

Hiawatha Campus Expansion Project

Community Meeting Recap, Feb. 11, 2016 East Phillips Recreation Center

INTRODUCTIONS

Council Member Alondra Cano and state Rep. Karen Clark welcomed those in attendance and reminded community members that they have an opportunity to help shape what comes next in terms of community engagement for the Hiawatha Campus Expansion Project.

Christina Kendrick, senior community specialist for the City's Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, said the meeting was intended to be an opportunity for community members to share feedback with the City's project team about how to move forward with an inclusive community engagement plan.

PROJECT HISTORY

Greg Goeke, director of property services, gave a brief history of the project. He said the City began to look at expanding the Hiawatha Campus in the East Phillips neighborhood after Public Works in 1991 came out with a comprehensive facility master plan.

In June 2015, the City Council authorized City Staff to negotiate with the owner of the Roof Depot site to acquire the property to allow for the relocation and consolidation of the Public Works Water Distribution Maintenance operation. The City Council approved the acquisition of the properties February 2016.

He said the City wants to work to find common interests and narrow the field of City needs to what makes sense on this site and locate groups that cannot leverage efficiencies from the proximity elsewhere.

WHERE THE CITY IS NOW IN THE PROCESS

Bob Friddle, director of facilities design and construction, gave an update on the project's tentative timeline. He said the City is in the discovery phase of the project. After discovery is wrapped up, the project will go to the design, bidding and construction phases. He said the meeting is intended to find out what kind of community engagement process works best for the community.

Friddle also noted that the City has been working with the architect to interview city departments as there are other municipal uses under consideration for the site.

He said the City would like to work with you today to define an open and collaborative process with the community, adding the community can define the frequency and scale of engagement.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS/FEEDBACK

- One community member said the community engagement should have started with the neighborhood in 1991 when the City first started thinking about the Roof Depot site. She said the time for citizen participation is way overdue. When asked by City Engineer Lisa Cerney about how the City can best work with the community moving forward, she recommended a site guidelines group with resident

representatives that could offer thoughts on the site. She said a site guidelines group was used for the Hi-Lake development.

- Another representative noted there has been tons of community organizing to develop a strong community vision for the Roof Depot site. He wanted to know that the community has a voice/stake in the project – not just making small design decisions.
- A community member said there has been a lot of work to try to deindustrialize the neighborhood and expressed frustration that the City didn't inform residents about plans for the site earlier. She referenced the community's alternative plan for the site, which calls for a green-jobs center with urban farming. She said the idea was presented to the City as a viable alternative to the City's plans for the site.
- A community member said the community is not saying no to the City's expansion plans, it just wants to also have space for its green jobs/urban agriculture project.
- Greg Goeke noted that the City plans to make the Hiawatha Campus Expansion Project a solar-ready site.
- A community member said she was frustrated with the City for failing to give enough notice about the meeting, saying people in Little Earth didn't know about it. She also said the meeting lacked people of color.
- Council Member Cano agreed, saying the City needs to figure out how to better engage with its diverse residents.
- Christina Kendrick reiterated the City's plans to do more meetings, including outreach with Little Earth, the East African community and Latino community.
- Karen Clark agreed with the importance of getting those meetings lined up and said there are still options on the table for the site. She said the City should extend the timeline to better capture the community's ideas.
- Another community member expressed frustrations about the lateness of the engagement process and was critical of the city's Neighborhood and Community Relations Department.
- Council Member Cano said she hasn't been supportive of the City's Hiawatha Campus Expansion Project. She said the City needs to hire an outside group to oversee engagement.
- A community member said the City shouldn't send out people to do community engagement work if they aren't aware of all the past efforts of the community to create a different vision for the site. She said the neighborhood needs to be empowered and respected.
- A Little Earth resident raised concerns about environmental racism, noting Little Earth's arsenic levels and high rates of asthma. She said it's crucial for the City to include plans for the neighborhood's children.
- Council Member Cano again brought up the idea of a site guidelines committee and discussed ways to move that forward.
- Greg Goeke provided some final thoughts to wrap up the meeting. He thanked everyone for providing a lot of feedback and good ideas. He said the project timeline is flexible and can be extended to accommodate additional community engagement.