

November 13, 2004

Council Member
Brooklyn Center, MN

RE: Resolution to Eminent Domain Hmong* American Shopping Center

Dear Council Member:

My name is Neng Thao Yang. I am the 2002 recipient of the Earle Brown community award. I am also a 14 year resident of Brooklyn Center, a tax payer, a constituent, and an American. I am writing to you in concern of the Brooklyn Center's city council's decision to seize the land located at the corner of Hwy 100 and 57th Avenue North (also known as the Hmong* American Shopping Center). It is my understanding that it is a priority for the city to redevelop this site. It is also my understanding that this will take affect within the next 6-12 months. It is also my understanding that this will impact the Hmong in this community the most. Thus, I am writing to share my thoughts and position with you all.

First, let me provide you with some historical information about the significance of this property to the Hmong community as a whole and the Hmong community here and around the Brooklyn Center metro areas. This shopping center that is currently considered "blight" by the City of Brooklyn Center is a very important symbol to the Hmong Community because it is the first Hmong owned and operated shopping center in the world. This shopping center is the only one of its kind for our community and to lose this vital achievement will digress the Hmong community an enormous step back in the business world and the progress of the Hmong community. For Brooklyn Center to play a role in this digression will be most unfavorable to the Hmong community and the community of Brooklyn Center. It will lose a historical site, a viable business, and land owners that actually care about the integration of our communities.

The second piece that I would like to share is that there is a very special business within this shopping center that is crucial to the quality of life here in Brooklyn Center for the Hmong, Asian, and overall community. This business is Asia SuperMarket. Since the day it opened in 2001 our community has experienced a better quality of life because of its' Asian grocery, Asian goods services, and its owners contributions to the City of Brooklyn Center. Before it opened the people needing Asian goods would have to travel to Saint Paul for food, clothing, and other items. We endured blizzards, long drives, long time delays for food essentials, and etc. These issues all contributed to many traffic safety issues (numerous trips cross town to Saint Paul) and unbearable time consumptions for basic needs. Just imagine the only CUB FOODS being located in Saint Paul and you and your family had no alternative but to go there whenever you needed basic food items. For our community to lose Asia SuperMarket would be detrimental to our quality of life here in Brooklyn Center.