



**armatage neighborhood association**

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Council Member Linea Palmisano  
City Hall, Room 307  
350 South Fifth Street  
Minneapolis, MN 55415

April 28, 2021

Dear Council Member Palmisano,

We are writing to ask you to oppose the City of Minneapolis's Hiawatha Expansion project and reconsider priorities for the property. At a minimum, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) should be completed to further assess the chemical plume in the groundwater beneath the site and increased air pollution from additional traffic, as referenced in the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the project. Without an EIS, the community and city leaders will not have an opportunity to understand the nature and full scope of the potential for significant environmental effects of the City's plan for the site. Additionally, the EAW does not take into account that East Phillips is an environmental justice area (a Green Zone, as designated by the City) or the historical, cumulative impact of pollution in this neighborhood.

This letter cannot be written without addressing the unprecedented and tragic time we find ourselves in here in Minneapolis. The events of the last year have laid bare the inequities of our hometown and exposed the systemic nature of the roots of those inequities. The project, as proposed by the City, takes advantage of the same location and economic characteristics that have historically turned this neighborhood into one of heavy industrial pollution and poverty. **Instead of disrupting this history, this project adds to it.** We are at an inflection point, and denying the City's proposal will allow for a future defined by environmental justice and community ownership.

As a designated Green Zone, East Phillips should be prioritized in pollution reduction and health-oriented green investment. The health issues and poverty experienced by this neighborhood are a result of making "greater good" decisions. We must stop overlooking our fellow Minneapolitans, regardless of their skin color, income-level, or neighborhood.

Some other main points where the EAW falls short:

- The EAW has not addressed the cumulative environmental and human health impacts of the Hiawatha Expansion project with regards to:
  - Roadway traffic: The EAW makes note of a 12% increase in traffic on 28th St. and doesn't account for the city-owned vehicle traffic associated with the relocation of a fueling station on the site. The Southside Green Zone Work Plan includes numerous action items to *decrease* roadway traffic and vehicle idling.
  - Air pollution/climate change: The EAW notes a 21% increase in CO2 emissions as a result of this project. This contradicts the stated goal of a Green Zone: "place-based policy initiative aimed at improving health and supporting economic development using environmentally conscious efforts." Furthermore, this contradicts the recognition that we are in a climate emergency.
- The sampling and analysis of soils and fill beneath the Roof Depot site and the surrounding paved surfaces is inadequate.
- The EAW makes unsupported claims about the economic benefits of the Hiawatha expansion project to the surrounding community.

**We strongly oppose the city's proposal and advocate for an environmentally just, community-based solution such as the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute's (EPNI) Urban Farm to take shape at the Roof Depot site.** The EPNI's proposal utilizes the existing Roof Depot structure without disrupting the groundwater issues beneath the soil and adds more permanent, *local* jobs and revenue-generating opportunities for small businesses. This site sits a mere three blocks from the Lake Street corridor, which provides opportunities for businesses damaged in the riots following the murder of George Floyd. Andrea Jenkins, Ward 8 Council Member, and Omar Fateh, State Senate District 62 have voiced support for the EPNI Urban Farm plan.

When learning about the Hiawatha Expansion project plans, zoning was the main reason for usurping community requests and perpetuating health and environmental inequities. How can zoning be the issue when the City has continued to seek awards and praise for rezoning in the 2040 plan? Zoning, which can be changed, is not the issue. The lack of keeping promises for Council and community-approved Green Zone commitments and the inability to think beyond the status quo is. To expand this Public Works facility in an economically, socially, and environmentally vulnerable neighborhood when other, more just solutions for the site are available is quite literally backwards from the Green Zone designation's goals. Minneapolis has an opportunity to be a leader in environmental justice. We were symbolically progressive when designating this neighborhood a Green Zone, now let's be operationally progressive in developing it.

In summary, we ask you to oppose the City of Minneapolis's Hiawatha Expansion project and reconsider priorities for the property. Please direct the Hiawatha Expansion project manager along with leadership of the Public Works, Performance and Innovation, and Planning and Development to rethink what is

needed on the site. Furthermore, consider how space, businesses, and work outside of the Green Zones will change over time and provide solutions that can meet the communities' needs while managing city operations.

Sincerely,

Armatage Neighborhood Association

*Approved April 26, 2021*

cc: Mayor Jacob Frey  
SouthSide Green Zone Council  
Brett Hjelle, Interim Director of Public Works  
Andrea Brennan, Director of Community Planning and Economic Development  
David Rubedor, Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations Dept  
Community Environmental Advisory Council  
Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council