

# Clyde Bellecourt, “Keith Ellison, crisis in Phillips! Join us in mutual pursuit of justice!”

**March 9, 2020** *Dear Attorney General Keith Ellison,*

Thank you for your attention to this crisis in our Community. East Phillips, as you know, is the most diverse neighborhood in all of Minneapolis. It is also the poorest on the South Side and the most overburdened with pollution from arsenic, lead, and airborne pollution from freeways, cars, and trucks as well as industrial pollution from a foundry and an asphalt plant. All of this is well documented, and results in more emergency room visits from asthma, more cases of children with lead poisoning, and more incidences of other ailments such as heart disease that are also linked to pollutants in the air.

When the 230,000 square foot Sears Warehouse occupied by Roof Depot Co. came up for sale, the Neighborhood; led by Little Earth of United Tribes, Tamales y Bicycletas, Somali Chemical Awareness, Women’s Environmental Institute, East Phillips Improvement Coalition, and others drew up a plan that would create an Indoor Urban Farm with “green” jobs and job training, a community commercial kitchen, an all nations World Café and Market, a bike repair and assembly facility right on the Midtown Greenway in our own East Phillips Neighborhood. In addition, the plan would create 28 much needed affordable 2-bedroom apartments. All of this is fully supported in the language of the Minneapolis City Council’s Green Zone Resolution which reads in part, “Be it further resolved that Green Zone efforts will include community led planning, prioritization of homegrown development, and community ownership of the Green Zone initiatives that are innovative, creative, courageous, flexible and adaptive.”

Little Earth of United Tribes, with its 1500 residents representing 34 Tribes and a waiting list of over 500, represents about 1/3 of the East Phillips Neighborhood residents. They suffer heavily from health disparities of asthma and other health issues that are correlated with the overburden of poverty and pollution, and along with Somali and Latinx residents, have been strong and hardworking supporters of the Community plan. The City’s Public Works Expansion ignores these disparities as enumerated in the 2017 Phillips Neighborhood Health Impact Assessment, and also ignores the language and legislative intent of the 2008 Clark/Berglin Environmental Justice Law. The authors have said as much and are ready to testify to their goals in passing this law.

The City of Minneapolis staff in their desire to expand their maintenance facility in East Phillips has managed to keep open discussion of the merits of the Community Plan largely out of Council deliberations, and in so doing threatens to miss an incredible opportunity to work with a challenged inner-city neighborhood in a way that would undoubtedly win awards as a model for cities everywhere.

Thank you, Attorney General Ellison, for allowing us to bring this to your attention, and we look forward to your response as we work together for justice in our City and our State.

*Clyde Bellecourt,  
American Indian Movement, Inc.*