



monitor

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St. Paul develops parks plan

Community School of Excellence finds new home at St. Bernard's High School site



The Community School of Excellence (CSE) has opened its doors at 170 Rose Ave. W., taking residence in the former St. Bernard's High School. The school, with 646 students in grades K-8, moved into its headquarters on Rose Avenue in July of this year, and classes started Aug. 30. (Photos by Stefanie Berres)

By JAN WILLMS

When Mo Chang walked along Rice Street in front of stores like Tschida's Bakery as a child, little did she know that she would one day be working in that same area as an executive director of a Hmong charter school.

The Community School of Excellence (CSE) has opened its doors at 170 Rose Ave. W., taking residence in the former St. Bernard's High School. CSE first started in the Midway in 2007, but outgrew its space.

The school, with 646 students in grades K-8, moved into its headquarters on Rose Avenue in July of this year, and classes started Aug. 30.

The majority of students are Hmong, and some are Kareni, who have moved here from what was formerly called Burma. Chang said there are also some African American students and a few Caucasians.

"We started the school because a group of parents and community members wanted to preserve the Hmong language and culture," Chang said. "We want the students to know who they are and be able to read and write in Hmong."

"We hope CSE will be a place that has strong cultural values and identification, and that all students can benefit from it," Chang said.

The instructional language used in the school is English. Students can then go to Hmong classes or Chinese classes, which are taught by an exchange teacher from Beijing.

CSE has a sister school in Thailand in Chang Rai Province.

The teachers and students from CSE exchange letters once a month with their counterparts in Thailand, sharing information about what they are doing in school and their language and culture.

Chang said some eighth graders were taken to Thailand last year to visit the sister school. "We plan to take a small group this year for a learning exchange," she said.

Chang said CSE is using a co-teaching model. "We have our English Language Learner (ELL) teachers co-plan and co-teach in classes," she said. "For example, the ELL teacher will co-plan and co-teach simultaneously in the classroom with the 4th and 5th grade teachers. It benefits all the students to have two teachers in the class."

Chang said that last year 35 per cent of the students were newcomers to this country, having arrived within the last five years.

"Particularly in kindergarten, not all the students speak English," she said. "Learning English becomes a challenge and an opportunity."

She said that 90 per cent of the students are in ELL and 88 per cent qualify for free or reduced lunches.

The interior of the school has been painted in warm colors with rich and vivid Hmong art, in the form of tapestries, paintings, cloths and dolls. Chang said the artwork is meant to welcome the students and make them feel at home.

"We believe that if students come here and feel welcome, they will be motivated and confident about themselves. They will do well in school. If they feel welcome, they will have ownership of the school."

She said that even though a large percentage of students are newcomers, all are eager to learn and are really hard workers.

"In time, we will make good

academic gains," she said. "We have great attendance and mobility rates. Most of our students come prepared to learn."

Chang said the school is in the process of getting authorized as an International Baccalaureate School. CSE is working to qualify for a Primary Year Program and Middle Year Program, which can take from 15 months to three years to complete.

"With the International Baccalaureate program, we feel more parents will want to send their kids here," Chang said. "Chinese will be the next Number One language in the culture. Next semester we will teach the Kareni language and culture after school."

She said the school is adapting and developing new programs to meet the needs of its population. "Just having good quality education will benefit all students," she said. "Our school is open to all, and in the next three to five years, we will be a very diverse school."

Summer school will be taught this coming year, and a full after-school program is already in place. It includes tutoring, homework help, computer classes and cultural enrichment. As a part of cultural enrichment, after-school offerings are available in traditional dance, traditional musical instruments, break dance, hip hop dance, art and traditional embroidering, called paj ntaub or flower cloth.

"The community has been really good to us," Chang added. "I joined the North End Business Association, and we went around the area and got free ice cream. St. Bernard's has been really welcoming."

"We love being here at the facility, and we hope to be very visible and have a presence on Rice Street," Chang said.

In October, she invited community members to a luncheon at the school. And on December 18, a grand opening of the school will be held from 4:30 to 8 p.m., open to the public.

"We will have food, entertainment and activities for the whole family," Chang said.

North Ender Bruce Larson has his business on the northeast corner of Rose and Rice Streets.

"I look out of my office window, and I see the school," he said. "They really are my neighbors."

"First of all, I miss the faculty and children from St. Bernard's," he said. "We became friends over the past 10 years, and I was very concerned about what would happen to the neighborhood when St. Bernard's School left."

"We started the school because a group of parents and community members wanted to preserve the Hmong language and culture."

- Principal Mo Chang



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monitor

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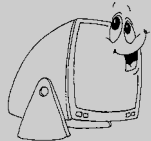
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Monitor in a Minute

Victoria Theater supporters make case

Supporters of saving the historic Victoria Theater will have another chance to make their case before the St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC). A public notice error means a Nov. 4 public hearing on local historic designation will be continued until 5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18.

The District 7 (Thomas-Dale) Community Council, historic preservationists and devotees of music history want the building at 825 University Av. to have local designation. While that wouldn't necessarily save the 1915 structure from the wrecking ball, it could be an incentive for a developer to seek national historic designation and historic tax credits.

The St. Paul Planning Commission has recommended approval of the local designation re-

quest. Planning Commission and HPC recommendations then go to the City Council for final approval, most likely in December or January.

The building would have to meet set criteria for local designation, said HPC historic preservationist Amy Spong. In the past the building hasn't been deemed eligible for a spot on the National Register of Historic Places, which has more rigid criteria. But Spong said that could change with additional information about the Victoria Theater's significance.

Supporters see the building as a potential arts and cultural hub for the Frogtown neighborhood. But owner Bee Vue opposes historic designation, saying, "I believe it would limit my ability to sell the property." He contends there are other properties along University Avenue that are more worthy of designation.

Vue also said there are only a few people in favor of designation, a point the supporters of designation dispute. About a dozen people

attended the Nov. 4 hearing to support local designation. More than a dozen people and organizations sent letters, including Historic St. Paul. Hundreds of people have joined a Facebook group calling for the theater to be saved.

"This building has a great deal of significance for Frogtown, for its future and its past," said District 7 Director Tait Danielson-Castillo. Neighborhood residents want the old theater and an adjacent building that once housed the nationally known Ray-Bell Film Studios, saved. Many would like to see the theater rehabilitated and used as a performance space again.

"The one thing we're missing in Frogtown is an entertainment venue and a gathering place," said longtime neighborhood activist Denise Harris.

The Victoria Theater opened in 1915 for movies and live performances. It didn't last long as a theater, being converted for use as a nightclub in the early 1920s. The nightclub was known as the Victoria Café and later Casa Grande.

Musical historians note that in 1927 the recording "Moonshiners Dance: Part One" was recorded there, by the Victoria Café Orchestra. The 78 rpm recording is believed to have been a promotional piece for the nightclub.

Kurt Gegenhuber, who researched much of the building's musical history, emphasized the importance of the anthology and its influence on many musicians, including Bob Dylan and Jerry Garcia.

His history research notes that Moonshiner's Dance is the only one of 84 recordings in the Anthology of American Folk Music not recorded in the American South or Chicago.

Council votes to seek funds for Trillium

Efforts to redevelop a North End site into a park and nature pre-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Mitigation programs developed to help affected University Avenue businesses

By JANE MCCLURE

A number of programs are stepping up efforts to help small University Avenue businesses that will be affected by construction of the Central Corridor light rail line. But whether those efforts are enough to save businesses is still a question mark, especially when the experience of Lowertown businesses is considered. Several small businesses in that part of downtown have been hit hard by utilities relocation and other rail-related work over the past several months.

More than 40 people attended an Oct. 7 session to discuss the experience of businesses in Lowertown, and the experiences those businesses have had during utilities work over the past several months. Innuendo and Rumors night club owner Sean Fetterman and city council members Dave Thune, Melvin Carter III and Russ Stark discussed the experiences downtown and what can be done to help businesses along University Avenue.

Just a few weeks after the session, Fetterman announced his nightclub would be closing after a Halloween party, due to the downturn in business.

Thune described what has been done to help Lowertown businesses, calling them the "practice victims" of the light rail project. He said University Avenue businesses shouldn't have to go through the same bad experiences.

Sometimes bureaucrats

aren't clear on what businesses truly need, said Thune. When the Lowertown businesses were asked what they need, the loud and clear answer was "Parking." But an initial city response was, "We could give you a marketing plan."

Thune said public policy toward businesses affected by light rail construction should be "Do ask, don't tell." He, Stark and Carter said they will do everything they can to help University Avenue businesses.

"Small businesses are the lifeblood of the city," said Thune.

Fetterman urged University Avenue business owners to plan ahead and prepare for rail. While saying he is all for progress and supports the light rail project, "progress has a price." If he and other business owners had the chance to go through the experience again, they would have done more planning.

"Make sure as business owners that you know everything," he added.

He said Lowertown businesses only had a few weeks to prepare before Fourth Street was torn up. Businesses had limited

time to do marketing and to get the word out to customers about restricted access.

Lowertown businesses have seen drops in revenue of 30 to 60 percent, said Fetterman. So far only Fetterman's business has fallen from the construction interruption, but if the Lowertown project weren't wasn't up soon that might be a different story.

All of the Lowertown businesses have had situations where power and water had to

be cut off for a time, sometimes with little or no notice. One nightclub has had its basement flooded twice. All businesses have had the problems of loss of streetlights and lighting, and having their storefronts physically blocked by construction equipment. He said that having storefronts blocked means customers don't see the businesses and don't make the effort to get there. "The big equipment scares off customers."

One of the greatest needs in Lowertown was to provide parking, which the city did by providing validated space in a city-owned ramp. But now parking will be banned after the streets reopened. City and Metropolitan Council staff said that is being done to train customers to be ready for the loss of parking when rail starts operations. But Fetterman and Thune said it doesn't make sense to ban parking more than three years before trains start running. They are working to see if the parking can be restored at least on an interim basis.

Fetterman did say that the

city and Metropolitan Council staff also provided a quick response to problems, said Fetterman. The city is also providing low-interest loans of up to \$10,000 to help tide businesses over. But a nonprofit partner to administer those loans hasn't been announced yet. City staff said that should be decided soon.

The city is continuing to promote its Ready for Rail program. Nancy Homans, senior policy aide to Mayor Chris Coleman, said the city is willing to help businesses, whether they want to stay on university or locate elsewhere in St. Paul.

The city is almost ready to unveil its parking plan for University Avenue and surrounding neighborhoods, said Homans. While final details aren't available the plan will likely include meters and time limits on the remaining University Avenue spots and spots on north-south street, and permit parking for the residential neighborhoods north and south of University.

University Avenue is expected to lose about 85 percent of its on-street parking due to light rail construction and operations.

Construction of the 11-mile light rail line starts next year at the west end of University Avenue. Homans said that schedule was intentional, to give the smaller businesses at the west end of University more time to prepare. Their construction is a couple of years away.



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Planning Commission hosts public hearings on Central Corridor zoning

By JANE MCCLURE

How University Avenue redevelops in the wake of Central Corridor light rail operations is the focus of proposed changes in zoning along the street. Changes in zoning along the light rail route could affect what property owners can do if they want to redevelop in the future.

The St. Paul Planning Commission will host two public hearings on Central Corridor zoning. Changes to zoning code requirements along University Avenue will be the topic of a public hearing at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Nov. 16. Proposed changes for individual properties will be heard at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Dec. 3. Both public hearings will be held in Room 41 of the City Hall/Courthouse before the St. Paul Planning Commission. Commission recommendations will then go to the St. Paul City Council for another round of public hearings and final approval.

Construction of light rail from Hamline Avenue west to the city limits begins next year. The line is expected to be up and running in 2014.

St. Paul city officials have spent several years planning for future redevelopment along University Avenue, through a comprehensive Central Corridor Development Strategy and more detailed planning along each of the planned light rail stations. The intent is to encourage more dense, transit-oriented development along Central Corridor and to restrict proposed new land uses that aren't as compatible with those goals.

While existing properties and uses can remain unchanged, the zoning changes would affect redevelopment or major changes to a property.

The St. Paul Planning Commission voted Oct. 15 to set the public hearings. The zoning regulations that are ultimately approved will replace an interim Central Corridor zoning overlay which expires next year.

The changes are being proposed because the existing business zoning classification along much of University Avenue doesn't facilitate the type of mixed-use, denser, transit-oriented development outlined in plans for the

Central Corridor. City Planning Director Donna Drummond said the recommendation from staff is to change those areas to traditional neighborhoods zoning, which would allow for those types of uses. The staff and Planning Commission have also taken the opportunity to look at traditional neighborhoods or TN zoning, which the city has had in place for about six years, to see if there are changes needed to the types of uses allowed in a TN district.

The proposed changes would not affect the area around the State Capitol, which has its own zoning and land use regulations set by state law. Nor would there be any zoning changes proposed for downtown St. Paul.

The proposed zoning changes along University would have different impacts in different areas. Where there are residential areas within close proximity to University, the recommendation is to have buildings that are a lower height of two or three stories, as opposed to the taller buildings that would be allowed in areas that are already largely commercial or are a mix of commercial

and industrial zoning.

In areas like the Midway retail district east of Snelling and south of University, for example, the proposed zoning changes would allow for dense development when those sites are ever redeveloped.

The regulations cover an array of building heights and setbacks, what types of land uses would be allowed, building design, placement of parking and other issues. Some of the proposed changes could be controversial, if discussions among Planning Commission members are any indication. One proposed change would not require new land uses to meet minimum off-street parking requirements, if that land use is located in a station area. Station areas are the areas with one-quarter mile of a train station. City staff recommended that change but some Planning Commission members said there may be pushback from neighborhood residents concerned about the potential of more spillover parking from University Avenue.

Drummond said the no min-

imum requirement could force businesses to think more carefully about their parking needs. "We know cars aren't going to go away but at the same time we don't want to create barriers to redevelopment. Nor do we want to encourage wasteful use of land" by forcing developers to build parking that may not be needed.

Another potential flashpoint is that of allowing auto-related uses such as service stations or repair businesses. Currently TN zoning doesn't allow new auto-related uses anywhere in the city. One suggestion from city staff is that the zoning be relaxed to allow auto-related uses as a conditional use. But some commissioners noted that TN zoning has been implemented in some neighborhoods that have too many auto-related uses, and that residents and business owners in those areas might oppose a change.

Detailed information on the zoning study and proposed zoning regulations can be found at www.stpaul.gov/centralcorridor. Click on Central Corridor Zoning Study.

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Community of Excellence

Continued from page 1

"But what has happened is that the school has been able to financially profit," he said. "What has effectively changed is the new immigrant population, primarily represented by Hmong."

"When they outgrew their facility in the Midway and needed more space, fortunately the St. Bernard's property was available for lease. A good deal was struck between the Hmong charter school and St. Bernard's, with over a million dollars a year for 10 years. St. Bernard's can pay back a huge amount of money to the Archdiocese. It's like Phoenix rising out of the ashes."

Larson said that in less than six months, a minor miracle was performed.

"Now there are over 600 Hmong children on the campus of St. Bernard's, and it continues to grow. I sense something good will come of it," continued Larson.

"The parish is also growing, with more of the Burmese community arriving. We will see a rehabilitation of the parish itself with younger families resettling in our neighborhood."

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Kim Huoy Chor closed despite last ditch patron campaign to keep it open

By JANE MCCLURE

Kim Huoy Chor is closed for good, despite a last-ditch effort to keep the University Avenue business open. The Chinese-Cambodian restaurant with a loyal following and long list of food safety code violations was shut down for good Oct. 14. The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously Oct. 13 to revoke all licenses held by the restaurant at 1644 W. University Av. That was followed by Mayor Chris Coleman's signatures on orders revoking the licenses, which were then hand-delivered to the business.

A sign announcing the closure was posted on the Kim Huoy Chor front door Oct. 14. Even last week, would-be patrons were seen arriving at the restaurant, only to find it closed. Hundreds of patrons had signed a petition asking that Kim Huoy Chor stay open.

The council had postponed a decision on the license for a week to allow owner Vuthy Taing and his staff to clean up the restaurant. St. Paul Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) staff recommended closure due to Kim Huoy Chor's history of repeated code violations, ranging from live and dead cockroaches

to food kept at improper temperatures. A few customers reportedly fell ill after eating there. The most recent report of illness was made to state health officials Oct. 7, the same day as the public hearing.

In St. Paul, the City Council must vote to revoke a business's licenses. No one on city staff could recall a similar restaurant closure for food safety violations. The City Council has shut down bars before, including Moonlight Magic, in Frogtown, in August, and Diva's Overtime Lounge on Rice Street in 2007. But in those cases liquor license violations, violations of license conditions and incidents of violence were cited as reasons for closure.

Other restaurants have had long lists of food safety violations and even had licenses suspended. But none have had the number and different types of violations at Kim Huoy Chor. Also, most restaurants typically correct violations after the first visit but Kim Huoy Chor had repeated problems that weren't corrected.

The restaurant, located in what once was the first St. Paul Embers restaurant, racked up violations for cockroach and rodent infestations, improper handling of food, filthy kitchen conditions

and keeping food for too long at temperatures that were too high or too low. Prepared food was stored in boxes that had held raw meat. Dishes were stacked almost waist-high. Council members said the pictures of code violations and the written reports were sickening to review.

The council postponed revocation of the licenses Oct. 6 after restaurant owner Vuthy Taing and his attorney, former council member Jay Benanav, asked for another chance. With only four council members present that evening, and Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune saying he wanted to see if problems could be corrected, the matter was laid over.

After more violations were found, Thune said he was disappointed that the restaurant didn't take advantage of a final chance to clean up its act. "I'm sorry we're going to be losing more than 20 jobs but they can't continue to have violations," he said.

After the Oct. 7 hearing Taing hired a former City of Minneapolis code enforcement officer to help with daily inspections of the restaurant. But more violations were found Oct. 8, including dead cockroaches, workers not following proper food han-



Kim Huoy Chor, the Chinese-Cambodian restaurant with a loyal following and long list of food safety code violations was shut down for good Oct. 14.

dling procedures and food stored and served at incorrect temperatures. Equipment had been replaced but in one case, an old rusty ice machine had been replaced with a used machine containing mold and scale.

DSI staff met with Taing Oct. 11 to see if any steps could be taken short of license revocation, said Assistant City Attorney Rachel Tierney. But licensing staff didn't see any other options.

"The department doesn't feel comfortable with a recommendation shy of revocation," said Tierney.

Benanav offered Oct. 13 for Taing to surrender all of his licenses rather than face revocation. That would have allowed Kim Huoy Chor to be cleaned up and possibly reopened as a new restaurant.

But Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark questioned what surrendering licenses versus revocation would mean and moved

for revocation. Stark, whose ward includes Kim Huoy Chor, wanted to revoke the licenses Oct. 6 but lacked four votes.

"Obviously a last chance was given," said Stark. "But it wasn't met with flying colors."

Council members weren't clear on what a voluntary surrendering of licenses would mean. When someone applies for a business license in St. Paul, applicants are asked if they have ever had a license revocation here or elsewhere. Surrendering licenses would allow Taing to say he'd never had a revocation if he applies for a license in the future. But Tierney indicated that DSI wouldn't be inclined to grant Taing a new license.

Taing doesn't own any other restaurants in St. Paul, but owns a small restaurant in Buffalo. That restaurant hasn't had any violations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

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Como neighbors rally to stop plans for parking lot

By DEBORAH BROTZ

When Como resident John McCormick was looking at the Como Regional Park Transportation Implementation Plan (CRPTIP) posted on the District 10 website, he was shocked to see a recommendation for a 480-car parking lot on the green space at Hamline and Arlington, right across the street from his house. He sprung into action alerting other neighbors about the proposed lot and found a group of neighbors who felt the same way he did.

"It's a very poor solution to a seasonal problem," he said. "There's real bad congestion on the west side of the park on the weekends. Cutting down half of a city block with nice mature trees is an outrage. It's a horrible destruction of the park."

On Oct. 30, neighbors against having a parking lot at that corner hosted a rally to "Stop the Lot" on that green space with McCormick as their official spokesperson. Several politicians spoke including St. Paul Ward 4 Councilmember Russ Stark, Sen. Ellen Anderson, and Rep. Alice Hausman, as well as Mike Hahn, St. Paul Parks and Recreation director. Organizers of the rally used kid power to demonstrate the boundaries of the proposed parking lot space by having them unravel and hold 'Caution' construction tape to create a strong visual. There was also a petition to sign, an education station, and kids area for campaign letter writing.

McCormick says the purpose of the rally was to save the green space.

"We don't want anything built on that space," he said. "At the

Parks and Recreation meeting on Nov. 10, we would like them to strike this option from the plans. On Nov. 17, Parks and Recreation will present it to the City Council. If Parks and Recreation has not stricken it from the plan, we want the City Council to take it out. I haven't found anyone who thinks this is a good idea. Nobody wants to pose with a golden chainsaw to cut down the first tree."

With the Nov. 10 St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission meeting swiftly approaching where they will be voting on whether to accept the CRPTIP recommendations, it was important to hold the rally on Oct. 30.

"The sooner we had it the more time for letters and emails," said McCormick. "The weather is against us. We didn't want it too cold that people don't show up. We wanted it to happen before the green gets covered up with snow. We wanted to have it while people can still be out on the grass."

McCormick was stunned at seeing the map of the proposed parking lot in the Kimley-Horn study.

"The size of the parking lot is enormous," he said. "There were several options studied in this plan. This option didn't appear until later in the plan. It was quite a surprise to the neighborhood."

According to McCormick, the proposed lot is a 1960s solution to parking.

"They want to bulldoze trees for a remote parking lot with a shuttle," he said. "They call it a shuttle lot where you park somewhere else and get a ride. They completely turned the idea on its head."



On Oct. 30, neighbors against having a parking lot at the corner of Hamline and Arlington hosted a rally to "Stop the Lot" on that green space. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

The green space at Hamline and Arlington is an important space for the neighborhood surrounding it.

"It's quoted in the plan as underutilized space, but many neighborhood kids play there," said McCormick. "Chelsea Heights running team practices there. People practice golf and putting in the area and walk their dogs there. It's a nice, big green space. To us, it's a cornerstone of the park and has a lot of value to neighbors and to the park itself."

McCormick feels this green space has been selected for a parking lot because it doesn't generate money.

"You cannot put out a donation box in every part of the park," he said. "Just because this is open space and not a profit center doesn't mean it's up to be destroyed. It would take away space we count on for our children."

Having lived in St. Paul his whole life, McCormick moved to Como Park almost two years ago.

"We would come to Como to take walks so we decided to move here," he said. "We love the park. That's why we live near it. I was absolutely horrified when I found out what they were proposing to do. We never would have bought our house if we knew what they

were going to do."

Como resident Sara Veblen-Mortenson, rally organizer, says the primary reason for the rally was loss of green space.

"The large space acts as a buffer from Como Town," she said. "It's a well-utilized space. People ski, sled, walk dogs, picnic, and launch water balloons as a July 4th tradition."

At the District 10 Annual Meeting on Oct. 19, the Transportation Implementation Plan item, brought forth by the Neighborhood Relations Committee, passed the Board vote (10-0). The Community vote on the action item was 153 to 3 in favor of supporting the proposed plan.

Neighbors who were against the proposed parking lot made an amendment at the Neighborhood Relations Committee meeting in October, which was to preserve the green space. This was added to the CRPTIP and passed at the Annual Meeting.

"There was a tremendous turnout for the meeting," said Veblen-Mortenson. "One recommendation was in opposition to the lot. We vocalized that at the meeting. One little piece created quite an uproar."

According to Michelle Furrer, Como Park Zoo and Conservatory director/campus manager, St. Paul Parks and Recreation believes that the parking lot location suggested

at Arlington and Hamline is the least desirable of the solutions identified for structured parking and that other solutions are better and more appropriate. The location at Arlington and Hamline is one option of the in-park shuttle location.

"We have the option of doing something off-site, but it reduces the users of the shuttle within two miles," she said. "People do not want to ride more than 10 minutes. We need a long-term lot. It can't be a moving target. The last two years of operation, we had to use three different lots. If there are multiple stops at different lots, it increases rider time. We need one large lot. As people don't feel comfortable, less people are willing to ride the shuttle."

The consultant recommendations for the CRPTIP are a result of a very thorough process with great emphasis on public involvement from the beginning of the project.

"There was consideration of asking the consultant to remove this suggestion from their report," said Furrer. "Ultimately, it was concluded that it best and fairest to the process that a more complete recommendation be presented for public review."

Furrer says solutions that reduce or limit access to the park by visitors does not directly respond to the congestion in and around the park that they are working to resolve.

"We want to balance park needs with visitor needs," she said. "We're trying to find a happy medium for all users including neighbors."

McCormick says they want people to show up at the Parks and Recreation meeting and City Council meeting.

"We want them to continue writing letters and emails," he said. "We want this struck from the plan. A lot of people were awakened to the fact that you can't assume other people are looking out for your best interests."

McCormick hopes the politicians will see things their way.


"I hope we can get a commitment from some politicians to strike this from the study," he said. "That is the best solution we can hope for."

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SENIOR APARTMENTS 

St. Paul develops draft of comprehensive parks plan

By JANE MCCLURE

More access to nature and trails, sports field improvements, more off-leash dog parks and fewer recreation centers are among the many recommendations in St. Paul's draft parks and recreation system plan. Some proposals would affect several area parks and recreation centers, including Northwest Como, North Dale, Merriam Park, Rice and several others. New parks are proposed along the planned Central Corridor light rail line. The plan will be the topic of upcoming public meetings where community members can weigh in. Area meetings are open houses which will be held from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. November 15 - Oxford Community Center/Jimmy Lee Recreation Center, 270 Lexington Parkway North and November 18 at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 St. Albans Street North.

A complete schedule of meetings and a draft copy of the plan are at www.stpaul.gov/parks

After additional public comments are received, a final draft of the system plan will be presented to the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission Dec. 8. The St. Paul City Council is expected to adopt the plan in January 2011.

Parks and Recreation Director Mike Hahm has often emphasized the need for "quality rather than quantity" when it comes to St. Paul's parks and recreation system. Those sentiments were echoed by some of the meeting participants and are reflected in the draft plan.

The draft was developed by consultants from Hoisington Koegler Group, city staff and community members who participated in a series of meetings earlier this year. Robert Smith, who has led the planning efforts for St. Paul Parks and Recreation, said the intent was to be as inclusive as possible when the draft plan was prepared.

"The community has been very engaged during this process," Smith said. There was good participation at community meetings, much input for city staff and two meetings with each of the seven City Council members. "I think we have done a lot to get input."

"The entire community has been very helpful in making suggestions and letting us know what they want," Smith added.

Greg Ingraham of Hoisington Koegler Group said the demand for more trails and more facilities to connect with nature became very clear during the citizen input process. It also became clear that many people view the city's recreation centers as not meeting their needs. Some people see recreation centers as serving children only and not people of all ages.

The city's shifting demographics, declining resources and aging facilities are one of the biggest challenges the plan must address. A key focus of the plan is to create a system that better meets the needs of all community members.

Some of the biggest changes affect recreation centers. The plan recommends changing St. Paul's 23 remaining recreation centers into 19 community centers that would serve residents of all ages. The changes to recreation centers not only would provide improved service for people of all ages, changes would also provide part of the cost savings outlined in the plan.

Financial sustainability is an important theme of the plan said Smith. "Like everyone else we have to live within our means," he said. St. Paul has made dramatic cuts to its recreation center system in recent years, dropping from 42 to 23.

"The financial benefit of the plan recommendations stem, largely from recreation center building changes/reductions and changes to athletic fields and courts," the draft plan stated. "Fewer buildings allow for a redistribution of staff resources to the remaining centers to expand hours of operation, expand programming and activities and enhance visitor experience." The proposed changes would save \$20 million over the next 20 years.

But the prospect of more changes to recreation centers is potentially controversial. Two East Side centers, Duluth/Case and Hayden Heights, would be closed and torn down. Duluth/Case would be replaced with a new

community athletic park.

Conway on the East Side and McDonough on the North End would be handed over to non-profit operators. Several buildings already rented out to partners would be fully turned over to tenants, including Desnoyer Park, Dunning and Griggs.

Five buildings considered to be of lower quality would be torn down either when partner groups move out or when major upgrades are needed, including Orchard and South St. Anthony Park. Only one new building, at Scheffer, is proposed. The tiny Frogtown center is heavily used.

Other changes are also suggested. Northwest Como is one of three recreation centers where the city would partner with a school to provide out-of-school time programming and staffing for gym use and events. City council members Lee Helgen and Russ Stark said that is the one plan change they have heard a number of comments and questions about.

"Northwest Como is the one

I am getting the most calls and emails about," said Helgen. He and Stark said they'd like to know more about what is proposed.

Recreation centers including North Dale, Rice, Hancock, Langford, Merriam Park, Oxford/Jimmy Lee and West Minnehaha would shift from being neighborhood and youth-focused recreation centers to more community-oriented places.

For Merriam Park, the city is suggesting a master planning process. Merriam Park would also get a spray pad or splash pad to provide water recreation for children during the summer.

The city should encourage the Midway YMCA to rebuild along University, according to the draft plan.

The plan makes a number of recommendations for parks and open space, and outdoor recreation facilities. One potentially controversial recommendation is to look at the city's ownership of three golf courses. The plan recommends the city only own and

operates two courses. Como, Phalen and Highland are the three courses.

Outdoor athletic facilities would be improved citywide by reducing the number of overlapping fields to improve quality and creating more irrigated turf and artificial turf fields. Field improvements are proposed at several sites including Rice and Oxford/Jimmy Lee.

The plan recommends eliminating some low-quality and low-use tennis courts.

Dog parks were yet another focus of the plan. The plan identifies a large area along the Mississippi River in Desnoyer Park, Macalester-Groveland and Highland Park neighborhoods as a search area for an off-leash dog park. The irregularly shaped area extends to Ford and Cleveland, and south roughly along part of St. Paul Avenue. Other suggested dog parks include along the Central Corridor and at Newell Park and Marydale Park, in specified areas of each of those parks.

Another recommendation calls for creating or maintaining signature nature-focused trail loops at five parks, including Como and Phalen. The intent would be to link the loop trails through the Grand Rounds of off-round multi-use trails, in the northwest corner of the city and across northern St. Paul neighborhoods from Como to Phalen parks.

Access to nature and open space would be promoted at several parks including Willow Reserve, Marydale, Merriam, Newell, Horton, Hampden and Ryan parks and on the Wheelock Parkway triangles and hairpin areas. Access to nature could include replacing turf with native prairie or savanna plantings, naturalized stormwater management, augmented native woodlands or restored ponds and wetlands.



Area meetings are open houses, which will be held from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. November 15 - Oxford Community Center/Jimmy Lee Recreation Center, 270 Lexington Parkway North and November 18 at North Dale Recreation Center, 1414 St. Albans Street North. (pictured above)

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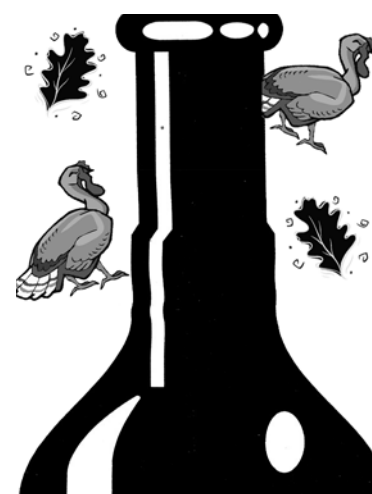
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In Our Community

Central Lutheran Pancake Breakfast

Save the date and plan to attend the annual Pancake Breakfast on Sunday, December 5th! Pancakes (and other goodies) will be served from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in the school gym at 775 Lexington Pkwy (just north of Minnehaha and Lexington). Tickets may be purchased in advance at Central Lutheran School by calling 651-645-8649 or stopping by during school hours. Central Lutheran School is a K-8 parochial school in the Midway area and has been offering quality education to area families for over 60 years.

Standards of rental properties examined

Interested in getting more involved in the community? District 6 Planning Council is looking for volunteers to photograph examples of well-maintained rental properties in the area. We are organizing a booklet of neighborhood standards for rental properties, so we need your help and input! Contact the office at 651-488-4485 or 651-488-7684 to if you're interested in getting involved and to find out more.

Guys and Dolls performed at Central Nov. 19, 20, 21

What do 65 middle school students, a gym, great food, and gambling have in common? Why, a production of Guys and Dolls Jr., of course! Once again, the talented children of Central Lutheran School, 775 Lexington Pkwy, under the direction of Elizabeth Wegner, have come together to create a fun, exciting production of a timeless classic. Come see a great show or attend the dinner theatre and savor some delicious eats while watching the action unfold. Tickets for the dinner theatre are \$8 for adults and \$4 for children (10 and under). All other shows are FREE! Show dates are Friday, Nov. 19 at 7 pm, Saturday, Nov. 20, dinner and show, 6 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 21 matinee at 2 p.m. Please call Central Lutheran at 651-645-8649 for directions, tickets, and more information.

Central holds instrument drive

The St. Paul Central High Music Booster Club is sponsoring an instrument drive to generate desperately needed used instruments (and funds for repair) that help enable all students to benefit from the exceptional music program at Central High School at 275 Lexington Parkway North. If you have a used instrument

that is no longer in use and would like to contribute to the school, you can drop it off at Central High School where you can pick up documentation of your contribution for tax purposes. If you prefer, members of the Booster Club will gladly pick up your used instrument. Finally, if you would like to contribute, but do not have an instrument to donate, monetary donations can be made to cover the cost of instrument repair. Checks can be made out to Central High School Music Department and sent c/o Meg Arnosti, 1722 Princeton Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105.

Making a contribution in this way will help students who otherwise might not be able to afford an instrument benefit from enrichment that comes from music education. This enrichment includes but is not limited to: cognitive skills, mathematical abilities, social skills, small and large group skills, self discipline and learning to delay gratification, patience, cultural awareness, listening skills, and a capacity to work towards a goal. Providing students with these opportunities and a way to feel connected is worth your contribution.

Call Alison Maule-Kronmiller for more specific information at 651 647-5722 x.1

Dinner with Santa and Mrs. Claus December 10

Dinner with Santa and Mrs. Claus is Friday, Dec 10 from 5:30-7 p.m. at Langford Recreation Center. The fee is \$5/person and to register you can go online at www.stpaul.gov/parks or call 651-298-5813. Activities include a spaghetti dinner, craft, decorate your own cookie and face painting.

The next Booster Club meeting for Northwest Como is Tuesday, December 14th at 6:30 p.m.

Free Thanksgiving dinner at Zion served at noon

Free thanksgiving dinner will be served at 12 noon at Zion Lutheran church on Thanksgiving Day. Please call in and sign up by 15th of Nov at 651-645-0851. Zion is located at 1697 Lafond ave. St.Paul, MN 55104,

History Group Gathers Nov. 20 at Ginkgo

The next monthly Sharing Meeting of the Hamline Midway History Corps will be held Saturday, November 20th from 2-4 p.m. The group meets on the third Saturday of the month at Ginkgo Coffeehouse, 721 Snelling Avenue (at Minnehaha).

The public is invited to bring items or stories to share, a question to pose, or simply your interest in local history. Visit www.HamlineMidwayHistory.org for more information.

Holiday Art and Craft Fair December 4 at GINKGO

Again this year, GINKGO coffeehouse shoppers will have a chance to purchase handmade items from a wide variety of artists at the annual Holiday Art and Craft Fair, Sat., Dec. 4, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is a great opportunity to purchase high quality local products at good prices. Buy gifts for family, friends, teachers...or yourself! For more information, call GINKGO coffeehouse, 651-645-2647.

Zion's Fall Bazaar Nov. 20

Zion Lutheran Church, 1697 Lafond Ave at Aldine St., will have their Fall Bazaar on November 20th from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Everyone is welcome! Items for sale will include coffee and cookies, bakery goods, crafts, needle work, recycled Christmas cards and other décor items. A light lunch will be available from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Call the church at 651-645-0851 if you like to donate. Please visit our website at www.zlcmidway.org.

Rice St. parking meeting

Come hear about the Rice Street Parking Study and provide your input about parking availability along Rice Street. The meeting will be at Rice Street Recreation Center, 1021 Marion Street, on Tuesday, November 16, at 6:30 p.m.

Independent Businesses meet December 6

The Midway Independent Businesses will meet Dec 6 from 10 to 11 at the Hamline Park Building (1564 Lafond Ave; SE corner of Snelling & Lafond). We are dedicated to creating a strong presence in the Midway neighborhood and develop our businesses to the next level. All who live or work in the Midway as sole proprietors are invited to join us. Please contact us if interested in marketing ideas such as the MIB directory, Welcome Packets and speakers to address your concerns and desires for your business. Contact Nancy at nucc50@gmail.com.

La Leche meets Dec. 14

Nutrition and Weaning is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, December 14. All expectant and nursing mothers are invit-

ed to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information.

Free breakfast served at North Emanuel Church

North Emanuel Lutheran Church FREE Community Breakfast. Sunday November 28th and every fourth Sunday of each month. FREE Community Breakfast served 8-9 a.m. Come one Come All to Our Fellowship Hall.

Gifts will be available to guests coming to the FREE Breakfast as a Thanksgiving Celebration. Just 5 blocks west of Rice Street on Hatch Ave, and 1 block north of Front Ave. on Matilda Street. Address. 301 Hatch Ave. 651-489-5611. Where Pastor Kisten Thompson and members welcome all for Breakfast and Fellowship with your neighbors. Any questions, call Sandy 651-283-1681, or Larry 651-373-5797.

Advocacy for the Hungry November 14 & 21

On Sunday, Nov 14, Karen Fitzpatrick, a volunteer with the Twin Cities Bread for the World office, will unfold the Biblical basis for hunger advocacy during the Adult Bible Class (ABC) at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Avenue. She will also walk participants through current pending legislation, especially the Earned Income Tax Credit, which will help reduce childhood hunger by bringing families at or near poverty level a refund sufficient to abate some of their serious financial worries and help them be more hunger resistant. Gathering time is 9:30 a.m. in the lounge of the church.

On the following Sunday, Nov 21, members of the ABCClass and others concerned with hunger, will gather in the lounge for prayer and to write letters to congress persons. This "Offering of Letters" will then be sent to legislators. It is said that one hand-written letter has the impact of 50 form letters. Members of the community are invited to learn about advocacy and join in writing letters. For more information call 651-628-4934.

Kim Huoy Chor closed

Continued from page 5

After the vote, Benanav said the offer to surrender all licenses was a good-faith gesture. "Well, we tried," he said. "I don't know what else I can say." At the public hearing earlier this month Benanav said he would not continue to represent the restaurant if it didn't

Spring Awakening: A Children's Tragedy

Hamline University Theatre begins its 80th season with a new translation of Frank Wedekind's "Spring Awakening: A Children's Tragedy," the result of a 2005 Collaborative Research project grant accorded to Nicole Bachman (Hamline Class of 2006) and Jeff Turner (Associate Professor of Theatre Arts).

Though written in 1892, the play did not see an uncensored performance until nearly 75 years later. Exploring the relationships between youth and adulthood, freedom and structure, and the societal conventions binding them together, the new translation of this provocative play will make its premiere on the Anne Simley Stage in early November. Due to the play's mature content, this production is not recommended for children.

Tickets are \$2 for ACTC students, \$8 for adults, and \$5 for students and seniors. The show runs November 11, 12, and 13. All performances are at 7:30 p.m. with the exception of November 6th at 8 p.m. Reservations are suggested and can be made through the Hamline University Theatre Box Office at 651-523-2905.

Volunteers needed for Como Park Sr. High

Rock Star Supply Co places community volunteers into Como Park Senior High to help our teachers and students be successful academically. Being a mentor to a student can help you develop applicable skills and create meaningful and professional connections! Go to www.rockstarsupplyco.org or contact volunteer coordinator Maria Cocchiarella at 651-235-2313 or maria.cocchiarella@gmail.com.

Next deadline:
Nov. 29
Next issue:
Dec. 9

clean up its act.

Taing could not be reached for comment.

Whether a restaurant ever reopens at 1644 University is a question mark. Taing rents the property and doesn't own it. The property had received variance for conversion into a credit union. Those variances were granted by the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) more than a year ago and would have to be renewed before anything can be built there.



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Board of Zoning to rule on Pierce Butler shipping business

By JANE MCCLURE

A fight over a business on Pierce Butler Route goes back to City Hall Nov. 15. That's when the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) vote on Nov. 15 will determine whether or not Todd Nimmo's shipping business can remain at the property at 681 and 733 Pierce Butler Route.

The city's zoning administrator has decided that Nimmo's business, Rail Transfer Inc., is a motor freight terminal and isn't allowed by the property's current I-1 zoning. He is appealing that decision to the BZA. The BZA heard the matter Oct. 18, and then sent it back to the Thomas-Dale Community Council for a recommendation. The board is also asking for additional information from the City Attorney's Office before making a decision.

More than 60 people jammed into an Oct. 26 community meeting at West Minnehaha Recreation Center to discuss Nimmo's request. The vote to recommend approval of his appeal was 16-7. Many people said that while they have concerns about the business, they didn't know enough about the technical issues before the BZA and chose not to vote.

The business has operated in St. Paul since 1995 and at its current site since 2004. It employs 22 people. The site is owned by two parties. Burling-

ton Northern Santa Fe Railroad owns 681 Pierce Butler Route; the property at 733 is owned by Apostolic Faith Temple Church. The church has considered building on the Pierce Butler site for some time. Its property was the site of a nightclub which burned several years ago. Nimmo would like to buy the church property and put a building there, as a means of dealing with odor and noise complaints. But that purchase is on hold pending the outcome of his appeal.

In response to a complaint, city staff visited the site recently and issued orders to both the property owners and the business owner, saying that the business isn't allowed under the properties' zoning and must be discontinued. During a city staff visit in September, 90 trailers were being stored on the site. That is another code violation, as the storage isn't allowed with 300 feet of residential property. Many of the trailers have since been removed.

Nimmo disagrees with the city staff assertion that his business is a motor freight terminal. He and his attorney contend the business doesn't meet the city's definition of what a motor freight terminal should be. They also contend that the definition is ambiguous.

Nimmo's workers use the properties to load and ship two different products. One is large

wooden logs, which are shipped to Asia and made into the furniture.

The other product shipped, which has generated complaints about odors, is corn. The corn is used to produce ethanol fuel. Corn that is trucked to the Pierce Butler site has already been processed for ethanol. The byproduct is unloaded, reloaded onto other vehicles and then shipped off for use as animal feed.

The smell from wet corn has wafted south toward West Minnehaha Recreation Center and its ball fields, and toward houses to the west and south. District 7 Executive Director Tait Danielson-Castillo said it has taken a few years to figure out where the odors were coming from.

"It's horrible," he said of the smell, comparing it to the ill-fated Gopher State Ethanol plant in the city's West End. At the community meeting, some neighborhood residents asked if air quality tests could be done.

Residents are also concerned about dust rolling off of the unpaved lots as well as potential contamination. But Nimmo and church representatives said the property isn't contaminated. Nimmo has put recycled asphalt down and continues to use gravel to control the dust.

Some neighbors had even questioned whether logs on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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Zoning

Continued from page 10

site were being treated with creosote but Nimmo and Peters said that has never been the case.

Nimmo has questioned whether the city's challenge to his business operations might play into the long-term plans to expand Pierce Butler Route east. When some neighbor-

hood residents asked if he would consider rezoning the site for heavier industry that would allow a motor freight terminal, Nimmo indicated that getting the zoning change could be difficult. Not only would a change likely be considered to be an illegal spot zoning, city staff might be reluctant to rezone a property that may be needed someday for the street extension.

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Monitor in a minute

Continued from page 2

serve continue as the St. Paul City Council voted unanimously Oct. 27 to seek environmental cleanup funds for the Trillium Nature Sanctuary.

District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council supports the request.

The 24.5-acre Trillium Nature Sanctuary site has been owned by the city since 2001. Phase I, Phase II, and RAP environmental re-

porters show evidence of contaminants on site. Parks and Recreation needs council approval to submit up to two grant applications requesting \$200,000 each to provide for brownfield cleanup. Cleanup of the site is a requirement in development of the park. The city has matching grant funds for the project through the 2010 Capital Improvement Budget program.

If the City of St. Paul is awarded the grant by the Environmental Protection Agency, the city agrees to accept the grant award, and may enter into an agreement with the EPA for the above referenced project. The city will comply with all

applicable laws, environmental requirements and regulations as stated in the grant agreement.

Como Classroom gets key state grant

The Como Woodland Classroom has gotten a key boost from a state grant. The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously Nov. 3 to accept the funding for the project, which would provide an outdoor classroom at the park.

The council accepted a \$218,000 grant and approved a fi-

nancing and spending plan for a Minnesota Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant for development of the classroom. The city's Capital Improvement Budget Committee recommended acceptance of the grant last month. The classroom development plan was developed by Parks and Recreation working with the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom Advisory Committee.

The project already has some city funding but the state grant will be a huge step forward.

Como Community Council is in support of the classroom project.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

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SPEAKERS

at Hamline University in November

Womanist Theology, November 11

Join members of the Hamline community as Dr. Monica Coleman presents, "With Open Hands: Sources for a Third Wave Womanist Theology." An ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Coleman is associate professor of constructive theology and African American religions and codirector of the Center for Process Studies at Claremont School of Theology. This event is made possible by the Mahle Endowment for Progressive Christian Thought.

Date and time: Thursday, November 11, 7 p.m.

Location: Bush Student Center in the 2nd floor ballroom, 1551 Hewitt Avenue

Cost: Free and open to all.

Environmental Issues Political Panel & Networking Event, November 17

Join professional women in the environmental field and Hamline's Center for Global Environmental Education for a light dinner and a panel discussion highlighting environmental issues facing the Twin Cities. Hear from women working to improve the environmental health of their communities. Panelists include Plymouth City Councilmember Ginny Black, City of Woodbury Environmental Resources Coordinator Sharon Doucette, City of Woodbury Sustainability Specialist Jen McLoughlin, and City of Minneapolis Director of Sustainability Gayle Prest.

Date and time: Wednesday, November 17
Discussion from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Location: Bush Student Center in the 2nd floor ballroom, 1551 Hewitt Avenue

Cost: \$12 for members or students and \$18 for non-members

Register in advance at: <http://fwef.org>.

Feed Your Hunger, Food and Justice, November 18



Author and activist Winona LaDuke will speak about food, justice, and sustainable communities. LaDuke is of Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) heritage and founder of White

Earth Land Recovery Project and Honor the Earth.

Date: Thursday, November 18, 7 p.m.

Location: Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room, 1535 Taylor Avenue

Cost: Free and open to all.

For more information call: 651-523-2483.



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