



Phillips Neighborhood Businesses



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Organization Background

Hope Community is a non-profit housing and leadership development organization that is located in the Phillips Community; a diverse and historically underserved area of Minneapolis that is comprised of four thriving neighborhoods. Hope Community strives to empower local Phillips residents and business owners through a variety of leadership development programs, events, and equitable housing opportunities. Lake Street Council is a non-profit organization that advocates, serves, and engages to ensure the vitality of the commercial corridor on Lake Street.



"I'm incredibly thankful to have been able to work on a MnTAP internship this year. It was an amazing experience that taught me a lot of skills that I will use in future careers, and I'm really appreciative of all of the guidance and support from MnTAP, Hope Community, and Lake Street Council. Improving the air quality of the Phillips Community has been extremely rewarding and a great experience!" ~ EJ

Project Background

After two years of Safer Products work in the Phillips Community, this year's project focused on replacing janitorial products used in restaurants and child care facilities, with a goal of further improving the local air quality and general community health. This project particularly focused on reducing the amount of bleach and quaternary ammonium compounds (QUATs) used in disinfectants and sanitizers, because each are attributed to negative human health effects. Bleach is a known asthmagen, and QUATs are known endocrine disruptors which cause developmental problems. Along with these two ingredients, this project also aimed to reduce or eliminate volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and hazardous air pollutants (HAPs).

Incentives To Change

The systems of environmental health and human health are tightly intertwined. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, poor air quality is the largest environmental health risk in the United States. The Phillips community is currently one of the most environmentally stressed and vulnerable neighborhoods in the Twin Cities, which makes hazardous health effects for its residents far more common than most other areas. This project provides restaurants, child care facilities,

and other small businesses in Phillips the opportunity to switch to safer cleaning products in order to help improve the air quality and general health of their community. Local, small businesses such as the ones that operate within the Phillips neighborhood often don't have the time or resources to invest in environmental projects for themselves. When approached with an opportunity to easily transition to healthier products, many were very interested in improving the chemical safety of their workplaces in order to positively contribute to worker and community health.

"The MnTAP Intern Program has brought so many benefits to our organization and our community. This year, Elizabeth was able to reach and provide direct support to several small business owners who otherwise would not have been aware that they could improve their indoor air quality. She went above and beyond expectations, even calling a dozen public agency staff to make sure her recommendations didn't conflict with regulations. It's been a fantastic partnership."

*~ Matt Kazinka
Sustainability Program Coordinator
Lake Street Council*

Solutions

Community outreach efforts were conducted in order to educate business owners about their cleaning products as well as record information about their current products and cleaning practices. This information was used to make customized recommendations of new janitorial products that were healthier for both employees and the environment.

MnTAP assessed the cleaning products and recommended alternatives when a product did not meet the criteria to qualify as a safer product. These safer product criteria included low VOCs, no HAPs, and all components classified as a “best available chemical” on the EPA’s Safer Chemical Ingredients List (SCIL), or third-party certifications from Green Seal, EcoLogo, or EPA Safer Choice.

Special attention was placed on making the recommended products as accessible, affordable, and efficient as the original products so that businesses could make the transition easily. After alternatives were found, sample products were purchased and provided



to the businesses. After a week or two of use, the products were evaluated again to make sure that they were effective replacements in terms of quality and performance. In the case that the products were not performing as well, new alternatives would be identified and purchased for a trial period. If the business reported being satisfied with their sample products, a case of product would be purchased and delivered to ease the business’ transition to the newer product.

In summary, 87 total cleaning products were analyzed in Phillips neighborhood businesses, and 41 met MnTAP’s criteria for safer products. After working with businesses to test and approve alternative product samples, 25 cleaning products were replaced with safer alternatives. By replacing these products, 2 lbs of HAPs, 10 lbs of VOCs, and 1,100 lbs of bleach and QUATs have been eliminated from the Phillips community annually.



Recommendation	HAPs Reduction	VOCs Reduction	Bleach/QUAT Reduction	Status
Switch to Safer Janitorial Products, Eliminate Bleach/QUATS	2 lbs per year	10 lbs per year	1,100 lbs per year	Implemented

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