

SOUTHWEST Connector

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WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU REMOVE INTERSTATE 94?

As community rethinks I-94,
they consider reparative
justice, climate change, and
how people live and work

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

What happens if Interstate 94 is removed between Minneapolis and St. Paul?

Our Streets Minneapolis is leading the conversation to rethink I-94 and consider various options.

They point out that the people who live in the corridor are the least likely to own a car and drive along I-94, and yet they are the ones being harmed by the pollution.

A multi-modal boulevard could fill in the trench with sidewalks and seating, two-way bikeways, a linear park, transitways and stations, traffic lanes, and affordable housing. The existing street grid could be reconnected. A freight alleviation route could move trucks elsewhere.

"I-94 was a very controversial roadway when it was built and it remains very controversial," said HMC Transportation Chair John Levin during the Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) Transportation Committee meeting on July 17, 2022, which can be viewed online.

"This project will determine the future of this corridor for the next half century or longer," said Our Streets Transportation Police Coordinator Alex Burns. It can be hard to consider what the roadway might look like if it wasn't an interstate. Our Streets seeks to start the community conversation and facilitate the visioning.



BDE MAKA SKA GIANT GREEN CHAIR FACELIFT



The 12-foot-tall Giant Green Chair at the northwest corner of Bde Maka Ska at 3033 Excelsior Blvd got a facelift on Aug. 12, 2022. The project is a collaboration of Lakeside Center (property owner), artist Joel Sisson (creator of the Green Chair Project), and Elpis Enterprises.

The chair at Bde Maka Ska is part of the original Green Chair Project that began in south Minneapolis during the early 1990s. The project was a way for young people to create a better community with guidance from Sisson by building Adirondack chairs. It was re-ignited by Elpis Enterprises, 2161 University Ave. in Saint Paul, with Sisson's assistance in the summer of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd.

Elpis Enterprises is a nonprofit that uses its social enterprises to support young people who have experiences that can make it difficult

to enter the work force. Paid internships are offered in screen printing and woodworking.

The work at Bde Maka Ska involved replacing seat boards and repainting the big chair. Elpis Enterprises summer interns from both Step Up (Minneapolis) and Right Track (St. Paul) helped with this project. The sale of Adirondack chairs help support this program and chairs can be purchased online through elpisenterprises.org. Workshops on chair building are also offered by Elpis.

▶ See more on page 2.

CONNECTED



Artist Habiiq Ibrahim of Moon Juice Art directs volunteers from Fortune Relief and Youth Empowerment Organization (FRAYEO) as they work together to create the mural on the side of Twisted Hare Salon (3401 Nicollet Ave.) on Saturday, Aug. 13. The fungi in the mural illustrate how community members support each other. (Photo by Chloe Peter)

▶ See more on page 6.

MAYOR PROPOSES 6.5%, 6.2% LEVY INCREASES

Council members plan to hold
budget meetings with voters

By **Cam Gordon**

On Aug. 15, Mayor Jacob Frey gave his annual budget address and presented his recommended budgets for 2023 and 2024 to the City Council for their consideration.

This formally kicks off the public process for one of the most significant council decisions of the year, approving the biennial budget for the next two years. It is set to conclude, following a series of committee meetings and public hearings, with a final vote on Dec. 6.

Although it is a two-year budget, for the second year the mayor is committed to submitting an amended budget in

August 2023. In his speech he said that a biennial budget would provide greater trust and is a way "we can blow by that old normal."

"I am, obviously, thrilled to see a biennial budget shift that you know I've been championing for years," said Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano.

Ward 7 Council Member Lisa Goodman was also supportive. "I am very pleased to see that the mayor and administration have moved to biennial budgeting," she said. "It's important to have the opportunity to focus on the departmental budgets and the details in the even year and analyze what's works and what hasn't in the odd years. With annual budgeting we never review what isn't going well. We just simply keep the basic service level and then increase for inflation and ongo-





GREEN CHAIR



The Green Chair project team. (L>R) Aaron Swinehart, Paul Ramsour (Elpis), Joel Sisson, JaMarien Miller, Lashay DeClercq-Ransom (Elpis), and Isabel Miller-Shiell. More online at www.swConnector.com. (Photo by Terry Faust)



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▶ LEVY INCREASES

ing costs. It has been my experience that no department head in the city will give up any funding even for things that aren't working. They just reallocate internally to do something else so we never see a reduction in department budgets."

Frey is recommending spending \$3.3 billion over the two years, with \$1.66 billion in 2023 and \$1.71 billion in 2024. To accomplish this, he recommends raising the tax levy 6.5% next year and 6.2% in 2024. If approved that will raise the total amount levied by \$27 million in 2023, and \$27.6 million in 2024 and will likely mean many property owners will see increases in their property taxes. The city finance department estimates that the levy increase of 6.5% will result in the property taxes for a median value home going up \$167 annually. This is not factoring changes to property valuations, which have increased throughout the city and will push this further upwards.

"In terms of the levy amount," said Palmisano, "I am sensitive to where this increase is going to be felt the greatest – in the lowest income parts of our city. However, I am also a little bit surprised that we have been able to stay this far below the current rate of inflation, given that inflation has the same amount of pressures on our supplies, materials, workforce, etc."

Goodman is not comfortable with the proposed levy increase. "With inflation going up, rent and mortgage payments going up, and costs rising while many incomes stagnate a large levy increase such

as this one will just make it more difficult for everyone," she said. "Remember the city is only one portion of the overall property tax payment. Parks, county and schools will surely increase, as well, compounding the problem. This is especially important when thinking about those who provide or need affordable housing. This will simply be passed on in the form of rent increases to cover the increase in taxes.

"It goes without saying that many constituents who have reached out to me this year feel like they are paying more and getting less from the city."

In his address, Frey highlighted affordable housing, city capacity and performance, climate and public health, economic inclusion and public safety as budget priorities for the next two years.

Frey's proposal includes a \$3 million increase for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund and \$2.7 million more for the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) with an ongoing \$1 million commitment.

Following the mayor's budget address Ward 11 Council Member Emily Koski said, "I'm glad to see the investment being made into the expansion of our Behavioral Crisis Response program. I hope this investment can support us moving to providing Behavioral Crisis Response services 24/7." The mayor has recommended expanding the Behavioral Crisis Response program with a \$1.45 million investment in 2023 and increasing that to \$2.9 million in 2024.

Koski also said, "I am grateful to see all of the investments into basic city services – our bread and butter here in the

city of Minneapolis." Among many investments in basic services, Frey is calling for an additional \$3.88 million in 2023 and \$4.37 million in 2024 to improve roads, trails and 311 response.

Koski is organizing a Ward 11 budget community meeting for October or November where there will be a presentation on the 2023-2024 recommended budget and opportunities for public participation.

Ward 10 Council Member Aisha Chugthai wrote to her constituents about the budget address, "I'm excited to hear directly from Ward 10 residents about how you think the city should spend our money.

"For now, I'm pleased to see a \$300,000 change item towards abortion access! Over the last few months, our office has worked with the Minneapolis Health Department, community organizations like Our Justice and Pro-Choice Minnesota, other cities around the country, policymakers at the city, and the mayor's office to ensure Minneapolis invests in abortion access." She added, "It's a really big deal to see this reflected as a starting point in the mayor's proposed budget!"

In addition to the funds to support abortion access in the health department's budget, the mayor has recommended ongoing funding of \$443,000 for the School Basic Clinics program to maintain one nurse practitioner, one medical assistant, one mental health counselor, and one health educator that had been grant funded, as well as \$645,000 in ongoing spending for treatment for opioid addiction. The treatment funding will come from a settlement agreement that the city participated

in with pharmaceutical distributors and opioid manufacturers. As part of the settlement agreement, Minneapolis will receive \$10.8 million over 18 years.

The Board of Estimate and Taxation President Samantha Pree-Stinson has some concerns about the budget. Two goals she cited in her campaign and as priorities for her first year in office – reparations and restoring the city's housing levy – were not directly included in the proposed budget. Pree-Stinson said that she is hoping to fund the housing levy to make an ongoing annual investment to public housing. She is also concerned about the overall levy increase and how "increasing taxes will disproportionately affect Black people." She wants to see some support for those most in need. "If we prioritize economic justice and prioritize things like public bathrooms, fountains, charging stations, safe use and needle exchanges, cooling and warming stations," she said, "it will help."

Looking ahead to possible amendments, Palmisano said, "I would support a larger sum for getting to more traffic calming requests that come from the community, which I think has quite a back log."

There will be plenty of time for the City Council to consider those, and other options in the months ahead. They will formally begin reviewing the proposed biennial budget at committee meetings in September. The Board of Estimate and Taxation will hold a public hearing on the levy on Sept. 14 and the council will hold public hearings on Nov. 10, Nov. 15, and before the final budget adoption on Dec. 6, 2022.



▶ RETHINKING I-94

"What do we want our community to look like in 20, 50, 100 years?" asked Levin. "How are we going to transition?"

'A SIGNIFICANT GASH'

The Minnesota Department of Transportation plans to revamp the 7.5-mile stretch of interstate that links the two Twin Cities from Marion St. west to Hiawatha Ave. It carries about 160,000 cars a day between the two cities. When the roadway was built in the 1960s, it displaced the homes and businesses that were there, as well as the city streets.

The underlying structure of the pavement and bridges is deteriorating, and the normal approach by MnDOT is to reconstruct the entire roadway.

"When MnDOT asked in 2016 if we should think about I-94 differently, the community resoundingly said yes," stated Levin. "We should not only be thinking about the roadway and the traffic on the roadway. We should be considering the health impacts of the roadway. We should be considering climate change, and the impact of driving on climate change. We should be thinking about equity, not only the historical wrongs but also the future.

"I-94 is a significant gash on the community, and it acts as a barrier," according to Levin. "It makes access much more difficult."

Priorities identified in an October 2021 community letter said that the Rethinking I-94 project must repair the high-

These two graphics show Interstate 94 today between St. Paul and Minneapolis (left) and what it could look like if the trench was filled in with buildings, trails, city streets and more.

way's harms and put the needs of adjacent communities first. This includes:

- Reduce air and noise pollution and resulting health disparities
- Advance racial equity and economic opportunity
- Reconnect neighborhoods
- Improve transportation access
- Reduce carbon emissions
- Reduce traffic injuries and deaths
- Prevent displacement

EFFECT ON NEIGHBORHOODS

"For a lot of us, it feels like I-94 has run through St. Paul forever," observed Ande Quercus, HMC Transportation Committee member. "St. Paul had a rail transit system for longer than the freeway has been there."

Rail transit was popular before the automobile industry gained momentum in the 1920s, pointed out Quercus. But the Twin Cities experienced large changes when the interstate system was created.

One in 20 Minneapolis residents lost their home due to highway construction of I-94, I-35 and Highway 55. In St. Paul, 6,000 people were displaced. Black and low-income communities were specifically targeted; 80 percent of Black residents in Minneapolis lived in the neighborhoods where highways were routed, and 80% of St. Paul's Black population lived in Rondo.

Levin observed that it is important to understand the huge change the free-

way had on the neighborhoods it went through. "It was destructive," said Levin.

28% DON'T HAVE A CAR WHO LIVE NEXT TO I-94

While the freeways enabled many to move out from the cities into the suburbs and still get to work, it didn't offer the same benefits to all. "Twenty-eight percent of the people in the I-94 corridor don't have access to a car," said Levin.

In Minnesota, transportation accounts for one-quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, Levin pointed out. "We will not really be able to address climate change until we address transportation in the region."

The people who are harmed by I-94 are the ones who use it least, said Burns. Air pollution in the Twin Cities is worse following roadways, particularly the heavily-trafficked interstates. "One of the things that's really important to know about these urban highways is that the traffic pollution creates these rivers of pollution and poison through the communities through which they run," said Burns.

Pollution impacts include asthma, cardiovascular disease, cancer, reduced lung function, impaired lung development, pre-term and low-birthweight infants, childhood leukemia, reduced academic performance in children, dementia and premature death. Some of the city's highest hospitalization rates for asthma occur along the interstates. Asthma hospitalization within the Rethinking I-94 cor-

ridor is three times the state average and two times the county average. It is 9.05 per 10,000 residents.

A look at household income shows that those who live in the Rethinking I-94 corridor make much less than those who live elsewhere. In the corridor, the median household income is \$45,164, compared to \$57,876 in St. Paul, \$62,583 in Minneapolis, \$68,871 in Ramsey County, and \$82,369 in Hennepin County, according to the American Community Survey.

OTHERS HAVE TAKEN OUT FREEWAYS

Other large cities have converted their highways into boulevards. In San Francisco, the Embarcadero Freeway was ripped out to provide better access to the waterway for residents and tourists. In Seoul, South Korea, the multi-story Cheonggye Freeway was removed to daylight a creek and add a linear park.

The city of Syracuse, N.Y. is set to remove a 1.4-mile stretch of Interstate 81 that has sliced through its downtown since the 1950s. A new community grid will reconnect neighborhoods.

The 11-lane Paris Beltway will be converted by 2030 into an eight-lane system with two lanes for streetcars with a linear park in the center.

Electric cars won't save us, asserted Burns. It will take decades for mass adoption. Right now, they make up 2% of new car sales and less than 2% of Minnesota cars are electric. They still produce greenhouse gas emissions depending on the grid source. They produce air pollution, create noise pollution, and require metals with harmful mining practices.

Our Streets representatives have knocked on 4,000 doors between Seward and Frogtown neighborhoods. "People don't believe the state and the city will invest in them and their neighborhoods," said Raquel Sidie-Wagner. Overall, people have been enthusiastic, said Sidie-Wagner. "It's been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

"In the long run, we want to change the way people live and work in the region," said Levin.

Learn more about the effort to transition I-94 and Bring Back 6th (Highway 55/Olson Memorial Highway) at: twincitiesboulevard.org.

SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE

A perspective of our political climate from a member of Generation Z

Being 22, I am on the older end of Generation Z, people born from 1997 to 2012. I am a part of the same 'cringey' generation who does Fortnite dances and is obsessed with TikTok videos. However, the other day, I was curious about how Gen Z compares to the generations that came before us.

We are the first generation to completely grow up in a digital age. I remember the day in fifth grade when we got smart boards instead of projectors, and how exciting it was to learn how to use the little battery-operated pens. But I also remember things like watching the students of Sandy Hook Elementary on live television run out of the school in terror. I was barely older than them; a sixth grader wondering what if it were my school? What if it were my friends? And would our lockdown practice work?



By **Chloe Peter**

These events have definitely shaped the way that we think about things. While my friends and I discuss politics, I've noticed that many of us fall somewhere in the middle. Going to a Christian college, I was prepared to tiptoe around certain political standpoints, but was surprised as to how willing others were to engage in thoughtful conversation rather than attacking one another.

This is consistent with what has been found of Gen Z as a whole. A Politico study found that despite a "leftward bend" in political tendencies, Gen Z are actually no more likely to identify with Democrats than registered voters. However, they would rather ditch the two-party system and go independent. In fact, Gen Z are wary of voting as a whole. There is less trust in the way that the voting process works. Instead, according to the study, Gen Z are more likely to be supportive of protests.

The Politico article states, "And while Gen Z respondents were less likely to think their vote mattered in comparison with registered voters, they were more likely to think that protesting is a very effective way to impact politics and public affairs, again signaling disillusionment with 'politics as usual.'" I agree with the point that Gen Z is

more likely to feel that giving attention to dire situations can make some sort of change. I've had many conversations where it is clear that people are sick of neither Republicans nor Democrats making big changes. While the recent Inflation Reduction Act is a win for climate change in my book, there are still many issues that remain in stalemate.

Just recently, I was having a conversation discussing how, though many Republicans and Democrats alike may accuse Biden of not being strong enough to make big changes, both sides have struggled. A \$35 cap on insulin was suggested but did not go through. A stimulus going toward baby formula was also suggested and then shot down. In my opinion, the fault falls on both sides although maybe not equally each time. This is where Gen Z becomes incredibly frustrated. So much of America is suffering, and yet many of our voices are not being heard through voting in a two-party system.

While I agree that there will never be a perfect candidate and we need to vote for the one that closest aligns to what we believe gives the best results, I and many other Gen Zers have become increasingly aware that applying the law to real life situations is not as black and white as politicians make it seem to be.

For example, the Florida Parental Rights in Education Act, more commonly known as the 'Don't Say Gay' bill, was passed in order to "prohibit schools from

using a curriculum or discussing topics of gender identity or sexual orientation" according to an MPR article. While thousands of high school students, members of Gen Z, had walk outs and protests, MPR reported that dozens more states were considering or have already implemented legislation that mimics the Florida law.

And yet, this situation is not as black and white as 'protecting' children from learning about sexual orientation. Talking about sexual orientation may not be a part of the curriculum, but educating students on different familial types and how others are different from them is crucial for building happy and healthy relationships. A study by Michigan State University on child development found that it is incredibly important to help children develop perspective taking in order to use the skill for empathy and understanding of others.

How then are we to have the conversations that keep us working with one another, that educate us and push us if it is seen as simple as black and white? I am proud of my generation for seeing the gray and taking steps toward change.



Chloe Peter is a writer, editor, and local news enthusiast. She is an advocate for creativity and learning with a sense of wonder. Contact her at news@swconnector.com.



WHAT DO YOU APPRECIATE MOST ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

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FOLLOW UP TO MY LAST COLUMN ABOUT 'REPUBLICAN UNTRUSTWORTHINESS'

TEAMING UP FOR GOOD

I was not surprised to receive a lot of response to my last column, which among other things, included these sentiments:

"Once you have drunk the Republican Kool-Aid, you seem to remain forever deluded... (Republicans) don't feel the same way that we do about either hypocrisy or democracy... If the Republican Party was a spouse, we would have gotten divorced... They are untrustworthy... Voting Republican is morally wrong at this point."

The most thoughtful and heartfelt letter I received came from B, who said, among other things:

"I try to keep an open mind... It's a big country with a lot of layers... I find myself where Democrats were 20 years ago... Live and let live... The extremes on both sides are a bit intolerable and the truth is somewhere in the middle... As someone who plays devil's advocate in the middle, I feel like you're not asking yourself the same questions of your party as you are asking the other side..."

B also wrote that he hoped that I would read the column about "Extremism" that appeared on same page as mine,



By **Larry LaVercombe**

written by fellow Southwest Connector columnist Eric Ortiz. Here are a couple phrases from that column:

"The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result... Going to the extremes does not work... People used to be able to work together, even if they disagreed... What happened to both-and solutions?"

I appreciate honest dialogue, and so I'll begin by saying that I agreed with a lot of what Mr. Ortiz said in his column. I don't find extremism in policy to be a wise thing, so sure, I believe we can find middle ground between having "some parking and some bike lanes." For what it's worth, in my opinion, the most counter-productive phrase ever uttered was "defund the police."

But, like I said, it's honest dialogue I appreciate, and it's honest dialogue that has been abandoned by, not both, but only one of the two major parties.

So, to Mr. Ortiz, I would answer the question, "What happened to both-and solutions?" with this: What happened? One side quit negotiating honestly. Yes, "people used to be able to work together," but we can't any longer because the Republican side insists on "alternative truths," which are, in fact, not true at all. Global warming is not a hoax. The election was not stolen. Iraq was not manufacturing yellow-cake uranium.

We actually went to war on that last lie. And since then, their lies have become commonplace. We even get to call them lies on TV now. Before Trump, we couldn't utter the word "lie" in polite company.

And sure, everyone lies. Everyone is capable of bending the truth. No one is perfect, so you can always find a place to point a finger.

But if the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, aren't we insane to continue to trust them and work with them? Is it really such an extreme position to "want a divorce?"

You may recall that regarding Obama's agenda, John Boehner came right out and said: "We're going to do everything - and I mean everything we can do - to kill it, stop it, slow it down, whatever we can." Mitch McConnell said, "The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president." And so, despite Obama's inheriting the greed-fueled Great Recession and banking crisis, Republicans did nothing but obstruct every healthy change he tried to enact. And let's not forget Karl Rove's denigrating comments about the "reality-based community," those of us who were stuck repeating our "judicious study of discernable reality," while he and his Republicans "create our own reality." "We're history's actors," he said, "and you, all of you, will be left to

just study what we do."

This is the modern Republican, and so, to B, I would say this: If you're where the Democrats were 20 years ago, you're living in the past. Those times are gone. We now have a Republican party that thinks the FBI are the bad guys and the Russians are the good guys. Twenty years ago that would have been absurd. And as Star Tribune cartoonist Scott Stantis noted the other day, the party of law-and-order is now taking the fifth. Sure, the extremes may be intolerable, but is it really so extreme to expect a party to stand behind "reality" and the peaceful exchange of power?

My point here is that we are not equally extreme, nor are we both equally responsible for the mistrust and the spreading of dangerous lies. And so long as well-meaning people believe that the solution is sitting down and talking honestly with people that have proven themselves incapable of honesty itself, we are "just doing the same thing over and over."



Larry LaVercombe is a writer, filmmaker, and activist, born in Detroit and arrived in Minneapolis in 1975. He lived in a treehouse in San Diego before getting an MFA from the USC Film School. He writes most days, and as Team Larry he has been selling residential real estate in Minneapolis for 26 years.

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FEELING GOOD STARTS WITH GRATITUDE

There is a science to happiness. Appreciating the little things is part of it.

Birthdays are about a lot more than eating cake. Of course, it's always nice to celebrate another trip around the sun. But it's equally important to remember that we don't make the trip alone.



By **Eric Ortiz**

Everyone we meet along the way is part of our journey. Parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, teachers, coaches, mentors, bosses, friends and foes. Some people make a big impact. Some make a little impact. But everyone makes an impact.

I just had a birthday, and I did a lot of reflecting. The older I get, the more reflecting I do. This year, I realized there are three types of people in the world. People who like birthdays. People who don't like birthdays. And people who hate people who like birthdays.

I like birthdays. Every time I have one I am grateful for the opportunity. But I don't need a birthday to celebrate life. Every day above ground is a good day.

A few weeks ago on a Sunday night before my birthday, I was thinking about gratitude and the meaning of gratitude.

The thought ended up taking me down one of those Google rabbit holes. You know the ones where you start a search, find an interesting link, and 25 clicks later, you're ready to start a doctoral dissertation.

Along the way, I read something profound: Gratitude is more than just giving thanks. It's about doing thanks. It is about performing acts of gratitude.

How do we perform acts of gratitude? By giving. Giving time. Giving money. Giving service. Giving whatever we can and being generous.

Generosity and gratitude are linked. The link goes back to primitive times. In an article entitled "How to Put the Giving in Thanksgiving," Kira Newman, the co-editor of The Gratitude Project, explains: "Evolutionary theorists suggest that gratitude and generosity have long been intertwined. Gratitude could have facilitated the process of reciprocal altruism, whereby one person's generous behavior inspires the other to act in kind. Our ancestors who participated in this cycle of gratitude and generosity were more likely to survive, the theory goes."

If you live gratefully, you are more likely to show generosity. And if you demonstrate generosity, you are more likely to live longer. According to The Gratitude Project — a project of the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley in California — the benefits of gratitude include stronger immune systems and less depression. More joy, optimism, and happiness. Stronger relationships and more

generous behavior. And less feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The Greater Good Science Center (GGSC) was founded in 2001 and has been called "the epicenter for research on happiness and gratitude." It's a place that studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society.

The best part is that there are ways to become more grateful. And anyone can do it. Robert Emmons, the GGSC's lead collaborator on the Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude project, is considered one of the world's leading scientific experts on gratitude and has 10 tips for living a life of gratitude.

1. Keep a gratitude journal.
2. Remember the bad and hard times to appreciate the good ones.
3. Ask yourself three questions based on a meditation technique known as Naikan — "What have I received from ___?", "What have I given to ___?", and "What troubles and difficulty have I caused?"
4. Learn prayers of gratitude.
5. Appreciate your senses — the ability to touch, taste, smell, see and hear.
6. Use visual reminders (such as people) to trigger thoughts of gratitude.
7. Make a vow to practice gratitude.
8. Be positive with your words and use the language of "gifts, givers, blessings, blessed, fortune, fortunate, and abundance."
9. Go through grateful motions —



(Debby Hudson/Unsplash)

smile, say thank you, write letters of gratitude.

10. Think outside the box and look for new ways, situations and circumstances to feel grateful.

Doing all of this can trigger the emotion of gratitude. Like anything, it will take some practice. But it's good to know there is a science to happiness, and you can feel good by being more grateful.

If you're still not convinced gratitude is good, don't worry. Keep looking for the goodness in life and appreciating the little things like sunrises and sunsets. As the poet and theologian Johannes A. Gaertner said, "To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch heaven."

So dream as if you will live forever. Live as if you will die today. And be grateful for the opportunity.

▶ Eric Ortiz lives in the Wedge with his family. When he's not community building, he's the director of media for Big Edition and writes bilingual children's books with his kids. Their first book, "How the Zookalex Saved the Village," is available in English and Spanish.

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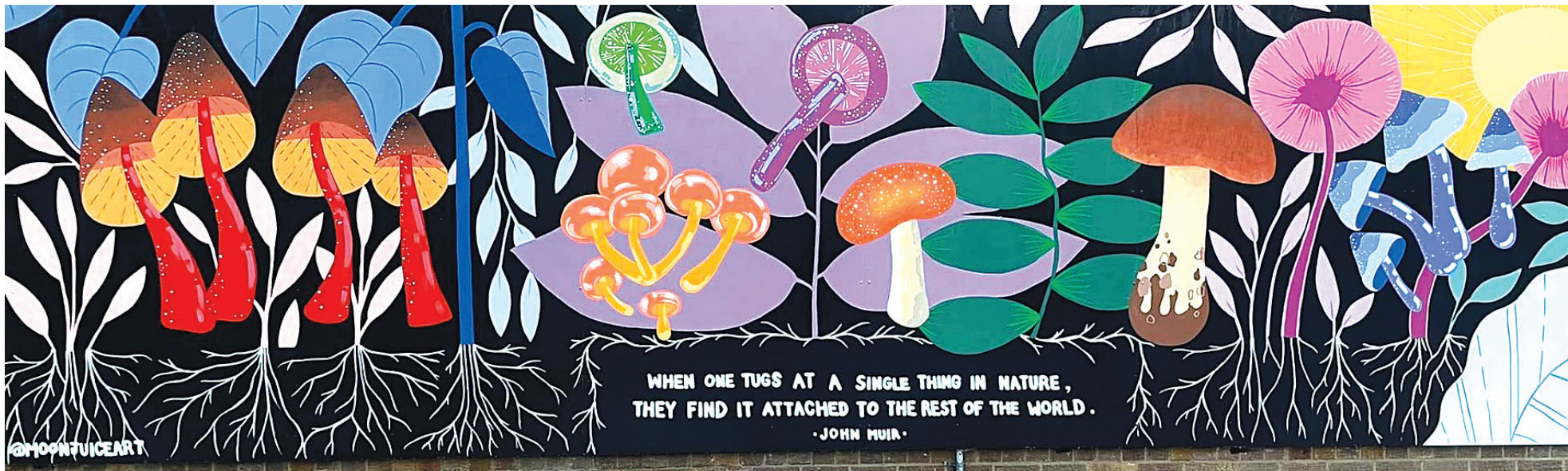
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1 CONNECTED

Mural features fungi, showing how community members support each other

By **Chloe Peter**

On Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022, the Lyndale and Kingfield Neighborhood Associations hosted a Nicollet Pop-off at the Twisted Hare Salon, 3401 Nicollet Ave. The main event, along with a live band, food, and art-making opportunities, was a mural painting done by Habiiq Ibrahim, otherwise known as Moon Juice Art. The mural included brightly colored fungi that used the theme of Alice and Wonderland from Twisted Hare Salon, but it also invoked a sense of community.

Mushrooms have large root systems connecting them together and sharing

nutrients and support throughout. This is where Ibrahim mentioned that she reached the idea of using mushrooms to demonstrate community as they support one another just as neighborhoods do.

"I enjoy creating spaces where people can gather together and evoke conversations with one another no matter their background," Ibrahim said.

Furthering the idea of community even more, kids from the local YMCA helped Ibrahim paint the mural. A program called the Fortune Relief and Youth Empowerment Organization (FRAYEO) helped organize the event in order to help kids get involved in the community. FRAYEO, located in Karmel Mall at 2910 Pillsbury Ave Suite, is the leading immigrant and refugee-led organization focused on stabilizing the lives of East African communities in Minnesota. It offers parenting education, women's empowerment, housing, and employment services.

Immigrants and refugees face barriers when trying to adjust to the new culture and life such as language, technology,

and transportation. It can make it even more difficult for them to get a job or find housing. When kids and their families can be directly involved in community events and find help through these barriers, FRAYEO believes it can bring the whole community forward.

The website states, "Youth grow up so fast, and their attitudes about themselves and their future shape our community and culture."

Creating spaces where conversations could happen and community could gather was the general theme of the event as there were also signs posted asking community members to weigh in on questions such as "What makes Nicollet Great?" and "What do you want to do and see on Nicollet?"

The quote by John Muir on the bottom of the mural rings out the theme of coming together and being connected: "When one tugs at a single thing in nature, they find it attached to the rest of the world."

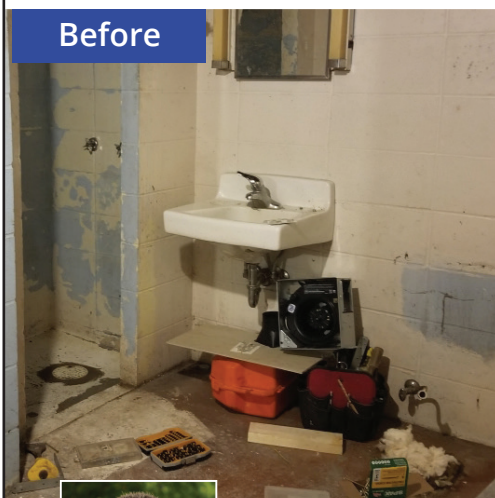


Tammy Ortega, owner of Color Wheel Gallery at 46th and Grand shows pictures of mushrooms and other fungi on Aug. 13 to inspire art-makers. Items will be displayed at a community art show at a later date. (Photo by Chloe Peter)

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Community members make their own fungi art on Aug. 13. The Lyndale and Kingfield Neighborhood Associations invited communal conversation and created space for members of the community to gather. (Photo by Chloe Peter)



WALKIN' AROUND CHECKIN' STUFF OUT.



Since Java Jacks back in the 1990's, the neighborhood has gathered at 46th and Bryant to hangout in the sun, people watch, drink coffee and talk. It's nice to see Alma embracing that idea and opening a new spot. Hopefully a few cafe tables will follow as the southern exposure makes sitting outside bearable even on a cold winter day. (Illustration by WACSO)



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TALKING BACK-TO-SCHOOL READING HABITS WITH THE U OF M

Fall schedules are filling up fast for families as students head back to school. They will begin new activities like joining sports teams, auditioning for plays, participating in study groups and doing homework. With busy days and nights ahead, independent reading can often fall by the wayside as families adjust to their new back-to-school routines.

Lisa Von Drasek, curator of the Kerlan Collection of Children's Literature at the University of Minnesota, answers questions about the importance of independent reading for children's literacy development and how to make independent reading a priority this fall.

Q: WHAT IS INDEPENDENT READING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Von Drasek: We often hear how important it is for children to read independently. This is out-of-school reading time. Time to practice the reading skills they learned in school like sight words, rhyming words or a handful of phonemic awareness words – like the short a in cat, hat and bat. The best thing students can do when it comes to independent reading is practice, practice, practice. To make this happen, embrace reading habits that your child will actually enjoy. There are beneficial and fun activities that go beyond struggling alone with a worksheet, sounding out the words in a leveled reader, or slogging through that very, very sad book where the dog dies because it won an award a trillion years ago.

Q: HOW CAN FAMILIES SUPPORT INDEPENDENT READING?

Von Drasek: Choose joy! Read aloud. Often we hear about the importance of reading aloud 20 minutes a day. Put down the stop watch. Think sprints rather than a marathon. Poems are the perfect way to reinforce sounds and repetitions. Lucille Clifton, Nikki Grimes, Karla Kuskin, Joyce Sidman, Judy Sierra, Jane Yolen, Jack Prelutsky, Ashley Bryan, Shel Silverstein, Douglas Florian and Kristine O'Connell George are all children's book writers whose collections will spark delight in juicy language.

My best recommendation for raising readers is to be mindful of opportunities. Schedule weekly trips to the public library, even if there is a school library. Limited resources often mean that the school librarians are focused on supporting the curriculum. The public library may have more free reading high-interest choices like magazines and mass market series books, comics and how-to titles.

Also, get into the habit of leaving high-interest materials around the house. Sign up for access to free books for the home with organizations like Reading is Fundamental and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Model reading. Listening to an audiobook while preparing dinner or driving to soccer practice brings language and story to life.

Q: WHY ARE BACK-TO-SCHOOL STORYLINES HELPFUL?

Von Drasek: Anyone who recalls their school years as unrelenting sweetness and light is suffering from amnesia. Children and young adults can happily anticipate the new school year and at the same time have feelings of anxiety and fear. Books can help. If nothing else, the giving of a book on back-to-school topics communicates to these students that they aren't alone having these seemingly oppositional emotions.

Q: ARE THERE ANY SPECIFIC BOOKS WITH A BACK-TO-SCHOOL SETTING THAT YOU CAN RECOMMEND?

Von Drasek:
Grades K-1

"The Day You Begin" by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by Rafael Lopez: Even for grown-ups, it is super scary walking into a room where you don't know anyone. It doesn't matter if we are five-years-old or 50, the first times are hard. Children's Book Ambassador Jacqueline Woodson gently reminds us that we bring our unique gifts with us to every occasion and that our stories will bring us together. This book is also available in Spanish.

Grades 2-3

"A Fine Fine School" by Sharon Creech, illustrated by Harry Bliss: What if your school had a principal who loved the school, loved the teachers and loved the students so much that he declared that school should be held on weekends and holidays and summer?

Grades 4-6

"The Strange Case of Origami Yoda" by Tom Angleberger: This is the perfect all-class-read school story told from various students' perspectives. Angleberger delves into the social emotional dynamics of a sixth grade classroom as friendships and alliances are formed. The story is both fun and heartwarming.

Grade 5-8

"Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems" by Kristine O'Connell George: This collection of concise poems in a variety of formats — haiku, free verse and acrostic — express the big feelings of a sixth grader. The confusion, loneliness and fears that accompany this big transition in schooling are handled with deft and humor. George provides the perfect mentor text for students' own creative writing.

High school

"How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope" edited by James Crews: Crews has collected one hundred poems including the works of inaugural poet Amanda Gorman, Joy Harjo, Naomi Shihab Nye, Ross Gay, Tracy K. Smith, and others that speak directly to our hearts and serve as mentor texts for reflection and creative writing.

"Everything Comes Next: Collected and New Poems" by Naomi Shihab Nye: Remember what I said about leaving high-interest reading material around? Young People's Poet Laureate Nye has collected her most popular and well-known poems in this delicious volume. Nye dedicates this volume to "All readers and writers of poems everywhere, be brave, the little things still matter most."

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WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

LINDEN HILL HOSTS ANNUAL FEST SEPT. 17

FROM YOUR CENTER WITHIN

Working can be stressful! Everyone who is employed or volunteering has been pivoting and re-adjusting schedules, expectations, and communication these past few years. Thank you to all the front-line workers in our community who have showed up daily through all the closures, isolation, and ever-changing recommendations. For those of you adapting to moving back into the office or work travel again, the shifts can be anxiety producing.



By Michele Rae

How do you stay well at work? How do we support each other's optimal health and wellness in the workplace? Recently, I was hired by a commercial real estate organization to offer several workshops on "Resilience: Keys to Recovering as We Re-emerge from the Pandemic." It was heartwarming to hear their stories of gratitude, resilience, and perseverance. Simultaneously, it was heart wrenching as they shared their loss, frustration, and challenges. I was inspired as I listened to many leaders and employees describe how working in a business that supports flourishing, growth and development was a highlight as they navigated the uncertainty they encountered.

Here are a few tips from my research and experience on thriving in the workplace and creating a culture of well being. Healthy individuals support healthy workplaces which supports healthy communities.

MAKE SPACE TO NOTICE AND SHARE STRESSORS

Pay attention to physical, emotional, and behavioral stress symptoms. Encourage proactive healthy choices. Remember, the body's stress response is activated by a stressful event occurring in your imagination as worry or an actual event. If you catch yourself worrying about a past or future event, gently remove your attention from those thoughts.

If you work with a team, offer listening sessions. Allow time in meetings or on-on-one to discuss and process important events inside and outside of work. Utilize active and deep listening. Plan social events to develop relationships among the team. Invite diverse experiences into your conversations to continue learning through the lens of others.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR

Share strengths people utilize to cope and thrive through adversity. Communicate best practices and problem-solving techniques. Celebrate the wins individually and collectively. What type of creative activity has supported flexibility and connection? Offer a way for colleagues to share specifics on what they are grateful for at work. What we focus on grows!

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Create a culture where self-care is encouraged and rewarded. Utilize a self-care strategy at the beginning of meetings or the starting of shifts such as deep breathing, playing relaxing or rejuvenating music, or sharing an uplifting story or quote. Promote healthy eating, drink plenty of water, take short stretch breaks, or step outside for a longer break.

Utilize guided imagery by remembering a favorite vacation, a fabulous spot to sit, or a special person you enjoy being with. Allow your imagination to fully experience this memory by using all of your senses (touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste) to recreate a relaxing memory. In your time away from work, reset. Get out in nature, connect with friends, find time alone to reflect, move your body, go to the farmer's market, visit an art gallery, read a book, or cook your favorite meal. We live in an amazing community with many options!

ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

People want to learn and improve. Share interesting articles, videos, inspiring talks, or materials that support growth and development. Start a book club. Share recipes. Volunteer as a group. If you work alone, connect with like minded people who grow and learn in an area that interests you.

TEND TO YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Limit your screen time. Declutter your work and home space. Reduce avoidable interruptions. Add beauty through color or meaningful objects to your workspace. Add music, nature sounds, or silence to your workday. Bring nature to your indoor spaces through photographs, plants, and windows. Bike to work. Recycle and minimize waste.

We all can be leaders in our work environment through healthy choices and behavior. Be the change agent and trend setter you want to see.

Michele Rae provides holistic coaching designed to accelerate and support personal and professional transformation.

LINDEN HILLS

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

BY Barbara Lunde, board member

The Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHiNC) is excited to announce that it will host its annual festival at Linden Hills Park on Saturday, Sept. 17 from 12 to 8 p.m. The park is located at 3100 W. 43rd St. Admission is free; food and drinks will be available for sale.

The festival will feature delicious food from local vendors and a beer garden sponsored by Red Wagon Pizza. House of Music is working with LHiNC on an all-day entertainment line-up which will include family-friendly activities like kids' yoga and storytime, as well as live music from local musicians of all ages. This year's festival will also feature the return of kids' carnival games and inflatables, plus these other festival favorites: free crafts with Heartfelt and Simply Jane, used book sale by the Friends of Linden Hills Library and LHiNC's annual Silent Auction featuring donated prizes from all of our generous local businesses.

The Linden Hills Fall Festival wouldn't be possible without the support of dozens of local sponsors, including our Platinum Sponsors: House of Music, Jeff Meyer's State Farm Insurance, Linden

Hills Dentistry, Maggie Taylor Homes and Mint Orthodontics.

LHiNC is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that serves the Linden Hills community.

Funds raised through this fun annual event are invested in:

- Building Community - LHiNC funds and organizes events to bring our community together, including the annual Festival, Taste of Linden Hills, Art Shanty Projects on Lake Harriet and more. The association also produces and distributes the community newsletter The Line and maintains the community website and Facebook page.

- Protecting the Environment - LHiNC's Environmental Committee is very active. Projects include: a soil regeneration study, native and pollinator gardens, addressing milfoil in Lake Harriet, tree planting, removing invasive species from William Berry Woods, environmental education and more.

- Supporting Arts and Education - Through its bi-annual grants program, LHiNC has provided funding for: college scholarships, diverse book collections for elementary school libraries, student robotics programs, after school tutoring programs, Minneapolis Pops Orchestra concerts at the bandshell and more.

The Linden Hills Festival is organized by the Linden Hills Neighborhood Council (LHiNC). For more information, please contact LHiNC Board Member Barbara Lunde at bkunde@hotmail.com.

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FOOD, INFO, FREE ICE CREAM AND MORE AT MUELLER PARK POP-UP MARKET



Emilia Ortiz (right) and Jennifer Probsts (left) dish up free ice cream from Sebastian Joe's during the Twin Cities Community Pop-up Market at Mueller Park on Saturday, Aug. 20. The event was organized by Lowry Hills East Neighborhood Association and Bread. Local small businesses owners and organizations set up tables in the park, including the Southwest Connector.

When asked what articles she has liked most in the Connector, Wedge resident Evelyn Hill said, "It's not as much what's in the paper, but about feeling like a community."

Folks could ask questions and give input on the Lyndale 4 to 3 lane conversion. The Zen Meditation Center offered free meditations. The Minnesota Peacebuilding Institute talked about their restorative practices. There was music, food, and goods for sale.



The sisters and their daughters behind Solux make and sell soaps, sugar scrubs and more. They focus on using natural butters and oils, and stay away from chemicals. "Natural is better," said Tiffany Truitt of St. Paul. "We don't do anything out of the pouch." It's important to Truitt to teach her daughters to be self-made first, and to be independent.

The next Summer Pop-up Market at Mueller Park is Saturday, Sept. 17 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Cesia Baires, who just goes by Abi, dishes up her signature pupusas during the pop-up market. Her cafe with its Salvadoran and Mexican food used to be located at Lake and Bloomington, but she was broken into so often after George Floyd's murder that she shut the location down and operated out of food trucks. Abi's has recently reopened at 2828 Lyndale Ave S. "It's starting to pick up," said Baires. Her aunt owns a similar restaurant in Fridley, and was considering an expansion when Baires toured the location with her. At the time, Baires was living in Virginia. She decided to move to Minnesota and open a restaurant in March 2015. Her recipes come from her grandmother and aunt.

NEIGHBORHOOD BRIEFS

GREENWAY GLOW ARTS FESTIVAL SEPT. 10

The annual Greenway Glow Arts Festival on the Midtown Greenway will be Saturday, Sept. 10, 4 - 10 p.m. Bike, walk, or roll along the Greenway to experience live music, art installations, puppets, DJ's, dancers, and more. The festival is free, but you can support the Midtown Greenway and get free food and drinks by purchasing a VIP ticket.

ANNUAL LINDEN HILLS FESTIVAL SEPT. 17

Tour the METRO Green Line construction at Kenilworth LRT Tunnel on Thursday, Sept. 22, 1 - 2:15 p.m. Attendance is capped at 15. Contact outreach coordinator James Mockovciak at james.mockovciak@metrotransit.org

RECYCLE ELECTRONICS SEPT. 24

An e-waste recycling, paper shredding and data destruction event co-sponsored by 15 south Minneapolis neighborhood associations, will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24 from 9 a.m. to noon at Mayflower Church (106 E. Diamond Lake Road). Bring the following items for safe recycling AND data destruction:

- Documents with sensitive info for shredding- please recycle non-sensitive items in your regular recycling
- TVs (all kinds and sizes)
- Computers-including secure data destruction
- Tablets
- Phones (all kinds)
- Peripherals (cords, computer parts, keyboards, etc.)
- Small appliances (lamps, fans, vacuums, small kitchen appliances, etc.)

****Friendly reminder that Mpls Solid Waste & Recycling customers can also set out two electronics items every week that recycling is collected for no extra fee!****

Donations of \$5 happily accepted, or \$5 + \$5 if you want to sponsor a neighbor, to help cover Tech Dump and Paper Shredding fees and other event costs. No one will be turned away. Cash and cards will be accepted on-site.

SSCO BOARD OPENINGS

Do you think that you or someone you know would be a great fit for the Stevens Square Community Organization Board? SSCO currently has two open Board seats. Nominations will be open until Sept. 10, 2022 through the SSCO Quarterly Meeting.

CITY BRIEFS

HENNEPIN LAYOUT APPROVED

After the mayor's veto of the council approval of full-time bus-only lanes, the council approved a modified layout for the Hennepin Avenue South reconstruction project. The newly approved action, that mayor signed, commits to having the transit priority, bus-only lanes operational for a minimum of six hours between 6 a.m. and 7 p.m. once the reconstruction project is complete. The resolution also requires that a transition to all-day, bus-only lanes will not begin for at least 24 months after the completion of construction.

NEW COMMISSIONER OF COMMUNITY SAFETY CONFIRMED

Cedric Alexander was approved on Aug. 4 by an 8 to 3 vote (with two abstentions) to become the city's first Commissioner of Community Safety. Council Members Aisha Chughtai (Ward 10), Jeremiah Ellison (Ward 5) and Robin Wonsley (Ward 2) voted against the appointment, and Council Members Elliot Payne (Ward 1) and Jason Chavez (Ward 9) abstained. He will oversee the mayor's proposed Office of Community Safety, that includes 911, fire, emergency management, police, and neighborhood safety.

POLICE CONTRACT

On Aug. 15 and 22, the city held community meetings to get feedback from residents about the Minneapolis Police Federation contract that is up for renewal again this year. This was the first time the city has ever hosted public sessions to talk about this contract and it is estimated that over 100 people attended. A third meeting is expected to be held in mid-September.

POLICE DRONES

The police department has announced plans to begin using drones with cameras to observe and monitor areas of the city. The city's Public Health and Safety Committee held a public hearing on the plan on Wednesday, Aug. 24.

OPENINGS ON CITY ADVISORY BOARDS

There are 269 openings on 33 city boards and commissions that need new members this fall. The city is seeking volunteers to help review and recommend improvements to city policy and programs and give input on the administration of services. Applications are due by Friday, Sept. 30. The list includes several special service district boards in the southwest, including the 50th and France, 54th and Lyndale, Lyndale-Lake, Lowry Hill, Linden Hills and Uptown special services districts. You can get the full list of open-

ings and more information at <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/boards-and-commissions/current-openings/> or 612-673-2216 or by emailing OpenAppointments@minneapolismn.gov.

INCREASED AIRPORT TRAFFIC

There will likely be more jets flying over southwest Minneapolis starting in September. Beginning Sept. 6, a runway will be closed for six weeks for restoration at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The airport officials are warning that this could result in a noticeable increase in air traffic for Minneapolis residents. This is a project of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which owns and operates the airport. People can get flight information on the commission's online FlightTracker or call their community relations office at 612-726-9411.

INTERSECTION UPGRADE AT BDE MAKA SKA

Improvements are now being made to the intersection along Bde Maka Ska Parkway at Richfield Road and William Berry Parkway. When completed in late September or early October, there will be new traffic signals and improved pedestrian and bicycle ramps. The new signal will have a pedestrian scramble, which means that for a time all traffic in all directions

will be stopped to allow people to cross from at all corners including diagonally.

HIAWATHA GOLF COURSE

In September, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board will hold a final vote on the \$60 million Hiawatha Golf Course Area Master Plan after it passed a committee hearing where over 40 people spoke, and 50 written statements were also read. The committee approved the plan that will add wildlife habitat and water management and reduce the golf course to 9 holes, instead of 18. The full park board was expected to hold their final vote on Sept. 7.

PRIMARY ELECTION RESULTS

As a result of the primary election, Hennepin County is almost certain to elect its first Black sheriff in November. Both the candidates, Dawanna Witt and Joseph Banks, who will appear on the November general election ballot because they were the top two vote getters, are Black. For County Attorney, Martha Holton Dimick and Mary Moriarty will be competing in the general election. In the school board election, Collin Beachy, Kerryjo Felder, Sonya Emerick, and Lisa Skjefte are moving on to run for the at-large seat. **View local results at www.swConnector.com.**

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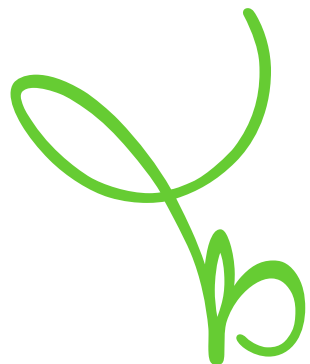
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