



## Whitelock Community Farm

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B&P Tunnel Project  
81 W Mosher Street  
Baltimore, MD 21217

To B&P Tunnel Project Management:

I am writing on behalf of the board of directors of Whitelock Community Farm to express our deep concern and displeasure regarding the current proposals of the B&P Tunnel project. While we have issues with many aspects of the three alternatives still under consideration, our strongest objection is to the proposed location of the ventilation building at the corner of Brookfield Avenue and Whitelock Street.

First, allow me to provide some background information on Whitelock Community Farm and the proposed ventilation site. For much of Reservoir Hill's history, the Whitelock Street corridor was the commercial heart of the community. As the neighborhood declined in the 70's and 80's, the commercial district fell into disrepair and became a violent and notorious open-air drug market. In 1994, the city razed the buildings on Whitelock Street, promising to bring commercial development back to these blocks as part of the revitalization of Reservoir Hill. These promises were not fulfilled for over fifteen years and the lots became neglected, trash ridden eye-sores in the community.

In 2010, a group of ten neighbors met through the Green Team of the Reservoir Hill Improvement Council. This group shared not only a passion for the greening of our neighborhood, but also a love for wholesome food and concern for the health outcomes of our community. According to a 2011 Baltimore City Health Report, the neighborhoods of Penn North and Reservoir Hill suffer from the third highest rate of diabetes and the sixth highest rate of heart disease compared to the other fifty-five neighborhoods in Baltimore. Much of Reservoir Hill is classified as a food desert due to a lack of access to healthy food options.

The group decided to start an urban farm on one of the vacant lots on Whitelock Street with the mission of increasing access to healthy, affordable food for all Baltimore City residents; promoting positive community activity; and creating local, green jobs. Through the hard work of Whitelock Community Farm's farm managers, board of directors and hundreds of volunteers, Whitelock Community Farm has not only thrived on the original lot on the north side of Whitelock Street, but has expanded to the south side of Whitelock Street where the proposed ventilation building would be located.

Whitelock Community Farm has been successful in pursuing its mission. In the past year alone, Whitelock Community Farm accomplished the following:

- Grew 3,700 pounds of produce to sell to neighbors at our weekly farm stand.
- Increased membership in our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program from 15 members to 25 members.
- Increased sales to residents using food assistance by 57%.
- Diverted over 3,000 gallons of food from the dump through our neighborhood composting program.
- Managed 20 apprentices and college interns.
- Employed four high school students from the neighborhood for the second summer.
- Hosted a Farm Club and healthy cooking classes with students at John Eager Howard Elementary School.
- Partnered with Midtown Academy to install an irrigation system on one of our expansion lots and revamp our neighborhood composting system.
- Hosted a fermentation workshop and a canning workshop with 80 and 15 attendees, respectively.
- Hosted five community potlucks featuring healthy farm fresh dishes.

Additionally, Whitelock Community Farm serves as a place where neighbors of diverse racial and socio-economic backgrounds can gather and build bridges across those barriers. At a recent community meeting regarding the extension of the lease of the lots on Whitelock Street, many neighbors from a variety of backgrounds testified to the positive effect Whitelock Community Farm has had on the community and their own lives.

If the ventilation building were built on the Whitelock Street lots, it would destroy the work of Whitelock Community Farm. Not only would a large portion of our farming land be plowed under, but the remaining land would not receive suitable sunlight and would be poisoned by the emissions from the ventilation building.

Furthermore, erecting a ventilation building on this land would serve as an act of social and racial injustice. Reservoir Hill is a community with unequal health outcomes, in part due to a lack of access to affordable, healthy food. Whitelock Community Farm is addressing this issue by not only growing fresh produce, but making it available to all neighbors and providing incentives for neighbors using food assistance to purchase produce. Whitelock Community Farm is instilling healthy eating habits in the next generation through our partnerships with John Eager Howard Elementary School, Midtown Academy, and Youth Works. A ventilation building at Whitelock Street would not only eradicate the progress that is occurring, but would also degrade health in the neighborhood through the release of toxic emissions.

Finally, should the B&P Tunnel Project continue with plans to seize the lots at Whitelock Street and Brookfield Avenue, it would serve as a slap in the face to residents who have risen above broken promises to take the future of their neighborhood into their own hands. The Baltimore City Government made promises to redevelop Whitelock Street, but these promises were not honored.

Instead, neighbors decided to build their own future and transformed these neglected parcels into a green oasis that improves health outcomes, promotes positive community activity, and creates learning and employment opportunities. It would be ironic, tragic and unjust if the federal government now came in and destroyed the progress that has been achieved.

Whitelock Community Farm's board of directors is also very concerned about emissions from a ventilation building, regardless of its location, and the potential transport of hazardous materials beneath our neighborhood. However, we felt that it was essential to spend the majority of this letter explaining our strong objections to the proposed location of the ventilation building.

While I know there are many factors involved in the decisions being made in this process, I trust moral decisions will be made that place the health of communities above corporate interests.

Sincerely,

Justin Kuk  
*President, Whitelock Community Farm*