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Midway Environmental Group sprouts tree planting project

By JAN WILLMS

"I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree."

Although poet Joyce Kilmer wrote these words in 1913, they could be used today to describe the tree planting project in the Hamline-Midway area.

The Hamline Midway Environmental Group (HMEG) was formed by the Hamline Midway Coalition in 2005, according to Stephanie Hankerson, who has been with HMEG since its beginning.

"They gave us an intern, and we worked on a wide range of projects," Hankerson said.

And one of those projects, the planting of trees, resulted in a subgroup called HMEG Tree Team being developed. Hankerson, a Ramsey County master gardener and community organizer in Minneapolis, met with Hannah Texler, who also lives in the neighborhood and works with the DNR. They were joined by Barb Spears, who has her degree in urban forestry from the University of Minnesota and in 2005 was working at Tree Trust, a community organization that implemented tree planting projects at the community level.

A grant for tree planting from Home Depot was available, and they decided they could apply this grant to the Hamline Midway neighborhood.

"We said 'Let's go for it,' and we developed the Tree Team, a little group of people to work on planting trees," Spears explained. "Hamline Midway Coalition handled the finances, and the result was 70 native trees planted throughout the neighborhood, primarily on residential properties."

With those trees planted, the Tree Team laid low for awhile. But in 2010, with the onslaught of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in the Hamline Midway area, the group made plans to plant again.

"When the EAB was found in our neighborhood, I knew I couldn't sit still," Spears said. The 2010 Tree Team project focused on residents who had an ash in their yard and available tree planting space. These residents were sent a direct letter.

"We told them that if they had an ash and a space to plant another tree, they would get first dibs on a tree, because they may



Hamline Midway Environmental Group volunteer Chad Giblin helps a couple select a tree during the tree distribution.



Hamline Midway resident and tree distribution volunteer Deb Olander (left) and resident Kathy Oaks with the trees for the tree distribution.

lose their ash. We gave them two weeks to respond, and then we offered trees to everyone," Spears said.

The trees for 2010 and the most recent planting in September 2011 were provided by funding from the McKnight Foundation and a grant from the Office of Ward 4 Council member Russ Stark through the Community Opportunity Partnership Program, and donations from community residents.

There was no charge for the shade trees available in 2010, but a fee of \$5 has been requested for the fall 2011 planting.

"It's a tough call, whether to charge," Spears admitted. "It's not

a large amount, and people make a commitment. And the Hamline Midway Coalition handles all the money."

Tanner Larson, who was then a student at Metro State University and an area resident, conducted an inventory of how many ash trees were in the neighborhood.

Spears said the volunteers working on the tree planting have been wonderful. "One woman couldn't physically help with the inventory, but she did all the data entry," she said.

"The EAB is serious," Sears said, "and just getting people to think about their trees and what the community will look like in five to ten years is important. We

will get through it, but we have to keep planting trees more and take care of the ones we have."

She said the US Forest Service has provided a Tree Owner's Manual to the community, as well.

"We know there will be increasing losses," agreed Hankerson. "Energizing planting trees now allows the trees to grow and become substantial when others have to be removed."

"We offered fruit trees this fall," she continued, "which are shorter in stature than the shade trees. The majority were cherry, plum and apricot."

Hankerson said private property owners were recruited and could self-select a tree.

"We have a distribution day, give them the manual and high-light important tips for the care of their trees," she added. "This September, we hosted two workshops on fruit trees and brought in a specialist."

The HPEG Tree Team partnered with Egg Plant Urban Farm Supply to help distribute the trees this year.

"They have expertise in fruit trees, can order wholesale and have space for the delivery and distribution of the trees," Spears said. And the owner lives in the neighborhood.

"That is very important, that whatever we do has a direct connection to the community," Spears emphasized.

Another resident, Mona Toft, was aware of a barren space near the Gateway Garden, a community planting space near Snelling and Taylor. She contacted the Tree Team, and two trees were planted in this space.

"That garden received strong support from the Midway Motel, located on the north edge of Midway," Hankerson said. "It is fantastic to see a business get that involved."

One tree was also provided to the Horton Park Arboretum through the Friends of Horton Park.

"There has been a native plant garden in the corner of Horton Park, which is a city park," Spears said. "Many years ago it was looked at as a mini arboretum, and now we're working with the city to develop an arboretum with an emphasis on native trees."

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District 10 approves plan for Walgreens

By DEBORAH BROTZ

It's been about a year and a half since Como Park residents found out about Semper Development's proposed redevelopment plan for a Walgreens store on the southwest corner of Lexington Parkway and Larpenteur Avenue. After much discussion, a decision had been made. At the Oct. 18 District 10 Community Council Meeting, the community voted 26 "yes" and 7 "no" to approve the Walgreens plan, with three conditions. Following the community vote, the District 10 board unanimously approved the request, and a letter of support was sent to the City of St. Paul.

Prior to the community and District 10 board vote on Oct. 18, the Land Use Committee had been working with Semper Development to address the residents' concerns with the proposed Walgreens store. At the Oct. 3 Land Use Committee meeting Ed Terhaar, of Wenck Associates, presented the draft traffic study that was completed in the area surrounding Lexington and Larpenteur.



At the Oct. 18 District 10 Community Council Meeting, the community voted 26 "yes" and 7 "no" to approve the Walgreens plan, with three conditions.

Members also sent a recommendation to the District 10 board in support of the current plans, with consideration of the following recommended conditions: The store and drive-through is closed for business by 10 p.m. The fence bordering the south edge of the property and surrounding the alley turn-around is constructed of a substantial mate-

rial (brick or steel). Delivery hours are respectful of the neighborhood and during off-peak traffic flow, such as not before 7 a.m. or after 2 p.m.

The Land Use Committee felt these conditions were important because residents brought them up during meetings about the proposed development.

"Neighbors didn't want it to

turn into a 24-hour Walgreens," said Kim Moon, Land Use Committee chair and District 10 board member. "They want the store to be closed by 10 p.m. Years ago, MGM (the property owner) tore the fence down between their property and the alley. They've been able to tie it up in court. Neighbors were concerned a wooden fence could be torn down easily. They want the fence to be more substantial than wood. They also want delivery hours during the day."

A traffic study was done with actual data from the site, as well as a national database, which is used to forecast future traffic loads based on type of business. The database for pharmacies with a drive-through predicted an increase in traffic trips in and out of the site compared to actual current data for MGM Liquor Store and office.

"The Lexington-Larpenteur corner right now is really awful to get through at 5 p.m.," said Moon.

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GROW YOUR BACKYARD HOMESTEAD

Several St. Paul neighborhoods to see increases in property taxes

By JANE MCCLURE

Despite declining or stagnant property values, several area neighborhoods will see increases in property taxes due to tax shifts and changes made at the state level. Although many home owners will feel the pinch, commercial, industrial and apartment property owners will be hit even harder. St. Paul, Ramsey County and St. Paul Public Schools officials are preparing for a deluge of questions and protests when tax notices go out in November.

Elected officials meeting this fall as the Joint Property Tax Advisory Committee worry that property tax impacts may be harder to explain than ever before, due to changes made by state lawmakers when a budget deal was negotiated in July. The legislative special session has also provided less time than usual for local officials to analyze what was passed.

The complexity of the changes will be difficult to explain, local officials fear. Taxes on most properties statewide will increase in 2012, even before local levy amounts are factored. Yet the impact of the state changes will vary dramatically from neighborhood to neighborhood, and when different types of property are compared.

Ramsey County has adopted a 1.7 percent levy increase for 2012. St. Paul Public Schools' levy increase is 3.6 percent and the city levy increase is 6.5 percent. Those maximums were adopted in September and can be decreased but not increased before year's end.

"We realize this is a difficult message to get out there because the impacts are going to be all over the board," said Chris Samuel of Ramsey County Property Records and Revenue. Ramsey County is already planning to double the number of people it has answering phones in its tax division, up to 15 people, just because so many questions are anticipated.

For home owners, the major

change will be seen due to the elimination of the homestead credit, a tax break that provided single-family homeowners with savings. The homestead credit had a cost to the state that would have been more than \$260 million in 2012. Local units of government will no longer get those payments.

There is now a homestead market value exclusion. This reduces the market value share that can be taxed on homes valued under \$413,800. It excludes 40 percent of the first \$76,000 in market value to a maximum exclusion of \$30,400. A formula is used to factor the exclusion, which declines as value of homes increases. This shifts more of the burden to higher-valued properties.

But many lower-valued homes, even some that have seen values decline, may still see a property tax increase due to the levy increases as well as the shifts and changes in the property tax system.

Samuel said it's going to be confusing. The frustrating part for local elected officials is that so much is out of their control. "Local government can't undo what the state has done," he said. "We're going to hear 'Don't do it' and that's not an option."

"We're just going to have to tell people that your taxes are going to be higher due to a bunch of stuff we just can't control," said City Council President Kathy Lantry.

"It is a difficult message," said County Manager Julie Kleinschmidt. "My property value went down, my taxes are going up, my services are being cut and that does not compute."

When single-family home median taxable market value is compared for area planning districts, the Merriam Park/Snelling-Hamline/Lexington-Hamline neighborhoods will see the highest percentage increase at 9.5 percent. The home value here drops from \$247,400 in 2011 to \$227,500 in 2012 for an 8 percent drop. This median value

home owner paid \$3,523 in 2011 and would pay \$3,857 in 2012, for a \$334 or 9.5 percent increase. That is also the highest percentage citywide.

The largest median taxable value decrease citywide is in the Frogtown neighborhood, where the median value drops from \$96,500 in 2010 to \$61,700 in 2011. That's a drop of 36.1 percent. This median value home owner paid \$1,147 in property taxes in 2010 and will pay \$1,084 in 2011, for a \$63 or 5.5 percent decrease. Frogtown is one of only four neighborhoods citywide where the median home owner will pay less.

North End property taxes would stay flat for a median value home. The median value home is at \$114,000 in 2010, and would decline 27.9 percent to \$82,200 in 2011. The home owner paid \$1,423 in 2010 and would pay \$1,427 in 2011, a \$4 or .3 percent increase.

If you own a home in Hamline-Midway neighborhood, expect an increase. The median home value dropped from \$160,100 in 2010 to \$132,600 in 2011, or 17.2 percent. This home owner paid \$2,149 in property taxes in 2010 and will pay \$2,270 in 2011, for a \$121 or 5.6 percent increase.

Como home owners will see median home values drop 12.6 percent, from \$198,400 in 2010 to \$173,500 in 2011. Property taxes of \$2,752 in 2010 compare to \$2,954 in 2011, for a \$202 or 7.3 percent increase.

That's also true for St. Anthony Park. The median value home of \$252,100 in 2010 drops 13.5 percent to \$218,100 in 2011. Property taxes were \$3,597 in 2010 and would be \$3,700 in 2011, for a \$103 or 2.9 percent increase.

The largest dollar increase in the city is seen in Summit Hill. The median home value declines from \$343,650 in 2011 to \$324,000 in 2012 for a 5.7 percent drop. This median value

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Griggs Street bicycle boulevard plan approved Oct. 28

By JANE MCCLURE

Six traffic circles, corner bumpouts and a new bike path through Dunning Park are part of the Griggs Street bicycle boulevard plan en route approved unanimously October 28 by the St. Paul Planning Commission. The plan, which went through a neighborhood review process this fall, goes to the St. Paul City Council for a public hearing in January. It won support October 17 from the commission's Transportation Committee.

The project has an estimated cost of \$400,000, which would be covered through a federal grant. If City Council approval is obtained in November, work would be done in 2012.

Improvements are eyed for Griggs from Summit Avenue to Minnehaha Avenue, making Griggs a north-south connection between bike lanes on both of those streets.

The Griggs route is also seen as a connection via Minnehaha to a Hamline Avenue bike route to Energy Park and a planned Como Park connection paralleling Lexington Parkway. The Lexington Parkway project is planned for 2012. Longer-term, Griggs is also eyed as a connection to Marshall Avenue bike route. Marshall already has bike lanes west of Snelling. City plans call for extending those lanes to the east.

Griggs carries 400 to 600 motor vehicles per day. It has been identified in various city plans as a potential north-south bike and pedestrian connection, and as a future connection to the planned Central Corridor light rail line.

The Griggs project needs approval from the St. Paul City Council and submission to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) by December 1, said St. Paul Public Works Traffic Engineer Paul St. Martin. That timeline was set by the non-profit group Transit for Livable Communities (TLC), which is administering a federal pass-through grant for bike-walk projects.

The Transportation Committee vote October 17 was 6-0-1 with committee member and TLC leader Barb Thoman abstaining.

Public Works hosted a bike tour of Griggs and two community meetings, the most recent of which was October 11. About 30 people attended that meeting to review the plans. The Transportation Committee praised the public outreach and communication process. This was the first time city officials have conducted a biking tour of a proposed bike route.

"We've gotten a lot of good feedback on the project," St. Martin said. At both meetings and the bike tour, only one person expressed outright opposition to the project. Others have raised concerns about issues including potential loss of parking on-street parking, snow plowing and traffic circles, but have indicated they'd like to see the project move forward.

"Griggs is a proposed regional route," said Emily Erickson, sustainable transportation planner for Public Works. "It's already a good place to bike and walk but it could be better."

The city did outreach via mail to property owners on and around Griggs, and used district council and community group electronic communications as part of project outreach.

All along Griggs, bicyclists will share the street with motor vehicles, with parking to remain in most places. Share the road arrows or 'sharrows' will be painted on the street and street name signs will be replaced with signs including a bicycle symbol. Guideway or wayfinding directional signs will be installed, along with destination signs at key locations. If there is community support, "paint the pavement" projects to slow down traffic can be completed. These projects involve painting designs on a street surface to attract driver attention and slow down motor vehicle traffic. Hamline-Midway neighborhood already has several paint the pavement projects.

One of the ideas that generated debate October 11 is that of removing stop signs and adding traffic circles at some intersections. This is proposed at Portland, Laurel and Dayton avenues in Lexington-Hamline neighborhood, and at Sherburne, Edmund

and Blair avenues in Hamline-Midway neighborhood.

At Summit, the Griggs project will tie into existing bike lanes. Striping and signs will be added to help eastbound cyclists turn north onto Griggs. Bushes in the median will be trimmed back to improve sight lights. Summit at Griggs carries about 9,500 vehicles per day.

Two options were studied for Griggs and Selby Avenue. One is to install crosswalks and corner bumpouts at Selby, which would eliminate two parking spaces. The second is to install a median or pedestrian refuge, which would eliminate six parking spaces. The preference is for corner bumpouts and crosswalks because of the loss of parking.

At Marshall and Griggs, there is an existing stop light and corner bumpouts. But the signal isn't triggered by motor vehicles or bikes on Griggs, which can mean long waits as well as illegal turn movements at times. Public Works proposes adding a countdown timer at this intersection, as well as audible pedestrian signals to assist pedestrians who are visually impaired. The audible signals are being installed throughout St. Paul, St. Martin said.

Bicycle detection equipment would be added on Griggs to trigger signal changes and allow bikes to cross safely.

Marshall carries about 5,650 motor vehicles per day.

Griggs ends at Dunning Park. Public Works proposes constructing a north-south dedicated bike path through the park, to separate pedestrians and cyclists. These plans would need approval from St. Paul Parks and Recreation. Preliminary plans call for bikes to travel east of Dunning Recreation Center.

The Interstate 94 frontage roads pose some of the greatest challenges for Griggs, according to Public Works staff, due to sight lines, visibility and speed of traffic. Cars on the frontage roads often exceed 40 miles per hour, above the 30 miles per hour speed limit. Concordia Avenue carries about 5,675 motor vehicles per day, with 5,225 on St. Anthony Avenue.

At Concordia plans call for using the existing bumpout and signed/marked crosswalk to funnel pedestrians to the bike/pedestrian bridge over the freeway. A bumpout or street narrowing on St. Anthony is being considered.

At both frontage road crossings push-button crossing flashing lights would be installed at the crosswalks. Public Works is also looking into equipment that would detect bikes and pedestrians, and change the signal automatically. Dynamic speed display sign would be installed to the east to show vehicle speeds Street lighting would be added and brush cleared to improve visibility.

Work on St. Anthony would tie into plans to improve pedestrian safety there, especially near the Skyline Tower high-rise.

On Griggs from St. Anthony to University Avenue, plans call for installing more lantern-style street lights there. This would require a one-time assessment to

property owners, there of about \$7.87 per front foot of property. Potential traffic conflicts with existing commercial driveways would be reviewed for possible changes.

University is the busiest of the streets bikes and pedestrians would cross, carrying an average of 24,625 vehicles per day. A traffic signal will be installed here as part of the central Corridor project. Public Works is exploring the use of video or motion detection for bikes so they will trigger the signal and be able to cross safely.

At Thomas, who carries about 2,525 vehicles per day, an existing four-way stop would remain.

Existing stop signs would also be retained on Griggs at Minnehaha. Striping and signage would be installed to connect Griggs to the Minnehaha bike lanes. Bumpouts would be installed on the south side of Minnehaha, meaning one parking space would be lost. Marked crosswalks would be installed.

Property taxes

Continued from page 3

home owner paid \$5,039 in 2011 and would pay \$5,471 in 2012, for a \$432 or 8.6 percent increase. The largest dollar decrease is in Payne-Phalen, of \$90. The median home value here dropped 32.2 percent, from \$116,700 in 2010 to \$79,100 in 2011. Taxes would decline from \$1,465 in 2010 to \$1,375 in 2011, or 6.1 percent. That is also the largest percentage decrease.

Officials also looked at median taxable value property types. The median value single family home in St. Paul had a value of \$155,500 in 2011, which will drop 4 percent or to \$149,300 in 2012. The property taxes paid in 2011 totaled \$2,076. Shifts and changes including the loss of homestead credit will bring a \$16 reduction. But add in the local levy increases and the increase is

\$91. Subtract the \$16 and the net increase that will appear on a tax notice is \$75. The estimated 2012 payable tax would be \$2,151 or a 3.6 percent increase.

The median value St. Paul commercial property would have the same value of \$385,000 in 2011 and in 2012. Taxes payable in 2011 are at \$13,160. Shifts and changes in the tax system would bring a \$565 increase, and the levy increase bumps that up \$738. The tax notice or this property would list a \$1,303 or 9.9 percent increase, for estimated payable 2012 taxes of \$14,463.

The median value apartment building in St. Paul will see an even bigger hit. The value was \$1,085,800 in 2011 and would have a 2 percent increase to \$1,107,800 in 2012. Taxes payable in 2011 are \$19,755. Shifts and changes in the property tax system would add \$2,141 and the levy changes would add another \$1,024, for a total increase of 16 percent or \$3,165. The total estimated payable taxes for 2012 would be \$22,920.



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St. Paul Schools revs up the bus for enrollment

By JAN WILLMS

People are jumping on the bandwagon—make that a school bus—for St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS).

A specially designed school bus is part of an enrollment campaign to raise student population at SPPS. The bus has been at homecoming parades, schools and school events, and is covered with a special 3M-donated adhesive wrap on which students, parents and community members can grab a sharpie and write the “One Thing I Love About St. Paul Public Schools.”

School board member Jean O’Connell was at Como High School when the bus was in the homecoming parade, and students and parents wrote messages on the bus.

“Several mentioned the one thing they liked was the peer mediation program at Como,” O’Connell noted. “As a school board member I learned things about the schools I did not know. The next time I visit Como I will ask more about that program.”

O’Connell said a student at Central had written on the bus that he liked the fact that his teachers challenged him. He further explained that he was challenged not just in his calculus class, but in his woodworking class, as his teacher kept sending his project back, knowing that the student could do better.

O’Connell said a mom wrote that what she loved most is the trust she has in the schools. The mother commented that the hardest thing for a parent is when a child leaves home for the first time to go to school.

“A part of your heart goes with them,” the mother explained. “I trust SPPS with that part of my heart.”

Julie Schulz Brown, SPPS director of communications, marketing and development, said the campaign is a way to gather information from stakeholders to share with other stakeholders about what they think of SPPS. “It helps us all realize there are a lot of good things in the St. Paul Public Schools,” she said.

Brown said SPPS has been going through changes as it adopts a new strategic plan, Strong Schools, Strong Communities. The plan focuses on achievement, alignment

and sustainability.

“As we go through changes, there will be some fall-out,” Brown stated. “A reduced student population, as well as growth in charter schools, could come from this change.”

She said that community supporters came forward and offered to help SPPS maintain enrollment as it goes through the three years of implementation of the strategic plan. Funding of \$225,000 was provided for marketing.

“The St. Paul Foundation, 3M and E.R. Bigelow provided private funding for us to do marketing,” Brown explained. “When using taxpayer money, the taxpayers want that to go directly to the students. It doesn’t allow us to be competitive.”

She said the “One Thing I Love” campaign has an interactive website where people can go and write about what they love about SPPS and read what others have written. There are also stickers and window clings promoting the project.

She said the bus is available through mid-November, but the school is trying to see if it can keep it running longer.

“This campaign has reinvigorated a sense of pride,” Brown claimed. “It’s generating conversation, and that’s the hope.”

O’Connell said the good news for SPPS is that this school year is the first in close to 10 years that the district has actually seen a growth in enrollment.

“Last year we were happy that we didn’t fall in enrollment as badly as we thought we would,” she said.

O’Connell said that something the district has needed to do for quite awhile is market SPPS.

“Charter and private schools spend lots of money on marketing,” she said.

“What mostly gets in the media,” she continued, “is about fights in schools or the negative things going on. It gives the parents concern and causes them to make decisions that may or may not be the best decisions.”

O’Connell explained that the current growth in school population in Minneapolis reflects how many students Minneapolis had lost compared to St. Paul. “Over the past 10 years, they have had a really major drop. SPPS has not

had that big a loss,” she noted. St. Paul is the 2nd largest school district in the state, and Minneapolis the 3rd.

“Our overall Strong Schools, Strong Communities plan is based on attracting more kids,” O’Connell added. The strategic plan is calling for an increase of 3,000 students by 2014-15.

“We are going to have more kindergarten kids, and we also need to look at our market share. Seventy-three per cent of the kids living in St. Paul go to St. Paul Public Schools. We can encourage parents to make a different choice,” she said.

Brown said the district recognizes that it educates some students very well, and some are not changing.

“The superintendent wants principals to be more instructional leaders,” she commented. “We also are working on restructuring transportation. We were going all over the city, and that was not working.”

She said that when schools have less enrollment, there is less revenue from the state and so there are less programs, which leads to less enrollment—an endless cycle.

“Our people in research say the enrollment decline is over, and



A specially designed school bus is part of an enrollment campaign to raise student population at SPPS. The bus has been at homecoming parades, schools and school events, and is covered with paper on which students, parents and community members can grab a sharpie and write the “One Thing I Love About St. Paul Public Schools.”

working itself through,” she said. “There is a potentially small increase in students going through the Metro. We will be opening buildings, similar to Minneapolis.”

She said over the next three years, SPPS plans to reopen six school buildings: Roosevelt, Wellstone, Longfellow, Prosperity Heights, Ames and Sheridan Elementary. “The school names may change,” she explained. “These are

the buildings.”

“We are headed in the right direction,” Brown affirmed. “We are very focused on the strategic plan’s achievement, alignment and sustainability.” She said the strategic plan in growing schools also entails working with partners and volunteers in the community.

With any luck, St. Paul Public Schools will continue to recruit more people to their bandwagon in the years ahead.

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The “One Thing I Love” campaign has an interactive website where people can go and write about what they love about SPPS and read what others have written. There are also stickers and window clings promoting the project.

City Council works to restore critical budget cuts

By JANE MCCLURE

Finding \$1.1 million to restore some fire, police and library budget cuts is the St. Paul City Council's goal as they race against the calendar. At a budget workshop November 2, council members agreed on priorities to restore funding. But with the 2012 budget approval date of December 14 looming, there isn't a lot of time left.

Another priority is to see if there are unspent half-cent sales tax dollars that could be reallocated.

In August Mayor Chris Coleman proposed a \$556.2 million city budget. The 2011 adopted budget amount was \$553.7 million. The city would levy \$100.758 million in 2012 if Coleman's budget is adopted. That compares to \$94.609 million for 2011. The increase is \$6.149 million.

The 2012 budget contains \$6.2 million in city services cuts. "We are having to make some incredibly tough choices to see which cuts can be restored," said Council President Kathy Lantry. "We obviously can't restore everything."

Largest of the cuts to be restored would be about \$500,000 for the fire department, to retain a rescue squad and preserve some overtime funding. One of three rescue squads is slated for elimination.

Another \$100,000 would preserve funding for the police department's motorcycle unit, which also faces cutbacks. A third priority is to restore some library hours.

Not included in the \$1.1 million is a request by Ward Five Council Member Lee Helgen to restore some lost recreation center hours and help more low-income families pay fees for recreation



The City Council continues to scrutinize \$1 to \$2 million in Neighborhood and Cultural Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) loans and grants, to see if any of that money can be reallocated. The council began reviewing the sale tax budgets in October, and must now determine which projects are still viable. One STAR project that was completed this past year was the North End Teen Center, pictured above. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

center programs.

One funding source eyed November 2 is the city's sewer utility reserve fund. Council members debated taking \$250,000 out of that account to plug budget holes.

The council is also continuing to scrutinize \$1 to \$2 million in Neighborhood and Cultural Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) loans and grants, to see if any of

that money can be reallocated. The council began reviewing the sale tax budgets in October, and must now determine which projects are still viable.

Council members were surprised to see some balances dating back to 2001 and asked for more scrutiny of 11 Neighborhood STAR loans and 35 grants, as well as 13 Cultural STAR grants and

loans. Those funds were allocated between 2001 and 2008. "There's absolutely no reason to just have this money sitting there if projects aren't going forward," said Lantry.

If projects are not going forward or if there are balances of money remaining, council members want to see the money spent elsewhere. Lantry said the funds should go back to the Neighborhood STAR Program. She notes that in recent years that program has been cut to less than \$1 million for citywide projects. The city has had to divert about \$5 million per year to pay for capital debt service and for public safety capital budget needs.

"We've taken a lot from Neighborhood STAR and should give that program more funding if possible," she said. "There are always more applications than dollars available."

That's a sentiment shared by Neighborhood STAR Board Chair Kerry Antrim. Antrim was surprised to learn that there were such large balances. The Neighborhood STAR Board does get updates on projects and balances, but not as far back as 2001. "I think that the Neighborhood STAR Board needs to be part of the discussion before the funds are allocated," she said.

Other council members want to see some Neighborhood STAR dollars restored to a per-ward allocation, which the council hasn't given itself for the past two years. That program, which has gone under different names over the years, allows council members to allocate grants and loans in their own wards. It has funded projects including streetscape work, home improvement programs, playgrounds, security cameras, parking lots and traffic circles. Lantry has criticized the program as a "slush

fund" in the past, but admits she probably doesn't have the votes to block a council move to restore it.

As of last week city staff was still tracking down which projects have and haven't been completed. Many projects on the neighborhood and cultural lists are completed, so removal may just be a record-keeping issue or an issue of unspent balances. For a few projects, the unspent balances are hefty. The largest and oldest project, the ill-fated Pan-Asian Village, dates from 2001 with \$950,000.

Pan Asian Village is likely to be the largest target. The ambitious redevelopment project was awarded a \$750,000 loan and a \$200,000 grant. The project, which went through many changes, centered on the southeast corner of University Avenue and Dale Street. Planning began in the late 1990s.

The Hmong Development Corporation wanted to tear down Uni-Dale Mall and replace it with 50-60 units of housing, 200,000 square feet of retail space and space for Theater Mu and other cultural groups including an Asian-Pacific Cultural Center. But the \$35-\$40 million project was opposed by African-American community groups. They contended that Uni-Dale was meant to replace community businesses lost when Interstate 94 was built and much of the old Rondo neighborhood lost.

The developers struggled to get financing and lost tentative developer status with the city in late 2003. Changes in leadership also hurt, with prominent developer Tou Moua Lee moving to Florida. The project was shelved in when mall owner Kraus-Anderson sold the property to private owners, with Che Ku buying the mall itself.

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St. Paul Planning Commission launches urban agriculture zoning study

By JANE MCCLURE

Growing interest in locally produced food, and a trend toward more community gardens like the one Sparc planted this growing season, has prompted the St. Paul Planning Commission to launch an urban agriculture zoning study. The commission voted unanimously October 14 to start the study, which is on a fast track. Recommendations will be drafted for the Planning Commission to review in the next six to eight weeks. The intent is to have changes in place before the 2012 growing season takes root.

The study is going to be broad-based, to cover as many possible urban agricultural uses as possible, said Commissioner Betsy Reveal. That promoted jokes from other commissioners about the staff and commission going "whole hog" on such a study.

The study will cover many topics, including community gardens, home occupations tied to urban agriculture, farmers' markets, greenhouses, licensed or larger composting operations, aquaculture, greenhouses, hoop houses, animal processing and accessory uses. Commissioners asked October 14 that the study be expanded to include beekeeping and possibly water harvesting. The latter is an expanded effort to capture and reuse water runoff.

St. Paul has already taken a number of steps to promote urban agriculture, including making changes to ordinances that allow residents to keep a few chickens at their homes. The city has also leased space, where available, to groups for community gardening. Since 2009 the city's Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) and City Attorneys' office have looked at ways to revise the garden space lease guidelines.

The zoning study was sought in 2009 by Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark, who brought forward a City Council resolution asking that St. Paul do more to facilitate a network of resources to support the production, distribution and consumption of healthy and locally grown food. Only recently has St. Paul Planning and Economic Development (PED) been able to devote staff time to starting the study.

Another group that has called for attention to urban agriculture and zoning changes is the St. Paul-Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission, which was established last year. The commission recently released a report asking that city and county officials look at urban agricultural issues.

The study is being watched closely by urban gardening and agriculture advocates, including Audrey Matson, co-owner of Egg-Plant Urban Farm Supply in Merriam Park. She noted that the City of Minneapolis is looking at similar regulatory changes, including eyeing a way to allow people to grow and sell produce from their own properties.

Matson said she does hear about gardeners who would like to be able to sell their own produce in St. Paul, as well as people with chickens who would like to be able to sell small quantities of eggs. At least of the city's community gardens is tended by volunteers who would like to sell produce and put up a small greenhouse. "I think there are ways to make changes, so that people can



This summer the community development corporation Sparc began a youth urban farm in the city's North End. This is a three-acre parcel with several large gardening lots and limited on-site sales. This use doesn't fit any specific zoning category and the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) wound up issuing a statement of clarification declaring that the site is a community garden. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

tion. The city allows farmers' markets, typically through a conditional use permit process, but defines the markets in the same way it defines other uses such as temporary garden product sale kiosks and Christmas tree sales.

Another issue is how to regulate urban farms. This summer the community development corporation Sparc began a youth urban farm in the city's North End. This is a three-acre parcel with several large gardening lots and limited on-site sales. This use doesn't fit any specific zoning category and the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) wound up issuing a statement of clarification declaring that the site is a community garden. That allowed the use to be in place for the 2011 growing season, but changes will have to be made in city regulations if sales and gardening go out at that location.

The long-term plan for the North End garden site is for residential redevelopment, with some agriculture use for the neighborhood.

sell the items they grow that they cannot use," she said.

Matson said she'd also like to see the study focus on ways that make it easier for people to keep chickens in the city, noting that she hears confusions from customers about the city regulations.

In his report to the Planning

Commission, City Planner Anton Jerve cited the reasons for the urban agriculture zoning study. One is a renewed focus on community gardens, not just in St. Paul but in other cities as well. Community gardens are not only a way for people to get to know each other and build community; they also

provide use for vacant properties.

Other factors also play a role. The Planning Commission and city staff have struggled for several years with how to better define what a farmers' market is. In 2005 the commission recommended that there be more study to come up with a specific defini-

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November events at Rice St. Library offer Lego Club, computer coaching, and more

The Rice Street Branch Library has many fun and educational events planned in November. Please stop in and visit us!

Thinking about an eReader for the holidays? Drop in on Monday, November 14 between 1-2:30 p.m. for a free eReader Clinic. Get a look at various eReaders and learn how to use them to borrow library ebooks.

The Lego Club will meet on Sundays from 2-4 p.m. Kids and adults (who are kids at heart) can stop in and build things with Legos! Free, fun and entertaining.

The English Language Conversation Circle will meet on Mondays from 4 to 5:15 p.m. The Circle is for adults interested in improving

their English speaking skills. Sessions are free and open to the public.

Computer coaching will be available on Tuesday afternoons from 2-3 p.m. Library staff will assist you with learning more about the Internet, e-mail or Microsoft Word.

The Computer Gaming Club will meet on Tuesdays 4:00 to 5:15. Try Runescape, Wii, Scratch or other computer games and programs. Bring your friends!

The Collector's Corner Neighborhood Trading Post will be open Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m. and Saturdays from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Bring a tradable natural object to the library and volunteers from the Sci-

ence Museum of Minnesota will help you learn more about it

Family story times will be offered on Friday and Saturday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Join Rice Street's storytelling experts for stories, finger plays, rhymes, and songs.

Free Family Friendly Movie Matinees will be shown Saturdays at 2:00. Please stop in or call the library at 651-558-2223 to learn which movie will be shown each week.

The North End Book Club will discuss *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt on Monday November 28, from 12:45-2:30 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy

at 651-744-3072. This group is offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

Computer classes will be offered on Friday mornings from 10:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. For more information or to register, please call Sandy at 651-744-3072. Classes are offered in partnership with the Community Education Senior Program.

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

The STARS Homework Help Center is a quiet place for students

of all ages to work on schoolwork. If you need help with homework or would like to be a Homework Helper, please visit STARS Monday through Wednesday from 3 p.m.-7 p.m., Thursday from 3 p.m.- 5 p.m. or Sunday from 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

The Rice Street Library is located at 1011 Rice Street between Lawson and Hatch. Hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12 pm-8 pm; Tuesday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; and Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. All Saint Paul public libraries will be closed Thursday November 24 for Thanksgiving. For more information about the Rice Street Branch Library or any of our programs, please call 651-558-2223.

Walgreens

Continued from page 2

"People don't understand it's illegal to block the intersection. Everyone wants to jump in the turn lane a couple blocks early. A lot of people were concerned having a Walgreens there will increase traffic. When Semper did the traffic study, it indicated not much more traffic there at peak times."

The Node Study, completed about a year and a half ago, suggests what the community would

like that intersection to look like five years from now.

"This is the entrance to the park from Roseville," said Moon. "The community wanted it to be a park-like entrance. We also have the other corner. We're thinking we'll hear from Paster Enterprises about redevelopment in the next five years."

Moon feels the building meets the expectations of what residents want to see at that corner.

"I think it fits pretty well," he said. "It's an inviting looking store. It's set back from the parkway with

a little bit of green space. For the most part, people are pretty happy with the outcome."

Pete Bolstad, who just finished up his term on the District 10 board in October, believes the Node Study outlines in pretty good detail what residents would like to see at the intersection five years down the road.

"I would imagine it's not a vision as much as a concern about multi-floor housing development or mixed dwelling," he said. "They would not like what is seen at Larpenteur-Snelling to take place at

Lexington-Larpenteur. People don't want to see three- or four-story dwellings."

With a 25-foot greenspace and no flashing signs, the proposed Walgreen development addresses some concerns of the residents.

"The neighborhood will continue to have opportunities for input," said Bolstad. "People should continue to come out and offer suggestions so they get what they want there. There will not be a lot of advertising in windows, but there will be flower boxes in the front, and little touches that make it fit in the neighborhood. As part of the site plan, there will be some trees and plantings in that green-

space. The neighborhood needs to make sure it happens."

Bolstad hopes the development moves forward as planned.

"My hope is the site plan that was approved by District 10 goes as was drawn and that there will not be any surprises," he said. "I hope the community continues to weigh in on the development as it proceeds."

Moon also hopes the Walgreens development sticks to the plan.

"We hope it goes through as planned," he said. "The neighborhood seems to like the design. The design is going to be an improvement over what's there now."



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In Our Community

Como Park Boys' Soccer finish 7-3

The Como Park Boys' Soccer Program concluded a fantastic season with the 60 players on the school's three teams all working hard every day to develop their skills and teamwork. The Varsity Team worked its way through some unfortunate injuries to key players, and completed their regular season with an overall record of 11-4-1 that included 6 straight shut-outs to end the season. The Cougars finished 7-3 in the Conference which earned 2nd place, and Head Coach Eric Erickson was selected as the St. Paul City Conference Coach of the Year. All-Conference Honors were awarded to Senior Forward He Moo, Junior Goalie Joe Krivit, and Sophomore Defender Yeng Yang. All-Conference Honorable Mention was awarded to the other starting Como Defenders: Senior Hussein Mohamed, Sophomore Hsa D Moo and Sophomore Zach Lee.

The Como Junior Varsity Team finished the season with an overall record of 14-2-2 and won the JV Division of the St. Paul City Conference. The well-organized team was led by JV Coach Jonah Fields who won the Assistant Coach of the Year Award for State Section 4A, which is a great tribute to Coach Fields and his players. The Como C-Team also had a winning and successful season with Coach Jeff Steiner leading Como's youngest players to an overall record of 7-5-3. All players and families will celebrate the accomplishments and efforts of the season at the annual banquet on November 1 at St. Timothy Lutheran Church.



The Como Park Boys' Soccer Program concluded an impressive season with the 60 players on the school's three teams all working hard every day to develop their skills and teamwork. The Varsity Team worked its way through some unfortunate injuries to key players, and completed their regular season with an overall record of 11-4-1 that included 6 straight shut-outs to end the season.

from Nettie & Friends, you're also benefiting the students at the Maxfield School in St. Paul's Rondo neighborhood. (Nettie & Friends is a registered 501(C)3 nonprofit organization).

Nutrition and weaning discussed Dec. 13

Nutrition and Weaning is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, December 13. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

'Senior Safety' at Hamline Midway Elders

Hamline Midway Elders hosts luncheon seminars every Second Tuesday of the month at 11:30 at 1514 Englewood Avenue. On Dec 13 the topic will be "Senior Safety Around and About the Home." The presenter will be a Crime Prevention Specialist from the St. Paul Police Department. A freewill donation is requested for the meal. Speaker presentations are free and begin at 12:15 p.m. Reservations preferred but not required. 651-209-6542.

Volunteer opportunities at Hamline Midway Elders

Hamline Midway Elders is celebrating its ten year anniversary of assisting seniors so they can live well in their homes. A variety of volunteer opportunities are available including daytime driving to nearby appointments and/or reaching out to isolated elders. For more information call 651-209-6542.

Messiah Sing-a-long at Como Lutheran Dec. 18

A Messiah Sing-a-long in memory of Alan Alshouse will be held Sunday, December 18 from 3 to 5 p.m. at Como Park Lutheran Church, 1376 Hoyt Ave. W. Soloists will be: Karen Wilkerson, soprano; Nicole Warner, alto; Brad Bradshaw, tenor; and Mike Schmidt, bass. Accompanying the singers will be pianist Michael Santoro and a string quartet. We'd like to encourage listeners as well as singers to attend.

Jehovah Lutheran's Bible study November 13

Jehovah Lutheran's Bible study on caring for God's creation continues through November. The presenter on Nov. 13 will be emeritus biologist Bob Holtz of Concordia

University, speaking on "The Birds of the Air — and People." Jehovah Lutheran is at 1166 Thomas Ave. All are welcome.

Church supper at Jehovah

Church night! Jehovah Lutheran Church at 1566 Thomas Ave. welcomes all to a church supper at 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Nov. 16, prepared by Pastor Bob Benke himself. Music is provided by church musicians. Suggested donation is \$2 for adults, \$1 for children. All are welcome.

Fall Barn Dance at Hamline Church Nov. 19

Hamline Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue, will host a Community Barn Dance on Saturday, November 19.

Barn Dances are for all ages and stages—singles, couples, and families—and feature traditional American folk dancing accompanied by a three-piece Appalachian string band. Dance caller Robin McGuillard Nelson teaches dancers all the steps.

Suggested admission is \$5 per person or \$15 per family/group. Dancing goes from 6:00-8:00PM, and snacks are available at yesteryears prices. For more information, contact the church office at 651-645-0667.

Dreamland Arts presents 'Space Commando'

Dreamland Arts presents Space

Commando and Other Odd Hobbies, an autobiographical acrobatic comedy, written and performed by David Harris, and featuring Sam Mistry. Performances are at Dreamland Arts, 677 Hamline Ave. N., on November 18-19 and 25-26 at 8:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and may be purchased by telephone at 651-645-5506 or online at www.dreamlandarts.com.

At the age of 14, David Harris knew exactly what he wanted to be, a professional yo-yo player. This dream led to a 20-year pursuit of odd hobbies; seemingly impossible stunts with folding chairs, shopping bag dancing, juggling feats, and inspired paddleball moves. Along this unexpected, hilarious, and often embarrassing journey, David finds amazing yo-yo masters, paddleball kings, and wedding rings. As part of the show, David will have on display his extensive collection of antique yo-yos; rare Duncan classics from the 50s, silver-plated designer yo-yos, Tom Kuhn prototypes, and yo-yos autographed by awesome people you've never heard of! Also featured in the show is drummer Sam Mistry, a 14 year old student at the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists and a resident of the Midway area of St. Paul.

Located in the Midway area of St. Paul, Dreamland Arts is a 40-seat theater and performing arts studio that presents performances, classes and workshops in theater, music, dance, puppetry and literary arts. Celebrating 5 years in the neighborhood, the small theater has hosted over 100 original shows by local artists.

Spaghetti Fundraiser at Tin Cup's Nov. 12

On November 12 from 1-6 p.m. join the Rice Street Festival Royalty for a delicious spaghetti dinner at Tin Cup's located at 1220 Rice Street. The cost for the event is \$10 (Children under 5 are free)! With each ticket purchased you will be entered into the drawing for the evening's door prize: a 32" TV!! Raffle tickets for other prizes will be sold throughout the evening as well!

Tickets are available at Tin Cup's as well as from the Rice Street Festival Royalty. All proceeds made from this event will go to support the Rice Street Festival and Royalty program. The Royal Guard from the Saint Paul Winter Carnival will also be in attendance, and will be making a donation of winter coats to the Dorothy Day center at 5 p.m. Please bring a winter coat to donate!

Free Thanksgiving Dinner at Zion Lutheran Church

Zion offers free thanksgiving meal on Thanksgiving Day at noon. Please call the church at 651-645-0851 to register. Zion Lutheran church is located at the corner of Lafond and Aldine. The address is 1697 Lafond Avenue. All are welcome!

Nettie and Friends sale December 3 at Egg & I

Do a little Shopping! Do a lot of good! Nettie & Friends are at it again with their irresistible, locally handcrafted goods. Come to the annual sale's opening reception on Saturday, December 3, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Egg and I East, 2550 University Avenue. Shop for your holiday gifts. Continue shopping at Egg and I throughout December. (Be sure to plan time for breakfast or lunch while you're shopping.) When you buy fabulous gifts

Northwest Como congratulates girls soccer

Northwest Como is proud to congratulate two of their fall soccer teams. The 12U Girls Soccer Team won the City Championship in the Silver Division coached by Rohn Anderson, Eric Erickson and Eric Beckman. Players include: Isabel Anderson, Ruby Beckman, Alyssa Clark, Anna Erickson, Emma Goff, Sophia Hoiium, Margaret & Natalie Ierien, Madeleine McPhee, Abigail Moseman, Elena Walczak, Cecelia Wulff.



The 12U Girls Soccer Team won the City Championship in the Silver Division coached by Rohn Anderson, Eric Erickson and Eric Beckman. Players include: Isabel Anderson, Ruby Beckman, Alyssa Clark, Anna Erickson, Emma Goff, Sophia Hoiium, Margaret & Natalie Ierien, Madeleine McPhee, Abigail Moseman, Elena Walczak, Cecelia Wulff.

Abigail Moseman, Elena Walczak, Cecelia Wulff. The 14U Girls Soccer Team won City Runner-Up coached by Josh Rhode. Players include: Lily Brown, Alayna Carrier, Grace Clemens, Kennedy Gay, Gabriel Huepenbecker, Taylor Koep, Angie Martin, Julia Plonski, Juliet Rhode, Ellie Smith, Marie Wulff. Thanks to the parents and coaches who supported their athletes.

Council votes to reject plans for a Pelham industrial development

By JANE MCCLURE

Saying that a site plan isn't consistent with city land use plans and surrounding properties, the St. Paul City Council voted 5-0 October 12 to reject plans for a \$3 million industrial development at 650 Pelham Boulevard. The site's future use remains unclear.

While Union Park District Council (UPDC), which appealed the site plan to the City Council, would like to work with site developer John Allen, his firm Industrial Equities and the St. Paul Port Authority on a new plan. Ideas the district council land use committee discussed October 17 include asking that part of the building be two stories instead of one and that the building be built up to the street and not set back.

But after the vote, Allen indicated he would consider taking the city to court. He and his supporters, including the Midway Chamber of Commerce, were very frustrated by the vote.

Allen, a veteran developer who owns and manages about 3 million square feet of industrial and warehouse space, told the City Council that facing community opposition is unfamiliar to him. "Usually I'm invited in," he said.

The developer also contended that City Council members knew of his plans for the property and questioned why the site plan would be rejected now. Earlier this year the site was one of many considered for rezoning for traditional neighborhoods mixed use redevelopment, as part of a larger zoning study meant to encourage redevelopment along the Central Corridor light rail line. Allen and business groups advocated for the industrial zoning to remain, a request the City Council and Planning Commission granted.

Allen took issue with foes' claims that his building is a "suburban industrial center." He described the one-story, 68,000

square foot building as a high-tech, flexible building that could accommodate biomedical, high-tech and other light manufacturing and office tenants.

The site is being developed with the Port Authority, which would require that a minimum of 68 jobs be created there. Some project opponents said that while they'd welcome jobs, that's too low a number. Allen and his supporters contend that the site is likely to create many more jobs, possibly as many as 200.

"I'm investing my own money in this," said Allen. "I'm convinced that it will be successful and I can convince you that these people will be happy when it's done."

Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark has worked with the community groups, Allen and the St. Paul Port Authority to find a compromise site plan. He said that Allen has gone "above and beyond what's required" in developing his site plan and adding amenities and design features that the community wants.

The industrial use and the zoning aren't the issue, Stark added. He rejected the site plan because it isn't compatible with the city's comprehensive plan and the land use plans for the area. Stark noted that the building isn't compatible with surrounding buildings, because it isn't placed up to the street. The Central Corridor Development Strategy and station area plans call for new buildings to be built up to the street, with no setback. Allen wants a setback to allow parking in front of his building.

"The site is zoned I-1 industrial but the design should be like adjacent buildings," said Stark. He encouraged Allen to come back with a site plan that meets city plans.

This was the second appeal of the site plan. UPDC, supported by the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association (DPAI), St. Anthony

Park Community Council and neighbors, appealed the plan to the city's Planning Commission. The Planning Commission upheld the plan in September on a 15-1 vote, prompting the second appeal to the City Council.

One key argument is whether the site plan is consistent with the St. Anthony Park and Merriam Park district plans, plans for redevelopment along Central Corridor and the city's comprehensive plan. City staff argued that the site plan is consistent with those plans and should be approved. Representatives of UPDC, DPAI and the SAPCC disagree.

Site plans need to meet a number of conditions, including consistency with land use plans, to win approval, said former UPDC member Mark Smith. He said it's not enough to consider the site zoning when making land use decisions and called the Industrial Equities plan a "quick fix shot" at redevelopment.

Several speakers said not enough has been done to consider the desires of the neighborhood and what residents want to see developed at the site. Almost a dozen people testified for the appeal.

"This is our neighborhood, this is our community," said Desnoyer Park resident and UPDC member John Schatz. The developer and Port Authority "have not compromised enough for us."

"People who don't live in the area are telling us what we need," said Desnoyer Park resident Peck Tierney.

Others argued that redevelopment needs to bring in more jobs. Yet another point is that even though the site is across Interstate 94 for Desnoyer Park and the Union Park planning district, it is a key gateway to the neighborhood.

UPDC Community Organizer Annie Johnson called the project "a debacle from the very beginning." She and others urged the City

Council to be consistent with plans for the area that call for mixed-use development.

Others said the site could be industrial in use with a better design. "Even if it is industrial zoning, why can't the site plan meet the goals of the city and transit-oriented development?" said SAPCC Member Ray Bryan.

"You can still have traditional neighborhood design in an industrial zone," said DPIA President Carla Olson. With more new development likely as the light rail line's 2014 opening draws near, Olson questioned whether the 650 Pelham site would set a bad precedent for other redevelopment projects if the site plan won approval.

But proponents said much has been done to improve the design. Port Authority project manager Kelly Jameson said the site plan should be approved and that Allen did add design features and a sidewalk that neighborhood residents

want. She noted that the new use will have many more jobs than the trucking firm that stood on the site for years had. Overnight Express, the long-term site tenant, had fewer than a dozen employees and more than 100 trucks in and out each day. The new development would produce more jobs and not have such an intensive traffic impact.

The Midway Chamber of Commerce and St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce joined Allen and the Port Authority in defending the site plan. Midway Chamber representative Ted Davis said the site plan "meets or exceeds" city requirements. Redevelopment of the site will help meet city goals for job creation and add to the property tax base.

"This is an important project, not only for the Midway but for the entire city," said incoming Midway Chamber of Commerce Chairman Mike Zipko.

Tree planting

Continued from page 1

Spears said the City of St. Paul has also been very helpful in the project. She said that through this winter, the Tree Team hopes to work with the city in looking at data from 2005, 2010 and 2011.

"We know who got trees, and if we can put it into a mapping system we can get a visual of where trees actually are planted," she explained.

Although the Tree Team focuses on trees, HMEG has also worked on providing rain barrels, workshops, community gardening and waste reduction activities.

"We have a sustainability theme," Hankerson said. "We're not very hierarchical. If anyone comes with an idea and it has

some merit and doesn't cost money, we will work on it. We just show up—that's our motto."

HMEG volunteers collaborated on a Green Alley event this fall, recruiting tools and neighbors to clean trash and improve run-off in one alley.

They have also helped with 350.org events, promoting bicycling in the neighborhood.

"The HMEG group is a very organic form for residents in the Midway to come together on environmental issues," Spears noted. "I recognize and value grassroots efforts. If people see an issue with the environment, they can come to us and see how we can support each other."

"We're not going to solve the world's problems or save the polar bears, but we can do things in our own neighborhood," Hankerson said.

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District 10 holds Annual Pancake Breakfast Oct. 29



The District 10 Como Community Council held their 3rd Annual Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, October 29 in the cafeteria of the Hubert H. Humphrey Job Corps Center, 1480 N. Snelling Avenue. Pancakes, sausage, orange juice and coffee were served to Como Park neighbors and friends in an effort to raise funds for future District 10 programs. Job Corps Student Government sponsored a festive Kid's Corner with free treats, art, games and face painting.

Hamline Library schedules fall activities

Join our Kids Book Club on November 12 at 1 p.m. as they discuss books, participate in reading activities, and eat treats. Open to readers ages 8-12. New members are welcome!

Teen Book Club meets on November 12 at 2 p.m. Call or ask at the desk for the latest selection.

Does your child love dogs? Paw Pals will be at the library on Saturday, November 19 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Call the library to register your child for this opportunity to build reading skills while reading with a therapy dog. Open to ages 6-12.

Career Solutions, community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing hope and help to people in career transitions since 1974, will be in the library on Tuesdays November 15, 29, and

December 6 from 10 to 11 a.m. to provide drop-in cover letter and resume-writing assistance.

The library will host an open lab on Wednesdays, November 16 and December 7 from 4-5:30 p.m. Patrons will be able to ask questions, get one-on-one computer help, and assistance with basic computer operations. This is a drop-in lab and patrons will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Teen Writing Club meets November 12 at 3 p.m. Join them to share your work in a supportive environment. No sign-up necessary; all are welcome regardless of skill level. Open to ages 11-17.

Join Colleen Dooley, CMT-RYI, for a yoga class at the library, Tuesdays November 15, 29 and December 6 at 11 a.m. Be-

ginners are welcome! This free class is open to the public, no registration required.

Join the fabulous Mighty Midway Storytellers for a storytelling event on December 3 at 11:15 a.m.! All children and families welcome.

Saturday Club meets November 19 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Join the crafting fun as we reduce, re-use, and recycle with repurposed materials!

Toddler and preschool storytimes are offered every Friday at 10:30 a.m. Bring your child to share in the joys of reading!

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.

16 Central High students named National Merit Semi-Finalists

The National Merit Scholarship Corporation recently announced that 16 Central High School students had been selected as Semifinalists in the National Merit Competition. The students are:

Jill Bachelder, Anria Brod, Amelia Burger, Alex Dudman, Benjamin Feigenbaum, Nathan Gagne, Jon Goetz, Nicoletta Loverso, Anthony Maxam, Dean Maxam, Hannah Nesser, Do-Hyoung Park, Matthew Peterson, Ian Shank, Alexander Sherman, Max Timmons National Merit Finalist will be selected in February 2012.

The following Central students were named as commended students: Cleome Bernick-Roehler, Chloe Booth, Tess Chudzik, Julie Griep, Sam Hage, Aidan Morzenti, Jack Nelson, Monica Ngo, Rebecca Rucks, Madeleine Schafer, Dylan Shinn, Helen Wieffering

COMMUNITY EVENTS AND MUSICAL PERFORMANCES AT HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

Hamline Theatre Presents God's Country

November 4, 5, 10, 11, 12

Hamline University Theatre will open its 81st season with its fall production, Steven Dietz's *God's Country*. Thought provoking and challenging, this show examines the inner workings of the white supremacist group, The Order, during the 1980's and reaches to the present to explore the relationship between these groups and today's society. Because of the mature content, it is not recommended for very young audiences.

Tickets: \$8 adults, \$5 for students and seniors.
Performances: November 4, 5, 10, 11 at 7:30 p.m., and November 12 at 8 p.m.

After the show on November 10, Hamline will host a discussion with members of the American Civil Liberties Union, Jewish Community Action, and Advocates for Human Rights. For reservations, call 651-523-2905.

Annual Tree Lighting Celebration December 1



Kick off the holiday season with Hamline University's annual Tree Lighting Celebration. Join President Linda Hanson, students, faculty and staff members, and your neighbors on Thursday, December 1 from 4:30 to 5 p.m. outside the Bush Student Center to "light-up" Hewitt Avenue. Come and enjoy cocoa, coffee, cookies, candy canes, and carols! If you have any questions please contact Tracy at 651-523-2707 or tsparby@hamline.edu

UPCOMING HOLIDAY CONCERTS

(These concerts are free and open to the public. For details, call 651-523-2296.)

Hamline Jazz Ensemble & Jazz Combo Concert

December 3
Saturday, December 3 at 7 p.m.
Anne Simley Theatre

A Cappella Choir Christmas Concert

December 4
George Chu, director
Sunday, December 4 at 4 p.m.
Hamline United Methodist Church,
1514 Englewood Avenue

University Women's Chorale & Hamline Winds Concert

December 10
Kathy Thomsen and Janet Greene, directors
Saturday, December 10 at 2 p.m.
Sundin Music Hall

Hamline Orchestra Concert

December 11
Yali You, director
Sunday, December 11 at 3 p.m.
Sundin Music Hall



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