



COMMUNITY PROTECTING COMMUNITY

Corcoran Neighborhood Organization partners with T.O.U.C.H. to prevent violence through nightly patrols along East Lake St.

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

The Corcoran Neighborhood Organization is one of seven groups sharing a \$1,000,000 pilot grant from the City of Minneapolis' Office of Violence Prevention. The grant was awarded to neighborhood non-profits across the city to mobilize civilian community patrols as part of improving public safety. It runs through Dec. 31, 2021.

"Community patrols can provide support for people who are struggling, and direct them toward available resources. By building trust, community patrols are effective at de-escalating violence and stopping its spread," said Alicia D. Smith, the executive director of the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization (CNO).



Corcoran Neighborhood Organization Executive Director Alicia D. Smith points out how community patrols de-escalate violence and stop its spread. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

CNO and T.O.U.C.H. Outreach

CNO is partnering with T.O.U.C.H. Outreach to provide a community patrol along Lake Street six nights/week from 5:30-11 p.m.

Smith said, "The full team of 20-25 meets in the west Aldi parking lot each night. They break into smaller groups and travel up and down Lake Street by train, bus, and on foot talking with community members and business owners. An engaged community typically has fewer problems than one that isn't engaged. We are providing an alternative presence to law enforcement on the streets: we are community protecting community."

Words, deeds, and actions

Muhammad Abdul-Ahad is the founder of T.O.U.C.H. Outreach, which stands for Teaching Our Urban Community Hope.

COMMUNITY PROTECTING >> 2

Minneapolis Bike Parks aims for options 10-15 minutes away from every home



Zaylee Olson (7) leads a group of girls on the snake at the Nokomis Bike Skills Park, the first of its kind in the city. Supporters hope more like it are built. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Devon Olson and others with Minneapolis Bike Parks knew that kids wanted fun places to ride, but they had trouble convincing the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and the general public at first.

So, in 2018 they built some small features at a few Open Streets events, and they were a hit.

"We had huge turn outs and kids cried when their parents told them it

was time to go home," recalled Olson. "We took that success to the park board with a plan for what would become the Nokomis Skills Park."

Carved out of an aging tennis court just north of the Nokomis playground along Minnehaha Ave., the skills course features from Progressive Bike Ramps were funded via donations from Quality Bicycle Products, People For Bikes, and People for Parks.

"With a permanent bike park we

were able to create a Girls Bike Adventure program through MPRB that incorporated bike skills, bike safety, and park board naturalists to expose young riders to the joys of biking and the natural space around them," said Olson, who is the father to two female bikers, ages seven and nine. "That location has been a huge success and has proved that if you build it they will come."

KIDS ON BIKES >> 14

1,063 COMMENTS AGAINST, 2 FOR

'Unprecedented' number of comments made against city's plan to expand public works facility into Roof Depot site

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

The city received 1,063 comments from individuals and organizations opposed to expanding the public works facility into the Roof Depot site at Hiawatha and 24th, and only two in favor of it.

Instead, the majority of people voiced support for the East Phillip indoor urban farm project along the Midtown Greenway, which has been designed by community members and would incorporate indoor farming and aquaponics, solar energy, affordable housing, a market, a bicycle repair shop, and business start-ups.

These comments were submitted in March 2021 as part of a comment period on an environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) that the city completed.

Due to the "unprecedented amount of public comment," Minneapolis City Council members delayed reviewing it to give staff time to review and assess the

information, according to Minneapolis Principal City Planner Hilary Dvorak.

East Phillips Neighborhood Initiative, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Move Minnesota, Corcoran Neighborhood Organization, University of Minnesota Environmental and Energy Law Society, and Southside Green Zone Council all submitted comments against the city's plan.

As part of the East Phillips Neighborhood Initiative comment, professor and scientist Dr. Gregory Pratt pointed out that the city's EAW didn't address the impact to adjacent homes of the use and storage of hazardous materials and generation of hazardous wastes; the potential cumulative effects of the two neighboring industrial facilities, Bituminous Roadways and Smith Foundry; emissions from diesel vehicles and small, mobile asphalt heaters.

1,063 COMMENTS AGAINST >> 3



For Joe Vital, the city's refusal to support the EPNI indoor urban farm at the Roof Depot site is an issue of environmental racism. "It's absolutely frustrating," he said. "I want to see the urban farm happen because every year at Little Earth we bury people. We have the highest rate of asthma and lead poisoning in the city. East Phillips has been the dumping ground for the city since the 1920s. One death should be enough to motivate anyone." (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)



Hiawatha/Howe say farewell to three educators

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So you want to retire? What do you do with your business?

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Get up close with three neighborhood coffee shops

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COMMUNITY PROTECTING COMMUNITY

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He grew up in the Phillips neighborhood, and the streets he patrols with his team are very familiar to him. He believes that hope is the essential ingredient in helping people turn their lives around.

Abdul-Ahad sees the community patrol as a neutral buffer between community members and law enforcement. There are 32 patrol members on the roster right now; each one works 4-5 nights per week. They are trained in violence de-escalation, mediation, inter-personal communication, and Department of Justice-approved support and safety techniques. They are employees of the city of Minneapolis' Office of Violence Prevention.

Abdul-Ahad said, "It's no secret that Black and Brown people have a very negative feeling about the police. By contrast, we are a visible force of positivity out on the streets. You can't miss us: we wear bright orange t-shirts to identify who we are. The t-shirts are also our ticket onto MTC-operated buses and trains.

"People we meet are so interested and they ask a ton of questions. We say we're out here for public safety, community engagement, and violence interruption.

"For us, success is changing lives and sometimes saving lives. We demonstrate positivity through our words, deeds, and actions."

A time like no other

Abdul-Ahad describes the members of his community patrol as super heroes. While the majority of the team is made up of men, there are a handful of women, too.

Sharesha (last name with-



The T.O.U.C.H Outreach community patrol in the Aldi parking lot before heading out for the night. Team leader Muhammad Abdul-Ahad is pictured standing center. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

held by request), who joined in March, drives all the way from Plymouth to participate. She said, "I raised three sons to adulthood as a single mother. I joined the community patrol to reach out to kids who might be struggling - before they get caught up in the juvenile justice system. It's important for them to know that people beyond their families care about them.

"When this time is finally over, I want to be able to say that I didn't just sit back. I want to be able to say that I gave back."

Abdul-Ahad expects the members of his team to practice self-care, as well as community care. He said, "I feel like everybody is suffering from PTSD right now. So many people have hit a breaking point, but it doesn't help to keep it inside. We've got to talk about the stress

that we've all been dealing with: the pandemic, the uprising, and whatever stuff we've got going on in our own lives.

"This is the first time that the city of Minneapolis has funded community patrols, and that makes me hopeful. Through our partnership with CNO, we're bringing the credibility of our violence interruption strategy to the heart of Minneapolis."

The six other groups that received funding from the Office of Violence Prevention are: A Mother's Love, the Center for Multicultural Mediation, the Native American Community Development Institute, Change Equals Opportunity, Restoration Inc., and We Push for Peace.

The city's objective for this pilot program is to fund outreach and support services during and after the trials of the four former

police officers accused of murdering George Floyd. Community patrols are not intended to replace law enforcement, but to complement it. Residents are still encouraged to call 911 for emergencies that require an immediate response from police, firefighters, or paramedics.

The role of community patrols is to support behavior change for community members at risk for violence: to connect them with mental health and chemical dependency services, food, housing, jobs and other resources.

This is a new initiative. While there won't be data on the effectiveness of Minneapolis community patrols until next year, similar strategies have shown positive impact in major cities across the country.



(Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

St. Albert tagged with graffiti

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

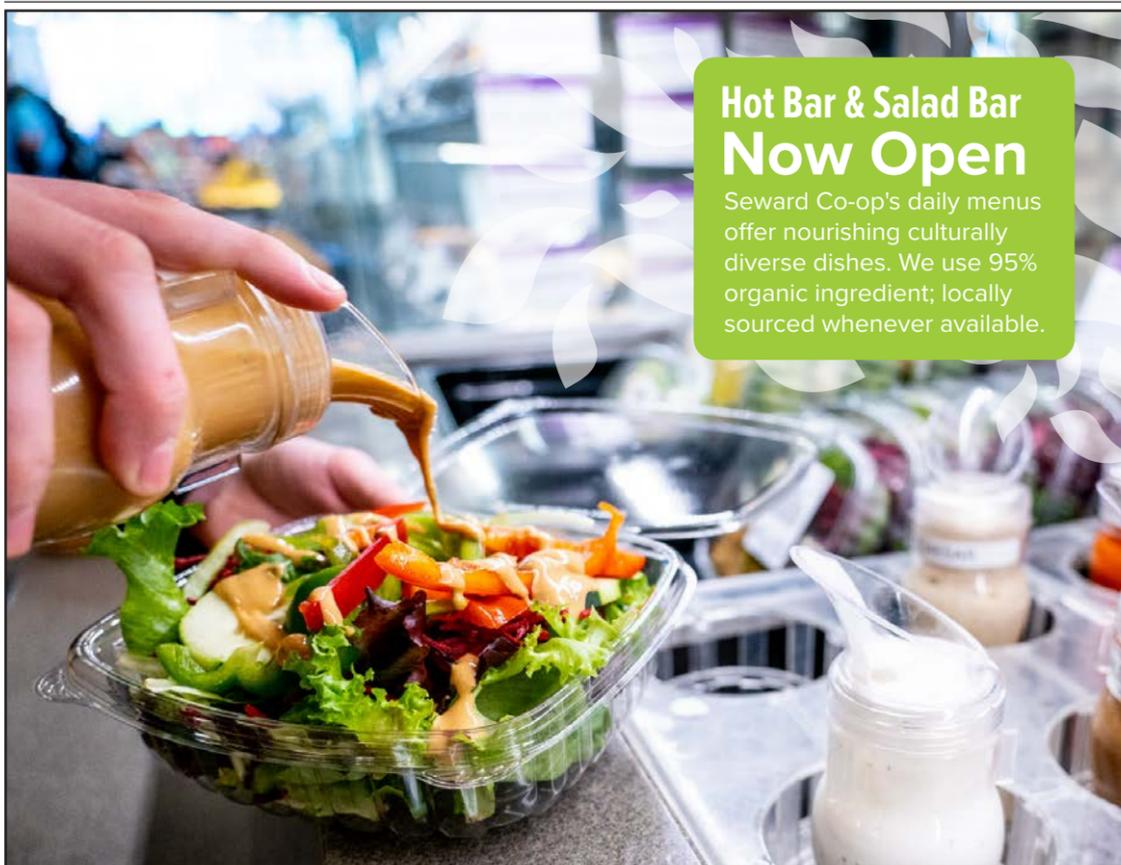
The Catholic Church of St. Albert the Great in Longfellow was tagged with graffiti on the night of Sunday, May 9, 2021. The sidewalk, stairs, and retaining walls were spray-painted with the numbers 666, a known Satanic reference, along with other graphic symbols.

Father Joe Gillespie said, "I've worked in some really tough neighborhoods in Chicago and St. Louis, and haven't witnessed a church being tagged. I was surprised and saddened to see what happened here. Our church is 86 years old, and has never been vandalized in any way before.

"I don't understand if the tagging is anti-Catholic, anti-church, or just a randomly expressed need for recognition?"

Due to the graphic nature of the tagging, the police were contacted. The Church of St. Albert the Great also reported it as a hate-motivated crime to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights Hotline at 1.833.454.0148.

Father Gillespie said, "Here in our Longfellow neighborhood, we long for something better."



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1,063 COMMENTS AGAINST, 2 FOR

>> from 1

Dr. Ted Schettler stated that any MPCA permits required for the proposed project will trigger the need for a Cumulative Effects and Environment Justice evaluation prior to applying for any necessary MPCA Permits considering the history of contamination on and around the site due to the former CMC Heartland arsenic factory there.

Environmental racism

The East Phillips neighborhood is a historically polluted neighborhood made up of predominantly low income, people of color, and the historic contamination from past and current industry in the area have exposed BIPOC residents to contamination in soils and air, pointed out the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA).

The MCEA stated that the proposed project forces residents of East Phillips to tolerate more polluting industrial facilities. It indicates that the city has an opportunity to convey to its residents that it is committed to addressing the issues of environmental justice within Minneapolis, in particular East Phillips.

According to the University of Minnesota Environmental and Energy Law Society, the EAW failed to acknowledge that East Phillips is consistently ranked as having some of the worst air quality in Minnesota, in addition to the high levels of toxicity in the soil from arsenic, antimony, and other chemicals.

Many of the public comments also pointed out the city's project conflicts with the city's own Green Zone Initiatives. Plus it contradicts Hennepin County's Environmental Justice promises and is contrary to the state's goals

to address environmental impact disparities.

City suspends project for now

On April 30, the city council voted 12-1 in favor of a staff direction to suspend the city's expansion of the Hiawatha facility in East Phillips. This staff directive was written by city council members Alondra Cano (Ward 9), Cam Gordon (Ward 2), Andrew Johnson (Ward 11) and Andrea Jenkins (Ward 8).

Staff were directed to return in August with a report on the financial and operational implications of terminating the city's interest in this parcel and identifying another site for a facility, including but not limited to a process, a timeline, and budgetary needs. They were also asked to recommend a process for how to sell all or a portion of the Roof Depot site.

In addition, at the Business, Housing, Inspections, and Zoning Committee (BHIZ) on May 4, the associated Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was postponed until Aug. 5 at Committee of the Whole (COW).

"I'll continue to stand with the community and continue to work hard in helping realize their vision," stated Johnson.

Citing the ongoing lawsuit filed by community members in response to the city's public works facility, Ward 12 Council Member Jeremy Schroeder declined to make a statement on the urban farm, but pointed out he did vote with the majority of city council members to suspend the city's project through August. Mayor Jacob Frey did not respond to the *Messenger's* request for comment.

'It's a health hazard'

Despite the uncertainty of the next step, urban farm supporters gathered at the Roof Depot site on Saturday, May 15 to celebrate how many came together to make their voices heard. They enjoyed food from the Indigenous Food Lab and decorated new signs for the fence around the building.

Corcoran resident Paula Holden said, "I'm here to support East Phillips Neighborhood Institute and the community here is really envisioning a positive project that will meet the community's needs and to help stop the city from expanding this harmful truck maintenance yard that will add to the air and noise pollution in the area. The neighborhood folks can't move but the city has other options where to put this facility. It's an environmental racism issue."

For Joe Vital, the city's refusal to support the EPNI indoor urban farm at the Roof Depot site is an issue of environmental racism. "It's absolutely frustrating," he said.

A Powderhorn resident and Red Lake Band member, Vital formerly lived at Little Earth, and many family members are still there.

"I want to see the urban farm



Storefront protest art on display

On May 22, at Phelps Field Park, Save the Boards, Memorialize the Movement and the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery hosted the first exhibit of the plywood boards of protest art that emerged during the May 2020 uprising. Named "Justice for George: Messages from the People," this was the first public installation where murals could be viewed together in one location. Musicians performed as a dozen artists on site created new paintings on fresh plywood. More than 800 boards have been collected so far, and the goal is to raise capital for a permanent space so the boards can be on display at all times. More information is at memorializethemovement.com. See the *Messenger* online and the July edition for more coverage of events commemorating the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's death. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

happen because every year at Little Earth we bury people," stated Vital. "We had to bury six people this year because of complications from this zip code. We have the highest rate of asthma and lead poisoning in the city. East Phillips has been a toxic dumping ground for the city since the 1920s. One death should be enough to motivate anyone."

He pointed out that the solar energy generated at the site and added to the city's power grid (located just a few blocks away from the Roof Depot site) could make enough in a few years to pay for the cost of selling the site to EPNI.

Little Earth resident Marcella Ballinger is against the city's project. "To me it's a health hazard," she said.

Lynnlake resident Tova Gorman stated, "It's not like it will stop polluting at the neighborhood boundaries. It's all related. I feel like the process of fighting gentrification is giving communities agency with what they want in their neighborhood."

Get involved

View a pollution map and learn more about the indoor urban farm at <http://www.east-phillipsneighborhoodinstitute.org/>.



Paula Holden



Marcella Ballinger

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Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to news@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com.

FIGHTING FOR OUR LOCAL PAPERS

On May 7 of last year, the *Hastings Star Gazette* printed its last issue. The paper's first issue as *The Hastings Independent* was published in 1857, a year before Minnesota gained statehood.

Generations relied on papers like this for local news—they told you who was born and who died, whose daughter just broke the county record for the 400-meter freestyle, whose Holstein won a surprise ribbon at the State Fair, and how your local leaders voted.

My dad was a Minnesota newspaper columnist and sports reporter. Even though he worked his way up the ranks to inter-

view everyone from Mike Ditka to Ronald Reagan to Ginger Rogers, he was always, as his managing editor put it, "a champion of those on the outside."

But today, newspapers of all sizes are struggling and closing.

The shuttering of the *Star Gazette* was helped along by the coronavirus pandemic, but long-term trends in newspaper ad revenue show that the *Star Gazette* and many local papers like it were already on their last legs when COVID-19 struck. Ad revenue for U.S. newspapers plummeted from \$37.8 billion in 2008 to \$14.3 billion in 2018.

During that time, two other

From the
U.S. Senate

By SEN. AMY
KLOBUCHAR,
www.klobuchar.senate.gov



companies, Facebook and Google—worth over \$2.2 trillion combined—became advertising titans.

These two companies don't just control the majority of online advertising; they've built

power over the news, crushing local outlets along the way. It saddens me to think my dad might not have a job in today's tech-dominated world, let alone a chance to interview a U.S. President.

In rural and small-town communities across America, we are seeing the impacts of this consolidation first hand—expanding "news deserts" where local coverage is increasingly difficult to come by.

We can't stand by and watch this happen to our independent press. That's why I have introduced bipartisan legislation with Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) and Representatives David Cicilino (D-RI) and Ken Buck (R-CO) to let news publishers join together to get fair terms with these digital titans. The Journalism

Competition and Preservation Act will level the playing field for the entire industry—not just a few publishers—by empowering local media outlets to make deals that ensure fair treatment.

By giving independent papers the chance to compete, our bill will also give them the power to demand deserved revenue so that they can invest in quality reporting—ensuring that hard-working reporters can continue to inform their communities.

The Journalism Competition and Preservation Act is a way we can turn the tide on this unprecedented threat to fair and honest competition. It will help America maintain access to the trustworthy local reporting that is the bedrock of our communities.

Living in America under Trump's era while being black, Muslim, and a new immigrant

Coming to America has always been my dream, but I never expected to come to America at a time where everything started going in the wrong direction.

Since I was young, I dreamed one day I would get to live in America because I knew my soul was here, although my body wasn't. This was the place where I always considered home even though I had never been. America was like a paradise, and in my mind, it was my ultimate destination. I believed I belonged to this great country ever since I first heard the name of America. I knew I had to work hard in order to survive, but another thing I kept in mind was this is a country of opportunities.

I arrived in Minnesota in September 2016. But unfortunately, my arrival was just two months before Donald Trump was elected as the U.S. President. A few days before his election, Trump came to Minneapolis for a rally and specifically attacked Somali immigrants. He called us terrorists, a disaster to Minnesota and spewed much more divisive and acrimonious propaganda. Just a day or two after his inauguration, Trump signed an executive order banning Muslim majority countries, including Somalia, from visiting or coming to the United States. He also started threatening deportation. He created chaos and hatred towards immigrants of color, especially those in Muslim communities.

Travelers from those countries which he banned who happened to be out of the country visiting their families back home, couldn't return to their own new homes in the United States. Those who were approved and had their visas to come to the

United States were denied entry. Families who were apart and wanted to join their loved ones in the United States lost hope. Everything was falling apart for those who were directly affected by the Muslim ban. There was rampant fear among the Muslim community about what he was going to do next. The impact of his decisions was even greater for asylum seekers and people who didn't yet have legal status in the US. But even US citizens in the community were scared because his decisions towards immigrants were unpredictable. All eyes were on the fight between the courts and Trump. The question: will the courts reverse Trump's decisions about the Muslim ban? It didn't happen.

I was completely shocked because I wasn't expecting this in my dream country. I asked myself why would the American people elect someone who hates me and people who look like me so much, or do they hate me too, but don't say it as he does? After a few months of Trump being in office, "go back to where you are from," started trending and was shouted by his supporters whenever they saw someone wearing a hijab or a brown person walking on the street. It was inevitable that when I went out with my hijab someone would shout this at me or call me a terrorist, even though the people were so welcoming and nice to me when I first came. The fear we felt was real.

He started dividing the country and turning people against each other, insulting everyone who wasn't on his side. He called people ugly names. I watched him encouraging white supremacists by saying there were fine

An
immigrant's
perspective

By SAFIYO
MOHAMED
Minneapolis Public School Adult
Education, South Campus



people on both sides of the Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally, instead of condemning what had happened. And that is when I realized this guy was incapable of leading this great country. He wasn't only attacking Muslims or people of color, but he was attacking everyone who had a different opinion than his. He was born with a golden spoon in his hand, so he lacks empathy. He kept saying he puts America first, but he had put himself first all the time. He divided when his job was to unite, he broke when his job was to build, he wounded when his job was to heal this country.

He built on our nation's foundation of systemic racism by encouraging those who were looking for excuses to attack other races and religions. Hate crimes were committed by his supporters because they knew the president was on their side and not going to hold them accountable. Police brutality towards the black and brown communities has continued unabated, even with Derek Chauvin's recent conviction.

Trump, with his racist use of words, made us feel like outsiders who don't belong or don't deserve to be here. How would you feel when the president of

the country and home you love the most treated you as an outsider or invader? He wasn't the president of all Americans; he was solely the president of those he misled. He kept attacking the Congresswomen of color, especially Ilhan Omar, even inciting his supporters to chant, "send her back" at his rallies. This is heartbreaking for us, not because we originate from the same country, but because his hatred towards Muslims and people of color is unbearable.

I believe if he could have, he would have gotten rid of the people who don't look like him in one way or another. He put kids in cages, ripped babies from their mother's arms, and held them in places where there is no dignity and sanity. Those kids will live with this trauma for the rest of their lives and some of them will never see their parents again. He treated asylum seekers who are fleeing from prosecution like trash. He called African countries "shitholes," and named Covid19 the "China Virus." Rather than respond to the crisis scientifically, he used it as a political tool in his culture wars. He downplayed and denied what scientists were telling him about Covid-19. Sadly, because of Trump's behavior, Asian Americans are experiencing increasing instances of discrimination.

Trump was impeached two times by the House of Representatives; once for abuse of power and obstruction, and once for inciting insurrection. Unwisely, he was acquitted both times, despite the senators knowing Trump was guilty of undermining our democracy. He can run for office another time even though he is unfit and should never

lead again. We must not allow this. America is better than this. Trump is a dangerous man who is capable of anything.

As Dr. Luther King Jr said: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." If we watch mistreatment towards one of us and we don't say anything, that's going to come back one day. If united, we can fight against all odds by standing for each other and against the bad apples like Donald Trump. His legacy is division and disunity; he did nothing for the American people; whatever he did, he did for himself. This country is all of ours. Even if he came before me, it doesn't mean he owns it and I don't. The United States is a nation of immigrants.

The extraordinary work African American people accomplished in the long and arduous fight against enslavement, oppression and inequality to improve this nation deserves appreciation, respect and honor. If they hadn't fought for their freedom, I wouldn't be here today. Their hard work, blood and tears paved the way for us to arrive in this country and be at home. Their legacy should be remembered by us every day, especially as we continue with this fight. Encouraged by Mr. Trump's rhetoric, bad apples have been fueled by his hate and animosity. But Donald Trump was voted out of office, and Chauvin has been convicted of George Floyd's murder. These are two steps forward in our fight for equity and equality in this country.

I can see the light coming. Change will happen and better days are ahead if we keep strong, vigilant and our voices raised.

What do you think?

Write to us. We'd love to hear your perspective. News@LongfellowNokomisMessenger.com

Messenger

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Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the Messenger. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to news@longfellownokomisMessenger.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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ers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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THE FINAL VERDICT

It felt like some sort of twisted New Year's countdown. The breath the world was collectively holding all weekend was about to be set free, let loose. She was on her daddy's shoulders, craning her neck to see the speakers, to try and understand just a little bit more.

Everybody is stir crazy, at least that's what dad said. I'm still not completely sure what that means. I feel nervous and everyone else looks nervous, so maybe that's what he meant. I give dad a big kiss on the head. He tilts his head to smile at me, but I can tell he's stressed.

It's loud here. A lot of people. I don't think I've seen this many people since we marched. I like marching with everyone, saying the chants.

I want Black men to stay alive. Everyone does... right?

If the police officer gets to go home, I will be scared. I think maybe our town will burn again. I don't want to see fire, it's hot and scary and it moves fast. Everyone keeps saying "justice." I don't know what that means, but it feels right. I think it means the bad man should go to jail. Well, that's what I want. But I'm only five, I don't get to choose.

I just do what's right, where I am.

There are newspaper people here. I see them talking to people. To my aunties and my dad's friends. To strangers, to each other. All of their words are blending together, I can't focus on just one thing here.

Stop Think Feel

By ABHA KARNICK



All of a sudden, somebody cries out. I jump, a shiver tickling my spine. Before I knew what was happening, people began cheering like we were at some sort of sporting event. My eyes scan the crowd, taking in the shouts and the hugging that began. I feel myself being pulled from his shoulders into a big hug. I lay my head on his shoulders because I love hugs. I wrap my arms around his neck, feeling safe and happy.

I think he is going to jail.

I think I will sleep tonight.

Maybe this is what justice looks like. I have never seen this before. Daddy is crying but it's okay. My house won't get burned down again. I like this moment, I want to live here for a while. I think George is in heaven, smiling. He probably wants to live here, too. I wish he was still here.

This verdict is okay; I think we will be okay.

Abha Karnick is a south Minneapolis resident with East Indian roots who graduated from Hamline University in 2019. Her passion lies in storytelling and finding moments to capture.

Educators retiring from Hiawatha/Howe

Submitted by Angie McCracken

This year the Hiawatha/Howe Community Schools will be saying good-bye to educators with 84 years of combined experience. Three teachers, Kelley McMurchie (kindergarten), Jill Waters (second grade), and Susan Stewart (third grade) are retiring and passing on the baton to new educators for the community.

Kelley McMurchie has taught kindergarten at Hiawatha Community School for 14 years, She has been a classroom teacher for 23 years. She writes, "I will miss the students, families, colleagues, and the neighborhood. I will also miss the Kinder Garden outside Room 117. In the spring, kindergarteners plant tomatoes, peppers and beans. The next fall the new kindergarten classes get to eat what the garden produced. We always saved bean seeds and used them to plant the next crop. Many times, there were extra veggies so the first graders got to have a little nibble of what they planted, too."

She plans to move to the Smokey Mountains and enjoy time with her children and grandchildren in her retirement. Her words of wisdom for us are, "This year has shown how resilient and capable people are, especially children. They are amazing. Children can fail and make mistakes, then use their own resiliency to be better and stronger the next time. Harder times and tough days show silver linings we may not have expected. Keep an eye out for those silver linings."

Susan Stewart has been a teacher at Howe Community school for the past four years where she has taught third through fifth grade. She has taught 22 years in Minneapolis Public Schools after moving to Minneapolis, teaching for four years in Pittsburg before that, for a total of 26 years.

She writes: "I've enjoyed working with Howe's children and families. I've many funny memories from the plays that my Lyndale third graders did at The Children's Theater. Once, we made a giant red cardboard stomach to show that Chronos had swallowed his children. The students, as they were swallowed, poked their heads through the cut-outs. A quiet boy assigned to hold the thing up surprised us by adding a hole for the stone that is swallowed instead of Zeus, but not before juggling it expertly to the delight of the audience."

Susan will miss the innate wisdom and fairness of children, and plans to spend her retirement with her parents, traveling, and exploring Cook County.

Jill Waters has taught second grade for 35 years at Hiawatha Community School.

She writes "I feel like I grew up here. I love this community. It was a privilege to celebrate Hiawatha's 100th year. People came from all over the country to share their memories of the education they received. My favorite day was May Day when the children would make May baskets and



Jill Waters (above left) and Kelley McMurchie are retiring at the end of the 20-21 school year, as is Susan Stewart (at left). They pass the baton to new educators for the community. (Photos submitted)

we would then deliver them to our neighbors. Hiawatha is full of traditions and my favorites are the ones where we brought in the community, Move A Thon, gingerbread houses our school dance and carnival. I am looking forward to the many more adventures life has ahead."

Jill shares this poem for all of her second graders:

- I Remember Second Grade*
- I remember tie dying.*
- I remember the Monarch Butterflies.*
- I remember Pumpkin Jack.*
- I remember Dorothy Molter Root Beer.*
- I remember celebrating the 50th Day.*
- I remember gingerbread houses.*
- I remember Hiawatha's awesome playground.*
- I remember the Egg Drop.*
- I remember Camp Skeeter.*
- I remember friendships made.*
- I remember my teacher believed in me!*
- I remember....*

Letters

Thank you, Bob

I'm writing today to celebrate someone who has dedicated the last four years to support students to become better readers at Lake Nokomis Community School Wenonah Campus.

As an AmeriCorps member with Minnesota Reading Corps, Bob von Sternberg has focused on providing students daily one-on-one practice and support to improve their reading skills. Over the past four years, he has given a total of 3,375 hours to help students succeed.

As this particularly challenging school year comes to a close, I would like to acknowledge Bob and his dedicated and unwavering service to the students and school community. Thank you, Bob.

Teri Kylander
Senior Manager
Minnesota Reading Corps

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In Brief

Melanie Majors leaving LCC



After 14 years, the Longfellow Community Council will be losing its executive director Melanie Majors on June 17, 2021. She has accepted a position as Director of Administration for Trellis, which is a state-wide affordable housing development.

The LCC Executive Committee is working on what process they would like to use to hire a new director. They will decide soon if they want to use an interim director.

Sibley, Corcoran park

Tell the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board what you'd like to see at Sibley and Corcoran parks.

The playground equipment and wading pool will be replaced at Sibley Park (1900 E 40th St.). MPRB is also exploring a name change.

Construction is planned for summer 2022.

The first step in the planning process is an online survey to gather community input, that is open through June 25, 2021. Visit the Sibley Park Improvements page on the MPRB website.

The project will be funded through \$1,022,713 from MPRB's 2021 Capital Improvement Program and \$185,413 from MPRB's 2019 Capital Improvement Program.

For Corcoran, \$956,181 of NPP20 funds is set aside from MPRB's 2021 Capital Improvement Program. Improvements will be based on the park's approved master plan with guidance from community engagement in 2021. An online survey is open through June 25. Visit the Corcoran Park Improvements page on the MPRB website.

U-Haul plans 5-story, self-storage at Hiawatha/42nd

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

After a pause, U-Haul is moving ahead with plans to tear down the existing buildings on the site and build a five-story, 1,200-unit storage facility on the southeast corner of Hiawatha Ave. and 42nd St.

The recent proposal would replace the small building currently on the site that used to be a Mobil Station with the new five-story structure tight up to 42nd St., and place a two-story retail/rental office building on the south side of the site along 43rd St.

The main 28,685-square-foot building will include a variety of storage unit sizes, including 5x5, 5x10, 10x10, and 10x15.

The north side of the building will offer two retail spaces on the first floor, their concession to activating the pedestrian realm which they don't typically do. The 1035- and 1175-square-foot-spaces could house a restaurant or boutique shop space, and can be tailored to any use. U-Haul has not reached out to any potential businesses yet.

A single-story area on the

south side of the main building will have four garage doors.

Self-storage will have 24-hour access at the discretion of the manager. Each unit has an alarm and the building will have full security camera coverage.

U-Haul will employ 20-30 people with 7-8 working per shift.

There will be about 10-15 trucks cycling in and out of the facility each day. Roughly 33% of those trucks will be on site at the same time.

The proposal includes 34 parking spaces total between the two building, including a few spaces for the commercial tenants.

The existing buildings are mostly brick, which they will recycle by grinding it up on site and reusing it in the construction of the new buildings.

U-Haul will use a metal and concrete panel system on the ex-



terior of the new buildings. There will be underground stormwater retention located under grass pavers at the center of the site.

During an online community meeting about the proposal, residents engaged in discussion about whether self-storage and truck and trailer rental were an appropriate use for such a large site in a TOD district, according to Longfellow Community Council Program Manager Justin Gaarder. U-Haul representatives said that having truck rental along a transit corridor will make it easier for people that don't own personal vehicles to move. They will have a truck reserved specifically for neighborhood use.

The attendees voted in support of LCC providing a letter of

support for the truck and trailer rental CUP. However, the height variance vote was mixed with 42.9% yes, 42.9% no and 14% yes but with conditions," said Gaarder. "The conditions given focused on wanting the retail/rental office building to be more than one story to increase density along the transit corridor and potentially include housing above."

Following the feedback, U-Haul decided to add a second story to the retail/rental office to make it a fully zoning compliant two-story building.

In perspective:

U-Haul joins several other storage facilities along the Hiawatha corridor, including Public Storage at 3245 Hiawatha Ave. MPLS Storage at 3138 Snelling Ave., and the two iStorage Self Storage at 3601 Hiawatha Ave. and 4325 Hiawatha Ave.

Happening nearby:

Across the street, the property owner has been looking into plans to replace the Wash Me Car Wash (4155 Hiawatha Ave.) with a Starbucks and Domino's Pizza, although there has been no date given for that project.

Register to vote - again?

This is part of a series about the 2021 municipal elections by the League of Women Voters Minneapolis.

Believe it or not, 2021 is an election year in Minneapolis - a very important election year. The mayor and every city council seat will be on the ballot in addition to members of the Park Board and the Board of Estimate and Taxation. There may also be proposed amendments to the city charter that could affect policing and the structure of city government.

Do you need to register to vote? Maybe.

You are eligible to vote in Minneapolis if you are a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age on election day, a resident of Minneapolis for at least 20 days and have finished all parts of any felony sentence.

You need to register if you

have 1) moved or changed your name since the last election, or 2) not voted in the past four years. You can register to vote when you renew your Minnesota Driver's License or State ID and you do NOT have to declare party affiliation.

You can CHECK YOUR REGISTRATION STATUS here:

<https://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/VoterStatus.aspx>

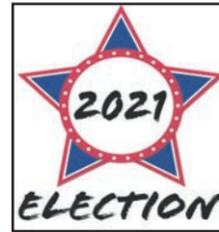
If you are not currently registered to vote, but you qualify, you can register online or download a paper form which is available in 12 languages. If you or someone you know has a question or needs assistance, call the city of Minneapolis Help Line: 311.

Remember: your VOTE is your VOICE and every eligible voter has the right to be heard. Democracy depends on it. Learn more at www.lwvmppls.org.

Why should you care about city elections?

If you drive a car, walk, bicycle, live in a house or apartment, breathe the air, have a pet, discard trash, flush the toilet, or eat or drink in a restaurant, then, as a resident of Minneapolis, you have a vested interest in who runs our city. If your concern is safety, policing, and civil rights, your interests are even more relevant this year.

City council members - one elected from each of Minneapolis' 13 wards - make the laws and policies that govern the city. They approve budgets, levy taxes and elect a council president who sets the council's agenda and presides over meetings. Council members serve on committees that focus on specific issues like housing & zoning, public health & safety, public works and budgeting. The city council writes



the rules that govern nearly every aspect of the city that impacts our daily lives. Read more about City Council Powers and Duties here: <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/city-council/about-city-council/powers-and-duties/>

Reminder: every city council seat and the mayor will be on the ballot on Nov. 2!

The mayor is the only city official elected at-large; that is, by the entire city voting population. Think of the mayor as the city's chief executive, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city and cheerleader-in-chief. The mayor is the most recognizable city official and acts as the city's figurehead and spokesperson. That enables the mayor to set the city's agenda and wield the bully pulpit. Where city council members typically represent their individual communities, mayors have a broader city-wide perspective.

In Minneapolis' "weak mayor" system, the mayor appoints commissioners and directors of the various city departments and oversees their work. The city council's Executive Committee, however, also plays a role in appointments and oversight. While this forces collaboration and democratizes decisions, it can lead to role confusion and unclear expectations by staff. Accountability is also shared, which may confound voters as to where the buck stops.

What is NOT controlled by city government: schools and parks. Both have separate boards that set policy and budgets.

Future installments in this series will explain the roles of the Board of Estimate & Taxation and the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (elected offices). You'll see both of these entities show up on the ballot in November, too.

Visit www.lwvmppls.org for more information.

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Dakota author Diane Wilson's new book "The Seed Keeper" is available at Birchbark Books & Native Arts. Wilson's novel weaves together the voices of four indelible women. "The Seed Keeper" is a story of reawakening, of remembering our original relationship to seeds and, through them, of remembering our original relationship to our ancestors. Birch Bark Books is currently open only for telephone and online orders: call 612.724.023 or visit www.birchbarkbooks.com for more information.

Mission:

The mission of Dream of Wild Health is to restore health and well-being in the Native American community by recovering knowledge of, and access to, healthy Indigenous foods, medicines, and lifeways.

Students in the Garden Warrior Program worked in the corn crop last summer at the Hugo farm site. (Photo submitted)

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Dream of Wild Health is one of the longest operating Native American-led nonprofits in the Twin Cities. Since 1998, they have been working to restore Indigenous relationship with the land, and to offer access to healthy Indigenous foods and lifestyles.

On their 10-acre farm in Hugo (about 30 miles northeast of the Twin Cities), Dream of Wild Health grows crops that are valued in the Indigenous community for their heritage and for their health.

The seeds have a story to tell

More than 20 years ago, Dream of Wild Health received a letter from a Potawatomi elder named Cora Baker. The Potawatomi are a Native American people of the upper Mississippi River Basin and the western Great Lakes Region. Baker was living at the time near Wisconsin Dells, where she kept a garden for many years. She dried corn on the side of her barn after harvesting. Knowing that she was a Seed Keeper, neighbors gave her their seeds to save.

In the letter that arrived five months before she died, Baker

wrote to Dream of Wild Health:

"I had prayed that someone would take this gardening up again. I am very pleased to learn about your project. I feel that the Great Creator has answered my prayers. I wish that someday the children will come to realize the importance of the garden again."

With the help of her great granddaughter, Baker sent seeds from many different varieties of corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, Indigenous tobacco, melons, and medicinal plants to Dream of Wild Health. It was the start of an ancestral seed collection that now contains more than 100 varieties.

As word spread about the seed collection, others started sharing their seeds. One family donated Cherokee corn seeds carried on the original Trail of Tears: the forced relocation by the US Government of at least 100,000 Native Americans from the southeastern states to the western territories in 1830-1850.

Community Outreach and Cultural Teacher Hope Flanagan said, "The collection is a priceless legacy from our ancestors that continues to grow."

The stewardship of the seed collection has been identified as a top priority for Dream of Wild

Health, and is an ongoing effort. In 2019 they added the Seed Regeneration team: three additional farmers who work mainly with caring for the Indigenous seeds.

Native grown, youth led

It took time, but Cora Baker's wish has been granted: Native American children are being taught the importance of the garden once again. Through Dream of Wild Health, the Hugo farm site hosts youth programs throughout the summer. According to Flanagan, "Last year, we grew 8.5 tons of produce on the farm, and we couldn't have done it without our youth."

On the farm, Native youth of all ages learn their individual cultural identities, and deepen their connection to the earth, water, pollinators, elders, and peers.

Cora's Kids is the summer program for Native American kids ages 8-12. They learn the foundations of growing and eating healthy Indigenous food, as well as Native American culture and language, traditional crafts and games.

Garden Warriors is for teens ages 13-18. Youth are paid a stipend for their work on the farm and at the two farmers markets

where food from the farm is sold. They learn the value of gardening, seed saving, foraging, sacred medicines, healthy cooking, Indigenous foods, leadership skills and more.

Garden Warriors who demonstrate maturity and commitment to succeeding in school are invited to join the Dream of Wild Health year-round Youth Leaders group. This is a way for Native American youth to take leadership in the community around nutrition, health, and food justice issues.

Flanagan is quick to point out, "We're not on vacation out at the farm. Even though it's fun, there is a lot of hard work to do. At the beginning of each session, we start with a naming ceremony. The young people are given a name while they're at the farm. The name speaks to what their main responsibilities will be.

"We teach them that every plant has a gift to offer: food, utility, medicine. In our legends, we talk about how the plants were eager to offer their gifts. We challenge the young people to ask themselves, 'How are you offering your gifts so that all life benefits?'"

Food fresh from the farm at two local markets

On June 3, the Four Sisters Market will start their summer season selling produce from the Hugo farm. From 11 a.m. - 3p.m. each Thursday, the market booth will set up in the Pow Wow Grounds Coffee Shop parking lot at 1414 East Franklin Ave.

The Four Sisters Market offers ingredients not usually found in other farmers markets: ground cherries, summer berries, Indigenous salad mixes such as amaranth greens and lams quarter, wild rice, Indigenous corn and squash varieties, heirloom tomatoes, fresh herbs, wild harvested foods when available, and much more.

Produce from the Hugo farm is also available for sale at the Midtown Farmer's Market on Tuesdays from 3-7 p.m. beginning June 1. That market is located in the Moon Palace Books Courtyard at 3032 Minnehaha Avenue.

To learn more about Dream of Wild Health or to donate to their effort of maintaining the Indigenous seed collection in their care, visit <https://dreamofwild-health.org>.

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SO, YOU WANT TO RETIRE...



Jesse and Marion Dunbar of Happy Earth Cleaning sold their businesses to their workers when they moved back to Seattle, Wash.

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Business owners who want to retire have two options. They can sell or just shut down.

Christina Nicholson of Nexus Community Partners (2314 University Ave. Suite 18) told those gathered at a joint NENA/NEBA meeting that there is another exit strategy.

They can establish a worker cooperative.

Nexus works with business owners and employees to figure out if this step is right for them, and walks them through the process.

REI is a well-known business that is also a co-op. Locally, several grocery stores are set

up as coops (including Seward Community Co-op and Mississippi Market) as is The Hub Bike Coop. As more workers want a say in their workplaces, Powderhorn resident Nicholson believes that this model will grow in popularity.

"Nexus supports strong, equitable and just communities in which all residents are engaged, are recognized as leaders and have pathways to opportunities," said Nicholson. "The key to building more engaged and powerful communities of color lies in the interconnectedness between authorship, leadership and ownership."

Do you sell the business, shut it down or transition to a worker coop?

Nexus focuses on how a coop structure can help with wealth building in a community, in particular by creating BIPOC partnerships. A coop allows more people to be owners and then get a part of the profit that the company earns, she explained.

What exactly is a worker cooperative?

Nicholson explained that worker cooperatives are owned and controlled by employee-members using a one-member, one-vote basis. This gives the workers the opportunity to have a say in how the company is managed. They earn a percentage of the profits, also called "patronage," in addition to their regular wages.

Members elect a board of directors, a majority of whom are employees.

Typically, the board of directors hires a general manager (or management team), which in turn runs the day-to-day operations.

Is it a free for all?

A common myth about worker coops is that they are "a free for all." People are concerned that if everyone is managing themselves that nothing will get done. "That is not the case," said Nicholson.

A board of directors sets the direction of the company and operates according to a list of bylaws. "This sets a day-to-day structure, accountability and type of culture you want to build," she said. "That's part of what makes a successful business."

This is not a top-down structure. It is not a carrot-stick model. Staff are not treated as children who need to be controlled. "It's more of a servant leadership model," remarked Nicholson. "It is a much more mutually accountable space. It can be much more empowering."

In a worker coop, owners earn 33% more than they would if they weren't part of a worker coop and retention is higher, according to Nicholson.

In an uncertain time like the past year, worker coops have shown they are more likely to keep jobs secure rather than lay people off. Worker coops are more likely to redistribute business funds to pay workers, reduce wages, or temporarily furlough wages rather than lay off workers.

"Worker coops are more resilient because it's a collaborative space from the inception," stated Nicholson. "When everyone is an owner, everyone has a vested interest in keeping the business going."

How does the process work?

A worker coop is not an escape hatch for a failing business. But it can be a way to turn the business over to the experienced people on the ground.

Nexus works with businesses to first explore their ownership options. Then they assess the feasibility, which includes looking at the last three to five years of cash flow.

Step three involves figuring out the structure of the deal and the new organization and leadership team. If the business has cash reserves, that may be paid out to the owner immediately

or over a set number of years. A loan and other businesses funding may be lined up by the new owners. The price of the business is set. "Just because you want to sell your business doesn't mean there is a buyer on the other end," observed Nicholson. In fact, two-thirds of businesses listed for sale never sell, and only 15% are passed along to a family member. Acquisitions by larger firms or out-of-state buyers often lead to layoffs and restructuring.

The owner and the worker owners negotiate to get to a competitive and fair sales price. Part of the benefit for the owner is seeing their dream continue once they're gone and securing their legacy.

The businesses that fit in best with this model have a triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental concerns, said Nicholson.

Some owners continue working under the new structure for a time, while others leave right away. For those who want to move on to other things immediately, there is typically a longer training period before the transition is complete. The process typically takes 12-18 months, depending on readiness, speed of decision-making, and complexity of the sale.

"What employees are taking on is like a mortgage," explained Nicholson. After the debt is paid, then the worker owners receive the patronage, which is like a bonus. "It allows them to invest in the business," she said.

Nexus helps complete the sale and transition to the new business entity, and also sticks around to support the new worker owners and leadership through ongoing trainings over the next two years.

They charge fees throughout the process and some of the work is philanthropically funded.

Nexus is currently working with 15 companies who are considering a worker cooperative model. "I think this model is starting to get some legs," said Nicholson. "I think in the next two to five years we will see more worker-owned cooperatives in the Twin Cities."

Schedule a free 30-minute phone consultation by emailing cnicholson@nexuscp.org or call (651) 289-7038.

Happy Earth Cleaning becomes a worker's coop

Happy Earth Cleaning (1822 Como Ave. SE) has transitioned successfully to worker ownership.

Marion Dunbar started Happy Earth Cleaning in 2010 after she had been in management and customer service for 20 years. Initially, she was the one staff member and managed cleaning, management and client cultivation herself. In 2013, her husband Jesse joined the business. Today, Happy Earth Cleaning has 19 employees.

Happy Earth is "A People Company that Cleans." They use environmentally-friendly products, participate in community events, and offer full-time employment to their staff recognizing the intersectionality between a happy planet, happy community, and happy people.

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Meet one worker owner

Tom Crouse, 32, of South Minneapolis is a worker owner of Happy Earth Cleaning in St. Paul. He's been at Happy Earth since 2014.

"I was drawn to the supportive work environment, livable wages, and amazing people of Happy Earth. I have held nearly every role at Happy Earth in my seven years here, from cleaner to manager. I'm currently the sales manager, in charge of introducing new customers to our eco-friendly service," he said.

"A worker co-op is just like any other company, except employees are welcome to buy into ownership, instead of profits benefitting only the private owners. Co-ops also have a board to guide big decisions, and employee-owners also have a say in big decisions. Otherwise, we manage and operate our business just like we used to when we were an LLC.

"Any year we're profitable, I get to share those profits with my fellow member-owners, like a bonus,

except we call it 'patronage.' I also get to vote in important company matters. So my work is both more lucrative and more democratic as an employee-owner. I also have more job stability, since it's harder to dissolve a co-op (at least, the way we set it up).

"Happy Earth is more supportive than any place I've ever worked. I never planned to work at a cleaning company for seven years, but it's just such a great environment filled with outstanding people."

Crouse urges other people interested in this model to seek out free help from organizations like the Minnesota Center for Employee Ownership (MNCEO). "Their free consulting and resources can help you decide if employee-ownership is a good fit for your business, and they can help you get started with the transition," Crouse said. "Employee-ownership is the most important, least considered business succession plan of the 21st century. You owe it to your community to consider employee-ownership for your business."

SO, YOU WANT TO RETIRE...

>> From 8

In 2018, the Dunbars decided they wanted to move back to their hometown of Seattle, Wash. They began thinking about a succession plan.

Potential buyers approached them, but they had concerns about selling the business to an outside buyer. They were worried their company would lose its "people first" culture, and that a new company would take their client list and lay off their workers.

So they started looking at employee ownership. They went through the nine-week Coop Technical Assistance Program (CTAP) offered through the city of Minneapolis that helped them understand coop development. Then they sent a larger group of employees through the program.

That group launched the process of selling their business to employees.

Thirty-two-year-old Tom

Crouse of South Minneapolis is one of the worker owners.

"Transitioning your business to employee ownership looks remarkably similar to selling your business in a 'traditional' way," he said. "There is a little more work, in the form of training and development for employees, but retiring owners can receive a fair price for their business and leave their legacy in the hands of those they trust (their employees)."

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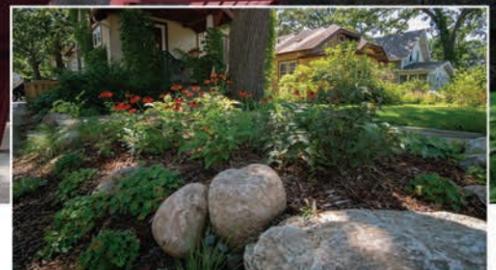


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PART II: THE TWIN CITIES HOUSING MARKET

Reimagining dream of home ownership for all

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

In a recent article about the Twin Cities housing market during COVID-19, real estate professionals characterized the market as "frenzied." A picture emerged of Minneapolis homes selling well above their asking price in a climate of multiple offers. While this is a benefit to sellers, it leaves many buyers, especially first-time home buyers and buyers without deep pockets, unable to compete.

Trent Bowman is the vice president and business development officer at MidWestOne Bank in Golden Valley, where he continues his 25-year commitment to working with aspiring minority homeowners. He also serves as president of the Twin Cities Chapter of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB).

NAREB is an equal opportunity and civil rights advocacy group founded in 1947 to ensure that African Americans (and other people of color) receive fair treatment in all real estate transactions. Founded in 1947, it is the oldest African American trade organization in the country.

Democracy in housing

NAREB has chapters across the U.S., unified in their vision of creating democracy in housing for all. When asked if that vision is any closer to becoming a reality after almost 75 years, Bowman said, "No. It has not yet been achieved – not in Minneapolis or anywhere else in the country."

In Bowman's opinion, "A prospective minority home buyer needs to have a team behind them, because there are obstacles all along the way to home ownership."

The team at NAREB Twin



Trent Bowman is the president of NAREB, a coalition of Black real estate professionals. He said, "Throughout history, people of color have been left out of the homeownership game. It's about leaving a legacy. It's about building wealth in our communities. We have to understand the history of housing discrimination, so we can work in the present to leave something for our kids in the future." (Photo courtesy of NAREB)

Cities includes African American real estate brokers, mortgage lenders, real estate lawyers, appraisers, home inspectors, real estate instructors, insurance professionals, and more. Visit www.narebtc.com to learn more about their housing advocacy work and resources for prospective minority homebuyers.

Homeownership starts with education

Homeownership is the surest way to build family wealth and strengthen communities – but Black homeownership rates have dropped from 29% to 23% in the last decade. According to Bowman, "Foreclosure rates were

higher in communities of color nationwide after the recession of 2008-09, and it has gotten a lot harder to get approved for loans."

There are several non-profit organizations in Minneapolis poised and ready to work with minority clients considering homeownership; in addition to providing valuable resources, they are sending the message that potential home buyers should stop telling themselves that home-ownership is beyond their reach.

The list of these organizations includes the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance, NeighborWorks Home Partners, Twin Cities Urban League, Build Wealth Minnesota, the Cultural Wellness Center, the African Development Center, and many others. Each offers resources and entering the housing market, including homeownership classes (which are a prerequisite for applying to any organization for Down Payment Assistance).

According to Bowman, one of the most crucial steps in the process of buying a home is choosing the right loan officer. He said, "We help prospective homebuyers understand the importance of building their credit, strengthening their savings plan, and coming in to the bank prepared for success. Too many times, minority loan applicants are denied for the wrong reasons and end up discouraged."

"A good loan officer will take the time to get to know a customer. This is not a transaction you do over the phone; it should be a sit-down conversation to discuss financial goals and realities. A dream home isn't just a home a customer can qualify for, but one that they can afford to stay in for a long time."

Minneapolis down payment assistance can help buyers enter the housing market

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

No spoiler alert here – the cost of even a small home in Minneapolis is sky-rocketing. While that is daunting to anyone looking to buy, it is especially intimidating for first time homebuyers.

As of June 2020, the median selling price of a home in Minneapolis was \$300,000. According to Roxanne Kimball, a supervisor with the City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development department, that number is twice what it was eight years ago.

"And that," she said, "is troubling. It means that many Minneapolis neighborhoods are just not within reach of first time homebuyers."

Funding the affordability gap

Affordability Gap is a term that has been around for a long time. It means the difference between the appraised value of a house and what a buyer can afford to pay for it. Kimball said, "As a city, we are stepping up our commitment to funding that gap."

Typically, down payment assistance (DPA) programs serve households below 80% of the area median income. For the Twin Cities 11-county area, the median income is \$105,000.

Based on a year-long study recently completed by the City of Minneapolis, more than 70% of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, or BIPOC, renters

have incomes less than 60% of the area median income. Kimball said, "South Minneapolis



(Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

is increasingly less accessible to those renters who may want to buy a home. For college graduates, student debt is an additional barrier to home ownership because it makes it harder

to qualify for a mortgage." DPA programs can help level the playing field for buyers who don't have inherited wealth or savings to come up with the standard 20% down payment. Some DPA programs allow for combining funds from different sources, once the home buyer has completed requirements for home buyer education and/or financial wellness classes.

Minneapolis currently offers two DPA programs:

- Homeownership Opportunity Minneapolis, which provides up to \$10,000 to homebuyers below 80% AMI to purchase any home in Minneapolis.

- The Minneapolis Homes Affordability Gap program, which provides a range of affordability gap assistance to purchase homes developed with Minneapolis Homes financing. Contact the developer for more information about home completion timelines and available financing.

To learn more about DPA programs available through the City of Minneapolis, contact the Minnesota Homeownership Center at www.hocmn.org.

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How to manage jumping worms

By Julie Vanatta

Two years ago few of us had heard of jumping worms. Now they're all the rage, gardeners have a panic attack every time they find a common nightcrawler.

Due to the Ice Age, no earthworms are native to Minnesota. This new species of invasive jumping worms, *Amyntas* species, is native to eastern Asia. They are a greater threat than previously introduced worm species as they consume essential nutrients in the horizon soil layer, damaging both plant and wildlife habitat. Unlike common earthworms, jumping worms consume wood mulch and roots, converting them to castings that resemble coffee grounds. Because they reproduce rapidly, it doesn't take long for an area of your garden to become infested.

Jumping worms have been in the U.S. since the late 1800s and were first recorded in Minneapolis in 2006. In 2015, Longfellow resident Andy Holdsworth, who completed his PhD thesis on invasive earthworms at the University of Minnesota, discovered and reported jumping worms found in his compost pile to the Minnesota DNR. Many wonder why they just are now becoming a problem. One theory is climate change, another is how species will adapt to survive. In any event, in the past 10 years they have begun to spread more rapidly through the U.S. and are beginning to cause serious harm.

I began my own quest to learn more about jumping worms in 2020, just after hosting a Wild Ones Twin Cities donated plant sale in my back yard. I became concerned and began to look for any sign of jumping worms in areas where we had staged the sale. I tested two areas using a mustard water drench, which brings all earthworms to



The tree above shows damage from jumping worms. Below is a juvenile jumping worm.



the surface. Learning how to assess risk areas in our landscapes and identifying jumping worms when they are young are key to containing their spread.

Lifecycle begins as eggs in a minuscule cocoon that overwinters in soil. Most cocoons from last year will hatch in May / June; they prefer moist soil. Cocoons may also lay dormant until conditions are favorable, even through a second winter. Each cocoon produces from one to 15 hatchlings.

Hatchlings are juvenile jumping worms. They do not have the distinct white ring (clitellum) and look similar to other small earthworms. If juveniles are detected there are likely more in the immediate area. Juveniles have the same acrobatic skills as adults; they are fascinating to watch. Most info websites have lots of information on adults, very little on juveniles.

Large, adult earthworms found in the spring are not



Protect your gardens from jumping worms by bare-rooting plants instead of using soil from others. (Photos by Julie Vanatta)

jumping worms; they are likely nightcrawlers that burrowed below the frost line for the winter. Adult jumping worms are found July through early October – once you see one you'll never forget. Unlike nightcrawlers, juvenile and adult jumping worms die when soil temperature drops below 40° F. They feed on wood mulch, leaves and compost. Once the duff layer is gone jumping worms will feed on roots. If you notice a patch of mulch that has disappeared, you likely have an infestation; look for their "coffee-ground" castings. A heavy rain may wash away the castings leaving plant and tree roots bare and unprotected. Each adult jumping worm will lay up to 20 cocoons. There may be a second population later in the season.

You can protect your gardens and limit the spread of jumping worms.

First, there is no need to panic. Researchers are testing various controls – hope is on the way. And despite the intense damage that can be caused by jumping worms, gardeners who do have infestations can implement practices that limit their spread. Simple steps like keeping tools and shoes clean, avoiding transfer of soil from one part of a garden to another, and collecting / disposing of adults as they appear will keep populations in check. If you do

not have jumping worms there are many things you can do to avoid getting them.

For avid gardeners and volunteers: Sharing plants with friends or importing mulch, compost and soil to your garden increases the risk of bringing home jumping worms or their cocoons, which easily blend into soil. If you volunteer in public parks or gardens, have a plan in place to clean your shoes and remove all soil from any tools before you leave one site and travel to another. In my own gardens I have collected and contained soil from three high risk areas. If cocoons found their way to my garden I am hoping one will hatch within these containers so I can confirm where, within my garden, I have an infestation. High risk areas are near boulevard sidewalk, potting bench and along a path where a landscape crew did some work. I also avoid spilling soil when I move plants, tools and yard waste. As for sharing my garden favorites, bare rooted plants have become the new necessity, something we are just beginning to learn how to do.

For hikers or mountain bikers: Keep a boot brush handy to clean tire and shoe treads. Yeah, I know, it's a discipline that may be difficult to adhere to, but to protect our gardens and natural areas, especially local treasures like the Mississippi River Gorge and Minnehaha Falls, we all need

to do our part to reduce the risk of carrying these cocoons into a new area.

If you do find jumping worms: Please be responsible and confirm, report and let your neighbors know so we can all work together to limit their spread. We can do this!

Learn more:

- Learn more about jumping worms and tips for protecting gardens by visiting Wild Ones Twin Cities Wild Ones Twin Cities YouTube channel. Visit Great Lake Worm Watch for latest updates.
- Wild Ones is hosting bare root clinics and demonstrations in Longfellow now through June 11. More will be scheduled in the fall.

Julia Vanatta has been a homeowner and active member of Longfellow Community in Minneapolis since the late 1970s. Getting serious about gardening roughly 20 years ago, Vanatta has used her own gardens to experiment and learn all she can about native plants and the wildlife they support, especially insects. For the past 15 years, Vanatta has been active as a leader in various capacities for Wild Ones Twin Cities. More recently she started the Facebook group, Native Plant Gardens in the Upper Midwest, a discussion group where members engage in an exchange of ideas and practices for local ecosystem gardening.

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UP CLOSE WITH THREE COFFEE SHOPS

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

Longtime Nokomis Beach supported by regulars

Nokomis Beach Coffee (4956 S. 28th Ave.) closed its doors for the first time in 22 years on March 13, 2020 – “8270 days in a row, not a bad run,” observed Dennis Kloek, who owns the coffee shop with his wife, Mary.

They remained closed until May 4. “Upon reopening I was surprised how generous our customers were, both in terms of purchasing of gift cards you knew were probably never going to be used as well as going out of their way just to consume, to show support,” Kloek said.

“We reopened with very strict COVID-19 precautions, some would say the most strict of anywhere they’ve been. I was ok with that. I saw early on the value many of our customers saw in our protocols. I’ve probably said some things to customers in the last year I would’ve never imagined myself saying to a customer, but when it came to our COVID-19 plan I wasn’t going to waiver or compromise.”

They surrounded the barista kitchen with plexiglass, and established a one-way ordering process with a strict 9-foot distancing. Everything was contactless. Food and drink orders were filled and placed on a table outside the back door. They paid with a new contactless system. “The idea was to get them in and get them out as quick as possible,” said Kloek. “This procedure is still in place today.”

The Kloeks worked during the week and their employees covered weekend hours, which created two pods in case one came in contact with COVID-19.

They provided patio seating and asked that no more than four people sit together. When folks pushed tabled together to accommodate eight or more, Kloek bolted the tabled down with 10-foot spacing. “In the end, I believe our protocols paid dividends. People eventually came to respect our position and desire to keep every safe,” observed Kloek. “By September we came within 4% of the same months sales the year before.”

A year later, Kloek can’t say for certain that they’ve survived the pandemic.

But they are still moving forward.

“Although the business



Nokomis residents Dennis and Mary Kloek have owned Nokomis Beach Coffee for 23 years. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

may look different than it did a year ago, it’s working,” Kloek said. “We have reached close to pre-pandemic numbers while being open far fewer hours. We now close at 2 p.m. Monday to Friday and 5 p.m. Saturday to Sunday, as opposed to 8:30 p.m. all days pre-COVID-19.” While Kloek is considering expanding hours again, he has seen a sharp decline in applications.

Receiving both rounds of PPP was crucial for Nokomis Beach Coffee. The funds allowed the Kloeks to bring back every employee that was working for them when they closed in March 2020, and keep them at the same amount of hours.

“Between new minimum wage laws, mandatory sick leave, and increasing rent because of property tax increases, we knew we had to find a way to trim expenses somewhere. For us it was cutting any hours that truly were not going to be profitable,” said Kloek.

“For years I took pride in the fact I was able to provide 13/15 jobs for individuals but now that’s down to 7/8. Not many people realize that in this industry a \$15 an hour wage cost the employer closer to \$19 after all taxes are paid.

“When you add in the sick leave/ taxes on wages and tips, workman’s comp, and unemployment insurance, we just can’t justify any extra hours that can’t carry themselves.”

The Kloeks have seen a lot of changes in the Nokomis community during their 23 years as business owners. More businesses have moved into the area, and their clientele has gotten younger.

They opened Nokomis Beach Coffee on Sept. 1, 1998, and are known for their expansive patio that welcomes dogs.

“While in college I had lived in Vienna for just over a year and really enjoyed going to all the coffee shops that had been part of their culture for many years. Upon returning I knew a shop would be somewhere in my future,” recalled Kloek.

“It was early on in our business life that we knew we want to live in the same community as we worked so we bought a house on the south end of the lake from where the shop is.”

Living and working in Nokomis East has been rewarding for them.

“The community has been amazingly supportive of the shop over the years,” pointed out Kloek. “Even as franchises have moved in our customers have remained incredibly loyal providing us with steady growth throughout the first 22 years.”

He added, “COVID-19 has, I believe changed every business model out there. Ours needed changing anyways.

“In the end, like so many, I’m glad to have this year behind us. It’s definitely had its challenges, but I’m pleased with how we’ve come out of it on the other side. In some ways our business is better because of it. It has forced us to get creative and find a way to make things work for the long term.”

Learn more at <http://lighthouseinternet.com/nokomis/mobile/index.html>.



Carley Kammerer of Wildflyer Coffee (3262 Minnehaha Ave.).

Wildflyer opened during a pandemic

Wildflyer Coffee opened its doors in the middle of a global pandemic.

Peace Coffee opted not to reopen its longtime coffee shop at 3262 Minnehaha Ave. and to focus instead on coffee sales. They reached out to Wildflyer who decided the time was right to expand from a coffee cart to a cafe.

“We didn’t view it as opening a coffee shop, we viewed it as opening an employment training program for youth experiencing homelessness, and that was needed more than ever before during the pandemic when unemployment was high and entry-level jobs were vanishing overnight,” explained Wildflyer CEO Carley Kammerer. “The need was too great to ignore it, and the opportunity to take over this wonderful shop and learn from Peace Coffee was too good to pass up. We were smart about it, but we knew this was ‘it’ for Wildflyer, so we went for it.”

“Would I open a coffee shop during a pandemic? No. Would I open an employment training program for youth? Yes.”

Former Southside resident Kammerer is a licensed social worker who has worked with youth experiencing homelessness for over eight years. “In that time, I started noticing a common trend where my clients could get a job but would quickly lose it, putting them in a cycle of homelessness and instability with no pathway out,” she observed. “There are so many barriers to employment while experiencing homelessness, things like transportation, hygiene/professional clothing, not even having vital documents to begin with, as well as a lack of soft skills.”

“It seemed like something needed to exist that just helped cultivate these skills and eliminate these barriers so youth could achieve self-sufficiency. Out of that resource gap came the vision for Wildflyer Coffee.”

They started with a mobile cart at farmer’s markets and private events in 2017, and received more youth applications than the cart could employ. They began raising money in 2019 to expand into a coffee shop. They were all set to sign a lease in March 2020. Then COVID-19 hit.

They put their plans on hold. “Peace had created a really special, local neighborhood coffee shop, and we knew we would benefit from that. We have already benefited from Peace’s customers wanting to see us succeed,” remarked Kammerer. “The shop itself was already a coffee

shop, which meant we could spend much less on a build-out and divert funds to our youth program, which was a wise decision based on our mission. We also love this area of South, and knew that the residents of Longfellow would be very on board with our mission.”

After neutralizing the color scheme, putting up their logo and color patterns on the back wall, and bringing in new furniture, Wildflyer Coffee opened on Dec. 15, 2020.

Located just three blocks from the Third Precinct, Wildflyer staff and board are talking a lot about racial justice.

“Many of the youth we employ are BIPOC, and statistically, youth of color experience homelessness at higher rates than their peers,” Kammerer pointed out. “Internally, we’re working to make sure our staff/leadership/board of directors adequately reflects the youth we employ, and part of that is diversity and bringing program graduates themselves onto the board.”

“Externally, with COVID restrictions easing up, we are hoping to use our shop, especially the extra side room, as a hub for community meetings and activism. We’re not sure what that looks like yet, but working on opening it up as a place to be used for real social change.”

The nonprofit coffee shop, creates employment opportunities for youth aged 16-24 who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. “Every dollar spent not only goes back into our work and life skills training program, but each customer is actually partnering with the mission closely by providing those critical interactions that are the training platform for skill development,” said Kammerer. “It’s really a community response to ending youth homelessness in our city.”

The name came from the idea that the youth who work there are “wildflyers.”

“We feel like our youth have so much potential within them, they just need support to really soar,” said Kammerer. “We provide that support, and partner with them in moving forward into a whole new future.”

She recommends folks check out their toast menu, with the popular avocado or hummus and kimchi toast. “Right now, with our spring drink menu, our ‘paint me like one of your French girls’ latte is really popular. It’s Rose Cardamom!”

“Come see our space, meet our youth, be part of the mission and vision!”

More at <https://wildflyercoffee.com/>.

MORE >> 13

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UP CLOSE WITH THREE COFFEE SHOPS

>> From 12

Milkweed adjusts hours and staff

Milkweed (3822 E. Lake St.) had been open less than a year under owners Brenda Ingersoll and Alex Needham when the pandemic hit. They shut down in March with 10 staff members, and when they reopened in April it was with the two of them and one other person.

Needham built a take-out window in the front door and installed plexiglass around the barista kitchen, and they started selling their signature drinks again with limited hours. He built a few more take-out doors for other local businesses, as well.

A year later, they began ramping up their staff again, starting from scratch as former employees had drifted away. Their menu is complicated and takes 4-5 days of training to master. "Generally, if they're excited about what we do, they can get along with the workload," remarked Ingersoll.

The menu includes delicious and nutritious drinks that are tailored to specific ailments, such as a hot toddy with elderberry, lime, rosemary and trace minerals to build the immune system in the winter. The Dirty Sailor is a warming, detoxifying dirty chai made with dandelion, burdock, chicory, ghee and seasonal ayurvedic spices. Their signature drink is a nettle and matcha latte with lavender syrup, oat pistachio milk and cbd, served cold or hot. With a focus on vegan and dairy-free offerings, they make their own plant-based milks (coconut, almond, oat pistachio, pumpkin seed and hazelnut).

"I see coffee as medicine. I



Brenda Ingersoll has staffed many of the hours at Milkweed herself since the pandemic began, but has recently brought on new staff members. (Archives)

see tea as medicine," said Ingersoll, who views the cafe as a mothering space. "We're just trying to heal and caffeinate."

Many of the herbs and some tea blends come from Sacred Blossom Farm in Mondovi, Wisconsin or Frontier Coop in Iowa.

Regular patrons include folks from the local neighborhood as well as people from the greater Twin Cities' metro area drawn by Milkweed's unique plant-based, vegan drinks and gluten-free options. One woman drives 30 minutes daily each way from St. Louis Park.

"We've become a secret destination," said Ingersoll. "Tons of people don't do dairy, it turns out."

The health and safety directives along with peoples' new habits changed how their space is used. Previously, there was a morning rush of folks getting coffee on their way to work in the morning. Now, they serve a steady stream of people all day.

Some get their coffee and tea to go, while others pick one of 12 chairs at six tables on the sidewalk patio.

Being located on East Lake Street through the civil unrest has been stressful, admitted Ingersoll. She drives past the Third Precinct and destroyed buildings every day on her way to work. "It's hard to see an area that was finally coming back to life get destroyed," said Ingersoll. "I'm sure it will start to grow and flourish again. It's just going to take time."

For a time last summer following the protests, Milkweed and Peppers and Fries next door were the only places open on that stretch of East Lake Street.

"People really needed coffee. They were up all night patrolling the neighborhood," recalled Ingersoll.

It has been rewarding to offer people a space to talk and feel safe.

Southside Garage Sale Day set for June 5

NENA offers many ways to get involved in your community.

• Southside Neighborhoods Garage Sale Day - Matching buyers and sellers throughout the Nokomis East and Standish-Ericsson neighborhoods, plus Corcoran and the Longfellow Community Council neighborhoods on Saturday, June 5, 2021. Visit standish-ericsson.org/garagesale2021/ for a map of the sales.

• Nokomis East Free Food Distributions - On the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, NENA hosts a free food distribution at 5735 Sander Drive from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. All are welcome, and volunteers are needed. Items include dairy, meat, fresh produce, pantry staples, toiletries, cleaning supplies, and culturally appropriate food options. For more information, visit nokomiseast.org/nokomis-east-free-food-distribution/

• Minnehaha Food Shelf - Every Tuesday, the Minnehaha Food Shelf is open from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm at 3701 E. 50th Street. For more information, visit minnehaha.org/foodshelf.html

Staying in Place Grants

NENA is pleased to offer our Staying in Place grant program through its nonprofit partner, Rebuilding Together Twin Cities.

Staying in Place Grants help vulnerable adults (lower-income households, seniors, residents living with a disability, and/or veterans) address outstanding housing maintenance issues. Rebuilding Together Twin Cities will provide access to needed funds to help these property owners living on fixed incomes make repairs to live safely in place with economic stability.

Offered services

Safe at Home: Provide home safety and fall prevention modifications and ramps for older adults and individuals living with

Nokomis East Neighborhood Association



By BECKY TIMM, Executive Director
becky.timm@nokomiseast.org

a disability.

Home Repair: Provide volunteer-delivered repairs, including weatherizing, cleaning, installing flooring, patching and painting, siding, and landscaping, and timely contractor-delivered repair or replacement of essential systems, such as HVAC, electrical, plumbing, outer envelope, and roofs. For more information, visit nokomiseast.org/staying-in-place/ or call NENA at (612) 724-5652.

Join NEBA

The Nokomis East Business Association is a volunteer-driven, fully independent organization. Our membership is open to local businesses - both storefront and home-based - as well as service organizations located in the Nokomis East neighborhood of Minneapolis.

NEBA works to promote our members and area businesses through our website, Facebook and Instagram accounts, newsletter, and through networking meetings and gatherings. By working together, we can build a stronger, richer, and more vibrant community. Find out more about NEBA, its great programming, and become a member at www.nokomiseastba.com.

Meetings and events:

6/1/2021: NENA Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee at 6:30 pm, Via Zoom

6/9/2021: Nokomis East Free Food Distribution at 2-4 p.m.

6/17/2021: NENA Green Initiatives Committee at 6:30 p.m.

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NENA's Staying in Place Grants help vulnerable adults - lower-income households, seniors, residents with a disability, and veterans - address housing maintenance issues

For the Keewaydin, Minnehaha, Morris Park, and Wenonah neighborhoods

Visit nokomiseast.org/staying-in-place or call NENA at (612) 724-5652 to learn more

KIDS ON BIKES >> From 1

Bike parks for the 70,000+ kids in Minneapolis

The goal of Minneapolis Bike Parks is to create accessible, exciting, and safe bike parks for the 70,000+ kids who call Minneapolis home.

"We would love to see a bike park within a 10-15 ride from all Minneapolis homes. We want to remove the barriers that prevent people from being able to experience the thrill of a bike ride. Those barriers are access, cost, time, and representation," observed Olson.

Some kids are traveling to Isanti for the indoor BMX track and others go out to Cottage Grove's extensive bike park.

"They have the parents who ride, they have the gear, the ability to transport multiple bikes, and the time to drive a 40-mile round trip on top of the ride time. The same holds true for most of the folks driving from Minneapolis to any of the local mountain bike trailheads like Battle Creek, Lebanon Hills, Carver, etc. Those experiences aren't always an option for kids whose parents aren't riders," Olson explained.

"Minneapolis lacks opportunities for kids to get excited about biking. Kids in the city, in almost any city, lack dedicated, fun spaces to ride and learn on their bikes.

"We want to see permanent locations around the city that draw kids, and riders of all ages, to them for various reasons. Some parks may be better suited for younger kids, some parks may have a pump track, other parks may have both or something completely different. When more kids ride, more parents start riding."

What's coming next?

Minneapolis Bike Parks has



Fans of the Nokomis Bike Skills area include Devin Olson, Zaylee Olson (7), Jozie Olson (9), Beatrice Torres (10), Samantha Stignani (4), Sophia Stignani (6), Mike Torres, Sylvia Torres (6). (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

been heavily involved in every MPRB master plan in the last three years.

"In the beginning people looked at us funny when we said we wanted to see bike parks on our parks, but once we engaged with the park board and community it became evident that these new features would be a great addition to the system," said Olson.

The South Minneapolis Service Area Master Plan was completed before the Minneapolis Bike Parks group could give input, so they are exploring options to amend it. There are two bike parks that are part of the Minnehaha Parkway Regional Trail Master Plan, that happen to be in South Minneapolis.

To date there are about 12 bike parks in master plans and three pilot skills parks in the system (Bryn Mawr, Nokomis, and Northeast Park).

Olson, who is a Nokomis resident, frequents the Nokomis Bike Skills Park. "People really appreciate the park's simplicity, its location in the neighborhood, and that fact that it's always there," he said. "Bike rodeos and pop-up bike parks are cool, but they only last a few hours and don't allow riders to master their

skill.

"It's pretty incredible to see how many people frequent the skills park and how confident riders get on two wheels because they go at their own pace. There is also an element of positive peer pressure and, of course, a small amount of risk, but arguably no more than a regular playground or sports field."

This year, the long-awaited pump track and natural surface skills area will be constructed at Perkins Hill Park in north Minneapolis (300 34th Ave. N.) after a one-year delay. "It will be the first of its kind in Minneapolis or St. Paul and will provide the youth of our city with a pretty cool experience," stated Olson.

"Bike parks get kids riding bikes and riding bikes helps connect us with nature, combats obesity, provides an alternative to traditional ball and stick sports, encourages active transportation, and introduces youth to lifelong sport/activity," remarked Olson.

Introducing people to power of a bicycle

It's fairly common to see bike parks in the suburbs or near a big city, but not in the city it-

self, observed Olson. "Minneapolis is in a very unique situation where we have a chance to be a leader in this space with as many bike parks as we have in the master plans - it's a matter of getting the projects prioritized and funded. The creation of the pump track at Perkins Hill will really help bring additional visibility to the pump track and hopefully help expedite other builds."

Over the course of the last couple years people in other cities like St. Paul, Eden Prairie, Bloomington and Hudson have noticed the progress Minneapolis has been making, and have started to ask questions about how they can get started in their community.

"I am hopeful that as a region we can build off of each other and continue to introduce more people to power of a bicycle," said Olson.

Get involved

"The last year has been tough to create opportunities to get involved because of so much uncertainty, but as we start to make the turn we are hoping to identify opportunities to get engaged follow us on Instagram or Facebook at @mplsbikeparks to get the latest info," said Olson. "Ask your neighborhood rec center to offer biking courses or better yet volunteer to lead one. There are bike parks in the master plans, but there isn't immediate funding for all of them so if you know of a funding source that would be able to help expedite a park build we'd love to hear about it."

Learn more at <https://www.mplsbioparks.org/>.

Also interested in skate parks? Follow City of Skate, which is advocating for a skate park on the west side of the Nokomis Rec Center, among other locations in the city. The new Elliot Skate Park at 901 S. 8th St. is set to open in June. More at <http://www.cityofskate.org/>

Ideas for family-friendly, off-street biking

Devin Olson: It can be very challenging to find good places to ride off-street especially with really young kids, but I have found that it works best to toss high expectations out the window and just go with the flow. Make sure you have a Plan B and always keep it fun.

If the ride isn't going well, stop to climb a tree or dip your toes in the water, do something that takes their mind off the ride for a bit. Don't venture too far from home or the car until you know what your kids can handle.

There are going to be crashes, tears, and melt-downs, but always remember the promise of ice cream does wonders.

We really enjoy riding just about anywhere in the city. When you travel by bike your view of the city and connections to your surroundings are completely different than when you are in a vehicle. Last year during 30 Days of Biking in April, we would take long, 20ish-mile rides to see how many pieces of cool graffiti or paintings on the sides of buildings we could see. When it was all said and done, we had made over 100 stops, it was a never-ending scavenger hunt and it really got the girls excited about riding further than they had ever ridden before.

For mountain biking we like Theo Wirth. The singletrack trails that allow you to escape the city and connect with nature while still offering amazing views of the downtown skyline. We also like heading up the Nokomis Skills park to meet up with friends and just goof around on our bikes.

As far as trails go, we really like Salem Hills in Inver Grove Heights. It's a pretty flat trail and doesn't draw the same crowds that some of the other trails draw. Cottage Grove Bike Park has a paved pump track, and the Carver Lakes Skills Park in Woodbury is pretty rad.

Outside of Minneapolis, we really enjoy the La Crosse, Wis. area. They have some great mountain biking and a couple pump tracks, plus we have family in town so it's always fun when we have great riding company.



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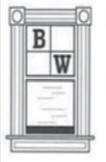
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