roberts’ Rules, the Fist to Five method asks participants to share their degree of support from a fist being strong opposition to five fingers being enthusiastic support. Using a more participatory process for voting, Marrocco said, “has elevated questions and ideas that wouldn’t have surfaced with majority voting.”

For Brasser, that dialogue at the Voices forum was particularly productive because the Scorecard acted as a collective anchor. “When we presented our Scorecard, in full transparency, the group didn’t agree with us on

everything,” he recalled. “We went back and forth on some points, but we were in pretty close agreement and it was a healthy debate guided by the Scorecard criteria. It wasn’t just hearing a developer come and talk about changing something in the neighborhood; individual community members knew the tool we were working off of.”

Even in its early stages the Scorecard has had clear impact on developments on the West Side. One of the most notable examples was the development at 617 Stryker Avenue. “When the City put up the Request for Qualifications on the lot, we had completed the first draft of the Scorecard and were able to work with the city planners in the pre-development phase to influence how the RFQ was written and what the community wanted to have developed there, in addition to the price points,” Bravo said. “We were able to work closely with Planning and Economic Development in this process, and also able to sit at the table for the review and scoring of the actual developer proposals.” The result? A deeply affordable housing project for seniors earning 30 percent of the area median income.

In another case, when Sherman Associates had to redraw plans for the expansion of the West Side Flats they were intentional to ensure compatibility with the Scorecard and buy-in from the community. “They actually took their blueprints and embedded them into the sections and tiers of the Scorecard, and when they came to present, they presented through the lens of the Scorecard,” Bravo said.

Even with exemplary performance on the Scorecard, accountability is critical to maintaining the spirit and intention of the tool to result in real benefits. After any initial assessment or recommendation, continued



West Side Flats

## Integrating the Scorecard into Project Development

The Scorecard process has already had an impact on developments on the West Side. For instance, Will Anderson, Senior Developer at Sherman Associates, noted that “The Scorecard is another process to work through but it takes some of the ambiguity off the table. It helped to guide the conversation.” As Sherman worked on its West Side Flats development they engaged with WSCO leaders around the Scorecard and integrated its metrics and priorities into the presentation it made at the West Side Voices Forum.



dialogue and transparency between developers and community is essential. For instance, Reuter Walton committed to provide WSCO access to the building site at any time and preference to West Side residents once units are completed. WSCO has been diligent about maintaining that accountability moving forward.

They have also been clear that the Scorecard is to be used by and for community, not by developers who attempt to score themselves in isolation or apply it outside the West Side to falsely credential their commitment to equity or community engagement. The power of any Scorecard adaptation, WSCO leaders emphasize, is in the countless hours of deep and meaningful engagement with members of the community. “A Scorecard is not intended for others to own and put upon you,” Bravo said. “There are other areas that want to use it now, which runs the risk of being a cookie cutter model that’s not unique to the needs and assets of the community.”

## Sustaining the Scorecard

To meet the evolving needs of the West Side community, the Scorecard is intended to be a living document that grows and shifts over time. In early 2020, WSCO was able to hire a community organizer who will have the capacity to dedicate significant time and attention to continuing that momentum. But, as Hartshorn knew from the start, an effective Scorecard can’t live with WSCO staff. That’s why WSCO created a Scorecard Team comprised of two representatives from each of the Ward’s precincts. The members of the Scorecard Team serve two-year terms and are provided stipends for their time and expertise to score proposed projects on the West Side.

“We were really intentional in trying to make the group as representative as possible, while also looking to center communities of color and marginalized groups,” Marrocco said. “It was a lot of personal asks. I talked to

a number of people and had to dispel this whole notion that you have to know a ton about planning and all this vocabulary. That perception was a big challenge. But I would say, ‘If you live here, this is for you. You are the true expert as a resident — and renters, people of color, we want you first.’”

Members of the group won’t operate in isolation. Team members will not only score the project on their own knowledge and expertise but reach out to the people and organizations most impacted by any project. To do that, members of the group will have access to training on key organizing strategies, like one-to-one deep canvassing. In that way, the Scorecard won’t just inform physical development on the West Side, but build leadership development, as well.

“By taking on that leadership, these folks will be responsible for bringing people along, for engaging their neighbors and building their skills,” Hartshorn said.

“The moment a developer comes in and this group gets to be the decision maker, knowing they have the back of the entire community, that’s going to be exciting. That’s why the Scorecard is powerful. It’s not just about getting our own people into decision making seats but creating our own spaces of decision making where we create the container rather than dominant structures. These decisions can be made in community rather than exclusively at city hall.”

From the Action to Equity Series in 2017 to adoption by city council in 2020, the creation of the WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard took years of investment from dozens of residents, but the impact on both the built environment and community power promises to be transformational.

“The Scorecard will be a positive mark for at least a generation of development on the West Side,” Kareem Smith said. “The community and residents of the West Side have historically been treated as less than, and that stops now.”

The residents of the West Side have historically been treated as less than. That stops now.

**Kareem Smith, West Side resident**

Learn more about the *Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard*, and read additional case studies on its use in community at [thealliancetc.org/equitable-development-scorecard](https://thealliancetc.org/equitable-development-scorecard)

Learn more about the *WSCO Equitable Development Scorecard* at [wsco.org/equitable-development-scorecard](https://wsco.org/equitable-development-scorecard)

