

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

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June 9, 2015

Dear City of Minneapolis Council Members and Planning Commissioners:

We are writing to express our support for the implementation of a Green Zones development plan that includes the East Phillips community. Relatedly, we request that you vote against any staff recommendation to authorize the City of Minneapolis' Property Services division to begin negotiations with the Roof Depot owners for municipal acquisition and operations.

Our department emphasizes teaching, research and engaging issues of race/class/gender in U.S. society in the interest of developing critical thinking to promote and practice social justice. We engage our faculty, staff, students and broader community through facilitating analysis, dialog and action through the lens and experience of the Chicano/a and broader Latino/a community. While we focus on the Latino/a experience, we approach issues of social justice in a relational manner, highlighting how social justice issues intersect with the experience of other communities. Latinos/as have become among the largest communities within East Phillips and broader South Minneapolis alongside American Indian, African and African American, and others. Unfortunately, we understand that East Phillips has high rates of asthma, lead-poisoning and other environmentally-induced ailments. For this we reason, we are highly concerned and urge you to act on these realities.

Our department maintains relationships with our communities in the city including East Phillips where many of our students have participated in community-centered actions and organizations including Tamales y Bicicletas and the Saber Comer Justicia campaign that includes an urban garden in East Phillips. In dialog with East Phillips leaders, we envision with them the development of institutions within their community that work to implement environmental and social justice. How amazing it would be to have our students learn from and contribute to this process. In this regard, we support the community's interest in promoting a Green Zones designation for East Phillips that would incentivize a revitalization of this Transit Oriented Development area through the lens of environmental justice, the creation and access to green jobs, and sustainable economic development. This is the long-term vision of this community and we see this issue as an opportunity to include East Phillips residents in the process as the City of Minneapolis embarks on seeking community input to update its Comprehensive Plan. We stand with the American Indian elders, families, and youth in this neighborhood as well as with their organizational partners Little Earth, Tamales y Bicicletas, the East Phillips Improvement Coalition (EPIC), the Ninth Ward Council Member Alondra Cano, and State Representative Karen Clark to help this overburdened community to reach its goals.

We urge you to vote against the staff recommendation to purchase the Roof Depot site in order to begin this process.

Respectfully,

The Faculty of the Department of Chicano & Latino Studies
Edén Torres, Chair
Jimmy Patiño, Director of Undergraduate Studies