

# SOUTHWEST Connector

NEWS FOR EVERYONE, DELIVERED TO EVERYONE • APRIL 2025 • VOL. 4 • NO. 5 • 25,500 CIRCULATION



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## DUAL BENEFITS

### With new biochar facility, Minneapolis is becoming a leader in green technology

By **Allie Johnson**

Minneapolis will soon be able to produce its own biochar, bringing the city one step closer to its goal of becoming carbon

Biochar itself has a myriad of different uses. When added to the soil, biochar helps soil retain nutrients and hold water, boosting plant growth and improving drought resilience, according to Eric Singaas, leader of the materials and bioeconomy research group at the University of Minnesota's Natural Resources Research Institute. It can also be used for filtering stormwater and in construction materials. For example, mixing biochar with cement can create a more durable concrete. "In every case, there's a dual benefit," said Singaas.

neutral by 2050.

This spring, the city will break ground on a new biochar facility – the first municipally owned and operated such facility in the U.S.

Biochar production is a carbon-negative process, meaning it removes more carbon

from the atmosphere than it releases, said Eric Singaas, leader of the materials and bioeconomy research group at the University of Minnesota's Natural Resources Research Institute. To limit carbon emissions, tree waste is heated in a low-oxygen environment like an industrial kiln, rather

than burned. The result is a charcoal-like material that can store carbon for thousands, if not tens of thousands, of years, he said.

Jim Doten, Minneapolis' carbon sequestration manager, calls biochar the "swiss army knife of



## VIOLENCE INTERRUPTERS COME TO SOUTHWEST

### MAD DADS to serve Nicollet Ave. corridor

By **Cam Gordon**

Following a lengthy and sometime contentious contracting process, in March

the Minneapolis City Council approved five new contracts for Minneapolis Violence Interrupter Services. One of them, MAD DADS, will serve part of Southwest.

The Minneapolis affiliate of MAD DADS (Men Against Destruction Defending Against Drugs and Social Disorder) has been awarded a contract of \$619,394, for a one-year term through March 2026

to provide community outreach violence prevention services in and around Nicollet and Franklin Aves.

Starting this month, they will provide teams of violence interrupters and outreach workers to identify risks and mediate conflicts in specific areas based on public safety and emergency response data from the city. They will also work to

change behaviors and reduce retaliation cycles through relationship building strategies that help them connect with youth and other community members.

The MAD DADS teams in Southwest will work primarily in the Loring Heights-Steven's Square neighborhood, identified as area 5 by the city.



Artists and community members join together to celebrate E. Lake St. during a weekend Skate and Sauna event in March, part of the Lake Street Lift project. At the events, neighbors were asked what they want to see at 2800 E. Lake St. where the US Bank building formerly was. (Photo by Bruce Silcox)

## LIFTING UP LAKE STREET

### State-funded initiative supports murals, festivals, business advice and development assistance

By **Tesha M. Christensen**

"I'm thrilled to see Lake Street back and thriving, and there's more to come," said Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley during an event at the former US Bank site at 2800 E. Lake St.

The bank was damaged during

the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd by Third Precinct officers based a block down E. Lake St. The site is the next to be redeveloped by a coalition led by Redesign, Inc. and owned by community members. Last summer, the Coliseum building at 2708 E. Lake St. reopened.

Redesign believes in people and place, according to its executive director Andy Hestness. They aim to bring the various voices of neighbors into the development process. As they work to redevelop the former US Bank site at 2800 E. Lake St., they're seeking ideas and comments during the Skate and Sauna events each weekend in





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# TWO STEP UP TO REPLACE JENKINS

## Soren Stevenson and Josh Bassais vie in Ward 8

By **Cam Gordon**

On Nov. 4, 2025 voters in Minneapolis will elect city council members for all 13 wards, three at-large park board commissioners, six district park board commissioners, two members of the board of estimate and taxation (BET) and one mayor.

Even though the candidate filing period doesn't start until July 29, candidates are already at work holding meetings, making phone calls and knocking on doors.

But this year current Ward 8 Council Member Andrea Jenkins isn't one of them. On March 3, she announced that she will not be seeking another term.

"It has, indeed, been the honor of my life to serve as your council member. During that time, I served as Council President and Vice President during some of the most challenging times in Minneapolis history," said Jenkins in her written announcement. "Minneapolis is a great city and I believe Ward 8 is the soul of this city."

So far, two candidates, Soren Stevenson and Josh Bassais, are running. They both had good things to say about Jenkins after her announcement.

Stevenson said, "I am very proud of her for being the first black trans woman ever elected. I think very highly of her 38 Thrive plan, and she has done excellent work recently on arts promotion through the city. I plan on implementing a lot of what went into the 38 Thrive plan and continuing to build on the arts support."

"I am deeply proud to celebrate Andrea Jenkins for her groundbreaking service to Minneapolis as the city's first transgender council member and former council president," said Bassais. "I want to honor her remarkable achievements, including her advocacy for cultural districts and her pivotal efforts in declaring racism a public health crisis. I am fully committed to carrying forward her legacy of pragmatic, community-first leadership, ensuring that every resident has a voice."

### SEEKING DFL ENDORSEMENT

Bassais and Stevenson are both seeking the Democratic Farmer Labor (DFL) party endorsement that will be determined at the ward 8 convention on Sunday, May 4.

Prior to that, the DFL party will hold precinct caucuses on April 8 to select delegates to attend their ward conventions. A DFL city convention will be held on July 19 and 20 to consider endorsements for mayor, park board, and BET.

Bassais, a past DFL party precinct chair, said, "I do intend on continuing my campaign if not endorsed even though as a life-long member of the DFL that would be a very hard decision."

Stevenson was endorsed by the DFL when he ran for council in 2023 and lost

the November election to Jenkins by 38 votes. "My neighbors have said clearly that they are looking for a change to the status quo in our city," he said. "I feel I have a strong chance at winning the DFL endorsement, but if I don't, I will continue to push for that change through November."

They also both appreciate living in the Lyndale neighborhood.

Stevenson especially likes "living on the Blaisdell protected bike path and seeing a beautiful cross-section of the neighborhood use it. I regularly see families with kids, people using mobility devices, commuters, and my friends pass by," he said.

"I love that my family and I can walk to some of the best restaurants in our city, including, Ramen Kazama, Hola Arepa, and Sonny's for a treat," said Bassais.

### EXPERIENCE

Stevenson moved to Minneapolis when he attended the University of Minnesota before graduating in 2020. During the protesting after the death of George Floyd, he was shot in the face by a police officer with a so-called "rubber" bullet and suffered injuries that included the loss of his left eye. Since then, he has worked for a nonprofit that forms housing cooperatives and volunteered with the Minnesota Justice Coalition and Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence. He currently works for Agate Housing, which runs homeless shelters.

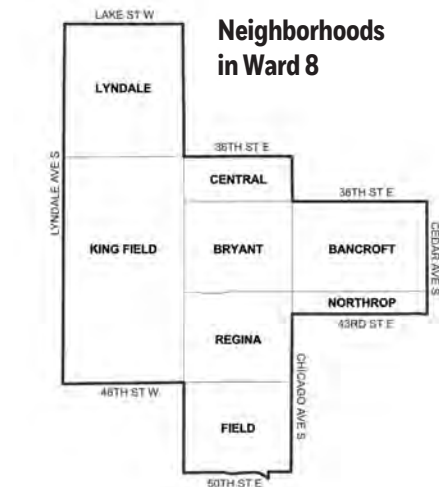
When asked about an experience that most qualified him for the council job, Stevenson narrowed it down to his work as a unionized homeless outreach worker. "I see every day the inner workings of the crisis on our streets, and I'm ready to bring that insight into city hall to reverse the trend of a growing homeless population, chaotic placement and eviction of encampments, and the worsening quality of life for people both in and out of homes as a result," he said.

Bassais, identified his collective bargaining experience working for labor unions as something that helps qualify him to be a council member.

He grew up in Minneapolis with his mother, attending Lyndale, Anwatin and Southwest schools, and said his "activism began at a young age, influenced by the anti-racist punk rock movement and my involvement in labor rights, leading to roles such as a union organizer and a precinct chair with the local DFL party."

After attending St. Cloud State University, Bassais joined a Minnesota hospitality union, UNITE HERE Local 17, and later became a business agent and labor negotiator for them. He now works as a union organizer with LIUNA, the Laborers' International Union of North America. "With over a decade of experience in labor unions and substantial time spent in the corporate world, I have developed a unique combination of grassroots activism and professional effectiveness," said Bassais.

Bassais has also has volunteer experience



coaching youth sports and serving as a board member and president for the Lyndale Neighborhood Association.

### PRIORITIES

"I am running for Minneapolis City Council in Ward 8, driven by a vision for a safer, more equitable city with improved public safety, housing, and economic opportunities, while standing in solidarity with marginalized communities," said Bassais. He lists six priorities on his website: clean and safe streets for all residents, tackling drug and behavioral health crises effectively, building sufficient housing to address affordability challenges, revitalizing Nicollet and Chicago Avenues to support small businesses, developing a thriving economic future, and enhancing the quality of life for everyone.

Stevenson lists his priorities under 13 general categories: public safety, police accountability, housing for all, healthy planet and healthy people, environmental justice, infrastructure, transportation, constituent services and community engagement, George Floyd square, equity and inclusion, neighborhood organizations and community building, good governance, supporting unions and good paying jobs and public schools.

Both candidates make the case that they will be responsive leaders focused on the values and needs of their constituents.

"We need a city that works together, embracing collaborative planning, decision-making, and action to overcome shared challenges," said Bassais. "I am committed to providing leadership rooted in genuine public service, always putting the needs of the people of Ward 8 first. I believe that to address these issues, we need clear communication, mutual respect, and a readiness to find common ground."

Stevenson has addressed where he lands along the occasionally evident political divide in city government with the mayor sometimes at odds with some members of the council.

"I am running for City Council in Ward 8 in 2025 because, while the kinder, safer Minneapolis we deserve is still possible, our current city leadership is failing to realize the potential of this city," he said. "The progressive majority on the city council has begun to make strides toward transformational change, but they encounter obstacles from the mayor and other council members at every turn."

### DEBATE APRIL 22

Minneapolis City Council Ward 8 candidates Josh Bassais and Soren Stevenson will debate at Martin Luther King Jr. Park Community Center on April 22, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. Professional Somali and Spanish interpretation services provided. The debate is being planned by the Minneapolis DFL Ward 8 convention committee. Both candidates are seeking the DFL endorsement.

The Ward 8 convention will be held on Saturday, May 4 at Justice Page Middle School. Convention delegates are encouraged to attend to have an opportunity to hear from the candidates.

Stevenson is endorsed by several local elected office holders including Hennepin County Commissioners Angela Conley and Irene Fernando, school board member Greta Callahan, BET member Samantha Pree-Stinson, State Senator Omar Fateh, and city council members Jeremiah Ellison and Robin Wonsley.

Both candidates expect to have more endorsements from individuals and organizations in the near future.

### DECISION-MAKING

A city council member is expected to make hundreds of decisions every month, some with significant and long-term consequences.

"I have honed my decision-making skills over more than 25 years of professional experience, particularly in roles involving contract negotiation, budget management, and stakeholder collaboration," said Bassais. "For instance, I successfully led a team working with a multi-million dollar contract, which required balancing diverse stakeholder interests and making strategic choices to achieve the best outcome. My ability to assess complex situations, weigh potential risks and benefits, and make informed decisions has consistently resulted in positive outcomes and strengthened relationships."

"I am a patient processor," said Stevenson. "I like to hear people out, and then sit with the ideas for a time before making a decision. This has been extremely valuable for me because experience has shown that your initial thought is not usually your best thought. This also allows me to hear more people and perspectives before jumping to conclusions. So much of our society doesn't value taking a second to think something through before talking, but I think it is one of my greatest strengths. I will bring this approach to city hall so that I can hear out the many different constituencies in Ward 8 and make the decision that best represents my communities."

### TO REACH THE CANDIDATES

Bassais is available to meet people at Hosmer Library, Room 102 every 3rd Wednesday from 5-7 p.m. and every third Saturday from 9-10 a.m. Email [joshbforward8@gmail.com](mailto:joshbforward8@gmail.com) or browse [www.joshbforward8.org](http://www.joshbforward8.org). To reach Stevenson, browse [sorenstevenson.org](http://sorenstevenson.org) and sign up, or email [sorenwithward8@gmail.com](mailto:sorenwithward8@gmail.com).

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## Working together to build stronger communities has never been more important.

Challenges bring opportunity. So do connections.

The other day, I met a Minneapolis fire inspections field operations manager who told me the city's fire department is understaffed.

"I think it's because people don't want to serve their community the way they used to," said the man, who also served 22 years in the United States military with tours of duty in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria.

"People are not as interested in giving back to the community or serving their community," he added. "Fire service is a trade. It also takes courage."

"What is a solution?" I asked.

"It starts in the home," he said. "We need to shift our values and priorities."

This conversation took place on Feb. 8 at the Community Connections Conference, an annual free event that connects residents of Minneapolis, community groups, neighborhoods, and local government.

This year's conference featured over 250 booths from the City of Minneapolis and other community groups. It brought together more than 1,000 community members from across the city to celebrate our communities, share ideas, and build connections.

Residents and city leaders interacted, discussed challenges, and celebrated neighborhood achievements. Information was shared in multiple languages.

Hands-on workshops and skill-building sessions allowed people to gain knowledge and resources to continue making a difference. The goal was to em-



By **Eric Ortiz**

power underserved communities and amplify underrepresented voices.

The Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation had a table with youth from our Youth Community Journalism Institute and created a community newspaper with conference attendees. We met dozens of great people doing great things in the community.

The conference was a huge success because it was grounded in the belief that all communities should feel welcome and everyone should have a chance to influence important decisions.

We need to continue working together to connect our communities with services and opportunities so that everyone feels a sense of belonging and can achieve their highest potential.

Building community is one of the most important things we can do today.

As former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said at this year's Knight Media Forum in Miami:

"America and the world need a new generation of community builders. A generation defined not by age but by spirit. By a fierce unyielding commitment to each other. A generation that is willing to stand up and reject the pessimism and animosity of our time and instead choose courage and hope. We must be that generation. It is up to all of us to build our lives around the time-tested triad of fulfillment grounded in relationships, purpose and service. It is up to us to rebuild community in America. My ask of all of you is to make community the lens through which you look at your life and your work, the compass you use to make decisions about what to prioritize where you invest your time and attention, and what issues, organizations and leaders you choose to support. How can your actions bring people together to help each other and build relationships? How can you use your role in sharing stories and shaping media narratives in de-



Twin Cities community leaders Carmen Robles, left, and Diana Hawkins at a community event in the Hawthorne neighborhood of north Minneapolis. (Photo by Eric Ortiz)

signing workplaces and schools and influencing culture to create the experience of community for more people and to make the case that community must be an urgent priority? I know this is easier said than done, but at a time when so many people are feeling divided and despondent, our work to build community could be one of the most important things we do to strengthen our nation."

Murthy, who wrote "Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World," recommends doing one small thing every day to help someone in your sphere of influence. Small steps will lead to the big cultural and policy shifts we need to create a just

world that works for everyone.

Working together has never been more important than now. We need more "community connectors" to connect people to resources, support networks, and opportunities.

Community connectors can build relationships and facilitate communication between different groups within the community, serving as a link between people and services and helping those who need it most.

We must continue standing up for those who need it most and giving back to our communities.

This means promoting empathy and understanding, creating opportunities for people to share interests, creating opportunities for people to feel valued and supported, creating opportunities for people to feel welcome and accepted.

We need to continue standing up for human rights and creating healthy communities for all people in all communities.

This means acting according to our moral principles, even when it's difficult or unpopular.

This requires courage and integrity.

This is how we build community connections

Community connections are how we build stronger communities.

Stronger communities are how we build a better future for everyone.

**Eric Ortiz** lives in the Wedge with his family. He is executive director of the Strong Mind Strong Body Foundation, a national youth and community development nonprofit based in Minneapolis, and associate director of research for The Pivot Fund, a venture philanthropy organization that invests in community newsrooms serving underserved communities.

## STORIES & JOURNEYS

With warmer weather coming, I have been able to get outside and walk more. Walking more is causing me to be aware that it is so easy for me to take my feet for granted. So, in this column, I am minding my body by celebrating my feet.

More to the point: what my feet enable me to do. My feet enable me to feel a connection to the ground literally and figuratively. And that's where this column starts.

### CREATING STORIES AND JOURNEYS IS ME GROUNDING MYSELF

I'm going start by taking you along with me into part of my "creative process" that results in Stories and Journeys each month. It starts with grounding. In fact, the next column starts getting written as soon as I submit the column I have been writing. At that point, it is not a conscious process – more an act of internal knowing and the words "be still and know" is how I start out. Then there are the wise words of my mother paraphrased, "To thine own



By **Donald L. Hammen**

## MINDING MY BODY BY CELEBRATING MY FEET

self be true and it shall follow as night follows day you shall not be false to any man or woman." Then there is the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech or the press; or the right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government for redress of grievances." Finally, there is what I have been tasked to write, which is what I am thinking, learning and experiencing in my life as an elder.

At the end of the day, Stories and Journeys is me paying attention to my internal knowing, being still and true to myself.

### CREATING STORIES AND JOURNEYS IS ME MINDING MY BODY BY CELEBRATING MY FEET

Twice in my life I have had to learn to walk again. This has led me to the conclusion that I/we live too much in our heads and don't pay adequate attention to our feet. So, how about you dear reader. Do you ever pay attentions to your feet and show them gratitude for what they do for you? Tell yourself, tell others or tell me via tesha@tmcpub.com. And if you have

read this far you have taken the plunge into the river (flow) of life experiences that is Stories and Journeys.

It's Feb. 26. I celebrate my feet taking me along with a ride from my neighbor Judith to the February meeting of Longfellow/Seward Healthy Seniors SOLOS Resource Group. Greater Longfellow resident Tim Mungaven is meeting with us. He is a longtime Minneapolis Regional Retirees Council (AFL-CIO) Housing Committee Chairperson. The topic is seniors and housing. Tim talks about his background, the history and work of the housing committee and what has been learned so far. This includes Tim offering his diagram of a new possibility for the delivery of services to seniors that is more neighborhood rooted in organizations like Longfellow-Seward Healthy Seniors. The attendance at this meeting was double what was expected. As many as 20 plus versus 12.

### ELDER VOICES

We gathered at Turtle Bread on Feb. 28. I celebrate my feet enabling me to get there. For the second month in a row seven new people showed up to tell their

stories and share their journeys. There was Silvia, Bruce, Andrea, Debbie, Tom and Joel. A mix of Messenger and Southwest Connector readers. Elder Voices is not normally a space where people share that politics and public policy are shaping their elder stories and journeys. Today was an exception.

Elder Voices is next scheduled to meet April 25, 10-11 a.m., at Turtle Bread, 4205-E.34th St. Look for the table with the sign.

### MINNEAPOLIS AREA DFL SENIOR CAUCUS

Celebrating my feet walking from my kitchen to the computer in my living room for a Zoom meeting. Several south Minneapolis residents running for six offices. Agenda items included Social Security cutback update and Medicaid reductions. Social Security data Issues in light of Musk take over of Social Security Administration. Concerns include I.T. system is weak and data privacy. In addition to service being made more difficult to access.

In gratitude for your readership. I wonder where my feet will enable me to go next.

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

## SOUTHWEST Connector

The Southwest Connector is a monthly community publication in Southwest Minneapolis, owned and operated by TMC Publications CO. Visit our website for calendar and publication dates.

### Owner & Editor:

Tesha M. Christensen, 612-345-9998  
tesha@swconnector.com

### Story ideas always welcome.

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

### Advertising & Marketing:

612-345-9998  
Tesha M. Christensen, tesha@tmcpub.com  
Denis Woulfe, denis@tmcpub.com

**Design & Layout:** Tesha M. Christensen  
**Billing:** billing@tmcpub.com

### Printing by: House of Print

This issue of the Connector is printed on recycled paper using soy-based ink. Approximately 95-97% of material that enters the print facility is recycled.

**Delivery:** 612-235-7197, Delivery@TMCpub.com  
Mail subscriptions available at \$80/year.

### Contributing Writers & Photographers:

Brian Gabriel, Jan Willms, Jill Boogren, Cam Gordon, Eric Ortiz, J.D. Fratzke, Terry Faust, Suzie Marty, Larry LaVercombe, Donald Hammen, Michele Rae, and WACSO.

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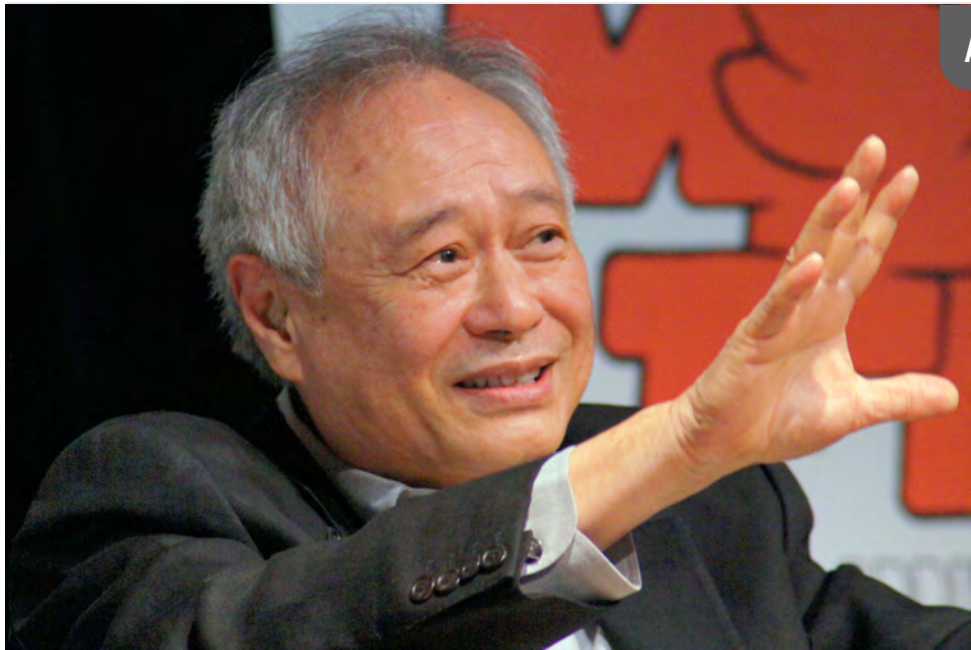


**TMC**  
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5139 34th Ave. S. #17097, Minneapolis,  
MN 55417 • 612-345-9998  
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ANG LEE OF ‘BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN’ HONORED AT MSPIFF 44

Award-winning director Ang Lee spoke to a full house of film enthusiasts April 6, 2025 as he received the Al Milgrom Tribute award at the Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival (MSPIFF.) In a conversation with moderator Dierdre Haj and the audience at De La Salle High School, Lee sprinkled his conversation with humor. The director of “Brokeback Mountain” and “Life of Pi,” among other films, Lee has been nominated for Oscars five times and has won twice as best director. Laughter rippled through the crowd as he talked about some of his experiences in filmmaking, how he started and how he feels about film. “Cin-

ema is something that is spiritual,” he noted. One of the films Lee won an Oscar for is Brokeback Mountain, produced by Minnesota’s Bill Pohlad. Lee was the first director of color to win Best Director for the film in 2005.

MSPIFF featured the 25th Anniversary Screening of “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” and the 20th Anniversary Screening of “Brokeback Mountain” before and after the conversation with Lee.

~ By Jan Willms

Photo by Terry Faust

LAKE HARRIET BANDSHELL REPAIR UPDATE

Repairs begin this spring at smaller Lake Harriet Bandshell structures after repairs to the Bandshell and its concessions building were completed last year.



This year’s repairs include the boat launch building, picnic shelter next to the concessions building, and information kiosk. Work is scheduled in spring and fall phases to accommodate summer events, activities and concessions at the Bandshell.

The spring phase began the week of March 10, 2025. Work will focus on renovating and repainting the buildings’ siding, repairing electrical systems, and building some new built-in seating at the picnic shelter and on existing planters facing the lake. This work is planned to wrap up in April, before Bread & Pickle concessions open for the season.

The fall phase is expected to begin in October after the season ends for Bread & Pickle and the boat launch. Work will focus on roof replacements for the boat launch building and picnic shelter, and door replacements at the Bandshell. This work is scheduled to finish up for the year in November.

TREE PLANTING AT KENNY PARK

The 2025 Minneapolis Arbor Day Celebration brings an entertaining evening in appreciation of trees to Kenny Park (1328 W 58th St.) on Friday, April 25, 4-8 p.m. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Forestry Department and its network of community partners invite everyone to enjoy a unique variety of tree-themed activities, education, and entertainment for all ages. Approximately 130 trees will be planted across the park this spring, about half of which will be planted during the Arbor Day Celebration.

LYNNHURST PARK SURVEY OPEN

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is working on a project that will replace and rehabilitate portions of playground equipment at Lynnhurst Park. Project design will be finalized this summer with construction planned fall 2025-spring 2026. An online survey is available until April 18, 2025 for people to share opinions on a number of options for the upgraded playground: potential play equipment and color schemes; layout options; support for refurbishing equipment; open comments.

GARDEN TOOL SWAPS MAY 10

Attention, gardeners! From seasoned growers to novice seed-sowers, all are welcome at the 5th Annual Minneapolis Garden Tool Swap. Neighborhood and community organizations are excited to once again offer this free event on Saturday, May 10 at Lake Hiawatha Park from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and at Armatage Park and Martin Luther King Jr. Park from 9 a.m.-noon. Kenwood Community Center will host the swap from 1-4 p.m. along with other activities.

As you start Spring cleaning, hang on to unused yard tools, planters, garden décor, books, seeds, and more, and share them with neighbors at the swap. You do not need to bring items in order to take, and you may bring without taking. All items donated at the swap are free for any participant to take home.

There will also be garden tool swaps going on in Northeast, Prospect Park and North Minneapolis on May 3 and at Brian Coyle Center May 16 with donations accepted anytime. For more event details, visit the City’s web page Garden Tool Swap - City of Minneapolis. <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/garbage-recycling-cleanup/garden-tool-swap/>

Thousands of items have found new uses over the years that Minneapolis Recycling has been supporting and tracking the swaps.



A bus-only lane was installed in 2024 on Lake Street and Lagoon Avenue as part of the B Line work.

B LINE TO OPEN JUNE 14

Construction of the B Line and Lake Street Improvements was almost entirely completed in 2023 and 2024. The following work remains to be done this spring:

- Traffic signals: Crews recently finished upgrades west of Dupont. Lake/Lagoon & Dupont signals will be completed later this spring. Crews will also install pedestrian push buttons for safer crossings.
- Street lighting: Final streetlight repairs will be completed this spring once ground frost thaws and weather permits.
- Bus-Only Lanes
- Pylons and real-time signs: Installation of station pylons and real-time Next-Trip signs are underway, with only a few left to install.
- Fare collection equipment: Installation of ticket machines and fare card readers is underway.

The B Line will officially open on June 14, 2025.

The B Line shares two stations in St.

Paul with the newly opened Gold Line. The Gold Line is a 10-mile bus rapid transit line connects Saint Paul, Maplewood, Landfall, Oakdale and Woodbury generally along I-94.

The next step for Met Transit is to look at the arterial bus rapid transit lines that would open beyond the Network Now horizon of 2027 – an effort called the arterial bus rapid transit (BRT) Plan Update. This Plan Update will identify the next three planned arterial BRT lines – the J, K, and L lines – planned to open between 2030 and 2035. These lines will join the growing METRO network of fast, frequent, all-day service between comfortable stations with enhanced amenities.

The Plan Update will start from 17 candidate corridors and narrow down to the J, K, and L lines through technical evaluation, public feedback, and coordination with cities, counties, and MnDOT.

Questions about B Line or Lake Street improvements? Call 651-356-6995 or email [BLine@metrotransit.org](mailto:BLine@metrotransit.org).

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## TIPS ON HOW TO USE A TINY YARD SPACE BETTER FROM FRAMEWORK HOMEOWNERSHIP

### FAUX HEDGES

If your outdoor patio or side yard is hemmed in by something like a chain-link or cinder block wall or planter box, consider installing a faux green hedge.

This is the perfect solution when you want to hide something while also adding some vibrancy to a small space. Plus, you can purchase a 24-pack of hedges and have them shipped directly to your door.

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### MOOD LIGHTING

If a space is small, rather than fighting with its boundaries, use them as an opportunity for coziness with candles, string lights, or tiki lights.

Paper lanterns are another affordable solution to suspend them from your patio ceiling. And while having lights in them is pretty, even if they're empty the adjacent outdoor lights will make them glow and cast shadows.

### FLEXIBLE FURNITURE

Changes to even the smallest balcony or yard can have a big impact.

Before setting your plans in motion (and buying furniture that may not work), note that you want to make sure there is room to walk into and through the area. Try flex-furniture pieces that can be folded when not in use to keep the space from getting crowded.

## FRAMEWORK HOMEOWNERSHIP PARTNERS WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Framework Homeownership is thrilled to announce an exciting new partnership with Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, one of the highest-regarded Habitat affiliates worldwide. This collaboration will introduce a custom homebuyer education course designed to empower

future homeowners in the Twin Cities area by transitioning Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity's current webinar series to the innovative Framework online platform.

The move to Framework's online platform will revolutionize how aspiring homeowners in the Twin Cities prepare for one of the most significant milestones of their lives. By integrating Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity's expert-led content with Framework's user-friendly online tools, the new program will provide prospective homeowners with flexible, self-paced learning opportunities catering to their needs and schedules.

### KEY FEATURES OF THE NEW PROGRAM INCLUDE:

- Self-paced learning: Participants can now access educational modules, videos, and interactive content at their convenience, allowing them to learn at their own pace and revisit materials as needed.
- Comprehensive education: The program will cover essential topics such as budgeting, credit management, mortgage processes, and home maintenance, equipping future homeowners with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful homeownership.
- Interactive tools: Framework's plat-

form offers interactive features, including quizzes and practical exercises, to enhance the learning experience and ensure a thorough understanding of critical concepts.

• Expert guidance: While the online format provides flexibility, participants will still benefit from the expertise of Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity's experienced educators and advisors, who will be available to offer support and answer questions.

The new experience is launching as Twin Cities Habitat celebrates its 40th anniversary. For more information, visit [www.frameworkhomeownership.org](http://www.frameworkhomeownership.org) or [home.tchabitat.org](http://home.tchabitat.org).

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## DUAL BENEFITS

climate tools.”

Biochar production provides a sustainable alternative to dealing with tree waste, which cities like Minneapolis have in oversupply due to things like utility line maintenance and emerald ash borer disease, he said.

But biochar itself has a myriad of different uses. When added to the soil, biochar helps soil retain nutrients and hold water, boosting plant growth and improving drought resilience, according to Singaas. It can also be used for filtering stormwater and in construction materials. For example, mixing biochar with cement can create a more durable concrete, he said.

“In every case, there’s a dual benefit,” said Singaas. “One is that long-term carbon storage and two is some other environmental benefit, whether it’s cleaning water or making materials stronger or some other job.”

### EQUIVALENT OF TAKING 789 CARS OFF ROAD

Doten was the first to push Minneapolis to start using biochar. Since 2013, it has been used in various applications throughout the city, primarily mixed with compost in community gardens and boulevards, but also incorporated into stormwater mitigation projects to help prevent pollutants from getting into lakes and rivers.

Doten purchased the biochar for the city from a vendor in Missouri. But for Minneapolis to continue to use biochar, he needed a local source.

“It’s a great way to demonstrate [biochar], but you reduce the climate benefits



When added to the soil, biochar helps soil retain nutrients and hold water, boosting plant growth and improving drought resilience.

when you have to truck it across the country,” Doten said.

Enter the city’s new biochar production facility.

Xcel Energy will be the primary supplier of the facility. The company plans to donate the wood waste from its routine tree trimming around power lines throughout the city. Doten said he is also in talks with Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Park Board to take their wood waste for use at the new facility.

Once it is up and running, the facility will have the capacity to process over 3,000 tons of wood waste and produce over 5,000 tons of biochar annually. That amount of biochar production will remove an estimated 3,700 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – the equiv-

alent of taking over 789 cars off the road, according to a news release.

### NOT NEW BUT GAINING ATTENTION

Biochar is not new. The practice can be traced back thousands of years to indigenous communities in regions around the world, said Doten. But biochar is experiencing a surge in popularity as communities seek ways to address climate change.

“We have not made as much progress towards slowing climate impact as we had hoped from years ago so I think [biochar] is gaining attention because of the climate impact,” Singaas said.

Doten said Minneapolis plans to sell biochar produced at its facility to other cities and counties in the Twin Cities



We have not made as much progress towards slowing climate impact as we had hope from years ago so I think [biochar] is gaining attention because of the climate impact.”

Eric Singaas



metro, as well as state agencies like the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the Minnesota Department of Transportation to use in their own projects.

“We’re not trying to displace private industry,” he said. “We’d like to get this up and established as a practice so people know how to do it so that there is a demand for private businesses to make biochar and make it into a green industry in Minnesota and better use our wood waste.”

Minneapolis has become a leader in urban biochar application, and cities around the world are taking notice. Doten said he has been contacted by officials in Buenos Aires, Argentina and Nairobi, Kenya who are interested in starting their own biochar programs. Doten also sits on the board of the U.S. Biochar Initiative, which will host its North American Biochar Conference in Minneapolis in September.

Minneapolis’ biochar facility will be located at 670 25th Ave. SE near the University of Minnesota campus. Doten expects biochar production to be underway by late summer or early fall.

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# VETO OVERRIDE CLEARS PATH TO EXPLORE PEDESTRIAN MALL AT GF SQUARE

By **Jill Boogren**

In February, the Minneapolis City Council overrode Mayor Jacob Frey's veto of the council's directive for reconstructing 38th and Chicago. Their action, according to Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez, means the city is moving forward with a concept that "guarantees pedestrianization" at George Floyd Square.

"In addition to cultivating and protecting the existing memorial from non-delivery, maintenance, and emergency vehicles, the pedestrian mall concept would also provide new boulevard spaces that will allow for plantings, trees, and stormwater treatment areas and prioritize traffic calming, safety, and accessibility improvements," wrote Chavez in a Ward 9 update to constituents the day after the vote.

Ward 11 Council Member Emily Koski, who had previously voted against the council's direction for the Square, joined eight of her colleagues in overriding the mayor's veto. In her Ward 11 newsletter, Koski said George Floyd's family called on her to overturn the veto. "For nearly five years, his family has come to George Floyd Square to grieve and heal. To them, this is sacred ground, a place of resilience, justice, and humanity. It is not just an intersection; it is a memorial," she wrote.

The day before the council vote, community leaders and neighbors held a press conference at the Peoples' Way calling for the override to enable community to develop a shared vision for the Square.

Mileesha Smith, co-chair of the Community Visioning Council (CVC), said the process of healing should not be rushed and that the community needs more time.

"We as people need time and space, with the patience of everyone to come together, to be able to say what this space needs to be able to function for everybody," said Smith. "Not just us as community. But the residents, the businesses and the people who fly in to take in, embrace this space we have been holding here for going on five years."

Rev. Dr. Jia Starr Brown said the space has grown to represent Black and Brown people whose lives were stolen at the hands of police.

"People experiencing injustice in all



Community Visioning Council co-chair Mileesha Smith said the process of healing should not be rushed and that the community needs more time during a press conference on Feb. 26, 2025. "We, as people, need time and space with the patience of everyone to come together, to be able to say what this space needs to be able to function for everybody," said Smith. (Photo by Jill Boogren)

forms and systems now also claim connection to this place. This place for gathering, for remembering, for grieving, healing and ultimately transforming. This is indeed a transformational space," she said. She spoke of the compassion, hospitality and educational leadership of the community that has embraced and educated thousands of people over the past five years.

"We need this healing space so we can remember, so we can rise," she said.

Marcia Howard, who has lived at 38th and Chicago for 26 years, said people visiting Minneapolis tend to go to the Mall of America, the Spoonbridge and Cherry sculpture, Paisley Park and now, George Floyd Square.

"We're talking about [the 3700 block of Chicago Ave.], where families and their bapas and their nanas are walking across to mourn, to grieve, to reflect and pay tribute, each and every day from all points of the globe. They are here in our fair city," said Howard. A map posted on a community board at the Square is often full of pins marking visitors' homes or places of origin.

## DOING THE WORK

The CVC has been meeting monthly on third Saturdays for over a year and has just added weekly Wednesday evening

meetings to continue their work.

"The Community Visioning Council has been doing the outreach, been listening to the people, been making space, creating space, redirecting the hurt into doing the work instead of harming each other," said Smith. As community, they are working to figure out what they need and looking out for one another.

Asked whether the CVC supports the pedestrian plaza over the flexible open plan, which was the original recommendation by project leaders, Smith said, "We have to weigh all our options and figure out what the domino effect is gonna be before we say what we feel is best."

Here, Howard added that in any option the safety of the people who will still be at George Floyd Square must be first and foremost.

"To paraphrase Malcolm X, 'We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us.' We're sorry we inconvenienced people and capitalism by having a Black man lynched here and having the rest of the world wanna come here. Sorry that it landed on a bus stop. Sorry that it landed in front of a deli. Sorry that George Floyd happened to inconveniently get lynched on a roadway. Oops," said Howard.

As to the question of what the area

needs, a couple of people in attendance called for meeting the 24 Demands of Justice Resolution 001.

"This area needs systemic oppression to end," added Howard, who explained that as a former high school teacher, she's lost seven students in these streets.

## THE PEOPLES' WAY

At Sabathani Community Center that same evening, four applicants presented their plans for developing the Peoples' Way. Rise and Remember, who has been caretaking the memorial and offerings since 2020, proposed a memorial garden and gathering space. The other proposals were for new builds at the site.

P3 Foundation (David's Place) would create a community center with a memorial garden.

Minnesota Agape Movement would build a six-story building with a gift shop, museum, business incubator, media hub, bar and restaurant (see "Range of building types, uses proposed for Peoples' Way," in the February 2025 Longfellow Nokomis Messenger).

The fourth, Urban League Twin Cities, has withdrawn its application for consideration.

The selection will ultimately be made by the city council and mayor.

The Community Visioning Council meets Wednesdays at 3715 Chicago Ave. from 5:30-7:30 p.m. and third Saturdays from 10 a.m.-noon in the Belfry Community Space (3901 Chicago Ave.). More information can be found at Gfscvc.org.

Immediately following the monthly meeting from 12-1 p.m., also at the Belfry, 612 MASH is offering free self care services, including blood pressure checks and glucose testing, acupressure and de-escalation skills. No reservations are needed, and walk-ins are welcome.

612 MASH (Minneapolis All Shall Heal) is a healthcare advocacy nonprofit that works to bridge the gaps between underserved communities and critical resources by connecting people with available health and medical services. They are volunteer-driven and are always looking for new clinical professionals and bilingual volunteers to join the team. For more information or to request a self care fair at an event or gathering, they can be reached on Facebook or at 612mash.org.



## NORDIC SKI TEAM EARNS STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

The Washburn High School girls Nordic ski team are state champions for the first time in the school's history. The team placed first at the Minnesota State High School League Nordic Ski Championship held at Giants Ridge in Biwabik, Minnesota on Feb. 12 and 13, 2025.

A few standout performances helped the team beat Minnetonka, St. Paul Highland Park, and Duluth East by 14 points. The Gardner sisters, Nell and Eve, ranked 6th in the team sprint. Chloe Angerman and Ciara Thatcher ranked 5th and 8th respectively in the pursuit race. The team is coached by Beckie Alexander.

## ZANE KAISER HONORED

Yamaha has recognized 40 exceptional music educators under 40 for the fifth consecutive year. Zane Kaiser is among the honorees who exemplify action, courage, creativity, and growth while going above and beyond in their music instruction. The 40 Under 40 music education program honors music educators across all grade levels.

Kaiser is the band and orchestra Teacher at Justice Page Middle School in Minneapolis. "I was already a little shaky just knowing someone nominated me," said Kaiser. "What could I be doing that is worth noting? Upon hearing the news, I was overcome with joy, confusion, happiness, and excitement. My students will be over the moon."

Hundreds of nominations were submitted by students, parents, teachers, and local instrument dealers and mentors, showcasing the music educators who made a positive impact on their community and students. "Despite the challenges that educators face, these music teachers are leading some of the most innovative, creative, and impactful programs to strengthen and advance arts education nationwide," said Heather Mansell, marketing manager of education at Yamaha. "Yamaha is deeply committed to ensuring access to high-quality, comprehensive music education for all



students, and we are proud to support and champion the efforts of these 40 exceptional educators – as well as the thousands of others across the country who share their dedication and vision."

## ARNAV BAHL EARN AWARDS

At the Minnesota State Science & Engineering Fair, Lynnhurst resident Arnav Bahl won the Beckman Coulter Middle School Excellence in Biology Awards, which includes a \$500 prize. Arnav also won a Minnesota Academy of Science Gold Award, the 3M Young Inventor Recognition, the Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovators Challenge, and the Naval Science Award. Arnav's project is titled "Antibiotic Overuse: Emergence of Resistant Bacterial Strains."

A total of 434 middle and high school students from 59 schools across Minnesota competed in the 88th annual Minnesota State Science & Engineering Fair (SSEF) on March 28 at the Roy Wilkins Auditorium in St. Paul. SSEF is proudly organized by the Minnesota Academy of Science (MAS). Participating students advanced from regional science fairs throughout Minnesota to compete in this prestigious state event.

Over 40 companies and organizations gave awards valued at more than \$20,000.





## URBAN STAR PARTIES AT PERSHING FIELD

A recurring family star party, Planets in the Park, is sponsored by Pershing Field Park and park director Heather Susag. The astronomers who run Planets in the Park are volunteer outreach specialists of the Minnesota Astronomical Society, Erica Stark and Michael Kauper.

"Please help PitP. Support Minneapolis Parks, city families and kids," say volunteers. "Help us introduce urban dwellers to astronomy."

An urban star party was held at Pershing Field Park (3523 W 48th St) on April 4, 2025 from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Free and open to all ages, the April event featured telescopes to view brilliant Jupiter, tiny Mars, the lovely quarter moon, as well as deep sky viewing of the star birth nebula, M42, in the sword of Orion, and the sparkling Double Cluster in Perseus the Hero.

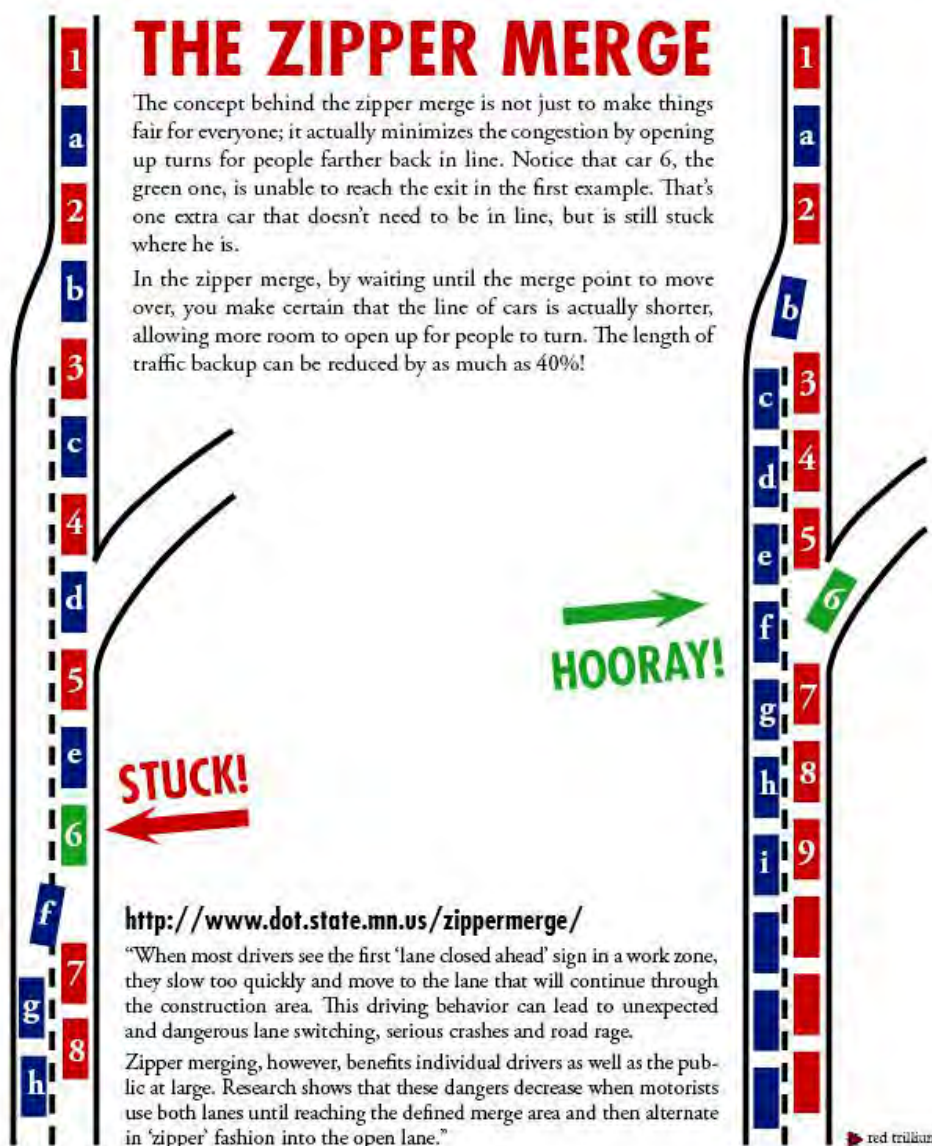
On Dec. 13, 2024, PitP observed Jupiter and its moons, Saturn and its moons, Venus and a 6-day waxing crescent moon. On Sept. 13, 2024, guest astronomer Ben Huset spoke about billionaire space walks and broken Boeing space capsules.

Planets in the Park feature a beginners' astronomy lesson. Volunteers hand out star wheels and red astronomy flashlights, followed by a laser-guided tour of the night sky. They read aloud diverse sky legends from all over the world.

PitP goes ahead clear or cloudy but is cancelled if stormy or snowy.

Upcoming events will likely be held Friday, May 2, 8:30-10 p.m and again on Monday, June 30. To find more, follow the Planets in the Park Facebook page.

## GET READY FOR ROAD CONSTRUCTION SEASON



## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

### COMMUNITY COLLEGE EXHIBIT

Visit the Community Collage installation at the Washburn Library, on display March 15 through April 30. For more information on the project, visit [www.communitycollage.org](http://www.communitycollage.org). Community Collage is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a mission is to bring people together through transformative photography experiences that celebrate both individual identity and collective connection.

### CARITAS VOCAL ENSEMBLE SHOWS

Caritas Vocal Ensemble, a Twin Cities a cappella chamber choir, concludes its season of Musical Stories with a spring program "Once Upon a Song..." St. Paul resident Laurie Zaepfel has been a member of the group since 2013. "Caritas Vocal Ensemble has a unique niche in the Twin Cities choral landscape, as we are a volunteer ensemble, presenting eclectic programs. We strive to reach more audiences with both our music and our partnerships with other non-profits." "Once Upon a Song" is a joyous program of eclectic music for all ages that celebrates childhood whimsies in song, with a special emphasis on the beloved Winnie the Pooh stories of A.A. Milne. Suggested donation \$25 online or at the door to be divided between Caritas and a local nonprofit for each concert. Benefit partners this spring are Cherish All Children, which works to combat child trafficking, and Avenues for Youth, which helps youth find a path out of homelessness.

Upcoming shows: Saturday, April 26, 4 p.m., Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church; Sunday, April 27, 4 p.m., First Lutheran Church (1555 40th Avenue NE, Columbia Heights). For tickets and additional information, visit [www.caritasvocalensemble.org](http://www.caritasvocalensemble.org) or email [caritasvocalensemble@gmail.com](mailto:caritasvocalensemble@gmail.com).

### PEACE IN THE WORLD CONCERT MAY 3

The Peace in the World Concert will be held on Saturday, May 3 at Loring Park. The Ukrainian Food Truck will be on site. There will be information and merchandise for sale supporting Ukraine. Performances include: 1 p.m. Mark Stillman, 2 p.m. JD Steele & Mill City Singers, 3 p.m. Colin Monette, 4 p.m. Ukrainian Village Band. Sound by Armadillo. "Bring a blanket or chair and come down!" urge organizers.

### LYNNHURST AUTHOR RELEASES NEW BOOK

Lynnhurst author and illustrator John Owens has several upcoming events planned following the releases of his new book "One Spring Up North," a wordless picture-book journey through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as spring awakens.

- Saturday, May 3, 10:30 a.m., Wild Rumpus Books (2720 W 43rd St.).

- Saturday, May 3, 2025, 2 p.m., Red Balloon Bookshop (891 Grand Ave, St Paul).

### SAFETY CLUBS MEET

Every other Tuesday from 5:30-6:30 p.m. the East Lake Harriet Neighborhood (ELHN) Safety Club will walk as a group through the East Lake Harriet neighborhood keeping watch and noting any safety or livability concerns. The ELHN Safety Club members will meet at Walker Place, 3701 Bryant Avenue S. The ELHN Safety Club is made up of neighbor volunteers and are identified by their bright logo-ed orange shirts and hats. The ELHN Safety Club is one of 18 city-wide safety clubs who collaborate with the MPD, Minneapolis Park and Police, City Council and more.

[www.mplsneighborhoodsafetyclubs.com](http://www.mplsneighborhoodsafetyclubs.com)

## CITY BRIEFS

### LEGISLATORS TOWN HALL APRIL 21

There will be a meeting on Monday, April 21 at 7 p.m. hosted by 5th District Congressional Representative Ilhan Omar; State Representatives Jamie Long, Esther Agbaje, Emma Greenman, Katie Jones, Sydney Jordan, Samantha Sencer-Mura, Mike Howard, Anquam Mahamoud, and Aisha Gomez; and State Senators Omar Fateh and Doron Clark. This event is open to the public but pre-registration is required to receive the location. The focus is on the impact of federal government actions on Minnesotans. For more information, email [MN05.Info@mail.house.gov](mailto:MN05.Info@mail.house.gov) or call 612-333-1272. The event will also be broadcast on Omar's social media.

### DISTRICT 61 TOWN HALL APRIL 30

There will be a District 61 town hall meeting on Wednesday, April 30 from 7-8:30 p.m. hosted by State Representatives Jamie Long and Katie Jones, and State Senator Scott Dibble at United Methodist Church (511 Groveland Ave.).

### OPEN STREETS

The city council has approved locations, dates and organizers for four Open Streets Minneapolis events this year. They selected Central Avenue, Cedar Avenue, West Broadway, and Hennepin Avenue in Uptown. The Uptown Association will be organizing the Hennepin Ave event on Sept. 20 on Hennepin between W 26th and 36th Streets. The Central Ave event will be held Aug. 2, Cedar on Aug. 17, and West Broadway on Sept. 6.

### SOUTHWEST LIGHT RAIL AUDIT

The state's legislative auditor released a report on the Metropolitan Council's

Southwest Light Rail Transit construction project on April 7, 2025, and found that the council's financial practices did not meet certain requirements and that there were weaknesses in internal controls in several areas. They also noted that the Lunda/C.S. McCrossan Joint Venture group did not always comply with the requirements regarding use of disadvantaged business enterprises and physical security of the project sites.

### LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH HEROES

The Minneapolis health department held a resource fair and ceremony to honor local health heroes on April 9. They are Marcus Kar, Director of North Minneapolis Programs at Youth Farm; Matt Toburen, executive director at Aliveness Project; Sue Abderholden, executive director for NAMI Minnesota; BrightSide Produce; the Avivo Street Outreach Team; Nazir Khan, executive director of the Minnesota Environmental Justice Table; and Colectiva Bilingüe of the Minneapolis Bilingual Education Collective.

### CITY HALL RENOVATIONS

The renovations to city hall that have been underway for more than three years are nearly completed. The construction updated heating, ventilation, air conditioning and electrical systems. The third floor now features a media room and more natural light, as the process uncovered many windows that have been hidden as part of previous renovations. The mayor and his staff have already moved into Room 330, City Hall. City council member offices and all the meetings that use the council chambers will move back over the next few months.

### MINNEAPOLIS MUSIC SUMMIT

The city and the Minnesota Independent Venue Alliance are co-hosting a Min-

neapolis Music Summit on May 10 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Green Room at 2923 Girard Ave So. Musicians, promoters, and those working in management, recording, venues, studios or policy are invited to attend this free event to connect to resources and give feedback on policy ideas.

### ART SOUGHT FOR RIVERFRONT

Artists have been invited to apply to create artwork at Water Works in Mill Ruins Park that includes the sacred Dakhóta sites of Owámmniyomni and Wíta Nagí and is within the Dakhóta traditional homelands. The selected artist or artist team will collaborate with the Dakhóta community to design the artwork. For more information, contact [lydia.fourhorns@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:lydia.fourhorns@minneapolismn.gov).

### SIDEWALK VENDING

On April 17, the city council is expected to pass an ordinance that will allow a vendor to operate their licensed cart at up to three locations instead of just one. It will also allow carts to operate on more streets, as well as commercial corridors and closer to park buildings. Operating hours will increase from 7 a.m.-10 p.m. to 6-12 a.m. unless within 300 feet of a residence, when hours must be between 7 a.m.-11 p.m.

### YARD WASTE COLLECTION

The 2025 season for Minneapolis solid waste collection of leaves, brush and branches started April 7. People can set yard waste out in reusable containers, compostable bags or bundled with string or twine by 6 a.m. on regularly scheduled waste pick up days to have it removed.

 Briefs compiled by Cam Gordon.

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## 1 INTERRUPTERS

"I'm grateful that the data validated our community experience and will result in violence prevention service to the neighborhood," said Ward 7 Council Member Katie Cashman.

### WHAT A TEAM LOOKS LIKE

MAD DADS Minneapolis Executive Director Jordan Nelson said that staff are scheduled to work based on local patterns and that they initially will have teams working 40 hours a week Tuesday-Saturday. They will be out in the community Tuesday and Wednesday from 2-8 p.m. and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 4 p.m. to midnight.

The staff teams will consist of five interrupters and two outreach workers, with one site supervisor and one program manager. Nelson said all staff are interviewed and then volunteer for four days to determine if they are "a good fit for the team." All staff complete background checks and CPR and stop the bleeding first-aid training through the Red Cross, as well as conflict resolution and de-escalation. They can be identified at work by their MAD DADS green sweatshirts, do not wear bullet proof vests, and are not allowed to carry weapons of any kind.

### A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

On April 1, people were able to learn more about MAD DADS at a League of Women Voters' forum held at the First Unitarian Society (900 Mount Curve).

At the forum, called Public Safety Beyond an Armed Police Presence, people heard from Nelson. They also learned about the city's public health approach to violence reduction from Commissioner of Community Safety Todd Barnette and Candace Hanson, executive director of Canopy Roots, the company that provides emergency behavioral mental health first



Todd Barnette, Jordan Nelson, Candace Hanson, and Jane Lansing of the League of Women Voters Public Safety Committee speak during the League of Women Voters Forum on April 1, 2025. (Photo by Gabe Gordon)

responders for the city that are now available throughout the city 24 hours a day.

"The public health approach is not new," said Barnette. "Many urban cities do this."

Under the approach, crime and violence are considered a public health problem similar to disease and accidental injuries. The process includes looking at causes in order to support prevention and intervention to limit harm when prevention fails. This approach, for example, has helped reduce death and injuries from a variety of causes and relies on using data to test – and verify – potential interventions.

### CURE VIOLENCE MODEL

Minneapolis is one of many cities throughout the world using the Cure Violence Model (CVM). Barnette said Minneapolis is using it to help develop "an ecosystem of services" to prevent violence from occurring, to respond when it occurs to limit its impact, and to restore and help those who are victims or engage in it to

recover. The behavioral crisis response services, as well as the community violence intervention teams, are both part of that.

CVM was developed by Cure Violence Global, founded in the 1990s by Gary Slutkin, M.D., former head of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Intervention Development Unit.

Researchers from John Jay College of Criminal Justice Research and the U.S. Department of Justice have found that it has contributed to violence reductions in many cities, including in killings by 53% in Baltimore, M.D. and homicides by 34% in Indianapolis, Ind.

CVM uses interrupter workers to prevent violence by identifying and mediating potentially lethal conflicts in the community. Outreach workers help those at the highest risk to turn away from violence and get services. They also work to engage community leaders, local business owners, residents, faith leaders, and others to promote nonviolence, and to shift expectations and norms around violence for the long term.

The model relies on employing workers who share the same background and come from the same neighborhood as those who need to be reached.

### VIOLENCE PREVENTION DOESN'T MEAN NO POLICE

Nelson, who has been executive director of MAD DADS since 2023, was born and raised in South Minneapolis. He engaged in criminal activity when he was younger and served eight years in prison. He is pastor of Foundations Church, which he founded in May 2020.

MAD DADS is a national organization that was started in 1989. The Minneapolis chapter has been operating since 1998, and currently employs 39 people. They engage in a range of community violence intervention work including youth work, jobs, and mediation.

"Just last year alone we had 596 inci-

dents of violence and seven on-the-spot incidents where someone was either brandishing a gun or a knife," Nelson said.

"I know a lot of people get afraid because they think violence prevention means no police," Nelson said. "Well they're wrong. The reality is that the police will always be here."

"But the truth of the matter is that a lot of black and brown people aren't always safe with the police. There have to be conversations about how communities feel safe and what safety means to them."

### CITY-WIDE EFFORT

The city also approved contracts with other organizations for violence intervention teams working in other parts of the city. On the Northside, A Mother's Love will cover area 1 and Restoration Inc will cover area 4. In the Southside, area 7 will be covered by the Sabathani Community Center and area 8 by TOUCH Outreach.

The city estimates that each target geographic area will cost approximately \$730,000 for 12 months.

Under the terms of the latest contracts, each organization is responsible for reporting using the Cure Violence Database. This includes documenting daily conflict mediations, violent incident, follow-up to previous incidents, outreach events, and other community activities.

The city will also be tracking participant and community outcomes including access to support services, job placement, educational achievement and violent crime recidivism for individuals and reduction of violent crime, homicide rate, gun violence incidents, geographic crime patterns and perception of safety at the community level.

"This work is extremely important," said Nelson. "This work has to be invested in and if this work isn't invested in, I don't think we will ever fully understand what it is to be safe in community."



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