



monitor

Serving the Midway, Como, and North End Communities of St. Paul



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Nine below zero: A perfect day for ski lessons in Como Park



Cross country skiers practice falling over onto their right side during an afternoon ski lesson at Como Park. (Photo by Liberty Willms)

By JAN WILLMS

Nine below zero on a frigid Minnesota winter day. What better time to check out the cross country skiing lessons offered by St. Paul Parks and Recreation at Como Park?

It's a brisk Saturday afternoon when the photographer and I meet Lindsay Hilger, who works with finance and planning for St. Paul Parks and Recreation. She has arranged for me to have a lesson, getting the full experience of what it's like to enjoy this Minnesota sport.

Many years ago, I did some downhill skiing in Montana and made one outing to Yellowstone to cross country ski. But that was ancient history, and I am hoping my current lifestyle has not been too sedentary. It would be embarrassing to not even make it through one lesson.

"One of the really great things about our program is that anybody can do it, and I mean anybody," Hilger is saying. I am about to prove her point.

The weather has been so cold this Saturday that the morning lessons were canceled. But there is a small hardy group that gathers for the afternoon session. Mike McKinney and Marie Jordan are the instructors for our group, which has three children as well as adults participating.

In the Como Park clubhouse, we pick out skis and listen to McKinney give some initial pointers. He first talks about the weather.

"If you see white spots on your face, that's a sign to go inside and warm up," he is saying. "If you feel your hands or feet getting really cold, it's best to go inside." I suppose avoiding frostbite is one of the most important lessons about skiing.

He shows us how to put our toes down and raise our heels, getting our feet locked into place on the skis. The touring skis we are using are lightweight and narrow. We practice slipping into and out of our skis, and then head outside to a track to start the lesson.

One of the first things McKinney instructs us about is how to fall down. If we think we may be heading for a spill, he suggests we try to fall over on our right side. He then asks us to practice this. Since my whole purpose of the af-

ternoon is to avoid contact with the ground, I am not anxious to do this, but I dutifully fall towards my right and somehow get back on my feet again.

Now we are about to start learning how to shift our weight, exaggerating the movement in our hips and allowing our weight to transfer from one foot to the other. We stand in a line and follow our instructors along a track. So far, not so bad. I am moving one foot ahead of the other, getting a little bit of the feel of gliding along

on the skis. Things are going fairly well when I sense I am losing my balance and about to take a tumble. In spite of my practice fall, however, instead of easing over on my right side, I fall backwards and my head hits the ground. A slight jarring, but I manage to roll over on my knees and get myself back in a standing position.

We practice some other moves. We practice gliding without our poles, using our arms to keep our balance. We then try us-

and gets me another ski.

I put it on and practice a little more with my new ski. I herringbone up the hill and prepare to ski downhill for the final part of the lesson. I bend my knees and try to remember my downhill skiing experiences in Montana. This is a very small little hill, and I fleetingly recall the wind in my face as I made it down a mountain—I should be able to do this. And I do, skiing down a few feet into a clearing and feeling very proud of myself. I stop and turn around, quite smug with my success. That is when my skis go out from under me and I land on my tailbone—hard. I struggle to get up, but find that I can't get my knees under me the way I want. I finally accept some help from the instructor and make it to my feet.

In spite of a couple of spills, I feel exhilarated and have enjoyed the workout. The air is cold, but the sun is shining and I feel refreshed and very much alive.

Cross country, downhill and snowboarding lessons have become great Christmas gifts, according to Hilger.

"The lessons are family friendly," she said. "You can be just starting out and never have been on skis before. We can ease you into it."

She said if people already have a skill set, the instructors can work with them to enhance those skills.

"People can enjoy our parks in the summer and they convert so well into areas for cross country skiing," she noted. "We are really lucky to have that ability."

For information about lessons, equipment rental and trail conditions, visit www.stpaul.gov/parks and click on winter activities or contact the Como Park Ski Center Chalet at 651-488-9673.



Equipment is available for rent at Como Park Ski Chalet at a reasonable cost. (Photo by Liberty Willms)

ing just one ski and no poles, to get the sense of shifting weight and feeling the gliding sensation. We watch the instructors doing this and making it look so easy.

We are nearing the end of this first lesson, and we now practice climbing uphill on our skis, learning how to herringbone. As I try to turn my skis outward, I still seem to be slipping backwards fairly easily. This is when McKinney discovers I have been doing the whole lesson with a ski that has a broken clasp. He quickly runs in

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From old University Avenue auto lot to future Midway housing?

By JANE MCCLURE

One of University's Avenue's old auto sales lots could become someone's new home in the future. City officials are hoping the vacant property will become a site for affordable housing in the future, in a project tied to the planned Central Corridor light rail line. The St. Paul City Council, acting as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, unanimously approved the purchase of 1433 University Dec. 9.

In November 2008 the City Council developed the LAAND Program to create affordable housing along Central Corridor. Construction of the rail line is to start on University in 2010, with operations starting in 2014.

"We want to acquire property on University and land-bank it for affordable housing," said Planning and Economic Development (PED) Director Cecile Bedor.

The city is using \$580,000 in loans to buy and land-bank the property, which is comprised of four lots. No developer for the site has been chosen. When a developer is selected, the HRA will hold a public hearing before selling the property. The developer will pay the LAAND loan.

One condition the HRA is placing on any future development is that at least 30 percent of the housing units must be offered to people earning 60 percent of the area's median income.

The property purchase has been negotiated so no further funds will be needed to acquire

the land. If any city assistance is needed to redevelop the site, that would be brought back at a later date.

"We think it's a nice opportunity to create affordable housing in an area where it is needed," said Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark. He represents the neighborhood where the property was purchased. Creating affordable housing on the site will not only meet a housing need, Stark said it will also create an attractive buffer between University and the Hamline-Midway residential neighborhood to the north.

The property at the northeast corner of Albert and University had most recently been used as an auto repair garage. For many years it was used by Midway Chevrolet as a car lot and repair facility. A building on the site was recently torn down.

Building housing at the site will require a zoning change as it is currently zoned for general business use. The site is 19,168 square feet in size.

The city is using the Central Corridor Development Strategy to find sites for affordable housing along Central Corridor. The strategy is a land use plan developed by a community task force and adopted by the City Council in 2007.

One concern often raised about the proposed light rail line is that it will cause gentrification and force low-income people out of the neighborhoods along University Avenue. That is why afford-

able housing is a goal of the LAAND Program.

The city has set aside \$2 million to buy and bank land along University for affordable housing. Half of the money is from the non-profit Family Housing Fund and the rest is from Metropolitan Council. The purchase approved Dec. 9 exhausts the funding and more will be needed if the program is to continue.

Another \$57,350 is needed to cover holding costs for the property. Those dollars will be taken from Invest St. Paul funds to cover costs that cannot be covered through the city program. The LAAND Program dollars can only be used for acquisition of property, so any other costs such as demolition have to be covered with other dollars.

Invest St. Paul is a program meant to revitalize struggling neighborhoods. Because 1433 University is not in an Invest St. Paul area, the share of funds used from that program will be repaid, said Bedor. The council also approved a waiver to the ISP guidelines Dec. 9, so the funds can be used for 1433 University.

The money comes from a pool of \$2 million in loan money — half from the Metropolitan Council and half from the non-profit Family Housing Fund — specifically to bank land before property values rise. In September, the city used about \$1.4 million from the fund to buy the former Saxon Ford site.

No one appeared at the HRA

meeting to oppose the purchase. That's in contrast to a similar purchase in September in Frogtown, when the city bought part of the former Saxon Ford property for \$1.4 million. A neighboring business owner, residential neighbors and the Thomas-Dale Community Council criticized city officials for not informing them of the property sale. They had to learn about it by reading the HRA agenda. Since then Frogtown community members have worked with Episcopal Homes on plans for affordable senior housing on that site.

Frogtown activists contend their neighborhood already has enough affordable housing.

Property negotiations for the parcels along University Avenue can pose a challenge, Stark said. He did notify Hamline-Midway Coalition, the district council where 1433 University is located, of the pending property purchase.

Community members want to know what is being built next to their homes and businesses. Stark said. Yet the city needs to keep property purchase negotiations confidential so that prices don't skyrocket. There has already been some land speculation along University Avenue in anticipation of light rail, which has fueled worries about gentrification.

One potential risk for the city is that the funds for the two land purchases need to be paid back within five years. The sale of the sites to private developers should provide enough funding to repay the loans.

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Monitor in a Minute

A farm for Frogtown?

The idea of turning the former Wilder Foundation property into a farm demonstration project and open space amenity is the topic of a meeting at 6-8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 14 in the community room of Rondo Community Outreach Library, Dale Street and University Avenue.

The group Frogtown Gardens has prepared a vision to turn the property, which is between LaFond and Minnehaha avenues, into an urban farm demonstration project site, park and open space. The garden group promotes a variety of activities including gardening and food education, garden tours and resources for urban gardeners.

Wilder Foundation moved most of its operations from the property more than a year ago, to a new building at Lexington Parkway and University Avenue. The Frogtown property is larger than a city block.

"We see the property not as a community garden per se but as a possible demonstration project for urban gardening, with open space for the community," said Patricia Ohmans, a longtime Frogtown resident and member of Frogtown Gardens. She noted that Frogtown neighborhood has no large parks or open space that isn't programmed with athletic fields.

There is growing interest

among neighborhood residents in producing their own food through urban gardening, said Ohmans. In Frogtown and in other parts of St. Paul, there has been a push to convert some of the city's vacant lots for community gardening, so people can grow their own vegetables and fruits.

But area neighborhoods have actually lost community garden space, with the demise of the group Farm in the City a few years ago. That group had gardens at Dunning Field, near Concordia University and at Jimmy Lee Recreation Center. All three sites have been lost.

Ohmans said the idea for the Wilder property has generated excitement in the community. "We're seeing strong interest in the idea," she said. St. Paul has no urban gardening demonstration sites so the idea for Frogtown would be a first.

The Frogtown group has discussed the idea with Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III and County Commissioner Janice Rettman, both of whom have expressed support for the idea. They have also met with Wilder Foundation.

At this point the idea is largely a vision, with no identified funding to buy the property.

At this point Wilder has no plans to sell the property, said Wilder Foundation spokesperson Teri Davids. Wilder Foundation will send a representative to the Jan. 14 meeting.

Wilder's child development center remains on LaFond Avenue

and there are no plans to move that facility.

"We are in the process of evaluating all of our real estate holdings, including that campus. With the major reorganization we are currently undergoing, divestiture of some of our properties will potentially occur sometime in the next two years. The 919 campus is obviously a very valuable asset, so it will be very carefully evaluated for future program use. It's all a part of a much bigger picture at this point," said Davids.

Food allergen ordinance OK'd

In late 2010 St. Paul's much-debated food allergy ordinance will take effect, as a result of unanimous St. Paul City Council approval Dec. 9. Restaurants will be required to display posters promoting food allergy awareness as of Dec. 1, 2010. Not displaying the poster could result in a fine. The delay in implementation gives time to finalize poster language and educate the restaurant community.

For a 7 percent discount on license fees, restaurants can also opt to have staff go through allergy awareness training set up by the city. Supervisors would watch a training video and provide written policies on handling customers' food allergies.

The poster requirement was adopted on a 6-0 vote; the training ordinance passed 5-1.

The allergy proposals were brought forward by Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III. One of his two young children has a severe peanut allergy. Both of his children attended the public hearing, as did other children with food allergies.

Carter has tried to find ways to address the food allergy issue for several months. He provoked an outcry this fall by proposing that restaurants have books on hand stating all of the ingredients that go into every dish and every recipe for every dish. Restaurant owners said that was impractical and would force them to disclose what can be proprietary or secret recipes.

"No one wants anyone to have an allergic reaction in their restaurant," said Carter. He said that while restaurant owners and patrons with allergies share the same goal, it took time to agree upon how to do that.

Carter worked with restaurant owners and hospitality industry representatives for several weeks to develop poster language. The poster is to be displayed where restaurant employees work.

But a carefully crafted compromise nearly fell apart during a Dec. 2 public hearing on the poster. Carter and representatives of allergy awareness groups and the hospitality industry had initially worked out poster language that was acceptable to all. But at about 2 a.m. Dec. 2, Carter emailed out a proposal to use poster language developed by the allergy advocacy group Food Al-

lergy Awareness Network.

Several restaurant owners and business leaders didn't know about the proposed change until they arrived for the public hearing. Some of them wound up testifying against a poster they were going to speak in support of.

Restaurant owners and industry representatives said the changed poster language could have opened business up to liability. Others said they couldn't support anything other than the initially agreed-upon language. "I think the rug just got pulled out from under me and I'm not happy about that," said David Siegel, executive vice president of the Minnesota Restaurant Association.

The change, and City Council member disagreement over the change, generated more than an hour's debate. Carter finally withdrew the substitute and brought back the originally agreed-upon language.

Area groups, individuals honored

Area residents and groups are among those honored with Metro Transit Commuter Choice awards. The awards are for people and companies that take creative steps to reduce vehicle emissions and traffic congestion. The St. Paul City Council recognized the local honorees Dec. 9.

St. Paul individuals or groups won three of the seven award categories, said Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark. The Community Hero Award was given to Sibley Bike Depot, which is located on University Avenue and has many volunteers from the Macalester-Groveland, Highland and West End areas. Sibley is a

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Suspect in custody for string of Rice St. area robberies

By JAN WILLMS

Residents in the University and Rice area have been on the alert for the past month after a string of street robberies began in early December and have steadily increased in violence.

"We have been working on this nonstop since then," said Office Charlie Anderson of the St. Paul Police Department.

The police department's diligence appears to have paid off, as Anderson indicated just before the Monitor went to press that a suspect, Marcell Estes, is in custody.

Estes was charged January 8 with two counts of first degree aggravated robbery, second degree assault and weapons charges.

"We have received evidence and are very satisfied with the outcome so far and feel we have the right man," Anderson said.

According to Commander Mike Reynolds of the Brooklyn Center Police Department, Estes was involved in a shooting incident in Brooklyn Center on Feb.

2, 2009. Reynolds said that Estes drove a relative to a movie theater, where the relative allegedly shot another individual in a love-triangle incident. Estes then drove his relative away from the scene, and he was charged with a felony, aiding and abetting.

Reynolds said this was the only contact the Brooklyn Center Police Department has had with Estes.

Anderson said two individuals were committing the robberies based on witness reports. One was apprehended and charged earlier in December, but the other individual has continued committing the robberies.

"The suspect we apprehended did not cooperate with us, and we have been trying to capture the other robber," Anderson said.

The robberies had occurred in a small area near University Avenue and Rice Street, with the robber approaching people in early mornings, late afternoons or evenings. The most recent victim, a young man in his 20s, was ap-

proached Jan. 4 while he was out warming up his car.

Although he reportedly did not struggle with the assailant, he was shot twice by the robber. He was taken to Regents Hospital and is expected to survive the ordeal.

"We took this very seriously," Anderson said. "I would dream about it at nights, and it kept me awake," he said. Anderson said there was concern because the robber was escalating his use of force. He at first robbed only female victims, then males as well. Although he brandished a firearm during every robbery he had never resorted to violence until he shot his latest victim.

Anderson said the best way for individuals to guard against such robberies is to be alert, walk confidently with head up and shoulders back. Most important, according to Anderson, is to stay off a cell phone when you're walking.

People don't need to panic, Anderson noted. "These things can happen anywhere," he said. "The important thing is to stay aware of your surroundings, and to stay off your cell phone," said Anderson.

"Most of these robberies have occurred when people were out and in transit," Anderson related. "Take the best traveled route to your destination. Take the route that is well-lit and avoid alleys."

Anderson said that individu-

als should also not carry a lot of valuables on their person.

"If you are going to your vehicle, keep your key out," he added.

Anderson said that if a person is confronted, he or she should not try to be a hero.

"Surrender the items you are asked for," he advised. "Do your best to pay attention to a description of the assailant; watch for tattoos and jewelry. Be aware of the time of day and the direction the robber is going and any weapon the robber may carry." Anderson said it is extremely difficult to catch a perpetrator when the crime is actually taking place.

"Every time this robber has

struck, we have tried hard to get as much information as possible from the victim," he said. "But we have to be able to identify him 100 per cent. We might have the best suspect information in the world, but we have to be able to match DNA or video surveillance is needed. It's tough."

He said the perpetrator would sometimes pass the victim and then come up behind him or her. "Sometimes he just came up directly from behind," he said. "He was very opportunistic."

"The thing to remember is that we can't help if we are not called," Anderson added. "We do take it seriously. That's why I couldn't stop thinking about it."

LETTERS

Get involved in precinct caucuses

Now that 2010 has arrived, I hope that as Minnesotans we will turn our attention to what will be an important election later this year. The Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, Republican Party and others will hold precinct caucuses on Tuesday, February 2. The process of selecting major parties' candidates for governor, Congress, and Minnesota House and Senate begins at precinct caucuses. As small

neighborhood-level meetings, caucuses are an excellent opportunity to engage the process, present your views about our state's most pressing issues, and learn more about candidates who wish to represent you.

More broadly, I also want to encourage members of our community to participate in this year's election process, and welcome you to contact me if I can assist you in getting involved.

Alice Hausman
State Representative
District 66B

"The thing to remember is that we can't help if we are not called. We do take it seriously. That's why I couldn't stop thinking about it."

- Officer Charlie Anderson

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Emerald ash borer takes a toll on area tree stock

By JANE MCCLURE

One year ago, the neighborhoods of St. Anthony Park, Como Park, Desnoyer Park, Hamline-Midway, Newell Park and Merriam Park had many more ash trees than they have today. What a difference a year – and the advent of emerald ash borer – has had on St. Paul neighborhoods.

Efforts to slow the spread of emerald ash borer continued this winter as ash trees in Merriam Park and Desnoyer Park were removed through a process known as “destructive sampling.” It’s one of the ways to find and track the destructive insects, which eventually will wipe out most of Minnesota’s 900 million ash trees.

In early December ash trees began coming down along Pelham Boulevard and St. Anthony Avenue in Desnoyer Park. City crews have been taking down about two trees a day, working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, said Rachel Coyle. She is the point person for St. Paul Parks and Recreation/Forestry on the emerald ash borer issues.

The winter tree removal and monitoring are just part of the City of St. Paul action plan. The City Council is poised to act as soon as Jan. 13 to formally declare emerald ash borer to be a nuisance, setting up detailed procedures to deal with diseased ash trees on public and private property. If adopted it would allow city crews to go onto private property to remove diseased trees and assess the property owner, if the property owner doesn’t remove the tree.

City and state forestry workers say that the intent of the emerald ash borer control efforts is to slow the spread of the pest. Chemical treatments can slow the pests but no chemical can eradicate the borers. The long-term solution is to replace the current ash population with other trees and to eventually develop disease-resistant ash.

Residents shouldn’t assume that all of the ash trees that come down now are infested, Coyle said. Department of Agriculture crews strip bark off of the trees to see if the trees show any signs of infestation.

The destructive sampling is being done in a way that spreads out the trees taken down. “We don’t want to take every ash tree off of a block or out of an area,” Coyle said. But she noted that over time, the ash trees must be removed and replaced.

There are about 120,000 ash trees in St. Paul, with about 60,000 of those on land the city owns or manages. That includes parks, boulevards and golf courses. About 35,000 are on boulevards.

Since May St. Paul and state officials have been scrambling to track the spread of emerald ash borers, after the state’s first outbreak was discovered here. Emerald ash borers are tiny, iridescent beetles. They lay eggs on bark of ash trees. The eggs hatch into larvae. The larvae tunnel beneath the bark and feed there, cutting off the supply of water and nutrients along the tree trunk. That eventually kills the tree. Minnesota Department of Agriculture Communications Director Mike Schommer notes that unlike pests

and diseases that first show up as wilting leaves or dying tree branches, the borers cannot be seen until it is too late.

“That’s why it’s such a difficult pest to track,” he said.

St. Paul has used two methods to track the insects – purple insect-luring traps and the creation of “trap trees.” Traps went up in June 2009 and came down in the fall. The traps aren’t effective in the winter.

Crews also girdled trap trees in June, removing a strip of bark as a way of encouraging adult female borers to the trees. Schommer said the intent of creating trap trees is to weaken a tree, to see if it will attract the borers. Like the purple traps, the girdled trees give off a scent. Then crews check to see if the tree became infested.

City and state officials will continue to monitor for emerald ash borers as the winter goes on, said Mark Abrahamson of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture plant protection division. The monitoring will go on in St. Paul, Minneapolis and Falcon Heights.

Abrahamson said the monitoring will probably spread to other communities. “Experience from other states shows us that we will find emerald ash borers in other areas,” he said.

St. Paul’s Hampden Park area has the dubious distinction of having Minnesota’s first emerald ash borer outbreak. The pests are believed to have been in the area since about 2006.

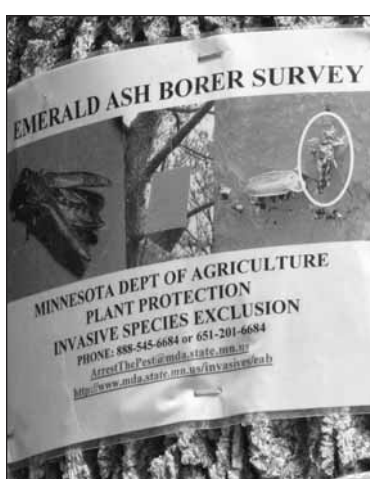
The nation’s first emerald ash borer was first found in 2002 in Michigan. Since then millions of trees have been lost, in at least 10 states.

Hampden Park, the surrounding St. Anthony Park neighborhood and several other neighborhoods were surveyed in the spring. Sixty-eight infested trees were cut down in and around Hampden Park. Another 46 trees were removed in areas around that initial outbreak. Only one of those trees was found to be infested.

Destructive sampling of trees began in September throughout the city, with seven trees removed. One tree in the Newell Park area was found to be infested, one block away from where a borer was found on a purple trap.

Eleven more trees in the Newell Park area of Hamline-Midway neighborhood were removed and sampled in October but no more signs of emerged ash borer were found. But it was a different story in South St. Anthony Park where eight of 10 girdled trees were found to be infested. Emerald ash borer was also found in Langford Park, about a mile from Hampden Park and South St. Anthony Park neighborhood.

In a pre-emptive move in November, city officials worked with Como Park residents to remove about 40 ash trees from a two-block stretch of California Avenue between Oxford and Milton streets. Although emerald ash borers hadn’t been found in the area, the neighborhood was chosen because several of the ash trees were in declining health. The Como Park tree cutting and replacement is seen as an experiment. The trees will be replaced with maples and lindens.



Efforts to slow the spread of emerald ash borer continued this winter as ash trees in Merriam Park and Desnoyer Park were removed through a process known as “destructive sampling.”

In mid-November, state agricultural officials found an infested tree on the University of Minnesota St. Paul campus in Falcon Heights. Although that tree ap-

peared to be healthy, one giveaway was that it had been hit by woodpeckers. The birds like to feast on ash borer larvae.

Ramsey and Hennepin counties continue to be under restrictions for transporting ash wood. Schommer and Abrahamson said not transporting wood is one of the best ways to slow the spread of emerald ash borers. “People also should continue to keep an eye on their trees,” said Abrahamson. Home owners should consider chemical treatments to keep ash trees healthy for as long as possible.

When the St. Paul City Council adopted its budget December 16, funding for emerald ash borer control was included. Of the 6.9 percent increase in the 2010 street right-of-way maintenance assessments, about 1.2 percent of those funds will be dedicated to combating EAB, said public Works Director Bruce Beese.

Coyle said city officials are also awaiting word on state and

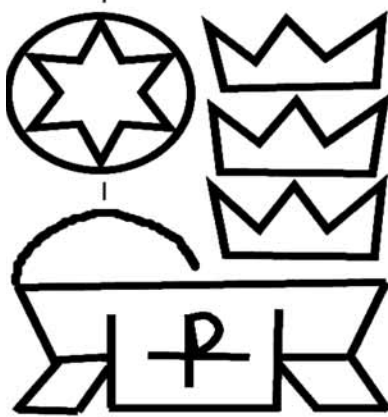
federal funding.

St. Paul’s proposed plan calls for removing about 3,000 trees a year or 5 percent of the ash. The estimated cost of monitoring and inspecting trees, using pesticides where needed and removing trees is \$1.16 million in 2009 and \$2.81 million per year in subsequent years. The 2009 figure doesn’t include the cost of reforestation.

Of the possible costs the largest share of the budget is tree removal, which is estimated to cost \$1.93 million per year in 2010 and beyond.

Parks and recreation’s forestry section currently has a budget of \$3 million per year. There are 31.2 full-time equivalent people on staff. Workers already trim about 10,000 public trees each year, on a 12-year cycle. They remove about 2,500 dead, diseased or dangerous trees and grind 1,400 stumps. About 1,600 replacement trees are planted each year.

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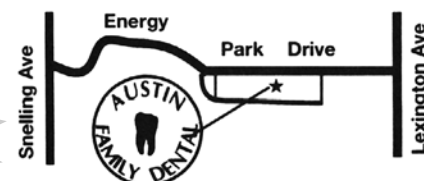


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University Ave. property owners may get relief on streetscape assessments

By JANE MCCLURE

Landowners along the planned Central Corridor light rail line may get relief on streetscape improvement assessments. Before the St. Paul City Council votes on the assessments Jan. 20, ways will be sought to lower the \$2.9 million bill to the property owners. But how to do that is already generating debate among council members.

If there isn't a break, many people believe they will lose their businesses and properties. More than two dozen property owners and business leaders testified before the council Jan. 6, saying they cannot afford additional costs in a tough economy. They asked that the assessment be reduced or at the very least, delayed until after light rail is up and running in 2014.

Council members said they will do all they can to reduce the assessments. "We heard you loud and clear," said Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark. "We know the economy is in tough shape."

On University, property owners would be assessed \$54.39 per foot for the improvements. The assessment would cover lantern-style street lights, sidewalks, boulevard pavers, special crosswalk paving, trees with structural soil and irrigation, median landscaping, street furniture, parking improvements and mitigation, and an upgraded overhead contact system to run power to the trains. The assessments would also help cover the costs of one of the three infill light rail stations at Western, Victoria or Hamline. The annual operating and maintenance assessment would be \$1.70 per foot for commercial properties and 34 cents per foot for residential properties.

In downtown St. Paul, assessments of \$22.56 per foot would pay for new globe streetlights. Another \$19.70 per foot would pay for sidewalks, pavers, and trees with structural soils and irrigation. The annual operating and maintenance assessment would be \$1.05 per assessable foot.

"We want the area to have a good appearance," said City Engineer John Maczko said the streetscape improvements. But the \$941 million light rail project budget doesn't include streetscape improvements. The city is using Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR), Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) and tax increment financing (TIF) to help pay the estimated \$15.7 million costs on University and \$3 million downtown. A request has also been made for \$10 million from the 2010 Minnesota Legislature.

Several longtime small business owners testified. Some were near tears. Only one person, Merriam Park resident Mike Madden, spoke for the improvements.

Alex Pham, owner of Cadoo, a Vietnamese restaurant at 439 University, said his business is already down 30 percent. He has had to let half of his staff go. "I have not seen a situation like this in 17 years of business on University Avenue – it's bad," Pham said he has no idea how he'll pay the assessments.

Landlords like Bob Lundberg are also struggling. His family has owned property at the southwest corner of University and Prior for 117 years. The building's second floor is currently 90 percent vacant. "I don't even know where we're going to get the money to pay the current real estate taxes, let alone the special assessment," Lundberg said.

"We are scared and struggling already," said Trihn Nguyen, whose family owns new French Bakery, 731 University. "We cannot really afford more taxes."

Mike Glasgow's family has owned Glasgow Automotive, 704 University, since 1946. He recalled when street prostitution and drug dealing was rampant in the area. Still, businesses held on. "Now it's almost like the tables have been turned and the city has been turned into the pimp," he said.

Michael Hafner, who owns a furniture store near University and Fairview, said he'll not only lose

his parking and loading area, he'll also have street trees blocking his building. "I don't want to have a tree blocking the 'for sale' or 'for lease' signs on my property," he said.

"The council is providing the nails in the coffin for the businesses on University Avenue," said Greg Ryan. His family has owned Ryan Plumbing and Heating, 811 University, for 60 days.



Before the St. Paul City Council votes on the University Avenue street assessments Jan. 20, ways will be sought to lower the \$2.9 million bill to the property owners.

"You cannot focus on beautification when there will be no businesses there to benefit from it," said George Younes, whose family owns Williams Store, a uniform shop at 908 University. "Please hear us on these issues – the parking is essential."

Nonprofits, such as social service agencies and churches, also feeling dinged by the assessments and question how they'll pay them. Robert Pickering of Lifetrack Resources, a jobs training agency, said government contracts and grants can't be used to pay assessments. "Donors wish to provide direct services, not pay assessments," he said. Lifetrack may be forced to cut services at a time

when there is high demand.

Business groups are asking for relief. University Avenue Business Association (UABA) wants the city to cap the assessments at \$2 million, and set up funding for business mitigation and replacement of the on-street parking that will be lost during construction. Midway Chamber of Commerce, St. Paul Building Owners and Managers and St. Paul Area Chamber

UABA. He said many businesses feel their issues, such as loading of goods and building access, haven't even been addressed yet.

Businesses are dealing with the worst economy since the Great Depression, said Interim St. Paul Chamber President Susan Kimberly. "People are asking for a break during a bad economy," she said.

"To give businesses an assessment in the middle of construction would be absolutely detrimental," said Midway Chamber President Lori Fritts.

Maczko and council members said the Jan. 20 vote sets a ceiling for the assessment amount. The final amount will be ratified in the fall, after bids for work are taken. The project has to be bid now so it fits into the overall Central Corridor construction plans. "This sets the cap," said Maczko. The rate can only go up an additional 10 percent beyond the rates announced. "(The rate) can always go down."

But how the rates could go down is sparking debate among council members. "I strongly believe this should have been part of the project and we shouldn't be having this conversation now," said Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris. He said the city may have to find a way to defer the assessments and use other economic development resources to buy down the costs. He was applauded when he suggested getting to the zero assessment level. But that drew protests from council members Lee Helgen, Dave Thune and Dan Bostrom, who said the city cannot deplete its economic development resources for one project.

Thune said the project has already been handled badly downtown, where construction began last year. He wants the city to do more to reach out to businesses and seek outside funding to help them. Bostrom asked why federal economic stimulus dollars couldn't be used.

"We need to get this (assessment) as low as we can go without raiding every other fund," said Council President Kathy Lantry.

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Friday, February 12th; 6:00 - 7:30 pm

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As mentioned in my previous article, I am part of the GRID (Getting Residents Involved Daily) Unit. GRID is a federally funded program that utilizes problem oriented policing to address crime and quality of life concerns within certain geographical sectors along the Rice Street corridor that have historically experienced higher levels of criminal behavior. The founders and subsequent supervisors of the GRID program, among them Sergeant Joe Strong, Sergeant Axel Henry, and Commander Matt Toupal, knew that reactive policing simply wasn't producing positive results. They knew that without establishing real relationships with our law enforcement and civilian partners a meaningful step in the right direction wouldn't be possible. These civilian partners include residents, landlords, block clubs, building managers, business owners, community leaders, and local government.

GRID is now about three years old. A reduction in crime has occurred within these sectors, resulting in a safer community for those who live and work in the area. In addition, a large number of calls for service per month no longer exist due in part to aggressive criminal and civil enforcement, prosecution, and increased community cooperation. Our overburdened patrol officers are therefore given a small reprieve, allowing them to concentrate more of their time conducting proactive activities in their respective beats.



On the Beat

By OFFICER CHARLIE ANDERSON

Police partner with residents to work the 'GRID'

We manage five sectors, but in order to put that number in perspective, there are 19 sectors in the North End and 55 in all of Central District. There are 88 sectors in Western District. Imagine what could happen if all patrol officers were given the same opportunities to follow up on investigations and take the time to build those positive relationships with the community! Unfortunately, when you compare the number of street cops on the job with budget concerns and call loads, you can see how difficult it remains for our cops to do anything but answer

calls for service dispatched through our Emergency Communications Center.

This is where you come in. As with every large city, there is always a chance that you may be a victim of a crime. You may also be a witness. While this may take the form of observing someone shoplift or commit an act of vandalism, your account as a witness could very well be the information an investigation hinges upon.

We as officers are trained to ask for descriptions of suspects from the head down. Here are some characteristics to keep in mind when you find yourself as a witness of a crime:

Age and race (to include complexion of skin); Height & weight; Build (thin, medium, heavy); Hair length, color & style; Facial hair type (goatee, beard, clean-shaven); Presence of hat,

glasses, earrings, scars, tattoos, etc.; Clothing (Be as specific as possible with types, colors, designs, & brands); Any other characteristics you can recall that stick out in your mind (walks with a limp, speaks with a lisp, etc.)

When the officer is done asking you for a description, they may ask you other pertinent questions, such as: Was there a weapon involved? What was it? Can you describe it? Could you hear anything that was said? What was it? What mode of transportation did the suspect use to flee? Was it a car? Can you recall the license plate or make and model? Did they flee on foot? Which direction?

Some other things that might be important to remember is how much time has elapsed since the crime occurred, and where your location is now in relation to the incident. Also, remember that offi-

cers will be most interested in facts. They will want to know, for instance, if a gun was actually seen or whether it was only implied.

As an example, we have recently experienced a string of street robberies in the lower Rice Street area. Witnesses (some of them were also victims) provided good suspect descriptions. We were able to tie a well known suspect to one of the robberies, and he has subsequently been arrested and charged with felony aggravated robbery. Unfortunately, his accomplice remains at large. But with your help, we can put him behind bars, too.

If you live along the Rice Street corridor and have a tip or need to get in contact with the GRID Unit, please contact us at SPPD-GRIDunit@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call 651-266-5937 to reach Sergeant Jeff Parsons or (612) 751-4423 to reach yours truly. For all of you who reside or work in Western District, please contact Sergeant Bob Donahue with the West Anti-Crime Unit at (651) 266-5412. If you don't know which district you are in, call the SPPD HQ Front Desk at (651) 266-5628 to find out.

Be vigilant. Be safe.

Monitor in a minute

Continued from page 3

community bike shop that provides space for residents, with assistance from trained volunteers, to repair their bikes. Sibley also hosts bike repair classes for youth and adults. Volunteers who need to use a bike for transit can pay Sibley for that bike by donating volunteer hours to the shop.

A second honoree is Grand Avenue business and apartment owner Chad Skally. He won the Neighborhood Leader award for his efforts to put bicycle racks on Grand Avenue. Skally worked with Grand Avenue Business Association (GABA), City of St. Paul, Dero Bike Racks and other organizations and businesses to install 66 bicycle racks along Grand.

The third St. Paul honoree is Linda Mainquist, a Seal Hi-Rise resident whose suggestions led to a citywide campaign to get sidewalks shoveled and cleared of ice

in the winter.

Ten of the 28 Commuter Choice organizational award nominees were also from St. Paul. Along with Sibley Bike Depot and Skally and GABA, those nominees include local organizations Aval-

on School, Macalester College and HOURCAR, a program of the Neighborhood Energy Connection.

The nominees and winners were also recognized in November by Metro Transit.

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Sign regulations changed

After several weeks debate St. Paul has a new set of regulations for dynamic display or electronic signs. The St. Paul City Council adopted

revised regulations Dec. 9.


Dynamic display signs can show up in sizes as small as an "open" sign to as large as a billboard. Advertisers like the signs

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

DISTRICT 66B • DFL CAUCUS

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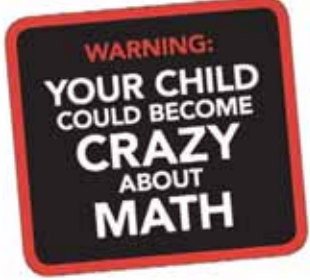


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In Our Community

Como Hockey Day planned January 23

Como Hockey Day will be held Jan. 23 at North Dale Recreation Center. Youth hockey games all day featuring fourteen teams hailing from St. Paul, St. Paul suburbs and even western Wisconsin. Como High School Alumni game. St. Paul Blades vs. St. Paul Saints Girls High School hockey game. Como Coaches vs. Minneapolis Bombers. Concessions featuring Bratwurst grilled outside. Other hot food and beverages available. Come on out and enjoy old-school hockey while warming yourself by one of our outdoor fire pits. For more information go to www.comohockey.com

District 10 forms traffic committee

On Dec. 16, 2009, the District 10 Como Community Council Board of Directors formed a new ad hoc traffic advisory committee. Co-chaired by District 10 Board member Peter Bolstad and former member John Marino, it will advise the soon-to-be-named District 10 representative on St. Paul's new traffic task force. The city will undertake to formulate a new plan specifically addressing traffic and parking issues in and around Como Park. All District 10 residents are invited to join the ad hoc committee and all Como area residents are encouraged to attend meetings. The first meeting will be held at the Historic Streetcar Station on Wednesday, Jan. 13 at 7 p.m.

Classes offered at Hamline Library

Take a computer class, enjoy a free concert, learn yoga and more at the Hamline Midway Library this month!

A Basic Computer Skills Class will be offered on Thursdays, February 4-18, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Learn basic skills for using a computer like how to use a mouse and keyboard, create and save documents, how to use the internet and set up your own email account. In March, take "Computer Skills for Job Seekers" on Thursdays, March 4-25 from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. to learn how to search for jobs on the internet, apply for jobs online and make a resume with Microsoft Word. Participants must have some previous experience with computers or have attended the Basic Computer Skills Class. Participants must pre-register for computer classes.

Senior Surf Day is Wednesday, February 3rd from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Representatives of the Senior LinkAge Line will provide hands-on computer training to

seniors who have little or no experience with computers and the internet. Participants must pre-register.

There are two more weeks of free yoga at the library! Instructor Chris Gordon will teach Anusara Yoga on Tuesdays, January 19 and 26 from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. Please bring a yoga mat and a firm blanket (Mexican style or a wool yoga blanket) and wear comfortable clothing that stretches.

There are many events for kids this month at the library! Come make a winter birdfeeder to hang in the backyard at Saturday Club for Kids on Saturday, January 16th from 1:30-3:30 p.m. On Saturday, January 23rd from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m., come to "The Youngster Parade," a free family concert full of songs and stories for all ages, presented by local record label House of Mercy Recordings. Finally, kids are invited to a Star Wars party with lots of fun and games on Saturday, January 30th from 1:30-3:30 p.m. The Star Wars Party requires pre-registration.

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 pre-registration. All events are free.

La Leche meets Feb. 9

The next meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group will be on Tuesday, February 9 at 7 p.m. The topic will be "The Baby Arrives: The Family and the Breastfed Baby." All nursing and pregnant mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

Job Transitions Strategies January 28

When it comes to a job transition, it's important to think beyond a resume and job search activities. Job Transition Strategies is a 90-minute workshop and networking opportunity. It's designed to help those who are unemployed take steps to recharge emotionally and keep a positive attitude to stay on top of their game. During the workshop, participants will receive information and tools to help them:

Remain focused, production and motivated; make connections with peers; experience a more positive job transition.

Register by January 25 at blc@bethelstpaul.com or 651-488-6681 with Lynne Rustad. Hosted by Bethel Lutheran Church, 670 W Wheelock Pkwy.

Winter barn dances at Hamline Church

Hamline United Methodist

Church will host three Community Barn Dances on the following Fridays: January 15, February 19 and March 19.

These inter-generational events offer live music (violin, banjo and guitar), and Robin, the caller, teaches all the steps. The dancing takes place from 7-9 p.m.

To learn more contact the church office at 651-645-0667 or check out the Friends & Fellowship page at www.hamlinechurch.org.

Fall Prevention topic Feb. 9 of luncheon

"Fall Prevention," will be the topic at a luncheon for seniors on February 9 beginning at 11:30 a.m. at 1415 Englewood Avenue (lower level, Hamline Methodist Church). Dr. Gary Hines from American HealthCare & Mobility will address the top 20 causes of falls, ways to prevent and/or avoid injury, how to make your home safer and what to do if you fall. A free will donation is asked for the meal. Call the office of Hamline Midway Elders 651-209-6542 to make reservations, request free transportation for the 1/12 event, grocery shopping or medical appointments.

A free, Joint Friendly exercise series will begin Tuesday, February 2 and run each Tuesday and Thursday for 8 weeks from 2 - 3 p.m. at 1514 Englewood Avenue. There is no charge for the classes. Please call the office of Hamline Midway Elders Living at Home/Block Nurse Program to register 651-209-6542.

"I AM" Study at Jehovah

The explicit words of Jesus telling who he is, the "I AM" words set in the Gospel of John, engage the Adult Bible Class at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Ave, from Jan 10 through Feb 14. Dr. David Lumpp, Jehovah member and professor of Theology as well as Dean of the College of Vocation and Ministry at Concordia University, St. Paul (CSP), will lead this study during the six Sundays of Epiphany — the time of the revealing Jesus. Adults of all ages are welcome around the table each Sunday at 9 a.m. in the lounge for fellowship/coffee, prayer, study and always insightful discussion. The "Jesus I Am Words" study booklet, written by Dr. Lumpp, will be available. Enter at the 1566 Thomas Avenue door. For further information call 651-644-1421 or go to www.jehovahlutheran.org

Free tax help at Jehovah

Once again Jehovah Lutheran Church is providing space for the annual volunteer tax assistance program. This year volunteers will provide income Tax Assistance every Monday and

Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. beginning Feb 1 through April 12. Enter at the 1566 Thomas Avenue door and follow directions to the help room. This free service is provided for senior citizens, low income and handicapped taxpayers, and volunteers are trained by the IRS and the MN Dept of Revenue. Please bring a copy of last year's tax return and your social security card(s) with you. No appointments are taken; this is a walk-in service only.

Anderson, Hausman & Lesch town meeting

Sen. Ellen Anderson, Rep. Alice Hausman, and Rep. John Lesch will hold a town meeting on Saturday, February 13, from 10:00 a.m. to noon, at the Lakeside Pavilion on Como Lake. The meeting is free and open to all District 66 constituents.

The Midway neighborhood is part of District 66B, which is represented by Sen. Anderson and Rep. Hausman. The North End is part of District 66A, which is represented by Sen. Anderson and Rep. Lesch. The Como Park neighborhood lies in both 66A and 66B.

The legislators want to hear the views of local residents on education, jobs and economic development, health care, housing, energy and the environment, infrastructure or bonding projects, transportation, taxes and other issues affecting our area.

Minnesota is facing a large budget deficit, but Minnesota's constitution requires a balanced budget. Anderson, Hausman and Lesch are interested in hearing constituent views on how best to solve this projected deficit.

The Pavilion on Como Lake has adjacent free parking (enter from Lexington Avenue). An elevator inside the building goes to the third floor, where the town meeting will be held. Food and beverages are available for purchase on the ground floor. For more information regarding the town meetings, please call the office of Sen. Anderson at 651-296-5537 or email her at sen.ellen.anderson@senate.mn

St. Cecilia's holds annual dinner February 14

The Church of St. Cecilia invites friends and neighbors to its annual dinner on Sunday, Feb. 14, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church basement. The dinner features roast turkey and all the trimmings. Tickets for the dinner cost \$8; children age 8 and under eat for free.

The ever-popular raffle is back. Prizes include a \$400 gift card to Target, a \$300 gift card to Target, a \$200 gift card to Cub,

and a \$100 gift card to Cub.

This year's Silent Auction will include theme baskets, various services and gift certificates for many local businesses and fine restaurants.

The Church of Cecilia is located east of highway 280 at 2357 Bayless Place, just north of the intersection of University and Cromwell Avenues in St. Paul.

January Activities at Rice Street Branch Library in January

The Rice Street Branch Library has many fun and exciting programs planned in January. Please stop in and join us!

Family story times will be offered on Tuesday and Friday mornings from 10:30-11:00 and Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7:00-7:30 p.m. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs. All ages welcome.

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4:00-7:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 1:00-4:00 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.

Teen Time will be offered Wednesdays from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Join us for a rotating roster of activities each Wednesday! Video games, board games, & crafts are just a few of the activities teens can do.

The Runescape Club will meet on Thursdays from 3:30-5 p.m. Each week it's nothing but Runescape. Bring your friends!

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 Foreclosure Counseling will be offered by the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development on Wednesdays from 12:30-5:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

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 Thursday from 3 p.m.-7 p.m.

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, 12:30-9 p.m.; Tuesday 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; and Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. The library will be closed Monday Jan. 18, 2010 in for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Thursday Jan. 28, 2010 for customer service improvements.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Planning Commission approves permits for new Midway Center buildings

By JANE MCCLURE

Construction of new buildings for Midway Center Walgreens and Big Top Liquors should get underway this spring, with St. Paul Planning Commission approval of a needed conditional use permit Jan. 8 and city staff site plan approval last fall.

But the project, which has been pending since 2007, still faces opposition. Union Park District Council (UPDC) asked that the conditional use permit be denied, saying the plans for the two stores are inconsistent with land use plans for the area.

There is a 10-day appeals window after the Planning Commission vote; otherwise the decision is final. It is too late for the site plan to be appealed as that was approved by city staff in November.

The site plan and conditional use permit for the project had originally been approved in 2007 but those approvals had expired, forcing shopping center owner RK Midway to reapply.

RK Midway spokesperson Paula Maccabee said difficulty in obtaining construction financing in 2007 postponed the project. "We are hoping to start construction this spring," she said. RK Midway is confident that financing will be found this time around.

There was a lag between the new approval of the site plan and the conditional use permit because of confusion on RK Midway's part, said Maccabee. The mall owners and city staff had to clarify the expiration dates for the site plan and permit.

The Walgreens and Big Top buildings are to be erected where a 30,000 square foot freestanding building currently stands just east of Snelling. Big Top is currently located in that building; a hair salon and video store used to occupy its two other storefronts. Plans call for tearing down that building and replacing it with a two-story Walgreens and a Big Top building with a mezzanine and partial second story. The Walgreens building will be about 32,000 square feet in size, with Big Top at 17,425 square feet. The drive-through lane will be located between the buildings.

Midway Center, at the southeast corner of University and Snelling avenues, is in one of the areas where there has been extensive land use planning tied to the Central Corridor light rail project. UPDC contends those land use plans, which call for compact, walkable, dense redevelopment, are not met by building two freestanding retail stores more than a block south of the proposed Snelling station.

But in recommending approval of the project Dec. 29 members of the Planning Commission Zoning Committee questioned the district council's focus on land use plans, saying the only issue before them was the conditional use permit needed for the Walgreens drug store's

drive-through window.

Zoning Committee members and city staff also noted that in 2007, the City Council granted an exemption to Midway Center owner RK Midway for the Walgreens and Big Top project. The plans have not changed substantially since then.

University United and the district council fought the plan in 2007, saying it was inconsistent with the land use plans being developed for the area. But RK Midway was able to persuade

the City Council to grant the project an exemption from the land use plans tied to Central Corridor.

This time around UPDC filed the only objections. "This conditional use, and the proposed development of the Walgreens/Big Top Midway Center go against many of the principles set forth in the St. Paul Central Corridor Development Strategy and the Snelling Station Area Plan, both of which have been adopted as part of the city's

comprehensive plan, and should therefore guide development planning to enhance and maximize the success of the Central Corridor," UPDC Board President Glen McCluskey stated in a letter to the Planning Commission.

UPDC opposes the project because it fails to maximize building heights, increase density, improve the street frontage or provide a variety of new land uses, which are some of the goals of the Central Corridor-related

plans.

Another concern raised is that the development doesn't meet the goals of transit-oriented development for the area and instead creates a "hodge-podge" of structures.

The district council also asked that the issue be laid over Dec. 29, indicating that no one from the council or its staff could attend the Zoning Committee meeting. But the committee rejected the request for a lay-over.

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Open House - January 21, 2010 - 7:00 p.m.

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In Our Community

Continued from page 8

Mighty Midway Storytellers celebrate

The Mighty Midway Storytellers invite children—newborn to early teen—to Celebrate Chinese New Year with stories and activities about the upcoming Year of the Lao-hu (tiger) with Jun-Li Wang. Learn how to say and write your Chinese zodiac animal in Mandarin!

Storytime is held 6 pm Tuesday, Jan. 26, fireside at the Hamline Midway Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Ave.

The storytellers will also be hosting a workshop Wednesday, Jan. 20, 6:30 to 8:30 pm, for those who want to lead future storytelling sessions. Held in the lower-floor auditorium at the Hamline-Midway library. Come work on honing your storytelling skills in a fun, interactive, nonjudgmental environment. Please RSVP to Erin Sutton at erin-carlson22@yahoo.com or Jean Thilmany at thilmanyj@gmail.com or at 651-771-8421, or for more details.

16th Annual Fireside Series at the Library

Get cozy by the fire with six weeks of readings by acclaimed Minnesota writers at the Hamline Midway Branch Library. Warm up the winter nights with a little mystery, a little verse, a lot of fiction and some armchair traveling. All programs begin at 7 p.m. and are accompanied by coffee, cider, cookies and book signings.

On January 14, Brian Freeman reads from his latest thriller, *In the Dark*, the fourth outing for police lieutenant Jonathan Stride. A starred review in *Publisher's Weekly* says this "harrowing and heartrending novel will leave readers guessing until the very last pages." The series continues with poet Dobby Gibson on January 21, Eric Dregni on February 5, Sarah Stonich on February 11, J. C. Hallman on February 18, and Marisha Chamberlain on February 25th. Call the library at 651-642-0293 for more details. The Hamline Midway Library is located at 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave.

Area author at Midway Borders January 31

In honor of Ecumenical Welcoming Sunday, David Weiss, theologian, essayist and poet—as well as Hamline Midway resident—will do a book reading at Borders bookstore, 1390 W. University Ave. Weiss will read from his highly acclaimed book *To the Tune of a Welcoming God: Lyrical reflections on sexuality, spirituality, and the wideness of God's welcome* (Langdon Street Press, 2008) on Sunday, January 31, at 2 p.m.

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@aplacetoremember.com. Want ads must be in the Monitor before February 1 for the February 11 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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Monitor in a minute

Continued from page 7

because they attract attention. But the signs have also run up against criticism as a distraction to motorists. Light pollution is also another complaint made about the signs.

Dynamic display signs are defined as "any sign capable of displaying words, symbols, figures or images that can be electronically changed or mechanically moved or changed by remote, automatic or electronic means." This excludes electronic signs that provide only time and temperature, but does include a wide array of other signs.

Copy on signs must be at least 15 inches high. Messages and images must remain constant for at least 12 seconds before changing.

The St. Paul Planning Commission recommended approval of a new set of sign regulations in August. The City Council held two public hearings on the sign regulations.

The new regulations will take effect in January. Key points of the regulations include a one-mile minimum separation of dynamic display billboards. Business signs with dynamic display must be at least 75 feet, as measured along the road, from a residential district and must be at least 540 feet from a residential district if measured radially. Signs within 100 feet of a residential use, measured from the sign to the nearest residential property line, shall not scroll and shall be turned off after

business or hours or between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m., whichever is later.

Council members were concerned that dynamic display signs not be intrusive upon residential properties. The signs are not permitted in residential districts but the council was concerned about spillover lighting.

Business signs must also have no more than 200 square feet of dynamic display sign space and may occupy no more than 20 percent of the totally allowable signage on the property.

Other changes address sign malfunctions, brightness of signs and colors of signs.

The discussion of dynamic display signs did prompt the City Council to ask the Planning Commission to do a study of other sign issues, including signs that are displayed inside store windows, illumination levels of signs and how gross surface display areas of signs are measured. The request for a study was adopted by the City Council Dec. 2.

Snow tags available

The first major snowfall of the season Dec. 8-9 and a Dec. 24-25 blizzard have renewed the push to get sidewalks shoveled within 24 hours of a snowfall. St. Paul Smart Trips and the City of St. Paul are reminding residents to shovel their sidewalks. Door hangers that neighbors can use to remind each other to clear sidewalks are available at multiple locations, as well as online. The door hangers are available through several district councils and City Council offices.

"Last year we fielded 4,600

complaints for unshoveled sidewalks, which clearly results in increased costs for the city. We need everyone's help to make sure there are safe, clear sidewalks for all of our residents," said Ward 4 Council Member Russ Stark.

"In our work to get more St. Paul residents walking and using transit unshoveled sidewalks are a huge hurdle, literally, for residents – particularly for the elderly and disabled members of our community," said St. Paul Smart Trips Director Jessica Treat.

St. Paul Smart Trips is a non-profit organization that improves

access and mobility for those who travel in and around St. Paul.

St. Paul requires property owners bordering public sidewalks to shovel sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall. The full width of the sidewalk needs to be cleared, and if the property is a corner lot, the sidewalk corners and curb ramps also need to be cleared. If the sidewalk isn't cleared and a complaint is called in, residents will be notified by the city and charged to have the city shovel. Shoveling around fire hydrants is also a neighborly thing to do in order to save first

responders time in an emergency, though it's not required by city code.

For more information about sidewalks and where to get door hangers (or download and print them), visit www.smarttrips.org/sidewalks. If the friendly reminder approach doesn't work, you can issue a complaint after the 24-hour window allowed after a snowfall by calling the City's information and complaint line at 651-266-8989 or visiting the city website at www.stpaul.gov/dsi

– Compiled by Jane McClure

'Doubt' at Lakeshore Players January 15 - February 7



Lakeshore Players Theatre continues its Pulitzer Prize season with the powerful drama, "Doubt," by John Patrick Shanley. The show runs through Feb. 7 with performances Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., and Sundays at 2 p.m. Performances are at Lakeshore Players Theatre, 4820 Stewart Avenue in downtown White Bear Lake. Tickets are \$18-\$20 and may be reserved in advance by calling 651-429-5674, with remaining seats sold at the door starting two hours prior to show time. Above, Como resident T. James Belich with Kari Steinbach. (Photo by Kevin T. Houle)

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMEMORATION AT HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 4 P.M.
SUNDIN MUSIC HALL

The program will focus on King's version of "The World House." The event is free and open to everyone.

Hamline University President Dr. Linda Hanson will speak at the commemoration, as will students and faculty and staff members. There also will be musical selections by the Hamline University Gospel Choir, a multi-faith invocation, audio and video clips of Dr. King and a charge to the university community from the president of the Hamline University PRIDE Black Student Alliance.



The program is organized by the Hamline University Center for Multicultural and International Student Affairs. The center's mission is to support, assist, empower, and promote the success of students of color and international students at Hamline. To better serve and retain students, the center's staff and initiatives help foster a campus community where the needs of students of color and international students are addressed and where multiculturalism and diversity are appreciated, celebrated, and advanced. For more information call 651-523-2296.