

July 11, 2006

Thank you for this opportunity to address your Board. My name is Paulette Wilson I am speaking on behalf of the Field Regina Northrop Neighborhood concerning the proposed re-use of the Northrop facility. I have been a lifelong resident of the neighborhood and I serve as the President of the neighborhood Board. At the request of Salimah Majeed, the former ED, I proudly served on the board of African American Family Services, one of the proposed co-tenants of the Northrop facility.

After reviewing the board member roster of The City Inc., I note that I consider myself a friend of many individuals that serve as board members of the organization. I am proud of the contributions that The City Inc has made in educating our youth.

But even friends can disagree and the proposal to move the City Inc. south campus to the Northrop facility is one such occasion. The Neighborhood Board has voted to oppose this proposal based on strong and consistent opposition from our residents. The neighborhood has consistently stated in public forums hosted by the MPS that they oppose any re-use of the facility that would involve teenagers or secondary students. Because our area is already the home of numerous social service agencies the neighborhood has repeatedly communicated our concern about the high concentration of at-risk youth this re-use would present.

While the neighborhood board and our residents have been consistent in providing this feedback, we do not feel it has been heard. After expressing our opposition to any secondary education use, the only proposal that was moved forward was a secondary facility. Furthermore, communication between the district and the neighborhood has been inexcusably poor. Public forums that the district planned and announced for both February and April of this year were never held. The only opportunity for formal community input was held *eight days* before the end of the RFP process and without The City Inc. having providing a specific detailed proposal. As we move ahead, I ask that the school board ensure that our residents are given more meaningful and timely opportunities for input, and that our input is given much stronger consideration.

Finally, I have been hurt and angered by the way in which officials with the City Inc. have recently characterized, minimized or dismissed legitimate concerns raised by the neighborhood. Information that *has* been provided by The City Inc in various documents and statements has been contradictory and has only led to further questions. Field Regina Northrop Neighborhood Group is a 40-year old organization with a long history of bridging race, gender, and socio-economic gaps. We are a socially responsible neighborhood, committed to diversity, and my neighbors and I take strong exception to ANY suggestion to the contrary. That's just not how good friends – or neighbors - treat each other.

Thank you.

Paulette Wilson, President
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