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Songs of Redemption...

'Inukshuk Pass' aims to put St. Paul on the map

By JAN WILLMS

Where is Inukshuk Pass? The name brings to mind a crossing in Arctic country that may have been discovered by some famous explorer. But it's a band, right here in St. Paul, whose sound has been compared to artists like Santana and Los Lobos.

The roots of the band members have been steeped in the Midway and North End of St. Paul since childhood, and the group is putting Inukshuk Pass on the map—right here in River City.

Patti Ryan, vocalist and songwriter; Paul Weyandt on bass; Mark Martin on guitar and Dave DeGennaro on drums and percussion perform songs that replicate the hills and valleys of life's experiences. Inukshuk Pass reverberates with the strength that comes from a tightly knit group whose members have had longtime connections.

They are living the dream of every teenager who has ever plugged into an amp out in their parents' garage with an electric guitar. They have given up everything to reinvent themselves as the next eclectic sound that combines folk, rock, jazz and blues. The only difference is that these performers are not 18; they are baby boomers who will never see

50 again.

"Paul and I have known each other since we were eight years old," Martin said in a recent interview, as the band members hung out together on a weekend afternoon at the apartment shared by Weyandt and Ryan, who have been married for 31 years.

"We used to ride bikes together, back when kids rode bikes," added Weyandt. The two grew up in the North End, and met Ryan when all attended Washington High School.

"We all met in a high school jazz band, under the direction of Felix James," Ryan said. "One of our first gigs was for a party for George Latimer when he was mayor. I remember we played on the Paddleford boat for his party; we were about 16."

They had a bar cover band for 25 years, joined by drummer DeGennaro in 1994. Amber Gay currently sings backup vocals and has done some studio work with the band on one of its CDs.

"We were all working day jobs, raising our families and doing music every weekend," Ryan said. "I had four kids, a day job, a paper route and my music. It was a tough schedule." Weyandt has worked with homeless children for years through Catholic Char-



Inukshuk Pass' sounds has been compared to artists like Santana and Los Lobos. The roots of the band members have been steeped in the Midway and North End of St. Paul since childhood. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

ties. Martin has been a carpenter.

And through it all, when she could find time, Ryan kept writing songs—about life and redemption and hope.

After working as a Head Start teacher for Community Action for 18 years, the requirements for Ryan's job changed. She had to decide whether to return to school or pursue her musical interests full-time.

"I knew I wouldn't have had time to go to school, work and concentrate on my music," she said. And then life, like it sometimes does, helped her make her decision.

Caught up in the economic downturn, she and her husband lost their home to foreclosure. With their four sons grown, they purchased a bus, christened it "The Happy Bus" and drove it to Duluth in June of 2010, where they lived in it. Ryan wrote songs and let her creative juices flow, creating a painting for every song she wrote.

"We lived in our bus, sold art and played music," Ryan recalled. "We got rid of everything we had but what would fit in the bus. We lived like a couple of gypsies."

She said ideas for songs were waking her up at night, literally. The group had made its first CD, "Chasin' Trains," in 2009. That CD and their second, "Don't Look Down," produced in 2011, were recorded at Winterland Studios in Minneapolis.

Ryan recalls how the band saved to make its first CD at the same studio where musicians like Lenny Kravitz, R. Kelly, and Black Eyed Peas, among others, have recorded.

"I cashed in my retirement," she said. But the scrimping and

saving and sacrifices were worth it. The first CD sold 1,000 copies and paid for the recording costs of the second one.

Ryan and Weyandt moved back to St. Paul in March 2011 and to an apartment in the Midway last October.

The apartment, which may seem cramped for rehearsals and recording, nonetheless offers a rich view of the neighborhood through its unencumbered windows.

Ryan said she likes to sit at the table by the window in their studio, where the band rehearses and she paints and writes.

Although Ryan writes most of the songs, Martin has also written one for each CD. "I mostly cater and clean up after the band," Weyandt joked.

"There are a lot of different genres in this music," Ryan noted, "that have influenced each of us. I was influenced by Peter, Paul and Mary and Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. My childhood had a lot of R & B and Motown," she added.

Martin cited Jimi Hendrix as an inspiration, and Weyandt mentioned Will Lee and Charles Mingus.

"It's about how everything fits together, which is magic," Martin explained. "Everything's got to fit; we need the right plan for it to sound big, because we're not a big band."

When asked about the unusual name for the band, Ryan said the name is an Inuit word for a stone marker indicating safe passage.

Ryan said she feels that everyone in the band adds their own color to it.

"One of our first gigs was for a party for George Latimer when he was mayor."

- Patti Ryan
Inukshuk Pass



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Monitor in a Minute

Planning Commission reviews North End plan

Technical changes to the North End neighborhood's new district plan were made Feb. 24 by the St. Paul Planning Commission. The commission had adopted the plan changes Feb. 10 but didn't make some of the needed technical changes.

The latest resolution recommends that the City Council decertify older land use plans. These include the 1991 Jackson-Arlington Small Area Plan, the 2005 Rice Street Small Area Plan, the 2006 Loeb Lake Small Area Plan and the district plan that was adopted in 2005 and amended in 2006. Elements of these previous plans are incorporated into the new district plan.

In recent years city planning staff and the Planning Commission have emphasized decertifying older plans, especially in areas where redevelopment has been completed or newer plans are covering the area.

The plan calls for zoning changes in a number of areas in the North End, to reflect redevelopment patterns in some areas and make land uses more compatible in others. The plan has the support of District 6 and many land owners but is opposed by some property owners who want to keep their long-standing industrial or commercial designations.

The plan goes to the City Council for final approval this spring.

Prior Avenue bikeway discussed March 21

The proposed Prior Avenue bikeway will be the topic of a public hearing before the St. Paul City Council at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 21 at City Hall. The project, which won approval from the Union Park District Council (UP-DC) and Hamline Midway Coalition last fall, covers Prior Avenue between Summit Avenue and Pierce Butler Route.

The \$41,000 project was funded in the city's 2010-2011 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB). It was proposed by Mister Michael Recycles Bicycles, a bicycle repair and giveaway program at 520 N. Prior Av. The project is included in city bicycle and transportation plans.

The major aspect of the project is that share the road arrows or "sharrows" would be painted on the street surface in Merriam Park neighborhood. The street is wide enough that a bike lane could be striped on the northern part.

More than a dozen Merriam Park residents attended a community meeting in August 2011 to discuss the plans. The greatest concern raised at that time was that on-street parking would be lost. St. Paul Public Works staff said that won't be the case.

Prior already has a parking ban on the west side of the street. A residential permit parking district east of Prior between Summit and Laurel avenues, as well as overflow parking from University of St. Thomas and St. Mark's School, add to the parking crunch. About 90 on-street spaces would have been lost with such a ban.

Traffic increases north of

Marshall above the 5,000 vehicle mark so on-street bike lanes should be striped there, according to Public Works staff. To accommodate bike lanes on Prior between Marshall and Iglehart avenues, some parking on the west side of Prior would be eliminated. Between Iglehart and St. Anthony avenues parking would be allowed on the east side of the street but eliminated on the west side. Between St. Anthony and University avenues parking would be allowed on the east side of Prior. In the industrial areas to the north much existing parking would remain on-street.

requirement.

The ordinance changes proposed would base the amount of required parkland dedication at the time of platting just on the total area of new lots being created that actually create a need for more park space. In some platting cases in industrial areas, questions have been raised about whether park space is needed. Another amendment removes the link between the amount of parkland dedicated to the number of parking spaces in a proposed development. The city has recently changed its parking requirements to require fewer spaces. Instead, different measures of new development density and intensity of use would be used to set the parkland dedication requirement for each new development.

Changes to this part of the ordinance are considered essential to efforts to creating park areas along the Central Corridor light rail line, which has land use plans and zoning in place to encourage more density and fewer off-street parking spaces.

Only two people addressed the commission, Friends of the Parks and Trails Executive Director Peggy Lynch spoke for the ordinance changes. She noted the current ordinance went through a number of amendments before it was adopted by the City Council in 2007, and that it hasn't had the results parks advocates had hoped for.

James McLean of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce also spoke. He said that while parkland is an asset to the community, city officials need to look carefully at whether or not new regulations would be too burdensome.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

Changes to parkland dedication ordinance discussed Feb. 10

Proposed changes to St. Paul's parkland dedication ordinance are in the hands of a Planning Commission committee, following a February 10 public hearing. The changes will be brought back to the Planning Commission, most likely in March, and then sent on to the St. Paul City Council for a second public hearing and vote.

St. Paul requires developers to either dedicate land for park and open space purposes or to pay a fee. The ordinance has been in place for several years but some park advocates have questioned whether the ordinance as it currently stands is effective in creating parkland. There are also concerns that the ordinance is being applied in cases of plat splits, where parkland may not be needed. The City Council does have the option to waive the ordinance

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St. Paul wraps up first phase of pre-spring tree removal

By JANE MCCLURE

St. Paul's structured removal of ash trees in selected neighborhoods coincided with the Christian holiday of Ash Wednesday on February 22, as that is when St. Paul Parks and Recreation wrapped up informational meetings on the first phase of pre-spring tree removal.

Trees on the East Side and Como were removed in late February and early March. Highland will lose about 159 trees in early March. City officials are continuing the structured removal program in response to the destructive insects and their larvae.

In some cases, some residents have asked to have their boulevard trees spared. But the dilemma for residents is this: the city can remove and replace trees now. If emerald ash borer spreads quickly, as it has in other communities, St. Paul could find itself spending resources removing trees and not replacing them. So keeping an ash tree could mean risking not getting a replacement tree later.

"It is spreading and it is spreading in a lot of different directions," said Cy Kosel, natural resources manager for Parks and Recreation.

About three dozen people turned out for the meetings. The District 10/District 6 meeting was February 16. People had many questions but all of the meetings lacked the large turnouts and sometimes vehement protests heard at ash tree removal meetings in previous years. That may be a sign that there is more understanding of the threat the city's trees face.

Ninety-two trees were slated for removal in the Como area, with 56 in District 10 and 36 in District 6. Streets affected include Chatsworth, Milton, Montana, Avon, St. Albans, Maywood, Arlington, Schletti and Cohansey. Cohansey between Wheelock and Arlington was set to lose more than two dozen trees.

Emerald ash borers are small, iridescent green insects. They fly and lay eggs on tree bark. The eggs hatch and the larvae bore tiny holes into the



Trees on the East Side and Como were removed in late February and early March. Highland will lose about 159 trees in early March. City officials are continuing the structured removal program in response to the destructive insects and their larvae. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

bark. They then feed on the tree's circulatory system and eventually kill trees. The insects are from Asia and have been in this country for several years. They attack all species of ash trees, and can affect trees regardless of their age and health.

Although there are chemical treatments for emerald ash borers, there is debate about their long-term effectiveness. Residents can get city permits to treat boulevard trees, but must pay for the treatments themselves.

St. Paul's approach to the emerald ash borer problem focuses more on removal and replacement of trees in selected neighborhoods. Citywide, about 503 trees will be removed this spring; another 500-600 could be cut down in the fall. The city tries to remove about 1,000 trees each year. Trees are removed in the spring and fall, so as not to coincide with the time that emerald ash borers are most active. City officials don't want to spread the problem by trans-

porting live insects on felled trees.

Ash trees are also removed and replaced as part of residential street paving projects.

St. Paul has about 35,000 ash trees on boulevards alone, said City Arborist Rachel Coyle.

This is the third year for distressed or weakened ash trees to be removed in selected St. Paul neighborhoods. Emerald ash borers were discovered three years ago in South St. Anthony Park. Last year an infestation was found in the Summit-Dale neighborhood. City forestry staff believe it will be just a matter of time before St. Paul and other communities lose most if not all of the ash trees.

And because Highland Park neighborhood has the highest percentage of ash trees on its boulevards, structured removal could continue there for years to come. Coyle said Highland has about 12,000 boulevard trees. About 2,700 are ash.

Como also has a very high percentage of ash trees on its

boulevards. For years the city allowed property developers to select and plant boulevard trees. Ash were popular because they grow quickly and are attractive trees.

The first year of structured removal, 'we wanted to share the pain,' said Kosel. Trees were targeted and removed in all seven council wards. But since then the focus every spring and fall has been to remove trees in areas where some level of decline is seen, and to target areas where ash trees of all species are most prevalent. Trees are surveyed to check for decline. One sign is thinning canopies. Another, seen in winter, is if a tree has attracted woodpeckers.

The city is only targeting "the worst of the worst" ash trees, said Parks and Recreation Public Services Manager Brad Meyer. Finding that ash borers had spread three miles last year to Summit-Dale increased the sense of urgency for the city, said Meyer.

One change from the origi-

nal structured removal program is that crews will leave healthy ash trees and not do clear-cutting any more. Crews are also allowing home owners to request a different type of tree than those proposed for a block. Typically blocks are replanted with two species. With disease-resistant elm, hackberry, red oaks and maples among the varieties offered, tree species are chosen to fit into specific neighborhoods and complement the architecture of surrounding homes.

Home owners can also ask that a boulevard tree not be replaced at all.

The city is also using chemical treatments in areas where there are confirmed infestations of the borers, to help slow the spread of the insects. Also, ash trees are left in the two areas of confirmed infestation, to keep a food source for the insects. That slows the spread of the borers.

Another step, started last year, is to release stingless wasps in some areas. The wasps eat emerald ash borers and aren't harmful to humans. But it can take a few years for a wasp population to take hold.

Other steps the city is taking to protect its trees include a citizens' forestry program, to encourage neighbors to work together to water and take care of boulevard trees. The city also is providing more tree care education on its website and in printed materials.

Kosel noted that the city's approach to the emerald ash borer issue will change with resources and as the disease spreads. One huge concern is that many of the city's river corridor trees, which are on steep banks, are ash. Minneapolis' river areas already have a borer infestation. Once the insects arrive here, crews will not be able to easily remove trees from steep slopes and banks.

The spread of the borers will also affect riverfront parks including Meeker Island in Desnoyer Park neighborhood. Kosel said in a matter of years those parks' tree canopy could be "decimated" by emerald ash borer.



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Busway proposals are back in St. Paul

By JANE MCCLURE

Rapid bus service proposals for West Seventh Street, Snelling Avenue/Ford Parkway and Lake Street/Marshall Avenue are the topic of upcoming community open houses. While that may be welcome news for transit riders, it is reigniting familiar debate in the West End over what bus rapid transit would mean on West Seventh.

The three bus corridors are among 11 being studied by Metro Transit. A recent evaluation showed that Snelling and West Seventh are the two routes should be implemented in the near term. Other lines, including Marshall/Lake Street, are recommended for further studies.

Metro Transit's timeline calls for selection of the first corridor or corridors for implementation in early 2012. Advance planning, engineering and construction would take place in 2012-2014, with operations getting underway in late 2014. Service would start in additional corridors in 2015-2030. Open houses were held in each proposal last year.

Upcoming area open houses are: 6-8 p.m. Tuesday, February 28, at the Mississippi Market, community room, 1500 W. 7th St., St. Paul; 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Thurs-

day, March 1, at the Central Library, Doty Board Room, 300 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis and 6-7:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 7, 6 to 7:30 p.m., Hamline Midway Library, 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave.

Comments can also be made by email to Metro Transit Service Development at ATCS@metc.state.mn.us.

Development of bus rapid transit is a priority for Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council. Council Chairperson Susan Haigh highlighted the need for bus rapid transit in her "state of the region" address earlier this year.

"Rapid bus service has been proven in other markets and provides faster travel times and better customer facilities that lead to higher ridership in these corridors," said Charles Carlson, manager of transitway projects for Metro Transit, in a press release. "The investment in these corridors has resulted in 15% to 25% better travel times and 20% to 40% increases in ridership."

In other regions studied, capital costs ranged from \$1 million to \$3 million per mile for initial implementation of rapid bus features in a corridor. For full implementation, the investment can be \$3 million to \$6 million per

mile. "Through this arterial study we plan on getting a better idea of both costs and ridership for our market, and will then provide the Council some ideas on how to best proceed," Carlson said.

News that West Seventh Street is again being considered for bus rapid transit dismayed Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune and members of the West Seventh/Ford Road Federation. "It's the Riverview Corridor all over again," said Thune. "I don't know how many times a neighborhood can say no."

Thune said area residents and businesses want good transit service but not at the expense of parking businesses need. "You look at what happened on Central Corridor, where businesses were told there would be little to no loss of parking. Those businesses have lost most of their parking."

"It doesn't seem like they want a lot of community input," she said.

In the late 1990s and early 2000 the Federation and Highland District Council battled with Ramsey County and Metropolitan Council officials over the Riverview Corridor, a proposed bus rapid transit project that would connect the Minneapolis

St. Paul International Airport and Mall of America to downtown St. Paul and Maplewood Mall.

The main routes through St. Paul were West and East Seventh Street.

Riverview Corridor was shelved in March 2002 after then-Governor Tim Pawlenty took back \$40 million of a \$46 million state allocation toward that project. The state had a budget shortfall and Riverview was one of several projects losing previously allocated funds.

No community groups have come out in support or opposition to the Snelling/Ford Parkway route, or to the Lake/Marshall route. The Lake/Marshall route, which is recommended for further study, would include Marshall Avenue from the west city limits to Snelling Avenue.

Bus rapid transit differs from dedicated busway service because buses can operate in the right-of-way with mixed traffic, rather than in a dedicated bus lane. At last fall's open house Metro Transit staff indicated that the bus rapid transit can shave several minutes off of a commute.

Bus rapid transit routes would offer such amenities as heated and more secure shelters, real-time arrival signs and fares

paid before a rider boards. Riders could board on both bus doors. Curbs would be raised and extended for rider convenience. Buses would have signal priority, meaning fewer waits at traffic lights. Buses would have fewer stations, with only two to three per mile.

Rapid bus service is proposed to operate every 7.5 to 15 minutes, depending on the corridor. If rapid bus service were to be implemented in a corridor, the current local service would still be maintained but at lower frequency, Carlson said.

The primary difference between the rapid bus or arterial BRT and highway BRT is that the latter operates on dedicated high-occupancy-vehicle lanes or bus-only shoulder lanes. Rapid bus service operates on arterial streets in the same lanes as other traffic.

Rapid bus service is part of larger plan for doubling transit ridership.

The Metropolitan Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan calls for a doubling of transit ridership from a base of 73 million in 2003 to 147 million in 2030. "This is an affordable way to help reach our goal and enhance the travel experience for our customers," Carlson said.

Inukshuk Pass

Continued from page 1

"Color is important to us," she claimed, "a sense of beauty in the music." She cited the drummer's rhythm, the guitarist's performance and recording abilities and the bass player's technique and personality. As for her, she said she likes painting pictures with words and playing music that draws people in.

She said her songwriting is based on experiences of life; sometimes her own, sometimes other peoples' lives, coming through a struggle.

In her own life, she has had a child with cancer and another who battled alcoholism and addiction that led to prison time.

"My children are all fine

now," Ryan said, "but there is pain in life; we can't avoid it. The music inspires some hope."

"I wear rose-colored glasses," she conceded. "I see the best in almost everything, and it's important that people have access to healing music."

Ryan recalled how one of her songs was a favorite of Jazzy J, a producer of Twin Cities Radio and huge supporter of independent artists, who died in June 2011 after battling cancer for several years.

The song was called "Imagine All Your Tears," and Jazzy J's favorite line was "Cry until you're finished, then go looking for what's beautiful in life."

Inukshuk Pass has been spreading its wings with its music. Besides playing at venues such as Dunn Brothers Coffee, Nina's Coffee and the Mounds Park Tavern, the group works on recording in their Midway apartment.



Inukshuk Pass has been spreading its wings with its music. Besides playing at venues such as Dunn Brothers Coffee, Nina's Coffee and the Mounds Park Tavern, the group works on recording in their Midway apartment. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

They have written music for a documentary, "Life, Lipstick and Laughter," based on women in Minnesota recreating their lives with a holistic approach. Ryan is

also working on a project with a concert of songs based on Ernest Hemingway's short stories.

In April, the group is releasing a music video at the Amster-

dam Bar and Hall.

Ryan is currently writing "A Survivor's Song," a piece for the Veterans' Scoop for Troops event April 29. She said local media celebrities serve ice cream in Eagan in support of people who have lost a loved one in the military to war.

"These people have experienced loss and sorrow, but my song is about surviving," Ryan said.

She said that at every concert, people approach the group and say the music has changed their world.

"Sometimes I ask myself why I am doing this," Ryan said, "and I am surrounded by people who remind me that our music has affected so many lives, and not to be discouraged if it hasn't touched the world yet. If it just touches our friends and our families and people in the neighborhood, that's enough for me."

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GROW YOUR BACKYARD HOMESTEAD

Central Corridor starts up again

By JANE MCCLURE

When construction of Central Corridor light rail on University Avenue starts again March 1, the lessons of 2011 will benefit businesses and residents affected in 2012. How construction will be staged and monitored has been discussed at numerous meetings between business leaders, University of Minnesota officials, local elected officials and Central Corridor project staff. Those who drive, walk or ride the bus in the construction zones this year should see a difference.

"We've looked at how things went in 2012 and which areas need improvement," Dan Soler of the Central Corridor project office. "We learned a lot."

"We want to be ready to roll," said Metropolitan Council Chair Susan Haigh.

Also in mid-February the City of St. Paul, Metropolitan County and business groups along University hosted meetings to share information. Owners of businesses affected last year by light rail construction gave advice to those facing the bulldozers and barricades this year. Schedules and project staging were shared at another meeting.

Increased outreach to the University business began February 13 with a panel discussion led by business owners who were affected by last year's construction. Those business owners told their peers to be plan for disruptions ranging from unexpected street closures to disrupted phone, Internet and utilities. Business owners

also told their peers to anticipate a drop in sales and to do stepped-up marketing and outreach.

The University Avenue Betterment Association (UABA) has been tracking businesses and storefront vacancies on university from the west city limits to Rice Street. UABA Interim Executive Director John Vaughn has found that vacancies have remained steady; at about 21.6 percent in May 2011 to 21.5 percent in February 2012. There are currently 314 occupied retail storefronts. Malls and franchise businesses were virtually unchanged. But Vaughn predicts that there could be more impacts due to construction this year, due to the large number of small "Mom and Pop" businesses on the east end of University. These businesses rely more on on-street parking and may be most at risk.

Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark, whose ward was most affected last year, said the outreach meetings are important. One meeting focused on businesses and the other on construction staging. But although each meeting attracted about 50 people, he is concerned that some

businesses still won't be prepared.

The Central Corridor Project Office is making changes to help those affected by construction. Shorter work zones, stepped-up efforts to rebuild cross streets and improved pedestrian access will be a focus in 2012, as a result input about the project. Project staff are focusing on lessons learned and ways to make construction go more smoothly this year, said Soler.

The 11-mile, \$957 million project was 45 percent complete by the end of 2011. A mild winter has meant construction has continued in downtown St. Paul through January and February. Work on University Avenue between the eastern city limits and Hamline Avenue wrapped up in November, as did much work around the University of Minnesota campus.

In 2012 rail construction on University Avenue will include Minneapolis' Prospect Park area and between Hamline Avenue and Rice Street in St. Paul. One huge complaint last year was idle work zones and the mile-long length of work zones. Crews from Walsh Construction



How construction will be staged and monitored has been discussed at numerous meetings between business leaders, University of Minnesota officials, local elected officials and Central Corridor project staff. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)



would fence off an area, remove the old pavement and then leave University torn up for long periods of time. That irked business owners, especially those at Midway Marketplace. Small business owners there complained that a torn up street and parked construction vehicles obscured their stores for weeks on end.

In 2011 more work crews were added to speed up construction. Soler said this year there will be more workers on the job right away, so that business owners aren't looking at fenced off and torn up stretches of street for months at a time. More will be done to keep construction vehicles from blocking the view of businesses and from parking on private property.

Pedestrian access to stores and bus stops were another complaint. At first temporary bus stops in the middle of the street couldn't be accessed by people with disabilities. Wooden bus stop ramps and protective railings were added to provide access.

At storefronts, when utility

blocked customer access to businesses, the project staff had temporary wooden bridges installed to get people into businesses. This year more will be done to schedule utility relocations to minimize business disruptions. There will be more frequent checks for compliance with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to ensure that street crossings, bus stops and store access ramps are accessible.

Directional signage will be clearer and businesses will be provided with more durable signs. That pleases business groups, who are also happy that more emphasis is being put on business outreach and planning before construction starts. Matt Kramer of the St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce said stepped out outreach is needed.

More will be done to monitor directional signs, said Soler. One problem last year was that work crews and members of the public would move signs, much to the consternation of project staff.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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Prevention chore list in spring can be important advance work for home, garage and garden

By DEBORAH BROTZ

HOME & GARAGE

Gutters and Downspouts

- Remove debris from gutters and downspouts and patch any holes. Make sure the downspouts direct water at least 5 feet away from your foundation walls.

Reattach gutters that have pulled away from the house.

Run a hose on the roof and check for proper drainage. If leaks exist, dry the area and use caulking or epoxy to seal the leak.

Windows and Doors

- Inspect/replace caulk on windows, doors, and other penetrations, such as dryer vents and cable wire holes.

Clean screening and check for holes. If holes are bigger than a quarter of an inch, that is plenty of room for bugs to climb in.

Patch holes or replace the screen. Save bad screen to patch holes next year.

Tighten or repair any loose or damaged frames and repaint. Replace broken, worn, or missing hardware.

Wind can ruin screens and frames if they are allowed to flap and move so make sure they are securely fastened.

Tighten and lubricate door hinges and closers.

Furnace

- Replace or clean your furnace filter. It should be checked once a month and replaced or cleaned as needed.

Have a professional air conditioning contractor inspect and maintain your system as recommended by the manufacturer.



Hot Water Heater

- Check your water heater. If you have a gas-fired water heater, make sure it is venting properly.

Check around the base of your water heater for evidence of leaks. If water leakage or rust is found, the water heater should be replaced.

Plumbing

- Check the shutoff valve at each plumbing fixture to make sure they function.

Know the location of all valves and what equipment and water lines they serve.

Siding, Fascia and Trim

- Clean siding with a pressure washer to keep mold from growing. Check all wood surfaces for weathering and paint failure.

Examine fascia or soffit boards. Replace if they are soft or rotting because they may allow rain in your attic.

Foundation

- Check foundation walls, floors, concrete, and masonry for cracking, heaving or deterioration.

Roof

- Inspect roof surface flashing, eaves, and soffits. Check flashings around all surface projections and sidewalls.

Inspect the roof for damaged, loose or blistered shingles.

LAWN & GARDEN

Lawn Care

It is important that you wait until the soil temperatures rise and you get some growth before attempting any renovation program on your lawn.

- Rake to remove leaves and to control thatch.

If you have a moss problem, apply a product called lawn sand to your lawn.

Aerate your lawn in the

spring to help encourage root growth, relieve compaction, and dry out any wet areas on the lawn.

If your lawn is riddled with bare patches due to dog spots, heavy traffic or neglect, apply grass seed to fill in those bare patches. The solution is called "over seeding."

Lawns can be fertilized organically by using compost and mulching mowers or with chemical fertilizers.

Trees & Shrubs

- Cut back and trim all vegetation and overgrown bushes from structures.

Clean up fallen limbs, branches and other debris around the home to discourage the proliferation of wood-eating insects such as termites.

Flowers & Garden

Resist the urge to start digging in your flower beds too early. When it's dry enough, you can start to dig beds and add compost or manure in preparation for planting.

Minnesota will be lacking shades of purple this spring. When temperatures warmed this winter, lilac branches began to bud out, only to be frozen off when the mercury dropped to zero. Some home gardeners watched their crocuses and daffodils come out of dormancy in December, only to freeze back down. Flower beds will have spotty shows of crocuses and daffodils, but they should come back next year. For now, protect them by covering them up.

Despite a lack of showy flowers this spring, people should not be in a rush to prune the bushes. Leave them alone and chances are their branches will be filled with blossoms in 2013.

Gardeners who didn't use mulch last fall can protect plants by covering them now. It's a good time to spread mulch around trees, shrubs, and perennials. Bags of mulch can be used, but if they are not available, use leaves.

Remove a winter protection of mounded earth from roses. Prune rose bushes before they start to leaf out.

Remove spent flowers from bulbs, but leave the rest of the plant as is.

Pull weeds from your beds and borders before they have a chance to take hold and spread.

Tend to your compost if it has been neglected over the winter. If you do not have a compost bin, start one.

Add new plants in your garden such as hardy annuals and summer blooming bulbs after all threat of frost has passed.

Stake plants that may be prone to wind damage during unpredictable spring weather.

If you're itching to get your hands in the dirt gardening, here are six early spring vegetables that you can start, from seed or transplants, outside before the danger of frost is past.

You can plant peas up to two months before the average frost free date. You can begin direct seeding spinach in the garden four to six weeks before the average last frost date. For best-tasting beets, sow directly outside up to one month before the average last frost date. You can sow carrot seeds direct in to the garden up to one month before the average last frost date. You can plant lettuce directly in the garden up to six weeks before the average last frost date. Radishes may be sown outdoors as early as April 10 in Minnesota. The average last frost date of St. Paul is May 21.

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North End Improvement Club honored by the Neighborhood Honor Roll

By JANE MCCLURE

Throughout St. Paul's history, citizen-activist groups have made a difference. One of the city's oldest groups, the North End Improvement Club, was honored Jan. 20 at the city's annual Neighborhood Honor Roll event. The club was one of the nominees from District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council.

The club began at a time when St. Paul had numerous neighborhood improvement or betterment clubs. These clubs served as a combination of local chamber of commerce and citizens' action group, promoting neighborhoods and working to make needed public improvements. North End and the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association are two of only a few that have survived.

"We've been around for a long time," said George Kramlinger, a North End native and longtime club member. "We've done a lot for the community over the years."

Kramlinger points out that the North End Improvement Club played a key role in the way the North End neighborhood grew and developed. "A lot of things would not have happened had it not been for the club," he said.

Improvement clubs, neighborhood associations and home owners' groups filled roles that district planning councils, business associations and community development corporations fill today. A key reason was the way St. Paul city government operated at that time. There were no City Council ward seats. Everyone was elected at-large. It was often difficult for working-class neighborhoods like the North End to elect a representative to what was then called the Common Council.

"The various commercial and improvement clubs of the city were born of necessity," one North End Improvement Club history tells us. "Under our form of city government it became apparent that certain districts of the city might be neglected and not receive the attention and consideration they should from a Common Council of six members, elected at large, all of whom might, under the City Charter, reside in the same ward."

In the club's Silver Jubilee History, founding club president J.W. Smith recalled that North End Improvement Club was not the community's first improvement club. Its forerunner was the North End League. "Their last activity was a carnival held in the rear of a few lots. . . When they came to count the cash returns, there did not seem to be any, and occasioned quite a controversy between the members. That also was the finish of the North End League."

The North End Improvement Club got its start in April 1922, when a young man named James J. Hogan appeared at the office of the local newspaper, the North



North End Improvement Club members George Kramlinger and John Thoemke recall how the North End Improvement Club got its start in April 1922, when a young man named James J. Hogan appeared at the office of the local newspaper, the North Central Progress. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

Central Progress. Hogan had 1,000 handbills printed, which he distributed throughout the community. The handbills asked residents and business owners to meet at Hedman's Hall, 916 Rice St., above where Hedman Brothers Dry Goods operated.

Hogan lived on Hatch Avenue and worked as a railroad brakeman. He was active in many of the early North End Improvement Club projects. One project he worked on was the acquisition of the first properties that first made up the Rice-Lawton playground. "Herman Wenzel was Commissioner of Parks and Playgrounds at that time and the Club gave him no rest until they finally succeeded in getting the two blocks which now constitute the Rice-Lawton Playgrounds," the club history said.

J.W. Smith, the first club president, lived on Rice Street and worked for the St. Paul Public Schools. After the club was incorporated, club members began to make the North End's concerns known at City Hall. Members lobbied for better streets, construction of a sewer system and installation of street lights. Traffic safety was a concern, so they sought improved crosswalks and stop and go signs. (The stop and go signs often stood in the middle of the intersections back then.)

They called for city garbage collection and demanded postal delivery service. It's astonishing to realize that this ambitious agenda was the club's first-year agenda.

The improvements drew the notice of other North End neighbors. "The community began to believe in this club and the membership grew. By January 8, 1923, the treasurer showed a balance of \$240.23."

For many years, club members closely scrutinized city projects in the neighborhood and served as watchdogs for the community interests. It's not unusual to find references to North End Improvement Club members at City Council meetings over the years, as they lobbied for the neighborhood's interests. Not all was work for the young North

End Improvement Club. The club held the first of its many fall festivals in 1923. The club also became one of the organizing groups behind the annual Rice Street Festival. In the early days most of the events were held at the Rice and Lawson ballfield and at the improvement club's lots.

By fall of 1924, the club's treasury had swelled to \$1,806.47. That made the group the envy of other neighborhood-based organizations.

Over the years, the club took on a wide variety of projects. These include:

- *Construction of a clubhouse at 1079 Rice Street, at a cost of \$25,000. (The club sold the hall several years ago. The building is now occupied by the Klub Haus.)

- *Construction of what is the former Washington Technology Middle School magnet. For many years, Mechanics Arts was the high school for North End youths. Area residents clamored for a school that was closer to their homes, so that students would not have such long walks to and from school.

In those days the city had direct control over the public schools so members lobbied the Common Council for a new secondary school for the North End. Washington was built as a result of a \$5 million bond issue, which also funded the construction of Wilson, Marshall and Monroe schools, which opened in 1926. For many years after that, the club made donations to help Washington buy items for the classroom and extra-curricular activities.

- *One of the club's most challenging projects was not even in St. Paul. Members were active in establishing a swimming beach at McCarron's Lake in the 1920s. One of the biggest stumbling blocks was the fact that then-Sheriff John Wagener, owned the site desired for the beach. He refused to sell for less than \$20,000, and state and county officials eventually became involved with North End Improvement Club's efforts to condemn the property as a way of acquiring it. Wagener's opposition to the beach project cost him his job.

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Prospective tenants consider Hamline Park Playground building



Efforts to find a new tenant for the Hamline Park building are continuing. The first of two tours for prospective tenants was held February 15, with a second tour slated for March 7. Deadline for proposals is 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 28.

By JANE MCCLURE

Efforts to find a new tenant for the Hamline Park building are continuing. The first of two tours for prospective tenants was held February 15, with a second tour slated for March 7. Deadline for proposals is 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 28. It will most likely be later this spring before the new tenant or tenants are selected.

The request for proposals for the property was released in January. The building, which was restored years ago in a major communitywide effort, has been vacant since the Hamline Midway Coalition moved out last year. The city owns the building and wants to find a new tenant.

How the property could be

reused is a question mark. It is zoned for residential use, as is the adjacent Hamline Park. It could accommodate offices but other uses could need variances or some type of city permit. Building permits for leasehold improvements will also require extra scrutiny.

The lease proposals will be reviewed by Parks and Recreation staff, with an eye toward the best combination of price, terms and ability to fit into the surrounding community. According to the RFP the prospective tenants have to show how their operation/business will operate within the surrounding community, a business plan, business historic and debates about their potential investment in capital

and historic repairs. \$3,000 in earnest money is also required.

RFP documents are sensitive to the building's locally designated historic status. "The City of St. Paul is seeking a tenant that has the vision and business skills necessary to maximize the communal benefit and economic potential of such a unique setting," the RFP said. It adds that city officials will select "the best overall proposal that enhances the vitality of the area while balancing the needs of neighborhood park users. Being adjacent to a neighborhood park, walking distance to light rail, and near (Hamline University) gives this site tremendous re-use potential."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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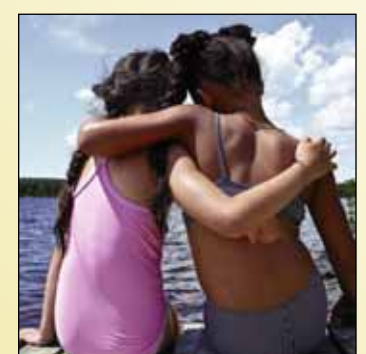
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In Our Community

Teens and money March 25

Jehovah Lutheran Church will host a free workshop on teens and money for families and teens age 11-14 following the 10:45 a.m. service Sunday, March 25 — that is, about noon — in the church basement. “Parents, Teens, and Money Matters” is a 50-minute presentation by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans featuring Thrivent representatives Janelle Calhoun and Greg Bancroft. Snacks and beverages will be provided, and teens will receive a free personal-finance organizer. Registration is required. Please RSVP to Kristen.Joseph@hotmail.com or call Kristen Joseph at 651-283-1192 by March 14. Jehovah Lutheran is at 1566 Thomas at Snelling in St. Paul.

Frogtown Events Committee seeks donations for May 4-5

Frogtown Events Committee and West Minnehaha Recreation Center are seeking donations for the annual rummage sale, May 4-5. Volunteers are raising funds for children's parties, senior citizens' events, the horseshoe club and other community activities.

The volunteers are looking for clothing, household items, furniture, toys, knick-knacks, bikes and other reusable items. Pickup can be arranged or items can be dropped off. Call Larry at 651-224-2456 for information.

Women's Drop-in Drum Circle March 13

Announcing a Women's Drop-in Drum Circle on Tuesday, March 13, 7:50 p.m. Percussion, rhythm and freedom of expression will be explored. All levels of experience are welcomed and encouraged. Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave. W., \$12 at the door. Drums provided. Info and registration at www.womensdrumcenter.org.

Men's Caregiving, Home Safety discussed

On March 13, “Who Says Men Don't Care? A Man's Guide to Balanced and Guilt-Free Caregiving,” will be presented by James V. Gambone, Ph.D., Professor of Gerontology, Graduate School of Public Service Leadership at Capella University. On April 10, Nancy Petrun from Handi Medical will address “Home Equipment Safety,” including home modification tips, how to maximize a product and new technology and engineering.

The topics will be discussed

at luncheons beginning at 11:30 a.m. at Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave, and are sponsored by Hamline Midway Elders. A free will donation is requested for the meal. Speaker presentations are free and begin at 12:15 p.m. Call 651-209-6542 to make reservations, request free transportation or find out more how seniors can live well at home.

Hamline Midway CONNECTS Mar. 13

“Caring for our Neighbors and Neighborhood” networking group for persons 50+ will meet at the Hamline Library, 1558 Minnehaha Ave on March 13 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. For more information, contact Stephanie Digby at 651-642-1288.

Jehovah hosts Bible studies

Jehovah Lutheran Church hosts a sequence of Sunday Bible studies during Lent led on DVD by Amy-Jill Levine of Vanderbilt University's Divinity School. All are welcome to the free 9:30 a.m. sessions at the church, 1566 Thomas at Snelling. March 11 will focus on Doubting Thomas, March 18 Pharisees and Sadducees, March 25 the Herodians, April 1 Judas Iscariot and April 8 Pontius Pilate. Coffee, snacks, conversation and prayer are part of each session.

Nutrition and Weaning topic of meeting

Nutrition and Weaning is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, April 10. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

The Oresteia Project: Queens & Daughters

Hamline University Theatre continues its 81st season with the world premier of THE ORESTEIA PROJECT: QUEENS & DAUGHTERS, produced in conjunction with Sandbox Theatre and written by Sandbox member and Hamline alumnus Ryan Hill. Under the direction of Sandbox members Nicole Devereaux and Heather Stone, THE ORESTEIA PROJECT is an experimental reimagining of THE ORESTEIA by Aeschylus, centering around the themes of free will and human choice in a new, unique theatre setting. Originally a challenge to Athenians to resist barbarism and embrace civility, THE ORESTEIA is here adapted to a modern audience to address our

vengeful tendencies and remind us of our evolution from animal to civilization, and that to remain civilized we must resist the pull of revenge. (As a note for this production, the audience will be asked to stand for the duration of the show, approximately one hour.)

Tickets are \$2 for Hamline students, \$3 for ACTC students and staff, \$8 for adults, \$5 for students and seniors. The show runs March 8, 9, and 10 at 7:30 p.m. in Hamline's Anne Simley Theater. Advance reservations are suggested for this production, and can be made through the Hamline University Theatre Box Office at 651-523-2905 or via e-mail at tickets@hamline.edu.

Lyngblomsten's Annual Wellness Conference scheduled April 14

Discover the health benefits and power of arts in aging; Explore new possibilities for creative expression; Learn about resources in the arts community. 8:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; \$25 per person – includes keynote presentation (Lucy Rose Fischer), workshops, and lunch. Roseville Lutheran Church, Questions? 651-414-5292 or . For complete details and to register: . If you have any questions, please contact me at 651-632-5377.

Soup luncheons and suppers during Lent

Jehovah Lutheran Church at 1566 Thomas hosts soup luncheons and suppers during Lent. Midday worship is at 11:30 a.m. with luncheon following. Soup supper is at 5:30 p.m. with worship at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome. Suggested donation is \$2.

Caregivers Support Group plans meetings

A new Caregivers Support Group will take place Thursdays April 12, May 10 and June 14 from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., 1514 Englewood Ave. The group will be facilitated by trained volunteers and is intended for people caring for older adults or adults or children with special needs. There is no charge. Preregistration encouraged. Contact monica@hmelders.org, 651-209-6542.

A free community breakfast at North Emanuel Lutheran

A free Breakfast is offered the fourth Sunday of every month

from 8:00 to 9:30 a.m. in North Emanuel's Fellowship Hall, 301 Hatch Ave. at Matilda Street.

All are welcome to come for Breakfast and if you would like to nourish your spirit as well, stay for worship at 9:30 a.m. North Emanuel is working to offer Help and Hope to the North End Community.

You may call Pastor Kisten at 651-489-5611 for directions or more information.

Local history buff explores Como area's 'back when' days at free event in March

The Como neighborhood's fascinating history includes the state's earliest airport, a fabulous mansion frequented by opera stars and successful plant nurseries and creameries.

“Tales of Old Como,” a presentation by Rog Bergerson, neighborhood historian, explores these and other historical gems on Sunday, March 18 at the Lyngblomsten Care Center Chapel, 1415 Almond Ave., St. Paul. The 2 p.m. event is free and open to the public.

Bergerson, the author of *Winging It* at a Country Crossroads, promises some surprises as he presents facts and photos about the neighborhood. For example, flying ace Speed Holman touched down at Curtiss Field, on a site now occupied by senior housing. Lorenzo Hoyt's large nursery was famous for its plants and seeds and the area has even had its gangsters and murderers.

Bergerson's presentation is the second in a series of free Sunday Seminars offered by the

Como Community Council's Environment Committee. The third and last event in the series, at 2 p.m. on April 15, will feature Erik Olsen, landscape designer for Out Back Nursery.

Cantus performs at Hamline

Can music really change the world? In 1989 it did. For Cantus' spring concert, the nine-member ensemble presents the beautiful music of the Baltic states, along with the inspiring story of how the people of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia joined hands in a peaceful revolution of song to gain their independence from the Soviet Union.

From March 15-25, Cantus performs “The Singing Revolution: Songs of the Baltic Awakening” at five Twin Cities venues, including Saturday, March 17, 7:30 p.m. at Sundin Music Hall – Hamline University.

Using the rich historical tapestry of Baltic folk song to illustrate the powerful, changing force of music, “The Singing Revolution” tells the story of the people of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. As their peaceful lives fall victim to government censorship and suppression from communism their quiet celebrations of music and cultural heritage sustain their national pride and eventually helps reinstates their independence. Featuring pieces by celebrated Estonian composer, Veljo Tormis, “The Singing Revolution” will also include songs very dear to the people of each country, including “Mu isamaa on minu arm,” “Mūžam Zili” and “Put, vejini.”

Tickets to “The Singing Revolution: Songs of the Baltic Awakening” are \$25 and are available online at www.cantussings.org or by calling 612-435-0055.

Central Corridor

Continued from page 5

Vehicle traffic and access was another major challenge in 2011. While work on university Avenue took place on one half of the street at a time, Soler said, “Most of our issues were with cross streets. Intersections were tied up for two to three months at a time to maintain traffic flow but that often caused long backups on narrow streets, including Prior and Raymond avenues. This year the cross streets will be totally closed for reconstruction over a period of two to three weeks. Detours will be posted.

Narrower streets, such as Raymond and Prior avenues, were problematic. Western and Victoria crossings, which will be rebuilt this year, are even narrower.

While busy streets such as Lexington Parkway won't be shut down this construction

season, Western and Victoria may be closed for as time for construction. That would minimize the time traffic there is impacted.

Also, motorists won't see temporary traffic signals in intersections. Some of those were hit by passing vehicles last year, and in some cases wires and signals were dragged down the street.

One thing won't change – the project will have the same 24-hour comment line, at 651-602-1404. About 100 signs with the number have been posted, said Robin Cauffman, who oversees community outreach for the project. “People really appreciate it because there is a live person when they call.”

The Central Corridor project Office will continue to issue weekly construction updates and alerts. One focus this year will be to post more information in languages other than English, because of the ethnic diversity on and around the east end of University.

Proposal to turn vacant North End home into boarding house debated

By JANE MCCLURE

A much-debated proposal to turn a vacant and foreclosed North End property into a boarding house has already generated much debate. That debate will continue this month as the St. Paul Planning Commission decided Feb. 24 to send the issue back to its Zoning Committee for another public hearing.

No hearing date has been announced; the soonest the hearing could be set is for Thursday, March 17. The committee debated the issue at length in February before splitting 3-3 on whether to approve or deny approval needed for the facility. That meant taking the unusual step of sending the issue to the full Planning Commission with no recommendation.

"There are just a lot of questions with this case and we need to sort those out," said Zoning Committee Chairman Gaius Nelson.

Some Zoning Committee members said they want more information before voting. "This is a lease situation," said Planning Commissioner David Wickiser. "We're giving a lot of credibility to a program we don't have a lot of information about."

But Commissioner Betsy Reveal said she sees nothing to prohibit the use. "If every resident of every home in St. Paul had to disclose their mental, physical and emotional health issues... well, that's just not fair."

The request for 1565 Albe-marle St. is for Pastor Irene Stockett. She is seeking a conditional use permit for a boarding house for six residents and one staff

member. But the question the Planning Commission is wrestling with is whether the facility is a rooming house or a community residential facility, such as a group home. The latter requires much more oversight.

The house has been vacant for some time and was foreclosed upon by federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials. In January John Henderson and Tony Kwar purchased the dwelling. Henderson is currently upgrading the property, with new paint, a new hot water heater, attic insulation and other improvements.

The owners intend to lease the house to Stockett. She would like to lease beds to women in transition. She will live on-site.

City staff recommended approval of the permit, on two conditions. One is that the house passes a fire certificate of occupancy inspection, to address life safety issues. The second is that the facility obtains any needed licenses.

The house is large, with three big bedrooms and a large lot around it. The property is zoned for residential use. But while city staff contends that the use meets the intent of various city and area plans, District 6 Planning Council's Land Use Task Force and several neighbors disagree. They contend that the areas needs less rental housing, not more, and that the house should be owner-occupied. The house is in a part of the North End that already has many apartment buildings as well as smaller rental home. City Planner Luis Periera countered that while the Rice Street Small Area Plan does raise concerns about the

number of area renters, the home is located just outside of the area covered by the plan. He also noted it is the type of housing supported in the city's comprehensive plan.

The neighborhood already has 32 apartment complexes, said District 6 Executive Director Kerry Antrim. It also is one of the busiest areas of the city in terms of police calls. "There are concerns that this will put more pressure on the neighborhood," she said.

Another concern is that Stockett could leave and another group move in. One neighborhood group home went out of business

and was occupied by another group that generated numerous police calls.

Henderson said the use will provide a safe home for the women. His renovation project has been hampered by break-ins and a fire. He said the home has ample space with about 1,000 square feet per floor. The building has three floors.

The house will offer counseling and other services for the women, said Stockett. Her intent is to eventually buy the home.

Neighbors and district council representatives said they want to

know more about what is proposed for the facility, and whether or not it is a boarding house or a community residential facility. Questions are also being raised about who the home residents would be. Another concern is that the facility, which has a large garage and driveway, would generate more parking demand in neighborhood streets.

"We're just a little worried about this and would like to know more about what 'women in transition' means," said Daniel Grundtjen, who owns two nearby apartment buildings.

Mayor kicks off construction at Flamingo Restaurant



Over the lunch hour on March 1, Mayor Chris Coleman took a short break from his principal duties as "Principal for a Day at Maxfield Elementary" and visited Flamingo Restaurant with Metropolitan Council Chair Sue Haigh to recognize the start of the 2012 Central Corridor construction season. Flamingo Restaurant, located at 490 North Syndicate Street, has been in business since 2009. It is owned by Shegitu Kebede and Frewoini Haile and serves East African cuisine.

Hamline Midway Library programming includes family movies, job search help, and Paw Pals

The library will be screening two family movie matinees: *Cars 2* will be shown March 13 at 2 p.m. and *Mr. Poppers Penguins* will be shown March 15 at 2 p.m.

Need help with the computer? Our Computer Coach is available on Wednesdays March 14, March 28 and April 11 from 4-5 p.m. to help you with your basic computer questions. Help is available on a first come, first served basis.

Job Search workshops will be held Wednesdays March 21 and April 4 from 4-5 p.m. A librarian will demonstrate some of the helpful resources your library offers to assist you in your job search. Please call 651-642-0293 to register for this free workshop.

Paw Pals will return to the library on Saturday, March 17 from 1:30 to 3:30. This popular event allows children to spend time reading with a

therapy dog and a literacy coach. Open to all kids ages 6 through 12. Call the library at 651-642-0293 to sign up.

Career Solutions, community-based nonprofit dedicated to providing hope and help to people in career transitions since 1974, will be in the library on Wednesdays March 14 and 28 and April 11, 1:00-3:00 p.m., to provide drop-in cover letter and resume-writing assistance.

The library will offer a workshop on Power Point basics Thursday, March 29. Please call the library at 651-642-0293 to register for this free workshop.

Join our Kids Book Club on April 7 at 1:30 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 April 7 at 2:30. Call 651-642-0293 or ask at the desk for the latest selection.

The Saints and Sinners mystery book club meets Saturday, March 3 at 1p.m.

Toddler and preschool story-time is 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.

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Good Friday	Noon & 7 p.m.
Vigil of Easter	8:00 p.m.
Easter Day	8:45 & 10:45 a.m.

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WINDOWS/SCREENS

Custom making/repairs. Thermal windows; fix frames, glazing. Kendall's—651-489-3210, 651-776-6996. B-12

Building

Continued from page 8

But the building needs work to restore its handsome façade and repair damage caused by the elements.

Neighborhood residents have asked that the building be retained, restored, and reused. The building was used as a recreation center until 1993 when it was closed, then rehabilitated and leased for office use. It has

had local historic status since 1992.

The site is designated as a historic structure because of its ties to city history. Built by the Works Progress Administration in 1938, the building was designed by Clarence "Cap" Wington, who designed the Highland Water Tower, Harriet Island Pavilion and several 1930s era Winter Carnival Ice Palaces. The Works Progress Administration was an important jobs program during the Great Depression,

and added greatly to the nation's infrastructure.

The RFP cites the need to consider building preservation in its reuse. Attention to detail in the preservation and restoration of a city-designated historic building and a willingness to work cooperatively with the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and Parks and Recreation are critical elements to a successful long-term partnership.

Any interior and exterior improvements proposed by a

new tenant would have to go through city staff and the HPC for review and approval. Those submitting proposals for reuse will have to be mindful of the constraints on the building and be clear about what their future plans for physical improvements are.

Kasota Limestone walls and steps are features of the building, which has its main floor about weight feet off of the ground. The lower level is accessible to people with disabilities

and there is an elevator inside.

All offers are to be submitted to Lisa Bartels, Contract Analysis & Services, 15 W Kellogg Blvd Rm 280, St. Paul, MN 55102. Or contact Lisa.Bartels@ci.stpaul.mn.us

The city will allow take 30 days for review and selection from the proposals, with April 28 as a target date. The city does reserve the right to reject any offer for any reason.

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Asian business strip on University Avenue christened 'Little Mekong'

By JAN WILLMS

There are about 100 Asian businesses lining five blocks of University Avenue between Mackubin and Galtier Streets, according to Va-Megn Thoj, executive director of the Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA). Some of them have been there for 25 years.

Finally, with the advent of light rail on University Avenue, this five-block section has been given a name, Little Mekong.

"It was the initiative of AEDA," Thoj said. "There are Asian restaurants, shops and services on these five blocks, including hair salons, dental clinics, tax preparers and medical clinics."

Thoj said it was about time this district was given a name that will help support and preserve the area.



He explained that a cultural identity of this stretch of University Avenue can provide stability to the businesses and provide a destination for patrons.

"This is a pretty unique area," he said, "and we want to bring in more customers and help these businesses weather the construction from the light rail. We want to attract customers from outside

the region and welcome folks who visit us."

Thoj considers Little Mekong an appropriate name, given the diversity of the ethnic group on this section of University Avenue. "We are not highlighting just one ethnic group," he said, "but the region of Southeast Asia where most of the business owners come from, and the river they have in common."

Thoj said he realizes some difficult memories from the Vietnam War might be dredged up by the name.

"I myself remember crossing that river when I was 6 or 7," he noted. "But it is part of our history, and we cannot deny it."

He said he can think of two reasons to use the Little Mekong to describe the area.

"First, there is no place that is positive in everything," he claimed. "And secondly, this gives us an opportunity to highlight history and what the residents and businesses have in common."

"Part of the attraction of the area is that we want to use our culture and history as a draw," Thoj stated. "We want to turn a nega-



As the 2012 construction season nears, organizers and entrepreneurs along the Central Corridor are ramping up efforts to drive traffic to local businesses. One of these efforts included the "Taste of Little Mekong" which was held on Saturday, Feb. 25 featuring live music, a traditional dragon dance and a ribbon cutting with Mayor Coleman and Nitaya Panemalaythong, Miss Minnesota USA 2012. Above, Mai Village owner Mr. Ngoan poses with friends and family at the restaurant as part of the Taste of Little Mekong festivities. (Photo courtesy of Think Quoc Nguyen)



The Asian Economic Development Association (AEDA) believes that a cultural identity of this stretch of University Avenue can provide stability to the businesses and provide a destination for patrons.

tive into a positive."

He said Little Mekong represents a celebration of the diversity in the neighborhood.

He said businesses will offer coupons and discounts during the light rail construction phase, and try to create customer loyalty. Some coupons will also be available at the website, www.littlemekong.com.

"We have already had a tasting tour at seven restaurants in the area," Thoj said. "And we hope to do more tasting tours this coming year."

Although some members of the larger Frogtown neighbor-

hood have said they felt left out of the naming process of Little Mekong, Thoj said the area is just one of the districts in the neighborhood, bounded by Frogtown and Summit-University. He does not believe that reflecting the Asian shops along this part of University in any way takes away from the identity of the other districts.

"This is an opportunity to develop a business district that entrepreneurs have created for many years," Thoj said. "In being preventive in adapting to light rail, we are really investing to improve the entire area."

Upcoming events at

HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

Acts of Faith: Interfaith Leadership in a Time of Global Religious Crisis

Tuesday, March 6

Choir performance, 6:15 p.m.
Eboo Patel, 7 p.m.

Join Hamline community members and neighbors to hear a keynote presentation by noted interfaith leader Eboo Patel. Named by *US News & World Report* as one of America's Best Leaders of 2009, Patel is the Founder and President of Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), a Chicago-based organization building the global interfaith youth movement. The Hamline Gospel Choir will perform prior to the lecture.

Free and open to all.
Hamline Church
1514 Englewood Avenue

Hamline Midway Empty Bowls

Monday, April 2, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Empty Bowls is an annual event at Hamline and an international movement for food justice that invites the public to take a stand against hunger. Meet with neighbors and enjoy a delicious meal donated by local restaurants and grocery stores. Participants will take home a handcrafted bowl to remind them to act against hunger throughout the year. All bowls are generously donated by local potters and artists. The Hamline Midway Empty Bowls raises funds for Keystone Community Services and the White Earth Land Recovery Project and educates people about hunger in the community.

Open to all
Free-will donation encouraged.
Hamline University
Klas Center, third floor
1535 Taylor Avenue

Mahle Lecture in Progressive Christian Thought "World Balance vs. Personal Salvation: An American Indian Postcolonial Perspective"

Tuesday, April 17 at 7:30 p.m.

Join Hamline community members and friends of Hamline for the annual Mahle Lecture in Progressive Christian Thought. This year's keynote speaker is Dr. George "Tink" Tinker, member of the Osage Nation (Wazhazhe) and the Clifford Baldrige Professor of American Indian Cultures and Religious Traditions at Iliff School of Theology in Denver. He will explore the world view of American Indian peoples' respect for creation, the whole of the created realm, and for all our relations

Free and open to all.
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