

Northeast residents unite to stop garbage transfer station

Written by

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Residents from Northeast and Southeast neighborhoods gathered last week at the Eastside Neighborhood Services Building gymnasium, 1700 2nd St. NE in Minneapolis to unite in their fight to stop the garbage transfer station and household hazardous waste facility proposed by the City.

Don't Dump on Northeast is a group of concerned residents and businesses from Holland and Marshall Terrace Neighborhoods who are reaching out to the neighborhoods throughout Northeast Minneapolis to raise awareness about the City's plan in hopes of stopping the waste facility. The meeting was held to get the word out about the City's proposal and to get Northeast residents and businesses organized to pressure the City into dropping its plans.

The "Don't Dump on Northeast" campaign organized the meeting to stop the City's impending purchase of the Wheeling Corrugated land at 340 27th Street NE – a site 10 feet from the nearest home and abutting residential neighborhoods on its south and east sides. The closest residential neighborhood to either the Brooklyn Park or Bloomington drop off sites is a half mile. The South Transfer Station has buffers all around, from other industry and a cemetery.

The proposed facility would replace the South Transfer Station. The facility would accept household hazardous waste, 250 tons a week of construction and household debris and would also be the site for receiving overflow waste from the Hennepin County incinerator when that facility is off-line. The City gave no public notice to residents or businesses prior to authorizing purchase of the land at a City Council meeting on May 18, 2010. The City has been studying the site since then to determine if it is suitable and plans to move forward with purchasing the land if it meets their criteria.

"People are just outraged that the City would even consider putting a waste facility so close to residents, restaurants and other businesses," said Marie Zellar, who lives a half block from the proposed site, "Every other facility like this is surrounded on all sides by industrial development, not homes and restaurants. It seems like the City is just ready to write-off our neighborhood as a viable residential and commercial area. We should have been part of the decision-making way before now if that is the vision they have for our neighborhood."

"We have to tell our side of the story because the City will not," said Craig Kruse, whose home is the closest to the proposed waste site, "They are green-washing this, calling it an environmental center. They won't tell you it is meant to replace the South Transfer Station and

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accept overflow from the incinerator unless you ask them the question directly. They show up at meetings and show a video of how great the household hazardous waste collection facilities are in Brooklyn Park and Bloomington. They don't tell you that there are no homes anywhere near those sites. They say 'Now is not the time for public comment on the facility,' but then when is the right time? It is hard to believe anything they say anymore."

Northeast residents and businesses are worried that having a waste facility so close to homes and restaurants will have a negative impact on home values, dining and bar business and the image of the community overall in the eyes of those who come to the facility to drop off their waste. "If you are dropping off a bunch of household hazardous waste and moldy junk from your basement, are you going to go a block down the street then and spend \$20 on a steak dinner or sit out on the patio and have a beer?" asked Zellar, "No, people don't eat where they dump."

Residents and businesses are also worried about the impact on an already bad traffic situation in the neighborhood. University Avenue is crowded and has a lot of truck traffic any given day. The City estimates the facility would bring another 850 vehicles a week into the neighborhood.

People in the community were alarmed to learn that this facility would also accept overflow waste from the Hennepin Energy Recovery Center when it is off-line. City officials tried to downplay those concerns at a community meeting, citing that the facility had only been off-line for seven days in the last ten years. They failed to mention that all seven of those days were in 2009. "It took them a whole month to fix the incinerator last year," said Kruse, "That facility is aging and we aren't fools. There will more breakdowns and overflow waste in the future, not less."

Don't Dump on Northeast wants the City to find a site for its waste facilities that has appropriate buffers for homes and businesses and less impact on traffic. They also want to have a broader conversation about how development decisions are made that affect residents and businesses in the area to avoid conflicts like this in the future. "If the only solution the City can come up with for addressing our waste management needs is to sacrifice a neighborhood, it sounds to me like we need to take a hard look at our solid waste management plans," said Zellar.