



East Phillips Improvement Coalition's East Phillips Neighborhood Institute Program

Report to the Legislature

As required by 2017 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 94, Article 1,
Section 2, Subd. 2 (z).

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Department of Employment and Economic Development

Economic Development Division

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Background

The Minnesota Legislature authorized a grant to the East Phillips Improvement Coalition in the 2017 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 7, Subd. 2 (z). The grant is from the State's General Fund and **was made** available at \$303,050 for FY2018 (\$319,000 less State administrative charges of \$15,950).

Grant funds **were to** be used by East Phillips Improvement Coalition (**EPIC**) to create the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI) to expand culturally tailored resources that address small business growth and create green jobs.

The grant **was to be used to fund the** collaborative work of Tamales y Bicicletas, Little Earth of the United Tribes, a nonprofit serving East Africans, and other coalition members towards developing EPNI as a community space to host activities including, but not limited to, creation and expansion of small businesses, culturally specific entrepreneurial activities, indoor urban farming, job training, education, and skills development for residents of this low-income, environmental justice designated neighborhood.

Eligible uses for grant funds include, but are not limited to, planning and start-up costs, staff and consultant costs, building improvements, rent, supplies, utilities, vehicles, marketing, and program activities.

The following report provides details on the grant funded project and the results of the ongoing project that extends beyond this one-time grant funding.

The Establishment of the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI).

DEED grant facilitated the creation of EPNI as a non-profit organization and certified 501(c)(3). EPNI created a diverse board of directors from various cultural communities to better represent the East Phillips neighborhood and get people of color involved in urban planning processes. EPIC gathered 300 community signatures requesting that the City of Minneapolis complete an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, while 1,775 Minneapolis residents (and counting) have signed a Change.org petition promoting green jobs for East Phillips. As an established non-profit, EPNI created a GoFundMe and self-raised \$35,000 for the pollution-free development of East Phillips. The fundraising campaign was supported by musical artist and activist Bon Iver, who donated \$10,000 to EPNI and endorsed our mission on social media. So far, 275 others have donated to EPNI's GoFundMe.

EPNI has received the endorsement and support of many Minnesota elected officials and organizations, including but not limited to: Senator Jeff Hayden; Senator Patricia Torres Ray; Senator Scott Dibble; Senator Bobby Joe Champion; Representative Hodan Hassan; Representative Aisha Gomez; Representative Frank Hornstein; Representative Jamie Long; Representative Jean Wagenius; Representative Fue Lee, A.I.M leader Clyde Bellacourte; Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC); Community Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC); Native People's Caucus of the MN DFL; Minnesota Young DFL Caucus; Latino DFL Caucus; DFL Somali Caucus; Minnesota DFL Environmental Caucus; South Side Green Zones Council; Little Earth of United Tribes; Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley; Minneapolis Black Lives Matter; United Nations Global Shapers; Minneapolis Green Team; Musical Artist Bon Iver; East Phillips Improvement Coalition (EPIC); Indigenous activist Winona

LaDuke; former Representative Karen Clark; AgroFund One; many Lake Street businesses; and select members of Minneapolis City Council.

East Phillips Neighborhood Institute's East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm Plan

Site Plans, Elevations, & Schematics

EPNI worked with DJR Architecture in producing site plans, elevations, renderings, and presentations for converting the former Roof Depot into the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm. They were able to measure and analyze the existing Roof Depot site to create both a 3 acre and 7 acre community plan that optimizes the existing building layout for indoor agricultural and hydroponics. The site plans feature traffic flow; building areas; exterior green spaces; agricultural areas; neighborhood buffers; Greenway and cycling integration; pedestrian connection; market areas; and interior and exterior circulation.



City of Minneapolis Negotiations

The second major contribution was the interpretation and community communication of the City of Minneapolis Public Works proposal. DJR was able to research the City's proposal and meet with various stakeholders to understand the City's needs and motivations. With this information, DJR continued to meet with East Phillips residents to discuss how they would be affected by the City of Minneapolis plan if fully realized. DJR frequently compared the City's proposal with the East Phillips Urban Farm proposal and identified action steps community members could take in propelling the projects forward. This helped resident understand the proposal and articulate their opinions for or against the City's plan.

Community & Investor Outreach

The EPNI team connected with other Minneapolis nonprofits and organizations to garner community support, attract investors, identify tenants for the East Phillips Urban Farm, and raise funds for the East Phillips Urban Farm. They presented at over 100 different community public forums, met with 200 public officials serving on a variety of boards and committees, and met with thousands of community members. This included presentation at Little Earth of United Tribes; Minneapolis City Council;

Minnesota Department of Agriculture; North Minneapolis Upper Harbor Collective; Community Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC); Minnesota State Legislature; Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC); Minneapolis Planning and Economic Development (CPED); George Floyd Square; Hennepin County Commission; Minneapolis Neighborhood Green Teams; South Side Green Zones Council; Minneapolis Black Lives Matter Collective; Minneapolis Indigenous Lives Matter Collective; Guidelines Advisory Committee; Hiawatha Advisory Committee; University of Minnesota; and to members of all South Minneapolis neighborhood organizations.

They have secured an investor to purchase the former Roof Depot building for \$6.8 million. The investor, Agro Fund One, is a local agricultural investment fund focused on developing sustainable indoor farming operations in regions affected by pollution and climate change. Agro Fund One has formally submitted a letter of intent to purchase the building to Minneapolis City Council. Many other private and public sources have expressed interest in our project, such as Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis. With additional funds, EPNI plan's on renovating the 230,000 sq. ft. Roof Depot building and provide hydroculture, aquaponics, farmers markets, affordable housing, and green industries. EPNI estimates that the East Phillips Urban Farm will support 500 direct community jobs and 3000 indirect community jobs, while creating a model for community ownership.

See appendix A for reports from program partners of the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute.

Appendix A: EPNI Partner Reports

East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI) DEED Funding Recipient Reports

Dean Dovolis: DJR Architecture

The DEED grant enabled EPIC, EPNI and DJR Architecture to accomplish four major objectives for the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm project.

Site Plans, Elevations, & Schematics

Thanks to DEED, EPNI had the funds to work with DJR Architecture in producing much needed site plans, elevations, renderings, and presentations for converting the former Roof Depot into the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm. We were able to measure and analyze the existing Roof Depot site to create both a 3 acre and 7 acre community plan that optimizes the existing building layout for indoor agricultural and hydroponics. The site plans feature traffic flow; building areas; exterior green spaces; agricultural areas; neighborhood buffers; Greenway and cycling integration; pedestrian connection; market areas; and interior and exterior circulation.

After a series of community meetings, the architectural visualizations reflected the specific needs outlined by the East Phillips community, which included a warehouse space for indoor aquaponics farming on both a low-tech and high-tech basis; the Little Earth Youth Farm facility; the World Cafe and commercial kitchen; farmers markets; community gathering spaces; commercial space for small businesses; solar energy; and individual plots for growing high-quality organic produce on at least 28 units of very low income affordable housing. The graphic material provides an accessible visual understanding of the East Phillips Urban Farm, crossing both language and cultural barriers. As such, diverse communities could provide feedback on plans and make changes in their own neighborhood. There was a common community support for the East Phillips Urban Farm thanks to our resident-led, participatory design process. This was the same process that we, EPIC and the community used to design, fund and assure the construction of the East Phillips Park Cultural & Community Center.



City of Minneapolis Negotiations

The second major contribution was the interpretation and community communication of the City of Minneapolis Public Works proposal. I was able to research the City's proposal and meet with various stakeholders to understand the City's needs and motivations. With this information, I continued to meet with East Phillips residents to discuss how they would be

affected by the City of Minneapolis plan if fully realized. I frequently compared and contrasted the City's proposal with the East Phillips Urban Farm proposal and identified action steps community members could take in propelling the projects forward. This helped residents understand the proposal and articulate their opinions for or against the City's plan. Unfortunately there was limited opportunity to participate in the actual decision-making process. These negotiations are ongoing and are starting to see results of a potential common direction.



Community & Investor Outreach

Third, the EPNI team and I have been actively connecting with other Minneapolis nonprofits and organizations to garner community support, attract investors, identify tenants for the East Phillips Urban Farm, and raise funds for the East Phillips Urban Farm. We have given countless presentations and set up informational booths at a variety of events and fairs. We've presented at over 100 different community public forums, met with 200 public officials serving on a variety of boards and committees, and met with thousands of community members. To name a few, we've presented at Little Earth of United Tribes; Minneapolis City Council; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; North Minneapolis Upper Harbor Collective; Community Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC); Minnesota State Legislature; Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC); Minneapolis Planning and Economic Development (CPED); George Floyd Square; Hennepin County Commission; Minneapolis Neighborhood Green Teams; South Side Green Zones Council; Minneapolis Black Lives Matter Collective; Minneapolis Indigenous Lives Matter Collective; Guidelines Advisory Committee; Hiawatha Advisory Committee; University of Minnesota; and to members of all South Minneapolis neighborhood organizations.

Thanks to our outreach efforts, we have secured an investor to purchase the former Roof Depot building for \$6.8 million. The investor, Agro Fund One, is a local agricultural investment fund focused on developing sustainable indoor farming operations in regions affected by pollution and climate change. Agro Fund One has formally submitted a letter of intent to purchase the building to Minneapolis City Council. Many other private and public sources have expressed interest in our project, such as Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis. With additional funds, we plan on renovating the 230,000 sq. ft. Roof Depot building and provide hydroculture, aquaponics, farmers markets, affordable housing, and green industries. EPNI estimates that the East Phillips Urban Farm will support 500 direct community jobs and 3000 indirect community jobs, while creating a model for community ownership. Through the DEED grant, we now have many foundations and private individuals that have expressed support for this vision.



EPNI Growth & Community Support

Fourth, the DEED grant facilitated the creation of EPNI as a non-profit organization and certified 501(c)(3). EPNI created a diverse board of directors from various cultural communities to better represent the East Phillips neighborhood and get people of color involved in urban planning processes. We gathered 300 community signatures requesting that the City of Minneapolis complete an Environmental Assessment Worksheet, while 1,775 Minneapolis residents (and counting) have signed our Change.org petition promoting green jobs for East Phillips. As an established non-profit, we created a GoFundMe and self-raised \$35,000 for the pollution-free development of East Phillips. Our fundraising campaign was supported by musical artist and activist Bon Iver, who donated \$10,000 to EPNI and endorsed our mission on social media. So far, 275 others have donated to EPNI’s GoFundMe, making our East Phillips Urban Farm project a true grassroots campaign.

We’ve also enjoyed the endorsement and support of many Minnesota elected officials and organizations, including but not limited to: Senator Jeff Hayden; Senator Patricia Torres Ray; Senator Scott Dibble; Senator Bobby Joe Champion; Representative Hodan Hassan; Representative Aisha Gomez; Representative Frank Hornstein; Representative Jamie Long; Representative Jean Wagenius; Representative Fue Lee, A.I.M leader Clyde Bellacourte; Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC); Community Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC); Native People’s Caucus of the MN DFL; Minnesota Young DFL Caucus; Latino DFL Caucus; DFL Somali Caucus; Minnesota DFL Environmental Caucus; South Side Green Zones Council; Little Earth of United Tribes; Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley; Minneapolis Black Lives Matter; United Nations Global Shapers; Minneapolis Green Team; Musical Artist Bon Iver; East Phillips Improvement Coalition (EPIC); Indigenous activist Winona LaDuke; former Representative Karen Clark; AgroFund One; many Lake Street businesses; and select members of Minneapolis City Council.

In summary, the DEED grant has given us the foundation to make the East Phillips Urban Farm a reality, placing an emphasis on community ownership. Through DEED’s support, the former Roof Depot building now has the potential to foster economic justice, racial justice, and environmental justice and become an example of an equitable project from the community, for

the community. We as the East Phillips community, EPNI, and DJR thank DEED for the opportunity to realize our dreams.



Steve Sandberg: East Phillips World Cafe & Farm Store

East Phillips World Cafe & Farm Store Planning

The DEED grant has enabled the planning of multicultural gathering places and businesses along the Greenway in the East Phillips neighborhood. I have assembled a team of local businesses and organizations ready to partner with and be part of the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm. Representatives from such businesses have been at the table with EPNI from the project's inception: both low-tech and high-tech aquaponics organizations; a youth-led cafe and coffee shop that will support entrepreneurship and job training; cultural markets and galleries that will reflect the neighborhood's diversity and give local artists a place to display and sell their work; an East African chemical dependency and mental health organization supporting second-chance job and job-training opportunities; educational facilities to host adult learning, English courses, youth art classes, and hands on agricultural training; plus a large public farmers market which will allow growers to display and sell their organic, sustainable produce. Further, a versatile community kitchen will provide space for neighborhood meals, soup kitchens, catering, and pop-up cultural restaurants— attracting customers from across the Metro area.

To garner support and identify business startups for the East Phillips Cafe and Farm Store, I have met with the Seward Community Co-op, Butter Bakery, The Gathering Cafe, Pow WOW Grounds, Appetite For Change, Full Cycle, Sioux Chef Sean Sherman, Hennepin History Museum, Minnesota Institute of Arts, Minnesota Humanities Commission, Monteverde Institute in Costa Rica, Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Hennepin County, Green Teams, Minneapolis City Council Members, Minneapolis neighborhood groups, local non-profits, and City of Minneapolis advisory groups. Thanks to these meetings and significant community interest, I have solicited and raised over \$72,000 in contributions for the East Phillips Urban Farm.



Professional Business Development

In expanding the East Phillips World Cafe and Farm Store, I established professional partnerships to help grow business development and community ownerships. One major partnership is with the Minneapolis Global Shapers, a subset of the United Nations World

Economic Forum. The Global Shapers are a diverse group of young leaders, focused on addressing and solving the needs of local communities. After several meetings, the Minneapolis Global Shapers chose EPNI and the East Phillips Urban Farm as their main project for 2020. They admired that EPNI is concerned with environmental justice, alleviating pollution, and assisting low-income, BIPOC residents. With this partnership, Global Shapers is helping lead media outreach, better organize community events, and link EPNI with business consultants and University of Minnesota organizations. For example, Global Shapers hosted a three-day seminar at Little Earth educating the community on the East Phillips Urban Farm and grassroots entrepreneurship, with 100 people attending. Open to the community, they brought in experts to discuss how to empower environmental justice communities for actionable system changes. At the event, Little Earth provided tours of their youth-led urban farm and discussed Indigenous civic involvement. The Global Shapers also host weekly meetings every Wednesday for the East Phillips community and EPNI board members to coordinate volunteer efforts and insure that neighborhood needs are being met.

Through the DEED grant, we were also able to work with David Ly at Bizarre Solutions, a consulting firm specializing in small business growth and the application of automation services to increase productivity. Ly is now leading our community ownership efforts by setting up a specialized economic model and fundraising system. This long-range financial plan will insure that even with private investors, the community will own a portion of the East Phillips Urban Farm and be capable of sustaining growth and local owne



Community Involvement & Events

Thanks to DEED, EPNI was able to support countless East Phillips community advocacy and outreach events. At these events, we gathered resident input to determine the future of East Phillips, while exploring numerous development proposals. We also held rallies and demonstrations to speak out against pollution and support a green future for East Phillips. Our events provided food and often featured speeches from elected officials, local activists, and key community members.

Though we hosted many more, here's list of a few major EPNI-led events:

- East Phillips Urban Farm Community Feedback Sessions: Community meetings where we gathered community feedback and encouraged civic participation. We presented both the East Phillips Urban Farm proposal and the City's Public Works proposal. We brought

in elected officials to meet with residents and participate in a Question and Answer. Speakers included Alondra Cano, Mark Ruff, Karen Clark, and Winona LaDuke. We also identified action steps for getting involved with EPNI and created an email database for interested residents. Meetings had up to 250 people.

- Edible Boulevards: Community event that partnered East Phillips residents with professional urban gardeners to create “Edible Boulevards.” The spaces between the sidewalk and curb were tested for toxins and then transformed into fruit and vegetable gardens.
- Guidelines Advisory Committee (GAC): Monthly meetings organized by the City of Minneapolis to plan the former Roof Depot Site and create a plan that satisfied both the East Phillips community and the City. EPNI was able to get many residents involved in these meetings, as community members delivered testimonies and presented the East Phillips Urban Farm proposal. 25-50 East Phillips residents attended per meeting. Meetings were terminated when a compromise plan was unattainable.
- Weekly Leadership Meetings: EPNI board meetings, which are open to the community. There have been 150 meetings since 2018, with an average of 10 people per meeting.
- Community Speak Out and Celebration: A community event hosted at Little Earth of United Tribes Youth Farm, where community members celebrated the gardening success achieved by Little Earth Youth and get updates regarding the EPNI community plan.
- Community Action for East Phillips Urban Farm: An interactive exploration of social and environmental justice in the Twin Cities hosted by EPNI, Little Earth, and Global Shapers. Event included a multigenerational story circle, interactive design challenge, artistic performance, and tours of the Little Earth of United Tribes Youth Farm.
- Global Shapers Hub World Economic Forum Conference: EPNI featured as a case study for stopping local pollution and developing community-led infrastructure.
- Air Pollution Demonstrations: A series of demonstrations and rallies to protest pollution in East Phillips, inform the community about EPNI developments, and elicit support for the East Phillips Urban Farm. Speeches given by key community members. 20-50 people at each rally.
- South Side Black Friday Community Fundraiser
- Greenway Glow
- Community Walkthrough of the Roof Depot Facility
- East Phillips Press Conferences
- Canvassing
- Poster Making Sessions
- Court Hearings

Through these activities the support for the East Phillips Urban Farm has grown significantly, and we anticipate moving forward in our negotiations with the City of Minneapolis. We are eager to reclaim the former Roof Depot, positively developing our community, while lifting up our low-income residents of color. The DEED grant gave us the opportunity to begin establishing a healthier future for East Phillips.



Carlos Parra Olivera: At-Home Aquaponics Kits

Aquaponics Research & Experimentation

Thanks to DEED funding, I am researching how to create at-home aquaponics kits and educational resources for East Phillips. Throughout the year, my aquaponics partner Angel Maldonado and I have been taking a Udeemy course titled, “Aquaponics Gardening: Growing Fish and Vegetable Together.” Through coursework and experimentation, I have learned how to achieve optimum tank pH balance; apply best lighting practices; identify and grow compatible plants within the same aquaponics system; create ideal system locations and environments; and improve aquaponics tank water chemistry. We are experimenting with two different aquaponics growing systems at both medium (50 gallon tank) and large (100 gallon tank) scales to determine which system is best for at-home use. By prototyping these two systems, we can catalogue and compare the amount of water, pump energy, fish, and lighting required for growth. In developing our at-home kits, we are also experimenting with affordable materials and easy-to-follow instructions so that aquaponics can be accessible for everyone in the East Phillips neighborhood. Once we finish prototyping, we will create an even smaller aquaponics system (25 gallon tank with 4x4 grow beds) that can be easily replicated in homes with little space. So far, we’ve achieved significant success in researching and conducting trials with different aquaponics systems. I hope that East Phillips residents can learn how to grow vegetables and fruits from their own homes, which will increase healthy food accessibility. Once the East Phillips Urban Farm is completed, I hope to lead community aquaponics training and educate young people about sustainability. I especially want to involve my Latinx community and fellow residents of color in the future of green industries. The DEED grant has provided much needed urban farming research and opportunity to create at-home aquaponics kits for our neighborhood-- I am excited for the future of East Phillips.



Community Advocacy

The DEED grant has also given me more resources to focus on community advocacy and outreach within the East Phillips youth and Latinx communities. I have helped host sharing circles for people of color to express the traumas of pollution and environmental racism. I was able to share my own story as someone who grew up in East Phillips and continues making the neighborhood my home. Additionally, EPNI and I hosted many presentations to educate the

community on the negative health impacts of pollution in East Phillips. Our presentations to the Minneapolis City Council were especially important, as communities of color came together to support the East Phillips Urban Farm and make our voices heard. I am getting more Latinx residents involved through door-knocking efforts and partnerships with the Global Shapers. I am thrilled that EPNI and our volunteer teams have expanded so much in the last year thanks to DEED funding.



Abah Mohamed: East African Outreach & Business Development

As both an EPNI board member and member of the East African immigrant community, the DEED grant helped us to raise awareness and address the social, economic, and environmental justice challenges facing our East African community. The grant helped expand South East Homes (SEH), the first East African focused program in North America specializing in chemical dependency and mental health. SEH serves Minneapolis' Somali community by providing health services such as trauma-informed therapy, drug abuse prevention programs, and family support. SEH provides culturally-specific resources and a supportive community during the patient's recovery journey. Additionally, SEH hires ethnic minority youth and young adults in the East Phillips Neighborhood, including those recovering from addiction, to provide training and career advancement opportunities. With the DEED grant, we were able to expand SEH's existing practices to educate East African immigrants about urban farming practices, sustainability, and green industries.

By recruiting, hiring, and training young, recovering adults in our community about organic/green farming, we provided second-chance employment and created new paths to achieve economic mobility. With the completion of the East Phillips Urban Farm, we hope that Somali residents in East Phillips will be now qualified for green jobs in both the low-tech and high-tech aquaponics sectors. Additionally, these trainings are inspiring Somali business startups to develop in conjunction with the East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm. I am very happy that the DEED grant is creating job opportunities to help my community succeed.



EPNI expanded East Phillips Somali urban farming outreach and dedicated many meetings to discuss how East Africans view farming practices compared to the City's established majority communities. A positive view connecting food production with farming came from these discussions and many Somalian community members are excited to explore and pursue green industries. We tried to envision how life can be sustained through urban farming and how these practices could benefit our children. The possibilities we discussed helped East African members imagine new business models for such enterprises. When East Phillips community groups realized that these start-up goals were financially feasible and could be accomplished, while also helping other Minneapolis Somali communities, interest picked up. By holding meetings to discuss new ideas about sustainability, I learned and reflected along with my community members. This has a unique growing experience for our Somali community.

In addition to community outreach, EPNI and the DEED grant supported East African advocacy and involvement in local politics. We were connected with Minneapolis City Council members, State Legislatures, State Representatives, Neighborhood Groups, and other important cultural organizations. I was able to attend many of these meetings where I learned a lot about connecting with government officials, community organizing, and pressing our case for the neighborhood plan. I feel more empowered and capable navigating local politics.

Although we need further funding, DEED and EPNI helped establish a budget plan, begin green jobs training for our Somalian community, connect local business owners, increase East African outreach, and give our community a voice in Minneapolis government. Unfortunately, the emergence of COVID cut short many intended excursions to local urban farms and further aquaponics training. We would like to see the program continue so our community can continue learning more from this experience.



Chad Hebert: Urban Farm Project & Little Earth Youth Urban Farming

The Urban Farm Project was contracted from EPIC through funding from DEED to improve the low tech/low cost development of aquaponics for the East Phillips Urban Farm. The Urban Farm Project was able to assess the feasibility of growing up to 20,000 lbs of yellow perch annually and around 80,000 pounds of produce. The Urban Farm Project has and will continue to conduct field studies and research on survivability of early life stage development in yellow perch. The research has been conducted with a focus on best management practices and will be applied at the completed East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm, which will provide locally grown, fresh vegetables and fish for the community throughout the year.

The Urban Farm Project has also been involved in the planning, development, and implementation of an urban farming workforce development program for Little Earth of United Tribes. Little Earth, the only Native American preference publicly-funded urban housing in the US, is using DEED funding to educate Native American youth on urban farming and gardening practices. Because Little Earth continues to combat the persistent health disparities found in Native American communities, the urban farm has been an amazing conduit for healthy cooking and healthy eating education classes, farming education, healthy living, and physical exercise through gardening. Additionally, Little Earth is able to sell their goods on markets to promote entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency.



In the program, selected applicants are given hands-on education and training about how to write their own resumes for the job; how to complete a job application, how to show up and do the work of ground preparation, planting, growing and harvesting vegetables and Native plant medicines; how to preserve the grown food for Little Earth families; and how to get ready for the cultural markets they could become part of at East Phillips Urban Farm, which would be located right across the street from their homes.

Since the beginning of the program, Little Earth has been able to use agriculture as a tool to teach 35 youths between the ages of 6-17 basic employment skills that will cross over to any line of work. The Little Earth Farm hosted an open-house event that was attended by over 100 residents and the farm received more than 40 applications. From the 40 applicants interviewed, 22 youths were chosen and 17 completed the training in Year One. Year Two interviewed 37 applicants, 17 were chosen, and 13 completed the training. Year Three saw more than 150 participants in the open house and 60 people applied for the farm program. Based on available funding, 17 kids were chosen. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil unrest in the community, plans needed to be changed. So with new safety guidelines in place, 5 youths

between 12-17 were able to complete the training. The Urban Farm Project has been able to assist Little Earth in a 3x increase in food production and 10x increase in food distribution.

Additionally, EPNI has increased Native outreach by appointing a Native American board member. Little Earth has been able to host a variety of events for the East Phillips community. The Little Earth community strives to build skills to counter poverty through innovation and providing for other communities, and the DEED grant has helped facilitate this.



Clarence Bischoff: Minnesota Aquaculture Association & Blue Water Farms

Advocacy & Administrative Activity

In the past year, I have served as Board Secretary, Legal Liaison, and I have served in a management/supervisory role in relation to the Public Relations Coordinator. The secretary role has involved the preparation of weekly agendas and minutes along with arranging the Zoom calls. It has led to assisting with financial resources and more recently in assisting with financial reports and coordinating resources. An approximate tally would be Board Meetings: 52, Legal Liaison Meetings 25; Public Relations meetings:25. There have been dozens of special meetings with City officials and other regulatory agency representatives.



Planning of High-Tech Urban Farm

The mission of the East Phillips Indoor urban Farm is to provide safe, tasty, nutritious, and affordable food products using a decoupled aquaculture/aquaponics system that represents the best technology and equipment available in the world. It represents food production that is sustainable, environmentally friendly, and conserves and protects our natural resources.

The indoor urban farm technology is the symbiotic relationship between fish, beneficial bacteria, and plants. In a decoupled indoor urban system, water from an aquaculture system is fed to a hydroponic system where the by-products are broken down by nitrifying bacteria into nitrites. After the nitrates are utilized by the plants the clean water is recirculated back to the aquaculture system with virtually zero waste. By creating optimum environments for all three of these living organisms, we are creating an efficient ecosystem that provides sustainably grown products

The East Phillips Indoor Urban Farm plan calls for the construction of an 80,000 square foot indoor urban facility in the East Phillips neighborhood. When complete it will annually provide 233,690 lbs. of fresh fish and 500,000 lbs. of organically grown produce. It will provide jobs for 40 people.

The complexity and scale of the project requires essentially full-time employment of MNSDG staff working with a wide-spectrum of specialists including engineers, agronomists, biologists, financial experts and more.

