

**Community Relations Plan
March 2023**

The Saint Paul Port Authority

**Former Hillcrest Golf Course Site
St. Paul, Minnesota**

1. Overview

The purpose of this Community Relations Plan (CRP) is to document engagement strategies to address the needs and concerns of the citizens of St. Paul, particularly the Greater East Side Neighborhood residents who are directly or potentially affected by the proposed environmental remediation at the Former Hillcrest Golf Course Site (Site), aka The Heights development, located in the City of St. Paul, Minnesota. This CRP provides an overview of how the City of Saint Paul (City) and the Saint Paul Port Authority (Port Authority) have involved and will continue to involve affected residents, City officials, and local organizations in the decision-making process regarding the environmental remediation efforts at the Site. The Port Authority is primarily responsible for implementing community relations pertaining to the Site.

2. Spokesperson and Information Repository

The spokesperson for this project is Ms. Kathryn Sarnecki of the Saint Paul Port Authority:

Ms. Kathryn Sarnecki
The Saint Paul Port Authority
400 Wabasha Street N, Suite 240
St. Paul, Minnesota 55102-1661
Phone: 651-224-5686
e-mail: kls@sppa.com

The Information Repository for the Site will be stored at the Port Authority office located at 400 Wabasha Street N, Suite 240, Saint Paul, MN. The repository is available for public review by contacting Rick Howden at rwh@sppa.com or by phone at 651-204-6223. A digital copy of the Information Repository is also available online at the Saint Paul Port Authority's website for The Heights ([The Heights Information Repository \(sppa.com\) https://sppa.com/hillcrest-development/hillcrest-soil-contamination/repository](https://sppa.com/hillcrest-development/hillcrest-soil-contamination/repository)).

3. Site Description and History

Prior to the 1920s, the 112-acre Site was used as cultivated agricultural land or grazing land. The Hillcrest Golf Course was developed on the Site in the 1920s. The golf course facility included a clubhouse, swimming pool/pool building, driving range, practice putting greens, tennis courts, and various support buildings on the north side of the Site, and agricultural chemical storage buildings and maintenance shop on the southeastern side. Earthen berms, which contain contaminated soils and intermixed debris, are located

along the southeastern boundary of the Site next to and south of the maintenance area and two unsealed water wells. The golf course ceased operations in 2017 and the Site has remained vacant since that time.

Golf course operations included the storage and mixing of agricultural chemicals. The storage and mixing of chemicals were primarily performed in and around the chemical storage and maintenance buildings and the fill/wash out area and wash pad. The facility was using the mix load pad for washing and filling of pesticide equipment. The load pad and associated area drains to a low-lying area immediately south of the maintenance buildings. The golf course facility used a variety of pesticides including fungicides (including a mercury-based fungicide), herbicides, insecticides, and algicides for various applications across the golf course.

Several petroleum underground storage tanks (USTs) and above ground storage tanks (ASTs) were historically located on the Site including three gasoline USTs and one diesel AST. Leaks were reported for two of the former gasoline USTs and the former unregistered diesel AST. The gasoline USTs were located south of the former maintenance building and south of the agricultural chemical storage building. The diesel AST was located west of the maintenance storage building. The MPCA assigned a closed status to UST leaks and to the AST leak reportedly with remaining groundwater contamination.

There are 10 total vacant buildings associated with the former golf course. All of the former golf course buildings require demolition to support redevelopment.

4. Proposed Use of Site

The Development Plan prepared for the Hillcrest Redevelopment Site meets the Port Authority's public mandate of economic development and job creation within a sustainable framework. The Development Plan includes a mix of active park, passive open space, residential parcels, and light industrial development. The light industrial development at Hillcrest Redevelopment Site, which has been renamed The Heights development, will prioritize the creation of jobs with low barriers to entry (i.e., advanced degrees not required) and emphasize the incorporation of locally based employees via an updated Community Benefits model with potential employers. To maximize the planned development of the Site, infrastructure will be added to the property to convert it from its former golf course use to the new development.

Infrastructure will include connecting public streets, district stormwater management, necessary utilities, a proposed district energy geothermal exchange network, and significant solar energy production. The Site is projected to be a Net-Zero /Carbon-Free community that will achieve LEED for Communities Platinum certification, which will be one of the first neighborhoods of its kind in the nation.

The Development Plan for The Heights will result in approximately 1,000 light industrial jobs. The Light Industrial use at the Site will cover approximately 54 acres and including 7 to 12 buildings with approximately 825,000 SF of gross heated floor area.

In addition to adding local jobs to the area, The Heights Development Plan will create approximately 23 acres of mixed-use residential development with approximately 1,355,000 SF of residential space, 25,000 SF of commercial/office space, and 20,000 SF of ground floor retail space. The job creation of the commercial, office, and retail space will add additional jobs within The Heights development.

The Plan includes an affordable housing component that will create a broader range of housing options compared to the surrounding context. Single family housing – both attached and detached types – dominate the adjacent neighborhoods. The new housing aims to provide a diversity of options in rental and ownership, unit size, orientation to public amenities, target affordability, and housing type. Recently referred to the “missing middle”, the proposed housing includes goals for both smaller and larger apartment units for single adults and large, multi-generational families, as well as low-rise, lower density options on more compact lots to encourage use of share resources and increase affordability. While the final affordability mix will be determined by the availability of public funds to subsidize its development, we believe an achievable goal looks like the following mix: 40 units less than 30% AMI, 60 units @ 31-50% AMI, 60 units @ 51-60% AMI , 40 units @ 51-60% AMI.

The Development Plan for The Heights includes approximately 15 acres of passive open green space, consisting of wetlands, stormwater management, trail networks, and activity nodes. Additionally, the Port Authority will dedicate approximately 5 acres of land to the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department for creation of active park space for uses that could include playgrounds, sports fields, and/or other active park activities.

The Saint Paul Port Authority’s Development Plan for The Heights will create a thriving neighborhood, with a dense activity node near the intersection of Larpenteur and McKnight, including first-floor retail and commercial services for existing and projected residents. The neighborhood node will transition through green spaces toward lower density residential development along the west side of the Site and light industrial development through the center and east side of the Site. The periphery of the site is designed to gradually transition from the existing single-family neighborhoods that abut the Site into the planned denser uses within the Site. A contiguous trail network will connect multi-modal users to all parcels and surrounding amenities.

The Port Authority plans to complete environmental remediation across the Site and regrade the property to be shovel-ready for prospective developers for light industrial and residential use. Existing wetlands will be cleaned of contaminants and left in place wherever feasible and mitigated and relocated within the Site when maintaining them in-situ is unfeasible.

Development of The Heights is expected to be a catalyst for economic development in Saint Paul's Greater East Side neighborhood. Adding jobs and housing to the Hillcrest Redevelopment Site, along with inspired new economic growth elsewhere in the Greater East Side will stimulate the economic vitality of the neighborhood and add tax base that will be used for public benefit in the community. The Heights is the largest addition of net-positive industrial tax base in Saint Paul in modern history.

5. Nature of Threat to Public Health

Environmental investigations have identified impacts from various contaminants across the Hillcrest Redevelopment Site. The primary impacts detected are elevated mercury concentrations in soil related to past use of agricultural chemicals at the Site. In addition, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) have been detected in several locations typically associated with buried debris. Most of the soil impacts are detected in surface soils, with intermittent elevated detections of impacts in deeper soils (>1 ft bgs) in select locations. Water impacts (surface water and groundwater) were limited to low level detections of various pesticides in one well at the Site at concentrations well below drinking water criteria, and one elevated diesel range organic (DRO) detection from a monitoring well located near a former underground storage tank (UST) basin. Based on the environmental investigations, environmental response actions are required at the Site to meet health risk based cleanup standards for the contamination identified at the Site specific to the planned redevelopment of the Site (aka The Heights development project).

Golf course operations, including the storage, mixing, application of agricultural chemicals, is the source of mercury contamination at the Site. The storage and mixing of chemicals were primarily performed in and around the former chemical storage buildings and the fill/wash out area and wash pad. The wash pad and associated area drains to a low-lying wetland area immediately south of the maintenance buildings. The golf course facility used a variety of pesticides, including a mercury-based fungicide, herbicides, insecticides, and algicides for various applications across the golf course. The application of mercury-based fungicide from the 1930s to the 1990s resulting in the cumulation of mercury residual in soils across the former Golf Course. In addition, historically the Site had several petroleum USTs and above ground storage tank (ASTs) on the Site. Leaks were reported for two of the former gasoline USTs and one former unregistered diesel AST. Non-agricultural contamination sources (PAHs, arsenic, mercury) include a historic fire that occurred in the 1960s that destroyed a former clubhouse structure, demolition of former structures located at the Site, and burial of demolition debris in the late 1980s.

The soil cleanup standards for the Site will be based on the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) residential Soil Reference Values (SRVs) for areas targeted for residential use and commercial/industrial SRVs for areas targeted for commercial/industrial development. For mercury, the primary contaminant driving clean up at the Hillcrest Site, the residential and industrial SRVs are 2.7 mg/kg and 3.1 mg/kg, respectively. The response action approach included in the Response Action Plan (RAP)

consisted of excavating soil (and soil with intermixed debris) exceeding established SRVs and managing the excavated soils through a combination of off-site disposal at a permitted landfill and on-site reuse where practical for the development (subject to approval by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and MPCA).

6. Community Profile

The City of St. Paul Minnesota is a community of approximately 287,000 people, located in Ramsey County. The Former Hillcrest Golf Course Property is located in St. Paul's Greater East Side neighborhood. The property is located in a residential area, with primarily single-family homes and a few small businesses and multi-family housing developments interspersed.

Low median income, high poverty rates, and high unemployment rates plague the neighborhood. 3.2% of neighborhood residents are unemployed compared to 2.5% unemployment in the State. Only 37% of employed residents have jobs that provide livable wages (greater than \$40,000). Over twenty percent of Greater East Side neighborhood residents live below the poverty level compared to 10.5% and 10.1% nationally and statewide, respectively. The median household income in the neighborhood is \$54,369, compared with \$62,843 and \$68,411 nationally and statewide, respectively. 46% of children in the Greater East Side live in single-parent households.

People of color make up nearly sixty percent of the Greater East Side community's population. With a high immigrant population, English is a second language to nearly 46% percent of residents. The community has the seventh highest number of crime incidents for St. Paul neighborhoods over the last six years. Based on poverty levels, geography, percent people of color, and percent immigrants, the Greater East Side community likely has limited access to health care compared to state and national averages.

7. Chronology of Community Involvement

The Port Authority and the City conducted community engagement in the Greater East Side neighborhood to involve community residents during the Hillcrest Redevelopment Master Planning process. The Port Authority was present and/or presented at all City Master Planning meetings to inform the City and the community of environmental and development issues. The City held seventeen Technical Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Committee meetings between October 2, 2019 and January 3, 2022. During Master Planning the Port Authority participated in several City sponsored Workshops and public forums held to inform the community and solicit input from the community at large. The final Master Plan was approved in June 2022.

During the master planning process, in anticipation of developing a cleanup plan and development plan for the former Hillcrest Golf Course Site, the Port Authority reached out to the Greater East Side neighborhood to get input from the community on the Port Authority's draft Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives, conceptual Response

Action Plan and conceptual Development Plan. Meetings were held at community centers, community library's, local churches, and with Ramsey County representatives. The Port Authority reached out to community leaders to request help in creating focus groups to further discuss environmental cleanup and redevelopment planning with the community. A concerted effort was made to form focus groups with members of the community that represented the ethnic and racial diversity of the Greater East Side neighborhood. The Port Authority also held several meetings with the City's District 2 Community Council, representing the Greater East Side neighborhood. Social media and website updates were utilized throughout the Master Planning process and cleanup and redevelopment planning process to inform and solicit feedback from the community.

In May 2021, the Port kicked off its own formal community engagement process with a focus on the development plan, with contingencies tied to the Master Plan. They held a series of topic-specific meetings throughout the Summer of 2021 at the Hayden Height recreation center, which serves the community surrounding the Hillcrest Site. These efforts were complemented by the work of a local, data-driven, BIPOC firm that was hired to do more in-depth community analysis through in-person surveys and focus groups throughout the last half of 2021. More than 500 residents were engaged through this process.

From January 2022 through December 2022, the Port Authority recruited residents to participate in four separate Work Groups focused on topics that were of most interest to the community. Special attention was paid to ensure these groups were diverse and represented the demographic make-up of the neighborhood. Results from the Urban Design, Sustainability, Housing and Outdoor Spaces Workgroups were shared with the Port Authority development team and will be shared with future developers. Input is also being incorporated into Saint Paul Port Authority land covenants, which creates legally binding requirements of future end users of the Hillcrest Site.

In addition, the Port Authority contracted with the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to host a block exercise in August 2022 and a developer panel in September 2022 to engage with a larger segment of the community. Approximately 65 residents from diverse backgrounds attended the event and were able to learn more about affordable housing and density strategies at The Heights development (aka Hillcrest Site). Residents also had the opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns at these meetings. A Public Art Workgroup is meeting in 2023. Native American participation is critical to both the outdoor spaces and public art engagement and diverse community input will continue to inform the Port Authority and shape The Heights as development plans come to fruition.

8. Key Community Concerns

Through the public participation process the following goals were identified for the Hillcrest Redevelopment site:

Expansive green space designed for community enjoyment

- a. Strong tree canopy to combat urban heat and island effect, including boulevard trees

- b. Tree diversity to minimize the risk of plant disease
- c. Native plants and biodiversity to promote resiliency
- d. Pollinator habitat
- e. Limited turf grass
- f. Edible plants

Landscape design

- ii. Food forest
- iii. Community gardens

Outdoor Community Spaces

- a. Trail connections that loop around wetlands
 - i. Bike racks (top priority)
 - ii. Lights for safety purposes (top priority)
 - iii. Maintenance stations (lesser priority due to maintenance concerns)
- b. Benches
 - *The Saint Paul Port Authority will likely incorporate seating throughout the site and will review artistic and recycled wood opportunities*
 - i. Swinging benches near water
 - ii. Artistic benches
 - iii. Benches created from reused wood
 - iv. Friendship bench
 - v. Solar powered benches with power stations
- c. Courtyards with seating
 - *Removable furniture, specifically courtyards with tables and chairs, would need to be provided by a*
 - *business owner (e.g., restaurant)*
- d. Play Areas
 - i. Nature-focused play areas
 - 1. Include structures for children to crawl, climb, and explore
 - 2. Use repurposed wood from the site
 - 3. Place along outdoor trails
 - ii. Multigenerational spaces
 - 1. Adult/child co-swings
 - 2. Adult exercise equipment
 - iii. Accessible park equipment (if not included in the 5-acre park)
- e. POPS and other outdoor spaces
 - i. Gazebos with picnic tables
 - ii. Amphitheater
 - iii. Food truck space
 - iv. Ambience features to enhance the “vibe” (e.g., string lights)
 - v. Community gardens
 - vi. Dog parks

Indoor Community Spaces

In almost all community engagement activities, neighbors showed concern for the lack of indoor community spaces. Residents are hopeful that neighborhood organizations will have the opportunity to partner with future developers to access street-level building space for the following:

- a. Community meetings
- b. Senior activities
- c. Education classes
- d. Faith-based gatherings
- e. Food shelves
- f. Affordable daycare

Celebration of Diverse Cultures

Celebrating the neighborhood's rich cultural heritage is extremely important to those we talked with throughout the engagement process. Stories that people are interested in telling tie back to Dakota tribes, the Jewish community, Hmong-American partnership during the Vietnam War, and the legend of Witches Woods.

Any of these concepts could be celebrated through the following:

- a. Interpretive panels throughout the site
- a. Naming opportunities for trails, POPS, and pocket parks
- b. Public art

Public Art

Most community members consider public art to be a primary component to building neighborhood pride. Concepts we have been encouraged to consider include:

- a. Leverage the opportunity to tell the neighborhood story
- b. Work with local artists for installations
- c. Reuse onsite materials, specifically wood
- d. Incorporate interactive art concepts

Create a Safe Environment

Many conversations in the neighborhood led to concerns about safety. Priorities to be considered at The Heights include:

- a. Lighting throughout the site (within light pollution controls)
 - i. Includes trails, sidewalks, and alleys
 - ii. Vandal-proofing is preferred (no strippable copper)
 - iii. Consider energy-efficient options
- b. Use of vandal-resistant retaining walls
- c. Safety measures focused on children
 - i. Use a safety lens when designing any public art that may entice children to touch or climb
 - ii. Ensure the outdoor spaces are safe for children and away from traffic, specifically POPS and trails
 - iii. Look for solutions that will calm traffic (e.g., bump outs)
- d. Cleanliness and upkeep

- i Establish neighborhood norms
- ii Develop upkeep plans
- iii Include developers in the conversation

These goals form the basis of the recommendations in the redevelopment strategy for the site.

Additionally, please see attached SPPA Community Engagement Summary.

9. Continued Community Involvement

The Saint Paul Port Authority intends to make an intra-governmental loan from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for up to \$1,200,000 for the Cleanup of the Hillcrest Redevelopment site. The Port Authority also used \$300,000 of its 2019 Brownfields Assessment Grant to complete the environmental assessment work on the property. The Port Authority has also received the following four grants/loans to help with the remediation and redevelopment costs for the property:

- A Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Loan & Subgrant (\$665,000 and \$665,000, respectively)
- A Metropolitan Council Tax Based Revitalization Account Cleanup Grant (\$750,000)
- A Ramsey County Environmental Response Fund Grant (\$300,000)
- A USEPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant (\$500,000)

In conformance with USEPA guidelines, a public notice was placed in the local newspaper on May 11, 2023 announcing the intended response actions at the Site. The public notice also announced that the repository of information on this project is available for review and comment at the Port Authority website. The information repository is also stored at the Port Authority offices and is available for viewing during normal business hours by appointment. The notice also announced the start of a public comment period on the Response Action Plan for the Site; the comment period ended on June 16, 2023. The Saint Paul Port Authority accepted comments on the Response Action Plan during the comment period; however, none were received.

The Port Authority intends to keep the community updated on the cleanup at future District 2 Planning Council meetings and through a Construction Communications Plan.