

MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL APPOINTMENT CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Candidate Name: Erik Hansen

Position Title: Director of Community Planning and Economic Development

Department: Community Planning and Economic Development

Responses Due to City Clerk: End of Day June 15, 2026

INSTRUCTIONS

The following questionnaire is intended to gather candidate responses for City Council consideration during the appointment process. There are two sections, the first contains questions posed to all appointed candidates, the second are questions more specific to the respective department's scope of work. Section One is broken into 4 categories, each with three questions. Section Two contains 8 department specific questions. Please ensure you respond to each question asked and aim for thorough but concise responses of roughly 1-3 paragraphs per question and the response field will adjust as you type.

Once completed, responses should be submitted to the City Clerk by the return date noted above. Should a question not directly apply to your background, briefly explain why and describe the most relevant analogous experience.

QUESTIONS FOR ALL APPOINTED CITY DEPARTMENT HEADS

1) Vision, Challenges, & Opportunities

- a) Please share what attracted you to this role with the City of Minneapolis?
- b) What do you see as the top challenges and opportunities facing this department?
- c) What are your top three priorities for the department to pursue this term? How have these priorities evolved throughout your previous appointments to this role?

Response

Minneapolis is my hometown. Public service is a calling that aligns with my personal and professional goals to leave the world in a better place. Minneapolis is city with enormous resources, an economic engine that propels the state, and 430,000 plus people who stand up for each other. Minneapolis is a great, but not perfect, city. One where structural disparities exist. Serving as the CPED Director appeals to me because it's a role where I can combine my professional and educational experience alongside a great team of subject matter experts to build an inclusive hometown.

Effective community development measures success in the outcomes of people's lives. While CPED sees tremendous impacts from its services and programs, not everyone is thriving. CPED's primary opportunity is to better align its services toward consequential improvements in outcomes. We are prioritizing our work by building an inclusive culture of belonging and simplifying systems that support our team and serve our

customers, maximizing the Minneapolis 2050 planning process to build the city of 2050, and improving conditions for people in the city – more equitable economic outcome, safe and affordable housing for all, and updated real estate strategy to move more CPED property into service, leverage operational properties, and address accelerate changes in building uses from Downtown, Uptown, and through every neighborhood.

2) Leadership Style & Management Practices

- a) Describe your leadership style and management philosophy? How do you recognize when staff are engaged and effectively supported?
- b) How do you incorporate continuous improvement into your own management practices, accountability standards, and oversight of senior and mid-level leadership within the department?
- c) As a department leader, how do you promote a workplace culture that values diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Response

Public service is an important profession drawing in caring and mission driven staff into its ranks. CPED has a current staff of 238 people, each with subject matter expertise in their roles. To meet the moment and achieve our mission to grow a vibrant, livable, equitable, sustainable and safely built city from everyone, CPED needs each one of our subject matters experts to perform at a high level.

CPED needs to foster a culture of inclusion and belonging. One does their best work, is most engaged and effective, when they feel they can show up as their true selves. Belonging supports psychological safety, which supports creative thinking and problem solving. We will make mistakes sometimes; mistakes are opportunities for growth where learn from them and move forward. To best support this culture, I continue to hone my own skills through reading, training, learning from the wisdom of community, and challenging myself to grow.

I am a service leader, working to remove barriers to outcomes with a focus on our department's culture. A culture that encourages inclusion, engagement, and cultural competence. We bring together people from different perspectives and lived experiences to build a team that can solve big problems. We offered anti-racism training for the entire department last year and I required psychological safety training for all people leaders. We will build on these training courses and our collective call to service to build stronger skillsets and better community outcomes.

3) Organizational Structure, Staffing, & Budget

- a) How do you evaluate the department's existing organizational structure, staffing, and budget priorities? When areas for change or improvement are identified, how do you implement those changes?
- b) What is the Director's role in management of a department's operational budget? Describe your own approach to budget oversight and how you have adapted to any previous budget challenges.
- c) As a department leader, how do you balance budgetary demands between your non-personnel and personnel budget?

Response

To achieve CPED's mission, we must continuously evaluate what and how we are doing the work we need to do to build a city for everyone. The department director sets a vision on how to meet our mission, develops an efficient operational structure, and has a deep understanding of the resources which fund the department's activities. I provide executive leadership of the budget process, have a working command of how each team does its work, and the funding that is in place to meet those tasks.

For the most part CPED's structure supports our overall strategic direction, requiring only minor changes. CPED's strength is the quality staffing in each division. CPED has strong subject matter expertise and staff agility to meet changing needs. This high-quality staffing is the primary asset of CPED. When organizational change is needed it must be tied into a theme of our strategic work, improve efficiencies, reduce barriers, and increase equity. We must have the will to make a change. Doing the same things and expecting different results does not lead to change.

Proper planning towards implementing our work ensures we are meeting the varying timelines and deliverables and equitable distribution of workload across all programs. We work as a leadership team to track budgets and make decisions aligned with CPED's mission and vision. This year we have addressed roll-over impacts and made operational changes in anticipation of roll-over impacts next year. Cuts impacted programs which in the long term could impact personnel.

4) Collaboration with City Council & City Government

- a) How does this appointed position fit within the City's government structure, including your relationships with the City Council, Mayor, OPS, OCS, and other City departments? Where does direction come from, where do you bring concerns?
- b) What factors do you believe are critical to building and maintaining a productive working relationship with the City Council? Describe your approach and experience communicating on significant issues, responding to Council concerns, and balancing policy direction with your professional judgment on operations.
- c) How can the City Council better support this role and department?

Response

The CPED Director reports up through the Deputy City Operation Officer for Development, Health, and Livability in the Office of Public Service. Being an appointed charter department head, this role also has a direct relationship with the Governing Body of the Mayor and City Council. CPED, as the City's community development department, has an external role with community and as such is called to connect community with departments across the offices of public service and community safety. CPED receives primary direction from the strategic goals of the City from which it develops its workplan. The annual CPED budget allocations also guide CPED's workplan as well as direction from the Mayor and City Operations Officer.

CPED works in every Minneapolis neighborhood therefore it must have productive working relationships with each City Council office. We achieve this relationship through open communication channels and willingness to provide the information each Council Member needs to do their work. With strong relationships, we can form

trust. It's from a place of trust where we can address conflict that arises from issues and concerns most effectively. City Council can best support this role by building trusting relationships together.

DEPARTMENT SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

- 1) What do you believe are the biggest economic challenges the City is currently facing? How do you plan to support addressing these challenges?

Response

Minneapolis is at an inflection point for the first time in just over 50 years. The way people use the city is changing. We are moving away from a compartmentalized city of divided uses where we have separate areas for housing, work, shopping, production, and recreation towards a city of dynamic experiences. As a result, we have the challenge to meet this trend and convert buildings seeking new uses, open our minds allowing more activities in more areas, and to make it easier to do business with and in the city. While this trend emerges, we still see too many people continue to experience housing instability, lack of employment opportunity, limited commercial service in some neighborhoods. In an era of rising costs, competition, and factors outside of CPED's control, the challenge in front of us is to both help the city transform into what it wants to become and to eliminate the seemingly constant disparities across our community.

I set a vision to build a city of 2050 with a people centered CPED. As we begin the Minneapolis 2050 planning efforts, we can focus on goals we want to achieve through this process and set our work plans to meet bold outcomes. We will continue to develop strategies to address housing affordability and supply, the rising cost of development, workforce availability, and ensuring that economic growth is broadly shared across residents and neighborhoods. We will continue to advance efforts to make it easier to build something or to open a business. Transform vacant buildings downtown, Uptown, and in our cultural districts into their next phase of life. All centered on the outcomes of people in Minneapolis.

- 2) Where do you believe there may be additional economic growth opportunities for Minneapolis to pursue?

Response

Simply, economic growth is one part resources and one part confidence. Minneapolis is the economic engine of the state because it had both parts in play, most of the time. We see the resources in action through our 15-year streak of billion-dollar construction years. We see the confidence in action in the diversity of industry we see throughout the city and the hundreds of emerging entrepreneurs seeking resources from our technical assistance providers each year. While we see this activity, we also see opportunity in vacant land, vacant storefronts, and economic instability of many households throughout Minneapolis. For these are areas where resources and confidence do not align.

CPED needs to continue its strategic work towards making it easier to do business in the city, take risks, and meet basic needs. Continue to align resources and build confidence. We see this

opportunity first in cutting red tape and making our processes more understandable for the customer. People are more likely to take a chance when policy and process environments are clear and predictable. Next, we need to get more CPED land into service. Vacant redevelopment land diminishes community value and stifle economic activity. Finally, CPED must remove barriers to entrepreneurship. Emerging entrepreneurs will fill vacant buildings and preserve our economic base. Aligning technical assistance, funding, and regulation reform is within the city locus of control to assist the next generation of business.

3) Describe CPED's efforts to balance support between the downtown business area with the rest of the city.

Response

CPED balances support for downtown and the rest of the city by focusing on downtown revitalization—through placemaking, adaptive reuse, and coordinated public-private efforts—while also directing resources to neighborhood business districts through programs like Great Streets, Ownership and Opportunity Fund, small-business assistance, and corridor-focused investment. The approach ensures downtown remains a vibrant regional center while neighborhood commercial areas receive targeted, equity-driven support so all parts of the city can thrive.

CPED follows the strategies in the Downtown Action Plan and budget directives to focus its efforts to increase building conversions, activation, and partnerships. Keeping a focused approach helps avoid resource strain that could impact other CPED efforts. CPED has long supported business districts throughout the city and in recent years areas that were most impacted by the emergencies in 2020 and since. These efforts will continue.

A thriving Minneapolis requires economically healthy downtown, Uptown, cultural districts, as well as neighborhood serving business districts. As we move forward, we will continue to rebalance our efforts to bring attention to areas in need, inclusive of the downtown economy.

4) Describe your approach to supporting small businesses and maintaining a welcoming environment for owners looking to start a small business in Minneapolis.

Response

Small business development is a critical component to meeting our mission of building a city for everyone. Supporting small businesses needs a committed staff team, community partners, and resources.

First, CPED oversees the Small Business Team, Business Development, Business Licensing and Employment and Training teams. Each has a critical relationship with small businesses as they choose to open, stay, and grow in Minneapolis. These groups serve as first points of contact, provide resources, regulatory oversight, and assist with employee search. These teams work to build a collaborative culture among staff, reflecting work both within the department and work that happens interdepartmentally, to help small business navigate the City's, sometimes complex, system to start, maintain, or grow their business.

We expand our connection to small businesses through community partners. Each city team has programs it offers through community-based partners. Using this network of providers extends the City's reach into more neighborhoods and cultural communities, reducing barriers to access and improving outcomes. These partners also assist in funding opportunities like the use of the 2% loan program, façade program, or ownership and opportunity fund.

While this support is in place, CPED must continue to review and revise its strategy. CPED continues to evaluate if current regulations are causing undue barriers, if our funding tools are meeting current needs, if there are emerging trends we need to support. We learn from our community-based partners and through engagement from the business community directly.

5) Can you highlight some examples where CPED has been successful in supporting workforce development?

Response

CPED's Employment and Training team helps people find good paying jobs and helps employers find the talent they need. They deliver services through a network of community-based organizations connecting job seekers, employers, educators, workforce partners, and government agencies. They align resources, reduce barriers, and create pathways to employment through needs identification and investing in innovative solutions. They develop Minneapolis' future workforce and supporting the city's long-term economic vitality.

Employment and Training programs create opportunities for residents at every stage of their career journey. Highlights of this success include:

- In 2025, Employment and Training served more than 15,000 individuals and helped more than 1,800 adults and youths secure employment or paid internships, creating benefits for workers, businesses, and the broader Minneapolis economy. Adult wages averaged over \$25/hr., adding over \$18 million into the economy in wages.
- Step Up provides Minneapolis youth with paid internships, career exploration, professional skills training, and mentoring opportunities. In 2025, more than 1,300 youth participated in paid career experiences, helping build the next generation of talent for Minneapolis employers. Step Up leveraged \$633,500 from private employers to provide paid internships to 659, and career exploration stipends to 726, young, underrepresented Minneapolis residents, ages 14-21.
- The Minneapolis Apprenticeship Outreach Office is a first-in-state model that helps residents access registered apprenticeship opportunities while increasing awareness of apprenticeship pathways in high-demand industries. In 2025, the office directly engaged more than 2,000 residents and connected participants to apprenticeship opportunities across multiple sectors.

6) How does CPED use zoning to encourage equitable growth opportunities?

Response

CPED uses zoning as a powerful tool to guide where and how growth happens, with an explicit focus on

equity, access, and reducing disparities. We do this by first producing a strong policy foundation in the City's comprehensive plan, *Minneapolis 2040*. The plan provides an adopted policy basis to change regulations to allow more development by right. *Minneapolis 2040* is a generational change to how the City addresses land use policy throughout the city to encourage growth through reduced regulations.

From the policy basis in *Minneapolis 2040*, the City changed the zoning code to align with it. In 2023, the City approved a completely rewritten zoning code complying with the policies in the comp plan. As a result, our zoning code:

- Allows more housing types in more places.
- Enables density in transit-rich and job-rich corridors.
- Allows more mixed-use zoning to support community-serving businesses.
- Increases density through added floor area ratios and add height premiums for public benefits like affordability and sustainable building practices.
- Levels the playing field by reducing barriers and making the development process more predictable.
- Protects cultural and economic interests through historic preservation, cultural districts, and protecting small neighborhood serving business nodes.
- Aligns zoning with racial equity goals imbedded in Minneapolis 2040.

7) What are the biggest challenges to the current housing market? What is necessary for the City to continue its efforts to create additional affordable housing?

Response

The Minneapolis housing market continues to face challenges related to affordability, housing supply, operational costs, and the increasing cost of development. While the city has made significant progress in expanding housing opportunities through land use and zoning reforms, external forces—high construction and operational costs, household income not keeping pace with rising costs, financing constraints, and market uncertainty have made it more difficult for new housing projects to move forward. These conditions impact all types of housing production whether rental or ownership housing, affordable housing or market rate housing production.

To continue creating additional housing, Minneapolis must support efficient permitting and review processes, leverage public resources to help close financing gaps, and continue working with public, private, and nonprofit partners to advance housing production at all income levels. Continued investment in transit-oriented development and foster partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders will also be important to supporting housing growth. We must also keep watch on existing affordable housing units and naturally occurring affordable housing to ensure we don't lose necessary supply.

As CPED Director, I will continue to:

- focus on implementing policies and programs that increase housing production across a range of income levels,

- strengthen partnerships with developers and community organizations,
- foster relationships with internal and external stakeholders to address the homelessness crisis,
- enhance our relationships with public and private funding partners and philanthropic entities to assist in the stabilization of struggling affordable housing projects like Heritage Park.

8) In addition to what you have already shared - can you identify an area of success and an area that has been challenging for CPED that you believe are important for the City Council to recognize?

Response

CPED achieves incredible impacts for community. More than 70 percent of CPED's program funding goes to BIPOC people, we process thousands of building permits and license applications each year and inspect each one. You can turn to us to find a job, open a business, or find a home. We plan for the city of the future and preserve the important history of the past. We combat structural and institutional racism for which we had either a passive or active role in the disparities that it created.

Through it all we endure the crisis that befell our community. We live in high contact social media age ripe for criticism of public officials from the Mayor and City Council Member all the way to the staff working the Public Service Area counter. Yet, CPED staff returns high positive engagement results each year in the MyMinneapolis survey. Our outcome and morale land solely on the professional performance and dedication of the 238 people who work for CPED.

Our culture builds off their interest to serve the people of Minneapolis and to solve the big problems toward a vibrant, livable, equitable, sustainable, and safely built city for everyone. Each member of the CPED team, regardless of place on the org chart requires specialized knowledge and skills with technical and legal requirements, making retention important. As we move forward together keep in mind the many talented people who choose to work for the City of Minneapolis how we work to retain them and reducing barriers to recruiting top talent when the opportunity presents.