

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
FOR THE PHILLIPS COMMUNITY**  
GREEN ZONES IN THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS



. . . the unequal distribution of power, in all its forms, is the major source of inequity, and that community empowerment can have a sustained impact of this distribution of power.

'Empowerment' refers to the process by which communities re-negotiate power in order to gain control over the factors that shape their lives, including access to information and opportunity, decision-makers, and policy making.

*--Jandu, M. B., Bourcier, E., Choi, T., & Yen, S. G. (n.d.). Equity Metrics for Health Impact Assessment Practice, Version I. Society of Practitioners Health Impact Assessment*

# **Health Impact Assessment Community Steering Team**

## **Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy**

Cecilia Martinez, PhD. Executive Director

Say Yang, Project Coordinator

## **Land Stewardship Project**

Dylan Kesti

## **Hope Community**

June Byuye

Betsy Sohn

## **Nexus Community Partners**

Danielle Mkali

## **Waite House**

Francisco Segovia

Rosa Tock

Report compiled by **Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy**

Author: Dr. Cecilia Martinez, Director of Research

with assistance from Shalini Gupta and Marisol Becerra



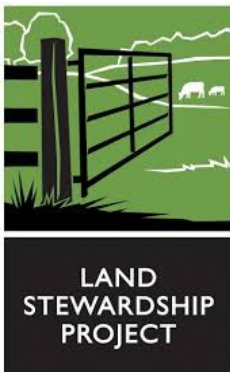
Hope Community has applied strategic and innovative strategies for over 40 years to foster connections that strengthen the power of community members and communities. Located in Phillips Community, Hope worked with residents to create a long-term vision for their community. Acting on that vision, Hope's housing and place-based development work is transforming a formerly abandoned intersection of two major corridors in Minneapolis. Beyond physical development, Hope has a long history of community building and organizing for equity. More than 600 youth and adults are involved with Hope each year to learn, connect, and grow while building community assets, community leadership, and community change.



Isuroon is a grassroots nonprofit organization that promotes the well-being and empowerment of Somali women in Minnesota and beyond. Led by the very women they serve, the group has earned a trusted place in the community because of their cultural insight and collaborative approach. Isuroon envisions a world where Somali women and girls are healthy, connected and empowered and their families are thriving in Minnesota and globally. The organization is dedicated to building Somali women and girls social connectedness and self-sufficiency so that they can lead healthier, more productive lives in Minnesota and globally.



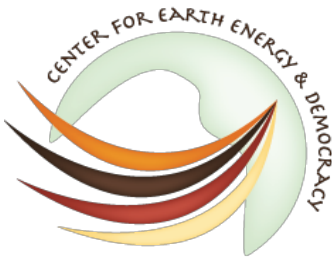
Waite House Waite House programs integrate civic engagement with human services to bring about positive change within our core focus areas of Employment and Training, Health and Nutrition, Youth Development, and Basic Needs. Waite House was established in 1958 in Minneapolis' Phillips Community and in 2012 moved into a larger space in a former park district building on 11th Avenue and 23rd Street. Each year, more than 4,500 Phillips Community members build social and economic capital via programs administered by 17 diverse staff and 120 volunteers, including 4 AmeriCorps members and students from six local colleges.



Land Stewardship Project is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1982 to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture and to develop sustainable communities. LSP is dedicated to creating transformational change in our food and farming system. LSP's work has a broad and deep impact, from new farmer training and local organizing, to federal policy and community based food systems development. At the core of all our work are the values of stewardship, justice and democracy.



Nexus Community Partners is an innovative community-building intermediary whose mission is to “build more engaged and powerful communities of color by supporting community building initiatives that expand community wealth and foster social and human capital.” The key to building more engaged and powerful communities of color lies in the interconnectedness between authorship, leadership and ownership. Nexus work to ensure that all community members, especially those who have been marginalized, have access to wealth creation and ownership, meaningful leadership opportunities, and the power to drive changes which affect their lives. Nexus is committed to social justice, maintains an unwavering focus on equity, and has an ability to work with multiple stakeholders, connecting their work to become part of long-term fundamental change.



Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy (CEED) creates sustainable and just communities by providing research, policy and educational tools that strengthen the advocacy impact of frontline communities facing environmental injustice. Its work is focused on ensuring that justice is a fundamental principle guiding strategies for addressing climate change, environmental degradation and long-term sustainability. CEED’s programs are guided by the principle that all members of society have the right to effectively participate in energy and environmental decisions that affect their health and livelihoods, and their community. CEED works to ensure that the voice of Indigenous peoples, communities of color, and those with moderate and low incomes are included in energy and environmental solutions.







**The Phillips Community Health Impact Assessment (HIA)** grew out of ongoing state and community concerns about health equity in Minnesota. In 2014, the Minnesota Department of Health released its Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota Legislative Report, which outlined the health inequities in the state. The report presented on the structural factors that produce and re-produce health disparities across Minnesota populations asserting that “(t)hese health disparities persist and are neither random nor unpredictable. The groups that experience the greatest disparities in health outcomes also have experienced the greatest inequities in the social and economic conditions that are such strong predictors of health” (1). One of its recommendations was to utilize Health Impact Assessments to develop inclusive and equitable polices, plans and programs (2).

In the same year, the Minnesota Legislature provided funding to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to the legislation, the two agencies were given discretion to decide the type of project to be developed for addressing environmental risks and air quality (3). The joint agency project team identified as one of its

deliverables a “Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of urban community health concerns” (4). A screening process using the following indicators were used to screen for potential communities for the project:

- Rates of asthma hospitalization
- Proximity to major roadways and major air permitting facilities
- Low-income residents
- Population people of color

The final determination of the “central area of Minneapolis” (and specifically the Phillips Community) as the HIA study area was made by MDH and Nexus Community Partners based on an assessment of local organizational capacity to participate in the HIA process, existing community relationships, and ongoing community planning and participate on in various efforts to improve the health of the community (5).

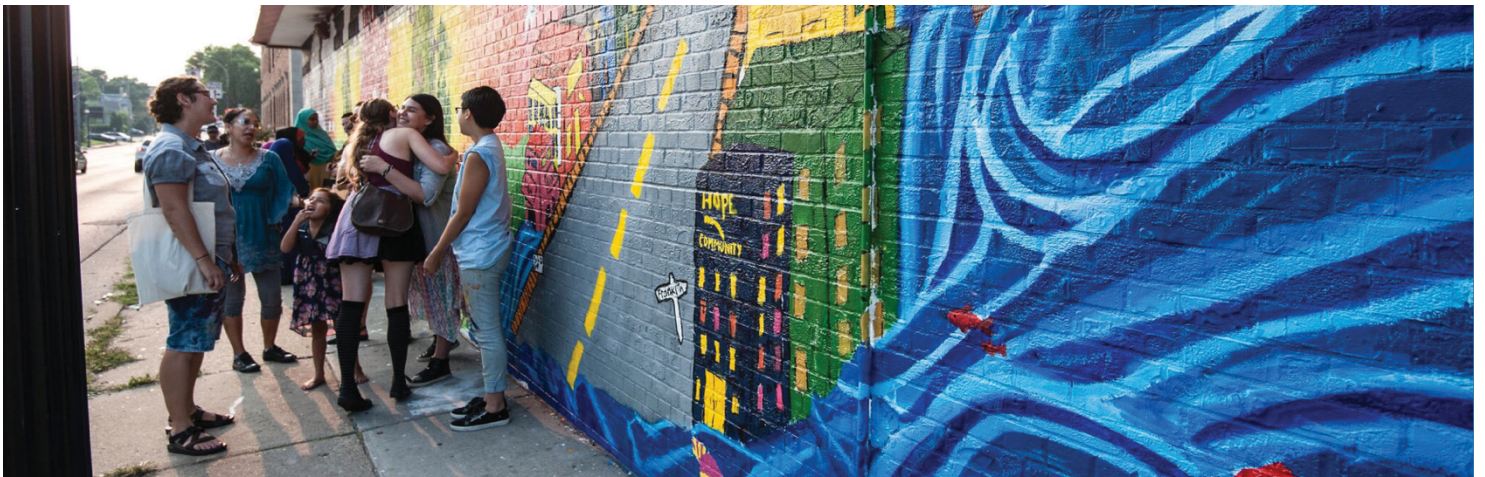
### **Socio-spatial History of the Community**

The Phillips Community, like most urban communities, has undergone demographic, economic and infrastructure changes over the years. These changes are not isolated from regional socio-economic and demographic shifts, national urban and economic development patterns, and increasingly over the last few decades, global economic factors. Phillips is a highly diverse neighborhood. People of color make up almost four-fifths of the population in the Phillips Community, which is significantly higher than the City’s overall demographic distribution. The household income distribution in the Phillips Community shows more striking concerns. Sixty-three percent of households have an income of less than \$35,000; and only 5% percent have household incomes of \$100,000 or more. In contrast, approximately one-third of Minneapolis households have incomes less than \$35,000 dollars in household income, and 23% of households have incomes of \$100,000 dollars or more.

These demographics are important for addressing health disparities in Minneapolis, and in the Phillips Community. There is substantial research that documents the link between the physical,

social and economic conditions of a neighborhood and an individual's health. Braveman et al., reveal that in the United States, people of color are more likely to live in poor neighborhoods, and that this uneven pattern is not fully explained solely by income. In other words, race continues to be a major factor in determining where one lives; and further, where one lives has an impact on one's health (6). MDH concurred in its Advancing Health Equity report, concluding that where you live matters, and neighborhoods with different socio-economic characteristics but only 3 miles geographically apart could "equal up to 13 years difference in life expectancy" (7). Braveman et al., note that although the issue is complex, "the overwhelming weight of evidence indicates that both features of neighborhoods and characteristics of individual residents, influence health. Both places and people matter" (8).

The factors that contribute to these conditions are complex and include a set of cross-sector issues such as access to retail food markets with quality, affordable nutritious food; housing conditions (affordable housing, quality of housing, neighborhood housing stock); environmental conditions (indoor and outdoor air quality, number and type of polluting industries, existence of brownfields and other legacy toxic contamination); education (school infrastructure, funding, teacher experience); safety (police relations, crime, quality of physical infrastructure); green space and other amenities; transportation (access, cost, and quality of service of public transit); economic conditions (access to safe and livable wage jobs), wages, small business support -- to name a few. As a National Research Council report stated, "[h]ealth can no longer be seen solely as the result of personal choice and behavior" (9).



## Green Zones Policy

There is increasing recognition that environmental pollution, not unlike other social issues in the United States, has a racial and income dimension. A substantial body of research exists to study this phenomenon. These studies range from investigating the ethical and legal issues of environmental disparities to public health and geographic information systems (GIS) analyses. Results from these studies reveal that a pattern of disproportionately higher environmental risks exists in communities of color and low-income communities (10,11,12). Even when viewed more closely, community by community, and block by block, the trend of concentrating environmental hazards in minority neighborhoods persists.



This unequal spatial distribution of environmental risks on the basis of race and income is the central focus of environmental justice concerns in the United States. This includes issues such as:

**MULTIPLE CONTAMINATION SITES.** In any given community, there are multiple facilities ranging from very small businesses to large-scale industrial emitters. Permitting is based on individual facility emissions and does not integrate the problem of multiple emitting facilities in the process.

**MULTIPLE POLLUTANT EXPOSURE.** Concentration of emitting facilities in communities can result in multiple toxic pollutants. However, risk assessments are based on single pollutant exposures.

**CUMULATIVE HEALTH IMPACTS.** Information on the cumulative or interactive impact of multiple substances on human health is not addressed within the current regulatory framework.

**CHRONIC LONG-TERM EFFECTS.** The health impacts of toxic substance exposure can be long term. Negative health impacts due to unequal exposures to populations may not be detected.

**SENSITIVE POPULATIONS.** The research has shown that exposure and health impacts on children and older adults can be more severe and extensive, because of their development stages, and behaviors (e.g., hand to mouth contact of young children). However, other socio-economic factors that can exacerbate the health effects of environmental pollution has also been identified, although this research is relatively immature.

**The Green Zones initiative** was first introduced to the City of Minneapolis in the Climate Action Plan by the Environmental Justice Working Group<sup>13</sup> as a cross-cutting strategy for meeting the City's climate mitigation goals. The Environmental Justice Working Group's (EJWG) recommended:

*The Green Zones Initiative will create a city designation for neighborhoods or clusters of neighborhoods that face the cumulative impacts of environmental, social, political and economic vulnerability. Communities with Green Zone designation would then be able to access benefits offered by the city (as well as state and federal agencies), ranging from targeted pollution reduction to increased funding opportunities for energy-efficiency, onsite renewable energy, and other low-emission infrastructure. Green Zone designation would ensure that communities most highly impacted by environmental hazards and economic stressors receive much-needed resources and support.*

The Phillips HIA's Community Steering Team (CST) determined that health in the Phillips Community is the result of many cross-sector factors, and as such the Green Zones was an appropriate policy tool for a comprehensive assessment of health impacts. In addition to present and historical environmental pollution that negatively impact health, the CST noted that inequitable distribution of future development and investment must also be addressed.

## **Social Determinants of Health: Green Zone Priorities for the Phillips Community**

As the CST continued its HIA efforts, the City of Minneapolis established an informal city appointed Working Group to make recommendations to the Minneapolis City Council on Green Zone designation. The HIA CST made the decision to continue its independence from local and state governmental efforts in order to maintain its integrity as a community-based body. A subset of issue areas for this initial HIA were selected by the CST given the time frame and resources available to conduct the study. Therefore, this HIA focused on air quality and residential energy. Additional issue areas were identified as food, housing quality and affordability, and economic development/employment. These issues were prioritized for a second phase of assessment.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of this initial HIA, the following recommendations were developed as priority areas for action for the City of Minneapolis Green Zones Initiative. While these recommendations are



tailored toward the City and focused on Phillips, many of the recommendations are applicable to county and state government, as well as other geographic neighborhoods that face similar pollution burdens and the demographic profiles of Phillips.

### **Policy and Planning Recommendations**

**CUMULATIVE IMPACTS.** Cumulative pollution impacts should be part of decision-making by the City and State, as well as appropriate planning departments for future development and redevelopment projects. To the extent

permitted by law, the City should discourage and advocate against development or redevelopment that will contribute to net additional pollution, especially pollution that negatively affects human health and avoid decisions that add pollution emissions in an area deemed disproportionately pollution burdened relative to other city neighborhoods. It is recommended that the City adopt ordinances that prioritize over-burdened neighborhoods for pollution reductions. Model ordinances such as the Clean Up Green Up ordinance passed in Los Angeles, California and other models out of Newark, New Jersey, can be used as exemplars (14).

**QUALITY OF LIFE.** As environmental improvements and sustainability measures improve quality of life in the Phillips community, and other potential Minneapolis Green Zones, the City must be proactive to prevent the direct and indirect displacement of residents currently living in these areas. Anti-displacement measures should be developed and implemented, including the development of metrics for continued assessment.

**CLIMATE RESILIENCY.** Green Zones should be utilized by the City as a means of increasing climate resiliency of vulnerable and overburdened communities. As the City acts to address the impacts of climate change, there must be specific attention to the uneven and unequal infrastructure across the City's neighborhoods. Without explicit attention to inequality, there is an increased risk that the pollution and environmental health issues outlined in this report will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. All aspects of climate resiliency planning and sustainable development practices, including comprehensive planning, transportation, housing, land use and energy planning should prioritize vulnerable and overburdened communities for climate resiliency.

**POLLUTION REDUCTION.** A comprehensive and coordinated green transition of higher polluting small businesses toward lesser pollution options should be developed. Investments in small businesses build the economic vitality of the community, and incentives for local hiring practices can be included to create job opportunities and resident health.

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OMBUDSMAN.** The City should create an environmental justice position or Green Zones Ombudsperson. This position would serve as the liaison between the City's

Green Zone efforts and Green Zone residents, small businesses, schools, and community-based organizations. The goal is to have maximum community involvement in the City's green transition efforts.

**GREEN INVESTMENT.** Green and resiliency-oriented (tree canopy, garden programs, public parks infrastructure, bike paths, etc.) investments offered by the City of Minneapolis should prioritize residents, non-profit organizations, and small businesses in Green Zones. This includes energy efficiency, renewable energy, zero emissions transportation, public transit expansion and any other sustainable-oriented programs.

**Anti-displacement.** In order to ensure that these green investments benefit residents in these communities, and don't result in displacement, the city must assess and develop anti-displacement strategies immediate. The City *must* prioritize equitable growth as a goal for its comprehensive planning and take risks in developing innovative strategies to achieve this goal.

*“If sustainable community development is to address the social imperative, sustainable community development projects will have to actively plan how to keep such communities accessible to a diverse range of income groups, professions, and retailers.”*

*Ann Dale and Lenore L. Newman, Local Environment. Vol. 14, No. 7, August 2009, 669–681*

## **Community Engagement Recommendations**

The City should actively promote meaningful participation and involvement by identifying risks to the public health and the environment, and by providing an opportunity to select alternatives an/or mitigation measures that will minimize such risks. Decision-making and planning should be proactively transparent. Green Zone and place-based sustainability planning in EJ neighborhoods in the City of Minneapolis must have meaningful and effective collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs). Strategies include partnerships with residents in over-burdened neighborhoods and with well-respected CBOs serving the community. Several tools can be utilized to enhance this process, specifically (15):



**COMMUNITY BENEFIT AGREEMENTS.** A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a legally binding contract (or set of related contracts), which can establish a set of community benefits of a development project. A CBA can help to ensure community involvement, and if the process is implemented well, can provide a venue for business-community relations. While, it is an undertaking, CBAs can be developed between the City, private entities, and community groups to provide points of agreement for building long term community improvements in Green Zone policy and project development. This can include up front agreed upon decision-making timelines, level and points of communication, intellectual property rights of research, protocol on funds raised by the City for community outreach, and decision-making structures.

**COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION PARTNERSHIPS.** There is great variability across departments in their community engagement proficiency. The City should develop partnerships with CBOs that have experience in community organizing, service provision, leadership development, technical and analytical capacities, and/or those with demonstrated effective relationships with local residents, particularly Indigenous, people of color, and immigrant populations. If the city is going to make progress in addressing environmental and public health disparities across neighborhoods, it is imperative that relationships between city departments and community residents are improved.

**MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT.** The City should develop an inter-departmental information and planning hub that collects data on resources, incentives and programs available for Green Zones. This would include data on health, environmental justice resources, incentives, and regulations would be incorporated. To create a better basis of information for decision-making with regard to public health and the environment. Require development and redevelopment projects that have the potential to generate additional pollution to provide information in the form of an Environmental Justice Review Checklist. In addition, in order to create a better basis of information for decision-making with regard to public health and the environment the City should develop Natural Resources Index that identifies areas that can be considered disproportionately burdened with pollution, and can assist monitoring and assessment, and decision-making.

## Air Quality Recommendations

**COMPREHENSIVE AIR QUALITY ASSESSMENT.** A comprehensive review and compilation of environmental conditions based on existing air quality and pollution studies conducted by the city, state agencies, and academic researchers. This review should be coupled with an updated cumulative impacts assessment for Green Zones neighborhoods utilizing the MNRiskS assessment model at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The assessment should also include recommendations for pollution reductions in these neighborhoods.

**PRIORITIZING AREAS WITH SENSITIVE POPULATIONS.** A priority for pollution reduction and other health-oriented green investment should be prioritized immediately in areas where sensitive populations (the elderly, and children) reside. This includes developing a City strategy for monitoring the environmental-public health linkages in these areas, and assigning responsibility for developing programs to address existing health impairing conditions, as well as benchmarks and assessment strategies to ensure progress.

**TRANSPORTATION POLLUTION.** Mobile sources of pollution are a significant health risk, and research indicates that communities of color are disproportionately burdened by these emissions. Heavy-duty vehicles are of high concern. Strategies to reduce emissions and that provide infrastructure that will reduce these emissions is of vital importance. Federal, State, County and City resources becoming available for pollution reduction (such as VOCs, diesel fuel, nitrogen oxide) and more location-based air monitoring/research, should be targeted to Green Zone neighborhoods with the highest transportation emissions effects. Expansion/modification and other related projects planned for highways (35W and 94) adjacent to the Green Zone areas should assess impacts on local air quality and resident health. Actions should be taken to decrease the disproportionate transportation pollution burden faced by Green Zone residents.

## Energy in Housing Recommendations

**ENERGY AND HEALTH.** Energy planning by the Minneapolis Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) should integrate health and other co-benefits in its agenda. The CEP should evaluate energy

infrastructure and efficiency with specific attention to neighborhoods in the Green Zones, and identify strategies that can aggregate and target clean energy investments at a neighborhood level. The city should request CenterPoint and Xcel Energy to make available household or neighborhood level data, for public research and evaluation.

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY.** Energy efficiency investments in both single family detached and multi-family rental units. This includes developing assessments on energy vulnerability among residents in the city, identifying the challenges to energy security, and developing strategies to address these conditions. The City should work with state agencies and expand its relationships with organizations with a focus on energy and environmental justice, rather than continue to rely on mainstream energy service and advocacy organizations. All energy programs should be developed in a manner to ensure benefits are received by renters, mitigating the risk that efficiency investments are used to upgrade and displace current occupants.

**ENERGY PROGRAMS EVALUATION.** An evaluation should be conducted on the penetration of existing local, state and federal low-income ratepayer and efficiency programs in Green Zones neighborhoods. This includes programs such as the Low-Income CIP, the Cold Weather Rule, the Weatherization Assistance Program, LIHEAP, and other related local energy service programs. The gaps in improving health of low-income residents of color should be assessed, and strategies for improvement implemented.

## **Conclusion**

The recommendations outlined above are focused on a sub-set of issue areas given the time frame and resources available for the Phillips Community HIA on Minneapolis Green Zones. Thus, a further recommendation by the Community Steering Committee is that a second phase of this Green Zones health assessment be conducted for the next priority issue areas for the community, namely: food, housing quality/access, and economic development/ employment.

The Phillips Community Health Impact Assessment Community Steering Team puts these recommendations forward not as isolated recommendations to be chosen, but as a comprehensive set of strategies that are needed to in order for the Minneapolis Green Zones Initiative to be implemented with equity as its center, and for the benefit of Phillips Community residents.

## Endnotes

- 1 Minnesota Department of Health. (2014). Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota: Report to the Legislature. p. 10.
- 2 Minnesota Department of Health. (2015). Draft version of Health Impact Assessment of a Green Zone in Phillips.
- 3 Minnesota Department of Health. (October 31, 2016). Environmental Health Division. Email Correspondence.
- 4 Minnesota Department of Health. (2015). Draft version of Health Impact Assessment of a Green Zone in Phillips.
- 5 Nexus Community Partners, Danielle Mkali, Interview, October 2016.
- 6 Braveman P., Cubbin, C., Egerter, S., & Pedregon, V. (2011). Neighborhoods and health. Exploring the Social Determinants of Health, 1256-70.
- 7 Minnesota Department of Health. (2014). Advancing Health Equity in Minnesota: Report to the Legislature.
- 8 Braveman, P., Cubbin, C., Egerter, S., & Pedregon, V. (2011). Neighborhoods and health. Exploring the Social Determinants of Health, 1256-70.
- 9 National Research Council (2011). Committee on Health Impact Assessment. Improving health in the United States: the role of health impact assessment, p. 14).
- 10 Edwards, B. (1995). With liberty and environmental justice for all: The emergence and challenge of grassroots environmentalism in the United States. Ecological resistance movements: The global emergence of radical and popular environmentalism, 35-55.
- 11 Liu, F. (2001). Environmental justice analysis: Theories, methods, and practice (Vol. 27). Boca Raton: Lewis Publishers.
- 12 United Church of Christ. Commission for Racial Justice. (1987). Toxic wastes and race in the United States: A national report on the racial and socio-economic characteristics of communities with hazardous waste sites. Public Data Access.
- 13 Environmental Justice Working Group Recommendations (2013). Minneapolis Climate Action Plan: Appendix C. Found at: [www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-109371.pdf](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-109371.pdf)
- 14 City of Newark, New Jersey, Title 41, Zoning and Land Use Regulations, Chapter 19, "Environmental Justice and Cumulative Impacts", July 2016. Found at: <https://newark.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=4714273&GUID=864A5411-2DF4-465F-A83A-E107DF5AA25E>. This ordinance establishes a set of requirements for the purpose of "protecting the health of all residents from exposure to pollution linked to adverse health effects including the cumulative impacts that may be worsened as an unintended by-product of development and redevelopment."
- 15 Green Zones and the Grassroots, Liberty Hill Foundation, February 2017.

