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Business bailout on University Avenue begins as construction chaos looms

By JANE MCCLURE

When Central Corridor light rail construction began on University Avenue in March, some business owners will brace themselves for lost on-street parking and difficult access. Others are planning to relocate. A few have already closed or moved in anticipation of the project, fearing difficulty in deliveries and customer access.

Chocolat Celeste owner Mary Leonard made the decision to shut down for a time and then move her business last year, leaving the University-Highway 280 area for new quarters on Transfer Road. She enjoys the new space and its off-street parking, but noted that the decision to move wasn't easy. Her old location offered high visibility but is already in thick of construction activity.

"The reality for me was, was I going to leave or was light rail going to close me down?" Leonard said her old shop location relied on on-street parking. "Without parking I have no business - no retail business at all."

Martha's Garden owner Martha Gabler Lunde will follow the construction from her new storefront at Selby and Snelling. She moved her floral design business from the University-Highway 280 area last fall. The move provided the opportunity for her to open a retail shop as well as serve wedding and events clients. But Lunde said she had mixed emotions about the move.

"I loved my old space and I truly loved the neighborhood," Lunde said. "But I had to move because we had only one entrance in and out of our studio and there was just no way we could load and unload flowers and props for weddings and events when we'd have no parking."

Light rail may be a boon for some businesses, Lunde said. "But for my type of business it just didn't work."

No one is sure how many businesses have already left or are leaving University Avenue because of light rail. It's not a number that the city or Midway Area Chamber of Commerce track. Only a couple of smaller organizations are trying to follow business comings and goings. University Avenue Betterment Association (UABA) estimates that more than two dozen retail and service businesses have moved or are planning to move. Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA) leaders said they also know of more than a dozen businesses that have closed or plan to move.

Calls to more than three dozen businesses brought a mixed response. A few business owners didn't want to be quoted saying they want to find new space before giving notice to landlords.

But the calls showed that typically the most turnover is being seen in areas near station

"The reality for me was, was I going to leave or was light rail going to close me down?"

- Chocolat Celeste owner Mary Leonard



Chocolat Celeste owner Mary Leonard made the decision to shut down for a time and then move her business last year, leaving the University-Highway 280 area for new quarters on Transfer Road. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

platforms, and in other areas where on-street parking is being eliminated. Many business owners are not only frustrated with Metropolitan Council, which is building the line, they are also unhappy with the City of St. Paul for what are seen as unacceptable parking options.

Construction on University from Hamline Avenue to Emerald Street started in March, said Dan Soler, project engineer. Pre-construction work, including utilities work, has been underway for some time and ramped up recently. Although plans call for University to have two-way motor vehicle traffic and bus traffic throughout construction, there will be delays. "You're going to see a lot of orange cones, you're going to see a lot of orange barrels, you're going to hear a few car horns," Soler said.

That has some business groups seeing red due to frustrations over loss of off-street parking and lack of financial assistance. "The message we'd like to tell the Metropolitan Council and the city is that your programs suck and they don't pro-

vide enough assistance for us," said UABA leader Jack McCann. UABA has lobbied for many months for assistance for businesses and replacement of lost on-street parking spaces. Business owners said their pleas aren't being heard but city officials contend they are doing all they can.

Metropolitan Council officials have long said that they have no resources for business and parking mitigation and that all of the \$957 million for the light rail project has to go into construction of the line itself. The city and the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative are offering more than \$1 million in business assistance, or up to \$10,000 per business in loan funds. The city is also providing more than \$1 million to improve off-street parking lots. But UABA said that is too little, too late and that some businesses that were granted parking funds may not use them due to costs as well as complexities in the agreements.

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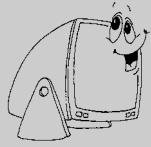
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Monitor in a Minute

Buildings to come down

Two vacant and deteriorated buildings in the Front Avenue area must come down, the St. Paul City Council decided February 2. In separate actions the council gave 15 days to repair or remove 859 Front and five days to tear down 954 Galtier, at the southeast corner of Front and Galtier.

Both buildings have long history in the neighborhood as commercial properties. The one-story building at 859 Front was a corner grocery store for many years but has been vacant off and on for more than a decade.

The other building at Galtier and Front was extensively damaged in a fire several months ago. The building was almost a block long along Front before the fire. Part of the building was destroyed in the blaze and the rest has been covered with plastic and left vacant. This building, which was more than 100 years old, housed a number of businesses and residents over the years. In its early days it housed a print shop. It most recently housed a salon on part of its main floor.

No one appeared at public hearings to speak for saving either building.

Moratorium weighed for rec centers

A two-year moratorium on any

further St. Paul recreation center closings and building demolitions will be considered by the St. Paul City Council this spring. East Side council members, who face the closing of recreation centers in their neighborhoods, brought forward the moratorium idea following a review of the city's new parks system plan.

Council members Dan Bostrom suggested the two-year moratorium during a February 23 council policy session. Two East Side recreation centers, Duluth/Case and Hayden Heights, would close if the plan recommendations are adopted. Bostrom said it doesn't make sense to close the centers, as they serve neighborhoods that have already lost schools and churches.

Other council members indicated that while it would be difficult to close more facilities, the city simply doesn't have the money to operate its 25 recreation centers. That's a concern raised by Parks and Recreation administration.

Area neighborhoods have already lost several centers. Front and Sylvan have had buildings torn down. Griggs, South St. Anthony, Dunning, Orchard and Desnoyer are among the buildings that have been rented out to private groups. The plan calls for those buildings to possibly be turned over to the groups, so that the city doesn't have ongoing maintenance costs. But how small organizations would afford to pay

for major maintenance needs was questioned by council members.

Right-of-way charges eyed

Could right-of-way maintenance assessments in St. Paul increase? The St. Paul City Council is considering changes to the fees. But if one group of property owners gets a break, someone else will have to pay more. Or services will have to be cut.

"The more we dig into this, the more we find that it's hard to create a system that is both simple and tries to be fair," said Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark.

Most council members agree they want to find a way to provide relief for property owners who may not be treated fairly. But the notion of shifting right-of-way maintenance costs onto other property owners is troublesome.

Several changes looked at for assessments of neighborhood corner commercial properties could bring huge shifts in how much is collected, ranging from a \$4.2 million increase to a \$2.9 million decrease in assessments. A decrease would have to be made up by charging other property owners more; any increase would have to go back into right-of-way funded work and could not be used for other city services, such as police

or libraries.

For nonprofits, the five changes on the table range could either bring reductions to downtown tax-exempt property owners or increases to tax-exempt owners citywide.

For corner property owners, all three changes proposed would bring a decrease. But the amount of decrease depends upon whether a property a classification is changed, or which side of a property is assessed – the frontage or whichever side is longer.

Rates for street maintenance assessments are set in a two-step process, with the 2011 rate tentatively set at the end of 2010. The final rate will be approved this fall, so there is still time for adjustments.

Two factors affect the assessments. One is the type of property, such as commercial, residential or tax-exempt. Another is the type or classification of street or alley. Rates vary by type of street or alley, ranging from \$20.11 per assessable foot for downtown brick streets to 37 cents per assessable foot for unimproved assessable alleys. The typical residential street has an assessment rate of \$3.20 per assessable foot. The increase for emerald ash borer will mean a 2 percent increase, for about \$3 for the typical property owner.

The council held a workshop on the fees in February but took no action.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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Midway resident part of musical group dubbed an 'Artist of the Year'

By DEBORAH BROTZ

Midway resident Chris Foss never dreamed he would be part of a group named 2010 "Artists of the Year" by City Pages. Foss, who is a member of Cantus, a nine-member professional male vocal ensemble, will be performing in "That Eternal Day," which is also the name of their recent acclaimed CD, on Fri., March 18, at 7:30 p.m., in Sundin Music Hall, at Hamline University.

The concert brings together the distinct styles and unique content of sacred music that spans more than eight centuries. From the music of the Renaissance and ancient chant to traditional African-American spirituals and contemporary American composers, Cantus finds common ground in the rich and diverse language of sacred music.

While Foss shares the recognition with eight other guys who form Cantus, that award is an indication of the success the ensemble has received this last year. Also, as Classical Minnesota Public Radio's "Artists-in-Residence," they are traveling to give out-of-state concerts and classes with high school choirs, and doing a variety of on-air and online projects.

Doing 70 concerts a year nationally as they tour all across the United States, the Cantus members are all friends and get along well with each other.

While Foss knew he liked making music, he never realistically considered it until he signed his contract with Cantus a couple years ago.

After a short two years at the University of Nebraska directing the Vocal Jazz program and earning his master's in music in choral conducting, Foss relocat-



Midway resident Chris Foss, who is a member of Cantus, a nine-member professional male vocal ensemble, will be performing in "That Eternal Day," which is also the name of their recent acclaimed CD, on Fri., March 18, at 7:30 p.m., in Sundin Music Hall, at Hamline University.

ed to the Twin Cities.

"I was just looking for a better art scene than Lincoln, Neb., had to offer," he said. "I decided to relocate and give it a go in a bigger city. I had some friends from undergrad school living in the Twin Cities."

Moving to the Twin Cities without any job, Foss worked for a year at Lutheran Church in Minnetonka, where he was contemporary worship music leader, before joining Cantus.

"I was always aware of them," he said. "When I was going through college they were achieving prominence around the country. After I graduated from college with my master's, I did audition with professional choirs."

While Foss knew he liked making music, he never realistically considered it until he signed his contract with Cantus a couple years ago. He had auditioned for Cantus the year before he joined them. Cantus is considered the pre-eminent vocal ensemble.

"They're one of two ensembles that have full-time choral ensembles in the entire nation," he said. "They're a top-notch artistic level ensemble, which is highly respected in the choral community."

Cantus is unique in several ways.

"It's all men, there are only nine of us," said Foss. "There's no director or conductor. We're all involved in making decisions."

We all sing in our normal singing voices."

Foss likes the music Cantus sings because they pull from many types of music.

"A lot of choral organizations do standard, straight forward concert repertoire, but we do all kinds of music that tells a story," he said. "It makes for a more effective message for the entire show. We choose an idea then everybody brings in everything that fits the theme."

While "That Eternal Day" is entirely acappella choral music, the "Covers" concerts Cantus does every year in June at the Ritz Theater are pop songs from the 1950s to the present.

"We hire a band," said Foss. "We do a few acappella songs. It's not traditional choral literature. We do all the arrangements ourselves for that show."

Midway resident Paul Wilson, Cantus board chair, decided to be chair because he used to be in the ensemble in the early days of the group.

"It's a chance for me serving on the board to give back to an organization I really did believe in," he said. "It's been fantastic as board chair, being a former member of the group, and living in the Midway. Midway is in a time of renaissance. Arts organizations are getting a hold in the Midway. We want to help bring Cantus to our neighbors and broaden arts offerings in our neighborhood."

Wilson feels Sundin Music Hall is the perfect location for a Cantus concert.

"It's a fantastic venue as far as acoustics," he said. "Cantus has a very intimate relationship with the audience. It's a chamber ensemble. They'll perform in a

hall designed for chamber music. The audience is pulled into the performance largely because of the intimate setting of Sundin."

Started at St. Olaf College the fall of 1995, Cantus was formed by a group of friends who wanted to sing together.

"It grew from there to a professional organization with full-time salaried employees," said Wilson. "They perform some of the highest quality music in the country. What's important is knowing where they came from. That sense of friendship and camaraderie is still evident today."

Midway resident Andy Davis, who is also on the Cantus board, decided to be a board member because he believes strongly in the mission of Cantus.

"I think they're one of the most gifted, talented artistic organizations in the Twin Cities," he said. "They bring so much artistic excellence to everything they do. I used to be a trumpet player. I was blown away by how incredibly talented they are."

Davis was excited to hear Cantus will perform at Sundin.

"It's great to bring that kind of music into the Midway," he said. "The acoustics are wonderful, and it's an intimate venue. It's great to be able to walk to something like that."

While Foss likes to brew beer and play Frisbee in his spare time, singing is his real love.

"I'm excited," he said. "Sundin is a great place for a concert. I hope we put on a great show and give people something interesting to listen to."

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Central Corridor construction begins as disruptions already ensue on the ave

By JANE MCCLURE

The start of major construction on Central Corridor light rail starts in March along University Avenue, from Emerald Street to Hamline Avenue. It will mean months of disruption for area businesses, home owners, motorists and transit riders.

"We're going to all have to co-exist to get around," said Dan Soler, project engineer for Metropolitan Council. He outlined the construction schedule February 9 for the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee, a group of elected officials and metropolitan council members overseeing the project.

Utility work already underway along University has caused minor traffic tie-ups in recent weeks, with huge traffic backups in the University-Highway 280 area. The start of what is referred to as "heavy construction" will bring many more changes. "We've been doing a lot of work to get ready for a very big and very impactful 2011 construction season," Soler said.

The change also means the elimination of some of the most heavily used bus stops on University Avenue. As of early March Route 16 bus stops will close at



The start of major construction on Central Corridor light rail starts in March along University Avenue, from Emerald Street to Hamline Avenue. It will mean months of disruption for area businesses, home owners, motorists and transit riders. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

nine locations, including Albert, Pascal and Simpson, which are heavily used by Midway Marketplace and Midway Center shoppers. That not only frustrates shoppers who will have to tote groceries and goods to Hamline or Snelling stops, it also is a worry for Ward 4 Council Member Russ Stark. Stark said it will be a "huge inconvenience" and wondered aloud if buses could even swing into Midway Marketplace to pick up business patrons.

But big and complex as Cen-

tral Corridor is it isn't the only game in town. There are also other major construction projects planned, including work in Interstate 94 and work on Minneapolis streets. That raised red flags for some Corridor Management Committee members.

"We're obviously very concerned about how people get to and from our campus," said U of M Vice President Kathy O'Brien. Major work on the Washington Avenue bridge began in late February.

Soler said there will need to be continued coordination between Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), St. Paul, Minneapolis and Hennepin and Ramsey counties to help motorists get around. "We don't want to send someone on a detour and then have them drive right into someone else's project."

The Central Corridor work will be the largest project of all. Crews will be working six days a week, with some very long days ahead, Soler said.

At the start of construction, parking changes will take place along University. All on-street parking will be eliminated. Two-hour parking time limits take effect on most side streets, meaning changes on many blocks north and south of University. Existing meters and residential permit parking will be enforced.

Two-thirds of the first stretch of University will be under construction for a time. The work will start on the south side of University at Emerald and continue eastward in approximately one-mile sections to just east of Hamline.

The first phases of construction will take place in from March

into July between Emerald and Hampden, with work starting in mid-March between Hampden and Aldine. By June work should be shifted to the north side of University between Emerald and Hampden, with completion in October. Work between Hampden and Aldine is to take place from July into November.

Between Aldine and Hamline, the south side of university will be under construction from April into August, with the north side work starting in July and ending in November.

Schedules are tentative due to weather. The goal is to get three miles of street ready for light rail by late fall.

Traffic control measures, including barricades, signs, temporary traffic signals and temporary access will be installed. Left turn lanes across University will be restricted to 11 signalized intersections.

Each section of street is to be under construction for up to 150 days, according to construction contracts. The street lanes and sidewalks on side have to be restored before work can begin on the other side.

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Meetings planned March 16...

University Avenue business owners stage protest over Central Corridor

By JANE MCCLURE

Business owners concerned about potential loss of revenue during Central Corridor light rail construction get another chance to speak Wednesday, March 16 with Metropolitan Council and federal authorities. The comments will become part of a supplemental environmental assessment. Comments made at the meetings and in writing by March 31 will be considered.

The meetings are at 8 a.m. at Lao Family Community of Minnesota, 320 University Ave. W., at 6 p.m. at Goodwill/Easter Seals, 553 Fairview Ave. N. Comments made will be part of the environmental review process. After the comment period ends March 31, Metropolitan Council and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) staff will respond to all comments. The comments and responses, as well as mitigation efforts, will be part of the final environmental document.

Draft copies of the 88-page document are available at area libraries. It includes an inventory of businesses, summary of construction-related business impacts, description of construction work and timelines, and information on business impacts and mitigation.

The document outlines potential impacts on businesses. Along Central Corridor there are 947 businesses. That number doesn't include the downtown areas.

Of the businesses 798 or 84 percent have annual revenue of less than \$2 million. The document notes that there have aren't previous studies to assess the loss of revenue directly due to construction-related impacts on businesses in a setting like Central Corridor. The best estimate for small business under \$2 million in annual sales revenue is a loss of 2.5 percent and zero. But the document also states that "Changes in sales revenues to individual businesses could fall above or below this range. Some businesses that sell to the construction workers and contractors will likely benefit with higher revenues during construction. However, some businesses that experience disruption but do not attract business from construction spending may see their revenues decline."

The report also summarizes the impacts on pedestrian and vehicular access to businesses, the loss of on-street parking and other impacts, such as problems caused by utility shutoffs during construction.

The document suggests a range of mitigation options, such as the city's business loan and parking improvement programs, as well as marketing of businesses, business counseling, adjustments to how construction is phased, and traffic management. The report also focuses on the need for good communications between contractors and affected businesses during construction.

If turnout March 16 is anything like the turnout for a similar meeting February 17, expect a crowd. More than 150 people turned out to meet Metropolitan

County and FTA officials. About 50 business owners and their supported protested outside of the morning meeting, holding picket signs and carrying a "coffin" that they said represented what will happen to University Avenue businesses during light rail construction.

The Supplemental Environmental Assessment process began as a result of a January U.S. District Court order in a St. Paul activist groups' lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). Judge Donovan Frank ruling resulted in more studies of the potential business revenue losses, as well as suggestions for mitigation. The assessment is conducted in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for environmental review.

Business owners contend that not enough is being done to address their potential losses during light rail construction. Pre-construction work began in February along University Avenue, will full construction getting underway in March.

The rally, organized by University Avenue Betterment Association (UABA), preceded what organizer saw as another chance to make their case for business

mitigation during and after light rail construction. Under a banner stating "Justice and Equity Must Run This Train" and the watchful eyes of three Metro Transit police officers, business owners said it was important to make their arguments one more time. UABA leader Jack McCann said that frustrating as it has been for business owners; they needed to weigh in one more time. "Don't be brushed off any more."

"If you're going to move because of light rail, let them know," McCann said. For businesses that plan to stay, "let them know that if your neighbor moves or if two of your neighbors move, it's going to affect you."

"This project should not be built on the backs of business owners," said Ax-Man Surplus owner Jim Segal. He wants to stay at university and Fry but will lose all of his on-street parking. "Without replacement parking it's going to be very difficult to do business here."

Inside, the meeting room was jammed as area residents and business and property owners met with Metropolitan Council and city staff. The meeting was held to gather comments for the supplemental environmental

studies recently ordered by Frank. The judge found that the studies leading up to light rail construction failed to adequately address the business impacts, and ordered Metropolitan Council to provide more information.

Those at the rally demanded that the study be thorough. Many held signs stating Don't Let LRT Kill My Job, University Demands Justice, We Want The Truth About LRT Parking and Where Is My Parking?

Tables at the Metropolitan Council-FTA forum provided information on business marketing, construction communications, pedestrian and vehicle access and other topics. Some of the longest lines were at a City of St. Paul table that had information on parking and business loans. Nancy Homans, senior policy advisor to Mayor Chris Coleman, said she understands the business owners' frustrations. "It's extremely complicated and it's going to be a big disruption," she said.

But Homans noted that the city is providing business loans, as well as \$1.35 million in funds to improve off-street parking lots. There is also a facade improvement program to help businesses. The city is also working to defray the costs of

planned streetscape improvements for businesses.

The city is continuing to seek additional resources to help business and offers drop-in resources through UABA at 712 University Av., Rondo Community Outreach Library at University and Dale, and the St. Paul Small Business Administration Business Planning Center at 2324 University Av. W.

The Supplemental Environmental Assessment is posted on the Central Corridor LRT Project website and is available for public review and comment for 30 days.

The direct link to the SEA page is <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/EIS/SEAFeb2011.htm>

The direct link to the EA is <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/EIS/SupplementalEnviroAssessment.pdf>

In addition to giving testimony at the hearings, the public may submit written comments by March 31 to Kathryn O'Brien at the address below or via email at Kathryn.obrien@metc.state.mn.us

Her mailing address is: Kathryn O'Brien, Environmental Services Manager, Central Corridor Project Office, 540 Fairview Ave. N., Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55104, 651-602-1927.



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Dream of Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom one step closer

By DEBORAH BROTZ

When former Como Park resident Deb Robinson proposed the concept of a Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom to the District 10 Environment Committee in 2005, she started on a long journey that is still years away from completion. Now, her dream is one step closer. Recently, the City of St. Paul received a \$218,000 grant from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to transform a 17.75-acre woodland located within Como Regional Park into the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom.

The Classroom will provide environmental education and historical interpretation for school children and adults, habitat for native wildlife, and an urban woodland oasis for the inner-city community where local place-based hands-on environmental learning opportunities are rare.

The idea for the outdoor classroom sprang from Robinson's work as a member of the District 10 Environment Committee. They had already been organizing small buckthorn busts and trash removal events in the woodland area near the southwest corner of Como Park.

"Rumors had been circulating that the woodland site was being considered as a possible parking lot or dog park," she said. "We felt that the last remaining woodland of its size in Como Park should remain a woodland. And, besides

the many values trees provide us, perhaps the woodland had educational value as well."

Having seen a presentation about the Belwin Outdoor Classroom in Afton (its name has since changed to Valley Branch Environmental Learning Center), Robinson got ideas for Como's Woodland Outdoor Classroom. All St. Paul Public School students visit the Center once in the third grade and again in fifth grade.

"Belwin's outdoor classroom is huge in comparison to the 17.75 acres of Como Woodland, but the idea behind both large and small outdoor classrooms is the same: get kids unplugged and outside to learn," she said.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden in Minneapolis was another outdoor space Robinson thought was a good model for them. At 14 acres, its size was closer to Como Woodland's size, it has three different Minnesota plant communities, and it has a network of trails with information posts.

Those two models provided a useful starting point for developing the concept of a Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom. With the support of the District 10 Environment Committee, Robinson wrote the first draft for the Outdoor Classroom. She did this as a student project for a "Grant Writing and Project Development" Class she was enrolled in at Metro State University.

"But, that was just the beginning, and the concept grew over



Recently, the City of St. Paul received a \$218,000 grant from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to transform a 17.75-acre woodland located within Como Regional Park into the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom. Above, former Como Park resident Deb Robinson, who proposed the concept to the District 10 Environment Committee, poses with other members of the Como Woodland Advisory Committee. (Photo by Matt Robinson)

time as more people gave input," she said.

Helping Robinson get the Outdoor Classroom off the ground was the project's Advisory Committee, which first met in July 2006. Those members include: Josh Leonard, Susan Jane Cheney, Jennifer Otremba, Joan McKernan, Matt Schmitt, Teri Heyer, and Ann White Eagle, some of who are still active project advisers.

For physical site work, the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom received \$242,100 in 2009 for the 2010/11 cycle. Phase 1 of the Master Plan is Restoration of the Joyce Kilmer Memorial Fireplace. The \$218,000 grant for the 2011/13 cycle is for Phase 2 and 3 of the Master Plan. Beginning later this month, Conservation Corps Minnesota will be selective-

ly removing invasive trees as outlined in the Outdoor Classroom Master Plan.

The grant will be used for developing six outdoor study areas, for construction of 4,000 feet of ADA accessible trails, for four entry signs and Interpretative trail signage, for teacher training and student involvement, and for propagation gardens.

Because there is a limit to what volunteers can do, such as trail work that involves heavy equipment, cutting down invasive trees with chainsaws, and invasive species removal that involves chemicals or fire, this grant is needed.

"Plantings for the different biomes (i.e. unique plant communities) needs to be done by a trained natural resource manager

so the plants selected will be able to survive in the soils and weather conditions present at the Como Woodland site," said Robinson.

Residents of St. Paul will benefit from having this Outdoor Classroom.

"Our economic wealth is totally dependent on natural ecological systems, yet the understanding of those vital systems is hard to teach in traditional classrooms in a way that connects students to the real world outside," said Robinson. "A well-educated public is necessary if we are going to solve the serious ecological problems we face, so people need access to places like this close to where they live."

The Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom is important to Robinson for many reasons.

"The amount of time and effort I've put into researching outdoor education, gathering input from stakeholders, going to the woodland site to lead educational tours and taking part in invasive species removal events there, writing and giving presentations to gain project support, writing grants, and attending meetings has made me a true believer in the value of outdoor education and the value of providing a place for nature in our big cities," she said.

Robinson hopes the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom gets finished in her lifetime.

"My personal hope is that it matures into a secure and sustainable project—perhaps under the guidance of a Friends-style non-profit in partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department and the community," she said. "I also hope to see a new crop of Como Woodland Advisers watching over the project and making it their own."

For more information about the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom readers can go to: comowoodland.org

"My personal hope is that it matures into a secure and sustainable project."

- Deb Robinson

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City considers proposal for Rice St. coffee shop

By JANE MCCLURE

A proposal to put a coffee shop at 843 Rice Street would mean a new use for a longtime problem property turned office-residential use. But could it also create traffic headaches on Rice Street and access problems for a building to the north? Those are questions the St. Paul Planning Commission had to wrestle with.

The Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit for Sparc and its building at 843 Rice St. March 4, with several conditions. The commission decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days.

The coffee shop's need for a drive-through window has resulted in the District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council being at odds with Sparc, the community development corporation for North End, South Como and Hamline-Midway neighborhoods. District 6 supported the drive-through window only if several conditions were met and had also suggested that a coffee shop without a drive-through window be considered. District 6 has concerns about the project including potential traffic backups on Rice Street and access problems for the building to the north.

District 6 Executive Director Kerry Antrim said that having the district council and community

development corporation at odds isn't a good situation. But she said Rice and Atwater is already a bad corner, with tall buildings that restrict visibility. Traffic tie-ups on Rice Street are already a problem.

Sparc Executive Director Matthew Ides urged the Planning Commission Zoning Committee to recommend approval of the permit, during a February 24 public hearing. Ides said the approval process has dragged on for so long, Sparc could lose its building buyer. The buyer was out of the country and unable to attend the public hearing. The buyer, who wasn't named, is interested in purchasing other commercial properties along Rice Street.

One previous effort to sell the building has already fallen through, Ides said. He rejected Planning Commission suggestions for a layover.

"We have laid this over before," Ides said. He said the new use will be good for Rice Street and will allow Sparc to move to another building and rehabilitate it for future sale. That is what Sparc and its predecessor, North End Area Revitalization (NEAR) do as a community development corporation.

Ides and project architect Paul Gates questioned whether the change in use would cause traffic problems. The coffee shop drive-through would only get about 25

customers per day, with 100 to 125 customers in the coffee shop building itself.

Even if there is no appeal of the permit, the project may face questions as it continues through a city staff site plan review process.



"We have laid this over before."

- Matthew Ides, Executive Director of Sparc

A traffic study for the project hadn't been completed at the time of the Planning Commission vote. The project also lacks an approved site plan and a completed property survey, which raised red flags for some Planning Commission members. The site plan, once it is approved by city staff, can also be appealed to the Planning Commission.

"There are surprises many times in surveys," said Commissioner Barb Wencl. But Commissioner Richard Kramer, who chairs the Planning Commission Zoning Committee, said that if the site plan and survey results aren't consistent, the permit cannot be granted.

Conditional use permits for all business drive-through windows in St. Paul must meet several conditions. The Sparc proposal

needs modifications on two conditions. One is that the drive-through window be at least 60 feet from residential property. This condition isn't met for 843 Rice St. as the window is 27 feet from a four-plex on Atwater. City staff rec-

ommended modifying that condition, and modifying a second condition requiring the fence on the northern property line.

fence on the property line would make it difficult for his tenants to use a narrow sidewalk that is adjacent to the 843 Rice St. parking lot. Sparc argued for some kind of fence or buffer. The zoning code requires a six-foot buffer but the Planning Commission can waive that condition.

Sparc has its office at 843 Rice St., which is at the northwest corner of Rice and Atwater streets. The building is in a neighborhood that is a mix of commercial, industrial and residential properties. For many years the building housed the Cosmos sauna, which community activists believed was a front for prostitution.

Sparc extensively rehabilitated the building and now plans to sell it. A building NEAR rehabilitated years ago near Rice-Lawson fields was sold and used as a coffee shop in the 1990s.

The property is zoned for traditional neighborhoods (TN) mixed use. A coffee shop and offices could go into the building with no Planning Commission review and approval process but a drive-through window requires a conditional use permit under city zoning regulations.

The window will be put in the building's attached garage. Vehicles using the drive-through will exit onto Atwater. Vehicles can enter and exit the building lot via Rice Street.

Wide variety of March events planned at Rice Street Branch Library

The Rice Street Branch Library has many activities planned for March. Please stop in and visit us!

In the Heart of the Beast will present the puppet show "Coyote Stories" on Saturday, March 26 at 2 p.m. Listen as Nimisee the clown tells some favorite trickster tales from the stories of the Assiniboine of the Great Plains, the Aztecs of Mexico and the Okanagan and Salishan of the Great Basin.

Family story times will be offered on Friday and Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for sto-

ries, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

The Computer Gaming Club will meet on Tuesdays, 4 to 5:30 p.m. Play Runescape, Wii, or learn Scratch. Bring your friends!

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4 to 7 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bring a tradable natural object to the library and volunteers from the Science Museum of Minnesota will help you learn more about it.

Free Family Friendly Movie Matinees will be shown Saturdays

at 2 p.m. Please stop in or call the library at 651-558-2223 to learn which movie will be shown each week.

Free Job Search Assistance will be offered on Fridays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. A consultant from Goodwill-Easter Seals will provide help with job applications and resumes. Please call 651-558-2223 for more information.

The North End Book Club will meet on Monday, March 28, from 12:45-2:30 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8733. This

group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

Computer classes will be offered on Friday mornings from 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-293-8811. Classes are offered in partnership with North End Community Education.

The STARS Homework Help Center is a quiet place for students of all ages to work on schoolwork. If you need help with homework or would like to be a Homework

Helper, please visit STARS Monday through Wednesday from 3 pm to 7 pm, Thursday from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. or Sunday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m.-5 p.m. For more information about the Rice Street Branch Library or any of our programs, please call 651-558-2223.

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The University of Minnesota is recruiting families in Ramsey County. The study will look at how the environment and family history affect children's health. Women between the ages of 18-49, who are pregnant or planning on becoming pregnant, may be eligible for the study.

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RAMSEY COUNTY THE NATIONAL CHILDREN'S STUDY
HEALTH GROWTH ENVIRONMENT

Winter snowfall may mean spring flooding and local home damage

By JAN WILLMS

The gentle flakes fell softly, coating the ground with a shimmering carpet of white. This poetic description could be applied many times over to St. Paul this past winter, but the reality of having nearly 80 inches of snowfall lends itself more to destruction than to poetry.

There may be serious flooding in the streets of St. Paul this spring as the snow begins to melt, but for many homeowners the flooding may also be seen in their bedrooms, basements and gardens.

"I think the main thing this year would be the damage done to ceilings and walls, related to water leaking into the house, caused by ice dams," said Ed Gross of Merriam Park Painting.

Ice dams are formed when heat from the attic melts snow at the ridge or peak of the roof causing an "avalanche" of snow and ice to overflow the gutters. The melted water can then back up under the shingles and work its way into the house.

Gross said the solution usually requires getting rid of the ice

dam and possibly doing some shingle repair by getting a water shield underneath the shingles. This could keep the ice from forming.

"You have to make sure the area underneath the ice dam is properly insulated so that warm air doesn't escape up into the roof, which causes the snow to melt," Gross said. "The water runs a few feet, then freezes and builds up a dam. The pool of water runs down the roof and ends up seeping into the house."

Gross said if damage to the interior is already there, the homeowner needs to call someone like him for help.

"Insulation may need to be repaired or dried out, or taken out and replaced. Maybe there is no insulation in there," he said.

"At times, depending on the extent of insulation repair, the homeowner may need to get an insulation contractor up to properly replace the insulation," Gross said. He said that sometimes melting snow is due to light fixtures that are recessed. This may cause the roof to heat up and melting to occur.

He also warned that a lot of ice dam contractors just seem to appear out of the woodwork.

"The industry has grown overnight, and a lot of these guys have no track record," he noted. "These guys may show up with a sledgehammer on your roof."

Dave Austad of Austad Construction agreed with Gross that with all the damage to roofs

from the heavy snow, there are a lot of would-be contractors out there, operating with no insurance or license, doing substandard work.

"They come from everywhere and are good at rounding up customers," Austad said. He said that all in all, people who travel around do not have a vested interest in the community.

"If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," Austad said.

He said it has been an awful year for ice damming problems, which can be solved with insulation and ventilation.

"A lot of people with old roofs have been waiting to fix them," Austad said. "Now they

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



Ice dams are formed when heat from the attic melts snow at the ridge or peak of the roof causing an "avalanche" of snow and ice to overflow the gutters. The melted water can then back up under the shingles and work its way into the house.

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Winter snowfall

Continued from page 8

realize they have to get something done with it. There are more exterior projects than in the past three or four years."

Austad said that while people have been remodeling before to add to the value of their homes, they are doing it now to protect their homes from the elements.

"People have been very frugal in the last two years," he said. "Now they know where they sit in this economy. They're not moving, but fixing up their homes to live in them."

He advised people to check their sump pumps and do what they can outside to keep water away from their houses and sidewalks. "We're not seeing as much fancy stuff being done, but people are doing the stuff that needs to be done," Austad said.

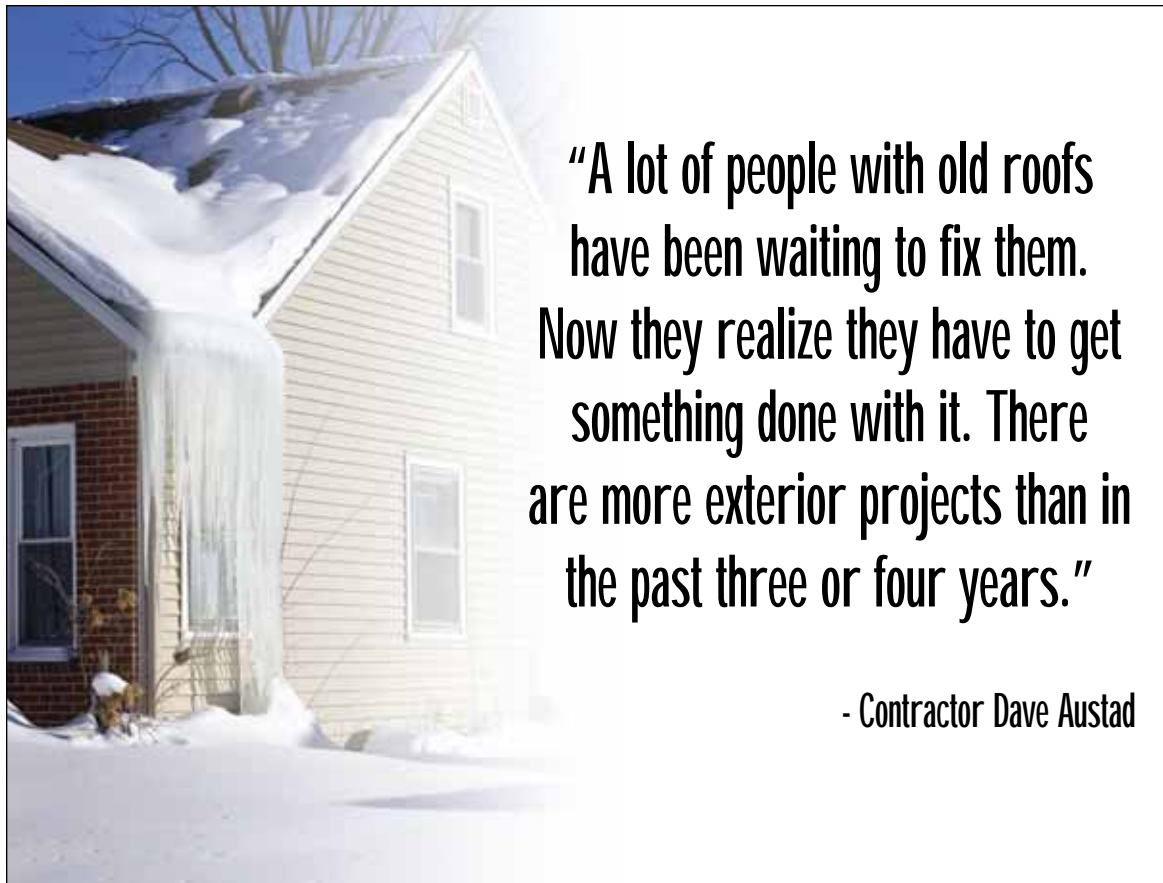
Rob Gardner of Gardner Construction said he sees people just trying to fix up their homes in general this year. "They're putting in new floors and fixing basement walls," he said. He said that while most of his customers are taking care of necessities, others may be doing more.

"It depends on the person," Gardner said. "If they've got money to spend, they'll spend it."

Gardner said he does mostly concrete work, on sidewalks, driveways and steps.

"Once the snow is gone, people start looking at their sidewalks and driveways and seeing if there is anything to do," he said.

Julie Pirie, the showroom manager at Hamernicks Decorating Center, said the store's resi-



"A lot of people with old roofs have been waiting to fix them. Now they realize they have to get something done with it. There are more exterior projects than in the past three or four years."

- Contractor Dave Austad

dent expert, Mel Deal, advises waterproofing concrete basement walls now while they are dry.

"This will help combat wet walls when the snow melts," she noted. "When the weather warms to 60 degrees or greater, caulking any voids around the windows and doorframes will prevent any future leaks. In warmer weather, waterproofing paint can also be applied to exterior cement walls."

Pirie said there are customers who want to do minimum improvements to hopefully sell their home in the near future, such as installing inexpensive carpet or laminating countertops.

"But the majority of people coming in are looking for good,

sound design advice and quality products," she added.

She said new yarn systems such as Anso and Smartstrand offer lifetime stain warranties and come in a variety of styles and price points. "Granite and solid surface countertops have a classic, rich look and are easy to clean," she said. "Hardwoods and laminates have new finishes for easier maintenance and the newest category, luxury vinyl tile, has taken the lead in popularity for hard surface flooring."

Taking the worst hit this winter are rain gutters, paint on the outside of the house and shingles that are beat up from the snow on the roof, according to Kendall

Crosby, owner of Kendall's Ace Hardware.

"We are stocking up this year on UGL, a waterproofing paint you put in your basement," Crosby said. "You paint your basement walls with it and have no water leaks."

"We're expecting a lot of flooded basements this year," he said.

The rough winter has not

been too bad for landscaping, according to Andrew Pierce of Beaks Lawn Care Landscaping. He said there has been a lot of snow cover, and anything that is not cold hardy, including delicate plants, should be fine.

"Flooding is the main problem, but it shouldn't drown everything out," Pierce said. He said that the steady cold has been helpful for vegetation, better than if the temperatures had been up and down.

"The plants have something similar to antifreeze in their cells," Pierce explained. "Others have water in between their cells." He said the heavy snow has been hard on the branches of some plants.

"I'm really worried about some of our evergreens," said Mark Armstead, assistant retail manager and grower at Linders. "The heavy amount of snow has ripped and torn away some of their branches."

He said snow mold is also pervasive this spring. He said snow mold resembles crop circles that show up on the lawn.

"The ground has not had a chance to dry up, and snow mold should disappear when it does dry. Once the yard is dry, you should get out there and rake," Armstead advised.

He said he expects the ground will be very soggy this year. He said that if people have questions about their yards and gardens, they can always call Linders.

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In Our Community

St. Bernard's holds Spaghetti Dinner Mar. 19

The Saint Bernard Men's Club 25th annual Spaghetti Dinner will be on Saturday, March 19th, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. (or we run out of food), in the Parish Center, Rice and Geranium. Adults \$8, Seniors \$6, Young Adults 6-12 years, \$4, and Under 6, FREE. Menu is Spaghetti, (all you can eat), plus Meatballs, Bread, Butter, Coffee or Milk, and Dessert. All profits go to parish needs.

Pre adoption session for Minnesota's children

Have you ever wondered about adoption? Or if you could parent an "older" child? Or what they mean by "special needs"? Or what it costs to adopt a waiting child? Or who are Minnesota's waiting children?

Downey Side...families for youth, invites community members to attend a FREE information session regarding adoption and Minnesota's Waiting Children. Downey Side's next information session will be Tuesday, March 22nd, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Downey Side Minnesota, 450 North Syndicate Street, Suite 90, St. Paul, MN 55104. Pre-registration required. To register, email stpaulmn@downeyside.org or call 651-228-0117.

Spring concert at Church of the Redeemer Mar. 27

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 285 N. Dale St., will host the Spring Concert of the Minnesota Valley Men's Chorus at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, March 27 as part of its Compline and Concerts series. The Chorus consists of 40 men, directed by Stephen O. Boehlke and accompanied by Margaret Boehlke, and their program consists of sacred and secular works. There is no charge, but a freewill offering will be collected. The concert will be followed by refreshments and the service of compline. Call 651-227-8295 for more information.

Teens Create! with Intermedia Arts

Saint Paul Public Library is teaming up with Intermedia Arts to offer several interactive events for teens in March. All programs are free, but space is limited, so pre-registration is required.

At three Experimental Filmmaking workshops, teens can create short films while experimenting with the elements of filmmaking including sound,

color, light, texture, and pattern rhythm. Sessions available are:

Saturday, March 19 at 1:30 p.m. at St. Anthony Park Library, 2245 Como Ave., 651-642-0411; Thursday, March 24 at 1 p.m. at Rondo Library, 461 N. Dale St., 651-266-7400.

Intermedia Arts is also presenting a Design Your Own Video Game teen workshop at Arlington Hill Library, 1105 Greenbrier Street, on Monday, March 21 at 2 p.m. Teens will create their own video game using Scratch software to explore character development, narrative and story structure, and video game scoring technology. Call 651-793-3930 to register for this event.

For more information on these and other programs for teens, visit www.sppl.org.

Poet Kysar at Hamline Midway Library April 4

St. Paul poet Kathryn Kysar, who grew up in the Hamline Midway, returns to the Hamline Midway Public Library on Monday, April 4, 7 p.m., to debut her new poetry collection, Pretend the World. Author of Dark Lake and editor of Riding Shotgun: Women Write About Their Mothers, Kysar teaches at Anoka-Ramsey Community College. Midway musician Sean Egan will provide accompaniment on jazz clarinet. Free, open to the public, with refreshments served, and books and CDs will be available for purchase. For further information, call the library at 651-642-0293.

Lenten Renewal Class at Jehovah Lutheran

A new Adult Bible Class (ABC) series, "Lenten Renewal the Ten Commandments in Daily Life," begins Sunday, March 13, at 9:30 a.m. in the lounge of Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Avenue at Snelling. The series runs six weeks and examines each of the Ten Commandments for how they can help deepen one's faith and life with God and one another. Six members of the class are preparing to lead the interactive sessions. Coffee is served at 9:30 a.m., prayers shared at 9:40 a.m. and study begins at 9:45 a.m. in the lounge. All are welcome.

Nutrition, weaning discussed April 12

Nutrition and Weaning is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, April 12. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information

Workshop at Bethel Lutheran

A one-day workshop on Saturday, March 26, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. (lunch included) to help you wisely manage your money throughout life's financial ups and downs...

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The workshop is led by Bethel Lutheran members who have received special training from Lutheran Social Service Financial Counseling Service at Bethel Lutheran Church 670 Wheelock Parkway. Register by March 21 at or 651-488-6681.

Christ in the Passover

What do the Jewish Passover and Jesus last supper have in common? Amer Olson, with Jews for Jesus, will answer that question as he presents "Christ in the Passover" at Bethel Lutheran Church located at 670 W Wheelock Pkwy on Friday, April 15th, at 7 p.m. You'll gain wonderful insights on how the pieces of God's plan of salvation fit together, and you'll remember this visual display of the Passover pageantry for years to come. Join us for Christ in the Passover from Egypt to Calvary to what it means for us today. For more information contact Bethel at 651-488-6681.

Wed Devotions/Soup at Jehovah Lutheran

The Lenten season began at Jehovah Lutheran, 1566 Thomas Avenue at Snelling, with Ash Wednesday (March 9) worship and imposition of ashes at both the 12:00 noon and 6:30 p.m. services. Worship around the Word continues along with Fellowship over a simple meal on the Wednesdays in Lent after Ash Wednesday - March 16, 23, 30, April 6 and 13 - at noon and eventide. "By Faith," based on the Biblical book of Hebrews, chapter eleven, is the theme of the devotions at 11:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. A light soup meal will

be served at noon following worship and at 5:30 p.m. before evening worship. The "By Faith" persons to be studied are Noah, Abraham, Moses, the Israelites and finally, Jesus, "the perfecter of our faith" as he takes the path to the cross. Please enter at the Thomas Street door to join this Lenten journey of faith.

Legislators hold town meeting March 19

Sen. Ellen Anderson, Rep. Alice Hausman, and Rep. John Lesch will hold a town meeting Saturday, March 19, from 10 to noon, at the Lakeside Pavilion on Como Lake. The meeting is free and open to all District 66 constituents.

The Midway is in 66B, represented by Sen. Anderson and Rep. Hausman. North End is in 66A, represented by Sen. Anderson and Rep. Lesch. Como lies in both. Legislators want to hear views on education, jobs, health care, housing, energy, environment, transportation, taxes and other issues.

One issue will dominate: a five billion dollar budget deficit. Governor Dayton proposed a balanced approach of cuts and revenue, while new legislative majorities propose all cuts. Minnesota's constitution requires a balanced budget.

The Pavilion on Como Lake has free parking (enter from Lexington). An elevator goes to

the third floor, where the meeting will be held. Food and beverages are available for purchase on the ground floor. For more information, call Sen. Anderson at 651-296-5537 or email at sen.ellen.anderson@senate.mn

HM Elders Food Growing talk April 12


April 12: "Teaching Others about Food Growing, Storage and Usage," will be addressed on April 12 at 11:30 at 1514 Englewood Avenue. What do you remember about by-gone habits for growing, storing or cooking? What money saving tips could you share? Lunch is served from 11:30 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. and a free will donation is asked for the meal. A registered nurse will also be available to take blood pressures. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations.

Healthy Eating discussed Thursdays

New! Healthy Eating for Successful Living, Thursdays, April 14 - May 19, 6:30 p.m. Learn about nutrition, how to make effective behavior changes and realistic goal setting, all in an interesting, relaxed setting. No cost. Call HM Elders 651-209-6542 to register.


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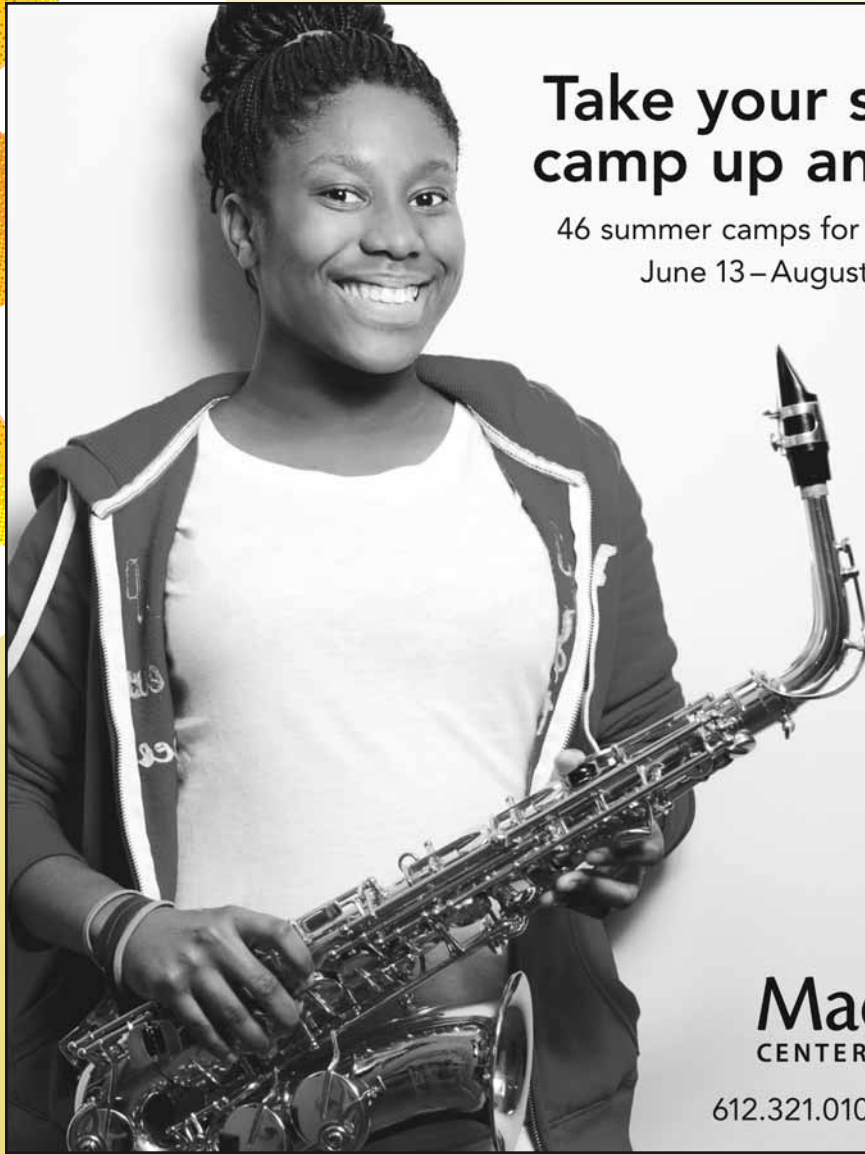
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Two Snelling Avenue projects on the long-term horizon

By JANE MCCLURE

Two construction projects on Snelling Avenue may be months away but advocates for safety and "Complete Streets" say now is the time to push for changes. Comments from a February 7 Snelling Avenue Complete Streets workshop will be forwarded to Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and St. Paul Public Works for consideration. The organizations are also asking that the projects be delayed, if possible, to see if ideas can be considered.

More than 80 people filled a Highland Arena meeting room for the workshop, which was sponsored by the Sierra Club North Star Chapter, St. Paul Bicycle Coalition, Fresh Energy, Mn GreenCorps, St. Paul Smart Trips, Active Living Ramsey Communities and Transit for Livable Communities (TLC).

"Complete Streets" is a city policy for street reconstruction projects. It is also state law, with a Complete Streets policy passed by the 2010 Minnesota Legislature. It is a policy that calls for transportation planning and design processes that emphasize safety and accessibility for all users of a public street. The needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders have to be taken into account when a street is redesigned or built.

MnDOT has two projects planned this summer. One is a mill and overlay of Montreal Av-

enue from West Seventh Street to Snelling, and Snelling from Montreal to Dayton Avenue. This project would start late this summer, with a break to accommodate Minnesota State Fair traffic, said MnDOT Project Manager Jennie Read. It would include reconfiguration of the handicapped accessible ramps at each street crossing. The current ramps, which are the area where the sidewalk slopes to accommodate people who use wheelchairs, don't meet current federal Americans with Disability Act (ADA) standards. Pedestrian signals that are audible for visually impaired persons, like those recently installed at Ford Parkway and Cleveland, would also be added.

A second project would be rehabilitation of the two concrete Snelling bridges that cross Pierce Butler Route, railroad tracks and Energy Park Drive in the Hamline-Midway and Como neighborhoods. The specific timeline for this project hasn't been set. This is a stretch of Snelling where speeds are increased and many pedestrians and bicyclists who use the narrow sidewalks along the bridges said it is an area where they don't feel safe. One huge problem here is how quickly vehicles merge into traffic from Pierce Butler Route and Energy Park Drive.

Snelling is one of the busiest north-south streets in the Twin Cities. It carries about 9,600 vehicles per day at Snelling and Mon-

treal. That increases to about 19,600 vehicles at Snelling and Ford Parkway, and climbs to 43,000 at Snelling and Marshall avenues. Along the bridge, volumes range from 39,000 to 41,000 on Snelling in the Pierce Butler and Como Avenue areas.

Ethan Fawley of the Sierra Club said the projects provide a rare opportunity to seek improvements to Snelling. "These projects only come around every 10 to 15 years and we need to act quickly."

Read said MnDOT is open to looking at ideas for Snelling. But she and St. Paul Public Works officials noted that the project budgets don't include major street reconstruction. Snelling won't be widened, for example, and the street won't be rebuilt beyond its existing right-of-way. Funding for improvements beyond what is budgeted is also a question mark.

The other issue Read pointed out is that Snelling is a state trunk highway and is a major truck route through the area.

The intent of the workshop wasn't to advocate for specific ideas but to bring forward a range of traffic calming and Complete Streets ideas MnDOT and city officials can consider during the two projects, said Josh Houdek, a Sierra Club organizer on land use and transportation issues. Workshop organizers urged those present to contact state and city officials with their ideas.

The groups also may ask Mn-

DOT to delay the project so that more public input can be sought, Houdek said. "I think that many people want to see ideas considered that would make Snelling Avenue safer for everyone - pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. And there's a question of whether there is time to do that."

"Unfortunately there is little in the current complete streets legislation that forces MnDOT to make changes without significant community backing, and even then their existing design guidelines allow minimal variance," said Jeff Zaayer of the St. Paul Bicycle Coalition. He said the meeting would help engage MnDOT and Public Works with community members.

On the two bridges, requests were made to lower speeds there, which increase to 40 miles per hour as vehicles travel the bridge, and to reconfigure the entrance ramps so that vehicles can merge safely. Lowering the speed limit would require a speed study, according to MnDOT.

One idea is to design the entrance ramps at right angles where Pierce Butler and Energy Park Drive feed traffic onto the bridge. Several speakers said driving, riding a bike or even using the bridge sidewalks is dangerous because of the way vehicles speed onto Snelling.

Many at the meeting also discussed the need for bicycles to get through the area safely. Bicycles

can and do use Snelling but several people at the meeting said there's a need for an alternative safe north-south bicycle route through St. Paul's western neighborhoods. The Snelling bridges are one of the only ways to get across the streets and railroad tracks in that area. Some speakers at the meeting said they want to see a dedicated pedestrian and bicycle bridge.

Zaayer said establishing a safe route is a "huge goal" for bicyclists. "It's a critical link but it's been a missing link for a long time." He said that while some cyclists would like a lane on Snelling, that isn't likely. But Zaayer and other cyclists said that making Snelling safer for bikes in mixed traffic would make it safer for everyone.

At minimum, said Zaayer, bicyclists would like to see what is called an uphill bike lane on Montreal. Bicyclists can travel Montreal now but the steep hill means some riders need to be able to take a break out of motor vehicle traffic. An uphill bike lane has small uphill refuges or raised places cyclists can stop out of traffic.

Many meeting participants signed a large banner and wrote down ideas to make Snelling safer, including corner bumpouts, more marked crosswalks and pedestrian-activated crossing signals. Several meeting attendees described having to dash across Snelling to catch buses or get to their destinations on foot. Requests were also heard to preserve as much on-street parking as possible. Houdek said the intent of bringing forward ideas isn't to take away business parking.

One idea for the bridges would be to change the way traffic flows onto Snelling from east-west streets, possibly by redesigning the ramps to be right-angled to slow down traffic. Many Monitor area residents who attended the meeting said the ramps as designed now are simply too dangerous.

But some ideas did cause debate. A suggestion of narrowing the traffic lanes brought a protest from a woman who said she is a frequent bus rider. "I would be scared to death to be in a bus in a 10-foot lane," she said.

But Steve Clark from TLC and other organizers said buses downtown already travel in 10-foot lanes. He commented that vehicles could drive safely in 10-foot lanes although some professional drivers "might lose a mirror."

Another idea that is generating debate is that of extending the new median between St. Clair and Grand north along Snelling. The idea of a median on all or part of Snelling from Summit Avenue to Marshall Avenue has been discussed by Union Park District Council (UPDC). A district council committee wants a median considered to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety. But that has raised red flags for Snelling-Selby businesses. Eugene Monnig, business association vice president and owner of Cadenza Music, said the businesses lost parking several years ago when bumpouts were installed. He said businesses cannot lose any more parking.

"We're certainly not promoting a median," Houdek said. Groups and district councils can bring forward the idea but he said it most likely would be beyond the scope of the mill and overlay project.



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Parking lots discussed, development eyed for former Midway Chev

By JANE MCCLURE

Long-term plans for a former Midway Chevrolet property call for development of housing there. But in the meantime, that property and another site to the west will help alleviate the potential parking crunch created by Central Corridor construction.

Hamline-Midway Coalition, city officials and LISC host a workshop to identify the goals for the redevelopment of 1433 University Ave. West. The city owns the property and purchased it with the long-term goal of providing affordable housing on the site. But no development plans have emerged since the city bought the land in 2009.

The workshop to discuss ideas for the site is 6:30-8 p.m. Monday, March 14 at the Central Corridor Resource Center, 1080 University Av. West. Contact Gretchen Nicholls, Twin Cities LISC, 651-265-2280 or gnicholls@lisc.org. Child care services will be provided by request only.

Site zoning would accommodate housing or mixed use devel-

opment.

In the meantime, the St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, voted February 23 to lease the site to Constantino Real Estate LLC. The company owns property on University Avenue west of the vacant lot has two tenants, Elsa's House of Sleep and Big Ten LLC, that need parking. Other businesses in the area, including Blessings Salon and Earth's Beauty Supply are also potential users of the lot for parking.

Businesses will share in the maintenance costs for the property but won't pay rent under the agreement with the city. The agreement approved by the HRA is initially for one year but can be continued until Oct. 31, 2014, when rail construction is to be complete and trains up and running.

If necessary, the lease can be cancelled with 30 days' notice.

Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark said the lease provides an interim use for the property while helping the businesses at the same time. While the long-term



Hamline-Midway Coalition, city officials and LISC will host a workshop to identify the goals for the redevelopment of 1433 University Ave. West on March 14. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

goal is for redevelopment, there are no development plans for the site at this time.

The council, acting as the HRA, also approved a second interim parking lot February 23. A lease with the St. Paul Federal Credit Union was approved to provide 30 temporary parking spaces at 1644 University Av. The

property was the site of the Kim Huoy Chor restaurant until that business closed due to ongoing health code violations.

The credit union owns the property and hopes to put a new facility there in the future. The credit union has variances to put a needed drive-through lane at the rear of the property. But no specif-

ic timeline has been announced to renovate the building and open a credit union there.

With no development underway, and a shared parking agreement nearby still on the drawing boards, city staff proposed the lease as an interim step. Parking at the east end of the lot is already shared with Pawn America; that arrangement will not change.

In June 2010 a \$250,000 allocation was given to businesses at the northwest corner of University and Snelling to create a shared lot. But negotiations continue and that lot won't be completed before construction gets rolling this spring. That lot, northwest of the businesses, is owned by American Bank. The lot needs improvements and businesses need to sign leases and create a parking improvement district.

The lease is for a minimum of five months for \$6,750 and a maximum time of nine months for \$12,150. It will serve businesses from 1601 to 1639 University.

The only obligation for the HRA is for rent and snow removal.

Bailout

Continued from page 1

At least two of the organization's 14 board members' businesses are planning to move.

McCann, whose Update Company and Midtown Commons owns and leases office and warehouse space, said there will be places that benefit from light rail. There is interest from office and non-retail businesses that are interested in the convenience of rail once the line starts operating in 2014. But that is three years away and many businesses will suffer in the meantime.

"We know this will have benefits for some but we're concerned that a lot of the businesses that have stuck it out for years won't survive to see it," he said.

City staff contends that they are willing to continue to try to help businesses get through the expected disruption and the long-term loss of parking. But they note light rail will bring change and that everyone needs to work together.

"I think there is an expectation in St. Paul that we can always park at the front door of a business and in reality, we're not always able to do that," said Al Lovejoy, a planner for St. Paul Public Works. Public Works and PED have worked since 2008 to help find locations for shared off-street parking.

PED Project Manager Craig Blakely said it's challenging to get businesses in an area to work together and to have everyone look at parking as part of a larger system. It has taken months to get the University-Snelling businesses to work together, to lease space northwest of the corner that is owned by American Bank.

But city staff challenges many of the parking arguments. Studies have found that off-street parking along University is "dramatically underutilized" in many areas and that redesign of lots is needed to promote more off-street parking. City staff are also actively working on ways to improve alleys to convert them for more business and parking access.

Lovejoy, Blakely and Nancy

Homans, Mayor Chris Coleman's point person on light rail, say the city is doing all it can to help businesses thrive during and after rail construction. But they also point out that city resources are limited. In recent months, city officials have expanded their offers of help to say that not only will help businesses wanting to stay on University, they will; help businesses relocate elsewhere in the city.

Midway Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kari Canfield said her organization is trying to focus less on businesses leaving University and more on helping with the marketing to help those businesses that stay. A marketing program will be rolled out soon to promote shopping, dining and using services on University.

"We're really trying to focus on the positive," Canfield said. While the Chamber knows businesses will leave, the hope is that businesses work together to market themselves and keep customers coming. And over the long term, Canfield said light rail does provide opportunities for new businesses to come in.

Businesses that plan to stay know they could be in for months of disruption. Tryg Truelson, who owns Porky's Drive-In Restaurant, said he plans to keep the popular hangout open. "But the lack of access will be tough for a time."

The other unknown he is eyeing is how vintage car fans, who hang out at his business on weekends, will be able to easily cruise University Avenue with restricted turning movements when construction begins.

Other business owners, including Russian Tea House co-owner Nikolai Alenov, may shut down for a time. Alenov said his restaurant has off-street parking but said he may shut down his restaurant for a time. "It's hard for us to plan if customers can't get here," he said. "We have to buy the right amount of food and not have it go to waste."

Landlords including Tim Holden, worry that they will lose tenants. Holden owns a construction business and property in the University-Snelling area. Businesses there have worked with city

staff in shared parking, but Holden and other property owners question paying for off-street parking that few will lose. "It's just going to be a mess," Holden said.

Other tenants are already gone. Swank, a vintage show near

Iris Park, closed in early February. Owner Alan Guttentfelder is out \$30,000 for the shop he opened more than three years ago. "We were facing years of construction and no parking during and no parking after the light rail is

scheduled to begin service in year 2014," he said. "I would like to have relocated my business but there is no business support fund for St. Paul businesses."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

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THE ODD COUPLE TEAM 

Midway resident uses Tarot as a map of spiritual pathways

By JAN WILLMS

A creative mind, an adventurous spirit and an open heart.

According to Nancy Antenucci, these are what you will need to properly experience her recently published book "Psychic Tarot."

Antenucci, who lives and works in the Midway area, teaches and mentors Tarot and intuitive development classes in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Tarot is a pack of cards (most commonly numbering 78), used from the mid-15th century. From the late 18th century until the present time Tarot has also been used as a map of mental and spiritual pathways.

Antenucci is also the creator of Midway Independent Business, an alliance for the entrepreneurs in her neighborhood.

With the assistance of Melanie Howard, a psychic and Tarot reader from Hastings, Antenucci has written a book to teach readers how to use their natural psychic abilities to read Tarot cards.

"I had my first deck of cards

when I was about 12, but I didn't start paying considerable attention to Tarot until I was in my 20s," Antenucci said. At that time, there were not many choices in decks of cards, and she taught herself how to use them.

"I was working as a professional dancer in Pennsylvania," she recalled, "and the message I received was that I should move to Minnesota to find the teacher I needed. I moved, but did not find anyone, and I became my own teacher."

Antenucci said that is the message at the core of her book—become your own authority.

Howard met Antenucci eight years ago at a Women in Spirituality conference in Mankato. She attended one of the classes Antenucci was teaching, and loved it. She became an apprentice of Antenucci.

Antenucci received a proposal to do a book, and she and Howard began working on it about a year ago.



Midway resident and author Nancy Antenucci.

"Most of the time, it helped for us to bounce ideas off each other," Antenucci said with a smile.

"I use Tarot to do creative energy and coaching," Antenucci said. "I do counseling and mentoring for organizations. For people

who want more creativity in their own lives, I teach intuitive development classes. The challenge for the book was to blend Tarot and intuitive development."

Antenucci said that reading Tarot cards can help one connect to his or her own purpose.

"What is it you really want? How do you handle the hard stuff? You have to enjoy the adventure part," Antenucci said. "Whatever works for you to feel creative in your own life is what works for us. The world needs a lot more joy and people thinking outside the box."

"For a lot of us who use Tarot, we are very image-oriented and visual people," Antenucci continued. She said Mary Greer, a well-known name in the Tarot field, has said that learning about psychic energy and Tarot is like completing a self-imposed degree.

"You have to know art history, psychology, philosophy and modern science," Antenucci said. "It opens the door for all kinds of studies of human nature."

She said her book is the perfect book for a beginner.

"A lot of Tarot readers don't see themselves as psychic," she explained. "This book is for them, as well as psychics." She said readers can learn how to develop their psychic nature if they so choose.

She said she is not sure if everyone might feel comfortable speaking to ghosts and spirits, and they should perhaps not do that. She recommended that readers just give themselves permission to feel their own energy.

"Nancy teaches having good boundaries," Howard added, "and I like that." She said a psychic can be empathic, but does not need to

keep the shingle out all the time.

Antenucci stressed that psychic energy can be a part of one's routine. "If it can't be used in daily life, it isn't worth much," she noted. "It's like in church. It's not who you are on Sunday, but who you are on Monday that's important."

"How are you using your energy?" she asked. "What does this mean to your client tomorrow? You could get really lost in theory."

She said that even beautiful, loving words can have a kick to them.

"If I see something, I have to say it," she said. "Truth is what makes you feel better. I don't think I ever give someone information they don't have power over."

Antenucci said she doesn't say something to a client that he or she does not already know on some level.

"You almost always have a sense, and I am here with you. Let's explore it," she will tell a client. "Talk to the fear instead of letting it yell at you."

Even if a reader is not a Tarot believer, Antenucci said he or she can benefit from reading the book.

"Psychic Tarot' encourages just as much exploration of your own spirit and journey as it does of your Tarot cards," she explained.

She and Howard have already had book signings and are scheduled to have another at Valley Book Seller in Stillwater March 11 at 6:30 p.m. Antenucci also has a Tarot meet-up called Tarot For Us online, through Yahoo. She plans to sell "Psychic Tarot" at conferences and directly to bookstores. It is also available on Amazon.



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Construction

Continued from page 4

The intent is to maintain vehicle and pedestrian access to all properties. Project outreach staff members have spent several months contracting businesses and meeting with owners to discuss access and how it will be provided when construction is going out outside the front door.

At least four feet of front sidewalk is to be maintained except when the new sidewalk is installed in front of a property. Sidewalks are to be replaced in 15 days. Properties may have to have temporary sidewalks and ramps.

Work in the one-mile sections will shift to the north side of University only after the new road and sidewalks are built and reopened on the south. The final piece of construction in each segment of the line is that of installing the track, guideway and station platform foundations.

While the street is torn up, public and private utilities must be relocated, including storm and sanitary sewers, electrical lines, phone and other communications system lines. District Energy, which wants to install a steam line along university, will be installing some of its infrastructure as well.

The intent is to keep University Avenue open at all times for traffic, with one lane of through traffic in each direction. Traffic will be in two lanes on one-half of the street. Traffic will be on the north side during the first phases

on construction. Project staff will provide notification prior to shifting traffic lanes.

Once the street and sidewalk is restored on the north and south sides of University, Work in the center of the street gets underway to install track, guideway and station platforms. That is expected to continue through November. In 2011 crews will be back to complete installation of the rail infrastructure and install overhead wires and communications systems.

When work is done on the north side, two lanes of traffic will be moved the south.

Power outages and water shutoffs are anticipated during construction. Project outreach staff will work with businesses to get the word out as much as possible before that happens.

One challenging area during construction will be University and Snelling. Utility work there recently caused some traffic tie-ups. Soler said contractors will work closely with Xcel Energy on relocation of major utilities there.

Snelling will be open for full traffic during the Minnesota State Fair. "We don't want to create significant traffic impacts for the fair," Soler said.

University Avenue will be going on while there is work underway on the Washington Avenue bridge, the East and West Bank University of Minnesota campuses, and in downtown St. Paul. The permanent closure of Washington Avenue through the U of M campus is also slated to take place this construction season.

CLASSIFIEDS

Classifieds

Monitor Want Ads are now \$1 per word with a \$10 minimum. Send your remittance along with your ad to Monitor Classifieds, Iris Park Place, 1885 University Avenue, Ste. #110, St. Paul, MN 55104. Classifieds must be prepaid via cash, check, or credit card. Classified ads can be e-mailed to denisw@aplacetorember.com. Want ads must be in the Monitor before April 4 for the April 14 issue. Call 651-645-7045 for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at www.MonitorSaintPaul.com

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Next deadline:
April 4

Next issue:
April 14

Bailout

Continued from page 13

Tieng Hang owned and operated Cafe Bonxai on University just west of Snelling until late last year, and is now focused on catering. Light rail was a factor in the closing, according to Hang. A big issue would have been the loss of on-street parking, a concern echoed by other University-Snelling area businesses. A few other business owners in that area said they may relocate, largely due to parking. That frustrates city officials who have worked for the past few months to set up a shared parking lot northwest of the businesses. But some business owners said they don't want to sign long leases for parking customers may not want to use and only a few businesses may want to pay for.

Other business owners said they could tough out the construction, but the permanent loss

of on-street parking would be too much. Impressive Print, Mike Baca's business, has been in the area since 1987. But he wants to move. "It just gets ridiculous," he said. "I don't want to leave but I don't see how we can do business here without adequate parking."

Baca contends the city has backed away from promises to help find off-street parking and to make it easier for business employees to park on neighborhood streets when areawide residential permit parking is implemented. City staff say that's not the case and that they are working on the parking issues. But during construction, all on-street parking on University will be eliminated. Two-hour time limits will be posted on most side streets. Existing meter and residential permit parking will be enforced.

"I won't have any place for my employees to park and the city isn't telling me what to do," Baca said,

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Hamline Midway Library offers an array of programs

Think spring and check out what the library has going on this March!

On Saturday, March 12 at 1 p.m. the library will host a Toxic Hazards in Your Community Workshop. This two-hour workshop is for community members who are interested in understanding more about the toxic substances in their homes

and neighborhoods. The instructor is noted researcher/toxicologist Dr. William Toscano, University of Minnesota School of Public Health, Chair, Environmental Health Sciences Division.

Join Colleen Dooley, CMT-RYI, for a yoga class at the library Tuesday mornings at 10:30. Beginners are welcome!

The Library will host Career Solutions, community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing hope and help to people in career transitions since 1974, as they present a workshop on resume and cover letter writing for today's job market. Attendees will receive handouts with information on formatting for electronic submission, matching a resume to a job description, and more. We'll also cover the topic of formatting, improving and customizing your cover letters. This program is on March 17 from 10:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

On Saturday, March 15 from 1-3 p.m. join the fun at the library! School age kids are invited to play and participate in fun activities at the Saturday Club.

Paw Pals will be at the library on March 19 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Call to register your child for this opportunity to read with our favorite dog, Toby! For kids ages 6-12 who enjoy dogs and reading.

Join us for a special Teen Movie Matinee on Monday, March 21. We will show Twilight Saga's Eclipse. There will be snacks, prizes, and lots of fun!

On Monday, March 21 at 7pm join finalists from the 23rd annual Minnesota Book Awards as they share excerpts from their work. Presented by the Friends.

Live at the Library on Friday, March 25 at 11 a.m.: join MacPhail Center's Vicky Mountain as we learn about history with clues from blues music! This Live at the Library event is sponsored by MELSA and is

funded by Minnesota's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

The Hamline Midway Library Association is a group of library lovers working to build community and support the Hamline Midway Public Library through political advocacy, volunteering, and fundraising. Join them for their next meeting on March 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the library.

Wednesdays in March from 3-7 p.m., Hamline Midway Library will host an open lab for library patrons to ask questions and get hands-on computer help. A staff member will be

available to assist you with filling out forms online, creating a resume, and other basic computer operations. This is a drop-in lab and patrons will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis.

The library continues to offer toddler and preschool storytimes at 10:30 on Friday mornings. Come share the joys of reading with your children!

Call 651-642-0293 or stop by the library at 1558 W Minnehaha Ave, near the intersection of Snelling and Minnehaha, to sign up for events that require registration. All events are free.

Local dental office helps children with their smiles

Dr. Louis Thomas Austin and his staff at Austin Family Dental participated in the Minnesota Dental Association's iGive Kids a Smile event on February 4.

"We were able to provide 28 children with dental cleanings, x-rays, sealants, fluoride and exams at no cost to their families," said Dr. Austin. Families and children were excited to participate in the program. One parent said "...it was a blessing to my family. I was impressed by the speed, efficiency and caring of everyone involved."

Dr. Austin said that it was a huge success and something we are looking forward to doing again next year. Austin Family Dental is located on 1360 Energy Park Drive.



'Maskenball' for German Immersion School

On Saturday, February 26th, Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) and the school's sponsor, (German American Chamber of Commerce) held it's annual "Maskenball" fundraiser for the school. The theme for this event was "A Night at the Oscars" and it took place at The Dancers Studio in Saint Paul. The band, Ol' Yeller, performed and kept many people dancing for most of the night.



March happenings at Hamline University's

SUNDIN MUSIC HALL

Saturday, March 12

Minnesota Philharmonic Orchestra Dance? Suite!

7:30-9:30 p.m.

Hear the orchestra play music by Ludwig van Beethoven, Malcolm Arnold, Bela Bartok, Antonin Dvorak, Aaron Copland, Jose Pablo Moncayo, and Virgil Thomson.

Sunday, March 13

Chopin Society of Minnesota Alon Goldstein, piano

3-5 p.m.

More info at www.chopinsocietymn.org

Thursday, March 17

A Tribute to Bach's Birthday Ginna Watson, violin, Donald Livingston, keyboards

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Celebrate Bach's Birthday (official birth date is March 21, 1685) with this program of Bach and Schumann.

Friday, March 18

Cantus "That Eternal Day"

Friday, March 18, 7:30-9:30 p.m.

Come to the CD release concert for "That Eternal Day." For details, call 612-435-0046.

Saturday, March 19

Minnesota Guitar Society Eden-Stell Duo

8-10 p.m.

See and hear the Eden Stell Guitar Duo, Mark Eden and Christopher Stell, one of the most innovative guitar ensembles in the world.

Sunday, March 20

The Musical Offering Two Favorites for strings & winds

3-5 p.m.

Oboist John Snow, clarinetist Alexander Fiterstein, bassist Matt Frischmann, and pianist Susan Billmeyer join the resident

ensemble led by Norbert Nielubowski to perform Mozart's quintet for piano and winds and Beethoven's septet in E flat.

Wednesday, March 23

The Smetana Trio

7:30-9:30 p.m.

This stellar piano trio from the Czech Republic is presented by the Schubert Club at Sundin Music Hall. For details, visit www.schubert.org or call 651-292-3268.

Friday & Saturday, March 25 & 26

The Minnesota Chorale Ein Deutsches Requiem by Johannes Brahms

8-10 p.m.

Kathy Saltzman Romey leads this wonderful chorus in one of the most heartfelt, large-scale choir pieces ever written.

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For tickets, contact: www.hamline.edu/sundin or call 651-523-2459 (unless otherwise indicated)



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