

From: City of Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission

To: City of Minneapolis City Council, Mayor Jacob Frey

Copied: City of Minneapolis, Community Planning & Economic Development Department and Sustainability Division; Development Team of the Upper Harbor Terminal site; Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board; Office of the Mayor

Date: December 3, 2018

Dear Minneapolis City Council and Mayor Frey,

The members of the Minneapolis Community Environmental Advisory Commission (CEAC) are writing to urge you to delay the approval of the Phase I Concept plan for the Upper Harbor Terminal (UHT) site until local communities can be inclusively engaged in the process and the plan has set goals for the project that align with those of the Northern Green Zone and the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan (CAP). We think that the City Council should require the inclusion of climate and resiliency goals in the concept plan and follow an inclusionary planning process, such as that outlined by the [Eco-Districts](#) protocol, and ask for additional time before approving any development plans for the UHT site. The current January 2019 deadline to approve the concept plan does not allow adequate time for review and collaboration with interested and impacted community groups.

North Minneapolis has a deeply rooted history of strategic disinvestment and racial segregation. Most cities rarely have an opportunity to remake 48 acres of space, let alone a mile of riverfront in an underserved, disenfranchised community. The UHT site provides the City and the local neighborhoods with a unique opportunity to be visionary and incorporate the City's goals around resident engagement and investment, Green Zones, and climate change with the visions of community members.

Through engagement meetings over the last three years, residents asked to see a project and engagement process that hears the voice and incorporates the vision of community members and that the development team use a racial justice framework and mission. However, community leaders strongly expressed to CEAC that the project's engagement process has not heard the voice of nor incorporated the vision of the neighboring communities in the concept plan and has not used a racial justice framework. As the City works to right past and current injustices, community engagement processes need to be made-over in order to hear voices that have often not been heard. Many community leaders are energized by plans to redevelop the UHT site and want to play an active role but do not feel that they have adequate time to engage in the process with the current deadlines. This is an opportunity to not repeat past injustices and change course before any development plans are considered by the City Council. Community members should have a voice in the meaningful process of defining this space which will have a profound effect on their neighborhoods.

The City passed a resolution in April 2017 that created the Northern Green Zone. Since that time, the newly formed Environmental Justice Coordinating Council outlined 12 goals and further considerations for a Northern Green Zone Work Plan based upon community-led planning, prioritization of homegrown development, and community ownership of the Green Zone initiatives. The UHT site is a special opportunity for the city to follow through on the values it has resolved to uphold within the Northern Green Zone; yet, the Northern Green Zone has become an afterthought in this process. For example, the first community meeting to focus on the Green Zone goals in a comprehensive way for the UHT site wasn't held until September of 2018. The City should be working with community members, community leaders, and the City's Sustainability Division to ensure that Green Zone goals are included in all relevant development plans. Community leaders have expressed interest in using the EcoDistrict protocol for this development process. As envisioned by community leaders, a development that is net zero or net negative in its energy use, incorporates clean water practices, and responds to the promises the City has made to North and Northeast residents better aligns with City environmental goals and the goals of the Northern Green Zone than the current plan.

This is also an opportunity to ameliorate some of the historical and ongoing environmental harms Northside communities have faced. The City has many environmental goals, including reducing greenhouse gases by 80 percent or more by 2050, and from what members of CEAC have heard from CPED and consultants, this plan would not meet the goals as outlined in the Climate Action Plan. St. Paul set a goal in 2016 for the Ford site redevelopment to be net zero energy. The UHT needs a similar goal in order to meet the goals of the Minneapolis CAP.

The development plan for UHT that comes before City Council for approval should include comprehensive community engagement, use of Green Zone goals laid out by the Environmental Justice Coordinating Council which include affordable housing and anti-displacement and incorporate the City's climate change goals and environmental promises to Northside residents. These changes should be made before any concept plans are approved by the City Council.

In summary, we ask that the Council and Mayor require the inclusion of climate and resiliency goals in the concept plan and follow an inclusionary planning process, such as [Eco-Districts](#), and ask for additional time before approving any development plans for the UHT site. We also encourage the formation of a Community Advisory Council (CAC) comprised of Northside community leaders, particularly those from the McKinley neighborhood, and a Technical Advisory Council (TAC), comprised of both city staff and non-city staff technical experts. These teams can help organize and engage the collaborative and innovative development that the community and city both desire, especially if the EcoDistrict protocol is used.

Please let me know if there is any additional information I can provide. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Niehoff, Chair, Community Environmental Advisory Commission