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Hillsborough Residents Rally Against &#039;Monster Warehouse&#039; Project

Hillsborough County faces resident backlash against a massive warehouse proposal, sparking environmental and traffic concerns ahead of a key planning meeting.

Homestead Road, Hillsborough Township, New Jersey, USA - Hillsborough Township is gearing up for what might be a pivotal meeting in the controversy surrounding a massive warehouse project on Homestead Road. The Planning Board is set to continue discussions on July 10, where attorneys for both the developer and the objectors will present their closing arguments. This project, proposed by Homestead Road LLC, has already been the subject of over 20 hearings since it was first introduced in May 2022, with the Board facing a deadline of July 30 to make a decision on the application. The proposed development encompasses two warehouses with a staggering combined area of over 500,000 square feet, situated on an 88.45-acre parcel near Route 206 bypass and Homestead Road.

Local residents have expressed deep concern about the project, with many labeling it a ڎmonster warehouseڌ and an ڎabomination.ڌ The fears center around potential increased traffic impacts on local roads and significant environmental effects, particularly in terms of stormwater management. Manville Mayor Richard Onderko has raised alarms regarding the projectۏs implications for the Royce Brook watershed and areas prone to flooding in Manville. Additionally, Montgomery Township Committeewoman Patricia Taylor Todd has called for a comprehensive traffic study to assess the broader regional impacts as well.

Environmental Justice and Warehousing

The conversation surrounding this warehouse proposal encapsulates broader issues related to environmental justice. As highlighted by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the expansion of warehouses often happens in areas already facing challenges. Locally undesirable land uses, including warehouses, can lead to increased traffic, air pollution, and noise, all of which disproportionately affect low-income and minority neighborhoods. Thereۏs something to be said for the residentsڈ apprehension about such developments ج they frequently lead to detrimental environmental and health outcomes, especially for the most vulnerable populations. Studies indicate that warehouses can exacerbate issues like asthma and respiratory allergies due to a higher concentration of truck-related emissions, which are far more damaging than those from passenger vehicles.

In fact, the dynamics in warehousing arenۏt confined to just Hillsborough. Nationwide, the demand for express deliveries has driven the rapid expansion of the warehousing industry, which has thrived in suburban areas due to lower rents and relatively lax regulations. Across the U.S., warehousing establishments have surged, with cities like Houston seeing a 40% growth in the sector. Yet with this growth comes greater environmental externalities, which already burden many communities, especially those with a high concentration of warehouses.

Community Impact and Future Considerations

The landscape of Hillsborough could change significantly if the Planning Board approves the proposed warehouse project. If residents have their way, this will not be the case. Concerns about traffic safety and the environmental integrity of the area are already becoming focal points of a grassroots movement against the development. Notably, findings from environmental advocacy groups are amplifying these residents’ voices, revealing that construction decisions often overlook public health considerations, particularly in communities of color. This ongoing fight reflects a critical juncture where local governance must balance economic interests with ethical responsibilities toward their residents.

As we look ahead to the July 10 meeting, it is clear that Hillsborough is not just debating a warehouse but also grappling with fundamental issues of community welfare, environmental protection, and social justice. The outcome has the potential to set a significant precedent for future developments in the region. Will the Planning Board heed the community’s concerns, or will it prioritize the demands of warehouse developers? The answer may shape Hillsborough’s environmental landscape for generations to come.

Details	
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Details	
	- earthjustice.org

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