City of Brooklyn Park  
Request for EDA Action

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<th>Agenda Item No:</th>
<th>Meeting Date:</th>
<th>Prepared By:</th>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>June 17, 2019</td>
<td>Erika Byrd, Economic Development Specialist</td>
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<th>Agenda Section:</th>
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Resolution: X

Item: Consider Amending the 2019 Economic Development Authority Budget in the Amount of up to $78,000 for a Qualitative Study of Evictions in Brooklyn Park and Authorizing Staff to Enter into an Agreement for Research with the Center of Urban and Regional Affairs

Executive Director’s Proposed Action:

MOTION __________, SECOND __________ TO WAIVE THE READING AND ADOPT RESOLUTION #2019- ___ AMENDING THE 2019 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF UP TO $78,000 FOR A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF EVICTIONS IN BROOKLYN PARK AND AUTHORIZING STAFF TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT FOR RESEARCH WITH THE CENTER FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS.

Overview:

In recent years, the EDA has been focusing on understanding eviction, improving the long-term sustainability of apartment communities, and addressing concerns about quality of life for renters. In 2018, HOME Line completed a quantitative analysis of evictions within Brooklyn Park. Following that report, the EDA expressed interest in engaging those affected by eviction (including landlords and tenants) in conversations. African Career, Education & Resource, Inc (ACER) and others encouraged Brooklyn Park to connect with Dr. Brittney Lewis, principal researcher at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), about the large, qualitative study on evictions she was leading in North Minneapolis. After several conversations with Brooklyn Park staff, Dr. Lewis has proposed leading a year-long qualitative research project in Brooklyn Park to investigate the issues of eviction, housing stability, and renter quality of life. The research would involve interviews with tenants and landlords and would be developed in collaboration with a variety of community members and stakeholders. The purpose of this action is to amend the EDA budget to support the proposed CURA research project regarding root causes of evictions and quality of life issues in Brooklyn Park apartments and prepare recommendations for city consideration.

Primary Issues/Alternatives to Consider:

- Why should the EDA consider this research?

This project is at the intersection of many of the identified goals of the EDA and the community and builds on the EDA’s work over the past few years. In 2018, the City worked with HOME Line to produce an analysis of evictions in Brooklyn Park from 2015-2017. This work was prompted by concerns about rising rents, displacement, and the high number of evictions in Brooklyn Park. These issues and others were brought forward by African Career Education & Resources (ACER) and La Asamblea De Derechos Civiles, in 2017 through their Civil Rights Blueprint: Building Our Common Home in the Brooklyns report (items 6.1 D).

The HOME Line Evictions in Brooklyn Park report (item 6.1E) examined trends related to residential evictions and found that while evictions in Hennepin County decreased significantly over the past decade, the number of evictions in Brooklyn Park has stayed relatively the same. Analysis of eviction cases filed indicated that evictions filed by just four property owners accounted for 65 percent of eviction cases in Brooklyn Park and on average Brooklyn Park evictions were filed 16 days after rent was due. Data from the Hennepin County
Eviction Dashboard reveals that Brooklyn Park contains 2 of the top 4 zip codes in the county with the highest number or eviction filings and highest eviction filing rate (55443 and 55429 in Brooklyn Park with the other 2 zip codes located in Minneapolis).

Hennepin County Eviction Rate by Zip Code 2018

![Map of Hennepin County showing eviction rates by zip code]

An eviction filing remains on a tenant’s record for seven years, so even if an eviction filing does not end up resulting in an eviction or displacement, the filing itself has important consequences for households. Seeking to reduce eviction filings and ensure stable housing is a benefit to the City. Understanding the factors behind eviction filings is essential to develop ways to increase housing access, stability, and quality.

In addition, in recent years, the City of Brooklyn Park has been focusing on improving the long-term sustainability of apartment communities and improving resident quality of life. The City has been expending many resources to address ongoing safety and quality of life issues apartment communities — particularly Huntington Place — but staff does not have the capacity to understand and address all the root causes of instability. A comprehensive mixed methodological approach enabling community members and policymakers to address how and why these trends are taking place and what city responses are recommended from the perspectives of tenants and landlords themselves is needed to effect lasting change.

• How was the research proposal developed?

The HOME Line report made a number of policy recommendations including that the City “consider additional research, particularly around informal eviction notices, qualitative interviews with affected tenants and landlords, and/or a landlord cost/benefit analysis of filing evictions.” While EDA staff has begun to meet with landlords and other stakeholders to discuss eviction, there is a need to add tenant voice to this work. One
organization doing qualitative research into eviction is the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota under the guidance of principal researcher Dr. Brittany Lewis. Dr. Lewis recently completed an in-depth qualitative study of evictions in the 55411 & 55412 zip codes in Minneapolis. The executive summary of the report is available at http://evictions.cura.umn.edu/

ACER and Council Member Lisa Jacobson encouraged staff to connect with Dr. Lewis about her work and the possibility of qualitative tenant research in Brooklyn Park. Through conversations with Brooklyn Park staff, Dr. Lewis put together a research proposal. Staff shared the potential research project with a number of stakeholders including ACER, Community Emergency Assistance Programs (CEAP), Community Mediation & Restorative Services (CMRS), HOME Line, Housing Justice Center, and Hennepin County. These stakeholders were overall supportive of this research project and provided feedback on the direction of the research question. Most felt that in addition to an examination of formal evictions through qualitative research, the project should look at informal evictions, housing stability, and quality of life for Brooklyn park renters. Dr. Lewis updated her proposal to reflect a broader scope that includes eviction and renter quality of life (proposal attached as item 6.1C).

- What would the research project look like?

Dr. Lewis and CURA bring a unique model of research that seeks to disrupt the power imbalances that often exist between researchers and the community, particularly in communities of color and low-wealth communities. Dr. Brittany Lewis employs a community-engaged action research model that uses a mixed methodological research approach to: (1) build community power, (2) assist local grassroots campaigns and local power brokers in reframing the dominant narrative, and (3) produce community centered public policy solutions that are winnable. This model relies heavily on the development of reciprocal relationships across sectors that embrace an open process where the collective develops shared understandings for the purpose of creating social transformation.

In preparing for the project, the first step would be to connect with stakeholders and those most affected and convene an Advisory Council comprising of tenants, landlords, community organizers, community-based staff members, staff members from the city of Brooklyn Park, and others. These engagements would frame the project and inform the scope of work and methodology. While the attached research proposal outlines the general framework of the research project, the final scope and methodology will be determined through this community engagement process.

CURA would write and deliver a final qualitative based report with data findings with policy recommendations at the end of the research process. Additionally, the community-based action research model that Dr. Lewis employs would result in learnings be shared and utilized throughout the process. For example, during her recent North Minneapolis eviction study, Dr. Lewis began to work toward improving Hennepin County emergency assistance programs during the research itself to be more human centered and timely.

- How will the study be funded?

Proposed funding for the study includes:

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<th>Funders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brooklyn Park EDA</td>
<td>$78,000</td>
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<td>CURA In-Kind</td>
<td>$11,100</td>
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<td>Other Sources TBD (Hennepin County &amp; MN Housing)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Staff is seeking a budget amendment to allow the EDA to fund up to $78,000 toward the study. EDA staff is also talking with additional partners to assist with the funding of the research. Hennepin County staff will be asking the Hennepin County Housing Redevelopment Authority to fund $15,000 toward the study. Staff is also reaching out to other funders, such as the Family Housing Fund, to ask for their participation. In addition, there are potential grant opportunities that could support this project. One upcoming grant is Minnesota Housing’s Capacity Building Initiative (up to $40,000 grant). If the research project is able to secure additional funds and partners, the scope of work may be expanded (up to $100,000) to include additional interviews and research questions. However, staff would also seek to reduce the EDA portion of funding as additional funds are committed from other partners.

- **Did the EDA seek multiple quotes for this research?**

City staff is not aware of anyone else who could do this type of work using an equivalent research methodology, which prioritizes community engagement, racial equity, and feasible policy recommendations. Qualitative research into evictions is a relatively new topic of research both regionally and nationally. CURA, however, under the guidance of principal researcher Dr. Brittany Lewis, recently completed an in-depth qualitative study of evictions North Minneapolis. The proposed research in Brooklyn Park would build on the lessons learned from CURA’s research work in Minneapolis but would be unique to Brooklyn Park and specifically designed through a community-engaged action research model.

- **What are the next steps?**

To secure Dr. Lewis and her team for research starting this fall, the EDA needs to commit to this project in June. If the EDA approves this action, staff would put together an agreement with CURA for the research and continue to seek other grants or financial contributions toward the project.

The City and other stakeholders would participate in the development of the research project by sitting on a steering committee that would start to convene this summer.

**Budget/Fiscal Issues:**

The EDA retains a general fund balance that allows it to take advantage of strategic economic development and housing opportunities as they arise. The proposed budget amendment would allocate up to $78,000 from the EDA general fund for this project. The final amount of EDA funding for the project could be less if funding partnerships and grants are secured.

**Recommendation**

The Executive Director of the EDA recommends approval.

**Attachments**

6.1A RESOLUTION
6.1B PROPOSED BUDGET AMENDMENT
6.1C PROPOSAL
6.1D CIVIL RIGHTS BLUEPRINT
6.1E HOME LINE REPORT
6.1F PROPERTY MANAGER SUMMARY