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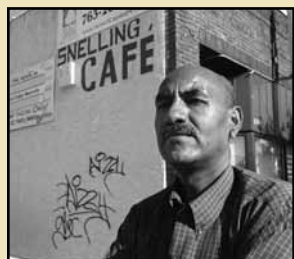
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Hamline Midway neighbors grapple with outbreak of recent break-ins

By JAN WILLMS

A Hamline Midway resident recently had a close encounter in his home with a burglar which could have landed him in the hospital. After that brush with danger the resident, who did not wish to be identified for this story, said he thought it would be a good idea to warn his neighbors about what happened to him.

He and his wife were sound asleep in bed one warm August night a few weeks ago when a sound in their house awakened them. Someone had apparently entered their house.

The resident quickly realized that because all the lights were out, and there were no cars parked in his driveway, to the world outside his house had looked empty. Now, his house was not only occupied, but it had picked up an unwanted intruder.

Without much hesitation, the resident went to investigate.

He surprised two burglars and chased them out the door. One had been in his daughter's bedroom and tried to get out through a window.

"He couldn't make it, so he came running down the stairs, and I grabbed him," the resident said. "An ammunition clip fell out on the stairway, so I think he tried to shoot me. I will never know. He yelled at me to let him go, and then he ran."

He interrupted the intruders in the middle of robbing his home; they got away with a laptop.

"They had a lot of other things piled up, ready to go. They left behind an empty backpack," the Hamline Midway homeowner said.

"We did a few things wrong," he noted. "Our security lighting was not up to snuff, and we had a window open on the first floor



There were 11 burglaries in July in Grid 85, a portion of the community that reaches from Minnehaha to University Ave. and from Snelling to Hamline. In August, there were three burglaries.

for air. It was pretty easy for them."

Unfortunately, this was not the only crime committed in the Hamline Midway neighborhood this past couple months.

There were 11 burglaries in July in Grid 85, a portion of the community that reaches from Minnehaha to University Ave. and from Snelling to Hamline. In August, there were three burglaries.

The recent increase in burglaries in the community prompted Mary Hendrickson to organize a backyard gathering at her home on Van Buren Street in the early evening of Aug. 29. She called the St. Paul Police Department (SPPD) and requested that someone come out and talk to residents about the upsurge in crime.

Around 30 people settled into lawn chairs, sampled punch and cookies, and listened to the

burglaries had decreased to three for Grid 85, that still was three too many. There had also been nine arrests in August.

"We need your help," she told the residents. "Three and maybe four of the perpetrators were caught because residents called in."

She said she could not stress enough the importance of people calling in whenever they observe something out of the usual.

"The police can't be everywhere all the time," she said.

"If you think something is weird, call," McCreary continued. "Let the cops come out and check. That's their job. It's not a bother. Any call is important, and no call is too small."

She recommended people call 911 for any type of emergency; if they are calling for information, they can use the non-emergency 211 number.

McCreary also advised callers to try and give the best description they can of what they have observed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Como Zoo welcomes new baby flamingo chick



Como Zoo welcomed a baby flamingo to its flock on Thursday, August 18 at 4 p.m. The small white chick is on public display huddled near its pink parents. This is the first flamingo born at the zoo since 2008, and only the second to be born in the zoo's history.

"An ammunition clip fell out on the stairway, so I think he tried to shoot me. I will never know. He yelled at me to let him go, and then he ran."

- Hamline Midway resident who was the victim of a break-in

monitor

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Burglaries

Continued from page 1

"Pick out things that will set people apart, such as a tattoo," she said. "The same with cars—describe the cars and the direction they were going. If possible, try to get a license number."

She said the criminals often live in the same general area as the houses they break into—not on the same block, but not too far away.

"They move from block to block," she explained. "They focus on an area, hit it hard and move on."

When asked who had been arrested, police officer T. Gillet said they were black, white, young and old.

"These burglaries have been occurring across the city," he said. "The department has added a couple of burglary investigators."

Gillet said laptops, credit cards, cash and big screen TVs are the items primarily being taken.

McCreary said a common thread through the burglaries is that many are taking place in daylight hours. A primary method of getting in is pushing in the window air conditioner, and then crawling in through the window.

"Another way is cutting screens and getting in through un-

locked windows or doors or garage doors," she stated. "If your car is parked outside, they can get into your car and hit the garage door opener."

McCreary said she remembered many years ago listening to a prison inmate who called himself a professional burglar tell how he got into homes, and how he chose his victims.

"If he saw a family outside, he would go in the front and grab as much as he could," McCreary recalled. She emphasized that residents should lock their doors, even if they are just working out in their garden. And they need to keep their eye on their belongings.

"One fellow was in his yard, working with his saws. He stepped inside for just a minute and came out and all his saws were gone," she said.

McCreary told the Hamline residents that alarm systems help, as do dogs. "Consider getting motion lights in the front and back," she advised. She also recommended keeping outdoor lights on all night and keeping the TV or radio playing.

She said windows should be pinned so that they do not open beyond six inches.

"If you are confronted, show your hands and back away," McCreary suggested. Several people in attendance had gone through

robberies, both during daylight hours and in the middle of the night. In some cases, the homeowners had been gone and in others, they had heard burglars enter their homes.

"If you scream at the intruder, they will usually run," McCreary said. "Be authoritative. Raise your voice—that works."

She said having a gun with a permit to carry is touchy.

"You have to consider what you are capable of," she explained. "I opt not to have a gun, because I don't think I could shoot anyone. Also, the perpetrator could grab the gun."

McCreary said that if a person is in his or her bedroom and hears someone walking around in the house, the best thing to do is pick up the phone and dial 911.

"Just sit there and don't say a word," she said. "Hold the phone." She said the call could be tracked, and the police would come. With a cell phone, she suggested telling the 911 operator as quietly as possible where you are calling from.

She said pepper spray can also be a deterrent, but she does not recommend it. "With the slightest breeze, the pepper can blow back in your face and you will be the one disabled by it," she warned.

One woman said she wondered whether to turn on the

lights and send an intruder running, or call 911 and try to keep them there for the cops to pick up.

"You sometimes just have to do what your gut tells you," McCreary said.

Ward 4 City Council member Russ Stark, who lives in the neighborhood and had also experienced a break-in, encouraged people to watch out for each other and let the police know of anything unusual they notice in the area.

The resident who had the encounter with the burglars can now speak from experience.

He said that he and his daughter walked around to their neighbors the next morning just to let them know what happened.

"People ought to be aware," he said. He added that if you find someone in your house, that person may not be the only one there. Another could be hiding somewhere else in the residence.

"I didn't expect the intruder would pull a gun, and I didn't expect them to break in while we were home," he said.

McCreary emphasized the need to be alert and ready.

"You need to think about what you would do if confronted by a burglar," McCreary stated. "You're not being paranoid; you are just preparing yourself for safety."

Planning Commission launches study of housing conversions

By JANE MCCLURE

The St. Paul Planning Commission will launch a study of housing conversions around the University of St. Thomas, with St. Paul City Council approval of a one-year moratorium and study August 24.

The vote caps weeks of debate over the issue, which drew more than two dozen people to an August 17 public hearing on the issue. The moratorium and study were sought by Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark.

Stark said that he hopes the study can be done in less than a year. One concern moratorium foes have raised is that it would affect the future sale of properties in the study area.

Up to the public hearing, Stark had 33 calls and emails to his office. Twenty-four people supported the study, with the rest opposed it.

He also heard from nine people wanting the study area expanded. The area targeted by the moratorium is bounded by St. Clair Avenue, Fairview Avenue, Interstate 94, Cretin Avenue, Marshall Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard.

But Stark noted that as the study at the Planning Commission level goes on, it could be expanded. The moratorium would be limited to the study area itself. One concern Ward Three Council Member Pat Harris has raised is that the moratorium could serve to push the housing issue to other parts of the neighborhoods around St. Thomas.

"We had to draw the line somewhere," Stark said.

Stark wasn't present for the final vote August 24, but the measure passed 6-0.

The push for the study and moratorium stem from a growing

number of housing conversions from owner-occupied to student rentals. On some blocks near the UST campus, neighbors contend that they have reached a tipping point as blocks change from largely owner-occupied to largely rental.

One block of Lincoln Avenue has been transformed from five student rentals to 19 in 10 years.

Twelve people testified for the moratorium and study August 17, with six speaking in opposition.

The University of St. Thomas isn't opposing the moratorium and ordinance study, said University Vice President Doug Hennes. UST believes that the one-year study won't have an impact on students as most have their leases in place for fall. UST would be concerned if the moratorium and study lasted for more than one year.

But the university wants to point out that the conversion issue

isn't unique to St. Thomas, and cited the geographic overlap of area colleges and universities. Hennes said UST does plan to be involved in the Planning Commission study and will weigh in on whatever recommendations come out of the study.

The West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee (WSNAC), a university-community advisory committee, presented a statement of support for the moratorium and study.

Proponents of the study and moratorium told the City Council it is needed because the converted houses aren't well-kept and affect neighborhood property values and stability. They described problems including deteriorated properties, litter and crime. But landlords and people wanting to sell their homes spoke against the ordinance, saying it would be unfair to them.

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John's Pizza fights with Board of Zoning over electric sign

By JANE MCCLURE

When John's Pizza Café moved from 620 to 616 Como Ave. business owner John Weatherston got a crash course in St. Paul electronic sign regulations. His quest to keep a digital sign moved from his old location to his new one got pied Aug. 22 by the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA).

Weatherston's sign has long flashed food and drink specials. He and contractors working on the pizza café relocation assumed they could move the sign to his new location and continue to operate it in the same manner. But in the years since the sign was originally installed and then moved, the City of St. Paul has tightened regulations on digital signs. That means that while the sign was grandfathered in at its old location, John's Pizza Café cannot use the relocated sign in the same manner as before.

Weatherston asked the BZA to consider allowing the sign to continue to show multi-colored

moving images on the sign; the new sign regulations restrict him to just two colors and restrict the amount of movement for the images. He also wanted to have the sign change every two seconds; the new regulations require a 12-second delay.

Weatherston and his wife Kathy said they want to be able to use the sign in the new location in the same way it operated across the street. They said the sign has greatly enhanced their business and their ability to draw customers. They also said that public safety for motorists in the area wouldn't be compromised by the variances, as the sign would operate in the same way it had before. They also said they have heard no complaints about the sign in the years it has been in use.

"The practical consideration is that when I put in this sign, sales skyrocketed," John Weatherston said. "If I have to take this down or change the way it is operated I will lose business."

"The only people opposed to this are the city staff," he added.

But the BZA disagreed on a 6-1 vote, saying that by moving the sign, Weatherston lost the ability to operate it under the old regulations. He has the option of appealing that decision to the St. Paul City Council within 10 days, changing the way the sign displays, or taking it down. As of Monitor deadline no appeal had been filed.

Some BZA members were sympathetic to the café owner's plight, asking if the sign could be considered grandfathered in even if it moved. Board member Daniel Ward voted against rejecting the variance request, noting there are plenty of similar signs at area businesses.

But city staff pointed out that once a sign is moved, it has to comply with the current regulations.

District 6 (North End-South Como) Planning Council supports the variance request, as do neighboring businesses. But Yaya



John's Pizza's quest to keep a digital sign moved from his old location to his new one was turned down Aug. 22 by the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

Diatta of the BZA staff said that by moving the sign, Weatherston lost his ability to operate under the old regulations.

Nor does it matter if other

signs in the area can operate under the old regulations as well. "Those signs were approved under the old sign code," Diatta said.

Hamline Midway Library Love Fest planned October 1

Please join us for our annual special event! Library Love Fest: a Fall Celebration of Community will take place on Saturday, October 1 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. This event, hosted by the Hamline Midway Library Association, features music, storytime, a used book sale and more. Bring the whole family!

Saints & Sinners Mystery Book Club will meet Saturdays, September 10 and October 8 from 1-3 p.m. E-mail gerrib13@q.com for information. Please include "Saints & Sinners" in the subject line.

Neighborhood Voices returns to the library on Wednesday September 14 at 6:30 p.m. Join us for an evening of Spoken Word with Poets from the Canvas, featuring National Poetry Slam champion and hip hop artist Guante. On Wednesday, October 12 the series continues with poets Cary Waterman, author of Book of Fire, and

Greg Watson, author of What Music Remains, with musical guest Sean Egan.

The Kids Book Club will meet on September 17 and October 8 at 1 p.m. as they discuss books, participate in reading activities, and eat treats. Open to readers ages 8-12. New members are welcome!

The Teen Book Club meets on September 17 and October 8 at 2pm for lively discussions and good times. Treats and fun provided. Call the library for more details.

The Hamline Midway Library Association is a group of library lovers working to build community and support the Hamline Midway Public Library through political advocacy, volunteering, and fundraising. The next meeting is September 26 at 6:15 p.m. in the library.

Toddler and preschool storytimes are offered every Friday at

10:30 a.m. Bring your child to share in the joys of reading!

Call 651-642-0293 or stop

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Next Issue: Oct. 13

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Snelling Café's quest for entertainment license rattles some neighbors

By JANE MCCLURE

The Snelling café's quest to add an entertainment license isn't sitting well with neighbors, who are concerned about late night and early morning noise from the business at 638 N. Snelling Av. Some neighbors claim the business already functions as a de facto bar and that adding music would just compound the disruption neighbors' face.

Café owner Afeworki Bein wants a Class A entertainment license, which would allow amplified or non-amplified music. Dancing would not be allowed.

But adding entertainment would require a parking variance for the cafe. The business is required to have 19 off-street parking spaces under its current licenses and seating capacity. The business is already licensed to serve wine and beer with food. Adding entertainment would require 23 off-street spaces, requiring a variance of four spaces.

Bein saw his request for a variance rejected Aug. 22 by the St. Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA). He has the option of ap-

pealing that decision to the St. Paul City Council. As of Monitor deadline no appeal had been filed. Bein also could seek the variance again in the future. Or he could find enough additional; off-street parking and then seek the license without a variance.

The variance had the support of Hamline Midway Coalition and city staff. But neighbors objected strongly to the variance, with petitions and more than 20 letters and emails in opposition. Neighbors objected to what they saw as a lack of notice about the BZA meeting and also said they weren't able to weigh in before the district council made its recommendation.

BZA members said that while the noise and neighborhood disruption issues weren't directly germane to the issue before them, they want neighborhood residents to take their complaints to city officials but neighbors said they are discouraged by the lack of response from city officials.

Many neighbors say they would fight an entertainment license request, noting that the

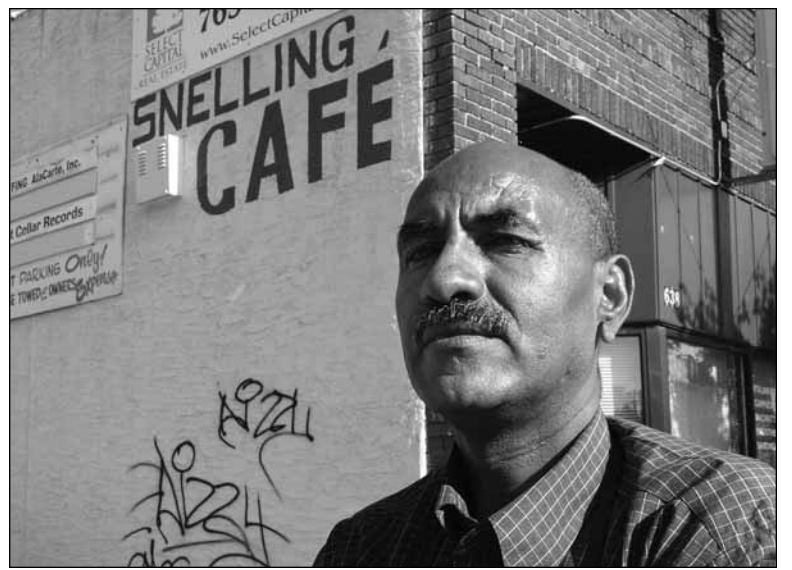
business began in 2003 as a coffee shop and then grew into a restaurant in a space that doesn't have adequate parking. They objected to noise and patron behavior, including the business staying open into the early morning hours. More than half a dozen neighbors attended the BZA hearing.

Michelle Fleischhacker has lived on Blair Avenue for eight years. She and her family had no problems with the café when they moved in, but are unhappy with how it has changed.

"It has in essence become a nightclub," she said. If the parking variance is granted and the café allowed to add music that starts at 9 p.m., that would be at her child's bedtime.

With the number of people gathering at Snelling café, the traffic and police calls, she added, "I frankly find it laughable that this is considered a neighborhood business."

She said the business has already been given a parking variance to serve beer and wine, and that city officials continually turn their backs on problems caused at



Snelling Café owner Afeworki Bein wants a Class A entertainment license, which would allow amplified or non-amplified music. Dancing would not be allowed. But adding an entertainment license isn't sitting well with neighbors, who are concerned about late night noise from the business at 638 N. Snelling Av.

the business. "If this application is approved our family will leave the area."

Lafond Avenue resident Claire Press said Snelling café does bring a lot of traffic to an area where parking is already tight, due to variances for other projects including rental housing. "When variances are given and we end up with a history of noncompliance issues, we have to ask why variances continue to be granted."

Bein disputed the noise complaints. "As far as I know we don't have any noise," he said. "I just want to be able to provide entertainment for my customers and keep them happy."

Neighbors said that would be

at their expense. "It's bad enough as it is right now," said Lafond Avenue resident Daniel Bittner. He said the neighborhood already deals with excess noise and traffic.

"When their parking lot is empty they're parked in front of my house," said Lafond resident Cecil Hartnett. He said adding entertainment would add to the problems of restaurant patrons hanging out behind the business, smoking and making noise.

Blair Avenue resident Marjorie Conrad said Snelling café already has a record of not following existing license conditions, adding building features such as a canopy without a building permit and generating many police calls.

Culvers comes to University Avenue at Midway Commons

By JANE MCCLURE

The Midway Commons development, which will include a Culvers restaurant, can proceed if several conditions are met. The St. Paul Planning Commission Aug. 19 approved a site plan and conditional use permit for the development which will be located on the north side of University Avenue between Pascal and Simpson streets.

Planning Commission approval is final unless there is an

appeal to the St. Paul City Council. But with support from the Hamline Midway Coalition and no neighborhood opposition emerging at an August 11 Planning Commission Zoning Committee meeting, no appeal was filed.

One neighbor who emailed the Planning Commission in support of the project described the section of University it is in as "blighted by crappy old buildings and broken-up parking lots."

A few commissioners said they were approving the plans reluctantly, with Commissioner Christopher Ochs voting against the conditional use permit for Culvers. One concern commissioners raised is that the project isn't consistent with the long-range plans for University Avenue.

The Midway Commons project will be built along the planned Central Corridor light rail line. Re-development along the light rail line typically brings a number of

conditions requiring pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented projects. The Midway Commons site is near the Snelling light rail station, which would trigger more regulations.

But the Midway Commons requests were filed last year, before this spring's approval of sweeping zoning changes along Central Corridor. That means the plans had to be approved under previous interim zoning regulations, including the site's previous

commercial zoning. The property is now zoned for traditional neighborhoods use.

"I'm voting for this reluctantly because it doesn't seem like a good use of the available land," said Commissioner Gaius Nelson. He called the project "development for development's sake" and added, "Hopefully we'll never see anything like this on University Avenue again."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Central Corridor project now 20% complete as complaints emerge about difficult access

By JANE MCCLURE

Construction of the Central Corridor light rail project is 20 percent complete, according to project staff. Parts of University Avenue, including the stretch from Emerald to Hampden, are complete on the south side. That means switching the work and the worst impacts on businesses, to the north side.

With construction, there has been a focus on business and pedestrian access, the Central Corridor Management Committee was told Aug. 10. Metropolitan Council staff, Council Member Jon Commers, Ward Four Council Member Russ Stark and others have been out recently inspecting access, to make sure patrons get into storefronts and people can cross streets safely.

Project staff admits that access has been a challenge. In some cases construction vehicles have blocked sidewalks. Metal pedestrian safety guards have been blown over or shifted to create passages that are too narrow for wheelchairs. Bus stops have been found to not have accessibility ramps. One way to address that has been to install wooden accessibility ramps with protective barriers at bus stops.

In other cases signage has been confusing and in some places, hazards such as cones or barricades have blocked sidewalks. For some businesses, vehicle access has either been blocked or has been hard to find.

"We saw there were issues and we agreed there was room for improvement," said Stark.

Robin Kaufman, who leads outreach efforts for the light rail project, said the project staff is doing what they can to document



Central Corridor project staff admit that access has been a challenge. In some cases construction vehicles have blocked sidewalks. (Photo by Stefanie Berres)

and then resolve issues with contractors. There are weekly meetings with the contractor to discuss issue. The project contractors face financial penalties if problems aren't resolved.

"I'm really happy to see that people are out there on a daily basis trying to address these issues," said Metropolitan Council Chairperson Susan Haigh.

The \$957 million light rail project will be completed in 2014. Construction is underway throughout downtown St. Paul, in the capitol area and on University from Hamline to Washington Avenue. Washington is also under construction. Business impacts on the project are being closely tracked.

The access issues are tied to how businesses are coping, and whether businesses leave or stay during construction. The latest business census data from the Central Corridor project office

shows that in July, four businesses opened on the corridor and four closed. Two moved to other spaces along the corridor, and another moved out of the corridor. That compares to four business openings, five closings, two moves and no moves away in June.

In the March-May time period 22 businesses opened, 14 closed, six moved to other spaces

along the corridor and three moved off of the corridor.

The corridor area studied is along Washington and University avenues, in an area with about 1,400 businesses. First-floor storefront occupants are the businesses counted, not occupants of multi-tenant buildings.

"What we're finding is that it's actually pretty common for businesses to move to different spaces along Central Corridor," Kaufman said.

The University Avenue Betterment Association (UABA) has also released its latest storefront survey, for business on University from Emerald Avenue to Rice Street. John Vaughn, who conducts the surveys for UABA, said the survey will continue and serve as a measure of what is happening.

Vaughn describes the survey as a "canary in a coal mine" to track impacts. During the survey he has also observed an increase in vandalism and graffiti along University, which is another concern for businesses "Too many vacancies create a no eyes on the street zone," he said.

The UABA numbers show

that the vacancy rate has gone up slightly, from 21.6 percent in May to 23.6 percent in August. There were 312 occupied storefronts and 86 vacancies in May, and 314 occupied and 95 vacant storefronts in August. The respective storefront totals for May and August were 398 and 409 respectively, as UABA continues to refine its numbers.

Vaughn said the next survey will be done in October, with help from Central Corridor project office staff and volunteers. The totals will be included in the next report to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA), which is requiring that Metropolitan Council do more to track the impacts of rail construction.

The focus on access comes at a time when businesses have started applying for assistance, in the form of loans of up to \$20,000. The loans are from a \$4 million fund and are offered in St. Paul and Minneapolis. Loans are forgiven, 20 percent per year. If a business stays open for five years after the loan is received, no money has to be repaid.

Nancy Homan, senior policy analysis for St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, said the city has OK'd 14 loans. The loans range from \$1,256 for a yoga studio to four \$20,000 loans and four \$19,000 loans. A property management company and a store which sells many products online were turned down.

"We've spent \$281,000 on the loan program to date," said Homans. She said the program appears to be working. St. Paul city officials involved in the loan program are seeing a wide variation in losses reported by businesses, from 8 to 68 percent.

"We saw there were issues and we agreed there was room for improvement."

- Ward 4 Council Member Russ Stark

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UNIVERSITY of ST. THOMAS

By DEBORAH BROTZ

After a 15 month wait, the District 10 Community Council Land Use Committee has a new revised plan for a stand alone Walgreens on the southwest corner of Lexington Parkway and Larpenteur Avenue. About 30 community members attended the meeting to hear about the revised plan, ask questions, and voice their concerns.

In May 2010, residents were presented with the third conceptual plan. This plan was for a 14,328 square foot Walgreens with a 50-space parking lot. At the May 10, 2010 Land Use Committee meeting, members voted to recommend that the Board accept the MGM Land Use concept. On May 18, 2010, the District 10 Community Council Board voted 8 to 6 in support of the MGM Land Use Action Item.

Even though it didn't carry any weight and was just a straw poll, a community vote was also taken, and the total vote resulted in 30 supporting the action and 35 against, so the Board decided to write a letter which expressed the community objections to John Kohler, the project's architect at Semper Development. Among the concerns, community members didn't want residential property rezoned for commercial use because they were fearful the project would impede upon the neighboring community. They were also worried about increased traffic and safety issues.



After a 15 month wait, the District 10 Community Council Land Use Committee has a new revised plan for a stand alone Walgreens on the southwest corner of Lexington Parkway and Larpenteur Avenue. About 30 community members attended the meeting to hear about the revised plan, ask questions, and voice their concerns.

The latest revised plan has the building shifted up to Larpenteur, changing the location of the parking spaces and eliminating three spaces. For the current plan, all parking will be located on the south and west sides of the building. The main entrance has been shifted up to Larpenteur Avenue on the north side of

the building. The building is being held back on the Lexington Parkway side in order to create more greenway and to give the building more of a street presence on Larpenteur. Kohler believes the setback from Lexington will give drivers more visibility when going north on Lexington and making a left turn onto Lar-

pen-teur Avenue. Shifting the building closer to the corner will also move it further away from the residential homes on California Avenue, decreasing the building's visibility from the residential area.

"We've held the building back 25 feet from the Parkway," said Kohler. "This gives it more of a parkway feel."

Currently, Wenck Associates Inc., a traffic engineering firm, is doing a traffic study and is working with Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul.

"They will take direction from the city and county, but we'll pay the bill," said Kohler. "Traffic engineers are concerned with the peak times of traffic. With Walgreens, it's a trickle all day long as opposed to a bank or fast food place that has peak times."

Residents are concerned with

the five houses owned by MGM on California Avenue. While some of the houses have tenants, others are empty and have become run down. Residents are fearful no one will buy the properties and reinvest in the neighborhood.

"We have no intention of keeping those houses," said Mike Maglich, owner of MGM Liquor Warehouse with his brother Terry Maglich. "We can't put the houses up for sale because who is going to buy them if they don't know what's going in there. We bought the properties at the peak of the real estate market. Now, we're taking a bath on the properties."

Maglich says they're selling MGM because they want to relocate. If the proposed Walgreens goes forward, Semper Development will buy the MGM property and Walgreens will have a long-term lease.

"We're not interested in owning real estate anymore," he said. "We've owned it for 39 years. We're looking for space. We've got to find a new location. We want to lease space someplace else."

Residents had several suggestions for the Walgreens proposed site plan. One resident wants the lit Walgreens sign to face the street rather than the parking lot and also wants a brick fence in the alley instead of wood. Another resident suggested that a fence should be constructed at the turnaround so people won't walk down the alley to get to Walgreens. While residents don't object to the cornices, which break up the roof line so it's not one straight line, they don't want the added towers on the cornices, which are used to hide the mechanical equipment, to be 30 feet high so they will be dropped down to 25 feet.

The next step in the process is the Oct. 3 Land Use Committee meeting, when the traffic study will be presented and discussed.

"Traffic engineers are concerned with the peak times of traffic. With Walgreens, it's a trickle all day long as opposed to a bank or fast food place that has peak times."

- Project Architect John Kohler



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Long-time Zimmerman Building could be sold and demolished in near future

By JANE MCCLURE

The Zimmerman Building, which has stood at the southeast corner of University and Prior avenues since 1926, could be sold and demolished soon. Tenants, some of whom have been in the building since the 1950s, have been asked to move this fall. The building is under contract to be sold to Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity.

The sale displaces more than half a dozen first-floor retail/service tenants on University and Prior, as well as second-story office tenants. One of the tenants is Peppin's Priority Barbers. Second-generation Gibb Peppin plans to move to a shop near Grand and Fairview this fall.

"My father signed the lease for this space in the fall of 1956," Peppin said. "We had many good years here." The only other first-floor business that has been in the building longer is Midway Liquor Store, which is seeking a new location.

Peppin said he is sorry to leave the corner but she he understands his landlords' desire to sell. "Things are changing." He plans to hold a farewell party before the move, for all of his customers.

Another longtime business,

David's Print Shop, has opted to close rather than move. "I've been in the printing business for more a total of 40 years, with about 20 years in this location," said owner David Liss. "Finding out that the building was being sold and I would have to move gave me the little push I needed to retire."

"I don't have the energy to move all of my equipment and set up equipment all over again," Liss said.

Another business that has been in the Zimmerman Building even longer is Midway Liquor Store. Owners of the store are seeking a new location.

The site is one of at least three major University Avenue properties currently in play. The others include the former Old Home Dairy site at University and Western avenues, and part of the former Midway Chevrolet property at University and Hamline avenues. Aurora-St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) has launched a community planning process for the Old Home site. Project for Pride in Living (PPL) wants to build on the former motor vehicle dealership property.

Al Blumberg of Zimmerman Realty said the property is under contract. "It's not a done deal."

The building has been listed for sale for some time. Blumberg wouldn't confirm a sale price but at real one real estate website gave \$1.1 million as a figure.

Habitat for Humanity spokesman Matt Hagen would only confirm that the site is being considered for a new Habitat headquarters and that no purchase has been finalized. Community organizations along University have been told a two-story office building is being considered.

Blumberg said that the family partnership that has owned the property for many years wants to sell and move on. "It's time," he said. Not only has the family owned the building since 1926, they have ties to a historic horse market that was across the street. The Zimmerman and Barrett horse stables stood on the north side of University for decades, during the 19th and 20th century. During World War I the business sold \$1 million worth of horses each month.

Blumberg said the sale isn't tied to the ongoing construction of the Central Corridor light rail line, although he noted that if the building remains open, the owners would be paying higher property taxes and street improvement

assessments.

University Avenue in front of the building has been torn up for several months and the businesses along University have found themselves behind a chain-link fence. That has made customer access very difficult.

St. Paul city officials have spent several years planning for changing land uses along University Avenue, in anticipation of Central Corridor light rail. The focus has largely been on mixed-use, more dense redevelopment. Redevelopment was the topic of a "big picture" forum last month, sponsored by the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. LISC works with community development corporations. The St. Paul Planning Commission also reviewed the upcoming housing projects last month. The cities and LISC are trying to develop a more cohesive strategy for affordable housing along Central Corridor.

One potential project is at the northeast corner of University and Hamline avenues, housing proposed by Project for Pride in Living (PPL). PPL provided affordable housing with support services at numerous Twin Cities

locations and is considering a project that would have more than 100 housing units as well as possible retail space.

Another project, which was presented to the Summit-University Planning Council (SUPC) Neighborhood Development Committee Aug. 9, would occupy the southeast corner of University and Western. Nieta Pressley of ASANDC presented preliminary ideas for the site.

ASANDC is working with Community Stabilization Project on the proposed redevelopment. She said the nonprofits have site control but want to form a new nonprofit to purchase and redevelop the property at 370 University Av. The most recent sale price listed for the 1.62 acre site is \$2.12 million. One idea she raised is that of trying to get the building donated to the developers. Financing options to buy the property are also being explored.

The site would be redeveloped with a mix of different housing types with some commercial uses as well, Pressley said. The developers would like to preserve the building's façade in some way, possibly by gutting the structure and saving the façade, or just using pieces of the façade in a new structure.

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Not too early to be thinking about getting home and garden ready

By DEBORAH BROTZ

While you're still enjoying the warm, sunny days of summer, fall is right around the corner. It's not too early to be thinking about what you need to do to get your home and garden ready for winter.

If you feel your gas and electric bills are too high, you might want to check out some home improvement tips from the Neighborhood Energy Connection listed in this story.

HOME & GARAGE

Gutters and Downspouts

Clean gutters and drain pipes and be sure they drain away from the house. Drain outside faucets.

Be sure water is not coming

down behind gutters and that all support brackets are securely in place. Check to ensure water drains properly and doesn't pool.

Windows and Doors

Change summer screens to cool weather storm windows and doors. Inspect and repair any loose or damaged window or door frames. Install weather stripping or caulking around windows and doors. Clean and lubricate garage door hinges, rollers, and tracks and be sure screens are tight. Remove window air-conditioners or put weatherproof covers on them.

Heating Systems

Replace the filter in your fur-

nace. Have a heating professional check your heating system. Clean your ducts to better your heating system's efficiency. Clean your thermostat's heat sensor, contact points, and contacts. Lubricate hot water heater's pump and motor. Bleed air from radiators or convectors. Drain hot water heater. Remove sediment from the bottom of the tank.

Plumbing

To prevent pipes from freezing and bursting, ensure that the pipes, as well as the wall cavities where they reside, are well insulated.

Be sure that you know how to locate and turn off the water

LAWN & GARDEN

Lawn Care

Fertilize cool season grasses such as Kentucky bluegrass, fine fescue, and perennial ryegrass.

Eliminate broadleaf weeds such as dandelions, broadleaf plantain, and ground ivy with weed killer.

Continue mowing every week or so until grass has stopped growing.

Lay seed so that your lawn gets a head start in the spring. Cover the seeds lightly with straw or mulch to protect from feeding birds.

Dethatch or aerate, or do both to reduce thatch, a layer of dead grass stems and roots that

build up faster than they can decompose, accumulating on top of the soil layer and reducing water penetration to the roots.

Run all gas-powered lawn equipment until the fuel tank is empty.

Trees & Shrubs

For cooler regions, plant trees, shrubs, and vines now through the end of October. This gives most plants a head start in the spring, since roots will grow in still-warm soil long after air temperatures drop.

Protect plants from rodents by keeping mice, voles, and other rodents from feeding on the bark of young trees in winter by wrapping a cylinder of 1/2-inch-mesh

hardware cloth around the trunk.

Protect tender evergreens from cold by surrounding these plants with a shelter of burlap or old sheets. Provide additional protection by using an anti-transpirant spray on the foliage after the first hard frost.

Soak soil around trees and shrubs if rainfall has been light to ensure that plants enter winter fully hydrated.

Prune your trees and shrubs after the leaves turn to encourage healthy growth in the spring.

Remove leaves from lawn and planting areas.

Trim any tree limbs that are dangerously close to power lines or the roof of your house.



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Chimney and Fireplace

Have a certified chimney sweep inspect and clean the flues and check your fireplace damper.

Test your fireplace flue for a tight seal when closed.

Install a carbon monoxide alarm near the fireplace and furnace.

Attic Ventilation

Be sure attic insulation doesn't cover ventilation vents in the eaves to prevent winter ice dams on the roof.

Be sure ridge vents and vents at eaves are free of plants and debris.

Check bird and rodent screens for attic vents to prevent any unwanted guests.

Roof

Check roof and around vents, skylights and chimneys for leaks.

Outdoor Solar Heating

In these very difficult times and other issues in the world, people want to invest their time and a few dollars to make their home landscape more festive.

Solar lighting is one of the easiest and most cost effective ways to not only add beauty to your home but to do so while simultaneously doing your part to help preserve our environment.

These lights are powered by solar energy. The lights store energy from sunlight during the day in a rechargeable battery and then come on at night when the controller receives the signal from the photoresistor that it is dark, and it routes the power from the battery to the LED in order to turn it on and produce light. In order to take full advantage of solar lights, you need to make sure they are

placed in a location where the solar cells can get full sunlight during the day. This will help ensure their batteries get fully charged.

While solar lights will work in freezing temperatures, the available sunlight in winter months is reduced in cold northern climates so your run time or on time for your solar lights may be reduced.

Solar patio lights are cheap, efficient and don't need wiring. Typical solar lights provide subdued lighting around the external areas of the house, and the more powerful mag and spot lights can do the job where stronger lighting is required.

With many options available for garden lighting, a cheap, low-maintenance option is solar rock lights.

Solar powered fairy lights have recently become more and more popular for people looking for unique and festive ways to add lighting to their homes.

Flowers & Gardens

Plant bulbs such as crocus, daffodils, hyacinths, tulips, and other spring-flowering bulbs.

In cold-winter areas, mulch after a hard freeze. Spread 2 to 3 inches of compost, composted cedar, pine, or fir bark, weed-free straw, or similar material.

In northern areas, dig and store tender bulbs such as tuberous begonias, dahlias, and gladiolus.

LED Lighting

LED Lighting

A light-emitting diode (LED) is a semiconductor light source. It is a device containing chemical compounds that light up when in contact with electricity. LEDs don't require a heating filament, so they burn cooler and use less electricity to produce light. They also last longer than incandes-

cent and fluorescent bulbs.

Many LED lamps have become available as replacements for screw-in incandescent or compact fluorescent light bulbs.

White LED lamps have achieved market dominance in applications where high efficiency is important at low power levels. One of these applications is solar-powered garden or walkway lights. LEDs came into use for home and commercial applica-

tions for indoor horticulture (also known as grow lights).

The wavelengths of light emitted from LED lamps have been specifically tailored to supply light in the spectral range needed for chlorophyll absorption in plants.

Solar LED motion sensor lights use a small solar collector to charge an LED battery, making them highly energy efficient.

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In Our Community

11th Annual Oktoberfest Oct. 7, 8 at Klub Haus

Come and taste a bit of German culture at the Klub Haus, Rice and Magnolia on Friday evening, Oct. 7th from 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. and on Saturday, Oct. 8th from noon to 11 p.m. at the 11th annual St. Paul Oktoberfest. See www.saint-pauloktoberfest.org for more details.

There will be a \$3 admission for age 21 and older; under 21 no charge. Five live bands performing are: The Bavarian Musikmeisters, the Bill Koncar Band, Die Alpensterne, Adam & The Jolly Jammers and the New Heritage Choir.

Other highlights will be the Ceremonial Keg Tapping, S.G. Edelweiss, Spielmannszug Minnesota Royalty and Spielmannszug Minnesota Tanzgarde. Events will be held inside the Klub Haus and in an outside tent. The outdoor patio will also be available for celebrating.

The ever popular events, the Dachshund Races and the Bed Races will return again this year starting at 3 p.m. on Saturday at the side parking lot on Magnolia. Advance registration of your dachshund is required, so please contact Tyrone Schenk at 612-275-7262. The Bed Races feature the chance to win cash prizes for your non-profit organization. Registration will begin one hour before. For information on your 4 to 6-person team, call Deb Grosskopf at 651-253-5261.

Community Forum Oct. 20

"Making a Difference in The Community," a public forum will be held on Thurs., Oct 20 from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. at the Hamline Library, 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave. The workshop will explore shifts in community and how citizens can re-ignite our commitment to making our communities work. It is co-hosted by Hamline Midway Elders and VAN, the Vital Aging Network. To register call HM Elders 651-209-6542.

District 10 Como Community Council to hold elections

Join the District 10 Como Community Council and be active in your community as one of the Council's 15-member, volunteer board of directors. Seven positions, including Chair and Secretary are up for election at the District 10 Annual Meeting on Tuesday, October 18th at 7 p.m. at the Historic Streetcar Station (1224 Lexington Parkway N). Serving on the District 10 board is a great way to get involved in your neighborhood and to play a part in fostering a friendly, active and safe community. The Council is a non-profit organization

with the purpose to provide a voice for the neighborhood by shaping decisions made by the City and local government.

District 10 would like to encourage candidates with a variety of expertise and experience to apply. All residents and business owners residing in the district are eligible to serve. Candidates should submit an application by Tuesday, September 27 to ensure that their name is included on the official ballot. Additional nominees can be made the night of the meeting from the floor.

For more information on board member duties, to view a job description, and to download an application, please visit www.district10comopark.org or contact Jessie at district10@district10comopark.org or 651-644-3889.

Interpretive tours of Como Woodland

Two one-hour interpretive tours of the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom project site will take place on September 8th at 6:30 p.m., and will be repeated on September 10th at 10 a.m.

Meet your tour leader at the Kilmer Memorial Fireplace on Como Ave. between Beulah Lane and Lexington Pkwy in Como Park.

Lisa Held, DNR Interpretive Naturalist and Como Woodland Advisor, will be your tour guide.

Tours are free, but reservations are suggested because tours will be limited to 25 participants. To RSVP or for more tour information, contact Ms Held at: 651-373-0028.

On this tour you will learn more about the Como Woodland's flora and fauna, and its history. For many years local volunteers and St. Paul Parks & Recreation staff have worked to remove invasive species from the site. Now this 18-acre urban woodland is being restored to native plant communities with a grant from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund. Como Woodland provides habitat for birds and animals, and will be used as an outdoor classroom. The area is also rich in history and tours will start at the recently restored WPA-era Kilmer Memorial Fireplace.

More information about the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom can be found at www.comowoodland.org

Calling all Parents of teens about driver ed

Do you have questions about teens and driver education? Community Education is hosting a Teen Driver Education Safety Fair for Parents on Saturday, September 17. The fair will run from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at Central High School, 275 N. Lexington Pkwy. This free event

will include many vendors available to answer you questions and share important information with you about how vital your role as a parent is in keeping your teen safe once they begin to drive. For more information, call the Driver Education Office at 651-744-4924.

Taste of Como Oktoberfest September 30

"Taste of Como" Oktoberfest will be held at Holy Childhood Church, 1435 Midway Parkway, on Friday, September 30. There will be samples of food, beers, wines, and soft drinks by many vendors. Enjoy the German music and dancing and visiting. Cost is \$15 in advance (call 651-489-2428 for tickets) or \$20 at the fence around "the Pit." Sorry, no minors allowed.

Como-Midway La Leche meets October 11

The Baby Arrives: The Family and the Breastfed Baby is the topic of the meeting of the Como-Midway La Leche Group on Tuesday, October 11. All expectant and nursing mothers are invited to attend with their babies and toddlers. Call Heidi at 651-659-9527 for more information about our new meeting location.

Metropolitan Toastmasters open house October 13

October is Toastmasters Month! If you've ever thought of improving your speaking and leadership skills, now is the time to try. Metropolitan Toastmasters, one of the oldest and most lively clubs in the Twin Cities, is holding an open house on Thursday, October 13th at 6:15 p.m.

We will have a larger number of guests than usual, as well as refreshments. We meet at the Goodwill/Easter Seals building at 553 Fairview Ave N., just north of University Ave. For more information, please contact us at info@metrotm.org, or visit our web site at metrotm.org. In addition to the open house, guests are welcome at any time, so please don't hesitate to come by any Thursday night!

Holy Childhood holds Rummage Sale Oct. 6

Holy Childhood Church will hold their Rummage Sale, 1435 Midway Parkway, St. Paul on Thursday, October 6th 9 a.m. - 7 p.m., Friday September 7th 9 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and Saturday bag day 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. There will be many treasures waiting for you such as clothing, housewares, shoes and boots, furniture, bedding, jewelry, books, plants and

many more. Have fun shopping.

German Dinner held September 23

Bethel's Annual German Dinner will be held on Friday, September 23rd from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$5 for kids age 10 and under. Contact Bethel's church office to reserve your tickets at 651-488-6681 or blc@bethelstpaul.com. The menu includes pork chops, the famous German potato salad, sauerkraut, green beans, rye bread, applesauce and homemade dessert bars. A children's menu of tater tots, hot dogs, corn, and the same dessert bars will be available.

All proceeds will be used for Bethel Lutheran Church improvement projects. Come and enjoy this fabulous food and good fellowship.

Women's Bible Study begins September 14

Jehovah Lutheran Church will host a women's Bible study every other Wednesday from 6:30-8:30 p.m. beginning Sept. 14 based on the updated edition of author Beth Moore's book Breaking Free. Sessions will cover the book of Isaiah to help participants discover the transforming power of Christian freedom. Cost is \$15 for a workbook. To reserve a workbook, contact the church office at 651-644-1421 or Bridget at bridgetkruchowski@comcast.net.

All are welcome. Jehovah Lutheran is at Thomas and Snelling.

Prepare a meal for homeless teens

Jehovah Lutheran Church invites members and others to prepare meals for homeless teens at Safe House, within about a mile of the church. All are welcome to help prepare meals for every first and third Tuesday of the month through December.

Safe House, sponsored by Lutheran Social Services, shelters homeless youth ages 16-20 and helps train them in living skills. Many clients have mental-health issues and may have endured abusive relationships at home. More information is at this Web site: www.lssmn.org/homelessyouthmetro.

To learn more about providing meals or other support, contact Annie Harm at Lutheran Social Services: 651-644-7739 or annie.harm@lssmn.org.

Joint Friendly Exercise Classes

A new, eight week series of joint friendly exercise classes will begin

Sept. 27, 1514 Englewood Ave., and will run each Tues and Thurs from 2-3 p.m. through Nov 17. There is no cost for the classes which are led by instructors trained through the MN Arthritis Foundation. For more information call HM Elders 651-209-6542.

Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's Seminar

"The Basics of Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's," will be addressed on Oct. 11 at 1514 Englewood Avenue. A free-will donation lunch is served at 11:30 a.m. and the presentation begins at 12:15. There is no cost for the presentation. For more information call HM Elders 651-209-6542.

Free Health Clinic October 11

Free blood pressure and nurse consultation clinics for persons 55+ yrs will be held Tues Oct 11 from Noon-12:30, 1514 Englewood. No registration required. Enter through the south door, handicapped accessible. For more information call HM Elders 651-209-6542

Free Well Pet Checks in October

Well pet checks for animals belonging to HM residents age 60+ will be scheduled during October. The checks are conducted by U of MN veterinary medicine students. For more information call HM Elders 651-209-6542.

Women's Drum Circle September 17

Announcing a Women's Drop-in Drum Circle on Saturday, Sept. 17, 6:30 p.m. Percussion, rhythm and freedom of expression will be explored. All levels of experience are welcomed and encouraged. Women's Drum Center, 2242 University Ave. W. \$10 at the door. Drums provided. Info and registration at www.womensdrumcenter

History Corps Plans Walking Tour, Oct. 9

At the turn of last century, the Minnesota Transfer Railroad Company Yards near University & Prior Avenues were booming. Led by local historians Steve & Nancy Bailey, discover this area's rich history of transportation, commerce, and innovation. Sunday, Oct. 9 at 1 p.m., NW corner of University & Prior. More information at www.HamlineMidwayHistory.org

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

Mayor helps cut the first tomatoes from North End Urban Farm

By DEBORAH BROTZ

St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman along with farmers cut the first tomatoes of the season at the North End Urban Farm, St. Paul's biggest urban garden, on Aug. 23.

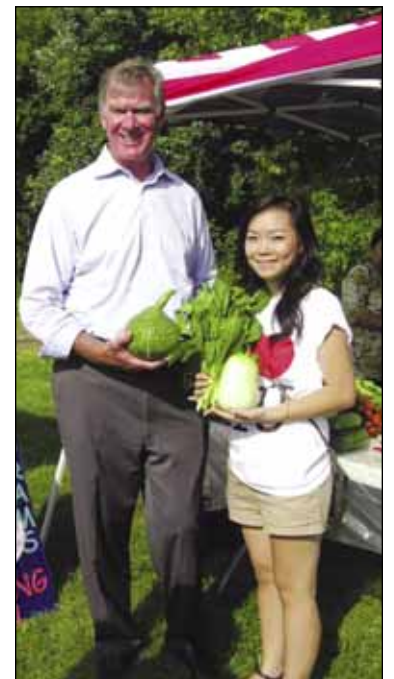
The three acre farm with 13 growers and a farmer's market provides fresh produce to an under-served community and helps develop small income-generating businesses.

Sparc, a nonprofit business assistance group on Rice Street, and its partners, The Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women of Minnesota; Community Table Cooperative; Pig's Eye Urban Farm; and Holistic Health Farms started the North End Urban Farm in 2011 as an interim use of vacant land. The vacant land at 425 W. Maryland Ave., the site of the old Larson Greenhouse, is where Sparc was going to put the Willow Reserve townhomes until the market changed drastically.

With the on-site farmer's market open 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays, people can buy vegetables picked fresh from the garden such as tomatoes, corn, beans, peppers, squash, cucumbers, greens, onions, beets, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, and herbs.

The Farm became a reality after Sparc teamed up with the University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs along with donations from Xcel Energy and Kendall's Ace Hardware of St. Paul.

The Farm launch and tomato cutting was a very newsworthy event.



St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman along with farmers cut the first tomatoes of the season at the North End Urban Farm, St. Paul's biggest urban garden, on Aug. 23. The three acre farm with 13 growers and a farmer's market provides fresh produce to an under-served community and helps develop small income-generating businesses. (Above left, Mayor Coleman and others demonstrate their tomato cutting style while at right, Mayor Coleman and an unidentified guest show off some examples of the produce from the harvest.

"In part, it's the uniqueness of the project," said Allison M. Sharkey, Sparc associate director. "A lot of community gardens provide access to produce. Our growers are all trying to make a business of it."

While many neighbors have come to the farmer's market to buy produce, more people are encouraged to come and support the businesses.

"Some growers are starting to see some of the same people each week," said Sharkey. "Tomatoes and corn are finally available. People have been happier with the selection as the season

goes on. It would be great to see people trying new vegetables they haven't tried before. They can ask the growers how to prepare them."

The Farm project is important to Sparc because it allows them to do something with the land. In five to 10 years, Sparc plans to develop green housing on the site, reserving a third of the site for ongoing food production, edible landscaping, and recreation that ties into the Willow Reserve, a 13-acre woods that was set aside decades ago as a place for migratory birds, fox, deer, or turkey. But, in the cur-

rent economic situation, this project has gotten the land back into use, provided income-generating opportunities for entrepreneurs, and provided fresh produce for the neighborhood.

"What our vision is for that land is a state of the art green development and maybe having a school," said Sharkey. "We plan to develop gardens and edible landscaping. It connects to the Willow Reserve so we'll have a path going into Willow Reserve. People can get in there and appreciate it."

Sharkey hopes the North End Urban Farm will continue to

bring people in the neighborhood together.

"We hope that the entrepreneurs that are there feel this has been financially successful for them," she said. "I'm excited about people from really different backgrounds coming together. I'm really excited people have been coming out of their homes to the Farm, volunteering and taking produce home. We hope to continue to provide that kind of anchor for people to get to know each other. Now, people are talking to each other and feeling pride in their neighborhood."

In Our Community

Continued from page 10

Wednesday evening dinners start Sept. 14

Jehovah Lutheran Church will host community dinners each Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. starting Sept. 14. Bible study, confirmation and choir will follow. A free-will offering is invited and all are welcome. Jehovah Lutheran is at 1566 Thomas.

YMCA holds Fall Garage Sale Oct. 5-8

Shop for great bargains and support YMCA Camps Widjiwagan and du Nord at the annual Fall Garage Sale at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds Merchandise Mart building from Wednesday, Oct. 5 to Saturday, Oct. 8. Free admission. Open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday to Friday; and 9 to 10 a.m. Saturday, followed by the \$5 Bag Sale from 10 a.m. to noon. More than 250 families contribute good quality clothing, household items, toys, books, antiques, furniture, sports equipment, etc. All proceeds go to the camps. For more information, call 651-645-6605.

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Increase in city budget won't mean an increase in city service

By JANE MCCLURE

A 6.5 percent increase in St. Paul's 2012 city budget won't mean an increase in city service. Instead, reductions in a number of city services are anticipated. The increase is driven by cuts to Local Government Aid (LGA), a trend Mayor Chris Coleman criticized in his August 15 budget address.

No *Monitor* area libraries or recreation centers are slated for closure in the 2012 budget. But library hours citywide will be reduced, as will some parks and recreation services. One change recreation center users will notice is less frequent cleaning of some facilities.

Coleman's proposed budget calls for no net growth in city government. The mayor tried to hold the line on cuts to public safety and make investments in city infrastructure, while addressing an anticipated \$12 million cut to LGA dollars.

The pending LGA cut for 2012 came at the same time city officials had to fill a \$15.6 million budget gap created by a 2011 LGA cut and changes to the market value homestead credit reimbursement. While decrying what he described as the "erosion" of state aid, Coleman praised city

staff for rising to the challenge of making difficult budget cuts.

Had the city not sustained LGA cuts, the mayor was poised to unveil another zero percent levy increase this year.

The proposed 2012 city budget is \$556.2 million, including library services. The 2011 adopted budget amount was \$553.7 million. The city would levy \$100.758 million in 2012 if Coleman's budget is adopted. That compares to \$94.609 million for 2011. The increase is \$6.149 million.

St. Paul had no increase in the amount it levied for city operations in 2011. How much property taxpayers will actually pay for city operations will hinge upon the type and value of property they own.

City government will be smaller despite the levy increase, due to the need to make up for lost LGA as well as inflationary pressures. The budget spares police officers and firefighters, although it does cut Fire Department overtime. Shifting the state's challenges onto the backs of our cities doesn't erase our need to put police officers and firefighters on the streets," said Coleman.

In the proposed budget the

police and fire departments would each lose two civilian employees and other job cuts will be spread through other departments. One of the few departments spared staff cuts is the City Attorney's office. The City Council members have already raised concerns about cuts to inspections, building permit and animal control staff.

St. Paul will cut its workforce by 55.9 full-time equivalent positions, from 2,945.7 FTE's in 2011 to 2,889.8 in 2012. Budget Manager Scott Cordes said that only about 20 people will have to be laid off but the actual number won't be known until year's end. Many departments will lose staff, including the mayor's office, where one position will be cut. About 20 employees have received layoff notices, effective January 1.

Employee benefits are driving some of the increase, from \$51.6 million in 2011 to \$52.5 million in 2012. Most city employees won't get a cost-of-living-adjustment increase in 2012, but about \$800,000 in annual step increases will be paid.

But the reduction in the city's work force means that overall salary expenditures would go from \$124.3 million in 2011 to

\$122.4 million in 2012.

The 2012 budget proposal includes \$6.2 million in cuts. There will be almost 50 hours of library hours cut citywide. No libraries or recreation centers will close. Animal control center hours will be cut.

The budget does contain a few additions. Parking meters will be replaced with a new system that allows drivers to use credit cards, after a trial of new meters earlier this year. The budget does include the first year of the 2012-2013 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB), which includes \$6.2 million for capital projects, \$12.5 million for residential street paving, and \$4 million for library upgrades. Most area projects recommended for funding in the capital budget did make it through the mayor's review, with the exception of funding to help complete the Marshall Avenue median project in Merriam Park. Area projects that were funded include the replacement of the Hamline and Edgumbe bridges, and pedestrian safety improvements at Skyline Tower.

Other projects Coleman announced include upgrades at the Highland and Sun Ray libraries, construction of the new Payne-

Maryland library-community center complex, and the start of the replacement of the city's ancient snow plowing fleet. The condition of snow plowing equipment has been a sore subject after the past two winters' heavy snowfalls and ice storms. Council President Kathy Lantry described the equipment as a World War II boneyard.

The city will partner with the state for 24/7, more reliable email services. During a record snowstorm this past winter the city was stymied by having its email service shut down.

Council members and city department heads have been philosophical about the budget cuts, although council members have concerns about specific items. Lantry is especially worried about some city inspector cuts saying staff is already spread too thin.

The budget will be hashed out in weekly budget meetings that began in mid-August and will continue into December. The council must adopt a maximum levy by September 15, to comply with state truth-in-taxation law. The city will announce its budget hearings and hearing on street right-of-way maintenance fees soon.

Culvers

Continued from page 4

Other commissioners and city staff noted that the new zoning regulations don't preclude similar redevelopment, including new development that includes fast food restaurants.

"When you step back, it's terrific to see investment in a block that sorely needs it," said Commissioner Bob Spaulding. While he has concerns about the development as it ties into overall plans along Central Corridor, Spaulding said he doesn't see the project as setting a precedent for the rest of the light rail line.

"One constraint here is that we are redeveloping existing buildings," said Planning Commissioner Rich Kramer.

At the Zoning Committee hearing, property owner Rick

Kline said it doesn't make sense financially to build higher-density development at the properties. Redevelopment may be a possibility in the future.

Two existing buildings on the site, a retail store and a former Laundromat, will be renovated as part of the project. The reuse of the two buildings does limit how parking and site access are reconfigured, said Tom Beach, who oversees city site plan reviews.

When the renovations are completed the former Spin City at 1491 University will be converted into a Culver's restaurant. It will have 4,953 square feet of space, with a drive-through window at its east end. The drive-through access will be to the east.

The existing building at 1489 University will be reconfigured to be 10,9092 square feet. It will house retail uses.

Planning Commission ap-

proval of the project included changes to the site's parking configuration, including the location of parking spaces for people with disabilities. The project requires a minimum of 37 parking spaces for the restaurant and retail uses.

A total of 53 parking spaces are proposed. That's the maximum allowed. Some commissioners questioned whether that was too much off-street parking, noting that the goal for University Avenue redevelopment is to minimize off-street parking areas. But Kline, who operated an auto dealership at the site for many years, said that the property once held as many as 70 motor vehicles at a time.

Another concern was access, and whether the property has access points on Pascal, University and Simpson. The site plan shows three access points on Pascal, University and Simpson. Some com-

missioners questioned whether the University-Sherburne alley would be used but City Planner Anton Jerve pointed out that under city regulations, a fast food restaurant cannot share an alley with residential neighbors, as Sherburne is residential in nature.

The conditional use permit is needed to allow for the Culver's restaurant. St. Paul requires almost all of its fast-food restaurants to have conditional use permits, which are used to regulate issues ranging from vehicle egress points to speaker box noise. The conditional use permit was approved on the condition that the site plan for the entire development is approved. The Planning Commission also asked that the number of curb cuts on the site be minimized and that the Simpson Street exit have signs directing traffic toward University Avenue. Simpson will be a two-way access point, as will

Pascal. The University access will be restricted by the construction of light rail down the middle of University and will have right in and right out access only.

Site landscaping will be concentrated along the public right-of-way, pedestrian pathways and drive-through to the greatest extent possible. The intent is to screen those areas.

One condition on the conditional use permit calls for the Pascal access point to be modified only if the entire site is redeveloped as proposed on the site plan. If that doesn't happen in two years, it goes back to the Planning Commission for further review.

Only one condition was placed on site plan approval. The Planning Commission is asking city staff to work with the developers to determine placement of an ornamental fence along University.



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St. Paul Planning Commission rejects site plan appeal for Pelham property

By JANE MCCLURE

Property at 650 Pelham Boulevard should retain industrial zoning and allow for the construction of a 68,000 square foot office building there, assuming the St. Paul Port Authority has its way. To help with that, the St. Paul Planning Commission rejected a site plan appeal September 2, following an August 25 commission Zoning Committee public hearing.

The commission is asking the developer and city staff to look at pedestrian improvements to the property, including a sidewalk on the Wabash Avenue site and improvements to the southwest corner of the property.

At issue is whether the planned Meridian Industrial Center is consistent with area neighborhood plans. The 5.2 acre site is zoned for light industrial use.

In the spring the St. Paul City Council voted to retain the property's industrial zoning, instead of changing it to traditional neighborhoods mixed use. City staff had recommended the mixed use rezoning as part of a larger package of zoning changes along the Central Corridor light rail line. But the St. Paul Port Authority, which is working with developer John Allen on the property, successfully argued for the indus-

trial zoning to remain. City Council members agreed, saying St. Paul needs to retain industrial property and build its job base.

The property has been industrially zoned since at least the 1950s and probably earlier, according to city records. Most recently it housed a trucking company, Overnight Express. That company moved out a couple of years ago and asked the Port Authority to buy its site. Pollution at the property was cleaned up last year.

Union Park District Council (UPDC), with the support of the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association, St. Anthony Park Community Council and neighborhood residents, appealed the site plan August 1. Desnoyer Park residents and DPIA President Carla Olson said that they consider the Pelham site to be a neighborhood gateway and that an industrial use isn't consistent with that desire.

UPDC asked the Planning Commission earlier this summer to act on the site plan, without filing a formal appeal, a request the commission didn't act on. Commission members noted at that time that the zoning change had had considerable review and discussion as part of the Central Corridor zoning changes.

The Port Authority has also pointed out that its staff has met with neighborhood residents several times to discuss the project. Port Authority Project Director Kelly Jameson noted that the changes made to the project, to address neighborhood concerns, have already added \$200,000 to \$300,000 to project costs. The project also went through several site plans before winning city staff approval in July.

Allen indicated he'd be willing to talk to neighborhood representatives and see if any further changes could be made to the site plan.

The city staff site plan approval placed several conditions on the plan, including required site improvements, that all needed city permits be pulled, that an erosion control plan be developed during construction and that separate parcels that comprise the site be combined into one tax parcel. Work covered by the site plan must be completed by December 1, 2012.

Annie Johnson, UPDC community organizer, said the appeal is needed because the proposed redevelopment isn't in the area's best interests and isn't consistent with plans for the surrounding neigh-

borhoods. The appeal itself is 18 pages long. The city staff response is 26 pages long.

In order to succeed with an appeal, UPDC has to prove that the city staff erred in granting site plan approval. The district council makes several arguments against the site plan, asking that parking be placed behind or below the building. The current site plan shows parking on all four sides of the building. The project has about 200 parking spaces.

Another argument is that there be sidewalks on both the Pelham and Wabash sides of the building, that the building be two stories tall, that the building has prominent storefront windows and that the building includes artistic elements. If the Meridian building is allowed, the district council is asking that local businesses looking to expand be given priority in locating there.

City staff has countered the appeal point for point and argues that no errors were made in approving the site plan. Staff also noted that the site isn't technically in the UPDC planning district but is instead in St. Anthony Park neighborhood. Staff also notes that Interstate 94 separates the site from Desnoyer Park neighborhood, which is in the Union Park planning district.

The new Meridian development could house up to eight offices, manufacturing/warehouse or distribution companies, and could create as many as 200 new jobs. The building is designed so that it can easily change tenants in the future. There would be offices on three sides of the building, Pelham, Wabasha Avenue and Interstate 94, with truck docks facing the east.

The parking lot in front would be set back from Pelham 25 feet, with landscaping and an ornamental fence in the setback area. A sidewalk would be constructed along Pelham. The existing bike lane would remain in place. The city staff report notes that the existing bike lane could connect with the planned Midtown Greenway extension nearby, providing even more bike access.

The building could increase the property taxes generated at the site by as much as 225 percent. The development has an estimated price tag of \$5 million.

The property is west of the Rock-Tenn paper recycling plant and also has Monarch Bus Service, Twin City Testing and All-American Storage as immediate neighbors. There are a few small apartment buildings a block away, to the north.

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School Supply and Sock & Mitten Drive!

District 6 Planning Council has sponsored a school supply and cold weather gear drive for quite a few years. This year, District 6 is requesting that the following items be donated: Kleenex, hand sanitizer, dry erase makers, along with supplies such as number 2 pencils, crayons, notebooks, folders, scissors and other supplies. Backpacks are welcome as well. Cold weather will be here so please also donate gently used or new cold weather gear. Donations for both drives are taken at the District 6 office located at 171 Front, hours vary or Mike's Complete Auto Care, 1174 Rice Street from 8 am to 5 pm until November 1, 2011 items will be distributed to area schools. District 6 wants to thank the individuals and the North End Improvement Club for past donations!

St. Paul Schools students definitely impacted by increasing cuts

'Johnny' can expect to pay more for supplies and athletics...



By JAN WILLMS

When Johnny returns to the classroom this fall in the St. Paul School District, that classroom will look much like the one he left last spring. But with increasing cuts to education, there will be definite changes in this next academic year that will impact his or his parents' pocketbook.

If he is enrolled in sports, he is going to have to expect to pay more to participate in each sport.

Because of rising labor and material costs, his school wardrobe as well as pencils, paper and notebooks are going to be more expensive.

And he may find his classroom more crowded, with nearly 200 teachers laid off.

But although the final budget bill for the state may be worrisome for the St. Paul School District, it could have been worse.

The schools have become used to dealing with shifts in funding, according to Jabar Alsaddiqui, chief budget analyst for the district.

"The state typically gives us 90 per cent of the current year entitlement and holds back 10 per cent each year," he explained. "That 10 per cent comes the next year."

Alsaddiqui said this percentage has changed to a current split of 70/30. He said that with the bill recently passed, the school districts will receive 60 per cent of the money the state owes them in the current year, with 40 per

cent shifted to the following year.

The funding shift this year will delay \$700 million in payments to schools in Minnesota. That is on top of the \$1.4 billion in delayed payments from last year. The final bill does include a \$50 per pupil formula increase to help districts offset the borrowing costs they will have to undertake.

It has been a continuing practice for the legislature to withhold funds from the schools to balance the state budget, which requires the largest districts to borrow extensively and pay millions in interest. The final passage of this year's budget has only increased the need for the districts to borrow.

The bill will require districts to improve annual teacher and principal evaluations.

"The voucher system was introduced but did not make it to the final bill," Alsaddiqui stated.

The bill does not include special education cuts and did not disconnect the compensatory aid for poor students from the general aid formula, according to Alsaddiqui. That funding is based on the number and percentage of students who qualify for free lunch. The higher the level of poverty, the more funding is provided.

Integration funding under the current law will continue for at least another two years.

"This funding involves additional resources for particular

cities, such as Duluth, St. Paul or Minneapolis," Alsaddiqui explained. He added that it is designed to create a racial balance and maintain integrated schools. This is one of the major areas to address to try and close the ongoing achievement gap.

"A task force is being put together to make recommendations regarding this program," Alsaddiqui continued.

He said that over the years, parents have already absorbed more of the school costs. This is particularly true with athletic program expenses.

To offset some of the athletic costs, St. Paul-based School Space Media will install 30-by-3-foot boards at Central, Como and Highland Park high schools. It has been reported that the boards will stream both school messages such as game lineups and advertisements. Ads will be for anything from colleges and universities to banks, insurance companies and auto dealerships.

The district, which will have a chance to veto any ads, will get half the net profits. While the three schools were chosen because of higher participation in athletics, the money will go to athletic programs at all seven traditional high schools.

In spite of the budget cuts, Alsaddiqui remains optimistic.

"The impact was not as great as we expected," Alsaddiqui said. The shifts in funding will cost the state \$2.8 billion.

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St. Paul property owners to face a wide range of fee increases

By JANE MCCLURE

St. Paul property owners face a wide range of fee increases in 2012, on top of a 6.5 percent increase in the city's property tax levy. Services including street right-of-way maintenance, curbside recycling, water, storm sewer and sanitary sewer services would rise if Mayor Chris Coleman's budget is adopted by the City Council.

Persons using parking meters might be looking for extra quarters, to help cover the costs of new meters. Users of parks services or those seeking city business or building permits would also pay more. As the City Council reviews various 2012 department budgets in the weeks ahead, more details about fees and charges will be fleshed out.

The impacts of fee hikes on top of a property tax increase worries Council members, who know that many residents will be hard-pressed to pay more for services. "It is a lot more for people to pay and it concerns me that it comes at a time when many people are really struggling," said city Council President Kathy Lantry.

More about fees will be discussed in the weeks ahead. The city charges a wide variety of other fees for service. For some services, such as those delivered by the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI), the intent has long been to have fees for services such as building permits and restaurant licenses cover the actual costs of providing services. That is meant to shift the costs of providing those services from property taxes

to those who actually are using services.

A typical St. Paul home is valued at \$149,300, with a 4 percent decrease in value from 2011 to 2012. That home owner paid \$1,110 in city property taxes and fees in 2011, with \$524 of that in property taxes. Right-of-way maintenance assessments, sanitary sewer charges, storm sewer charges, water charges and the recycling fee made up the rest.

For 2012, the property taxes for the typical home would increase \$44 to \$568 under Coleman's budget. Add in the fee increases and the total would be \$1,235.

The curbside recycling fee would jump from \$32 to \$54. Of this increase \$18 is attributed to the addition of citywide collection of organic materials at curbside. This is meant to allow residents to have clean organics, including food waste, collected for composting. Other material that could be composted includes paper towels and napkins that have food waste on them.

Collection of materials curbside for composting has been discussed in St. Paul for more than a decade, with various pilot programs tried in the past. The programs have been popular because they have allowed residents to dramatically reduce the amount of trash they put out for collection.

Last year Macalester-Groveland neighborhood launched a program in which materials were collected for composting. Although the composting programs have been popular and residents

have asked for collection of materials, the mechanics of how the program would work have been a sticking point. Costs have also been a factor.

Public Works and Eureka, which runs recycling programs, will bring information to the council this fall to outline how curbside composting would work.

One step toward a composting program gets underway soon as Eureka starts to collect pizza boxes at curbside in September. Because those boxes usually contain food waste, the boxes haven't been collected as part of paper recycling. Pizza boxes can be composted.

For the typical home, water rates would increase from \$111 to \$139. Storm sewer charges would rise from \$74 to \$80. Sanitary sewer charges would rise from \$159 to \$169.

The right-of-way maintenance assessment for the typical home would rise from \$210 to \$224. But city staff caution that it is hard to say what a typical right-of-way maintenance assessment charge is.

The right-of-way maintenance fee is based on a property's amount of street frontage so that is one variable. The fee is also affected by the classification of a street in front of a property, such as a collector street or a residential street. The city has numerous street classifications it bases the right-of-way charge on, ranging from brick downtown streets to dirt alleys. Street right-of-way maintenance fees as a whole would rise 7 percent in 2012.

Some rising fees could be tied

to a proposal the city Council reviewed August 24. About \$5 million of the 2012 budget is based on what is described as "public right-of-way cost recovery." The city is looking at ways to recover costs for utilities during construction projects, including sanitary sewer, storm sewer and water that are in public streets. City Budget

Director Todd Hurley explained that cost recovery has been stupid by several city departments for the past eight months. Part of the increase in water and sewer rates proposed for 2012 is tied to cost recovery.

"The policy decision we have to make is, is this a way to raise revenue," Lantry said.

Mayor Coleman, officials celebrate as demolition makes room for new business



Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, Councilmember Lee Helgen, local officials and community leaders celebrated last week as a long vacant building at 855 Rice collapsed into a pile of rubble. Standing empty for 22 years, the adjacent structure at 857 Rice Street will be renovated to house Libby Law Office and their tenant, Sparc, a community development organization.

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Haddad is a professor of the history of Islam and Christian-Muslim relations at the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in Washington D.C. Her fields of expertise include twentieth-century Islam; intellectual, social, and political history in the Arab world; and Islam in North America and the West. Currently, Haddad is conducting research on Muslims in the West and on Islamic Revolutionary Movements. She also teaches courses on Muslim-Christian Relations and Arab Intellectuals.

This event is free and open to the public, but attendees must pick up a ticket in advance, as seats are limited. Tickets are available September 15 at the front desk of Bush Student Center, 1551 Hewitt Avenue. For more information call 651-523-2423. Hamline Church is located at 1514 Englewood Avenue, Saint Paul.

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