

**Date: July 13, 2020**

## **A Letter From Members Of The Faith Community Of North Minneapolis**

### **RE: Police Brutality, Land Ownership, and Upper Harbor Terminal**

#### **To Our Elected Leadership**

The killing of Black and Brown bodies by the police is directly connected to the history of the United States quest for land and profit. America was founded on stolen land and human bondage and its operating system is still based on a hierarchy of human value.

Policing in the United States is a direct descendent of the slave patrols that were developed to control enslaved Black people who were in bondage to fuel American Capitalism. The profitability of cotton created an explosion of wealth for America. To maintain that profit, cotton required more and more land which America took from Native Americans many times by military force and sold it to land speculators who quickly resold the land for twice the price.

The history of land ownership and development is rooted in the fundamental realities of systemic racism that continues to this day. In Minneapolis the proposed Upper Harbor development in North Minneapolis continues to perpetuate this injustice. The murder of George Floyd has shone a spotlight on the embedded racism in our community and the calls for drastic changes to our police force are more than warranted. However, if we do not attack the foundational issue which is racism in **all** of the systems that govern our everyday lives, we will never achieve equality for all people.

The Upper Harbor development could be a transformational project in the city of Minneapolis. Land development does not have to continue to be an extractive wealth process. Yet starting the project by proposing the sale of city owned land to a white owned real estate company, while requesting \$20 million in state bonding to support a performance center benefiting another white owned company clearly demonstrates the depth of injustice baked into the current system.

As faith leaders in North Minneapolis we believe that the leaders of the Minneapolis City Council and our State legislature will listen to our request to fundamentally change the process and the resulting outcomes from inequitable to equitable. We all have a moral imperative to fight for change for our children's lives.

Our proposal outlined below would be the start of a new reality in Minneapolis when it comes to the development process in communities of color.

## **A 10 Point Plan for Equitable Development at The Upper Harbor Terminal**

- **STOP** all facets of the current development process and move the leadership of the project from economic development at the City of Minneapolis to Long Range and Community Planning at the City of Minneapolis.
- Deny \$20 million (or any amount) bonding request to the MN legislature by the city of Minneapolis for the Upper Harbor Development.
- Disband the Collaborative Planning Committee and develop a new community engagement process that includes North Minneapolis residents the Native American community, is community lead and centered on Racial Equity.
- Support a process to create a community vision for the project while expanding Community Voice and Power. Residents should own the vision and the process. Community participation is not an advisory process. Allow for sufficient time to develop the vision you can go fast or you can go far.
- Wealth creation and ownership for community members should be the primary outcomes of the development.
- Consult with national experts on wealth building and ownership including the Democracy Collaborative, Neighborhood Investment Company, Mercy Corporation, The Kaufman Foundation, Kresge Foundation and others. Integrate local expertise including The Center for Economic Inclusion, CURA, Create Initiative, Minnesota Design Center, MN AIA, NOMA and others.
- BPIOC professionals should have leadership roles in the planning, design, financing and construction of the project.
- Develop a strategy for cross sector involvement that supports local entrepreneurship, links training to employment focusing on jobs for those with barriers to employment and includes employer needs for high quality employees. This strategy would include secondary, technical and post-secondary educational institutions along with state, local and non-profit employment and training organizations.
- Focus on systems change throughout the process and project.
- Create a true collaboration between Community, the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

**Right now, we are at a moment in our cities and countries history where we are witnessing change every day. Things that we thought were not possible only a few short weeks ago are now probably. The Upper harbor terminal project can be a national model for how to dismantle systemic racism in the community development process. Will you stand with us and be a part of this historic opportunity to see justice?**

Yours Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Robin R. Bell-Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Rev. Eric Hoffer-Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Rev. Laquaan Malachi-North united Methodist Church  
Rev. Kelly Chatman- Minneapolis Area Synod-ELCA  
Rev. Janet Johnson-Wayman A.M. E Church  
Rev. Al Galmon-Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church  
Rev. Harvey Witherspoon - Zion Baptist Church