

The building of an amphitheater stirs controversy among citizens.

Adam Whisner,

Narrator: It's a quiet, serene place now. But just a few years ago, this was a noisy, dirty garbage dump. Now developers are proposing to build an outdoor amphitheater to host live entertainment shows, such as operas, symphonies, rock concerts, and more, during the warm months of the year. But this project has stirred up quite a bit of controversy in the city of Burnsville, where the amphitheater would be built, and in neighboring communities.

Hi. I'm Adam Whisner, and I'm standing on the site of the controversial project, the Burnsville Amphitheater. Burnsville is a suburb of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and it's located on the bank of an important river that flows through the area. According to its supporters, the amphitheater is an opportunity to turn a little-used piece of land into an attractive outdoor entertainment center. It would seat almost 20,000 people and provide a new source of revenue for the city. On top of that, the city would not have to finance an environmental cleanup of the former dump site. That would be paid for by the developers. It seems like a good idea, doesn't it? So what's the controversy?

Well, right next to the project site is a national wildlife refuge, and just across the river are the homes of many people who are afraid of the noise, traffic congestion, and disruption they believe the project would bring. They think the city shouldn't be allowed to build it. We're going to talk to people on both sides of this issue and see how they feel about it – and why.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is a sanctuary for many species. Joe Artmann, a Burnsville resident and wildlife biologist, is concerned about what will happen to these animals and birds if the amphitheater is built.

Joe Artmann,

Wildlife biologist: This amphitheater proposal is going to have a dramatic impact on the animals and the birds that utilize the area.

The sporadic loud noises, the impact of nearly 20,000 people, and thousands of vehicles will scare wildlife out of the area. It will cause increased mortality and may disrupt the reproductive behavior of some species. I'd prefer to see the area incorporated either into the national wildlife refuge system or be left as a natural area.

Adam Whisner: Greg Konat, Burnsville's city manager, doesn't think that the refuge will be in danger, since the noise already produced by nearby Interstate Highway 35W has not affected the wildlife at all.

**Greg Konat,
City Manager**

of Burnsville: The impact on the wildlife refuge was analyzed, and interestingly enough, the sound level being generated by Interstate 35W . . . uh . . . which goes right along the wildlife refuge, was actually louder than what we anticipate the amphitheater would be. There isn't any indication . . . uh . . . that it's going to have a negative impact on the wildlife . . . uh . . . in the area.

Adam Whisner: However, in Artmann's opinion, the continuous noise of automobile traffic and the sporadic loud noises of occasional concerts shouldn't be compared.

Joe Artmann: Studies have shown that most species of wildlife will adapt to continuous regular noise levels such as traffic noise. But occasional loud and unfamiliar noises have been shown to have significant negative impacts.

Adam Whisner: Residents in Bloomington, a community just across the river from the proposed project, are also opposed to the potential noise. Many of them feel that something has got to be done to stop it. Brian Carlson is one homeowner who thinks the amphitheater project shouldn't be permitted to go forward.

**Brian Carlson,
Bloomington**

homeowner: As far as we personally are concerned at our home, we're very concerned about the noise. We know that the way it's being proposed and designed, it will be troublesome and create a noise problem for our neighbors and . . . and ourselves.

Adam Whisner: Burnsville's city manager doesn't think noise will be a problem.

Greg Konat: There is a significant amount of controls placed on the operator of the amphitheater. There will be . . . uh . . . monitoring devices both in Burnsville and in Bloomington that will . . . um . . . be monitoring the sound levels while the concerts are going on.

Adam Whisner: Residents are also concerned about the increased amount of traffic the amphitheater will bring.

Man 1: I think that something must be done to stop this project. . . . In my opinion, it's going to create enormous problems with traffic. I live here in Burnsville, and I don't want any more car and truck traffic than we already have.

Adam Whisner: Burnsville's city manager says the project will actually help improve the highway system.

Greg Konat: Roadways will be built to help traffic flow both to and from the site in a more efficient way. All of those roadways would then be used year-round . . . uh . . . by the people in Burnsville and the people that come to our area.

Adam Whisner: Elizabeth Kautz, mayor of Burnsville, says that the amphitheater is a good use for the former garbage dump. It will actually bring environmental benefits to the city, and taxpayers will not have to finance a costly cleanup project.

Elizabeth Kautz,

Mayor of Burnsville: The amphitheater project is a project that will allow us to reclaim the riverfront and to begin the cleanup of the riverfront so that our citizens can access the river.

Adam Whisner: Burnsville's city manager agrees.

Greg Konat: The amphitheater . . . uh . . . would allow us to close the landfill in an environmentally sound way.

Adam Whisner: City officials also cite another benefit the amphitheater will bring: revenue, in the form of taxes.

Greg Konat: It'd provide economic development because the amphitheater itself will generate taxes that will be used to build infrastructure.

Adam Whisner: Ordinary citizens we talked to had mixed reactions to the project.

Woman 1: I think that location-wise, it's perfect. So if it means bringing in more revenue and obviously more culture to this area, then I'm all for it – definitely. And I would go.

Man 2: I think it'd be a nice idea. I've been to a couple of different amphitheaters in different parts of the country, and it's . . . it's nice being outside listening to the music and whatever is being played at the time – and the sun's going down, and it's . . . it's just very comfortable and relaxing.

Man 3: I think it will bring some good things to the economy. And, uh, that's always good!

Woman 2: I don't think it's a very good idea because I think that some of the music groups, like the rock and heavy-metal bands, will create a lot of noise. And another thing is the kind of behavior that type of music provokes. People tend to drink too much, and there's often drug use. And I just think they shouldn't be allowed to build it here.

Brian Carlson: In my opinion, it's a disaster. I don't think it should be built. Uh, it has enormous environmental problems associated with it. There's water-pollution problems associated with it. So I think basically it's a . . . it's a bad plan and a bad idea.

Adam Whisner: You've heard some of the facts and some of the opinions surrounding this issue: the benefits of reclaiming a former garbage dump; the city's redevelopment plans; potential problems with noise, traffic, and the environment and how they'll be dealt with. You've listened to both sides. Should the amphitheater be built or not? This is Adam Whisner, reporting from the city of Burnsville.