

NORTH-MISSOULA COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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October 17, 2000

Mr. Mark Simonich, Director
Montana Department of Environmental Quality
1520 E. 6th Av.
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Sir:

I am writing on behalf of the North-Missoula Community Development Corporation (NMCDC). My organization is the nonprofit arm of the North and Westside Neighborhood Associations and works for revitalization of our low-income service area. Centered in this area, is the State of Montana Superfund Cleanup, White Pine Sash Site. The neighborhood associations have intensively followed MDEQ's six-year involvement in the property. The NMCDC has also been actively working for several years with the Missoula City-County Health Department on its EPA Brownfield Grant and the data from that process is now in.

The City of Missoula recently entered into purchase agreements with current owners, Zip Beverage and the Scott Street LLP to relocate its city shops facility to the old mill site. The City, the Scott Street LLP and Zip Beverage have agreed to dedicate three acres of the site for desperately needed playing fields in the neighborhood. I know from personal conversations with principals in the Scott Street Partnership that a number of parties have been interested in purchasing and redeveloping parcels of the site but have shied away due to the vagaries of the MDEQ process.

The primary responsible party for cleanup, Huttig Corporation, recently provided a reassurance of cleanup indemnification to the current owners, and by extension, potential future owners. Economic redevelopment of the former White Pine Sash property is now being held hostage to MDEQ's completion of its assessment and order for cleanup. Despite early and then intermittent promises to the contrary, MDEQ has not been timely or effective in following its own timeline for completion of the project's various phases.

The stigmatization of the Northside as home to a State Superfund Site continues. An ongoing perception of MDEQ inactivity has become a serious neighborhood concern. MDEQ failure to complete its work now hampers completion of environmental cleanup and exacerbates the old mill site's perpetuation as a brownfield and as a barrier to the revitalization of the community. The neighborhood associations have repeatedly expressed their frustrations with MDEQ's handling of the process (the last, in an as yet unanswered letter from June 5, 2000). There seems to be no accountability involved in MDEQ's actions or previous promises (see, for example, the *Missioulain* article from

December 6, 1994 discussing the State's "tough 12-point list of community expectations" and "a strict timetable for issuing a cleanup order").

We need to know if there is any place in MDEQ's bureaucratic hierarchy where the "buck stops." Perhaps your office can provide a needed response followed by the necessary course of action?

Sincerely,

Bob Oaks
Executive Director, NMCDC

C: Marc Racicot, Governor
Mike Kadas, Mayor of Missoula
Barbara Evans, BCC
Bill Carey, BCC
Michael Kennedy, BCC
Gail Gutsche, HD 66
Vicki Cocchiarella, SD 32
Dale Mahlum, SD 35
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Dick Haines, HD 63
Rosie Buzzas, HD 65
Tom Facey, HD 67
Jim McGrath, Missoula City Council
Jamie Carpenter, Missoula City Council
Chris Cerquone, Missoula City-County Health Department
Beth Berlin, Missoula Office of Planning and Grants
Aimee Reynolds, MDEQ
Mike Stevenson, Scott Street LLP
Bill Watkins, Zip Beverage