

December 4, 2020

St. Paul City Councilmembers
15 Kellogg Blvd. West
310 City Hall
St. Paul, MN 55102

**RE: Hmong College Prep Academy Air Rights Vacation for Skyway
(1515 Brewster Street)**

Dear Council President Brendmoen and Members of the St. Paul City Council:

It was disheartening to see that the School's request for the vacation of air rights on Brewster Street did not receive the requisite 5 votes required for passage at the City Council meeting on December 2, 2020. Without the vacation of the air rights, we will not be able to move forward with construction of the skyway that will connect the new middle school with the existing classroom buildings, creating a serious safety issue for the teachers and students at HCPA going forward. The skyway was included as part of the project approved by the HRA Board as part of the HCPA Phase 5 Project during the August 12, 2019 Councilmember meeting and will be funded from HCPA's cash balance. HCPA will not be receiving Lease Aid from the MN Department of Education for the skyway, and it was not funded from the proceeds of the Series 2020 Bonds.

The Phase 5 Project that HCPA is currently constructing, a new middle school on our property south of Brewster adjacent the parking lot and sports dome, has always included the Skyway to address the safety of our students and teachers, and traffic issues in the neighborhood. Our students and staff/teachers currently have to cross Brewster street every hour starting at 7:00 am to 6 pm for gym class, recess, to board the buses during arrival and school dismissal time, and to attend after school sports program that are held inside the sports dome. This creates a significant issue for traffic on Brewster throughout the day. To make matters worse, once construction is complete on the Phase 5 project, 650 Middle School students will be crossing Brewster street daily to eat breakfast and lunch, while K-5 students will cross the street every hour for recess at the sports field and playground area. **That's 2250 students and 350 adults every day crossing Brewster street back and forth more than 8+ hours per day Monday- Friday** if we do not build the skyway.

While we as a school have made every attempt to be safe with teachers escorting every student and flaggers escorting each class crossing the street, near misses have occurred in the 1.5 years we have owned the south property as we can't make drivers obey the flaggers and traffic safety laws. We have had instances where cars nearly hit our students and staff crossing the street because they were driving too fast.

With the skyway, ALL students including special education and special needs students will be able to cross the street away from traffic, indoors, out of the elements. No longer will students have to depend on flaggers and drivers obeying all the rules of the road. **Safety of the students attending school at HCPA in St. Paul should be the City Council Members and everyone's number one concern.**

In addition, the skyway will benefit the neighbors to the School. With the skyway, HCPA will be able to do morning bus drop off in our parking lot as well as the existing front door. This doubles the speed in which buses can clear the area, reducing congestion. Also, with children rarely crossing the street anymore, traffic will flow more freely on Brewster, making it easier for community and neighborhood drivers, thus lessen the complaints about congestions daily issues during student arrival and dismissal.

The School is using its own fund balance outside of the bond proceeds to pay specifically for the skyway. The funding of the Phase V project was mentioned as a reason for rejecting the air rights vacation request. While yes, the middle school itself is funded partially through the St. Paul HRA, the skyway cannot be funded with any money through the bond proceeds due to requirements of the Minnesota Department of Education. While the Skyway is a benefit to our students and the community, it is not instructional space, and bond funds could not be used for its construction.

We ask that you please reconsider allowing the **passing for the air rights vacation to allow HCPA to build the skyward for the SAFETY of 2350 children and 350 staff** and the benefit of our community during the upcoming December 9th City Council meeting. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Dr. Christianna Hang, Superintendent
HCPA Governing Board
Jay Squire, Counsel to HERC/HCPA Project