



**West Bank Business Association**

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October 28, 2019

Dear Council Member Warsame, Mayor Jacob Frey, Emily Stern,

For the past few months the West Bank Business Association has worked alongside the city to address the concerns and needs of the business community, who we represent. While there has been some progress, concerns remain regarding the proposed development at Lot A. As this is the last and largest public-owned parcel in our dense urban neighborhood with limited opportunities of this kind, we believe the release of any RFP should be delayed until the following processes are completed:

- **A feasibility / market study for the proposed location and project.**

Our board and staff read through the past feasibility study for the previously proposed alternative location. Some of the concerns addressed in the previous study would only be exacerbated in the newly chosen site. These include but are not limited to: marketability, ownership, scale, and parking. A new study should be completed that is specific to the current location, market, and available space. We believe a market study is best practices and prudent for a project of this scale, especially one that plans to make use of city-owned land and taxpayer dollars.

- **An anti-displacement strategy outlined for existing businesses.**

There are 200 businesses in the West Bank / Cedar-Riverside neighborhood, a majority of whom are owned and operated by people of color. To release the RFP before a fully articulated anti-displacement strategy is outlined puts every one of those businesses at risk. We need to make sure area businesses are not displaced as a result of this effort and look forward to working with the city on coordinating this strategy.

- **An arrangement with Hennepin County for the transfer of property.**

To release an RFP before this arrangement has been made with Hennepin County places the city, the developer, and the community at a great disadvantage. Waiting until an arrangement has been made allows everybody the time to plan for things thoughtfully, working proactively rather than reactively.

- **A community planning process.**

While a collaborative planning process may take longer, it is an equitable way to do things in a community frequently disregarded from decision making, particularly regarding use about neighborhood resources. A retrofitted developer's proposal may or may not include the needs of the community.

It bears noting that not a single business or property owner in the district has come forward in support of this project, in spite of repeated invitations and requests made to both businesses and the Council office. The business community is excited about responsible growth and development in our area. However, there is universal concern among the business community about this current process, specifications and variability around the proposed use, and the unusually accelerated RFP timeline.

We think a thoughtful planning process will go a long way to alleviate concerns so that we can work towards building a great project together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "JS", written over a light blue circular stamp.

*On behalf of the WBBA Board of Directors,*  
Jamie Schumacher