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## QuickPoint! – Metro's \$700,000 Sentiment

By Helen Cook

On June 25th, Metro approved \$700,000 in taxpayer money for what is best entitled a nice sentiment: Metro's Nature in Neighborhoods program. The program hopes to improve water quality and wildlife habitats through grants to local organizations that promote racial and cultural equality.

But the program has a serious flaw: Success is not easily measured, despite the large amount of taxpayer dollars flowing into the grants.

Metro's approved recipients for 2020 demonstrate the subjectivity of the program. Objectives include bringing "healing to the community and landscape through Traditional Indigenous healing practices" as well as building "youth of color's relationship around the water and waterways."

Perhaps an important question is whether our local government should be exploring these objectives with taxpayer dollars, especially during this time of economic instability. Ironically, Metro councilor Craig Dirkensen came close to this question when he asked whether Metro's grant program was unique. The simple answer was "no." Similar programs do exist, just not at taxpayers' expense.

Metro should get out of the grant business and into the park-building business. The Nature in Neighborhoods program is yet another example of how Metro consumes taxpayer dollars without measurable benchmarks for success.

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