



RESOURCES FOR LEARNING ABOUT THE PROPOSED PUBLIC WORKS EXPANSION IN EAST PHILLIPS

Following is a list of resources for learning more about the proposed public works expansion in the East Phillips neighborhood. The City of Minneapolis has a plan – one that has engendered a strong and long standing opposition – to build a new City Water Works

facility that will expand the already existing one adjacent to the Roof Depot building in East Phillips, in order to update and consolidate all the several Water Works facilities that currently serve Minneapolis. The new multi-acre campus would include a significantly expanded facility, parking capacity for 888 staff vehicles (including the vehicle fleet and staff vehicles that are currently based at that site), a mix of diesel and non-diesel fueled vehicles, and a diesel fueling station. (Note: The 888 parking spaces is a cap for the lifetime of the facility; the City documents state that there will be approximately 589 vehicles, staff and fleet vehicles combined, but there is certainly room for expansion built into the project; the estimate of 589 vehicles represents an increase of 265 vehicles over current usage.)

We have made every effort to use only accurate information and data from verifiable and reliable sources. The issues and controversy surrounding the proposal are many layered and complex and have a long history. In this list we have primarily focussed on questions about air pollution and health impacts, especially from the increase in vehicle traffic and the addition of more diesel trucks and a diesel fueling station. But it is important to acknowledge that there are many other issues at the core of the opposition to the project which are rooted in environmental and racial justice and the historic and current harms to Indigenous people that have happened over land loss; East Phillips, home to Little Earth, is at the heart of the Indigenous community of Minneapolis.

Green Zone Information:

In 2017 the City of Minneapolis identified two areas of Minneapolis as “Green Zones.” A Green Zone is defined as “a place-based policy initiative aimed at improving health and supporting economic development using environmentally conscious efforts in communities that face the cumulative effects of environmental pollution, as well as social, political and economic vulnerability.” To qualify as a Green Zone, an area must meet two basic criteria: 1) It must be disproportionately burdened by a high level of pollutants and 2) it must be in a community that is majority BIPOC and with a high rate of poverty. The Southside Green Zone, includes the East Phillips neighborhood and extends into west Seward (though it includes a much larger area). Following is the City’s Southside Green Zone map:

<https://www2.minneapolismn.gov/government/departments/health/sustainability-homes-environment/sustainability/green-zones/map/>

East Phillips neighborhood is already heavily burdened by sources of pollution including Smith Foundry, traffic on Hiawatha Ave, and an asphalt plant; it was also ground zero in what became an EPA Superfund cleanup site in the early 2000’s for arsenic contamination left by a pesticide plant. That arsenic contamination was also found in Seward. It is important to note that the area of Seward that is included in the Green Zone, just on the other side of Hiawatha Ave from East Phillips, is home to some of Seward’s most diverse and low income community members. That part of Seward includes the Cooperage for low income elders, Touchstone Mental Health’s residence for adults with severe and persistent mental health illness, and a public housing highrise at Minnehaha and 22nd St; it also includes Wadaag Commons, the affordable housing apartments being developed by Seward ReDesign.

The Minneapolis 2040 plan included a plan for the Green Zones that focused on policy and development that would reduce pollution harms in those communities as a matter of environmental justice.

<https://minneapolis2040.com/policies/environmental-justice-and-green-zones/>

Health Data and Impacts:

The City of Minneapolis had a Racial Equity Impact Analysis conducted for the proposed expansion of the public works facility in East Phillips. The following quote came from Section 2 of that document posted on the City's website:

"The project site is located in the East Phillips neighborhood of Minneapolis. This neighborhood has the largest urban American Indian population as well as a large number of immigrants from Latin America and Africa. The neighborhood is a majority BIPOC community and has approximately twice the percentage of people of color as the City of Minneapolis overall. Unemployment rates are slightly higher than Minneapolis overall, while median income is less than 2/3 of the city's median income. Residents in the zip codes around East Phillips have higher two to four times the rates of asthma emergency department visits and hospitalizations as the Twin Cities metro area. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency considers the East Phillips neighborhood as an area of concern for environmental justice, and the City of Minneapolis designated it a Green Zone in 2017. The neighborhood is in the highest 10% of particulate matter (PM2.5) levels of the entire state, with over 50% of PM2.5 contributed by traffic. An MPCA study on PAHs found that estimated lifetime risks from inhalation of air toxics was estimated to be 8 to 9 additional cases of cancer in a population of one hundred thousand based on data from the nearest air monitor (Andersen School). 2 The MPCA PAH study also found high exposures over short time periods were significantly elevated at Andersen School. PAHs are one of the top four air pollutants in East Phillips." See Section 2: Data in Racial Equity Impact Analysis for this quote and additional breakdown of health data:

<https://lms.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/24786/Hiwatha-Maintenance-Facility-Campus-Expansion-REIA-Option-B-Oct-6-2021.pdf>

The City vehicle fleet housed at the expanded facility would include diesel trucks (though the City has not made clear what proportion of the vehicles will be diesel-fueled); the plan includes a refueling station at the site. Diesel emissions are known to increase risk for asthma, heart disease, strokes, diabetes, and Alzheimer's. About half of vehicle-related pollution is not actually from emissions but rather from tire and road particles (caused by the friction between the two) and brake particles. That tire/road friction is worse in heavier vehicles and the brake friction is worse when vehicles are braking more often. So a refueling station has these other pollution impacts beyond emissions.

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0021850218301642?casa_token=wjmhC5CbfRMAAAA:Wbt8yw4UyunHohX_2x4-RN3-k-2Xf_rgLakFGuJPsDsnHzVUaoG10a105AnnU9l6P0c6w-C8kg

City Documents about Hiawatha Campus Expansion plan

Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW):

This is a 1000+ page City document describing environmental issues and mitigation plans for the Hiawatha Campus expansion project. (If you are interested in seeing how specific topics are addressed, you can download the document in Adobe where you should be able to do a word search. For example, if you want to know about air quality impacts and mitigation plans, you can use “air quality” as a search term.) An EAW It is not the same as the far more rigorous Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); rather it determines if the project in question meets the specific criteria that would require an EIS. The project, as outlined in the EAW, was determined not to meet that threshold.

The EAW is quite detailed about proposed mitigation plans, but it is important to note that it’s scope does *not* include an air quality analysis of the impact from increased vehicle traffic on air pollution and specific information about what proportion of the vehicles will be diesel-fueled; nor does it take account of the impact of the project adding more to the cumulative pollution already existing sources in East Phillips.

<https://www.eqb.state.mn.us/content/eaw-process>

Racial Equity Impact Analysis (REIA):

(This document was linked by the City but it’s not clear exactly what body of City government did this analysis.)

The REIA evaluates the Hiawatha Campus Expansion Proposal from a racial equity lens. It categorizes multiple specific factors in the plan as being in one of three categories of impact on the community: negative, positive, and uncertain. It also identifies several pertinent areas of data that were unavailable or missing in the City’s plan. One of those areas of missing data was identified as “quantitative data on the air pollution contributed by increased personal and fleet vehicles (including diesel trucks) to the site.”

<https://lims.minneapolismn.gov/Download/FileV2/24786/Hiawatha-Maintenance-Facility-Campus-Expansion-REIA-Option-B-Oct-6-2021.pdf>

Roof Depot Interim Response Action Plan (IRAP):

This City document specifically relates to how soil and water contamination will be dealt with during demolition of the Roof Depot and the construction process.

https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/23686597-final-roof_depot_irap-1?responsive=1&title=1

Relevant State Legislation

There is currently a bill (SF 466), sponsored by Senator Champion, moving through the State Legislature. It would act as a modification to the bill passed into Minnesota law in 2008 (HF 3293, commonly referred to as the Clark-Berglin bill). The bill states that “in all decisions that have the potential to affect the environment of an environmental justice area or the public health of its residents, due consideration is given to the history of the area’s and its residents’ cumulative exposure to pollutants and to any current socioeconomic conditions that increase the physical sensitivity of those residents to additional exposure to pollutants.”

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/text.php?version=latest&number=SF0466&session=ls93&session_year=&session_number=0

Background information and site history

This Star Tribune article addresses the history of East Phillips being declared the center of an EPA Superfund cleanup site in the early and mid 2000s because of arsenic contamination resulting from a pesticide plant that was operational from the 1930s to the 1960s, adjacent to the current Roof Depot building. The Superfund site included Seward. The site was officially taken off the Superfund list in 2019.

<https://www.startribune.com/epa-says-cleanup-of-arsenic-laced-minneapolis-superfund-site-is-mostly-complete/513463092/>

The following two articles provide some helpful information about where things stand currently with the proposed public work expansion, opposition to it, and where things stand now legislatively and legally.

https://sahanjournal.com/climate-environment/roof-depot-demolition-east-phillips-neighborhood-institute-minneapolis-legislature/?mc_cid=414cb8373e&mc_eid=934011081f

https://sahanjournal.com/climate-environment/roof-depot-demolition-minneapolis-east-phillips-neighborhood-institute/?mc_cid=414cb8373e&mc_eid=934011081f

Voices:

The following article is an important reminder that there are factors and history that run wider and deeper than the air pollution issues that have been primarily addressed in this collection of resources and documents for learning. We hope you will read this Star Tribune opinion piece by Nicole Perez, a resident of Little Earth, speaking to why what happens at the Roof Depot site is so important to her and other members of Little Earth and other Indigenous community members. More than 20 Twin Cities based Indigenous organizations recently united in opposition to the expansion of the City public works facility in East Phillips.

<https://www.startribune.com/native-people-will-not-be-silenced/600254866/>