MAY 25, 2022

The Sanneh Foundation
1276 University Ave W.
St. Paul, MN 55104

Dear Saint Paul City Council:

I am writing on behalf of The Sanneh Foundation, to offer our support for the Hillcrest Master Plan. In our opinion, the Master Planning process has been robust, inclusive, and the final plan makes the best use of this property for the benefit of both the City and its residents.

First and foremost, we do not want to see the Master Plan slowed or stopped. A handful of detractors should not overshadow the hard work of many over the past few years. The longer the site stays vacant, the longer the city goes without much needed housing, jobs, tax relief, and green space to enjoy (i.e., parks, trails, dog parks, community gardens, and gathering areas). We also understand that a delay will put funding sources at risk.

We stand behind affordable housing as a project priority. Our community wants and needs more affordable housing. This includes both deeply affordable and long-term affordability options. We also understand one size does not fit all and are glad to see a thoughtful transition from low- to high-density housing inventory in the Master Plan.

We support new jobs coming to our neighborhood. This neighborhood once flourished with manufacturing jobs that were close to home, with names like 3M and Whirlpool. Jobs that paid above average wages with the benefits people needed to support themselves and their families. The Heights offers the opportunity to bring these kinds of jobs back to the Greater Eastside. And with housing nearby, it will eliminate possible barriers to transportation.

We stand behind the Port Authority's Commitment to Sustainability. While low-income neighborhoods have traditionally had to bear the brunt of pollution, the opposite will be true at The Heights. We commend the Port Authority's goal to be one of the first Carbon-Free Communities in the nation. It's time to put the health and wellness of Greater Eastside residents first.

We understand that leaving the site as a park is not an option. We need housing and jobs, and there are few spaces left to grow. At the same time, leaving it a park would create a significant tax burden for all Saint Paul residents. We're excited to see how the City will activate their 5-acre park and the Port Authority their 15-acres of green space, especially since this space hasn't been available to non-paying patrons for over 100 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our opinion on this well thought out plan.

Sincerely,

Tony Sanneh
CEO

Brandon Griffin
Sr. VP of Operations