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CITY TO RECOUP COSTS FOR CARS, EQUIPMENT USED BY POLICE FOR PRIVATE SECURITY WORK

Taxpayers will no longer be subsidizing off-duty side jobs for its police officers; 2024 cost estimated at \$1.4 million

By Cam Gordon

Minneapolis will begin collecting fees to recover costs for the use of city-owned resources by Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) officers who work for private or nonprofit organizations when they are not on duty working for the city. The city law change, unanimously approved by the city council on Jan. 30, 2025 and subsequently signed by Mayor Jacob Frey. "I was proud to bring forward an or-

dinance to enable the city to recoup fees along with my co-author, Council President Payne," Wonsley said. She added that this is "the first step to reining in an inequitable and fiscally appalling program, and is crucial for advancing our goal of an equitable citywide community safety system." "This is good governance, plain and simple," said Payne. "Taxpayers shouldn't be asked to subsidize private side jobs for

police or any city employee." According to state law, any fees must be set to accurately recover costs identified through a formal study. The council has called for such a comprehensive fee study to be completed by May 1. That study will provide detailed costs of vehicles, materials, uniforms, administration, and other costs associated with the off-duty work. The council is expected to vote on the



PODCAST DETAILS RACIAL HOUSING HISTORY OF SOUTHWEST

Kingfield resident Eric Roper shares history of his home and what he learned researching two former owners

By Allie Johnson

Some not-so-pleasant parts of southwest Minneapolis' history are the focus of a new podcast from the Minnesota Star Tribune. "Ghost of a Chance," tells the story of Harry and Clementine Robinson, a Black couple who lived in the same Kingfield house as Star Tribune reporter Eric Roper a century prior, and shines a light on the lesser known housing history of southwest Minneapolis. The six-part series created by Roper and producer Melissa Townsend, is the Star Tribune's first ever narrative podcast. The podcast began as a personal project of Roper's, who, shortly after moving into his



Eric Roper's house in Kingfield sent him on a deep dive into the city's racial housing history.



Justice Alan Page reads his latest book, "Baking Up Love" to his grandchildren, (left to right) Esther, Amelia, Theo and Otis. (Courtesy of the Page family)

Justice Alan Page's new children's book excites young readers with a story about multi-generational love, grief and cupcakes

By Grace Aigner

Justice Alan Page's new children's book, "Baking Up Love," ignites curiosity and fuels empathy in young readers with a story about love, grief and multi-generational teamwork. A southwest resident, Justice Page, said he wants his new book to connect families with the value of multi-generational relationships and a love of reading. "Our goal is to put a smile on your face, if you will, and tug at your heart a little bit and speak to important values,

certainly important values to us," Justice Page said. "Baking Up Love" is the Minnesota Vikings "Hall of Famer" and retired state Supreme Court Justice's fifth children's book. The book was released on Jan. 1. Justice Page co-authored the book with his daughter, Kamie Page, to tell a story about a young girl named Esther who works with her grandpa to bake her deceased grandma's chocolate cupcake recipe for her school's "Literacy Feast." Ms. Page, a fifth grade teacher at Blake School in Hopkins, said she wants kids to connect and empathize with the unique family dynamic portrayed in the book. "I really believe that our stories not only are mirrors for kids, but I think they're also windows for maybe an atypical family, or a family that only has one mom, or she's working and grandpa's living with them," Ms. Page said. "It just normalizes some of those differences that sometimes kids feel."

Illustrator David Geister said he admires how the Pages' books break stereotypes about what stories feature Black characters. "The thing that I really admire about what Alan and Kamie are doing is they take these little slice of life stories, and they remain slice of life stories," Geister said. "But that's the world that the vast majority of us live in." Geister is a painter, sculptor and children's book illustrator based in the Hale neighborhood. He has worked with Justice Page on his children's books for the last 10 years. Justice Page broke his own set of stereotypes as the first African-American Supreme Court Justice in Minnesota history, elected in November 1992 and retired in 2015. He earned his law degree from the University of Minnesota in 1978 while playing professional football for the Vikings. Geister said that working



WHERE DO PIGEONS GO IN THE WINTER?

Photos by Terry Faust



Two Art Shanty Project attendees enjoy sledging on the Lake Harriet ice. The Ice Shanty Project went from Jan. 18 through Feb. 9, 2025.



Eileen Anderson (former Southwest resident), along with daughter Claire Anderson and friend Savanna Lockovitch, are welcomed to “Where Do Pigeons Go in the Winter?” by pigeon performers (left to right) Josh Conroy, Patty Gille, and Kayla Nussbaum. The puppet performance aimed to challenge the notion that pigeons are pests by showing their importance throughout history and what truly amazing birds they are.



Dressed as pollinators, Carrie Finnigan, Joe Tadie, and Barb Reilly demonstrated the dance moves to the Pollination Rap song in the “Pollinator Frenzy” shanty. This year’s program included 20 shanties that stayed up all month, and more than 20 performances and art actions that popped up throughout the village at different times throughout the run.



Lelis Brito (aka Felicity Featherington) gives her audience the low-down birdseye poop on the importance of pigeons. No kidding. As a fertilizer, pigeon poop was highly sought after. The performance of “Where do pigeons go in winter” was part of this year’s Ice Shanty Project on Lake Harriet.

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BAKING UP LOVE

with Justice Page is one of the rare times he gets to have a direct relationship with the author he illustrates a book for.

"It gives me a much greater insight into what the author is thinking," Geister said. "How do they feel about the character? Maybe who's the inspiration for the character?"

Justice Page's late wife, Diane, inspired the story for his new book, "Baking Up Love." She was also the person who first told him to start writing children's books.

Justice Page said he had no clue how to go about writing a children's book, so he recruited Ms. Page for their first book, "Alan and His Perfectly Pointy Impossibly Perpendicular Pinky" in 2013.

The pair have co-authored three other books since 2013: "The Invisible You" in 2014, "Grandpa Alan's Sugar Shack" in 2017 and "Bee Love (Can Be Hard)" in 2021.

The Page couple founded the Page Education Foundation in 1988 to encourage students of color to get a post-secondary education through financial assistance and community engagement. The proceeds from "Baking Up Love" will directly fund the Page Foundation.



The Page family. Alan and Diane Page (center left and center right) and their four children, Justin, Nina, Georgi and Kamie. (Courtesy of the Page family)

To honor Justice Page, a middle school in Tanglewood changed its name from Alexander Ramsey Middle School to Justice Page Middle School in 2017.

Justice Page said his daughter's creativity compliments his technocratic writing

style in the writing process for the five books they've written together.

"Over the years, I've sort of fallen in love with working with words," Justice Page said. "So having somebody who knows me, who understands me, to be

able to work with them, it's really kind of special."

Ms. Page, who resides near Theodore Wirth Park, said their father-daughter relationship allows them to encourage each other's strengths as co-authors.

"We both complement each other really well, even when we disagree about a word or a phrase or what happens on this page, we can push each other and have conversations about it," Ms. Page said. "It's like a father-daughter (relationship), but also a working relationship that just feels really natural."

Justice Page, who spent time in classrooms reading with kids throughout his career, said his motivation for "Baking Up Love" and as a children's author comes from a lifelong love of reading and the joy it brings kids.

"In some respects what reading does is ignites and excites curiosity and fulfills curiosity," Justice Page said. "The more curious we are, the better off we will be, and so it gives me a great sense of joy just to be a part of it."



Grace Aigner is a University of Minnesota student majoring in journalism.



VIEW MORE PHOTOS in the online version of this story at www.swconnector.com

PODCAST

113-year-old home in 2020, started digging into the history of his house. That research eventually led him to the Robinsons, a middle class Black family who moved to Minnesota in the early 1900s and lived in his house from 1917 to 1931.

In telling their story, *Ghost of a Chance* illuminates how housing and employment discrimination and urban development impacted families like the Robinsons during that time – and how that shaped the racial makeup of southwest Minneapolis today.

"What I like about the project is we walk through time through the eyes of two specific people," Roper said. "Over the course of the podcast, we discuss all the specific ways Black people were being held back in Minneapolis."

Today, southwest Minneapolis is the whitest community in Minneapolis – more than 80% white, Roper said. And, as the podcast highlights, that was likely intentional.

Racial covenants are one of the more well publicized ways that Black people were kept out of certain neighborhoods in Minneapolis. While some houses in southwest Minneapolis had racial covenants, the area has fewer than other areas of the city because many of the homes here were built prior to when these covenants started appearing in property deeds, Roper said.

But that does not mean Black residents were necessarily welcomed in these neighborhoods. In episode 3, Roper and Townsend discuss a particular meeting in 1920 that was held just five blocks from the Robinsons' home where a group of 200 of their white neighbors met to protest the roughly nine Black families living in the area at the time.

This was not an isolated event, either. A later episode details similar protest meetings that occurred in Linden Hills in the 1930s.



Eric Roper interviewed Gwen Green in Plattburgh, Mo., in August 2023 as they looked through historical records. Green's ancestors came from the same area as Clementine Robinson. (Tane Danger/Special to the Minnesota Star Tribune)

As southwest Minneapolis residents, Roper said, "We have to grapple with the idea that people in our neighborhoods were gathering in large numbers to exclude Black people from living here."

Roper has lived in the Kingfield neighborhood for nine years, yet he was not aware of this part of the community's history. He is betting that he is not the only southwest resident for whom that's the case.

"I'm someone who feels pretty knowledgeable about local history," Roper said. "In working on this project, there were a lot of things that were very new to me and helped me understand the context of this place where I live."

The final episode of the podcast addresses the construction of Interstate 35W in the 1960s, which separates southwest Minneapolis from the neighborhoods on the city's east side.

By that time, the Robinsons had moved to a new house in the Old South-

side area just one block off of what is now I-35W. Clementine, as an elderly woman, would have seen her neighbors' houses being demolished to make room for that freeway, Roper said.

"There were many ways in which the Robinsons' lives took me to some very important places and events in Minneapolis history that helped connect a lot of things together for me," he said.

Roper said the podcast has done extremely well so far, with people beyond Minnesota listening, too. But he's focused on the podcast's impact in Minneapolis itself, particularly southwest neighborhoods most affected by this history.

"I think this is really important history to fully understand how our neighborhoods were shaped over time, and we're able to explore it more fully now because of advances in digitization and other things that allow us to find a lot more granular details than we did in the past," Roper said.



Harry Robinson



Clementine Robinson

The end of the podcast doesn't mark the end of the project – far from it. Roper said he and Townsend have several events in the works for residents to continue to engage with the themes explored throughout the episodes. No dates have been announced as of publication, but anyone interested can sign up to receive updates on the Star Tribune's website.

"There's more for us to look into and to talk about the history of race in southwest Minneapolis," Roper said.

In the meantime, the Star Tribune recently dropped a discussion guide for "Ghost of a Chance" for listeners who want to start a dialogue within their own community on the themes covered in the podcast.

"We really hope that the podcast starts a conversation. Some of those conversations are going to be with friends and neighbors, but I hope that they actually expand beyond that and that we have a larger conversation," said Roper.

Each episode also has an accompanying episode guide online, which goes deeper into detail on much of the history discussed in the podcast along including maps, photos, and more.

All six episodes (and a bonus seventh episode) of "Ghost of a Chance" are available now on all podcast platforms. Episode guides, discussion guides, and more can be found at startribune.com/ghost-of-a-chance

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Shortly after initiating the acquisition of Twitter in 2022, Elon Musk posted, "For Twitter to deserve public trust, it must be politically neutral, which effectively means up-setting the far right and the far left equally."

Today much of the public trust Musk aspired to earn has eroded. His actions since acquiring the platform, now rebranded as X, have increasingly contradicted his early proclamations of neutrality. Musk's strong embrace – to put it lightly – of Donald Trump in the 2024 presidential election stands as a glaring departure from his promise to remain politically neutral.

X itself has undergone a transformation alienating many users. Musk fired the majority of the Trust & Safety team, reinstated accounts previously banned for promoting hate speech—including neo-Nazi profiles—and reconfigured algorithms to favor content aligning with his own ideological leanings. This shift has turned X into a space where extremism and division are the norm.

Disillusioned users have responded by departing to alternative platforms like BlueSky and Threads, which are the leading beneficiaries of Musk's controversial stewardship. Both platforms reported a surge in new users following the 2024 elections. Journalist Nick Halter of Axios Twin Cities noted several Twin Cities reporters—some with over 100,000 followers—who've abandoned X for these alternatives.

These platforms come with their own limitations as it relates to news:

Do they adhere to fundamental journalistic standards? No.

Do they implement robust user verification to ensure accountability? No.

Do they compensate journalists? Again, no.



By **Chuck Peters**

A NEWS ERA

Do their algorithms even prioritize news content? For Meta's Threads, the answer is a resounding no.

These platforms are fundamentally no different from X. Their distinction lies primarily in not being owned by Musk, but this alone doesn't make them better suited for journalistic or community engagement. Twitter, BlueSky, Threads, et al are destructive disinformation machines masquerading as "social" networks amplifying division, loneliness and eroding the fabric of informed civic discourse.

Let's be clear: these platforms were never designed to serve as reliable news sources. Continuing to treat them as such risks further damaging the already fragile state of journalism. We risk seeing an increase in news deserts, the decline of credible news outlets and an overall gutting of America's media ecosystem.

The crisis in journalism is real, and it's urgent.

In Minnesota, for instance, the media landscape has been shrinking at an alarming rate. Since 2005, we've lost 34% of our local newspapers and 64% of our local journalists. Newsrooms are being forced to do more with fewer resources. Consider The Pioneer Press: when Alden Global Capital acquired the paper in 2006, its newsroom employed around 200 people. By late 2023, that number had dwindled to just 29, according to a report from Racket.

This decline in local journalism is fueled by the rise of social media platforms where over half of Americans now get at least some of their news. Among adults under 30, trust in information from social media (52%) is almost on par with trust

in national news organizations (56%), according to a Pew Research study from October 2024.

But as I've emphasized: these platforms weren't built to be trusted sources of news, nor will they be.

Rather than trying to retrofit platforms like BlueSky or Threads to serve as news hubs, it's time we rethink the entire model. What would a platform designed specifically for local news look like?

At a minimum, such a platform would need the following features:

- **User Verification:** Accounts should be verified to ensure accountability and trust.

- **Reserved Posting Rights:** Only credible community leaders—such as local businesses and journalists—should have the ability to build an audience, preventing the platform from devolving into petty disputes.

- **Chronological Feeds:** Algorithms distorting perceptions and amplifying ideologies should be replaced with straightforward chronological feeds to ensure timely information.

- **Compensation for Journalists:** Just as Big Tech platforms compensate content creators, journalists should be fairly compensated for their reporting.

Creating such a platform from scratch is undoubtedly a challenge, but it's also necessary. In the Twin Cities, one such initiative already exists: Ambit Media Company.

Launched in October 2024, Ambit is a tech startup designed to support local journalism and strengthen community ties. Despite being new, Ambit has been met with enthusiasm. In its first official

month, the platform hosted nearly 1,000 visitors, 65% of whom were returning users—evidence of real, authentic community.

Ambit users utilize the site to discover and support over 130 verified local businesses. Tools like the Pop-Up Map highlight neighborhood vendors, such as Mogi Bagel, recently named Best Bagel in Star Tribune's Best of Minnesota competition. Other features, like the Grand Opening Registry and Events Calendar, connect residents with new establishments and local events.

At its core, Ambit's mission is to support local journalism by compensating news organizations based on user input. This innovative model empowers journalists while encouraging user-focused reporting. I'm honored to share that the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger, Midway Como Frogtown Monitor and Southwest Connector, along with eight other local news organizations, have partnered with Ambit Media Company on our mission.

As Ambit continues to grow, it poses an opportunity to revitalize local news—not only by directly compensating newsrooms, but also indirectly pressuring Big Tech to compete for journalists and their followers.

Let's seize this opportunity to support a positive, more informed, connected future and put this era of toxic social media behind us.

The groundwork for a better alternative is already in place. The question now is: will you use it?



Prior to starting Ambit Media Company, Chuck Peters was a manager in Deloitte's Data & Digital Trust practice advising the Big Tech industry through the dynamic internet regulatory landscape to create safer digital experiences for users. Learn more about Ambit at www.Ambit.community.

STORIES & JOURNEYS

As I start to write, I am aware that the Trump inauguration is coming. When he leaves office, I will be 84 years old.

LOST AND SEARCHING I HAVE ADOPTED GUIDES

The holidays in 2024 have come and gone. I seem like I was barely conscious. Feeling lost and searching. Still trying to absorb the shock of another four years of the Trump oligarchy. My primary guide but not my only guide is "The Hidden History of American Oligarchy: Reclaiming Our Democracy from The Ruling Class" by Thom Hartmann. I am currently focused on the chapter entitled "America Slides into Oligarchy and Dances Close to Tyranny." At the outset he reminds me that, "Democracy is rule of, by, and for the people; oligarchy is rule of, by, and for the rich." He goes on to remind me that two other times oligarchs have tried to replace American democracy with oligarchy. Today we are living through a third effort to change the American experiment from democracy to oligarchy, but also pushing



By **Donald L. Hammen**

LOOKING FOR, FINDING HOPE LOCALLY

beyond oligarchy to outright tyranny. Tyranny...." a form of government that entirely abandons even the pretense of the rule of law and reigns through police-state terror." I fear we are perilously close to tyranny if we don't find a way to resist and fight back.

The Trump presidency is just one expression of America's third struggle with oligarchy that began in 1971 with the Lewis Powell Memo. Hartmann writes. "..... Lewis Powell, himself a proud agent of tobacco oligarchs, laid out in a famous memo to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce a plan for various oligarchs of America to stop competing and organize to take over the U.S. government."

I am keeping in mind that for me the greatest U.S. Presidents in my lifetime were Franklin D. Roosevelt and his vice president Henry Wallace, who warned us about the danger of American fascism in the New York Times on April 9, 1944. Add to my list Jimmy Carter and Joe Biden. They spoke to me in ways that others did not because they were pro-democracy and for the most part pro-farmer-labor.

And so, dear reader, if you have read this far you have taken the plunge into the river(flow) of life experiences which is Sto-

ries and Journeys.

DESPAIR IS NOT AN OPTION OR SO I TRY TO TELL MYSELF

I have adopted other guides so far to help me get through this period of being lost and searching. I am discovering the world of Podcasts through an app on my phone called Spotify. These podcasters are helping me get through each day. There is the Mary Trump Podcast, The Weekly List with Amy Siskind, The Coffee Klatch with Robert Reich, The Hartmann Report with Thom Hartman along with others. They all comprise a library of sorts. All these progressive podcasters seem to be echoing one theme which is despair is not an option. If not despair, then what? I'm trying to re-ground myself in my south Minneapolis life and what I call 'hope local'.

So, dear reader, what are your sources of information and inspiration besides the Longfellow Nokomis Messenger and the Southwest Connector for local news and views to help you through the next four years? Tell me, tell others or tell me via tesha@tmcpub.com.

HOPE LOCALLY. THE MINNEAPOLIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGING.

More than ever I need to stay rooted and grounded in south Minneapolis and focus what I am calling 'hope locally.' For example there is the Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Aging.

Tuesday Jan. 9. It was billed as an open house. Right away when I walked into the meeting a woman asked me if I write a column in the Southwest Connector. I said yes. Turns out she showed up because she read about the committee in a Stories and Journeys column.

ELDER VOICES (TELLING OUR STORIES/SHARING OUR JOURNEYS) IS SCHEDULED TO MEET FEB. 28, 10-11 A.M. AT TURTLE BREAD, 4205-EAST 34TH ST.

It's International Stand Up to Bullying Day. Look for the table with the Elder Voices sign. In December, I was joined by my neighbor and Messenger reader Judith. She wanted to know about the history of Elder Voices. She thinking about coming back. Me, too!

IN GRATITUDE.

Donald L. Hammen is a longtime south Minneapolis resident, and serves on the All Elders United for Justice leadership team.

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The Connector is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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READ THEN REUSE

It's been 75 years since airplane crash leveled home at Emerson Ave. S and Minnehaha Parkway

Near the corner of Emerson Avenue South and Minnehaha Parkway, there is a one-story home uncharacteristic of the neighborhood. To any passerby, it's clear that this single-story house is not the same 1920's vintage as the other two-story homes throughout the neighborhood. I have been a resident of this neighborhood for 35 years. Soon after I moved into our Emerson Avenue home, I learned the reason for this outlier house – a 1950s plane crash that leveled the original home and caused the death of 15 people.

On March 7, 1950, Northwest Airlines flight 307 originated in Washington D.C., with the final destination of Winnipeg, Manitoba. After a scheduled stop in Madison, Wis., the Martin 202 aircraft, built to carry 49 passengers, took off for its next scheduled stop in Rochester, Minn. With freezing rain in Rochester, the pilot, Don Jones, was directed to change courses to Minneapolis.

The plane approached Wold Chamberlain Airfield (now MSP airport) around 9 p.m. with 10 passengers and three crew members. Visibility was poor due to a significant snowstorm. For reasons still a mystery, Captain Jones did not use the instrument landing system (ILS) that the previous flights had used with success that evening. Instead, he attempted to do a visual site landing. As a result, the plane came in very low and 650 feet off center from the runway, and the left wing struck a 78-foot flagpole at Fort Snelling Cemetery. Apparently, unaware of the damaged wing, Jones pulled up the plane, and attempted to swing back for another landing try.

What he didn't know was that, after the flag pole collision, the plane was doomed. A 30-foot section of the left wing separated and fell near the Washburn Water Tower. Jones radioed, "I'm falling," and sent stress flares into the sky to light up the ground. After losing that section of the left wing, the plane was airborne only for another half mile and plunged into the home of Franklin and Marie Doughty. A fireball ensued, and the top floor of the house was immediately engulfed in flames.

In addition to the 10 passengers and three crew members that perished, the two youngest members of the Doughty family, Janet, age 10 and Tommy, age 8, also died, while asleep in their second floor bedrooms. The remaining Doughty fam-



By **Mark Raderstorf**

NORTHWEST AIRLINES FLIGHT 307



On March 7, 1950, Northwest Airlines flight 307 crashed into a home in Tangletown around 9 p.m. Visibility was poor due to a significant snowstorm. The left wing of the plane struck a flagpole at Fort Snelling Cemetery, and when the pilot attempted to swing back for another landing, he fell near the Washburn Water Tower. Ten passengers, three crew members, and two children in the home died. (Photos courtesy of the Minnesota Star Tribune)



ily members, Marie and Franklin, and 15-year-old daughter, Diane, survived only because of the good fortune that they were watching a Minneapolis Lakers basketball game on the first floor at the time of the impact.

The crash was the most deadly in

Minnesota history at that time, and attracted national news. Our neighborhood was awash in gawkers for days afterwards, as investigators attempted to put together the puzzling pieces to the crash. My one personal connection to the crash was my neighbor, Evelyn Stenson, who was liv-



ing on Emerson Avenue at the time of the crash. She shared with me that her house became "media central" for all the out-of-town journalists that covered the tragedy.

The crash was certainly a tragedy, but there are two postscripts: First, the tragedy for the Doughty family did not end on that day. Franklin Doughty, the father who was undoubtedly anguished over the loss of his two young children, died of a heart attack five years later, while on a business trip for his employer, Liberty Mutual. Perhaps he died of a broken heart.

Second, following the crash, there were several newspaper articles and editorial opinions that expressed the need to move the airport because of this deadly crash. Apparently, there was a site picked near Anoka at that time. Anyone flying into MSP these days knows that the new airport idea was never approved by our community leaders. Thank you, Arnie Carlson!

There is a boulder with a commemorative plaque set across Minnehaha Boulevard from the crash site and the current one-story house. A neighborhood effort headed by former city council person, Mark Kaplan, raised funds in 2011 to establish this memorial. If you find yourself going down the creek, take a moment to walk up to the boulevard and see the memorial plaque. Turn around and take a moment to gaze over the house, and imagine the heartache and tragedy that reined from the skies 75 years ago.

Mark Raderstorf has lived in the Lynhurst neighborhood since 1989. He now gives walking and biking tours of Minneapolis @youbetchatours.com.

HAPPY 3RD BIRTHDAY!

I just wanted to say thank you for all your hard work. I haven't lived in Minneapolis for long, and your newspaper has really helped me get an idea of what's going on locally. Thank you!

Kalina Jurkowski



MARVELOUS PAPER

I recently picked up the January Connector at Washburn Community Library. Marvelous paper. Marvelous articles. Thank you very, very much.

Mark Glenn

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Banding with fellow Johns, he fashions ice sculptures at St. Paul Winter Carnival

By Margie O'Loughlin

You may have seen John Njoes around the neighborhood. After more than 15 years of donning his handyman hat, Njoes started his career as a realtor specializing in residential sales. He said, "I was doing a lot of remodeling work, and decided to make a pivot to real estate during COVID. I've always loved working with people, and I love old houses."

Njoes is also a person who loves cold weather and all things winter. For a few days each January, he exchanges his Sotheby's Realtor's vest for a thick parka as the St. Paul Winter Carnival Ice Carving Contest unfolds. Njoes said, "Ice carving is a pretty obscure art, special to the Midwest. When people grumble about how much they hate the long months of winter, we're just getting ready for our favorite time of year."

TEAM JOHN

The "we" he's referring to is his ice carving team: Team John. The other two team members are also named John (John Nusser-Cooper and John Matis), and they all graduated from South High School in Minneapolis. Njoes said, "We've been competing as a team in the Winter Carnival for more than 20 years. Every Thanksgiving, we get together and decide what we want to carve next."

This year, they'll be carving a giant scale with symbolic objects on it that throw the scale out of balance. All three team members have a young child, and feel the sometimes conflicting demands of parenthood and their respective careers/interests pulling them this way and that.

Each team received 10 blocks of clear, shining ice weighing 300 pounds apiece. As Team John has evolved, they've built their own lathes, cranes, and table saws unique to working with ice. Njoes said, "Ice carving is hard on the body, so we have to get creative in how we work with it."

Having grown up in a creative family, Njoes was grounded in making props and sets for Richfield Flowers & Events, his dad's flower shop. He said, "As someone who was used to building things, making signs, and working with stencils, the art side of ice carving made sense to me – but roughing out designs in ice with a chain saw was one of the new skills I had to learn."

DESIGN CRITERIA

He continued, "People have a hard time understanding why we put so much energy into something that lasts such a short time. Our House of Cards sculpture

NEIGHBORHOOD REALTOR CARVES OWN NICHE



Each January, John Njoes, exchanges his Sotheby's Realtor's vest for a thick parka as the Winter Carnival Ice Carving Contest unfolds. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)



In 2025, John Njoes earned the professional title in the single block division, earning \$600, with "Hammock on the Beach."



In 2021, John Njoes worked alone to carve a phoenix rising from the ashes for the drive-thru Winter Carnival during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

in 2015 lasted just 12 minutes before it collapsed – but we made it to the finish line. We took second place that year."

What makes for a good ice design? The categories that all contestants are judged on are impact, attention to detail, technical difficulty, finishing, site clean-up, and whether or not the final sculpture matches the initial design.

The pool of entrants for the Winter Carnival Ice Carving Contest is getting smaller each year. Fewer and fewer chef schools offer training in ice carving these days, which means beginning carvers have to learn their skills elsewhere.

If you'd like to try your hand at carving ice, you'd better dress for it. Njoes explained, "I have two different carving coats, and wear several layers of warm clothes underneath. You need to be able to transition from working hard with a chainsaw to standing still with a hand tool. We often wear heat packs in our mit-

tens and socks too."

In addition to being flexible with clothing, a carver has to be flexible with design. Njoes said, "You try to get a warm weather and a cold weather option for your sculpture. It can be the same design, but you have different ways of executing it depending on the weather."

COUNT DOWN

The contest officially started at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 23. Each team had 48 hours to finish their carving. Njoes said, "There have definitely been years when we've spent the last six hours on Saturday checking the big clock on the Landmark Center tower, wondering if we'd finish in time. That's the clock that judges use for counting down."

He continued, "For finishing, we use a weed burning torch and a plumber's torch to melt away any scratches we've made on the ice. We have to move all the torches,

electrical cords, tools, bags, and scaffolding before 7 p.m. on Saturday. We also like to rake our way out of the work area so the ground looks nice. Sometimes we have to carve all night, or at least wait until the sun drops down below the City Center. It can be a real grind. Sunshine is as big a factor as temperature. Cloudy skies and temperatures around 10 degrees are best – but I don't find ice carving stressful, even when the weather isn't cooperating."

The Saint Paul Winter Carnival ran through Sunday, Feb. 2. This year marked the 139th anniversary of the St. Paul tradition: Minnesota's oldest and best loved winter celebration.

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THERE'S A SUMMER CAMP FOR EVERY KID

Summer camp season will be here before parents know it. While children anxiously await the last day of school, adults know that it can be challenging to keep kids occupied and mentally stimulated when they aren't in the classroom. Although it may be alright to enjoy a few days lounging around and playing video games, too much sedentary behavior is not good for anyone, even children. Families turn to summer camp to provide children with activities to occupy their time when school is not in session.

Camps catering to a variety of interests are open to youngsters, so there's likely one out there to excite every child. Each year, more than 25 million children and adults take part in the camp experience, says the American Camp Association. Summer camp gives kids a chance to spread their wings and enjoy new adventures. When seeking camps, families can consider interests, proximity, cost, and other variables. Here are some of the different types of camps families can consider.

Day camps are a popular choice. Day camps tend to be general recreation camps that offer an array of activities. Campers are dropped off (or bussed) in the morning, and arrive home early evening. These camps are readily accessible and run by various organizations. Some camps enable you to pay by the week, rather than com-

mitting to an entire season.

Academic camps focus their attention on various subjects, putting like-minded children together. Academic summer programs ensure children's brains stay active, helping students avoid that dreaded "summer slide." Some of these camps mimic a school day so they are familiar to kids. Academic focus may vary from general academia to specific subjects like STEM to astronomy to the arts.

Fitness-minded campers or those who play particular sports can investigate camps that focus on fitness and sports performance. These may be more rigorous than other types of camps since they involve lots of physical activity. Wilderness preparation camp is another type of camp that may fit into this category. It will highlight survival training and help mold active hikers and campers.

Like the name implies, sleep-away camp hosts campers overnight, typically for several weeks. This may be children's first extended time away from home, and there's bound to be a few nerves that spring up. Round-the-clock activities and chances to bond with their peers can help kids overcome fears of being away from home.

Summer camp options abound. It's only a matter of identifying a path for children and then seeking a camp that offers the desired program.



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IMAGINATION FAIR

On Feb. 6, 2025, Burroughs Elementary School hosted its first ever Imagination Fair. Over 60 students from grades K-5 participated, showcasing projects that ranged across art, science, history, technology and culture. Over 100 visitors from the community came to learn from student presenters. This event was part of Burroughs' annual Readathon, with this year's theme being 'Make Your Story Magnificent,' inspired by the book "The Most Magnificent Thing" by Ashley Spires.



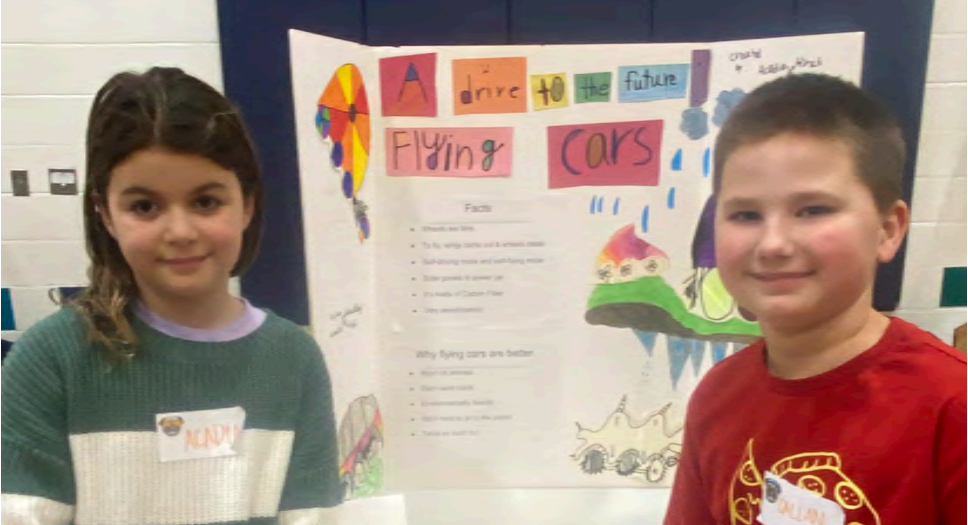
"Forest House: A House Connected to Nature" by Aras Yucel (Photo submitted)



"Anxiety into Energy" by Chloe Lillehei (Photo submitted)



"Volcanoes: Threats Living Near Them and Solutions" by Hugo Roller, Anders Eisele, Mathias Colin and (not pictured) George Young. (Photo submitted)



"Flying Cars" by Acadia Hinckley and Callan Hirsch (Photo submitted)



TANGLETOWN WINTER FEST COMING FEB. 22

The annual Tangletown Winter Fest will be on Feb. 22, 5-7 p.m. at Fuller Park (4802 Grand Ave. S.) Enjoy bonfires and s'mores, a sing-along under the stars, food from local food trucks, and an exciting fire spinning performance at 6:30 p.m. "Don't miss this special night when we light up Fuller Park with luminaries and bonfires and invite our Minneapolis neighbors of all ages to join in the fun of a winter evening," said Tangletown Neighborhood Association Executive Director Andrea Siegel.

This is a free event with food available for purchase.

Tangletown Neighborhood Association will sell s'mores kits, including marshmallows to roast over blazing bonfires, to raise money for its 2025 programs and events. Venmo, PayPal, and cash payments will be accepted. Bathrooms will be accessible inside the park building. This event is brought to you in partnership with Fuller Park.

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OUR STREETS, DISTRICT COUNCILS PUSH FOR AT-GRADE OPTIONS

Re-Thinking 94 update

By Jane McClure

Frustration is growing over the Re-thinking I-94 project proposal to drop two at-grade options. The Rethinking I-94 Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) Jan. 17 discussed recommendations to eliminate options from further study, in the face of pushback from local elected officials and many community groups.

The Rethinking I-94 project involves the freeway from I-35W and Highway 55/Hiawatha Avenue in Minneapolis to Marion Street in St. Paul. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) officials and project consultants hope to have one option set for detailed studies by 2026. Construction wouldn't start until 2030 at the earliest. The project does not have any funding yet.

MnDOT Commissioner Nancy Daubenger emphasized that the recommendations are preliminary, with review of all 10 alternatives to be finished this spring. St. Paul and Minneapolis City Councils and Hennepin County Board PAC representatives objected to dropping the two options that would fill in the 7.5-mile freeway trench and replace it with an at-grade roadway. So did many of the 145 community members who signed up to speak. They represented Our Streets, the champion and developer of the at-grade proposals, area district councils and individuals.



Our Streets members rallied to speak. Leaders announced earlier in January that its efforts to get a federal U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities grant fell short, despite having matches from the city of Minneapolis and Hennepin County.

"I have no doubt that MnDOT's decision to rashly eliminate the two at-grade boulevard project options significantly undermined our application," Our Streets Executive Director José Antonio Zayas Cabán said in a website statement. "With the incoming presidential administration, this was our last opportunity to leverage these critical federal dollars. It's incredibly disappointing to see Melissa Barnes and the rest of the Rethinking I-94 team completely disregard the community they serve and instead pursue the easy choice of

status quo."

At-grade advocates said that retaining those options is seen as righting historic wrongs and reconnecting communities long split by the freeway. It is also promoted as having long-term positive effects for climate change.

Many objected in the meeting chat during public comment, when MnDOT sent out a news release summarizing the meeting before it finished.

All of the remaining four options would allow for construction of the proposed Rondo land bridge. The bridge faces challenges on another level as Minnesota House Republicans have introduced a bill trying to block that project.

Elected officials unsuccessfully pushed to be able to vote on each of the 10 options at the meeting. Six of 10 options are

eyed for elimination, including expanding the freeway, and separating I-94 into local and regional routes. The options are in an environmental impact statement (EIS) process.

Russ Stark, chief resilience officer for St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter, said that while there are reservations about at-grade options, those should not be ruled out. At the same time, he noted that the three years of filling the trench with "constant trucks" must be considered. Benefits of developing land along the at-grade boulevard would need many years to take shape.

The four concepts that are recommended for further study would allow a reconfigured or reduce freeway to move forward. Ideas include a dedicated lane or continuous shoulders for bus rapid transit. All four would allow a proposed Saint Paul land bridge, spearheaded by Reconnect Rondo, to be built.

Most people who commented spoke for retaining the at-grade options, arguing that it would reduce air pollution, and add housing and businesses where the trench is now. Area district councils spoke for maintaining the at-grade options including Union Park District Council, Summit-University Planning Council, Hamline-Midway Coalition, St. Anthony Park Community Council and West Seventh/Fort Road Federation. Federation comments centered on that neighborhood's history of being split by I-35E years ago.

Minnesota Chamber of Commerce and Minnesota Trucking Association were among the few business groups speaking against the at-grade options, citing the challenges in delivering goods.

OFF-DUTY POLICE

fee amounts this autumn with collection starting on Jan. 1, 2026, at the earliest.

DECADES OF CONCERN

Controversy about city police officer off-duty work is not new.

"For decades, both subject matter experts and directly impacted residents have been telling city leaders that MPD's off-duty system is ripe for corruption and is a bad deal for residents," said Wonsley.

In 1990, police lieutenant Mike Sauro, who was working off-duty in downtown Minneapolis, was found to have used excessive force and the city was required to pay \$700,000, as part of a civil award settlement.

Then-Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton and then-Police Chief Robert Olson tried to put officers' off-duty work under the department's control, but the police officers collective bargaining group, the Minneapolis Police Federation, sued the city and won a court-ordered injunction in 1995. In 1997, a court-approved settlement agreement said, among other things, that the city "agrees that Minneapolis police officers have the right to contract to provide services during the off-duty hours and wear their uniform, badge and gun while performing such duties."

"City leaders have spoken publicly about their concerns with off-duty since at least 2017 when MPD officer Mohamed Noor shot and killed a resident named Justine Ruszczyk after working off-duty and starting his on-duty work with very little sleep," said Ward 7 Council Member Katie Cashman. "Estimates using MPD data indicate that such fees could have recouped up to \$1.4 million in 2024."

A 2019 city audit of the practice recommended eliminating cash payments and having the city take over the scheduling, billing, and paying of wages for off-duty work. It also noted that the city

already charges larger "secondary employers that have a higher demand" an hourly rate for squad car usage and that other "police departments require secondary employers to share the cost of liability insurance" for off-duty work, something Minneapolis has never done.

In 2020, Mayor Frey convened an off-duty task force, but the group appears to have only met twice and not produced any recommendations or report.

Also in 2020, the Main Street Alliance, a coalition of small local businesses, called for overhauling the system and a city policy change removed the decades-long practice of requiring

business or groups to hire off-duty officers as part of licensing conditions or event permits. Organizations may still be required to hire qualified security or traffic control services.

In 2022, as the most recent police contract was being negotiated, retired Minneapolis police officer Gregory Reinhardt said that "the off-duty provision needs to be reviewed and improved." As an officer, Reinhardt did off-duty work for the Minnesota Vikings and Whole Foods. "I basically had to curry favor to get those jobs," he said. The department would approve the businesses where he could work, but "someone in the rank and file would make the assignments and would collect a management fee."

Wonsley started working on the issue

in 2022. "Residents were upset and perceived this as the city enabling a 'pay-to-play' system for police services," she recalled, "where corporations were able to pay to receive police services when other residents were not receiving them."

In 2023, a U.S. Department of Justice report concluded that the city's "secondary employment (or 'off-duty' employment) system undermines supervisory authority" and that the jobs can pay up to \$150-175 per hour. They reported "that MPD allows officers to use its squad cars (and gas), and the officer keeps all the compensation. The city gets nothing. Some patrol officers manage these opportunities, deciding who gets the lucrative work. Because MPD allows patrol officers to control whether supervisors get off-duty employment opportunities, supervisors have ample disincentive to hold officers accountable. MPD's off-duty employment practices impede effective supervision."

QUESTIONS REMAIN

At this point it is not only unclear what the fee amounts will be, but also how they will be collected, who will pay them, and what possible negative consequences could result.

At the council meeting on Jan. 30, Ward 8 Council Member Andrea Jenkins shared concerns about how adding fees might impact police off-duty work generally and said that "the cost should not be borne by the officers themselves."

"We have to enter this with an open mind," said Ward 3 Council Member Michael Rainville. "Let's not raise the cost to such an extreme that people are not able to afford their events." Some larger events, he noted, like the Twin Cities Marathon and Pride, use a large number of officers and squad cars. Cashman, who also represents much of downtown, also shared concerns about raising costs for events.

"I am anxious to get the fee study back from MPD," said Ward 13 Council Member Linea Palmisano, "so we know exactly what we are looking at here." Currently off-du-

OFF-DUTY WORK CONTRIBUTED TO DEATH OF JUSTINE RUSZCZYK

In 2017, MPD officer Mohamed Noor shot and killed Justine

Ruszczyk after working off-duty and starting his on-duty work with little sleep.

The 40-year-old Australian-American woman had called the

police to report a possible rape. She died in the alleyway entrance located on the north side of West 51st Street between Xerxes Avenue South and Washburn Avenue South.

Damond's family brought a civil lawsuit against the city of Minneapolis alleging violation of Damond's civil rights, which the city settled for \$20 million in 2019. On June 7, 2019, Noor (the city's first Somali-American officer) was sentenced to 12 and one-half years in prison.



“

City leaders have spoken publicly about their concerns with off-duty since at least 2017 when MPD officer Mohamed Noor shot and killed a resident named Justine Ruszczyk after working off-duty and starting his on-duty work with very little sleep.”

Katie Cashman



ty officers can be called back to work for the city at any time. "I want every off-duty officer to be able to swap into active duty whenever necessary," she added.

Payne brought up the federation contract and how, in past contracts, the city has been "off-loading a lot of management rights in exchange for lower pay." With the latest contract, he noted, base salary was significantly increased, and he hopes that the city can negotiate to gain more authority over off-duty work in the future.

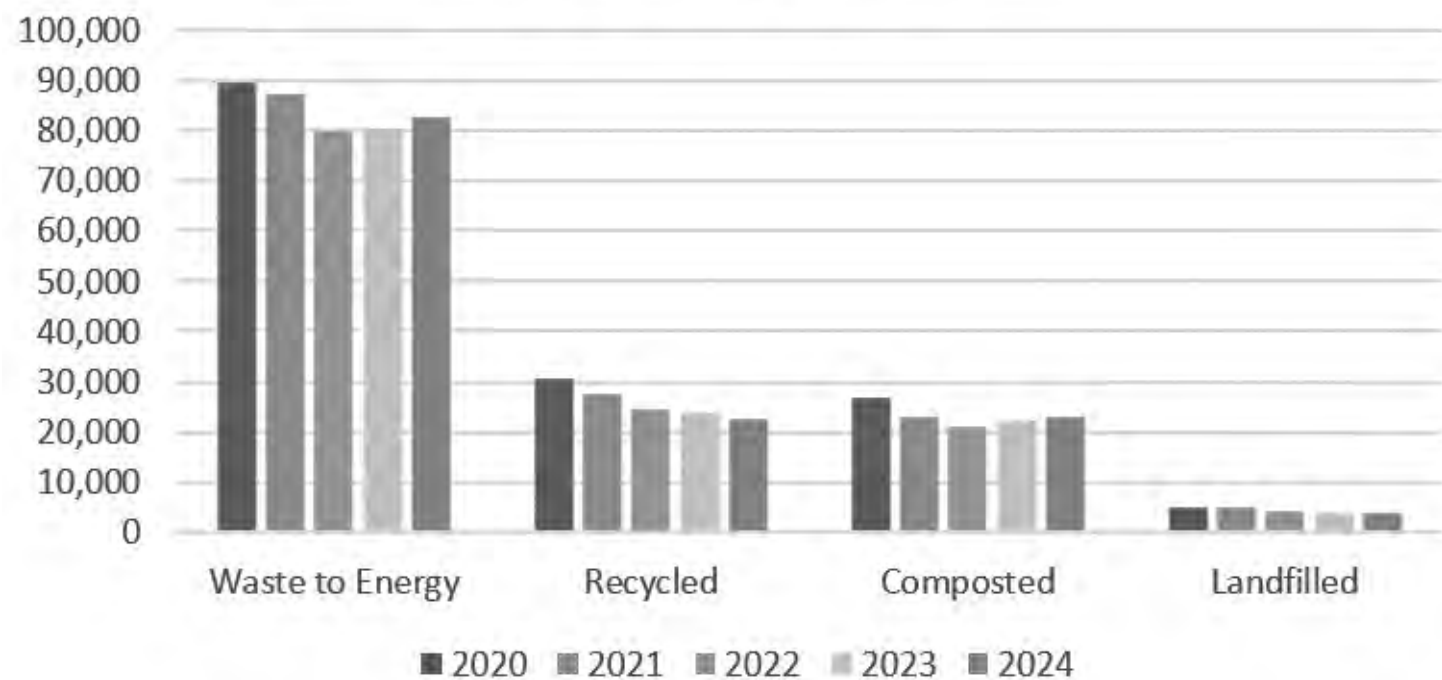
"I'm proud that after nearly 30 years of inaction by city leadership, this council has brought significant accountability and fiscal transparency to what has always been a system ripe for abuse," said Payne.

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Garbage and recycling trends

2020 - 2024 tons collected



MINNEAPOLIS WASTE REPORT

The 2024 waste and recycling breakdown in Minneapolis shows an increase in the total waste generated (132,350 tons) when compared to 2023 (130,366 tons). This is an increase of 0.6 pounds per household per week.

The biggest changes were found in the following material categories:

- Increase in garbage (0.6 lbs / household / week)
- Decrease in traditional recyclables (0.35 lbs / household / week)

Recycling contamination in 2024 was 10.91%; this is a decrease of 1% compared to 2023. The top contaminants found in recycling carts include:

- Plastic bags and films
- Recycling in plastic bags
- Large plastic items (storage tubs,

laundry baskets, kids toys)

- Random metal items (pipes, poles, reusable coffee / water bottles, pots and pans)

Four truck-loads of organics were sorted by hand in fall 2024. The average contamination rate for organics was found to be 1.1%. This is a very low contamination rate. Top contaminants found in organics include:

- Plastic-lined paper items (not BPI certified)
- Non-compostable plastic bags
- Pet waste and bedding

As of Jan. 1, 2025, a new state law went into effect requiring compostable products to be clearly and accurately labeled. Submit a report to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency whenever you find a product labeled compostable that is

not actually compostable.

UPCOMING FIX-IT CLINIC

- Saturday, March 8 (12 - 4 p.m.) Fix-It Clinic at Lynnhurst Rec Center (1345 Minnehaha Pkwy., Minneapolis)

GARDEN TOOL SWAPS

Garden tool swaps will be held on Saturday, May 3 and May 10, 2025 at multiple locations across the city. More details to come. If your neighborhood organization wants to be a host site, contact GreenCorps member Margo Ashmore: margo.ashmore@minneapolismn.gov, 612-258-5635.

Check out Hennepin County's Choose to Reuse website and Reuse Minnesota's website for upcoming sales, swaps and tips and tricks to reuse, repair, and shop used.

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

The council has voted to appoint southwest Ward 13 resident Peter Ingraham to the zoning board of adjustment. This city board decides matters of zoning variances and appeals.

SPECIAL SERVICE DISTRICT APPOINTMENTS

The city council has appointed the following new southwest Special Service District (SSD) advisory board members for two-year terms. Any property owner, or their representative, who pays the district's service charges, is eligible to serve on the district's board. Boards advise the city council and staff on desired services, an annual budgets, district activities and concerns.

- Uptown - Jacqueline Knight, Jeff Herman, Mocholas Hall and Andrew Finn
- Lowry Hills - Thomas Fletcher, John Winter and Dan Leitner
- Lyndale Lake - John Meegan, Stuart Ackerman, Denise Arambadjis, and Christina Le
- Linden Hills Special Service District - Mark Dwyer, Mark Settergren and Felicity Britton
- 50th & France - Steve Young and Heidi Bing

NICOLLET AVE CONSTRUCTION

The city has identified the details of

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

PLANS FOR FORMER K MART SITE

The final open house for the New Nicollet Redevelopment is on Feb. 25, 5-7 p.m., Whittier International Elementary School, 315 W. 26th St.. New Nicollet is a 10-acre parcel of land between the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street. It was home to Kmart for many years. The open house will showcase the ways community input is shaping the project. Attendees can give feedback on the development framework and learn about next steps. Language interpretation will be available for Spanish and Somali. Free food and kids' activities will be provided.

WALKING AUDIT OF 35TH AND 36TH STREETS

As the city of Minneapolis is in the initial planning stages for a full reconstruction of 35th and 36th Streets between Blaisdell and Chicago, Lyndale resident and safe streets advocate, Chris Vaughan is leading a series of "walk audits" to help the communities that live, work, and play in those corridors surface barriers and opportunities around walkability. The next walk audit is Wednesday, March 5, 3:15-5 p.m., Hosmer Library (347 E 36th St - Room 104). Reach out to Chris Vaughan at: crrmail@gmail.com, or text 413-281-1268.

EMPTY BOWLS SUCCESSFUL

Over 500 people came to the Kingfield Empty Bowls 2025 community meal. It was a morning full of pottery, locally made food, accordion music, and neighborly spirit. This attendance exceeded 2024's event.

RESEARCH HISTORY OF YOUR HOME

Learn about the historical resources at the library and across the county that will help you piece together a history of your Minneapolis house, neighborhood or property on Saturday, March 15, 10-11:30 a.m. at Washburn Library, 5244 Lyndale Ave. S.

location and improvements of certain existing streets in the Nicollet Ave. and Cecil Newman Lane street construction project, including proposed special assessments, and setting a public hearing for April 10, 2025, to consider the assessments, and the abandonment and removal of areaways in conflict with the project. The total estimated cost is \$23,345,000.

NEW POET LAUREATE

Junauda Petrus has been named this year's Minneapolis Poet Laureate. Among her extensive work in the city, she was lead artist with the Heart of the Beast Theatre's May Day Parade from 2015-2017, and City Page's Artist of the Year in 2016. Her 2019 novel, "The Stars and the Blackness Between Them," is about two teenaged girls living in Minneapolis. Petrus also wrote a piece entitled "Sweetness for George" following the police killing of George Floyd, and is a co-founder of the Minneapolis-based Free Black Dirt, a collective of writers and creators who seek to "spark and engage in critical conversations."



➡ Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

CITY BRIEFS

MET COUNCIL IMAGINE 2050 PLAN

The Metropolitan Council has approved its 'Imagine 2050' plan which sets the long-range policy foundation for housing, land use, regional parks, transportation, and water for the seven-county region. The plan includes the council's local forecasts for population, households and employment and predicts that the area will add 650,000 people by 2050, with Minneapolis reaching 500,000 total residents for the first time since the 1950s. In accordance with state law, this plan serves as a development guide for local governments to create consistent, compatible, and coordinated local comprehensive plans within the regional policy framework.

HUMAN RIGHTS AGREEMENT

Effective Law Enforcement for All (ELEFA), the evaluator hired to track the city's compliance with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights settlement agreement, issued their first semi-annual report. The report covers work done from March 18 to Sept. 30, 2024, and identifies some changes in policy, training, and the handling of misconduct complaints, as well as plans for equipment, technology,

facilities, and data systems. The report is on ELEFA's website. The next review period will cover work completed between Oct. 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025.

GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE STREET LAYOUT

The city council has voted to delay a final decision about the street layout at George Floyd Square and further evaluate the pedestrian mall concept. They gave directions to staff that would help develop language for a corresponding pedestrian mall that would be adjacent to 3744 Chicago Ave. (aka The People's Way), which the council approved earlier and action is consistent with a resolution they passed in December that expressed support for the pedestrian plaza, which allows for vehicular access to local residents and businesses only while maintaining access for emergency vehicles. This allows the city to pursue the pedestrian plaza concept in compliance with the state law.

NEW WARD 8 CANDIDATE

Josh Bassais has announced his candidacy for Ward 8 City Council member. The seat is currently held by Andrea Jenkins, who has yet to announce a reelection campaign. Soren Stevenson has also formally announced his candidacy for the position.



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