



June 11, 2015

Dear City of Minneapolis Council Members and Planning Commissioners:

We write this letter to echo the East Phillips community's opposition to the proposed purchase of the Roof Depot site and subsequent relocation of the water yard. We ask that the Council vote against this proposal which will have damaging effects on the surrounding community's health and environment.

At Gardening Matters, our mission is to support successful, sustainable gardens and inspire gardeners to build resilient communities as they grow their own fresh food. As you know, growing our own food in the city is important because it reduces families' food budget, improves access to healthy food and exercise, and reduces dependence on fossil fuels, among other benefits.

Through our community engagement in Phillips, we know that residents face barriers to gardening because of lack of garden space and prevalence of soil contamination, especially in the established South Minneapolis Arsenic Contamination Zone. Adding to the industrial burden of East Phillips further deters and even endangers gardening in the neighborhood resulting from more air pollution and soil contamination.

Furthermore, the proposal violates the City's Plan for Sustainable Growth, which states that "Through promoting and protecting the civil rights of the citizens of Minneapolis, sources of environmental pollution will not be concentrated in neighborhoods of one race or ethnicity, near sensitive populations, or in economically disadvantaged areas." The siting of the water yard in East Phillips would be incompatible with this plan because according to the MetCouncil, the Phillips Community is an area that has been designated as a Racially Concentrated Area of Poverty, whose residents already face disproportionate exposure to pollution and rates of chronic disease.

All Minneapolis residents should have the opportunity to live, garden, and thrive in a neighborhood unburdened by environmental toxins. In the interest of our community partners in Phillips and the East Phillips residents who have organized and strongly expressed opposition, we ask the Council to vote against the recommendation to begin negotiating the purchase of the current Roof Depot site at 1860 28th Street East and 2717 Longfellow Avenue.

Thank you,

Gardening Matters

