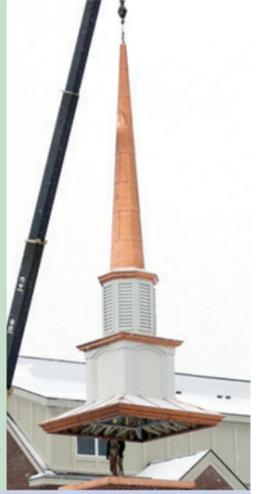




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# monitor

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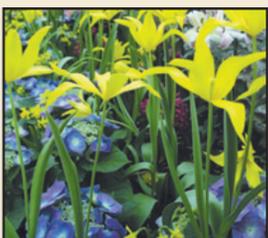
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# Midway retail survey spurs debate, focus on future

By JAN WILLMS

There are times that Brian McMahon may feel like he is a lone voice crying in the wilderness. But for him, the wilderness is the urban retail area stretching along the Midway of University Avenue in St. Paul.

McMahon is the executive director of University UNITED, a coalition of 12 community organizations along the University Avenue corridor in St. Paul and Minneapolis, and six individual business people.

McMahon has been striving to improve the shopping areas in the Midway for some time. Two years ago, University UNITED prepared a report that looked at three shopping centers in the Midway: Midway Center, Midway MarketPlace and Target, areas that together match the 72-acre size of the Rosedale Center in nearby Roseville. Although the properties are the same size, they differ in property value, with Rosedale Center assessed at \$153 million and Midway at \$65 million.

McMahon said he looks at other shopping centers such as Rosedale and Southdale in Edina, and he considers Midway to be under-performing. "When we did that report, we tried to get the Midway torn down, and start over," he said. "A one-story strip mall is functionally obsolete."

That proposal, however, was not well received. Nor was his plan for the mayor and business owners to sit down and talk over ideas about improving the retail along the Midway.

"We moved on," he said. "There are lots of other things to keep us busy." However, a few months ago, he found out that Rosedale is planning to expand, and Southdale is doing the same thing.

"It blew me away," he said. McMahon and his organization decided to give it one more try, and this time he went directly to the public, doing a survey about the Midway shopping area online and what people are pleased with, concerned about and would like to see changed. The survey drew 360 respondents.

McMahon admits it was not a scientific survey, being somewhat selective, but the responses were greater than he had anticipated. Safety, maintenance, ap-



Business owner Scott Johnson of My Apple Music at 1549 University Avenue has spent 10 years on the Midway, six years at his present location. He said he has seen numerous changes along University Avenue during this period of time. Johnson is aware that positive changes have come to the Midway, he just feels that much more could be done. But his main concern is crime or perceived crime in the area, and he said he would donate space in his building for a police substation. (Photo by Terry Faust)

pearances, store mixes and traffic were major concerns of shoppers.

To address these concerns, McMahon is planning to hire a consultant who will establish a University Avenue Merchants Association and will also meet with a newly formed Retail Advisory Group consisting of neighborhood residents. McMahon said that 100 people, mostly residents, have volunteered to be part of a shoppers' advisory task force.

The merchants group will initially work on security and safety issues, signage clutter and appearance.

McMahon emphasized the need for the area to start working. "These shopping malls that are number one and two in the market don't rest on their laurels," he said. "They are out there, making renovations and additions. St. Paul is dead last in retail capital in the region."

McMahon envisions a 20-year plan of renovation and improvements. He would like to start by getting the merchants talking to one another.

"I'm not asking them to pay any money," he said. "We can start off with a nucleus of five merchants, and it will expand. We can leverage our efforts by hiring consultants as we need them, and we can also draw on professional volunteers."

Eventually, he would like to see structured parking in place to make better use of space. He thinks the Midway could consider mixed use and multi-story buildings, including some housing.

"We need to create a feeling of one large shopping district," he noted.

"I go out and visit a lot of shopping centers across the country," he said. "The Grove Shopping Center in Los Angeles is one of the most successful, because the owner of the mall tried to find out what the community wanted."

For McMahon, the key is still the city. "We need the mayor to pick up his phone, and get people to his office to sit down and talk."

Amy Schultz is currently a

board member of the Hamline-Midway Coalition who lives in the Midway area and patronizes the local shopping centers. She was one of the individuals who responded to the survey.

"We live close enough to walk to the stores along Midway," she said. "The one concern I have is that it is difficult to cross some of the big parking lots. The walkways are not well marked, and there is a lack of sidewalks. I don't feel that safe from the traffic."

Other than pedestrian safety, Schultz said she did not feel worried about crime in the area.

She also commented on the improvement of the looks of the Midway Center, particularly with the Rainbow Foods Store. "They have done such a good job with Rainbow," she noted. "It seems so much cleaner."

Because of the proximity of the Midway, Schultz said she does most of her shopping in that location. She said she thought a theater in the area would be welcome.

She said she supports the University UNITED's idea of involving patrons in determining what direction the Midway shopping area should take.

"Bringing in neighbors and patrons brings in a viewpoint that might be missing otherwise," she noted.

Richard Birdoff of RD Management Corp. is one of the ownership partners of Midway Center. He said he was not familiar enough with the University UNITED survey to comment on its validity, but he is interested in working with the community to improve Midway's shopping area.

"We have a full-time security service, in addition to the local police presence, at Midway Center," he said.

He also noted that the shopping center has recently spent over \$1 million in improving its facade and adding lighting.

Although he said he is not opposed to businesses working together cooperatively in holiday promotions or advertising, Birdoff said the practicality of it is difficult, especially for the bigger merchants.

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# Midway Como in a Minute

## Plans for Summerhill condos shelved

Plans for the proposed Summerhill senior condominium project have been shelved. Nichols Development, which partnered with area developer David Van Landschoot and Justin Properties on the project, indicated in mid-February that there weren't enough presales to meet federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) financing requirements. The building would have had 44 units of owner-occupied senior citizen housing.

The project site used to be part of the Samaritan Hospital complex. For many years it was the Hamline Midway Sculpture Garden.

The project had the support of Hamline-Midway Coalition and Sparc but was opposed by a number of neighborhood residents. Proponents contended that the senior housing provided by the cooperative would be welcomed in the neighborhood and that adding senior housing opportunities is consistent with long-range plans for Hamline-Midway. But opponents raised concerns about the height and mass of the building, and the shadow it would cast over small houses across the street.

In August 2004 the St. Paul City Council upheld project variances and denied neighborhood residents' appeal of the project. But by mid-February, city officials and neighborhood groups were notified that the project had fallen through.

After announcing the Summerhill project's fate, David Van Landschoot indicated that the Hamline park Plaza Partnership will continue to look at potential

site redevelopment opportunities. Involvement with the Coalition and Sparc will continue. "At the moment we are evaluating two potential development opportunities at this location," said Van Landschoot. One is a 40-unit senior condominium building. A second is 32 units of market-rate townhouses. Neither development would be larger than four levels of living space. Underground parking would be part of the project.

No timeline has been set for new plans to be brought forward. HMC Executive Director David Gagne indicated that a community meeting will be held when plans are ready. Neighbors should watch for fliers.

## Street paving project can move ahead

One of this summer's largest street paving projects can move ahead now that concerns raised by Holy Childhood Catholic Church have been addressed. The Arlington-Pascal Residential Street Vitality Program (RSVP) plans won approval from the St. Paul City Council February 23, following a February 16 public hearing.

The project affects a number of streets in the Como Park neighborhood. The project area is roughly bounded by Snelling Avenue, Midway Parkway, Chelsea Street and Larpenteur Avenue. Most streets in the area are older oiled streets and will be replaced with a bituminous road surface, and concrete curbs and gutters. New lantern-style street lights, boulevard trees and sidewalks will also be part of the \$11.5 million project, which starts in 2005 and ends in 2006. Part of the project is covered by

the city's capital improvement budget. Part is covered by property owner assessments.

More than 40 people attended the public hearing. Many are residents who have waited for some time to have their streets paved. One benefit of the paving project should be the reduction of flooding problems on some streets, especially Midway Parkway.

Como Community Council Community Organizer Sue McCall spoke in support of the project, noting that it was included in a 1997 neighborhood plan.

Ward Four City Council Member Jay Benanav said residents have waited a long time for their streets to be paved. He asked for the one-week delay so that Public Works staff could have time to discuss Holy Childhood's concerns.

Representatives of Holy Childhood spoke against the project. They had objections to being assessed on three streets that abut the church. The church property abuts Midway Parkway, Pascal and Bison avenues.

The city treats churches and all other nonprofit property owners in the same manner, said Peter White of the city's Real Estate office. Nonprofit property owners pay assessments for all of their street frontage, just as home owners and businesses do. But church representatives said Bison should be treated as an alley, not as a street.

Another concern is the street design with corner bumpouts. Although bumpouts are designed to make street crossings safer for pedestrians, church trustee Dick Hoffman questioned whether the bumpouts would actually create problems for the church. Bumpouts do mean elimination

of some on-street parking spaces. Most Holy Childhood parishioners would rather park on the street than in the church's lot, Hoffman said.

But McCall said the bumpouts are planned to help children and parents get closer to the school.

Benanav asked if Canfield Street could be added to the project. Canfield is just south of the project area. It's a street where many residents of Lyngblomsten and Sholom senior housing complexes like to walk, but there are no sidewalks.

St. Paul Public Works Project Manager Dan Haak said that Canfield is due for improvements eight years from now. Benanav said he'd like to know what the costs would be of including Canfield in the Arlington-Pascal project. That would require another public hearing and feedback from neighbors.

Arlington-Pascal is just one of two area street projects the City Council approved in February. A second project that won approval February 16 is the Como-Dale-Front redesign and the reconstruction of Dale between Minnehaha and Hatch avenues.

This project was sought by area business owners, Sparc and the district councils in the North End and Frogtown. This \$1.6 million project includes narrowing Dale, adding corner bumpouts and parking bays, adding a pedestrian island at Como-Dale-Front and banning of some turning movements. Also, a stop light will be installed at Dale and Topping, to serve the growing Great Northern Business Park. Public Works is also trying to see where public art can be incorporated into the project.

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# New Menards offers help for home improvement needs



The new University Avenue Menards store will have a grand opening celebration March 19-26 that will include prize give-aways, in-door demonstrations, merchandise price reductions and celebrity appearances. (Photo by Terry Faust)

By JAN WILLMS

Opening new stores is getting to be a habit for Timm McDaniel, the general manager of the new Menards at 2005 West University Avenue, St. Paul. When the doors opened Tuesday, March 8, it was the fourth opening McDaniel has presided at.

"We're doing things we've never done before, and as part of my job, I am making new merchandising decisions," said McDaniel, who has been with the company for 14 years.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held Monday, March 7, with Mayor Randy Kelly and several other dignitaries on hand to welcome Menards to the community.

The University Avenue store will have a grand opening celebration March 19-26 that will include prize give-aways, in-door demonstrations, merchandise price reductions and celebrity appearances.

The Menards Mega Store is the first to boast a two-story design. "It's a new prototype, the first double-decker for Menards," McDaniel noted.

The upper level will feature lighting, bath fixtures, cabinets and appliances, windows, doors and trim.

Paint, hardware, building materials and carpet departments will occupy the main floor.

"Another new benefit of this Menards is a rental center," McDaniel commented. "Tools, jackhammers, and carpet installation

kits will be available for rental. The rental center will be geared towards do-it-yourselfers."

The new store, which occupies the old Knox Lumber location, has 230,000 square feet and 220 employees.

McDaniel said he thinks the Midway area is eager to have a store that caters to home improvement needs in the community, based on the number of people who stopped by before the doors even opened.

He said that the store, with its bright lighting and spaciousness, is a little more upscale than the average Menards, but still provides low prices.

"We guarantee the lowest prices, and we also try to maintain a clean, helpful and friendly environment," McDaniel said.

He said he thinks the addition of a Menards to the Midway will help to draw other businesses.

"Customers come to the store any time of day," he said. "Contractors usually come in the early mornings, or around lunchtime, or after their shift is over. They might want to stop here first, then get lunch or breakfast or dinner. I think restaurants tend to thrive around a Menards store."

Menards is a family-owned company started in 1960, and it currently has 198 home improvement stores located in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Menards is open from 6:30 am to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday.



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The community meeting was packed with people expressing concerns about their shopping centers, which they felt were poorly connected, and inaccessible to pedestrians and bicyclists. The consultants, who were hired by the city and county, talked about the increasing competitive threat from nearby retail areas. Was this a meeting about the Midway shopping area? No, try Southdale in Edina. Among the consultants' recommendations is a proposal to demolish some of the strip malls to add a variety of housing.

At a different meeting, a city council was reviewing a plan to expand their major shopping center. "We need to stay competitive, add jobs and maximize the tax base," chanted several councilmembers.

Was this meeting being held in St. Paul, which has the lowest retail sales per capita of any major city in the region? No, it was in Roseville, which has the highest retail sales per capita in the region. The City Council went on to support the proposed expansion of Rosedale, featuring a Cineplex and a new lifestyle center.

Two years ago, University UNITED did a study of the shopping centers in the Midway (Midway Center, Midway Marketplace, and Target) which concluded that they were not performing anywhere near their full potential. This report is posted at [www.universityunited.com](http://www.universityunited.com). As it turns out, the Midway centers and Rosedale are both 72 acres, and have essentially the same trade area, and yet Rosedale



## Guest Column

By BRIAN MCMAHON Executive Director, University UNITED

### Remaking retail: Why not in St. Paul?

is outperforming Midway almost 3 to 1 based on assessed valuations.

Another indication of its underperformance can be seen in the 350 responses to a recent on-line shopper survey which portray a considerable level of dissatisfaction. The shopping areas are perceived as difficult to access, relatively unattractive, not having a great mix of stores and even unsafe.

How is it that two of the most successful shopping centers in the region, Southdale and Rosedale, feel the need to continually improve and upgrade their projects, but the stagnant Midway centers are content with the status quo? How is it that a city which is dead last in retail sales per capita has not created the sort of proactive programs to support its shopping areas? The response from the city is most perplexing and disappointing. We started talking with the Mayor and the Department of Planning and Economic Development two years ago but we did not get a meaningful response. It is very clear that other cities have aggressively pursued opportunities to upgrade their retail centers – and St. Paul has not. This lack of City in-

volvement makes it very difficult to achieve meaningful progress.

However, at University UNITED we are committed to doing all that we can. Over 100 residents have volunteered to serve on a Retail Advisory Task Force indicating a high level of interest and concern. We are currently working with several store-owners to create a University Avenue Merchants Association that

will work to promote their businesses and the area. This new group would be similar to retail organizations that have formed along such streets as White Bear Avenue, Grand Avenue, Payne—Arcade and Lake Street. These associations typically have very strong ties to neighborhood organizations, working with the community on shared concerns. We hope to see the Midway centers create cooperative planning, marketing and advertising campaigns, seasonal programming, and many of the strategies used at shopping areas around the region.

The community can play a vital role. Please speak with your local store managers to encourage them to become more engaged in their community and to participate in these organizing efforts. We should support and promote stores that are working with the community. Finally, please call or write the Mayor and your city councilmember urging them to get actively involved. Why isn't the City taking the lead on making our shopping centers as attractive and successful as Rosedale or Southdale? Why not here?

### Annual Coalition meeting May 12

Hamline Midway Coalition will hold its 2005 Annual Meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday evening, May 12, 2005. The event will take place at Hamline Park Playground, on the east side of Snelling Avenue between Thomas and Lafond, behind the HMC office building. This year's Annual Meeting will again feature Hamline Midway resident, singer and entertainer Pop Wagner.

In addition there will be an opportunity to meet Hamline Midway Coalition Board and staff while visiting with friends and neighbors. Participants will again be eligible for prizes given out during the Annual Meeting. The HMC Annual Meeting is also the last opportunity to vote for your favorite candidate for the HMC Board of Directors.

Participants who live in the Hamline Midway neighborhood can register and vote for their candidates to the Board at the beginning of the Annual Meeting. The names of the new Board of Directors will be announced at the end of the Annual Meeting.

Come and spend time with your neighbors while you enjoy the entertainment and refreshments. For more information on becoming an HMC Board member or on the Annual Meeting contact Dave Gagne at 651-646-1986.

### How can you, your organization or your group get more involved in the Hamline Midway neighborhood?

Do you belong to a neighborhood-based group like a block club, a gardening group or an interest group? Would your group or organization benefit from participating in a program that helps new leaders make connections and carry out innovative community projects?

The Leadership in Support of Neighborhood (LISN) program provides people who are committed to the Hamline Midway neighborhood the opportunity to develop leadership skills while working on community projects that contribute to the health and vitality of the neighborhood.

Contact Jun-Li for more information, to request a LISN presentation for your group, or to nominate individuals and organizations. Also mark your calendars for

## Hamline Midway Coalition

BY THE STAFF OF HAMLIN MIDWAY COALITION

### Coalition announces its annual meeting, board election

a LISN information session on April 18th, 6:30-8 p.m. at the Hamline Midway Coalition.

### Hamline Midway Coalition has space available for nonprofit organization

Hamline Midway Coalition's office building at 1564 Lafond includes an additional 500 square foot office space for lease by other nonprofits. This space will be available for lease on April 1, 2005. Contact Dave Gagne at 651-646-1986 for more information.

### Summerhill Senior Coop Housing Project won't happen

Nichols Development Company has announced that it has ended its plans to build a five story, 44-unit senior coop housing development on Thomas Avenue between Asbury and Simpson due to a lack of pre-purchase agreements for the proposed project. The owner of the property, David VanLandschoot, continues to work with Sparc

and Hamline Midway Coalition to explore other housing options for that site. Senior housing continues to be a priority. For more information call Dave Gagne at 651-646-1986.

### St. Paul proposes new zoning for

### Adult Entertainment businesses

On March 25, at 8:30 a.m. in Room 40 of St. Paul City Hall there will be a St. Paul Planning Commission Public Hearing for public response to a proposed change in St. Paul zoning as it relates to adult entertainment businesses. Contact Larry Soderholm at 651-266-6575 for more information.

### Hamline Midway Coalition small business training opportunity

If you live in the Hamline Midway neighborhood or would like to start up a business within the neighborhood call Dave Gagne at 651-646-1986 to get more information on the Micro Entrepreneur Training and Support classes. Twice a year HMC sponsors these classes with the Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) and provides basic training in how to start up and run a small business. Participants look briefly at many aspects of running a business, including marketing, financials and various operating issues. Now may be the time to pursue this dream of running your own business. Call now!

## LETTERS

### Congrats on outstanding light rail story in February

I just wanted to congratulate you on the outstanding article on light rail in the February Monitor. I consider this the last word so far on the subject: it was carefully researched, fair, balanced, and very, very thorough.

In fact, I cut out the article to save it, highlighted the key points (there were a couple dozen!), and typed my own summary of the key points. I'm now

going to try to memorize the list, so that whenever the topic comes up in discussion, I'll be able to participate fully.

I am a homeowner in Midway, and I own a rental house in Midway, so this issue is very personal and meaningful to me.

Great job Jan Willms! Kudos!

John Benson  
Midway

## About the reviewers:

The Bachelor likes a lot of food with a minimum of silverware. Unless, of course, the fancy trappings give him an edge on a first date.

The Food Snob quotes from gourmet cookbooks like some people quote from the Bible. Her fellow reviewers greet these revelations with a resounding "Who cares?"

The Cheapskate demands a lot of food for a little money, and always writes last so the others can't delete the soapbox speeches.

## Food Snob

The Bachelor, a sensual soul in spite of his "Animal House meets Homer Simpson" dining habits, frequently wanders the Como Park Conservatory smelling the flowers and perhaps dreaming about his future wedding (still in the realm of theory). Recently, he described the brand new Como Visitor Center cafeteria, Zobota, this way: "I had chicken in some kind of sauce. It was good."

Based on that eloquent endorsement, we high-tailed it right over.

The Visitor Center links the Conservatory and the Zoo, and will feature a rainforest exhibit, bonsai and orchid rooms, and a year-round lily pond. A gift shop and Zobota Café are already open for business. Zobota is a noisy, narrow room with the food service area at the far end. In peak summer season, I envision a sea of strollers, wandering toddlers and high chairs creating a serious obstacle course. (However, in the summer season the shaded patio will also be open.)

Even now, with modest traffic, it's confusing to figure out what Zobota offers and where to get it. There's an area for coffee and desserts, some self-service food items, and a main line where hot food is cooked and served, all packed tightly together. I predict traffic jams and mass confusion.

I tried to envision myself as a mom with kids in tow, and ordered a trendy panini—a grilled, pressed veggie sandwich on crusty focaccia—and macaroni and cheese from the children's menu. Our lunch guest, a female professional football player, kept her



# Without Reservations

## Zobota Café great addition to visitor center

strength up with a burger and fries. My sandwich (\$6.49) was generous and gooey and the plate was piled high with "gourmet" potato chips. The running back's burger (\$5.99) was overcooked to the point of crispy-ness, a casualty of society's E-coli epidemic, but she enjoyed it thoroughly. Her fries were addictive (I ate most of them).

Zobota is a "restaurant" in the literal sense of a place to restore oneself. It's a respite between Sparky the Seal's show and a visit to the newborn monkey. It's a place to refuel the body after refueling the soul at the flower show. It could be quieter, better designed, and easier to navigate. But it's a handy stop for a tasty bite.

## The Bachelor

Let me just make one thing crystal clear. When I'm mincing through the aisles of the Conservatory sniffing orchids, it's strictly a reconnaissance mission. When a guy has to cough up two whole dollars for him and his date to get inside, he wants to get a good return on that investment. The Conservatory, with its lush foliage, tropical smells, and a collection of orchids only a truly sensitive man could appreciate, has been the ideal conspirator for your dear Bachelor on many a cheap and/or last-minute date.

Naturally, I felt just a wee bit skeptical, possibly even threatened, by this new Visitor Center and Zobota Café. Would it tarnish, possibly deflate some of the charm of a setting that my dating life has grown so dependent on? It looks so big and modern from the outside. Is it possible for your beloved Bachelor adapt to this environment?

Thank the dating gods I don't have to worry. The new Visitor Center and Zobota Café are indeed modern, with long rectangular lines and hip, tiny lighting fix-

tures dangling here and there. But it never feels cold or sterile. It has a muted warmth and a lot of class. The Bachelor can make this work.

I already have it all worked out in my head. Me and the future Mrs. Bachelor have just spent about 43 minutes slowly meandering through the moist pathways of the Conservatory, giggling at those silly Koi, giving each other googoo eyes near the Saint Francis statue. We decide to head over to Zobota to cool down. We order the trusty entrée of the day, which the last couple times I was there was a wonderful pasta dish with good stuff piled on top. We make quick work of the pasta, when I grab my date's hand in a manly-yet-sensitive way and together we sponge up the enormous amount of sauce that's left pooled in our plates. Not exactly good for our hearts—but then again, maybe it is.

As for dessert, we let the Muddy Paws cheesecake melt on our tongues and then...well, I'll leave the rest up to you. Va Va Voom!

## The Cheapskate

I don't know about you, but hardly a day goes by when I don't long for someone to grab my hand and thrust it into a pool of leftover sauce on my lunch plate. Talk about romance. Va Va Voom indeed, Mr. Bachelor.

Now, about Zobota. The Bachelor is right. The hot food is good—it's really good. Especially the special entrée of the day. That's what I'd recommend you try. If you're a modest eater (or want dessert), you could share it, and for \$5.99 that's a good deal. On

recent visits, the daily entrée has been delicious without exception: Grilled chicken on pasta in a basil cream sauce; "curried" tomato pasta that actually tasted more like an excellent, fresh spaghetti sauce; and chicken fajitas, better than many I've eaten in Mexican restaurants.

The soups have been good, too. If you want to finish your meal with a slice of the excellent Muddy Paws cheesecake (the mother ship is on Snelling Avenue just north of Minnehaha in the Midway) and a Caribou Americano, then just start with a cup of soup or chili. So far that combination has never let me down.

As for the cold deli sandwiches, my experience has been more mixed. Not that they're bad, they're just nowhere near as good as the hot stuff on the menu. For instance, my roast beef sandwich was generously loaded with beef and had good added flavors like

blue cheese. But the bread was a little dry and the whole thing was too chilly for me to really enjoy the texture and flavor.

Enough about the food. On to the hard-hitting issue: The name. Zobota—Not bad, combining "Zoo" and "Botanical" into a single word that's fun to say and sounds vaguely Spanish or Slavic. My problem here is with the umlaut. They put two dots over the first "o." No self-respecting, umlaut-using language would put one there. It's unpronounceable. It's a crime against "nature." Against something, surely. It's the Haagen-Dazing of America. It's the moral equivalent of those posterous Ikea product names.

(We all know where Ikea gets theirs—they've outsourced the product-naming function to a band of Nordic trolls that lurk under wooden bridges, stirring up batches of syllables in a steaming cauldron. Then they sit around cackling while they place bets on how soon they can get people in Bloomington, Minnesota, to say "Three Grongfinks for my Crudskynsk shelving system, please.")

Let's keep umlauts where they belong, like in the Hofbrau Haus. Meanwhile, just close your eyes when you walk past the Zobota sign, don't cross any wooden bridges, and you'll be fine.

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# Lexington Park development possibilities discussed

By JANE MCCLURE

A TCF branch bank, new offices for the Wilder Foundation and possibly some senior housing would join an Aldi grocery store as part of the Lexington Park development at the southwest corner of University Avenue and Lexington Parkway. The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) would like to locate its credit union there,

too. But do such plans meet neighborhood objectives of transit-oriented, more dense development? Reactions were mixed among members of the University and Lexington Design Advisory Group.

The next skirmish over the Lexington and University plans could come at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, March 31 at City Hall. That's when TCF Bank will seek a re-



Because of the ongoing community debate over the Lexington and University development, the TCF site plan will be the subject of a St. Paul Planning Commission Zoning Committee public hearing at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, March 17 at City Hall. (Photo by Terry Faust)



The proposed Lexington Parkway TCF bank would be one story tall and 4,000 feet in size. The drive-through would be behind the bank. Between 16 and 20 people would work there. It would have 20 adjacent parking spaces. (Photo by Terry Faust)

quired conditional use permit for its building drive-through.

To prepare for that meeting, members of the design advisory group will meet with Ward One City Council Member Debbie Montgomery at 7 p.m. Monday, March 21 at Martin Luther King Center, 270 N. Kent St.

The group was set up last year after representatives from area district councils and University UNITED clashed with property developer Wellington Management over plans for the site. The community groups have pushed for more dense, transit-oriented development, with a mix of housing, retail and office uses.

Because of the ongoing com-

munity debate over the Lexington and University development, the TCF site plan will be the subject of a St. Paul Planning Commission Zoning Committee public hearing at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, March 17 at City Hall. Tom Beach, who oversees site plans for the city, said he put the issue on the agenda because of questions about how the site plan conforms to the University Avenue Transit Oriented Development Framework, a plan the City Council adopted last year.

More than 40 people attended the February 7 design advisory group meeting. If that discussion is any indication, TCF does face questions. Stuart Alger, Lexington Hamline Community Council's

representative on the design advisory group, was among those with mixed feelings. He likes some of Wellington's ideas for bringing a parkway look and feel to the west side of Lexington, with a 25-foot setback and plantings.

"But I'd have to say that a branch bank is one of the last things people have envisioned here," Alger said. "It just evokes an image of a lot of cars and a lot of people just driving through."

TCF officials note that there is strong demand in the surrounding neighborhoods for a full-service branch bank. TCF has a "significant" customer base in

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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# Central athletes make case for eight-lane track at Griffin Stadium

By JANE MCCLURE

Central High School athletes and their supporters are playing in an unfamiliar venue—the political arena. Over the next five weeks they'll be making the case for a new eight-lane track at Griffin Stadium and two school district-funded gyms at the proposed new Jimmy Lee Recreation Center-Oxford Pool complex. Both issues are expected to return to a School Board committee March 22, after being tabled January 25.

"We're hoping everyone helps us support our need for new facilities," said Central Athletic Director Nate Galloway. Central doesn't have the space on its campus to add a field house or even one gym, so the Jimmy Lee space is badly needed.

"We do need more space," said Central Principal Mary Mackbee. Central has six basketball teams. Scheduling practice time, even with use of the current Jimmy Lee gym, is difficult. Some teams routinely practice on a half-court space. "They never get a full court."

Mackbee also said that basketball practices typically end at 9 p.m. now, which raises concerns about student safety.

Meeting as a committee of the whole in January, the St. Paul School Board voted 2-5 to reject a bid to add two gymnasiums to the Jimmy Lee project. Tom Conlon and Kazoua Kong-Thao supported the two-gym proposal. John Brodrick, Anne Carroll, Toni Carter, Al Oertwig and Elona Street-Stewart voted against. Most board members say they need more information before ultimately voting to support or oppose additional gymnasium space for Central High

School. For now, that means the proposal for just one school district-funded gym and two city-funded gyms, for a total of three gyms, stands.

A citizens' advisory committee recommended that St. Paul Public Schools pay for two gyms at Jimmy Lee-Oxford. The complex at the northeast corner of Lexington Parkway and Marshall Avenue, is across Lexington from Central High School. Central already has joint use agreements for Jimmy Lee fields and the recreation center's lone gym.

Plans for the new recreation

center call for St. Paul Parks and Recreation to renovate the existing gym and replace its worn tile floor with wood. The city would build a second new gym, that would be located next to the school district's gym or gyms.

Parks and Recreation and Central staff say that having four gyms would give St. Paul its only tournament-size gym facilities, that could be used for basketball, volleyball and other indoor sports. The school district and city have jointly built and shared other facilities and would have a joint use agreement for the Jimmy Lee gyms.

**"I haven't heard a compelling argument that this would benefit our students."**

—School Board Member Anne Carroll

center call for St. Paul Parks and Recreation to renovate the existing gym and replace its worn tile floor with wood. The city would build a second new gym, that would be located next to the school district's gym or gyms.

Parks and Recreation and Central staff say that having four gyms would give St. Paul its only tournament-size gym facilities, that could be used for basketball, volleyball and other indoor sports. The school district and city have jointly built and shared other facilities and would have a joint use agreement for the Jimmy Lee gyms.

"It's not just about basket-

ball," Galloway said of the quest for two gyms. Central High could use the gym space during the day for physical education. It also would be available for the growing badminton program and intramural programs, which can't be held now due to space limitations. The gyms could also be used by the Area Learning center, including Hubbs Center on University Avenue. The centers have no physical education space of their own.

Central High estimates its gym use, for indoor sports and physical education, at 675 hours per academic year. That doesn't in-

clude soccer and football practices, which sometimes have to move indoors due to weather.

Citizens' advisory committee chairperson John Thoenke said it makes sense to build both gyms now. "We believe it would be good for Central and good for the whole district," he said.

Another issue for the committee is costs, which are at about \$880,000 per gym. "We'd never be able to build those as freestanding gyms," Thoenke said. He called the project "a bargain."

But school district administration proposed one gym and not two, citing costs and the ability to add a second gym later. Some

board members also said they'd like to see if the city could pay for a third gym. But an advisory committee working on the Jimmy Lee-Oxford project has ruled out any additional city expenditures on the project. The project, which has included buying and moving houses, has a \$10 million cost.

Director of School Services Pat Quinn said the construction timeline for Jimmy Lee could also affect when and if the school district ultimately supports the additional gym. He told School Board members that any gym or gyms the district pays for would be spaces the school district would have priority use of. A new joint use agreement will have to be developed when and if the agreement on the number new gyms is reached.

Conlon and Kong-Thao supported the citizens' advisory committee recommendation. But other board members said they couldn't support the second gym at this time.

"I haven't heard a compelling argument that this would benefit our students," said Carroll. Oertwig questioned why Central should end up with more facilities than are available at other district schools.

Oertwig was also skeptical of the city's inability to put more money into the Jimmy Lee-Oxford project, saying "We've heard that before."

Another issue that will be brought back to the School Board in March is the possible location of an eight-lane track. The \$56 million school facilities package given preliminary approval January 25 includes \$1 million for field renovation at Johnson High

School on the city's East Side. Johnson is the last St. Paul City Conference high school to have its fields renovated.

The plan for Johnson includes an eight-lane track. It would be the school district's only eight-lane facility. All tracks rebuilt in recent years have just six lanes, said Jerry Keenan, Harding athletic director and lead athletic director for St. Paul Public Schools.

Six-lane tracks work for dual meets but aren't large enough to accommodate the St. Paul City Conference meet or a district competition, Keenan said. For several years the City Conference has had to rent space at Hamline University for the conference championships. Because Hamline was rebuilding its track and stadium last year the conference meet was held at Roseville Area High School.

Johnson officials said holding large meets at their school could require adding field lights, which isn't in the \$1 million budget. The space available at Johnson isn't enough for bleachers on both sides of the track and football field. Keenan said that typically at conference and district meets bleacher space on both sides of the track are needed, for spectators and for competitors.

Central is set to have its track rebuilt, after recent stadium renovations. But converting from a six-lane to an eight-lane track there would mean removing some bleacher seating. That cost isn't in the capital budget. One possibility is that Central could work with Concordia University to share the track costs. That is part of the information the School Board will be seeking in March.

Next deadline: April 4

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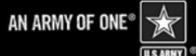
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# Midway author is finalist in Minnesota Book Awards' 'Fine Press' category

By DEBORAH BROTZ

When a stranger intruded on his pool while he was trout fishing in western Wisconsin, Midway resident Clayton Schanilec got the idea for his book. Collaborating with his brother, Gaylord Schanilec, who did the design and illustration, he wrote a book titled, "The Intruder."

The Minnesota Humanities Commission recently announced Schanilec as a Fine Press Finalist for the 17th Annual Minnesota Book Awards.

"I was thrilled," he said. "I read about it in the newspaper first. A couple people who read it in the newspaper mentioned it to me after I read about it."

"The Intruder" is about a fellow who fly fishes for trout and has a problem. A guy takes over his pool. People fly fish in moving streams, in which there are a series of pools, where it gets deeper. Trout are caught in these pools.

"He senses something is wrong, but he doesn't know what it is," said Schanilec. "They call it angst. He has a feeling something is wrong in his life."

An avid fisherman, Schanilec's idea for the book came from real life experience fishing. He has had his fiction published in Gray's Sporting Journal, a renowned sports journal, which is one of the only ones that publishes fiction.

"If you're fishing in a pool, no one comes because trout spook easily," he said. "A guy came up with a spinner, which is a big lure. Fly fishermen are really snobby. They don't fish with worms. The guy was hooked on to the biggest trout I had caught that year. I was perturbed so I decided to write a short story about it."

Schanilec's book is in the Fine Press category, which is creating a book in art form using old world materials and methods before the offset press was developed.

"They use metal type and real fine paper," he said. "The book is hand-bound with a clam shell cover. It fits within a fancy box and



Midway resident Clayton Schanilec's book "The Intruder" uses fine press techniques, which is creating a book in art form using old world materials and methods before the offset press. He collaborated with his brother, Gaylord Schanilec, who did the design and illustration. The Minnesota Humanities Commission recently announced Schanilec as a Fine Press Finalist for the 17th Annual Minnesota Book Awards. (Photo by Terry Faust)

has engravings. It's very cool."

Schanilec's brother, who put the book together, lives in western Wisconsin and has done several fine press books.

"He is known for his creations," said Schanilec. "He's about the best in the country. There are not a lot of people who do that."

Schanilec's 5 x 7.5-inch, 32-page book was published by Midnight Paper Sales, with an edition run of 146 copies. The book is printed on Zerkall mould-made paper and bound in quarter blue Cialux cloth, with printed paper over boards and a paper title label printed with gold ink on black

Arches cover. Enclosed in a slipcase, it has a three-page, 5 x 13-inch panoramic engraving of Schanilec fishing his favorite pool. The panorama was printed in four colors on gray Hahnemuhle Ingres paper.

"The nice ones sell for \$250 apiece, and the less fancy ones sell for \$125," said Schanilec. "It's kind of an investment. There's a small press run of each type."

The fine press run is usually up to 200 at most.

"They're not very big runs," said Schanilec. "It's supply and demand. It's such good work. It will go up in price. It definitely appreciates. The most expensive one was

\$850. They're incredible. I can see why people who love art buy them."

Schanilec writes all the time so it wasn't a big leap to write a book. Since attending a fiction writer's workshop in Iowa City, Iowa, in 1981-82, he has written four novels, but has not published any. This is his second short story although he has had many non-fiction stories published as a writer for the Midway/Como Monitor.

"That's my big aspiration," he said. "I want to make my living as a writer."

Although Schanilec currently earns his living as a high school English teacher at Grace Adult Ba-

sic Education for District 196 in Apple Valley, he has been a performer with dance companies. He still plays fiddle for dances and festivals.

Schanilec enjoys writing because he likes to tell stories.

"It's a passion," he said. "I like to create different worlds. I have control over all these worlds. I get myself across through these stories."

Writing is a very important part of Schanilec's life.

"I'm a happier person if I'm writing and have a story going," he said. "The ones who make it are the ones who need to write. To be a complete person, I need to write. I'll keep doing it even though there is not much remuneration for it."

Schanilec's latest novel is about Sir Thomas Malory, author of "The Book of King Arthur and His Noble Knights of the Round Table," based on the legends of King Arthur.

"He got to make stuff up," said Schanilec. "He tells stories about Sir Lancelot, Guinevere, and the Knights of the Round Table. Malory's life influenced legend."

In the future, Schanilec hopes to get his novel done and to be able to sell it.

"It's pretty tough to sell books these days," he said. "That's my dream to make a living at fiction writing and to work out of my house."

Schanilec looks forward to the Minnesota Book Awards, which will be held at 8 p.m., on April 16, at The Women's Club of Minneapolis.

"I hope to sell all my copies and maybe attract some attention and get more publishing opportunities on the local scene," he said. "We may or may not win, who knows. We want to win, but either way my brother will come over, have a nice dinner, and go to the ceremony. Either way, we'll go out and celebrate afterwards."

To purchase "The Intruder," call 651-647-5492.

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Often, I look back into my records from previous years to see what natural events typically happened in the month in which I'm writing about. March is more challenging than other months because of the dynamics of the changing seasons—when March comes to Minnesota, anything can happen. One day you could be skiing in Como Park on fresh-fallen snow or just as likely you could be marveling at the early awakening of spring flower bulbs.

The divergent moods of March are quite difficult to predict. For example, on March 7, 1995, there was a half-foot of new snow on the ground and the temperatures were in the wintry 20s. Less than a week later, it was nearly 60 degrees with only a trace of snow left, the tulips were coming up on the south side of the house, and I was dreaming of getting an early start on the gardening (foolish tulips, foolish gardener).

On the same date in 2000, the temperature got up to a balmy 73 degrees. The normal high for March 7 is a mere 36 degrees, but what's really "normal" for the month of March is anyone's guess. Native plants are rarely fooled by false promises of an early spring (global warming may change all this). However, foreign transplants, like the tulip, are as vulnerable as we gardeners are to an attack of March madness.

Flowers of the *Tulipa* genus grow from a true bulb: an underground storage organ consisting of scales that are attached to a fleshy basal plate. Inside each bulb is a complete plant in miniature. If you were to slice down the middle of a bulb you would see the tiny shoot, leaves, flowers, and stem that are just waiting for a new season of growth. Daffodils, lilies, and onions are all true bulbs; however, it's the tulip that has inspired true lunacy.

It all started in the spring of 1554 when the first European "discovered" the tulip. De Bus-



# Neighborhood Naturalist

By DEB ROBINSON

## March madness—when anything can happen

becq, an ambassador appointed by Emperor Ferdinand I to the Ottoman Empire, was smitten by the beauties he saw growing in the Turkish gardens of Istanbul: thou-

sands of tulips (all collected from the wild). The ambassador sent some of these tulip bulbs back home to Europe.

Then a German botanist and

painter, Conrad Gesner, spread the tulips' fame far and wide by publishing illustrations and descriptions of those first tulips. French horticulturist Carolus Clusius propagated the tulips into a collection, which he brought to the Netherlands in 1593, and then the madness struck.

"Tulipomania," the rampant speculation in the tulip-trade, was in full bloom in the Netherlands in 1634. Some of the rare bi-colored tulips were selling for outrageously large sums of money. The inflated tulip bulb market collapsed a few years later. However, the bulb trade is still worth

breaking dormancy before our winter is actually over.

Tulips traveled to the New World with the first Dutch colonist, but many of our native flower bulbs traveled back to the Old World as well. In 1735, bulbs of our beautifully purple speckled orange Turk's-cap lily were collected from the wilds of eastern North America and sent to European gardeners by a Pennsylvania Quaker named John Bartram. However, the Turk's-cap lily blooms safely in the warmth of early summer.

Our cautious native bulbs have never caused a financial crisis like "Tulipomania" nor do they suffer from March madness. Unlike tulips, they seldom go poking their tender green heads out of the dirt until the dangers of our northern winters are past. But, if a few tulips were to brave the hazards of March, I would certainly be grateful for the color.

Endnotes: Tulips will be blooming by March 19th when



Illustration by Deb Robinson

**Flowers of the *Tulipa* genus grow from a true bulb: an underground storage organ consisting of scales that are attached to a fleshy basal plate.**

millions to the Dutch economy, where 3 billion tulip bulbs are produced each year.

The ancestor of the common garden tulip originated in those regions of the Middle East and Central Asia where the climate is warm and dry in the summer with cool and rainy winters. The wild Turkish tulips evolved to go into dormancy to escape summer drought. The dormancy habit has served the transplanted *Tulipa* family reasonably well in escaping cold Minnesota winters. Yet, it only takes an unseasonably mild March to fool them into

the Spring Flower Show starts at the McNeely Conservatory in Como Park - info: 651-487-8200.

\*Spring Park Clean-up Day is April 16th - join the Dist. 10 Environment Committee at the Como Pool parking lot (on Horton Ave. just west of Lexington Ave.) at 9 a.m. for refreshments before we start picking up trash - info: Susan Jane Cheney at Environment@ComoPark.org. \*Volunteers needed for a yearlong survey of Dist. 10 Como Park area Birds - info: Val at 651-645-1124. \*To contact writer: dmrobinson@btstream.net



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# In Our Community

## Spaghetti Dinner at St. Stephanus April 2

The St. Stephanus Men's Club is hosting their annual spaghetti dinner on April 2 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. The menu will consist of spaghetti and meatballs, bread, pumpkin dessert, and beverage. Donation is \$6 for adults and \$4 for children ages five to twelve. Children under five are free. For tickets, contact Arnie at the church at 651-228-1486. Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. St. Stephanus is located at 739 Lafond (at the corner of Lafond and Grotto).

## March Events at MMSA School include 'Stations'

The drama students at Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew's School will be doing Silhouette Stations of the Cross on March 17 at 2 p.m. in O'Donnell Hall.

Kindergarten Visiting Day is Tuesday, March 29, from 11 a.m.-6 p.m. This is for Kindergarteners who will attend MMSA this next school year 2005-2006. They may come and check out the Kindergarten rooms, meet the teachers and play for awhile.

Come and enjoy food, fun and fellowship at MMSA Arby's night on Monday, March 14 from 4-8 p.m. Mention MMSA when you order and a portion of the sales goes to the school! The location is Arby's at 2300 Rice St. just north of Hwy. 36.

## Craft Sale at Central Lutheran March 19

Central Lutheran School is hosting a craft sale on Saturday, March 19, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. We will have a variety of crafts, a bake sale, jellybeans, a white elephant table, and food for sale. Central Lutheran is located at 775 N. Lexington Pkwy.

## Spring Storytimes at Hamline Midway Library

The Hamline Midway Branch of the St. Paul Public Library will be offering spring storytimes on Tuesday evenings and Wednesday mornings beginning in late March. Bedtime storytime will be offered for preschool and early elementary age children, beginning on Tuesday, March 22, at 7 p.m. The series will continue on Tuesday nights through April 26. All children are encouraged to wear their pajamas and bring a favorite bear or blanket to storytime.

The toddler and preschool storytime will be offered on Wednesdays, at 10:30 a.m., from March 23 through April 27. Both

## Spring Flower Show at Como Park



Spring arrives at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's Sunken Garden Saturday, March 19, through Sunday, April 24, where tulips, hyacinths, daffodils, lilies and pansies create a fragrant garden of beautiful blooms. The 2005 Spring Flower Show's color scheme of blue, purple, and yellow will showcase Tulip "Yellow Present" and "Purple Flag" and Lilies "Cordelia" and "Sunray." Enjoy Spring with a visit to the Conservatory! More than 12,000 bulbs are grown for this show. Winter hours through March 31 are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Summer Hours beginning April 1 are 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

storytimes will include storytelling, flannel boards, songs, fingerplays, movies, and much more.

Pre-registration is requested, but is not required. The library is located at 1558 W. Minnehaha Avenue. For more information or to register for storytime, please contact the Hamline Midway Branch Library at 651-642-0293; information is also available on the Library's Website at [www.sppl.org](http://www.sppl.org).

## Free Home & Garden Show, Sat., March 19th

Sparc, a non-profit community development corporation presents the 14th Annual Greater Midway Home & Garden Show at Crossroads Elementary School, 543 Front Ave., (Front and Dale). Visit expanded workshops on gardening, kitchen design, energy improvements, mosaic tile projects, and old window repair. Exhibit Hall features local home improvement contractors/products, financing options, senior resources and Sparky the Fire Dog. Workshops run from 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Exhibit Hall open from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Garden art activity for kids 11 a.m.-noon. Free admission and parking. Questions? 651-488-1039. Look for our flyer inserted into this issue of the Monitor.

## South Como Block Club meets March 28

The South Como Block Club will

meet on March 28 at 6:30 p.m. to hear speaker, Seth Benzinger, speak about Sparc's housing improvement and loan programs at the Orchard Recreation Center, 875 Orchard Avenue. Prior to each meeting, there is an optional potluck beginning at 6 p.m.--bring a beverage and a potluck item to share. All are welcome, especially our neighbors from the area within Lexington Parkway and Dale Street (east-west) and Front Avenue (south) to the railroad tracks (north), and surrounding area. For more information, check the online list for South Como neighbors, at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/southcomo/>.

## Hamline Church hosts final barn dance Mar. 18

Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue, hosts the final Community Barn Dance of this winter on Friday, March 18, from 7-9 p.m.

A caller teaches traditional American folk dancing for all ages, set to live Appalachian string music. Snacks are available from 6:30-9 p.m. Members of Hamline-Midway Neighbors for Peace will be on hand to answer questions about their programs. Suggested donation is \$2/adult or \$6/family. For more information, contact the church office at 651-645-0667.

## Hausman speaks at Block Nurse program April 12

Rep. Alice Hausman will be the

featured speaker on April 12, for the "Second Tuesday" luncheon at the Hamline Midway Living at Home Block Nurse Program. She will address current legislative issues affecting elders. To RSVP for the event held at 11:30 a.m. at the Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave., call 651-209-6542 by April 8.

## Spring volunteer yard clean-up April 23

April is volunteer month! Service groups, families and individuals needed for the fourth annual spring yard clean-up for Hamline Midway elders Saturday, April 23. For more information, contact Monica Gallagher at 651-209-6542.

## Volunteer tutors urgently needed for ESL classes

The Minnesota Literacy Council is looking for volunteers to assist in morning and after noon adult English as a Second Language classes in the Midway area and East St. Paul. No experience or second language skills necessary. Training is provided. For more information, please contact Astrid Liden at 651-645-2277, ext. 204.

## Hausman receives 2005 Environmental Award

In a ceremony on February 8th, the League of Conservation Voters awarded Representative Alice Hausman (DFL-Saint Paul) its 2005 Environmental Leadership Award. Rep. Hausman was one of only two Legislators, out of 201 members of the House and Senate, to receive a rating of 100% from the organization.

The League of Conservation Voters conducts its rating of all members of the Minnesota Legislature on conservation issues every year. The most recent ratings were based upon six votes taken during 2004, ranging from rules governing feedlots to restrictions on the use of All Terrain Vehicles in wetlands. According to the League, only Rep. Hausman and Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-Minneapolis) made pro-conservation votes in all six cases.

## Join Family Academy us Family Fun Day March 13

Circle Sunday, March 13 on your calendars! Family Academy Charter School will be holding its annual Family Fun Day with a Dinner, Silent Auction fundraiser, and Carnival for the kids. The event will be held in the School auditorium at 1330

Blair Avenue (formerly St. Columba School on Hamline and Blair) in the St. Paul Midway area from 1 to 5 p.m.

Classrooms are putting together auction baskets and local businesses have been invited to participate. Some of the themes selected for the auction include Game Night, Beach Time, Grilling, Sports, Chocolate, Gardening, Twins, Vikings, and Art Fun.

In addition to the Silent Auction, the school is sponsoring a dinner featuring Famous Dave's Georgia chopped pork or chicken barbeque sandwiches, chips, dessert, and beverage. A bake sale and carnival will be part of the event as well.

This is an annual fundraiser for the school to support its educational programs. Family Academy is a Minnesota Charter Schools in its fifth year of serving students from Preschool to Grade 8.

For more information about the Family Fun Day Activities or more information about Family Academy, please call 651-697-1740.

## Victory Toastmaster's meet Monday nights

Victory Toastmaster's welcomes anyone new to the art of public speaking. Victory Toastmasters Club is an old but experienced club in District 6. We hold our meetings every Monday night (except holidays) from 6 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

We are located behind the Capitol, at Bethesda Lutheran Rehabilitation Hospital; 559 Capitol Boulevard. For more information call Cynthia at either 651-231-6997 or 651-291-0489.

## Como area hockey team has winning season

Congratulations to Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew School sixth and seventh graders Adam Crowley, Peter Kolias, Peter Odney, Adam Kusterman and Colin O'Brien on their undefeated hockey season. These boys play on the B PeeWee Team for Como Area Hockey and were recently ranked 14th in the state. They ended their season in first place with a 19-0-1 record and are coached by parents John Larkin, Paul Kolias and Tim Crowley.

The Como Area A PeeWee Team ended their season in second place with a 4-3-1 record! The team includes sixth and seventh graders Brian Comiskey, Conor Comiskey, Mario Rubi, and Joe McCullough.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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# Revitalization of University and Raymond area moves ahead

By JANE MCCLURE

The revitalization of the University and Raymond area is moving ahead, with designation of a new local historic district and key city approvals for a multi-family housing development on the old Johnson Brothers Liquor Company property.

The St. Paul City Council unanimously approved designation for the University-Raymond Commercial Historic District February 23, giving 35 historic Midway buildings special status. The City Council vote ends a process that began in the early 1980s, when the St. Paul Historic Sites Survey noted several of the buildings' significance as part of the city's largest industrial area and one of the nation's key transportation centers. The Midway not only has a rich history as a rail center, it also was the site of much of the Twin Cities' early trucking industry.

Ward Four City Council Member Jay Benanav said the designation recognizes a unique area. "It's really quite a thriving district along University Avenue," he said.

St. Paul Historic Preservation Specialist Amy Spong said University-Raymond area is the city's first historic district created since 1992.

In recent years the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission has started to look at historic buildings and areas in a context that reflects buildings from a specific era or eras.

For University-Raymond, he period of significance is 1891 to 1941. Buildings in the district once housed the Minnesota Street Railway company, General Motors Corporation Truck Garage, Twin City Four Wheel Drive and Mack Truck International Motor Truck factory and showroom.

"University and Raymond has a good collection of buildings that relate to the region's transportation, the railroad industry and the trucking industry," Spong said.

The historic district has recommendations of approval from the St. Paul HPC and Planning Commission, as well as the St. Anthony Park Community Council.

Putting the district together meant about two years' worth of meetings for building owners in the new historic district, said Spong.

Benanav and Spong said the historic designation will help building owner obtain federal historic tax credits for future building rehabilitation projects. "These

buildings are really quite remarkable," said Benanav.

The district is in an area roughly bounded by Cromwell/Highway 280, Charles, Myrtle and Hampden. Newer buildings or buildings that have been dramatically altered were left out of the district.

February 25 was a big day for three buildings in the historic district as the Planning Commission unanimously approved a zoning change and variance for the University Carleton Limited Liability Corporation. These actions also had the support of St. Anthony Park Community Council. The commission's decision on the variance is final.

The commission unanimously recommended rezoning the property, from light industrial use to traditional neighborhoods use. This zoning type, known as TN, allows for more dense mixed use development. The City Council will hold another public hearing before voting on the rezoning request. As of early March no public hearing date had been set.

The Planning Commission also approved a variance needed for the project. The developers wish to build 263 housing units, but the traditional neighborhoods zoning

would only allow 223 or 44 units per acre. The developers contend that the rental market for their property will be for one-bedroom units, as opposed to larger units. One past University UNITED study noted that the site would be an ideal place for student housing, due to its proximity to area colleges and to transit.

The 6.22 acre site is bounded by Carleton Street and University, Hampden and Charles avenues. The two blocks include three large brick warehouses, which were built in the early 20th century. The developers would keep the three warehouses, while tearing down newer additions. The historic district only designates the original warehouses as buildings that contribute to the historic district's character.

Johnson Brothers operated its liquor distribution business on University Avenue for many years, before moving to Shepard Road several years ago. Since then a number of small office, retail and warehouse users have rented parts of the property.

Johnson Brothers is now working with a development team including Dominion Development and Acquisition and BKV Group Architects to form the University

Carleton group.

In the first phase of the project, 2341 University Av. would have its historic front restored and a new elevator and stairway core built to the north. This building would be remodeled into loft-style apartment, targeted toward area workers. The buildings at 2285 and 2295 University Av. will also have their fronts restored. A new addition will connect these buildings, and provide community space. These buildings would be remodeled into loft-style live-work apartments. The first phase would end with the creation of 171 housing units.

In the second phase, new multi-family housing would be built in the open lot between 2295 and 2341 University Av. It would have underground parking for the development. The development would also have about 160 parking spaces in a lot along Charles.

The second phase would also include a new multi-family building at the corner of Hampden and University. The building could include commercial or retail space. It would mean demolishing a bar that has been closed for several years. The second phase would result in the creation of 184 new housing units.

## Lexington Park

Continued from page 6

the Midway and surrounding neighborhoods, said Judy McDonald of TCF.

A TCF branch bank located inside the Midway Cub grocery store is the busiest of all of TCF's in-store bank banks, said McDonald. The Midway Cub's space has doubled since it opened in 1995, but it is still too small to provide every service customers want. The nearest full-service TCF branch banks are downtown and at Randolph and Snelling in Macalester-Groveland neighborhood. McDonald said the Cub branch would remain open.

TCF is planning a second branch bank in the area. On March 2 city staff will review a site plan for a TCF Bank at 2183 Ford Parkway, the northeast corner of Ford and Cretin Avenue. That bank's request for a conditional use permit for its drive-through goes to the Zoning Committee for a public hearing at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, March 3 at City Hall.

The proposed Lexington Parkway bank would be one story tall and 4,000 feet in size. The drive-through would be behind the bank. Between 16 and 20 people would work there. It would have 20 adjacent parking spaces.

The design of the bank is meant to fit into an urban, not suburban, neighborhood, according to Mike Kraft of HGT Architects. "We have a really terrific Colonial prototype on a big patch of green grass, but that's not going to work here," he said. The Lexington site would only be three-quarters of one acre in size. The design also has to accommodate the 25-foot parkway setback along Lexington.

Some members of the design advisory group questioned whether a two-story building, with office space above the bank, wouldn't be more appropriate for an urban setting. A few people noted that HGT Architects designed the two-story Western Bank that is being built on University just east of Dale Street. That bank is set right on the University sidewalk, to line up with other buildings. It is brick, with large windows and other design features

meant to harmonize with other University Avenue buildings.

Alger said the neighborhood needs "a place that feels like an asset" as part of Lexington Park. He asked whether TCF's need to better serve the community could be met with a different kind of building. Some design advisory group members asked that TCF consider a two-story building, with offices or even housing above. But TCF officials said they don't want to be in the business of leasing and managing rental space.

Kraft said the one-story building will fit into the neighborhood and that it is being designed in a way that is as pedestrian-friendly as possible.

University UNITED Executive Director Brian McMahon disagreed, saying the bank doesn't meet the community's goal of transit-oriented development. While applauding Wilder Foundation's idea of consolidating its offices in an office-commercial building on the western part of the site, he questioned the TCF plans.

The Wilder Foundation plans are more preliminary, according to foundation representatives. The nonprofit social services provider is looking at consolidating six of its sites in an 80,000 to 90,000 square foot building. The spaces to be consolidated include most of the one-block Wilder campus on Lafond Avenue in Frogtown.

The Lexington Park location would provide more cost-efficient and visible space for Wilder, said Craig Binger of Wilder Foundation. "We think this project could really add to the area." It would also put many of Wilder's services on the Metro Transit Route 16 bus line. Transit access to current Wilder facilities varies by site, with a walk of at least one block or more to some facilities.

Wilder's five-story building would be south of the planned Aldi grocery store. First-floor retail would be part of Wilder's plans, with a coffee shop or other businesses that could serve the employees. A play area would be built outside. But the project would also need a parking ramp, with about 450 spaces. The costs haven't been hammered out yet.

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## Midway in a minute

Continued from page 2

### Dickerman Park gets boost from Friends of the Park

It may be St. Paul's smallest and least-visible park. But Dickerman Park got a boost February 9 from the Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County. The St. Paul City Council accepted a \$7,000 donation from the Friends. The money will be used for design services in the development of a preliminary park design. Park proponents hope to get the design work underway in the months ahead.

Dickerman Park is a long, narrow city park that is on the north side of University Avenue between Aldine Street and Fairview Avenue. Most people don't even realize it is a park. It is in front of the Griggs Midway, Midway YMCA, Avalon Charter School, Metro Light and Sound, and Marsden buildings. In some places the park appears to be part of the front lawn of the buildings. Play equipment has been built on part of the property. In other places what is park land is paved for motor vehicle parking.

A coalition developed a vision for Dickerman Park several months ago that would include a number of improvements. Play areas, landscaping and small ponds would be developed. Landscaping would also be

added on the south side of University Avenue, across from the park.

Some of the parking areas that are currently on Dickerman Park property would remain.

In 2003 a community charette was held to discuss ideas for the park. The park design task force includes representatives of University UNITED, Merriam Park Community Council, Hamline Midway Coalition, Midway Chamber of Commerce, Parks and Recreation, Friends of the Parks and Trails, and Ward Four City Council Member Jay Benanav's office.

The Dickerman family has donated more than \$40,000 to the city to be used in design and renovation of the park.

### Disagreement over HealthEast expansion puts sale on hold

An ongoing disagreement over HealthEast expansion at its Merriam Park campus has put the brakes on the sale of its Midway campus headquarters. The St. Paul City Council was set to approve \$41 million of conduit tax-exempt lease revenue bonds for the St. Paul Port Authority March 2. The Port Authority would use the bonds to purchase HealthEast's property at 1700 University Av.

The Port Authority's board authorized the purchase in February. It is part of a financing plan that would provide funds for future HealthEast expansion and renovation of HealthEast's St. Joseph's Hospital complex

downtown. HealthEast provides about 1,700 jobs at St. Joseph's.

HealthEast looked at various ways to raise money for the St. Joseph's improvements before deciding to use the equity in its Midway property, according to Port Authority documents.

The Port Authority would buy the Midway HealthEast property then lease it back to HealthEast. The lease term is 40 years plus renewal options. HealthEast's complex of offices and outpatient services is located on the former Midway Hospital campus in Merriam Park.

The conduit bonds have no cost or financial obligation for the city.

But the transaction has raised questions in Merriam Park, where HealthEast's neighbors are protesting a parking lot expansion plan. They contend that the health care provider hasn't lived up to promises it made tied to a past expansion. Merriam Park Community Council is looking at the issues.

Ward Four City Council Member Jay Benanav laid over HealthEast's request, saying he needs more information and needs to discuss the issue with neighbors. The bond issue will be brought back for City Council action in three weeks. However, Benanav said if his questions are answered sooner, he'll bring the issue back for approval before then.

-Compiled by Jane McClure

## New addition to University Avenue



Construction workers lowered a 45-foot steeple through the snow February 24 to crown Coventry Chapel, which is now nearing completion on the Episcopal Homes continuing care campus in Saint Paul's Midway. When it opens in early May, Coventry Chapel will serve as a spiritual and educational focal point for residents of the campus and beyond. The building of this chapel was one of four goals set for Episcopal Homes' ambitious \$6 million Celebrate the Journey capital campaign.

Another goal was to build Cornelia House, a 47-unit residence that will bring much-needed affordable senior housing to the neighborhood. Cornelia House adjoins the new chapel and will be ready for occupancy on April 1st.

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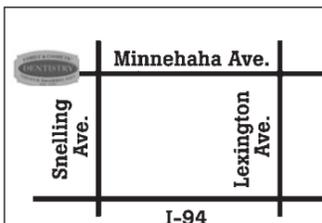


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# On-line retail survey

Continued from page 1

"All three shopping centers along the Midway have different owners," he added. "But we're always willing to cooperate."

Birdoff, who visits the Midway Center property several times a year, said the marketplace will determine what happens along University Avenue.

One person who would agree with that concept is Lori Fritts, president of the Midway Chamber of Commerce. She said that University UNITED is very tied to planning, but the Chamber tries to utilize existing resources as best it can to help with the biggest impact. The Chamber's approach, in other words, is radically different than the approach University UNITED uses.

The Chamber, in short, believes in market oriented development—that there must be a market for the development and that implementation of Transit Oriented Development principles must be economically feasible for the project.

"One of our biggest concerns is bringing jobs to the area," she said. "We are much more focused on what is going on in the marketplace today."

On the subject of the retail survey, Fritts felt that the results

didn't really offer any concrete suggestions of what stores people would like to see in the area, and if they are willing to have taxpayer monies subsidize retail development. Taxpayer subsidy, she pointed out, is what would be required to enact the University UNITED plan.

Fritts said Midway Chamber has been a strong advocate for area businesses for 86 years. While Suburban chambers have been merging with the St. Paul and Minneapolis chambers, the Midway Chamber is still a vibrant, effective organization that continues to attract and retain members, and that says something positive about the Midway.

"Our mission is to create jobs, make the best and highest use of lands, and that has to be driven by the market-oriented development," Fritts said.

Fritts also questioned the comparison University UNITED makes between Rosedale and the Midway. She believes that the two are very different shopping experiences. "Midway is its very own destination," she said. "The opportunities to shop in Midway are unique. We just need to do a better job of promoting it."

She believes a major obstacle that needs to be resolved for Midway Shopping Center's future is the status of the bus garage, owned by the Met Council, and a connecting empty lot owned by the owner of the Midway Shopping Center.

The bus barn has undergone some environmental remediation and has some huge piles of dirt on it. Although the Met Council is looking for a new location for the bus barn, the re-

quirements for the site of a bus garage are very restrictive.

"There is very high interest in that property by the big retailers, and some new successful stores will eventually be built there," Fritts said.

Steve Wellington, chair of the Midway Chamber board, and the developer of University Avenue's latest project, Lexington Park, at Lexington and University, has another take on the Midway area.

"I think University Avenue has to build on its current eclectic mix of retail businesses," he said. "A better model for the Avenue than Rosedale is some of the cool retail moving into parts of northeast Minneapolis or the retail that is now flourishing in the Uptown area or along West Seventh in St. Paul."

He said the Midway needs to have a vibrant, very urban flavor. Although a movie theater has been discussed for the area, he said that the idea of a large collection of cinemas does not appeal to him.

"Destination retail like the recently announced new Patagonia Store on Grand Avenue would be a great addition to the Avenue. Also, we have lots of really unusual and fantastic ethnic restaurants which could be expanded substantially."

Wellington said he thinks this vision will necessarily evolve over time, with pockets of this type of retail development occurring in the next five years. He would like to see significant improvements in the publicly owned portions of University Avenue involving lighting, new trees and landscaping, signage

and banners.

"We cannot afford to wait for light rail to beautify this important commercial corridor," Wellington said. "This work seems more important and likely to occur than an effort to dress up the current Midway Shopping Center."

Business owner Scott Johnson of My Apple Music at 1549 University Avenue has spent 10 years on the Midway, six years at his present location. He sells, rents and repairs guitars, keyboards, bass and drums and provides sound systems for live music events and rehearsal space for bands.

He said he has seen numerous changes along University Avenue during this period of time, with TCF Bank and Wards going down.

"Six years ago, in the evenings there was a lot of crime and prostitution in the area," he noted. "But I have seen improvement in getting rid of this. I think getting rid of three bars we have in one block would help, also."

Johnson said there is a high concentration of music-related businesses near University and Snelling, including everything from recording studios to music teachers.

He said his biggest problem is that customers come in and say, "I never knew you were there. I drive by all the time." Johnson said he guessed he needed signage, but that would add to the clutter along University Avenue.

Johnson is aware that positive changes have come to the Midway, he just feels that much

more could be done. "If the Midway had a facelift, I think it would look better," he noted. But his main concern is crime or perceived crime in the area, and he said he would donate space in his building for a police sub-station.

Paula Maccabee, a consultant who has done work for clients along University Avenue, however, says that the perception of crime is overblown compared to actual statistics.

"In terms of personal safety, the Midway area has a very low rate of crime, according to the Police Department," Maccabee said.

Although Maccabee had not seen the current survey put out by University UNITED, she said she felt the most important survey data is whether customers shop.

"I have talked to store owners along the Midway, and they have told me about their high rate of business," Maccabee said. "That's the best survey of all, customers voting with their feet."

The challenge for University UNITED and the rest of us is whether we can bring in government dollars for business improvement," Maccabee said. "With the current economic climate, I just don't see that happening right now."

Merchants will have an opportunity to gather and express their views at a meeting March 15, 8 a.m., to discuss the organizing of a new group called the University Avenue Merchants Association. The meeting will be held at Four Points Sheraton, 400 North Hamline.

## HAMLIN UNIVERSITY CELEBRATING 150 YEARS



### Upcoming Events

#### The Musical Offering

Music by Glinka, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich  
Date: Sunday, March 13  
Time: 3 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Contact: For tickets and information, 651-523-2459

#### Minneapolis Quartet

Music by Barber, Schubert, and Shostakovich  
Date: Sunday, March 13  
Time: 7:30 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Contact: For tickets and information, 651-523-2459

#### Public interview with author Mary Ruefle

Date: Tuesday, March 15  
Time: 7:30 p.m.  
Location: Law/Graduate Building, Room 106  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: Sandy Beach, 651-523-2476, or sbeach@hamline.edu

#### Law and Leadership

Speaker: Pamela Thomas-Graham, president & CEO of CNBC  
Date: Thursday, March 17  
Time: 11 a.m.  
Location: Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: Deb Lange, 651-523-2122

#### The Graying of Minnesota

Part of the Hamline Dialogue series "Challenges and Innovations: An Examination of Issues that Affect Our Communities."  
Date: Thursday, March 17  
Time: 4-6 p.m.  
Location: Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room  
Cost: \$25, includes refreshments  
Contact: To register and for information, contact Kris Norman-Major, 651-523-2814, or www.hamline.edu/gsm

#### The Schubert Club's Early Music Series

Featuring Nigel North, lute  
Date: Friday, March 18  
Time: 8 p.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Contact: For tickets and information, 651-292-3268

#### "Causes of Global Violence"

The Howard and Darrel Alkire Symposium on International Business and Economics  
Speaker: Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, Lamont University Professor, Harvard University  
Date: Tuesday, March 29  
Time: 11:30 a.m.  
Location: Sundin Music Hall  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: 651-523-2216

#### Bayard Rustin Social Justice Symposium Kick-off

Bayard Rustin in 3D: Documentary, Desserts, and Discussion  
Date: Wednesday, March 30  
Time: 6:30 p.m.  
Cost: Free and open to the public  
Contact: MISA Office, 651-523-2423

#### "Morals Beyond the Bedroom: Can Faith Lead to Social Justice?"

Hamline University Founders Day  
Date: Thursday, March 31  
Time: 11 a.m. - Registration  
11:30 a.m. - Lunch  
11:45 a.m. - Keynote Speaker: Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford  
12:45 p.m. - Dessert Bar and Panel Discussion  
Location: Kay Fredericks Room, Klas Center  
Cost: Free and open to the public, registration requested  
Contact: To register, 651-523-2200, or www.hamline.edu/ur/foundersday

