



**West Bank Business Association**  
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Mayor Jacob Frey,  
City Council Members Abdi Warsame, and Cam Gordon,  
County Commissioner Angela Conley,  
Rep. Noor, Rep. Dzedzic,  
Joe Bernard and Emily Stern, Community Planning and Economic Development

CC: Mpls City Council Members, Cedar Riverside Partnership, West Bank Community Development Corporation, Cedar Riverside NRP, Pillsbury United Communities, West Bank Business members

August 1, 2019

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your response and your engagement since the announcement of the proposed development at Lot A.

We appreciate that you've committed to:

- Ensuring a decision-making seat at the table for stakeholders,
- Continued communication moving forward,
- Adjusting the originally stated timeline to ensure a more responsible community engagement process.

We understand that shifting roles and transition in leadership can mean some originally stated priorities fall through the cracks along the way, so we look forward to seeing these considerations documented in the RFP and any related policies moving forward for this development.

We are writing to request response to several new concerns that come up, to reiterate questions that have not yet been addressed, and to request additional support moving forward.

### **Anti-Displacement and Gentrification**

The African Village proposes to be an anti-gentrifying project, and to prevent displacement of businesses. This is a great value, and aligns with concerns for retention that we share. However, the proposed project does not account for the full diversity of our neighborhood - including but not limited to other businesses of color. We've been told that the branding of the market is not intended to be exclusive, but by it's very brand it is so.

There are other locally owned businesses on the West Bank, a majority of whom are businesses owned and operated by people of color, that are working to prevent their own displacement. How

will this project be inclusive? We recommend revisiting the overall branding of this effort so it can better include the West Bank community as a whole. Reflecting the full and deep history of our neighborhood would allow the project to more effectively serve as a tool to prevent further erasure.

A brand more aligned with existing neighborhood nomenclature such as “West Bank Village” or “Cedar-Riverside Village” would allow the space to serve market needs, remain consistent with local destination branding, but still be distinctive from the already-named Midtown Global Market. We are a sanctuary city and our neighborhood has historically been a welcoming space for immigrants. If this project moves forward it will be a core component of our neighborhood for years to come, and will likely require taxpayer dollars and subsidies to implement. How does the branding of the village reflect our neighborhood’s past, present, and future?

### **Studies and Research**

The last letter noted that the lot “barely cashflows,” but our understanding is that Lot A has been one of the highest-income generators of city-owned parking in our neighborhood, such that the last contractor was reticent to lose control of this revenue generator. We are again requesting copies of the studies that were referenced regarding re-development of Lot A and best use, including any available parking metrics about lot utilization.

### **Parking**

We wholeheartedly support light-rail and transit traffic to our local businesses, and have been working with them on growing greener, less vehicular audiences. However many West Bank businesses still rely on drive-in traffic, including the cultural institutions and venues that are critical to our economic ecosystem. To prevent displacement for these businesses, a parking transition strategy is needed. We recommend considering modal parking options in the development that can provide replacement parking immediately, but be reclaimed as the neighborhood parking needs decrease over time. This has been done successfully in other areas such as Victoria and the UK, and parking has been reclaimed over time to add additional housing, provide space for aquaponics, and more.

We implore the city to address parking - both during construction and in the RFP as a requirement for development. This will be a key component of preventing the displacement of businesses.

### **Wayfinding and Area Branding**

We’ve been made aware that the plan is to connect this project to the overall branding and wayfinding throughout the district. This is great news, as we’ve been actively working on these efforts including local branding, way finding, and serving as an active participant in the city’s Cultural Corridors conversations. We want to make sure that new efforts are aligned with efforts already underway. For example: during the Light Rail branding efforts, branding was re-created in a duplication, but a plan was not put in place to sustain new marketing efforts.

What is the plan to connect this work to the local work, as well as the city’s overall Cultural Corridor efforts?

## Short-Term Loans and Financing

We currently administer CPED programs such as the Business Technical Assistance program, Great Streets Program, and Facade Grant Program. In addition to these city-run programs, will additional funding be available to businesses for interim needs during construction? Programs like the Forgivable Loan program were critical in helping our businesses survive during Light Rail construction. While this construction process is not as long, it directly impacts many businesses core parking source. Funding and low or no-interest loans to help mitigate construction and parking loss will be critical to prevent further displacement.

Thank you for your continued communication.

I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JS', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Jamie Schumacher  
*Executive Director*