

Dear City of Minneapolis Council Members:

Stone's Throw Urban Farm is writing today to request that you vote against the staff recommendation to authorize the City of Minneapolis' Property Services division to begin negotiations with the owners of Roof Depot at 1860 28th Street East and 2717 Longfellow Avenue South for municipal acquisition and operations. This proposal will be before the Ways and Means Committee on June 15, 2015 and the full City Council on June 19, 2015.

Stone's Throw Urban Farm has spent the past five years developing an urban food production business that is focused on building stronger community through the cultivation of previously vacant lots, community engagement through farm education, and working across a broad sector of community stakeholders to design and implement stronger support for community green space and urban agriculture throughout the Twin Cities. Limiting pollution in Phillips is a major concern for us, both as food producers and as citizens. We see the path towards long-term, sustainable development consisting of green business, affordable housing, and equity for low-income communities in Minneapolis.

We believe that the City acquisition of Roof Depot does not align with the City's own racial equity work and expressed commitment to supporting environmental justice. The Phillips area is designated by the Met Council as a Racially Concentrated Area of Poverty—it is a majority low-income, Indigenous and People of Color community with more children (a vulnerable population) than any other neighborhood in Minneapolis. East Phillips is a Residential Arsenic Superfund site, and one of two areas in Hennepin County with the highest incidences of elevated blood lead levels and asthma hospitalizations in small children (the other being the near Northside of Minneapolis). It is the site of a foundry, an open air hot asphalt plant, and already carries the burden of two industrially-zoned City of Minneapolis facilities—a garbage transfer station and a Public Works facility.

The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth 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.” By putting the water distribution function in East Phillips, the City would be further concentrating air pollution and negatively impacting air quality by adding more heavy truck traffic and welding emissions to this already environmentally overburdened community.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of community engagement and transparency around this proposal. Despite the lack of consultation with the community, the residents of East Phillips and their Neighborhood organization, cultural groups, and faith communities have come together and held a series of robust community conversations about the City's proposal. Residents have expressed a multitude of concerns related to this project: the environmental and livability impacts of increased truck traffic, emissions associated with welding, and that this proposal would take a piece of prime industrial land off the tax rolls permanently without bringing any good jobs to the community. They have come together and are calling on their elected officials to say no to the acquisition of the Roof Depot site by the City of Minneapolis.

We hope that we can count on you to stand with the Phillips community by voting against the staff recommendation to begin negotiating for the purchase of the Roof Depot site.

Respectfully,

Alexander Liebman, Owner/Partner of Stone's Throw Urban Farm