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**Como students finish on top***Met Council's Peter Bell:*

The conductor for the Central Corridor

By JAN WILLMS

In the hubbub of brainstorming, debate and proposals over light rail coming to University Avenue, Peter Bell is the behind-the-scenes conductor of the Central Corridor project. His mission: trying to ride out the controversy and guide that project safely home.

"It's always an adventure," said Bell, chair of the Metropolitan Council, who finds himself juggling the multitude of Central Corridor expectations as he strives for compromise as a Feb. 27 deadline draws near.

At that time, the Met Council, the agency building the Central Corridor line, will make decisions on the scope of the line.

The Central Corridor LRT is designed to link downtown Saint Paul and downtown Minneapolis, as well as Hiawatha's LRT line and the Northstar commuter rail line. Most of its 11-mile length is along University Avenue.

Without a doubt, light rail transit is the hot-button issue for the Twin Cities.

Various institutions with a stake in the Central Corridor are all demanding their piece of the light rail pie. Both the University of Minnesota and Ramsey County Commissioners are looking at their long-range needs and the important role that light rail will play in meeting them. Meanwhile, district councils, community development corporations and business associations are all lobbying for project additions.

But for now, Bell's role is somewhat of a naysayer.

The current LRT cost, at \$990 million, has to be shaved down to \$840 million. A tunnel under campus at the University of Minnesota, according to Bell and others, cannot be built. That would add \$110 to \$130 million to the current costs. A route desired by Ramsey County commissioners to tunnel the tracks beneath Kellogg Boulevard to Second Street so trains could swing in behind the Union Depot would also add costs to the LRT plan.

Those routes, as well as plac-

ing more stations on University Avenue, would add up to a cost of \$1.2 billion, according to Bell. The stations, at \$5.5 million each, are the smallest piece of the project.

"I don't think those things are frivolous," he said, "but we have to get the cost down to \$840 million."

To do this, Bell has been urging compromise. And it looks as if some of these compromises are being reached. Commissioners have dropped their most expensive idea, and the University is also considering a ground-level route along the northern edge of the campus.

However, costs estimates on the University route would not be known in time for the Feb. 27 deadline, and Bell does not want to wait. These changes can be made later but will not affect the current cost-cutting efforts.

"If we delay this decision for another year, fuel and construction material costs go up, and we are looking at \$40 million in increased costs," he said.

"We have not removed things from the transit request, but the community continues to add things. No one is thinking of taking stops away," he said, "but it is hard to add them. They are expensive."

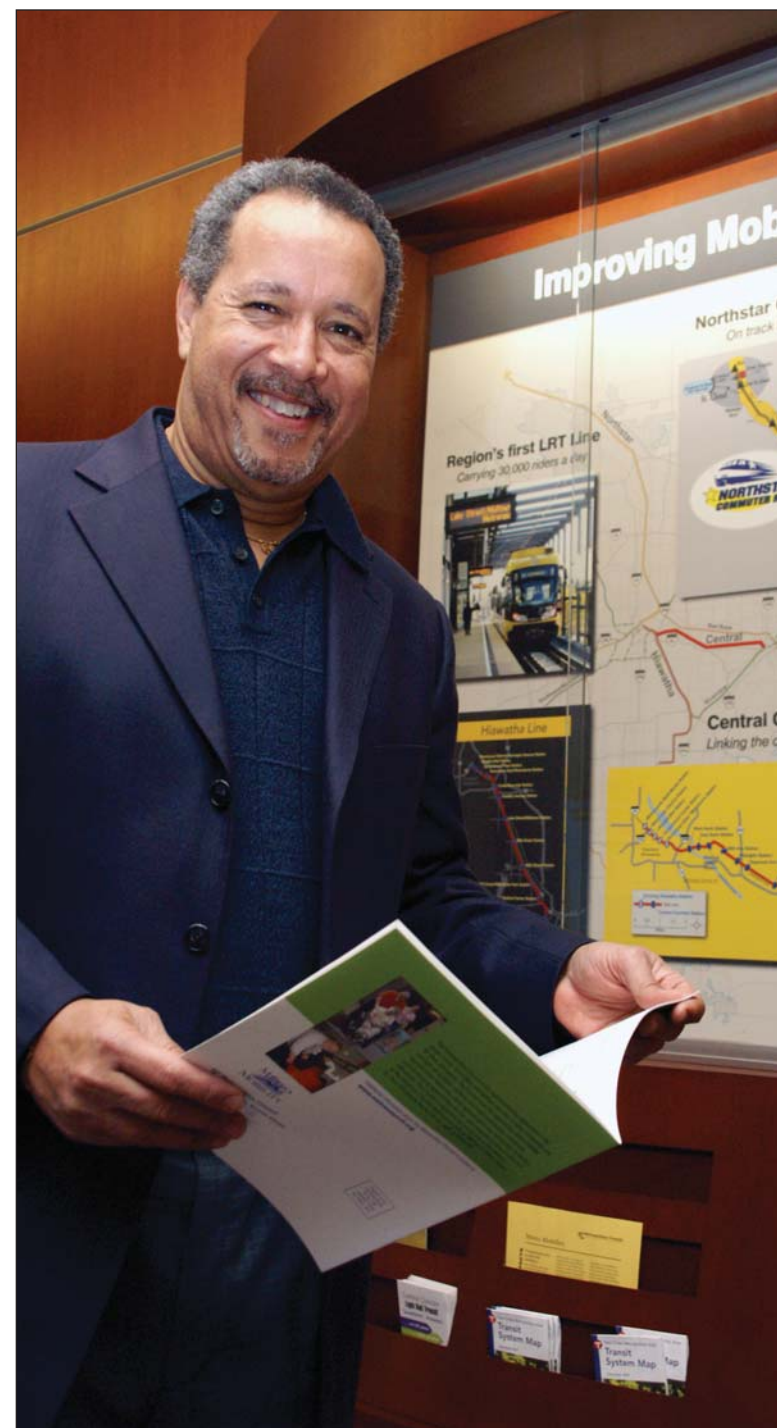
With deadlines looming and pressure building, Bell doesn't seem to show signs of buckling under the strain.

"I work at problem solving

"If we delay this decision for another year, fuel and construction material costs go up, and we are looking at \$40 million in increased costs."

- Met Council Chair Peter Bell

and building a consensus. I identify a problem, think through a solution and try to build a consensus around that. This has been true in all aspects of my ca-



Peter Bell, chair of the Metropolitan Council, finds himself juggling the multitude of Central Corridor expectations as he strives for compromise as a Feb. 27 deadline draws near. (Photo by Terry Faust)

reer," said Bell, who has formerly served as executive vice president for corporate community relations for TCF Bank, and as executive vice president for develop-

ment, publishing and educational services at Hazelden, a non-profit providing alcohol and drug-abuse services.

Bell said he does not believe

there has been one light rail built in the country without major compromise.

"I hope I can get all interest-

ed parties to have a renewed spirit of compromise," he said. As part of the build-up to the Central Corridor, informational meetings have been held throughout the community through January and early February. These meetings have offered the public current and updated information on the process. During the month of February, listening meetings have been scheduled.

These meetings will give Met Council members an opportunity to hear from the public their comments on the project.

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Monitor in a Minute

Residents feted on Honor Roll

Several area residents were honored in January with places on St. Paul's Neighborhood Honor Roll. The honor roll, prepared every year by the city's district planning councils, is a highlight of an annual volunteer recognition. The event also celebrates the achievements of district councils, which facilitate citizen participation and input on a variety of issues in St. Paul.

The honorees were feted January 11 at the University of St. Thomas. Mayor Chris Coleman and the city's artist in residence, Marcus Young, were speakers. City council President Kathy Lantry presented the awards.

Two area volunteers were honored posthumously. Longtime North End resident Olive Taylor was saluted for her work on the Loeb Lake Small Area Plan. Mary Moran was one of the Frogtown honorees, for her work at the Thomas-Dale Block Clubs and West Minnehaha Recreation Center. She worked on senior programs in that neighborhood for years. Both women passed away in 2007.

Other honorees are:

- District 13, Merriam Park. Anne White and Jill Mraz have been active in the effort to restore the historic Crosby Block building in the Iris Park neighborhood. White is also active in the District councils Collaborative and Central corridor light rail planning.
- District 12, St. Anthony Park. Gregg Richardson has been a member of the district council and its environment committee for decades. Jon Schumacher is the executive director of the St. Anthony Park Community Foundation and

a key member of the Como 2030 planning task force. Ned Wesenberg and Park Service Station staff were honored for helping clean up the neighborhood after the devastating August 11, 2007 wind storm.

- District 11, Hamline-Midway. Stephanie Hankerson advocates for neighborhood greening through her membership in the Hamline Midway Environment Group and Friends of Horton Park. Ruth Proft Dannehl is a board member and volunteer with Hamline Midway Elders and tutors children at two schools. The Mosaic on a Stick business and its owners, Lori Green and Maria Ricke, were honored for their community art projects including the planters on Snelling Avenue.
- District 10, Como Park. Sehoya Cotner is a District 10 board member and a member of the advisory committee for the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom.
- Josh Leonard, a teacher at Como park High School, is honored for his environmental work on behalf of the park and his students. Chet Mirocha is a member of the district council's environment committee and the neighborhood's parking task force.
- District 7, Thomas-Dale (Frogtown). Vatou Her is a University Avenue business owner and involved in groups studying the Central Corridor. He also helped start a Hmong Business Association. Gordon Radney organizes anti-crime marches through the neighborhood to draw attention to issues and unify neighbors.

St. Anthony Park residents ask for relief

Residents of the St. Anthony Park neighborhood are asking for relief from increased traffic noise on Highway 280. The St. Paul

City Council unanimously adopted a resolution January 2 that seeks support from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) for additional noise abatement measures, especially in the area where there is a gap in the roadway sound wall.

Highway 280 was pressed into service as a major detour route after the collapse of the Interstate 35W Bridge Collapse on August 1, 2007. The increased traffic levels are expected to continue until the new bridge is built and opened for construction this fall. The increased traffic has meant much more noise for the St. Paul and Minneapolis neighborhoods on either side of the highway. The St. Paul request only deals with the east side of the highway.

There are sound places along sections of Highway 280, but not in the Energy Park Drive area. Nor is there a sound wall south of the Como Avenue intersection.

The city is asking that the noise abatement measures be taken as quickly as possible, but sets no specific timeline for the work to be done. Nor did the city's request indicate what the cost of more sound walls would be.

Area properties facing pollution cleanup issues have received help from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). DEED recently announced it was

allocated grants to Total Tool Supply and Sholom Community Alliance.

The largest grant goes to Total Tool Supply, which is located on Pierce Street in Merriam Park. Total Tool received \$721,250 to clean up lead contamination at its property. This will allow the tool supply and services business to expand its facilities. Total Tool has been in Merriam Park for more than 30 years.

Sholom receives clean up grant

Sholom Community Alliance, developers of the new Sholom Home East at West Seventh and Otto, received a \$124,347 grant to help clean up pollution at its new housing campus. The complex is being built on the property that was occupied by retail uses along West Seventh and a former fuel tank farm. Construction on the 3.4 acre site got underway last year. This project is also receiving additional assistance from Ramsey County and Metropolitan Council programs.

This facility would replace the Sholom facility that has stood at Snelling Avenue and Midway Parkway for many years.

- Compiled by Jane McClure

District 6 has openings for Board of Directors

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three consecutive meetings.

Our Annual Meeting and Elections will be April 7. Time and location will be on our website and in future publications.

We have extended hours and will be open the third Wednesday from 5:00 to 7:00 and the third Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon. This would be a great time to pick up information or a recycling bin.

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North End Elementary Principal Hamilton Bell, along with North End Elementary staff and St. Paul School District representatives, have been going door to door in the North End to sell parents on a new concept for North End Elementary. (Photo by Terry Faust)

North End principal door-knocks to sell neighborhood on new concept for school

By **DEBORAH BROTZ**

Hamilton Bell isn't running for political office. But, the first year North End Elementary School principal will be knocking on doors, handing out flyers, and doing a lot of persuading before Mar. 7, when parents have to make a choice of what school to send their child to.

Bell, along with North End Elementary staff and St. Paul School District representatives, have been going door to door in the North End to sell parents on a new concept for North End Elementary. The School District wants to transform the school into two new gender-based academies for grades K-3. In that North End Elementary, 27 E. Geranium Ave., has lost enrollment over the last few years, Bell and the School District would like to target neighborhood parents, that have decided to take their children elsewhere.

"We've had declining enrollment over the last three years," said Bell. "This is something new to draw students."

St. Paul School District officials decided to put the University Academy for Boys and the Univer-

sity Academy for Girls into North End because the school needs more students. Most of its 340 students are bussed in. The school building is underutilized because it could hold as many as 900 students.

"They are trying to build up the North End of St. Paul," said Bell.

Elementary was a group decision.

"How do we get more students?" he said. "We said let's go door to door, find where they're at, and go after them."

While Bell is not sure where those students might live, he is fairly convinced that over the years hundreds of families have chosen to send their children to

"How do we get more students?...We said let's go door to door, find where they're at, and go after them."

- North End Elementary Principal Hamilton Bell

With the recent introduction of the Bio-SMART program at Washington Middle School and Arlington High, the school district decided it was appropriate to update the program offering at North End Elementary.

Bell says the idea to go door knocking to convince parents to send their children to North End

St. Paul charter schools instead of North End Elementary.

"Charter schools test scores are not as good as ours at North End even though we have an 87 percent minority population and 91 percent are free and reduced lunch. If our students are passing the MCA (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments) yearly, it goes to show we're doing a good job at the school."

When over 50 families attended a meeting at North End about the gender-based academies, they responded favorably.

"They seemed very interested," said Bell. "When you look at studies where you separate boys and girls, the results were positive. Boys need to stay focused."

The school will also use grant money to focus on closing the achievement gap between black boys, who as a student subgroup have had the lowest test scores, and white students. Since the School District believes the neighborhood is surrounded by black families with school age children, this should also help attract families to the school.

Bell has listened to the community to find out what people need for their children to be successful. Currently, the school has an after school program three days a week, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. And, Bell, himself, started a morning tutoring program for students in the computer lab and in math and reading from 7:30 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., when breakfast begins.

"It's amazing how many kids show up," he said. "We have a total of about 35 kids. We're creating conditions for them to be successful."

John Thoenke, a onetime interim school board member who has lived in the North End for 37 years, feels the School District has not done enough to gauge public support of its plan to transform

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Deadline looms for Central Corridor project

By JANE MCCLURE

February 27 is decision day for the Central Corridor light rail project, with many choices to be made by the Metropolitan Council. Those choices will affect whether or not there are extra stations on University Avenue, whether the streetscape is redone, whether a tunnel is built through the University of Minnesota east bank campus and if there is a connection to the Union Depot concourse.

The decisions are needed because Central Corridor costs are hitting the \$990 million mark. And that is without every single feature that is sought for the project. Adding the most costly choices for connections to Union Depot or the tunnel would ratchet the costs up to \$1.242 billion.

The project costs has to be brought down to \$840 million to meet federal funding guidelines and a cost effectiveness index used to determine which projects throughout the United States should receive federal dollars. When even studying an option can add a few million dollars to the project costs, any possible cuts are seen as critical.

Decisions must to happen soon, according to Metropolitan Council Chairperson Peter Bell. If the major project decisions aren't made soon, Central Corridor's preliminary engineering won't be completed in time for a September 5 submission deadline to the Federal Transportation Administration.

"If we delay the scoping (studies) for a month or two, it doesn't mean we're delayed a month or two," said Bell. "It delays us for a year." The project is on a timeline where construction

would start in 2010 and the line would start operations in 2014.

Metropolitan Council staff told the project's Corridor Management Committee January 9 that even a one-year delay could add millions of dollars in inflationary costs. If decisions aren't made to pare down the project, "our ability to get our (federal) application in fall 2008 will be in jeopardy," said Bell. Even a delay of a month or two would be too late and not allow enough time for engineering studies to be completed.

The looming February 27 deadline is prompting a flurry of meetings all along the 11-mile corridor route, with cities, counties, neighborhood groups and business organizations hurrying to weigh in. Metropolitan Council has held a series of public meetings and listening sessions, which wrap up in early February.

St. Paul City Council is the latest to weigh in. As part of the 2008 legislative agenda adopted January 16, the council stated the need to develop "a sufficient number and placement of stops to maximize the line's social and economic benefits to the region and to the neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor." District councils, community development corporations and other groups along the Central Corridor route are lobby-

ing for added stations, at Victoria, Western and Hamline, citing the project's impact on the neighborhood and the need for good transit in an area where so many residents are transit-dependent. Adding stations would add about \$5.5 million per station to the project.

St. Paul Intergovernmental Relations Director Mike Wilhelmi said it's important that the light rail line serve the city's residents and businesses.

The city is also lobbying for improved neighborhood transit connections to the Central Corridor, as part of its support for a comprehensive regional transportation package. One huge criticism of Central Corridor is that there is no north-south bus service between Snelling Avenue and Dale Street. But the costs of those improvements would not add to the Central Corridor budget.

But as local elected officials and community groups weigh in, so, too, has Governor Tim Pawlenty. On January 14 when announcing his 2008 state bonding recommendations, the governor pushed for the project to get its costs back to the \$840 million mark. Metropolitan Council is seeking \$140 million for the project; Pawlenty has recommended \$70 million, saying he won't recommend the

full request until there is agreement on various facets of the project.

How the decisions will be made raised questions among the Central Corridor Corridor Management Committee January 9. St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman and other public officials on the committee said they assumed the group would vote on facets of the project and send recommendations to the full Metropolitan Council. But Bell said he didn't anticipate that the committee would take votes and said he'd take Coleman and others' request to vote under advisement.

Prior to the vote, local government officials are looking at ways to cut costs. The bigger-ticket items looming over Central Corridor are the tunnel at the University of Minnesota and the connection to the Union Depot concourse, which is eyed as a multi-modal transit hub. The project already was pushed from \$932 to \$990 million by the federal government's request that the contingency fund be increased.

Ramsey County commissioners, meeting as the Regional Rail Authority, voted 6-1 January 15 to eliminate the most expensive of the plan. That option, which would have added \$57.8 million to the project cost, would have used the second Street viaduct, as well as a tunnel. Commissioner Tony Bennett cast the lone vote against eliminating that option, saying a less expensive version of that route should be studied.

But other commissioners disagreed. "I'm not sure there is another alternative to staying on Second Street," said Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt.

That leaves connections using Broadway or Wacouta streets on the table. The current Central Corridor study calls for trains to stop in front of the depot head house on Fourth Street, more than a block away from the concourse and planned transit hub.

Near the west end of the line, the U of M has agreed to pay for engineering studies of an alternative ground-level rail lines to travel north of the campus. But because those studies won't be done by February 27, any project changes would have to be weighed against delays and added costs.

U of M Vice President of University Services Kathleen O'Brien said the U wanted the northern options studied seven years ago, but saw that request turned down by an advisory committee. The U is seeking the tunnel because of concerns about traffic and pedestrian safety, especially on Washington Avenue.

The tunnel as originally proposed for Central Corridor can no longer be built because of conflicts with where the new U of M football stadium is under construction. Capital costs for a redesigned tunnel would be \$110 to \$130 million.

Project staff are busily cutting costs as well. One option recently unveiled for University Avenue would cut the cost of a requested street reconstruction in half, from \$55 million to about \$24-\$27 million. St. Paul leaders contend it makes sense to rebuild the street and put in streetscape improvements at the same time light rail is built. If the costs to redo the street can be cut, that could improve that part of the project's chances to stay in.



University Avenue eyed for cost containment in Central Corridor project

By JANE MCCLURE

The small savings found thus far for the Central Corridor project may be along University Avenue, as work to rein in the light rail project budget continues.

Throughout discussion of the project, St. Paul leaders have pushed for University Avenue to be rebuilt, storefront to storefront. They contend that putting in a new street, sidewalks, trees, lighting, benches and other amenities makes more sense when the street is torn up for light rail construction. Another argument for doing the work during the Central Corridor project means not tearing up the street at a later date and disrupting businesses and area residents twice.

Much of University Avenue was rebuilt during the city's ambitious sewer separation and street reconstruction of the 1980s and 1990s.

Redoing University Avenue curb to curb initially was estimated at \$55 million, as part of the Central Corridor.

The project engineering team is now suggesting that the street have a mill and overlay, rather than total reconstruction. That

would not only save \$24 to \$27 million, it would also reduce project construction time and impacts. The project engineers estimate that 85 percent of University Avenue would have to be rebuilt under the original option.

A mill and overlay is when the surface of a paved street or road is removed and replaced. Jim Alexander of the Central Corridor project team said the center of the street would still be removed and rail installed. But not digging up the entire street would provide the savings.

Another suggestion is that there be local cost sharing for curb and sidewalk replacement, rather than simply having the project cover the costs. But that is likely to draw objections from business owners, who already face disruption and potential loss of customers when light rail is built.

If the city paid for the University Avenue street improvements, it would require assessments to property owners. It would also take a huge chunk out of the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

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Land use planning for Central Corridor delayed

By JANE MCCLURE

If you're waiting to see the land use planning ideas for neighborhoods around the Central Corridor light rail stations, be prepared to wait a little longer. Draft plans for seven station areas, which were to be ready by late January, won't be ready for a few more weeks. That means a group reviewing station area plan ideas won't get their first look at the plans until February 19.

A community open house on the draft plans isn't planned until the end of March, meaning the plans probably won't get to the St. Paul Planning Commission and City Council until late spring or early summer.

While the Metropolitan County and a staff team is working on design of the light rail line itself, the City of St. Paul is responsible for land use planning along the proposed rail line.

The Central Corridor Station Area Planning Steering Committee heard an update on its timeline January 22. The group also heard a report from Metropolitan Council staff on changes to the light rail line and stations in the Capitol area.

The planning delay is needed because consultants from Toronto-based Urban Strategies need more time to work on the plans, said City Planner Donna Drummond. Much time was needed to



If you're waiting to see the land use planning ideas for neighborhoods around the Central Corridor light rail stations, be prepared to wait a little longer.

sort through suggestions from the approximately 300 people who attended station area planning workshops last fall. That's higher than initial estimates of workshop participants.

"I think that was excellent representation from the community," said Drummond. "We had 44 pages of comments."

The suggestions have been sorted into ideas for public space, ideas for future land uses, pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic movement and access to and design for the stations themselves. The comments were separated by station areas around the Westgate Business Park, Raymond Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Snelling Avenue, Lexington Parkway, Dale Street and Rice Street.

The long-term impacts of light rail could be dramatic, according to planners. The development strategy indicates that as

many as 30,000 more people and 15,000 more housing units could be built along the corridor by 2030. During that same time the area could also have an additional one million square feet of retail space and an additional five million feet of office space developed.

Different suggestions for new land uses were made for each station area, ranging from housing to commercial to light industrial that would create more jobs. While different land use ideas were suggested for each station site, one common theme for every station area is the need for pedestrian access to stations and safety in crossing University Avenue.

"People want the opportunity to be able to continue to have pedestrian crossings at every block," Drummond said.

The Metropolitan Council, which is building the rail line itself, is working with the City of St.

Paul and Ramsey County on street improvements. Part of the plans call for having a traffic signal every quarter-mile or every two blocks, said Jim Alexander of the Central Corridor project's staff team.

University Avenue already has 22 traffic signals along the length of the proposed light rail line. The plans for building the light rail line itself now call for adding seven signals and removing one. Turns would also be restricted at many intersections, and only allowed at intersections with signals.

The signalized crossings would have walk and don't walk signs, which would be activated by pedestrians.

Some changes to the light rail plans for University Avenue, which were outlined by Alexander, could have an impact on land use planning. But staff and task force members don't believe the changes would require major changes to the ideas proposed for station sites, or to the overall development strategy.

One change is to the Rice Street Station, which is being moved to the south side of University Avenue, east of Rice Street. This station would have been located in the center of the street, just west of the Rice-University intersection. Moving the station provides better bus connections, and reduces the need to acquire more

right-of-way, Alexander said.

Another change is being to the planned Capitol East station, near the state capitol and state office buildings. This station would have been located on Columbus Avenue. Trains would reach it by traveling from University to Robert Street. Plans now call for putting the station on Robert between 14th Street and Columbus.

Another change is to the capitol area alignment of the light rail line. Alexander said the route as proposed behind the state capitol was challenging because of the street's steep grade, as well as right-of-way impacts at Rice Street. Now plans call for shifting the rail line from the center of the street to the south side of the street, on University just east of Marion Street. Putting the rail line to the side of the street addressed those issues, if there is a shallow cut into the street east of Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Boulevard.

Any interim zoning regulations can only be in place for one year, so the Planning Commission will soon bring forward recommendations for the City Council to adopt to keep the restrictions in place for a longer period of time. This will allow more time for land use planning. A commission subcommittee is discussing ways to keep the restrictions in place, with a public hearing before the commission on March 7.

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Cost containment

Continued from page 5

A small piece of the cost puzzle may also be solved with recent studies of the Minnesota Commercial Railroad Bridge, which crosses University between Prior and Cleveland. The railroad has operated in the Midway for more than a century.

Previous studies indicated that bridge would have to be rebuilt to accommodate the light rail trains' height. Replacing the bridge would have cost \$1.5 million.

But now it appears the bridge can remain in place. Instead, the street and rail track beneath the bridge can be lowered. "But based on further analysis we can make this work without disturbing the bridge," said Alexander.

Yet another aspect of the project which could appease area residents is that of adding three stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western. Alexander said the project team is continuing to look at the possibility of installing infrastructure for additional stations now, with the possibility of adding the stations in the future. Each of the three stations would have a cost of \$5.5 million. Installing infrastructure would cost about one-third of that.

Members of the station area planning group asked if those costs could be revisited, saying they seem high. "That just seems like a lot for a station," said Anne White, a Merriam Park resident who chairs the District Councils Collaborative, a coalition of groups along the rail line.



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By the end of January the below zero temperatures had me hunched over and chilled to the bone. The snowy landscape was turning a little gray.

My husband and I have two friends who spend these coldest winter months of the year sailing the Bahamas from one sun-drenched island to the next. The most recent email from these snowbirds contained their lament that their on-board refrigerator was acting up - our sympathies went out to them. And then came the cruel question, "How's the weather been up there?" Besides sailing south to more tropical latitudes, how does one escape these winter doldrums?

Directing a winter-weary mind towards planning a backyard garden, a community garden, or a water-quality garden is the virtual equivalent of taking a breath of spring air. A few horticulture books, several garden catalogs, and an imagination are all that is needed. Ah, I can almost smell that first fragrant iris in full-bloom and hear the hum of contented insects.

Winter is also a perfect time to write a work plan for the coming year; that is what the recently renewed District 10 Como Community Council Environment Committee was doing one cold January evening, at the office in



Nature in the City

By DEB ROBINSON

Planning ahead is like a breath of spring air

the Historic Como Streetcar Station.

The Environment Committee's newly elected chair, Michael MacDonald, joined the District 10 Community Council board last November. After a stint in the Peace Corps, he and his wife decided to settle in the Como Park neighborhood. "When we moved back to Minnesota, St. Paul was the only place I considered living," said MacDonald.

MacDonald is a geologist who has spent his career investigating and cleaning up polluted properties. Because of his education, work history, and St. Paul roots, he was naturally interested in getting involved in local environmental issues. MacDonald volunteered to serve on the Capitol Region Watershed District's Citizen's Advisory Committee.

Back in 1998, it was the District 10 Environment Committee that petitioned for the creation of the Capitol Region Watershed District (CRWD), and the CRWD

has done an admirable job managing the area's water resources. Now, a decade later, the Environment Committee needed the favor returned, and MacDonald volunteered to fill the vacant Chair position.

Every winter, the Environment Committee researches, discusses, and then writes a work plan that contains the projects, goals, and activities that the committee wants to accomplish for that year. The ambitious 2008 plan includes: helping with Como Lake shoreline maintenance, sponsoring the educational Tree Treks, promoting the Ramsey County Birding Festival, supporting the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom project, adopting the Como Lakeside Pavilion community garden, tracking neighborhood environmental issues (like the Como Pool/Aquatic Center remodeling and the Rock-Tenn transition to a new fuel source), and more.

I asked MacDonald what projects he had a special interest in. Considering his CRWD connection, I was not surprised to hear MacDonald wants to engage District 10 homeowners in local water quality issues, "We are planning a rain barrel workshop this spring, which will educate people on how rain barrels can improve water quality, and the participants will construct a rain barrel to take home."

The old-fashioned rain barrel is making a comeback, but for a contemporary reason. Attached to a downspout, the rain barrel collects rainwater directly from the roof thereby reducing stormwater runoff (and the pollution it carries) headed for the lake. And a rain barrel supplies rainwater for use in the homeowner's garden. The rain barrel workshop is expected to fill to overflowing, so sign up early when this event appears on the District 10 website.

The Environment Committee also discussed a new initiative that would move the frontline of the battle against invasive buckthorn from parkland into resi-

dential yards. Community volunteers and EcoPartners have spent countless hours removing buckthorn shrubs from Como Park and other city parks. However, seeds from buckthorn still

The Environment Committee meeting went on for two hours on that cold night in January, but it was time very well spent. Just talking about the Ramsey County Birding Festival that will take place the first week of May and the prospect of digging in the rich soil of the Como Lakeside community garden in late-May made Spring seem that much closer. Endnotes: *Information and volunteer opportunities with the District 10 Environment Committee's projects and activities, email the committee Chair: mike@comopark.org or



Illustration by Deb Robinson



Michael MacDonald, the newly elected Chair of the District 10 Community Council Environment Committee's, leads other local residents in establishing the committee's activities and goals for the coming year. (Photo by Matt Schmitt)

growing in surrounding yards are transported by birds and re-infest the parks with more buckthorn.

A homeowner may not even know that their aging hedge is indeed buckthorn. Besides educating folks on how to identify buckthorn, MacDonald said, "maybe we can develop a program to help them get it out of their yard or find a way to help defer the cost of replacing it [the hedge]."

visit the District 10 website for meeting dates and times: www.comopark.org *St. Paul Community Garden information, visit the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Gardening Website at: www.stpaul.gov/depts/parks/environment/gardens/ *Water quality garden information, visit our local watershed district's website at: www.capitolregionwd.org *To contact this writer: dmrobinson@bitstream.net

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Officials work on minimizing impact of Rice Street bridge replacement

By JANE MCCLURE

Replacement of the Rice Street Bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks will have an impact on neighborhood residents and businesses this summer. Although St. Paul and Ramsey County Public Works staff are working hard to minimize disruptions and detours, the closing will affect motorists, transit buses and bus riders, school buses and kids, and even the annual Rice Street Parade and Rice Street Mile races.

The Rice Street Bridge, which is ¼ mile north of the Maryland-Rice intersection, is one of two major bridge replacement projects that will affect the North End this summer. The other project is reconstruction of two of the Maryland Avenue bridges just west of the Interstate 35E interchange. Those bridges also carry motor vehicles over the rail line.

All of the bridges are deteriorated and in need of replacement. The Rice Street bridge will be 50 years old this year; the other bridges are slightly newer. Rehabilitating the bridges has

been rejected in favor of new construction. St. Paul Public Works Bridge Engineer Kevin Nelson said the Rice Street Bridge has a design that isn't used any more. That bridge also has deterioration from years of salt use during the winter months.

Engineers hope to keep at least one lane open in either direction on the Maryland Avenue bridges. But the bridge on Rice Street could be closed for up to 120 days. Ramsey County is offering incentives if the work is done in 90 days.

The incentives are important to keep the project on task and ideally, finishing as quickly as possible, said Ramsey County Commissioner Janice Rettman. "We want the new Rice Street bridge built properly but we also want the work done quickly so that there is as little impact on businesses as possible."

City and County Public Works staff are working together to coordinate the projects. Maryland Avenue and Rice Street are technically county roads, which is why the county is involved.

Although a summer and fall



The Rice Street Bridge, which is ¼ mile north of the Maryland-Rice intersection, is one of two major bridge replacement projects that will affect the North End this summer.

of detours will be disruptive, Nelson said the tradeoff is to get the work done all at once. "We'd just be spreading the disruption out if we did one project one year and the other the next year," he said. The city is designing and taking the lead on the two projects.

Businesses were to hear an update on the bridge project's impacts February 6, with a presentation of the construction schedule for the North End Business Association. A neighborhood meeting was held in January.

Tim McDonough, co-owner of the Tin Cups' restaurant at

Rice and Maryland, is one of many business owners eager for more information about the bridge project. There are worries about loss of customers if people cannot get to the businesses.

"The concern we have centers on how long the work will take," said McDonough. He and a partner just bought the landmark Rice Street business late last year. They are concerned that businesses will be detoured around the Rice-Maryland business area.

"I think many of us have questions," said McDonough. He and other business owners will push for directional signage, which the city does for other business districts during street and bridge construction projects.

Residents have concerns about detours through residential areas, said District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council Director Kerri Antrim. Rice Street is a main north-south route through the community, with few options besides Jackson Street and Dale Street. There are fears that motorists will try to find short-cuts through the residential areas on either side of Rice Street, only to wind up driving around.

The Rice Street detour will be from Maryland to Jackson Street, then Jackson to Arlington Avenue. Public Works records show that when the current bridge was built, the city used Albemarle Street, just west of Rice, as a detour. But Nelson said the current traffic volume on Rice Street means that isn't an option.

Another issue that has to be resolved is that of where the Rice Street Parade and Rice Street Mile running races will be located. It is the second-oldest neighborhood festival in St. Paul and has one of the longest parades. The parade starts at Rice and Atwater and ends north of the Rice-Arlington intersection. The men's and women's mile races start at Rice and Front streets and also ends near Rice

and Arlington. Organizers are aware of the bridge construction but have not announced alternative plans yet.


The St. Paul City council approved its share of the projects' funding in December when the 2008-2009 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) is adopted. The Ramsey County Board voted in January to sign engineering agreements with the city related to the projects.

The Rice Street Bridge has an estimated construction cost of \$2.8860 million. The cost for the Maryland Avenue bridges is \$2.215 million. A combination of funds is being used to pay for each project, with federal, state, county and city funds used for the Maryland Avenue project and city, county and state funds for the Rice Street bridge.

Both projects required approval from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The city will prepare the bridge plans but work closely with the county throughout the project. MnDOT and railroad officials will also be closely involved. The Rice Street project is ethnically a technically project, as the state is in the process of turning back numerous streets and roads back to counties and cities.

The bridge plans for each project are still being prepared. Once those are done, bids can be sought. Public Works anticipated advertising for bids in March or April, and awarding the winning bid in time for a May construction start. Work is to be completed in October, although the contractor is being offered incentives to finish the work sooner on the Rice Street Bridge. Work on the Maryland Avenue bridges could extend later into the fall.

Exact starting date of construction won't be known until the bids are awarded and a contractor gets ready to start work. Typically city and county crews put up signage days before a street or bridge is closed for construction, to alert motorists.



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Embers building approved for credit union

By JANE MCCLURE

Remember the Embers? Did you stop there for burgers, fries and shakes while cruising University Avenue? Memories may be all that's left as the restaurant chain's first restaurant is set for a transformation. If a purchase agreement for the property is executed in the future, what is now a popular Chinese-Cambodian restaurant could become a credit union.

The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) unanimously approved a major variance January 14 for the building at 1664 University Av. That decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days.

The variance allows St. Paul Federal Credit Union to add a drive-through lane behind the building. The minimum setback requirement between a drive-through lane and a residential property is 60 feet. The restaurant shares a fence with an apartment building to the south, six feet away from the property line. That required approval of a 54-foot setback variance.

The restaurant building is at the southeast corner of University and Pierce Street. Its block has no alley, but there is a driveway between the rear of the restaurant building and the fence for an apartment building to the south.

City staff recommended approval of the variance. There is a vacant lot between the apartment building and the fence. The fence itself is wood, with shrubs around it. That is seen as one way to muffle noise from the drive-through speaker. The credit union has agreed to use a sound system to reduce noise and to add security cameras behind the building. The audio system will be placed in a way that diverts noise away from the residential area to the south.

The drive-through will be open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m.-noon Saturday. The drive-through



The St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) unanimously approved a major variance January 14 for the building at 1664 University Av. That decision is final unless it is appealed to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days.

will have two lanes. Vehicles can enter through existing curb cuts on University Avenue or on Fry Street, and will exit onto Pierce. The credit union has estimated drive-through window traffic for the University Avenue location. The estimates vary from 54 cars on Saturday to a low of 26 on Tuesdays.

District Council 13 took no position on the variance. City staff heard from the manager of the nearby Spruce Tree Center commercial building in support; the apartment building owner and a tenant contacted the city in opposition with concerns about noise from the drive-through lane. No one attended the BZA hearing to speak against the variance.

The property is located along the proposed Central Corridor light rail transit line and is in the area subject to interim zoning standards meant to encourage transit-oriented development. A credit use is a permitted use under the interim zoning regulations. Be-

cause 1664 University is not within a defined station area, it doesn't fall under more stringent regula-

tions governing redevelopment around the proposed light rail stations.

1664 University currently houses a Chinese-Cambodian restaurant, Kim Houy Chor, a tailoring business and a real estate office. St. Paul Federal Credit Union will use the entire building and not keep any of the current tenants. The building has about 11,000 square feet in space.

The restaurant building was developed in 1966, according to records submitted by the credit union. At some point during its history two additions were built onto the restaurant building.

The one-story building was constructed as the original Embers restaurant. The restaurant was housed on the main floor, with Embers corporate offices in the basement. Embers was once one of the region's largest and most high-profile restaurant chains. Most of the area locations have closed in recent years. Restaurant co-founder Henry Kristal died in December.

Embers occupied the building

until 2003. The property was then sold. Various restaurants have occupied the building since then.

No timeline to open the credit union has been announced. If St. Paul Federal Credit Union buys the building it would renovate the structure and update the exterior before moving in. The parking lot would be restriped to have about 40 parking spaces, with a smaller employee parking lot on the Fry Street side. The parking lot would also be landscaped, with a landscaped area southeast of the building, alongside the drive-through lanes.

Credit Union President Bonny Godtland appeared before the BZA to answer questions about the project. The credit union would like to expand its services to area neighborhoods. University Avenue would be the credit union's third location in St. Paul and its first on the western part of the city. Its main office is at 1330 Conway St. on the city's East Side. A smaller branch office is at Hillcrest Shopping Center, in the northeast corner of the city.

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In a world where our children are mesmerized by Spongebob and YouTube, the emotional depth of the Peanuts characters is a breath of fresh air. No one ever brought the generations together better than St. Paul's own Charles M. Schulz. Thanks to the Community Theater of Saint Thomas More (formerly IHM- St. Luke Community Theater), we can enjoy the gang once more in You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown, the 1994 Tony award-winning musical.

Under the talented direction of Elizabeth Gibba and the inspiring choreography of Judith James Reis, the 73-member cast drawn from multiple schools and neighborhoods brings this popular musical to life with a unique inter-

generational cast. "Our philosophy has always been to use age-blind casting which makes our theater community so unique" according to director Liz Gibba, "And it's never been more appropriate than with the genius of Schulz in this production." Grandparents, parents and children will see their peers on stage and fondly remember the comic strip and characters they called their own.

And, indeed, Charlie Brown and the gang do tell the story of Schulz' childhood. From the staccato rhythm of the Peanuts characters' speech, to the awkwardness of Charlie Brown's relationships—Schulz' work reflected his life and times here in St. Paul. How appropriate that this show is staged just

blocks from where Charles Schulz was born, went to school and gave life to his Peanuts characters.

This seasoned theater group now in its 20+ years of history is doing a total of six performances. The four evening shows will be held at 7 p.m. on Friday, February 29th; Saturday, March 1st; Friday, March 7th; and Saturday, March 8th. Afternoon shows will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, March 2nd and Sunday, March 9th. All shows will be in the Saint Thomas More Auditorium (formerly IHM-St. Luke's School) at 1065 Summit Avenue. Ticket information and more about this unique theater group can be found on the school's website at www.ihm-stlukes.org.

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Gordon Parks Alternative School a legacy to St. Paul photographer

By JAN WILLMS

He picked up a camera instead of a gun.

"I think his main legacy is what you choose to do with your life," said Russel Balenger, reflecting on his uncle, Gordon Parks.

"He was working in an after-hours joint, cleaning a pool hall, and life was not always easy for him," Balenger said. "He went in a pawn shop and could have picked up a gun. The choice was so important."

That choice started Parks, who moved from Kansas to Saint Paul as a teenager, on a life as a photographer, painter, writer, musician and film director, and won him accolades for his many talents.

Parks died in March 2006 at

the age of 93, but his legacy lives on. It lives on through Gordon Parks Alternative High School, at 1212 University Avenue in Saint Paul.

The school, housed in a new building, opened Dec. 3, 2007.

It was originally located at Dale and University and called ALC Unidale.

"We finished teaching in the old building Nov. 30," said Steve Lindberg, principal of Gordon Parks.

"A lot of planning has been done for three years to move the program," he said. "We broke ground a year ago and have been building since then."

Ted Johnson, a social studies teacher at the school, proposed naming it after the legendary Parks. He was strongly supported by the school board and the community, according to Lindberg.

The new two-story facility looks out over University Avenue, with a spectacular view of the buildings and flow of traffic. Between 280 and 295 students attend classes at Gordon Parks, the largest of seven alternative day school programs in Saint Paul.

The school serves students ages 16 to 20.

"There are so many different paths you could take with this school," said English instructor Paul Creager. "Gordon Parks was a playwright, a writer and a social activist. We teach the students

about Parks, and many discover they may have already known about him."

Creager said the faculty wants the students to learn more about Parks and be able to talk about him.

"We're trying to connect with some of his protégés, someone who worked with him and knew him and who might mentor here," he said.

"We're looking at a couple of things," Lindberg said, regarding the direction of the school. "We're leaning toward film and media types of work and, secondly, the Principles of Learning program of academic excellence that has been around for about five years."

Lindberg said that in the spring, the school might consider a film festival of student work or a juried type of film festival.

"There are a lot of opportunities around the legend of Gordon Parks," he said.

Lindberg said there is no typical student that attends the high school.

"There are kids who have struggled in regular high school because of various issues," he said. "There may have been drugs, alcohol or abuse issues."

The school also is home to an evening high school, a separate program that serves 250 to 265 students.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



English instructor Paul Creager listens as Principal Steve Lindberg talks about the program options at Gordon Parks Alternative High School. (Photo by Terry Faust)

"Gordon Parks was a playwright, a writer and a social activist. We teach the students about Parks, and many discover they may have already known about him."

- English teacher Paul Creager



Gordon Parks died in March 2006 at the age of 93. (Photo courtesy of Russel Balenger)

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Gordon Parks' legacy lives on through Gordon Parks Alternative High School, at 1212 University Avenue in Saint Paul. The school, housed in a new building, opened Dec. 3, 2007. (Photo by Terry Faust)

Parks

Continued from page 10

"A lot of students are from other high schools who may be down a credit or two," Lindberg said. "We also have students who may work part-time jobs, who may have children at home or other issues. They may be homeless."

Lindberg emphasized the importance of an alternative school for those who for one reason or another don't fit into the regular school system.

"Every student in Saint Paul needs to have an education to be successful in life," he said. He suggested the new three Rs of education provide an opportunity for a child to connect with a school system that is pertinent.

"Those three Rs are Rigor, an outstanding curriculum; Relationship, a chance for a child to connect with an adult in the building; and Relevance in what we are teaching," Lindberg said.

He said there are 13 instructors on the teaching staff, and a

portion of them share their duties with other alternative schools. There are also educational assistants and a very active student resource group, including on-the-job training teachers and counselors. A parenting nurse works with teen parents, and Healthstart, a private, nonprofit health program is expanding into the school.

"We have a state of the art technology lab and workroom, and a combined industrial tech and art room," Lindberg said.

He said students are currently building a lamp, combining design with mechanics.

"The art class is using some of Gordon Parks' work as an example," Lindberg said, pointing out a picture Parks had done of Muhammad Ali.

Lindberg said the school's gym is a tremendous asset, giving students a chance to shoot a game of hoops before class. Breakfast and hot lunches are also served in the cafeteria.

The quality of the building was quickly recognized as the high school was named 2007 project of the year by University UNITED.

Lindberg said the school is

being dedicated March 6. "It should be a tremendous day," he said.

On the front floor of the building there is an Adinkra, an African symbol, featuring two crocodiles sharing one stomach. It is a symbol meaning unity in diversity.

Gordon Parks would have been proud.

His nephew recalled some of the tough times Parks endured as a youth, sleeping on trolleys when he was kicked out of his uncle's home. Facing racism in his birthplace of Kansas, which was not such a friendly place for a black child in the 1950s.

Coming from a family of 15 children, money and food were sometimes scarce.

"My mom said when they were growing up as kids, they had to share dinner plates," Balenger said.

"I don't think my uncle ever completed high school," Balenger said. "But over the years he received at least 40 honorary doctorates."

And it all began with his choice of weapons—a camera.



Visitors to the Gordon Parks Alternative High School are treated to an array of sights and sounds. On the front floor of the building (top right) there is an Adinkra, an African symbol, featuring two crocodiles sharing one stomach. It is a symbol meaning unity in diversity. (Photos by Terry Faust)



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Vacant structures in St. Paul soar to record levels

By JANE MCCLURE

Getting many of St. Paul's 1,600 vacant properties rehabilitated, sold and occupied again is a pressing issue, as the number of vacant structures soars to record levels. But would forcing property owners to make minimum safety improvements before a building is sold help solve or worsen the vacant building crisis?

Ward Six Council Member Dan Bostrom has introduced an ordinance that would require minimum safety improvements before a property is sold. It would affect all buildings that are registered as vacant with the city. The St. Paul City Council will hold a public hearing on the proposal at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, February 20 at City Hall.

Real estate groups and some housing advocacy groups have raised concerns with the proposed ordinance, saying it could deter the sale of houses to new owners and result in more tear-downs and loss of housing stock.

City staff estimate that as many as 1,300 of the city's vacant buildings require repairs. Some of the issues are significant. Most buildings that are brought before the City Council for remove or repair orders have numerous code violations. A Fuller Avenue house the City Council voted to have removed or repaired January 2 had 30 building, plumbing, heating and electrical violations that needed correction. These include every-

thing from re-leveling the basement floor to replacing the kitchen sink.

A check of housing reports indicates that the repairs can easily get into the tens of thousands of dollars. Typically if a building can be saved, a buyer agrees with the city to make the repairs and submits a detailed work plan and financial information. But Bostrom's proposed ordinance calls for many of these repairs to be made before a lender can sell the property.

At this point, Bostrom admits that his ordinance "is a work in progress." Most council members said they don't support the proposal in its current form and want to find other ways to ensure that vacant buildings are repaired and reoccupied. But Bostrom said if nothing else, he is drawing attention to an issue that has reached crisis stage in some neighborhoods.

"We have to do something," said Bostrom, whose Sixth Ward contains a high number of vacant buildings. Of the East Side neighborhoods he represents, "you can see three or four vacant buildings in a one or two-block area. It's stunning, the impact these vacant houses are having on neighboring properties and on the fabric of neighborhoods."

He said property owners who keep up their homes and have to live next to abandoned, deteriorated properties are the victims of the housing market downtown and the spike in va-

cancies.

But the unintended consequence of the Bostrom ordinance is that it could result in more houses being torn down and fewer being rehabilitated, according to Patrick Ruble, government affairs director for the St. Paul Area Association of Realtors.

Contractors who have successfully restored other vacant properties and resold or rented them out could be discouraged from doing so under Bostrom's ordinance. Ruble said the city should allow the market to continue to play a role, rather than dictating what lenders should do. His group has already spoken with Bostrom and wants to seek a compromise.

Mortgage lenders contacted for the story hadn't seen the ordinance and didn't have a comment. Most of the lenders who show up on housing cases that get to the City Council level for public hearings are out-of-state firms.

Other City Council members have reservations about the ordinance or haven't taken a position on it. Most say they agree with Bostrom's intent but fear it will have unintended consequences. "I appreciate what (Bostrom) is trying to do but I'm not sure it's the best solution," said Ward Two Council Member Dave Thune. He concerned that the ordinance could result in demolition of structures that could otherwise be saved, or "quick fixes" that don't address long-standing

repair and maintenance needs.

Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris said he also doesn't want lenders to walk away from properties rather than put them back on the market. "We want to make sure there's an incentive to get houses repaired, instead of throwing up their hands and saying they're done."

Harris, who has expressed concern about the loss of the city's historic housing stock in the vacant building crisis, said the city needs to find ways to get the houses repaired and occupied. "I think this ordinance would discourage that," he said.

Ward One Council Member Melvin Carter III and his family live in an area with about a dozen vacant houses. He has had to pull weeds out of his fence and clean up broken glass from the vacant house next door, when the glass ended up in his yard.

"Something obviously has to be done," said Carter. He wants incentives to get houses sold and occupied again, but isn't sure the proposed ordinance will accomplish that. "This is a good beginning to the conversation and I credit Dan for getting this started."

Lee Helgen, whose Fifth Ward also has a high number of vacant and deteriorated structures, said he could support an ordinance that targets more deteriorated vacant buildings, while putting fewer restrictions on those that need less work to be

reoccupied.

While he understands the concerns about loss of housing stock and the desire to preserve historic structures, "there are just some buildings that aren't worth saving," Helgen said.

"We have houses that the city has had to issue order after order on," said Helgen. Some of those houses are too far gone to save. "And unless you have a definitive work plan, it's not fair to the surrounding neighborhood to have a vacant house sit, be a target of copper thieves or occupied by illegal squatters until you decide what to do with it."

Helgen also raised the issue of adequacy of inspections and how to determine what standards a house would have to be brought to. When a house is currently sold, vacant or not, there is a truth-in-housing inspection. This is meant to point out possible defects.

But Helgen notes the inspections aren't a guarantee that all problems are discovered before a sale. His family's first St. Paul house passed its inspection - only to have the basement flood after a heavy rain after the family moved in.

In a few cases in his ward, Helgen said that reputable contractors bought vacant houses with the idea of fixing them up for resale - only to find that structural or mechanical problems were far too costly to be repaired. "So we had to tear the house down anyway."

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In Our Community

Como Park holds Showcase/Open House

Come to the Como Park Senior High School Showcase/Open House for students, families and parents/guardians to learn more about CPSHS: Thursday, February 21st, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (Note: This is a date change from originally scheduled date),

See our students and staff in action! Learn about CPSHS programs: Advanced Placement, Music, Technology, English World Languages, Business, Science, Foods, Clothing Mathematics, MCJROTC, Social Studies, Art, Health Physical Education, Athletics, Clubs.

For more information call 651-293-8800 ext. 1031.

Home & Garden Show March 29th

Sparc, a non-profit community development corporation presents the 17th Annual Greater Midway Home & Garden Show at Crossroads Elementary School, 543 Front Ave., (Front & Dale), St. Paul. Visit expanded workshops on keeping seniors in their homes, patios and paths for city lots, gardening, and more! Exhibit Hall features local home improvement contractors/products, garden/landscaping experts, financing options, senior resources, "green" remodeling options, and Q&A with Ramsey County Master Gardeners. Children's Building Project - build a birdfeeder with Elpis Enterprises. Workshops - 9 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., Exhibit Hall - 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Free admission and parking. 651-488-1039.

Maya Society of Minnesota lectures and workshops

Hamline Midway community members are invited to sample these events (free entry if you mention that you saw it in the Monitor!).

Friday, February 8 - Lecture - Cycles of Development from Ancient to Modern Times in the Yalahau Region of the Yucatan Peninsula by Dr. Scott Fedick, Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of California - Riverside. 7:30 p.m., Drew Science Building, Room 118, Hamline University.

Saturday, February 9 - Workshop - Ancient Maya Agriculture and Land Management: Assessing Ancient Maya Sustainability by Scott Fedick. 9 a.m. - 12 noon, Giddens Learning Center 6S (Anthropology Lab), Hamline University.

Friday, March 7 - Lecture - Finding Maize in Formative Mexican Pottery by Robert Thompson, Lecturer, University of Minnesota.



Preliminary Brain Bee winners; Evelyn Rwema, Lauren Berger, Stephan Brancel and Evelyn Rwema (not pictured: Maiken Hay)

Five Como Park High School students finish in Top 30 in the Minnesota Brain Bee

Five students from Como Park Senior High School will be advancing to the Semi-final rounds in the Minnesota Brain Bee. The Minnesota Brain Bee is a competition sponsored by the University of Minnesota to quiz student knowledge of the brain and neuroscience. Lauren Berger, Stephan Brancel, Maiken Hay, Emma Lee and Evelyn Rwema will be competing in the semi-finals on February 6th at the University of Minnesota.

7:30 p.m., Drew Science Building, Room 118, Hamline University.

Saturday, March 8 - Workshop - Archaeology Behind the Microscope: Food Residues as a Small Feature by Robert Thompson. 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon, Giddens Learning Center 6S (Anthropology Lab), Hamline University.

Financial Resource Fair held February 12

On Tuesday, February 12 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. A Financial Resource Fair for Seniors will take place in the community space of Hamline Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Avenue. Professionals representing a variety of services will be on hand for one-on-one assistance (reverse mortgages, taxes, elder law, real estate, organizing your finances, mold in your home, etc.) Commissioner Janice Rettman will also make an appearance. A freewill donation is taken for the meal. Call 651-209-6542 to make reservations for the luncheon, request free transportation or if you are a senior, caregiver or neighbor and would like information about our services. Visit www.blocknurse.org

Hamline Midway Elders taking donations

Hamline Midway Elders is taking donations new and gently used art to be sold at a neighborhood dinner on Thursday, April 17. Requested items include: paintings and photos (framed and/or matted), textiles (cross-stitch, knitted, crocheted, quilted, sewn), sculp-

ture, woodwork, metal, jewelry/beading, mosaics, ceramics, pottery, and works by children (framed or matted if flat). Professional artists who donate are welcome to have business cards and flyers promoting their work on display. Call the HM Elders office at 651-209-6542.

Kindergarten Round Up at Chelsea Heights

A Kindergarten Round Up will be held at Chelsea Heights Elementary School, 1557 Huron Street, Tuesday, April 22, 3:45 p.m. in the school cafeteria.

Tours of the school will be given by sixth grade students from 3:15-3:40 p.m. At 3:45 the Round Up will start with a welcome by Chuck Wollmering, School Principal. Our Kindergarten teachers will give brief presentations in their classrooms. Refreshments will be served by our Parent Teacher Organization.

You will also receive information packets with the required forms for Kindergarten students. Activities will be provided for children entering Kindergarten in the fall. Please call the school office at 651-293-8790 for more information.

"Life Changing Conversations with Jesus" at Jehovah

Devotions based on persons in the Bible who experienced "Life Changing Conversations with

Jesus" are open to the community twice each Wednesday during Lent on February 13, 20, 27, March 5 and 12. Devotions begin at 11 a.m. followed by a simple noon meal, and again at 6:30 p.m. devotions are held preceded by a light meal served from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Please enter at the 1566 Thomas Street door. Call Dawn for more information at 651-644-1421 or check the web site at www.jehovahlutheran.org.

St. Cecilia's to host annual parish dinner

The Church of St. Cecilia invites friends and neighbors to its annual dinner on Sunday, March 2, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the church basement.

The dinner features roast turkey and all the trimmings. Tickets for the dinner cost \$8; children age 8 and under eat for free.

The ever popular raffle is back. Prizes include a big-screen LCD TV; a \$300 gas card; a digital camera; an MP3 player; and a portable DVD player.

This year's Silent Auction will include tickets to area theaters, sporting events and outdoor attractions, theme baskets, various services and gift certificates for many local businesses and fine restaurants.

The Church of Cecilia is located east of Highway 280 at 2357 Bayless Place, just north of the intersection of University and Cromwell Avenue.

Women's Bible Study Open to Community

"Jesus the One and Only": An In-depth Study of the Life of Jesus based on the book of Luke meets every other Wednesday evening at 6:30 in the lounge of Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Street, beginning February 13 and running through May 7.

This Beth Moore study promises an intimate look at Jesus through Beth's video sessions, personal assignments and group discussion. Dawn Hirt, Parish administrator, facilitates the group. Call her at 651-644-1421 or e-mail her at jlc_dawn@msn.com to inquire or enroll.

Hamline Church holds barn dances

Hamline United Methodist Church, 1514 Englewood Ave., hosts two Community Barn Dances on Friday, February 29, and Friday, March 28.

The intergenerational events feature a three-piece Appalachian string band. Robin, the caller, teaches the dances; those who wish to listen and watch are welcome, too. Recommended dona-

tion is \$3 per person or \$10 per family.

Dancing takes place from 7-9 p.m., with snacks and beverages available from 6:30 p.m. on. For more information, please visit www.hamlinechurch.org or contact the office at 651/645-0667.

Anderson, Hausman and Lesch hold meeting February 23

Sen. Ellen Anderson, Rep. Alice Hausman, and Rep. John Lesch will hold a town meeting on Saturday, February 23, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the Lakeside Pavilion on Como Lake. The meeting is free and open to the public.

The Midway, Como and North End neighborhoods are part of District 66, which is represented by Sen. Anderson. Midway is part of 66B, which is represented by Rep. Hausman. North End is part of 66A, which is represented by Rep. Lesch. Como is split between the two districts.

The legislators want to hear the views of local residents on education, jobs and economic development, health care, housing, energy and the environment, transportation (including both mass transit and the need to repair roads and bridges), taxes and other issues affecting our area.

The Pavilion on Como Lake has adjacent parking (enter from Lexington Avenue). An elevator inside the building goes to the third floor, where the town meeting will be held. Coffee and food are available for purchase on the ground floor.

For more information regarding the town meetings, please call the office of Sen. Anderson at 651-296-5537 or email her at sen.ellen.anderson@senate.mn

MMSA gears up for Festa Italiana

Maternity of Mary/St. Andrew School is gearing up for their annual silent and live Auction & Dinner on Saturday, April 5. This event has grown to be one of the biggest gatherings in the community. This year's theme, Festa Italiana, will be another great evening whether you are Italian or not. Join family and friends for an evening of Italian food, music, and FUN while supporting the school. There are a limited number of tickets available. Additionally, event planners are still accepting monetary or item donations and they are looking for additional sponsors. Anyone interested in purchasing tickets or making a donation should call Deb or Scott at MMSA School, 651-489-1459.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

Peter Bell

Continued from page 1

"Listening meetings are a very important part of the process," Bell said. "This line will not be imposed on a community. Everybody does need to feel they were legitimately heard. I have the responsibility to listen until I understand."

He said meetings have been scheduled at various times, in the hopes that residents and business owners can attend. Meetings are also offering translation in Spanish, French, Hmong and Swahili.

Bell said there is a legitimate concern at how smaller businesses might fare during construction of the transit line.

"We will take steps to mitigate and reduce the impact of construction," he said. Bell indicated that the Met Council can't guarantee that every business will survive the Central Corridor construction, but the agency will do its best to protect them as best it can.

While Bell has served as the voice of reason during this process, he is the first to acknowledge that the Central Corridor LRT is desperately needed.

"Compared to other cities, I think we are slightly behind," Bell said, regarding the transit system of the metro area. "But I think that's overplayed a bit. For the foreseeable future, the bus



Met Council Chair Peter Bell said there is a legitimate concern at how smaller businesses might fare during construction of the transit line. (Photo by Terry Faust)

system is our mainstay."

He said 77 million people a year ride buses in the Twin Cities, compared to 68 million when he started his job in 2003.

He said the ridership has grown, even though the cost of public transportation has risen.

"We are a little behind in public transit," he said, "but

every city you go to says it's behind, whether it's education or transportation or infrastructure. But I do believe we need to build our mass transportation system."

Listening Sessions

- Thursday, Feb. 7 - 5:30-7:30 p.m., Metro Transit Fred T. Heywood Offices, 560 6th Ave. N., Minneapolis.
- Monday, Feb. 11 - 5:30-7:30 p.m., Metropolitan Council chambers, 390 N. Robert St., St. Paul.

Bell said that light rail has a broader demographical ridership profile than the bus system.

"More riders are middle and upper class, and more are white," he said. "Some of this is because of where it is located, but this is the trend across the country."

Bell said an indispensable ingredient that has to go along with transit is density.

"We need people to live in close proximity," he said. "But to what extent do we manipulate housing choices? People used to buy houses based on schools, safety and education," he said. "Now it is also based on commute times."

Bell said he considers traffic congestion the number one livability issue.

"We have to push the envelope in every direction with roads, bridges and transit," he said. "With the density required for rail, I am not sure how many more lines there might be in the Twin Cities."

Bell said he would like to do more with bus rapid transit.

"We have a grant for \$133 million, the Urban Partnership Agreement," he said. He said this grant would fund two bus rapid transit lines in the west metro.

"I would like to do more of these types of things," he noted.

Bell said that although the Central Corridor is his number one priority, he has many other responsibilities in his role as its chair. The Met Council's mission is to develop a comprehensive regional planning framework, in cooperation with local communities. The Council focuses on transportation, wastewater, parks and aviation systems, guiding the efficient growth of the metropolitan area.

"We fund parks and wastewater systems," Bell said. "There are budgetary and engineering issues."

But Bell realizes that his involvement in the Central Corridor project is special. He knows his name has become synonymous with light rail.

"I am (italics) the public face of the Central Corridor Line," he said.

For those who say they have been waiting forever for light rail connecting Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Bell said he would tell them to have patience.

"I think the Central Corridor will be a reality in the Twin Cities area, and will be a major part of building our nation's transit system," he said.

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New Spirit's Star Student of the month receives a \$25 gift certificate for a local bookstore.

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Condo project for North End clears key hurdle

By JANE MCCLURE

A 50-unit condominium project planned for the North End has cleared another key hurdle. The St. Paul Planning Commission approved a conditional use permit for Alliance Properties January 11, for a property bounded by Sylvan, Cottage and Mayre streets. The permit is needed so that the developer can fill and replace part of a wetland on the property.

The project was also granted a front yard set back variance and a parking variance. The developer said the variances are needed because of the configuration of the lot and the desire to have open space, including the wetland.

The three-story building also had to be set back from the wetland as far as possible. It will be closest to and face Mayre Street.

It is in a mixed-use neighborhood of single-family and multi-family dwellings, and light industrial uses, just southwest of the Rice-Arlington intersection.

As the *Monitor* went to press, no appeal of the Planning Commission had been filed. Without an appeal to the City Council in 10 days, the Planning Commission decision is final and the developers can start their project. No groundbreaking date has been announced.

Under city zoning regulations a 25-foot front yard setback is required and a 7-foot setback is proposed, for a variance of 18 feet. The project requires 75 parking spaces and 61 are proposed, for a variance of 14 spaces.

The parking variance will also allow the developers put all of their parking underground and not have a surface lot. That will

reduce the amount of runoff from a lot that could flow into the wetland area.

The property is currently vacant. It is zoned for multi-family residential use so no further zoning changes are needed. The wetland plans did need review and approval by the Capitol Region Watershed District. The watershed district recently granted a permit for the project.

Project architect Steve Erban, who represented Alliance Properties said the developer is confident that the condos will sell, despite a soft market for that type of housing throughout the region. They have planned a timeline of several months to sell the units and believe they will find buyers.

"We're excited to be building this project," Erban told the Planning Commission Zoning

Committee January 3. The committee recommended approval of the conditional use permit, following a public hearing.

The condo building is of the first large housing projects to be built in the North End for some time. The neighborhood saw some apartments and condominium developments throughout the 1990s and in the early part of this decade, thanks in part to former Mayor Randy Kelly's Housing 500 initiative. But as the housing market has slowed, so, too has new construction.

District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council recommended approval of the conditional use permit and variances, as did city planning staff. But two neighboring property owners raised concerns about potential traffic and parking impacts, im-

pacts on property taxes for surrounding properties and the possibility that wildlife in the area would be disrupted by construction and additional housing.

One challenge to infill development in parts of the North End is the existence of small pockets of wetland areas. That has made it more difficult to develop some sites.

Erban said that the wetland changes should actually enhance the environment for wildlife. About 4 percent or 2,456 square feet of the wetland on the property would be removed under the development plans, and 5,693 square feet added.

Traffic will go to and from the condo parking entrance off of Cottage. City staff believe there will also be adequate on-street parking in the area for the condo residents and their guests.

Principal

Continued from page 4

North End Elementary into gender-based academies.

"They have not given the information to residents, although that is the plan now," he said. "They're going to go door to door. That should have happened two months ago. They had some meetings, but families did not understand what's going on."

The bottom line, Thoemke says, is people will not choose a school with a program they do not understand.

"There's a fair amount of evidence to show single gender education works really well," he said. "To spring that on them, if they do not understand what's in it for them, will result in a negative reaction. Only one month from today (Mar. 7), parents have to

decide what school to send their children to. If they're confused, they certainly will not choose North End Elementary."

Thoemke feels the way to combat that is to have before and after school programs.

"They want daycare for first, second, and third-grade kids," he said. "If the administration wants to make North End a success, they should open up a daycare program."

Another issue that Thoemke feels is a dealmaker for parents is safety.

"People who work want to make sure their child is on a safe school bus or put in a daycare program," said Thoemke. "Parents who go to work before their child goes to school don't want to leave their child alone. So, they choose a school across town so their child gets bussed."

Besides the issue of little time left to choose a school,

Thoemke feels people aren't aware of what North End has to offer.

"The biggest thing is they don't know how good a school it is and how good the teachers are," he said.

John Jungwirth, a 30-year area resident and member of North End Elementary's site council, is concerned about whether the School District's plan is to make North End Elementary a neighborhood school.

"If the administration truly says they want to make a neighborhood school, then the curriculum and focus needs to be on meeting the needs of students who live in the neighborhood," he said. "That can always be shifting. They need to look at who is in the neighborhood."

The most important aspect of the school transformation for Jungwirth is creating a strong neighborhood school.

"Having a neighborhood school helps stabilize a neighborhood," he said.

According to Nancy Stachel, executive director of elementary education for St. Paul Public Schools, the focus for North End is the development of a college-bound preparatory program provided through gender-based programming.

"This programming is based on schools in New York, which are gender-based," she said. "Research done there has shown high levels of student achievement."

To help with student achievement, St. Paul Children's Collaborative has awarded a grant to North End Elementary. The school will use this money to focus on closing the achievement gap between black males and white students, becoming a research center for the District.

"We're looking to do re-

search on closing the achievement gap and strategies to close it," said Stachel. "The school is not designed for African-American males. But, we will be evaluating strategies to see how effective they are in closing the achievement gap between African-American males and other students."

Wired for success, Bell is optimistic he will succeed in making North End the best school in the City of St. Paul.

"It's an exciting time for North End," he said. "I'm happy to be part of something new. We will be the first gender-based school in the State of Minnesota. If this works out, they might try it other places. There's a lot riding on it."

Community members with questions about North End Elementary and its new program, can call the school at 651-293-8795.

Next deadline: March 3
Next issue: March 13

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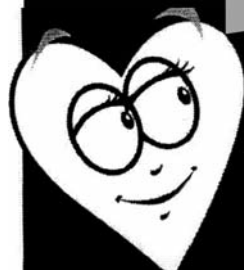
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History Corps forum focuses on Hamline Church Dig Project



Rayna Olson (wearing a hat) and Andrew Connor (wearing a hooded sweatshirt) excavate the church foundation at the dig at the Hamline United Methodist Church.

By KRISTA FINSTAD HANSON

This past fall Hamline University archaeologist and Anthropology Professor Brian Hoffman and his team of students uncovered a buried piece of the Hamline neighborhood's history; the foundation and charred remains of the first Hamline United Methodist Church building that had burned in a fire on December 24/25th, 1925.

The public is invited to attend a Hamline Midway History Corps Speaker Series event focus-

ing on the Hamline United Methodist Church Archaeological Dig Project. Guest speaker Brian Hoffman will present findings and share artifacts found in the dig. The event will be held Wednesday, Feb. 20, 7 p.m at the Hamline Midway Branch Library, lower level Auditorium, 1558 Minnehaha Avenue West.

The Hamline neighborhood's Methodist and Presbyterian congregations first met at Hamline University's Old Main in the mid-1880s. When the

Methodist congregation raised enough money, they built their own church at 1534 Capitol (now Englewood) Avenue in 1900 for the final cost of \$17,000. Noted Minnesota architect Clarence H. Johnston designed the church using the Akron plan style for its auditorium interior, and an English gothic style evidenced in its stone and wood shingled exterior and turret bell tower. Sadly the church

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Local Organization to Help In-Home Caregivers

Released today, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation and Lutheran Services in America have awarded St. Paul-based Lyngblomsten a \$40,000 grant through the "Aging in Community Initiative" to develop a national model of its now local "The Gathering" program. This program provides respite for in-home family caregivers of persons experiencing memory loss.

Lyngblomsten, a Christian nonprofit social ministry organization in St. Paul serving older adults and their families since 1906, has offered the respite services of The Gathering program for over seven years, and it keeps growing. "Through this grant, we will be able to develop a hybrid model of our caregiver respite program that other organizations across the nation can implement in their communities," said Sandi Krohn, Director of Home- and Community-Based Services for Lyngblomsten. "The number of family caregivers is growing rapidly, and programs like The Gathering

give caregivers a needed break so they can care for their loved ones with renewed energy."

Locally, The Gathering program is currently offered in five locations across the Twin Cities (with more underway)—mostly hosted by Lyngblomsten's partner churches and staffed by volunteers who are specially trained to work with those suffering from dementia. The Gathering is a weekly get-together consisting of a day of stimulating activities and lunch for those with memory loss. This gives their caregivers several hours to do anything they want—go to the grocery store, visit with a friend, or take a much-needed nap. It seems like a simple gift, but for those caring for someone 24/7, five hours of "free time" can be a godsend.

Charles Hillstrom, a longtime resident of St. Paul, has been a full-time caregiver for his wife, Alice, ever since her diagnosis of dementia back in 2005. "I didn't do any of the housework before, and now I do most

all of it—laundry, financials, cooking. I ain't no cook, so we eat a lot simpler, but I just do the best I can...I think the hardest part about being a caregiver is being pinned down—I don't like to leave Alice home alone." So, at the recommendation of a home health nurse, Charles started bringing Alice to The Gathering program at Centennial United Methodist Church in cooperation with St. Timothy Lutheran (both in St. Paul). Charles said, "We both needed a break. Alice loves going there [to The Gathering]—she says everyone is so nice, and they do fun things. And, it gives me a chance to get out and do some errands."

To find out more about The Gathering program, as well as Lyngblomsten's four other Home- & Community-Based Services, visit www.lyngblomsten.org and click on "Support Services." (Caregivers, please note: Click on the "Resources" section of the website for a printable "Resources for [local] Caregivers Guide.")

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Details on website:
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In Our Community

Continued from page 13

Adult Forum Sundays at Jehovah Lutheran

Still wondering about Jesus? Who, when, where, why? A six-week video curriculum hosted by British New Testament scholar and gifted communicator Dr. Tom Wright vigorously introduces Jesus in the setting of his day and today. The Christian History Institute, producer of the series, beautifully incorporates footage of Israel, Jewish practice and archeology to deepen comprehension of this "Jesus: The New Way." Everyone is welcome around the table starting at 9 a.m. Sundays beginning February 10 in the lounge of Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Street. More information at 651-644-1421 or www.jehovahlutheran.org.

Como-Midway La Leche meets February 12

Baby Arrives: The Family and the

Breastfed Baby is the topic of the next meeting of Como-Midway La Leche League, to be held on Tuesday, February 12 at 7 p.m.

The Art of Breastfeeding and Avoiding Difficulties is the topic of the March meeting of Como-Midway La Leche League, to be held on Tuesday, March 11 at 7 p.m.

Mothers-to-be, mothers, babies and toddlers are invited to attend. La Leche League meetings offer breastfeeding information and support through mother-to-mother helping.

A lending library on a wide variety of related topics is also available. For meeting location or more information, call Heidi at 651-659-9527.

St. Bernard's holds Spaghetti Dinner March 29

The Saint Bernard Men's Club 22th annual Spaghetti Dinner will be on Saturday, March 29th, from 4 p.m. until ???, in the Parish Center, Rice and Geranium. Adults \$7 and 6-12 years, \$3.50. Under 6, FREE. Menu is Spaghetti, (all you can eat), Meatballs, Bread, Butter, Coffee or Milk, and Dessert. All

profits go to the school and to the local area youth.

Free Tax Prep at Jehovah Lutheran

Have your taxes prepared and electronically filed by an AARP certified tax preparer at Jehovah Lutheran Church, 1566 Thomas Street, on Mondays and Fridays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in February, March and April up until the tax due date. This service is geared towards those over 60 and low income individuals/households. Enter at the Thomas Street door and go downstairs to the choir room where an AARP tax assistant awaits.

Winter Flower Show at the Conservatory

The Marjorie McNeely Conservatory's Winter Flower offers guests an escape from winter with vibrant pinks, yellows and purples created by over 2,000 azaleas, cyclamen, veltheimia and amaryllis flowers. The colors and scents of the Sunken Garden's annual show transforms you to a picturesque warm summer day.

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1, 2008 and runs daily through March 16, 2008 from 10am to 4pm.

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For more information, visit www.comozooconservatory.org.

Como Park announces 'The Mikado'

Como Park High School Music Department announces its production of Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado, Como's annual fall musical production. Mikado will be performed Thursday, February 7, at 7 p.m., Friday, February 8 and Saturday, February 9 at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday, February 10 at 2 p.m. in the auditorium at Como Park High School, 740 West Rose Avenue. Tickets are \$9 for Adults, \$5 for Students and Seniors. Friday is Food Shelf night: get \$1 off your ticket price with a non-perishable food item. A Dinner Theatre package is available on the evening of Saturday, December 8 beginning at 6:00, with a salad bar and pasta buffet and the Mikado's Theatricals at 7:30 p.m. Reservations are required for the dinner and the package cost is \$23 for adults \$18 for children under 12. Will Nanki-Poo be executed? Can Ko Ko actually kill anything? And who is that Pooh-Bah!? Information about the DinnerTheatre package can be obtained by calling 293-8800, ext 1209 or by emailing carole.whitney@spps.org.

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Mama's Pizza back serving the 'family' it loves

By DEBORAH BROTZ

Even at 3 in the afternoon on a Thursday in January when most restaurants have a slowdown in business, Mama's Pizza is three-quarters full. Since the popular pizza and pasta restaurant reopened on Jan. 5, it has been busier than ever. The restaurant had been closed 11 months for a complete renovation after a frozen water pipe burst and caused extensive damage.

Mama's Pizza owner Tony Mudzinski, 40, didn't expect to see lines of people waiting to get seated after they reopened.

"I didn't expect to be that busy," he said. "I thought it would be like a soft opening. I didn't expect half that many people."

But, North Enders who had established Mama's as one of their favorites over its 43-year history were amazed to see what it looked like after the renovation.

"Everything had to be replaced," said Mudzinski. "What the water didn't damage we had to update to city codes. Whatever they wanted, we did."

Mudzinski explained that while the restaurant had been grandfathered in years ago before it opened in 1964, given the fact the property was damaged, the establishment no longer enjoyed the exemption of being grandfathered in.

"We lived on credit cards for a year," said Mudzinski. "(But) we haven't survived yet. It's a long process."

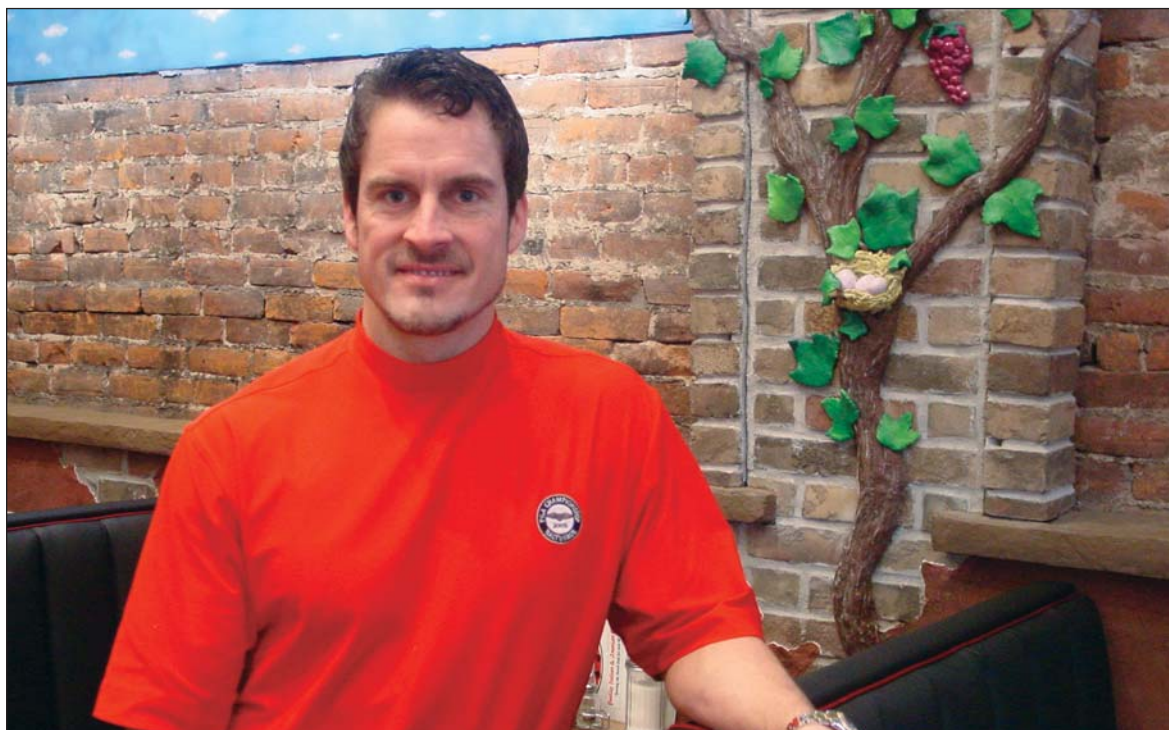
Money for the needed repairs to Mama's Pizza, at 961 Rice St., came from insurance and a low interest loan from the City of St. Paul.

"The North End area Sparc gave me a grant, which we greatly appreciate," said Mudzinski. "It was an equipment grant for the freezer."

Ward 5 Councilmember Lee Helgen helped Mudzinski get funding.

"He was very active and supportive," said Mudzinski. "He helped get the loan from the City. He was very instrumental."

Mudzinski explains that after 11 months of being closed, some



Even at 3 in the afternoon on a Thursday in January when most restaurants have a slowdown in business, Mama's Pizza is three-quarters full. Pictured during a brief closure between lunch and dinner on a weekend, Tony Mudzinski pauses to proudly show-off his new interior.

North Enders started to doubt whether the restaurant would ever reopen. When he started to tell folks the restaurant would reopen in January, the phone lines started buzzing. Soon, word spread like wildfire.

"I told about 20 people," said Mudzinski. "Within 15 minutes of opening (Jan. 5), we were full. Our customers are like a big giant family."

Had Mudzinski ever thought of shutting down this location and moving to a new establish-

ment? Absolutely not.

"The area has been so good to our family," he said. "Rice Street is a great area. People are very supportive of neighborhood restaurants."

Helgen, who is also a Mama's Pizza lover, was thrilled to see it reopen.

"It's such a neighborhood institution," he said. "There's a strong commitment for the family to stay on Rice Street. We're happy they're there. The food is great."

Although Rice Street has had some bad publicity in the last year, things are changing, and businesses like Mama's are rekindling people's feelings about the North End.

"Things are really getting a lot better," said Helgen. He quickly rattled off a list of examples. "There's a new marketing program and new infrastructure. The Winnipeg Project (mixed use housing project) is developing nicely. We're continuing to work on the look of the street and making new improvements there. It's a good statement about where the future of the street is going."

Helgen pointed out that Rice Street is one of St. Paul's best-traveled corridors.

"About 15,000 cars a day travel through the area," he said. "There's a good solid community around the area."

That good, solid community of Rice Street was something Mama's Pizza family knew a lot about when it opened in 1964. Located at Rice Street and Front Avenue, the restaurant was opened by Tony Mangini, Mudzinski's uncle. After Mangini died in 1973, Dick Mangini, Tony's brother and also Mudzinski's uncle, took over. Because he had other restaurants, Peachie Mudzinski, Mudzinski's mother who was born Patricia Mangini, took over in 1980 until she died of colon cancer in 1999.

"She was nicknamed Peachie by her father when she was a baby and it stuck," said Mudzinski.

"That's the name everybody knows her by. Her picture is still on the wall. This is still her place."

Peachie Mudzinski was a well-known North End.

"It was because of how caring she was," he said. "There were over 3,500 people at her funeral. There was a four and a half hour line to get to where she was laid out. That was the day my sisters and I decided what to do with the restaurant. She had a big heart, and she was genuine."

The family keeps a framed portrait of Peachie on a dining room wall.

"We love her," said Mudzinski. "As long as we're here, there will always be her picture on the wall. She's earned it."

Just like Mudzinski will always be devoted to his mother, his restaurant, Mama's Pizza, will always be dedicated to Rice Street.

"They've had such dedication to us," he said. "The customers earned a new restaurant. As much as our customers love us, we love our customers. The restaurant keeps that alive so we can be here 20 years from now."

Although the menu is identical, the esthetics of the restaurant are nicely updated. There are tableside color televisions, all new ovens and equipment, and new tables, booths, and chairs.

"We're open on Sundays from 4-9 p.m. from demand," said Mudzinski. "A lot of people had to come back four or five times just to get in. Our customers keep trying. On my end, I decided to open on Sunday so everybody can get in. I've worked every one of them. I put in 98 hours last week."

Does Mudzinski have any aspirations for himself or the restaurant? Mudzinski has pretty much the same hope his mom had.

"I'm hoping 30 years from now I can say the same thing mom did," he said. "I want to stay in this great business for the rest of my life. We have the greatest customers in the world."



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Dig

Continued from page 16

burned in a Christmas Eve fire in 1925.

This set off a domino-effect of changes at the church. The demolition crew reportedly demolished the church and filled up the foundation. The 1901 parsonage, originally located 1524 Capitol (Englewood) Avenue, was moved in the summer of 1926 to its current location at 1626 Englewood Avenue. In 1927 the "new" church was built for \$125,000 at 1514 Capitol (Englewood) Avenue. That church which remains today was designed by architect Fred Slifer and built by the Gustav Anderson & Son company, both Hamline Village residents.

During Professor Hoffman's 2007 fall semester's Anthropology course titled "Excavating Hamline History," multidisciplinary students focused around the church archaeology project, but used their varying talents to research their own interests connected to the project.

Professor Hoffman teamed up with members of the Hamline Midway History Corps and Hamline University Archivist, Candy Hart, to brainstorm potential dig sites. When the location of the original Hamline Methodist Episcopal Church came into focus, genealogist and HUMC church historian Mary Bakeman joined the project and was instrumental in garnering the support of the HUMC congregation.

What became the "Hamline

Village" project was truly a group effort. The dig area was near the corner of Englewood and Asbury on the church grounds. The students in the course did the bulk of their digging during the course's meeting time and continued until the first week of November. Open-to-the-public digs were held on two Saturdays. A class of 6th graders from Hamline-Hancock Elementary school and members of the Mighty Midway 4H group were invited for dig days.

"I think one thing that I've been really intrigued with is the difference between the first excavation project on campus versus the church excavation in terms of the quality of interactions with the community," said Professor Hoffman. "In terms of engagement, some students wrote about how they now care about the Hamline Midway community and that they are excited about positive changes in the neighborhood."

Because of the small area used for the dig, the team was limited in their findings. However, the team unearthed many remarkable artifacts including stained glass shards, a scrap of wallpaper, an enamel cup, woodwork, metal fragments, and many other items. Professor Hoffman and the students spent the remaining course sessions doing laboratory analysis on the materials they found.

A member of the student team was Melanie Freimuth, herself an anthropology major. Freimuth said she enjoyed "researching and finding things and following leads." She focused her research on trying to determine

what the interior of the church would have looked like. With only one surviving interior photograph and no architectural plans to consult, her research was limited. Paul Clifford Larson's tome /Minnesota Architect: The Life & Work of Clarence H. Johnston/ (Afton Historical Society Press, 1996) as well as works on Akron-plan churches proved extremely helpful. Freimuth said she liked "combining the research and the dig work and doing the two things in one."

The Hamline Midway History Corps Speaker Series is a free event and is co-sponsored by the Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. For more information about the Hamline Midway History Corps, the Speaker Series, and upcoming events, see our website: <http://www.hamlinemidwayhistory.org>.



Hamline students find a fragment of wallpaper found amidst the rubble inside of the old Hamline Church building. The team wondered why the fragment was not fire damaged.

Classifieds

Continued from page 19

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HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

Black History Month Events

The theme of the celebration is "Expressions of Blackness, The Power of Our Words." All events take place on Hamline's Saint Paul campus, located at 1536 Hewitt Ave, and are free and open to the public.

For more information about these events, please call the Center for Multicultural and International Student Affairs at 651-523-2423.

February 4 Prophets of Protest

This event will examine black leaders who excelled in using language, rhetoric, and debate to influence and support the black community. The guest speaker for this event is Dr. Rosilyn Carroll, the academic director for the Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching at Hamline University. Carroll is an educational consultant

and has taught graduate and undergraduate courses at universities throughout the United States.

Giddens Learning Center 100E; 7 p.m.

February 7 This is My Story: African-American Women

Bring your lunch to this brown-bag discussion and listen to African-American women share their thoughts and experiences on issues of identity, race, justice, and important issues facing black communities.

Giddens Learning Center 100E; 11:30 a.m.

February 16 Cultural Night, Tribute to Legend of Past and Present

Come and experience musical, poetic, theatrical performances that honor some of the cultural icons from years gone by. There will be tributes to Gordon Parks, Muhammad Ali, Michael Jackson, Ida B. Wells, Lena Horne, and others. Performers include Trena Bolden Fields, Yolanda Williams, and others, along with Hamline students and staff.

Sundin Music Hall; 7 p.m.

February 19 An In-depth Look at the Press Coverage Of Barack Obama Keynote Address by Catherine R. Squires

Catherine Squires is the inaugural John and Elizabeth Bates Cowles Professor of Journalism, Diversity, and Equality at the University of Minnesota. Her work focuses on the interactions between racial groups, mass media, and the public sphere. Squires' first book, *Dispatches from the Color Line*, analyzes news coverage of controversies surrounding people of multiracial descent. She also has published work on African-American-owned media, African-American identity, and the public sphere in *Communication Theory* and the *Harvard International Journal of Press and Politics*.

Klas Center, Kay Fredericks Room; 6 p.m.

February 20 Black Jeopardy IIX

Faculty, staff, and students participate in a lively, competitive test of their knowledge of black history and culture.

Bush Student Center Lobby; 6:30 p.m.

February 21 The Words of Spike Lee

Join us for a panel of faculty members reflecting on the social and cultural implications of the films *Bamboozled*, *Do the Right Thing*, *Get on the Bus*, *Jungle Fever*, and *School Daze*, followed by an open discussion.

Giddens Learning Center 100E; 6 p.m.

February 24 18th Annual Gospel Night: "The Words of My Mouth"

Celebrate the legacy of gospel music in the black community at this inspirational worship service. The Hamline University Gospel Choir, choirs from Shiloh International Ministries, Temple Apostolic Church, First Trinity Church of God In Christ, and other musical groups will perform.

Sundin Music Hall; 6 p.m.

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