



She helps others meet the trees
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HOMEGROWN BREWERY COMING TO RONDO

Rondo resident sets sights on opening first Black women-founded brewery in Minnesota

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Rondo resident Brittney Mikell aims to open the first Black woman-founded brewery in the state of Minnesota. And she wants to do it in her own neighborhood.

So, she's working with the Rondo Community Land Trust to find the location on Selby Ave. that will be just right,

and she launched a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo to fund the launch of Bubble Line Brewing Company with \$500,000.

LESSONS ABOUT HERSELF

Mikell worked as a pharmacist before pivoting to making beer during the pandemic.

She enjoyed her work in healthcare.

"I've always been the kind of person that needed to be contributing to something bigger than myself in my career," she explained. In that way, she fit right in. She had struggled academically while earning a degree in chemistry at Carleton College, but around the end of her four years, everything began to click. "I learned how to study and what worked for my learning

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INTERSECTION OF IDEAS ON INTERSTATE 94

Community discusses Rondo landbridge, boulevard conversion, bus lanes, expansion and reconfiguration of 7.5-mile stretch between downtowns

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

As MnDOT evaluates its upcoming Interstate 94 project, community members are talking about how they live, work and play along the corridor, and what they envision for the next 50 years. It's part of the Rethinking I-94 project.

ReConnect Rondo has proposed creating a community land bridge around the site of the historic Rondo community. Our Streets has suggested replacing the existing freeway with a multi-modal boulevard and returning the surrounding land to neighborhoods. Recently representatives from the three groups presented to the Midway Chamber of Commerce. The meeting was held on the ninth floor of the former Central Medical building with views of I-94 in both directions.

RONDO LAND BRIDGE

ReConnect Rondo aims to fix some of the wrongs done when Interstate I-94 carved through a Black middle-class

INTERSECTION OF IDEAS » 2



A view of Interstate I-94 looking towards Allianz Field from the top floor of the former Central Medical Clinic at 393 N Dunlap. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Will city limit drive-thrus? Maybe.

St. Paul considers banning drive-thrus for restaurants and coffee shops, but not pharmacies and banks in some areas

By JANE MCCLURE

St. Paul could become the latest city to limit new drive-thru sales and services if a proposal is adopted this summer. The St. Paul Planning Commission held a public hearing on the issue June 7, 2024, and will make a recommendation to the city council in June or July.

If the regulations are adopted by the council, St. Paul would join other cities, including Minneapolis, in such restric-

tions. While some cities have adopted outright bans on drive-thru services and St. Paul could do the same, planners have also suggested taking a more nuanced approach, focusing more on restaurants and coffee shops and less on banks and pharmacies.

City planner Bill Dermody told the commission earlier this spring that drive-thru sales and services can negatively impact walkability and active streetscapes. That is seen as being in conflict with the

DRIVE-THRU DEBATE » 10



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REBUILD REPAIR RECYCLE
The Bee Line brings beauty and biodiversity

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Looking for things to do this summer? Check out our round-up.

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neighborhood, according to Marvin Roger Anderson and Keith Baker.

A northern option for the interstate would have followed Pierce Butler Route, but the southern route was chosen through Rondo, which was designated as a slum.

This political and intentional decision resulted in the loss of 700 homes and 300 businesses between 1950 and 1969, including the home at 1021 Rondo Ave. that Anderson's grandfather lived in until it was taken. He and three of his friends had also owned four lots at 989 and 995 Rondo that they constructed 12 townhomes on. Today, the loss of property in Rondo is about \$250 million in unrealized home equity. There is an annual earning gap of \$370 million.

"Why did they feel like they could come into our community?" Anderson asked.

"Minnesota ranks next to Mississippi in racial disparities," pointed out Baker.

Baker worked at MnDOT for 18 years and is now the ReConnect Rondo Executive Director. When the Central Corridor rail line, now called the Green Line, was proposed in 2009, there were no stops in Rondo, he stated. The idea emerged then: "Not only do we want stops, why not replace the land that was taken in the 1950s," said Baker.

In 2018, a five-day advisory panel by the Urban Land Institute recommended creating up to 21 acres of new land over the I-94 freeway from Lexington to Rice St. They also advised creating an African American cultural enterprise district around the new land bridge that would be constructed and maintained by MnDOT.

ReConnect Rondo envisions a community-led development that emphasizes community ownership, history and cultural strengths, 21st century innovations (bringing broadband to Rondo), and the assets of the historic Rondo area. "When the community is the developer, the community becomes the beneficiary," said Baker.

They have done a number of studies, including an anti-displacement and community investment study. In order to keep residents and businesses in the neighborhood, a Community Reinvestment Fund will be created to use revenue from the land bridge to support community assets. A Community Investment Trust will enable the Rondo Community to benefit from future development on and off the land bridge. A Right to Remain and Return for people who were displaced and their descendants will be established. Together, these initiatives will build wealth. "It's a systems approach," said Baker.

Now in the planning phase, the land bridge will include 21 acres, parks and open space, 576 housing units, and 140,000 square feet of marketplace/institution/non-profit. It will add 1,800 jobs to the city with over \$3 million in annual city revenue. Construction could begin in 2026 and be completed by 2030.

The land bridge (sometimes referred to as a "cap" or "lid") fit within all of the Rethinking I-94 options that have been presented by MnDOT except for the at-grade options and expansion A/B alternatives. ReConnect Rondo staff pointed out that there have not been traffic analyses or modeling of daily vehicle movement for at-grade options that will fill in the trench

COMMUNITY RETHINKS INTERSTATE 94

Category	Cost
Bridge and Infrastructure Design, Engineering & Construction	\$313M
Buildings, Utilities and Parks & Open Space	\$167M
Pre-planning	\$13-15M

- 21 acres w/park and open space
- 576 housing units
- 140,000 Sq. Ft. market place/institution/non-profit
- 1800+ jobs
- \$3M+ annual city revenue

and bring the roadway back to be a city street. They also have mobility and safety concerns.

In Minnesota, there is a cap over Hiawatha Ave. in Minneapolis, providing space for Longfellow garden. In Duluth, a cap over I-35 is filled with a park and gardens. There is a similar park (Klyde Warren Park) over the Woodall Rodgers Freeway in Dallas, Texas. The first highway cap ever built was in 1976 in downtown Seattle.

The "Stitch" in Atlanta, Ga. plans to cap the I-75/I-85 Downtown Connector with green space and buildings spread over 14 acres on a three-quarter-mile platform. Construction is planned for 2026-2030.

OUR STREETS: CONVERSION TO BOULEVARD

Our Streets is proposing that the interstate be eliminated, the trench filled in, and a boulevard created in its place. The reclaimed land could be used for new housing, businesses and parks via a community land trust. They are proposing a similar model for Olson Highway

in north Minneapolis (the Bring Back 6th initiative). According to Our Streets, the original concept of the U.S. highway system was to bring people to the edge of cities, and then the network of streets and boulevards would carry people into and through cities. Plans changed, and interstates like I-94 were built through urban neighborhoods.

Our Streets Executive Director José Antonio Zayas Cabán pointed out that they have done door knocking and talked to 30,000 people in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Neighborhoods along the interstate have some of the worst air quality in the Twin Cities area. With that come health disparities as residents suffer from asthma, dementia and lower life expectancies.

I-94 interrupts the street grid, and it interrupts local access, observed Our Streets Advocacy Coordinator Yasmin Hirsi.

Every day, 120,000 people travel on I-94. Twenty-five percent of the trips on I-94 are less than two miles, and those trips don't begin or end on I-94.

"Most people are going out of their

way to use I-94 for short trips," said Hirsi.

Other cities have removed their freeways. Construction on removing Interstate 81 in Syracuse, N.Y. through the downtown area will begin this year. When Central Freeway in San Francisco, Calif. collapsed in an earthquake, it wasn't rebuilt as a raised interstate. Instead, it was replaced with an at-grade boulevard with side access lanes for parking. Some predicted that commute times would increase by two hours, but instead congestion improved. Over half of the car traffic "evaporated," according to the Our Street presentation.

The right of way that could be reclaimed over the 7.5-mile stretch of I-94 between Minneapolis and St. Paul is equal to 50 Allianz Field stadiums, said Hirsi. That's 10 acres in Cedar-Riverside, 26.1 in South St. Anthony Park/Merriam Park, 27 acres in the Midway, and 32.8 in Rondo.

"There is so much space to consider for better use than a freeway," remarked Hirsi.

Cabán pointed out that I-94 is not serving its intended purpose of long-distance, inter-city travel.

Our Streets questions MnDOT's modeling for I-94 traffic projects, and they believe a boulevard conversion can adequately serve transportation needs. They would like to see a "Restored Network" option added to the I-94 alternatives so that the potential for land use is factored in. Our Streets is pushing for a broader study area that includes both downtowns, additional parallel streets, and the portion of Highway 280 south of Energy Park Drive. They want to see the model account for short-term behavior changes and long-term land use changes following highway removal.

RETHINKING I-94

The 7.5 miles of Interstate 94 from Marion Street in St. Paul west to Highway 55/Hiawatha Ave. in Minneapolis is set for construction in 2029.

MnDOT is evaluating 10 possibilities for the roadway, from maintaining the existing roadway to upgrading it to current standards. MnDOT is also looking at removing the freeway and replacing it with an at-grade roadway with dedicated bus lanes. Or, they could separate local traffic roadway on either side of the freeway. The freeway could be reduced, reconfigured, or expanded.

Rail transit is not being considered.

MnDOT is planning for walkability and bikeability improvements within the corridor. MnDOT is also coordinating with ReConnect Rondo on a potential land bridge, and is creating a lid/stitch/land bridge working group.

"We understand the importance of this corridor not only to the people who live along the corridor but to the region," said Rethinking I-94 Project Manager Mark Lindeberg. MnDOT is focused on getting people to where they're going in a reasonable amount of time, he said.

The alternatives on the table right now followed input from 3,350 surveys, 25 presentations, 21 community events, and 2,008,046 impressions on media platforms including newspapers, the project social media, website and digital advertising between June and November 2023. "We are working to get out there," said Renee Raduenz, Rethinking I-94 Communications & Public Engagement Manager.

The 10 alternatives will be evaluated and refined. Provide feedback at talk.dot.state.mn.us/rethinking-i94.

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Brittney Mikell has always been a science girl. So the switch from pharmacy to beer wasn't hard. (Photo by Terbutto Ochothow)

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style, and I started doing better," Mikell remarked. "That grew my confidence a ton. So I didn't actually struggle at all during my doctorate studies. I knew how to put in the work to learn, I did well, and it paid off." She received her doctor of pharmacy at the University of Minnesota in 2020.

But once she began working as a pharmacist, she found herself struggling again. "My empathy was huge, so it was hard for me to be in traditional hospital or clinical settings where people were really sick," she explained. "Then I went corporate, gave my all, and burned out. It took a lot of therapy for me to understand that I wasn't a failure or that I 'couldn't hack it'."

The lessons she learned through that period are helping her now. "Deep into this business venture, I know when I'm headed in the direction of burnout. I also have an amazing partner who sees when I'm not doing well and helps me slow down. Starting a business is a ton of work, but it's a marathon, not a sprint. Historically, I've been a sprinter. I'm so much better now at pacing myself, and ultimately I trust that it will lead to happiness and success in this venture."

A SCIENCE GIRL

Mikell has always been a science girl. Growing up, she used to mix household chemicals in her parents' basement when they weren't around. So the switch from

pharmacy to beer wasn't hard.

"All of the medicinal chemistry that I learned is directly related to the chemical reactions of yeast, the science of hops and bittering, and the acid-base chemistry of IPAs. A friend of mine said that there is a pharmacist to brewer pipeline, and that's super true," said Mikell. "Several pop brands were created by pharmacists, and pharmacies used to be the only place that a person could buy a fountain drink. So when I was looking for hobbies during lockdown in the pandemic, a lot of folks made bread, and I made beer. I wanted to engage that creative, science-y side."

Mikell has tapped into countless resources. She got books and equipment secondhand on Facebook Marketplace to start. She joined the Brewing Change Collaborative, where she met other folks of color interested in beer, and/or working in the beer industry. She completed the St. Thomas Community Entrepreneurship Program, which provided her with mentors, student consultants, and step-by-step actions needed to start a business. They gave her a micro-grant, and connected her with the folks over at Rondo Community Land Trust. "That has been invaluable," said Mikell. "We've been working together to secure a location, and overall they've provided resources to ensure that I'm set up for success. I can't speak highly enough of those folks. Plus, they're right up the street from my house."

She has worked part-time at La Dona Cerveceria in Minneapolis to hone her skills.

There are many individuals who have helped along the way. "I've also got great advice from Elle at MetroNOME, Mahad and Kevin at Dual Citizen, Dicky at La Dona (another huge mentor), Shaunte at Wooden Ship, Dan Beaubien, Bri and Sophia at Modist, Jill and Deb at Urban Growler, Dan at Lift Bridge, George at Augsburg, Matt at Wandering Leaf, several folks at Waldmann, and so many more," said Mikell.

The Brewing Change Collaborative (BCC) was a place of refuge for Mikell.

"They care about the same things that I do – beverages as a vehicle for good. The group really embodies that. It's no secret the craft beer industry lacks diversity, but BCC is doing real work to change that," said Mikell. The group is always looking for more members, and she encourages others to join. They'll be at Pride in June and All Pints North in July.

DRAWN BY RONDO'S SPIRIT

When she was working in healthcare, Mikell and her partner were able to save enough to buy a house. "Our realtor asked what we wanted and my response was 'I want to be around people that look like me, and I want to be able to walk to a lot of different amenities,'" she said. After seeing many homes, none that felt right, their realtor found a spot in Rondo in 2021. They immediately fell in love.

"The energy was exactly what we were looking for. There's a really positive community spirit here in Rondo," stated Mikell. "Everyone knows each other, and I feel lucky every time I meet someone that's been here for decades or more."

She added, "I'm from the South Side of Chicago, and I connect so deeply to the history of what folks have experienced here with the installation of I-94, redlining, racial covenants, and other methods of systemic disinvestment. I'd always heard about the history of Rondo, but it's another experience to actually be here, hear people's stories, and literally see the impact with your own eyes. By opening this brewery, if I can help promote some of the vibrancy that I see in the people here, I've succeeded."

"I can clearly see a picture in my mind of community members working and hanging out in the brewery and I can't help but smile. That'd be the ultimate win for me."

The vision for BLBC includes not just lagers and IPAs, but nonalcoholic lemonade and espresso drinks, kid-friendly spaces, apprenticeships for brewers of color, a home brew library corner, and community events – in short, all the makings of a "vital third place."

BEVERAGES AS A VEHICLE FOR GOOD

The overarching mission of Bubble Line Brewing Company is to make a positive impact by centering their three pillars of business: innovation, putting people first, and environmental sustainability. With these pillars in mind, BLBC will offer community beer-making workshops, brewing apprenticeships for brewers of color, and exceptional employee compensation/benefits.

echoing the movement of water to reflect the school's name.

With the school's location in the historic Summit Hill neighborhood, the exterior design had to be approved by the City of Saint Paul's Heritage Preservation Commission.

Hidden River Middle School will become the third SPPS school to install geothermal technology to heat and cool the building, and the second school to leverage a natural aquifer – the "hidden river" – under the school to fuel the system.

Other energy efficiencies include high-performing air handling units with energy recovery, and energy-efficient LED light fixtures and lighting controls. Environmental features also include insulating existing exterior walls and roofs as well as replacing windows to improve energy performance and comfort. Sustainable ma-

WHAT'S THE NAME ABOUT?

Bubble Line Brewing Company founder Brittney Mikell has a deep love and passion for science and learning. In chemistry, the bubble line is a graph that illustrates the temperature at which the first bubble of vapor is formed while heating a liquid. After surpassing this temperature, the liquid begins to boil.

BREWING CHANGE COLLABORATIVE

Brewing Change Collaborative works to foster diversity, equity, and inclusion for people of color in the brewing and beverage industries through advocacy, outreach and education. It was started by Ellie Rhodes, Ramsey Louder and Nasreen Sajady in the Twin Cities five years ago. Since, the collaborative has grown to include members across the world. They typically meet on the fourth Thursday evening of each month.

There are about 9,300 breweries nationwide, and most – 94 percent – of brewery owners are white, 2 percent are Latino, 2 percent are Asian, and less than 1 percent are Black, according to the Brewers Association.

Learn more and find a map of diverse breweries worldwide at brewingchangecollaborative.org.

BLBC has already raised over \$25,000 through an initial campaign. Their current crowdfunding campaign at www.indiegogo.com is for:

- Purchase of brewing equipment (existing purchase agreement)
- Design of greenhouse storefront
- Investment in sustainable brewing practices

"It's quite the challenge figuring out the capital aspect of funding the brewery," acknowledged Mikell. "It can cost \$850,000 plus to start a brewery and I don't come from a ton of money! So right now, I'm spending lots of time working on the crowdfunding campaign, valuating the business so I can approach investors, preparing to approach banks, and all the while just trying to stay true to myself."

She's grateful for the small team working with her, and says they feed off of each other's positive energy.

"I'm having a ton of fun, and learning a lot, too. My heart is really full with support from folks around me," stated Mikell.

She aims to open the brewery in early 2025.

"My dream is to build a 'nature house' for the brewery," said Mikell. "Since we live in Minnesota, it would be a beautiful, warm refuge for folks when the temps hit -20°, as they tend to do. It would be really good for all of our mental health during the part of winter when we only have a few hours of sun everyday. Plus, I think it'd be a lovely way to honor Rondo and its descendants. Sure, this brewery is for me and my love of beer, but more-so it's for them. It's a privilege to have the opportunity to honor their legacy."

More at bubblelinebrewing.com.

TIDBITS

SPPS TO GET CLEAN SCHOOL BUSES

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announces that 15 school districts across Minnesota will benefit from the 2023 Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, funded by President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The program will help Minnesota accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles and to replace existing school buses, which have been linked to asthma and other conditions that harm the health of students and surrounding communities. St. Paul Public School District has been selected to receive \$8,685,000 in rebate funding to purchase 25 clean school buses.

This third round of funding will build on the previous almost \$2 billion in-

vestment via the 2022 Rebates and 2023 Grants to further improve air quality in and around schools, reduce greenhouse gas pollution fueling the climate crisis, and help accelerate America's leadership in developing the clean vehicles of the future. EPA is currently accepting applications for the 2024 Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program until 11:59 PM ET on July 25, 2024.

HIDDEN RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL PROJECT

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) celebrated the groundbreaking for the remodeling of Hidden River Middle School on May 23, 2024.

Originally built in 1924, the school's renovation and addition will create a new Summit Avenue entrance for the school. Design features include undulating metal fins on the exterior to provide shade while



materials such as linoleum flooring in classrooms and terrazzo flooring in corridors will be installed throughout the facility.

Construction starts this summer and is set to be completed by fall 2025. To speed up the remodeling timeline by two years, the school community will temporarily move to the Wilson building (631 Albert St. N.) during construction.

Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse and varied thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com.

Midway Chamber joins forces (and office space) with our district councils

BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

BY CHAD KULAS,
Midway Chamber of
Commerce Executive Director
chad@midwaychamber.com



Since the '90s, the Midway Chamber of Commerce has had an office at the Spruce Tree Centre. Anyone who spends time in the Midway knows it as the "big green tile building at the corner of Snelling and University." The building has served us well, with a location in the heart

of the Midway and at a very busy intersection. The building has usually had a high occupancy and it has been good to connect with other tenants.

The Midway Chamber has also shared office space with others over time, but perhaps not anyone as fitting as our two new roommates: two local neighborhood district councils. This spring, the Hamline Midway Coalition and Union Park District Council moved in with us.

This is a move that excites all three organizations. It helps all of us stay afloat of what's happening in the community, and with each of us hearing different information and having different sources, it has made us all more aware of news we should know. We have been able to con-



nect each other with new contacts, which no doubt will lead to positive outcomes.

Symbolically, the move also makes sense. Snelling and University is in the midst of the Midway Chamber territory and is the border for the two district councils. Residents of both district councils

utilize businesses and amenities around this intersection, and drive or take transit through it regularly. The Hamline Midway Coalition recently adopted a light rail station at the intersection, doing regular cleanups and talking to people who use the station.

This is not only an important intersection throughout our city's history, but is (no pun intended) at a crossroads currently. There are threats, such as a perception of safety issues. But also opportunities, like the upcoming United Village project and whatever may come of the former CVS. Having our three organizations become even closer could be very important as we work together to shape this intersection for the future.

Finding Moses Dickson: The untold story of Minnesota and the Underground Railroad

PLANTING SEEDS

BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,
dr.artikatyner@gmail.com



I am sharing exciting news about Karen Sieber, historian, educator, and leader in public humanities this month. She has discovered a missing chapter in Minnesota's history about our state's connection to the Underground Railroad.

Q: You recently uncovered evidence that noted Underground Railroad leader Moses Dickson (1824–1901) was living in Saint Paul in the 1850s. Why is this significant?

Sieber: This discovery impacts our understanding of Black history at both the local and national levels, as no one had ever located the radical Black abolitionist this far North before. Moses Dickson (1824–1901) was the leader of the Knights of Liberty and the Order of Twelve, two secret societies whose members reportedly led countless formerly enslaved individuals to freedom via the Underground Railroad. Dickson was also reportedly behind one of the largest planned (but halted) slave uprisings in U.S. history. Following the Civil War, he helped found the HBCU Lincoln University, organized Black fraternal organizations and aid groups, opened Prince Hall Masons temples, dabbled in Reconstruction Era politics, preached in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and aided Exodusters moving West. There has always been a gap in Dickson's known whereabouts in the 1850s though, and the only existing details about his life pre-Civil War stem from his own self-curated accounts.

After years of searching further down the Mississippi River, I located Moses and his wife Mary living in Saint Paul during that missing decade. Dickson's community here in Saint Paul included many Black abolitionists from the couple's ear-

lier years in Galena, Ill., including William Taylor, Joseph Farr, and James Highwarden (sometimes Hyawadin). The Dicksons ran an eating saloon, while Moses also worked as a barber and periodically on steamships, providing him with easy covers for their operations. Dickson was also the first educator for Black students in Saint Paul. His years here in Saint Paul pre-statehood coincided with what were known to be his most active years organizing people to freedom along the Underground Railroad. This helps us rethink Minnesota's role in the Black freedom seeking experience, and provides new routes and stories for students to learn about in the curriculum about the Underground Railroad.

Q: How does this story connect to what is already known about Saint Paul's Black history, like the story of Pilgrim Baptist Church, Rondo, or the Justus Ramsey House?

Sieber: Dickson was operating here in Minnesota about 10-15 years before Rev. Robert Hickman and others arrived in Saint Paul in 1863, later forming Pilgrim Baptist Church. The original church, as well as the neighborhood that Dickson and other Black leaders were operating out of, were originally further downtown in Lowertown. The community was pushed further northwest into what would become the foundations of Rondo. Dickson remained connected to Farr and others in Saint Paul. He came back to open the Pioneer Lodge No. 1, a Prince Hall Masons chapter which still exists today with connections to Rondo. Although no direct link has yet been made to the Justus Ramsey House, Dickson had known connections to the Ramseys, Dodges, and other territorial leadership. Most of the house's Black history is from later decades, and connected to Pullman Porters, but collectively with Dickson's story and the role of the river tell a larger story of Black opportunity, transportation, and organizing networks over time.

Q: As we prepare to celebrate Juneteenth, what do we know about Dickson's personal thoughts on freedom?



Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute celebrated our 2024 Book Award Winners for our annual writing competition. This competition celebrates Black artists while furthering our mission of planting seeds of social change in the Black community by offering opportunities to learn about the cultural history of the African diaspora and share historically absent narratives. More at ppgji.org. Above, left to right, back row: Nasra Noor, Portia Bright Pittman, and Isaiah Allen; Front row: Elise Washington, Mercedes Yarbrough, Rose McGee, Lanasa Benjarowicz. (Photo by Kenneth Allen)

AWARD WINNERS

- **Best Illustration:** Lanasa Benjarowicz (*Nap Time*)
- **Black History:** Mercedes Yarbrough (*Going Back to Rondo*)
- **Book of the Year:** Nasra Noor (*My Mommy is a School Teacher*)
- **Social Change:** Rose McGee (*Can't Nobody Make a Sweet Potato Pie Like Our Mama*)
- **National Book of the Year:** Portia Bright Pittman (*A Bright Day at the State Capitol: There ought to be a Law*)
- **Honorable Mentions:** Lesley Bracero and Natoia Franklin (*BJ Doesn't Cry*), Isaiah Allen (*A Smile*), and Elise Washington (*Tika Speaks*)

Sieber: My favorite discovery so far into Dickson's previously unknown time in the north was a letter he wrote to the Minnesota Weekly Times on March 28, 1857, following the final Dred Scott decision. A portion of the letter, which calls out the hypocrisy of the Supreme Court, reads:

"I cannot help asking you if you have ever read a genuine copy of the American Declaration of Independence? ... In what have I offended that this injustice should be heaped upon me and mine? Is it because I love my country less than you? No! For you have all the advantages of education and refinement that society can furnish, and are eligible to any office at the gift of the People, your affection for your native land is only enough to put her in chains; while I, though depressed and downtrodden by my country ever since I saw the light of day, loves her still.... What kind of institution is a negro? Who am I? I am not an alien, for I was born on American soil. I am not a citizen, for you and your subordinates, the five slaveholders, say I am not. I am a thing. I live, breathe, eat, work, think, die, and if I have a soul—does it go before the eternal judge? Or does the Supreme Court take care of that, too?"

Yours, an Alien American,
MOSES DICKSON

THE FINDING MOSES INITIATIVE AIMS TO:

1. Connect researchers doing research into the Black experience in the Midwest in the 1800s.
2. Build a comprehensive database of names, places, and resources associated with Moses Dickson. This includes those in his political, religious, abolitionist, and fraternal organization networks.
3. Create an interactive map, timeline, lesson plans, and other resources that highlight the movements, networks, and stories of the Midwest freedom movement.
4. Nominate additional Network to Freedom sites in the Midwest to better highlight our region's role in the Underground Railroad and the long civil rights movement locally.
5. Increase public awareness of Moses Dickson and others working in the freedom movement in the Midwest.

Through her organization, Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

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The *Midway Como Frogtown Monitor* is a monthly community publication in the Midway, Como, Hamline and Frogtown neighborhoods of St. Paul, owned and operated by TMC Publications, CO. Visit our website for our calendar and publication dates.

Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the *Monitor*. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com. Unsigned letters will not run.

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28th Community Peace Celebration June 21

PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES
peacebubbles@q.com



Happy beautiful June! This has been an exciting leap year, and it feels like we keep leaping through a Winkle in Time of historic and enchanting events, as well as sad and tragic events. For instance, the recent senseless murders of our first responders, increasing climate shifting storms, hurricanes, and deadly tornados, and the ongoing global wars and genocidal efforts have been toxic on minds, bodies, and emotions. There are things we all can do to reduce the negative tensions and hostile-like and immoral mindset that's invasive in our country currently. On the other hand, we have been blessed with the best ever viewing of a total solar eclipse, a fantastic opportunity to witness a spectacular aurora borealis dancing in the night skies, and Minnesota sport teams are winners! We can enjoy the beginning of summer activities and events, celebrate and be thankful for the rain, sunshine and fresh air. We can be thankful and kind, first to ourself and then to others.

JOIN US AT WESTERN PARK JUNE 21

I was one of local residents of Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods started the Community Peace Celebration 28 years ago to promote peace and unity following the tragic killing of a young girl due to street violence. Since that summer, community members and organizations continue this annual event focused on build-

ing a strong community and spreading a message of peace.

The 28th Annual Community Peace Celebration will be held on June 21 from 2-6 p.m. at Western Sculpture Park (387 Marion St.). This year's theme is Joyful Insistence. With all that we continue to persevere through it is important that we hold fast to joy and insist on peace and unity in our neighborhoods, city and everywhere around this precious and beautiful world.

We just try to celebrate the community. We are working to create joyful peace bubbles instead of bullets. Come join us!

This free event welcomes everyone and offers live music, delicious food, useful neighborhood resources, and fun activities for all ages.

Special keynote guest, Jim Embry of Kentucky will share his joy and justice journey. Transformation Speaker, Will Flowers will be returning as emcee extraordinaire. There will be exciting performances by singer/actress Tearra Oso, jazz band The Rondo All-Stars, traditional Mexica-Nahua cultural group Kalpulli Yaocenoxtli, youth choir ComMUSICation, Cameroonian music artist Ewangson, youth leaders collective BYHAC Pop Up Team and many more.

The celebration continues to be a grassroots, all-volunteer, that is organized and funded by organizations and members of the community for the benefit of people in the community. This year's peace partners include the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, Minnesota Council of Churches, Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers (MAP), Public Art Saint Paul, Summit-U Planning Council, Capitol Region Watershed District, Renewing the Countryside, Mississippi Market, and Lyft.

More at communitypeacecelebration.org.

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**DISTRICT 10 COMO
COMMUNITY COUNCIL**



BY SHEVEK MCKEE
Executive director
district10@
district10comopark.org

SHE HELPS OTHERS MEET THE TREES

District 10 volunteer Stephanie Mirocha continues work of her father with Tree Trek events and new Meet the Trees self-guided walk

Last year, D10 Como Community Council received a grant from the Saint Paul Audubon Society to support a new initiative for the Como Park Tree Trek. For several years, the Tree Trek program has tagged Como Park trees and provided an accompanying self-guided map but thanks to the new funding, the program has expanded content with Meet the Trees.

Our Tree Trek guide, Stephanie Mirocha, spent countless hours last year writing thorough and personalized tree species write-ups with photos for all 41 tagged tree species in Como Park. Stephanie thoughtfully sorted the photos and formatted the writing to suit ideal implementation into the D10 website. Even so, it took staff five months to complete the content transfer piecemeal between regular duties. The content is so vast it was technologically disruptive to contain on a single page so each species has its own page!

It was wonderful to see that, like the experience of attending one of the guided Tree Trek events (the next on June 22, 10 a.m. to noon), the written content is not only informative but filled with personal touches and fun quirks. While the photographs document the trees and stages of their seeds, many of them are also simply gorgeous and betray to the viewer Stephanie's multitude of artistic talents (check out her website).

Below, Stephanie shares more about the history of the Como Tree Trek and how Meet The Trees came about:



Minnesota Master Naturalist Stephanie Mirocha (at left) introduces Shevek McKee and his daughter, Rhoda, to a tree during the fall 2023 Tree Trek. (Photo submitted)

2022 TREE TREK

I grew up riding my bike through Como Park, running through the woods, and climbing trees. Though I don't live in St. Paul currently, Como Park and the neighborhood area will always be my home.

My dad, Chet Mirocha, was a Professor of Plant Pathology at the University of Minnesota (UMN). After he retired, he started something new for him, enlisting help in learning about tree identification and tree diseases. He had a lot of fun with that, and started leading his tree treks under the auspices of the District 10 Environment Committee in 2004, of which he was a newly active member for the community. Later, he had the idea for attaching tree ID tags, and, by 2011, these new tags were attached to 18 trees in the park. He also helped create a map on the District 10 website pinpointing the 18 trees that were labeled. The map could be printed out. My dad stopped leading Como Park tree treks sometime after 2013.

My involvement began after he passed away in 2019. At that point, I became very interested in learning about the scientific study of trees. Like him, I followed a path that was new for me. My dad and I both shared a great love of trees and nature, and also like him, I "speak for the trees." That is the legacy I continue.

My newfound interest in dendrology, or the scientific study of trees, combined with my activities as a newly graduated

MEET THE TREES >> 7

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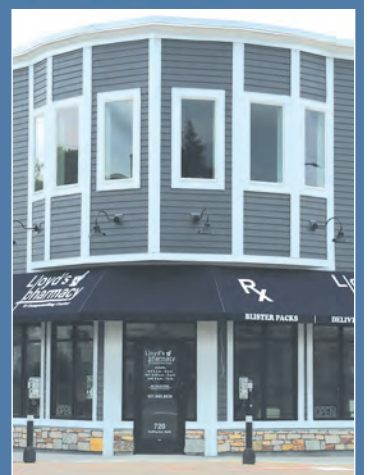
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MEET THE TREES >> from 6

UMN Master Naturalist in 2020 led me to the idea of taking up and carrying on the tree trek event that he began and which by then had fallen to the wayside. In 2020, I asked for and received permission from District 10 to go ahead with reinstating the Como Tree Trek event which I was very enthusiastic about. I began leading tree treks that year, and have done so ever since, now twice a year, usually one in June and one in autumn.

Right off the bat while leading my first tree trek, I spoke with one of the Environment Committee members on the trek that day, Susan Jane Cheney, and expressed to her my wish to expand from the 18 identified trees because there is such a variety of species in the park to learn about. She agreed with the sentiment, brought this project proposal to the committee, and ended up accompanying me on some of my forays through the park choosing and tagging trees. Her support was very important to me, and I ended up making a new friend to boot! The project was okayed, and thus began the fun work adding the 41 trees that are currently labeled with tree ID signs today. I spent many hours surveying what trees were in the park and choosing which ones to add to our list expansion. Several of the tree tag species were not available from the tree sign company, so I wrote the text for some of these for custom ordering.

Shevek McKee came on board in June 2021 as the new Executive Director of District 10 and was there when the first order of tree tags arrived. He was enthusiastic about updating the website, bringing his interest and expertise in that area. His first idea was for all the tagged trees to be updated using their GPS locations on a new map, and further, that they should have QR stickers on them to connect people to the "Tree Trek" page of the District 10



Attend the next guided Tree Trek on June 22, 10 a.m. to noon. Sign up on the District 10 website as space is limited. Or, go on a self-guided tour. Find information on the District 10 website.

website. So, as I tramped through the park that year choosing and tagging trees, I also took their GPS locations and sent those to Shevek to create the new map.

By September 2022, volunteers on the Environmental Committee had placed QR stickers on all the tree signs. My dad's first map did not have GPS, but I liked the fact that it was printable. A map makes it so fun! I wanted to continue to offer that option, as well. So, I asked my daughter, a geologist who works with data mapping, if

she could create a new one for the District 10 website tree trek page. The map is now available to print from the website.

So, now we come all the way back full circle to the Meet the Trees activity. The idea for this project blossomed early on during some of my first tree treks, when I realized what a great resource the website could offer alongside the tagged trees with their QR stickers. Now, anyone can access the website any time of the year on their device to find out more. This project expands the self-guided tour of 41 tagged trees beyond their locations in the park to have corresponding information for each tree located on the website. In a way, as I was writing these, it felt like I was leading a tree trek, except that instead of talking I was writing down the words!

The 41 tree write-ups will allow self-guided tree trekkers to follow the tree tags through the park, or link to the website later, while learning all about each tree species' ID traits, their natural history and their science facts. My hope is for readers to enjoy the mix of commentary balanced with science facts that bring the trees into their own lives, getting to know our friends, the trees. I was very motivated to take this project on and it just felt right. I also knew it would be a lot of work. I don't live in St. Paul currently, but I do visit often, so I managed my schedule to research and take photos whenever I could fit the time in.

It was always on my mind - what could be blooming or fruiting or emerging. A part of the project was supported by the St. Paul Audubon Society, but I can't even enumerate how many hours were involved! In the end, it took a year of writing, researching, and getting out "in the field" to take photos during each season of the year for the visual phases showing the trees in flower, their winter ID traits, leaf characteristics, and seed and fruit bearing. I loved doing it, learned a lot, and it was (as I suspected) a lot of work! Readers of

this article may have seen me out there in the snow, or just about any time of year, taking photos! It became pretty intense towards the end, but I at last finished up the writing and compiling of photos by early January 2024.

You can find Meet The Trees on the website, and also register for the June 22 guided Tree Trek (space is limited). We hope you enjoy learning about the trees and share this great resource with anyone you know who enjoys the park!

More at <https://district10comopark.org/treetestpage/>.

This article was originally published at the District 10 website.

LIVING 50+ GOOD NEIGHBOR

Know someone aged 50+ that contributes to the Midway/Como/Frogstown community and inspires those around them?

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We're launching a new series in our September Living 50+ section that will run quarterly. Send your nomination to tesha@tmcpub.com. Please include your contact information, their name, age, and contact information, and a paragraph about what they do that you find amazing about them.

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THE BEE LINE: FORWARDING A VISION

by RENNIE GAITHER
Frogtown Green

Imagine a roadside right-of-way that can increase native biodiversity, assist with carbon cycling and sequestration, help purify water, and reduce soil erosion. If you've ever traveled along Pierce Butler Route, you've driven that right of way, known as the "Bee Line."

In 2022, a group of Frogtown and Hamline Midway residents envisioned Pierce Butler Route's grassy south boulevard as a series of interconnected green features running along a 2.25-mile corridor. Ideas included a series of pollinator-beneficial gardens, rain gardens, strategic tree plantings, and a meadow. That year, the group received \$40,000 from the Minnesota "Lawns to Legumes" project, and the Bee Line was born.

The envisioned Bee Line runs from the intersection of Dale St and Minnehaha Ave to Newell Park, just beyond the Snelling/Pierce Butler entrance ramp. Generous support from the Lawns to Legumes grant has hastened expansion of existing components - Monarch City Gardens near Dale and Minnehaha, Pierce Butler Meadows near Snelling, and the west anchor, Newell Park - and helped advance plans for others.

Today, the project moves forward apace as a collaboration between Frogtown Green and the Hamline Midway Coalition. Curious, I decided to check in on some of the project's ardent supporters about their activities over the past year and their dreams for the Bee Line's future.

Garden, nature, and local food educator Stephanie Hankerson is a long-time supporter of the Bee Line. She's a nature educator and co-creator of MN SEED, an organization that conducts seed harvesting workshops, swaps and sharing events, many in Bee Line native wildflower gardens. MN SEED shares collected seeds freely with community members. "Last season over 7,000 seeds packets were shared at our events," she said, adding, "Participants harvested over 135 native pollinator plant species at programmed educational events." MN SEED events promote community sharing and biodiversity,



Local historian and wildflower enthusiast Paul Nelson stands near prairie coneflowers, also known as ratibida. (Photo submitted)

a common spirit along the Bee Line.

Local historian and wildflower enthusiast Paul Nelson possesses that same ethos. He leads Thursday morning volunteer plantings at Monarch City Gardens, an ever-growing oasis of native wildflowers encircling the West Minnehaha playing fields. He explained to me that last year saw the addition of a dozen new species to the garden, along with some trees and shrubs. Despite noting challenges such as "the infiltration of grasses, especially quack grass," Paul's sanguine vision for the future of Monarch City and the Bee Line prevails. "An aspect of the Bee Line is a wish to bring some beauty to the Pierce Butler corridor. It's ugly now, something to pass through. But it doesn't have to be THIS ugly," he said. "Imagine a Bee Line that was leafy, sometimes colorful, and gentle on the eye. People would love it and some would wonder, 'Why can't more roadways be like this?' Beauty is, or can be, tremendously productive."

Chris Stevens is a master gardener and co-director of Frogtown Green, a community-led green organization. With a recent grant from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Chris led an effort to plant a "mini-forest" at Our Village Community Garden, along the Bee Line corridor. Chris used principles from the Miyawaki Method of reforestation, which

transforms vacant lots or landscapes with many non-native plants into tiny, biodiverse forests.

On a recent Saturday morning, Frogtown Green volunteers planted 600 tree and shrub sapling varieties native to the area in an area no larger than a half-dozen parking spaces. Chris explained: "We chose to plant woody species that would have existed at the location during pre-European settlement times. This biome is considered an oak forest. These plants would have evolved with the insects, birds and other animals native to the area. They will provide habitat for them again as well as act as a living wall from the traffic on Pierce Butler Route." The hope is for a mature natural forest to emerge within decades, instead of centuries.

Pierce Butler Meadow adds another dimension to environmental diversity along the corridor. Since 2018 Steven Mittrione and a host of other volunteers have made slow, steady progress establishing native plants in the massive swale formed by the Snelling-Pierce Butler interchange. Many of the plants and seeds have come from MN SEED. Despite challenging drought conditions, plantings have increased due to leveraging community support.

"We have held several events where volunteers have planted native seedlings that we have raised through MN SEED's winter sowing program," Steve explains. "Through this program we have been able to develop a native plant source by enlisting individuals in our community who plant seeds in the winter, tend them through the summer, and return them to us for planting in the fall. This harnessing of community involvement and support has allowed us to develop a wide palette of

native plants on a shoestring budget. Seeds have exponential power," opines Steve.

Like Paul, Chris, and Stephanie, Steve is unabashedly hopeful. "We hope to continue to involve the community in our work as a way of educating the public about the importance of native plants in the creation of an ecosystem that supports wildlife and us." He continues, "We also hope to show how beautiful these landscapes can be. It has been very heartening to see that every time we are working on the site as a group, people honk their approval as they drive by on Pierce Butler. We have our fans out there. We hope to win over more."

Recently, Bee Line planners secured a contract with the firm, EOR, a water resource-based engineering and environmental consulting group, to develop an environmental assessment plan with green infrastructure improvement recommendations for the Bee Line. EOR landscape architect Britta Hansen summed up the plan as "proposed improvements along the Bee Line that include native vegetation for pollinator habitat, trees, and green stormwater infrastructure such as rain gardens, tree trenches and permeable pavements. These improvements will help beautify the Bee Line, while also making it and surrounding neighborhoods more resilient to climate change."

The firms' final report, funded by Ramsey County and the Capitol Region Watershed District, is due later this summer. Britta cautiously added: "To do this we have walked the route and analyzed drainage patterns with desktop tools. We have learned that there are many sites of soil contamination along the Bee Line that MPCA is monitoring. This is because of both industry and the railroad which runs on the north side of the Bee Line."

Britta's expertise and assistance will be highly valued. In addition to a map of proposed habitat and infrastructure improvement opportunities, she said that the report will include an analysis of stormwater management and water quality potential of a several sites along the Bee Line.

These supporters and volunteers exude hope and optimism in the Bee Line. They see the various pieces of built and green infrastructure as necessarily reliant upon growing community support and advocacy. Audrey Hepburn's pithy adage "To plant a garden is to dream of tomorrow" is apropos. And yet, mulling over these supporters' ideas, I'm left to wonder if simply to dream of tomorrow is to plant a garden?

Rennie Gaither is a Frogtown Green volunteer. Frogtown Green is a resident-led and volunteer-powered environmental initiative in St Paul's most diverse neighborhood. If you'd like to know more, browse frogtowngreen.com or call 651-757-5970. For more detail on the Bee Line, see hamlinemidway.org/news/hmec/beeline

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BY ERIC ERICKSON
Social studies teacher

THEY STARTED HIGH SCHOOL DURING A PANDEMIC

SENIOR DEDICATION NIGHT

The Class of 2024 concluded their classes on May 30 and celebrated with the traditional Senior Barbeque at school on May 31. The last week of May was a busy time that also included Senior Dedication Night on Tuesday, May 28 in the Como Auditorium.

Senior Dedication was an opportunity to recognize the educational achievements of a unique group. This graduating class began their high school experience as online students due to COVID-19 before transitioning to in-person learning with masks in the spring of 2021.

Once they arrived on campus, the spirit, leadership, and academic ability of the class of 2024 was evident and remained integral through their time at Como. Those characteristics were clear for families to see during the program.

Over 100 students earned academic cords for grade distinctions of Cum Laude or higher, including 50 who graduated Summa Cum Laude. Cords were also distributed to Advanced Placement Scholars who have passed multiple AP Exams.



Summa Cum Laude graduates gather on stage during Como's Senior Dedication Night. (Photo by Jonas Tetevi)

Each academic department honored two students of distinction, and service and leadership cords were awarded by both the school district and the Como administration.

Highlights of the evening included presentations of college tuition scholarships from community partners which were surprises to the recipients. Ranging from \$500 to \$16,000, students were thrilled to hear their names called and col-

lect a helpful check!

Scholarship sponsors included the Wallin Education Partners, Blaze Financial, Paitich #forthekids Foundation, Como STEM, Get Ready Student Success, Rice St. Athletic Club, and the Como Park Schultz Scholarship.

At the conclusion of Senior Dedication Night, 12 graduating student athletes who will be participating in college athletics signed their letters of intent together.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENTS

Two major facility upgrades will occur this summer thanks to extremely generous donors. The complete reconstruction of the school's eight tennis courts paid for by retired Como teacher and coach Kathy Dumas is scheduled to start on June 17. The new courts should be ready for the start of the girl's tennis season in August.

The weight room is receiving a total makeover with brand new state-of-the-art equipment thanks to the Adam Thielen Foundation. The philanthropic efforts of the former Viking are already evident with the new painting and Como branding on the walls. All equipment, including a small indoor turf area, should be installed during July.

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

Graduation for the senior class was held downtown on Wednesday night, June 5 inside the Roy Wilkins Auditorium. The student address was delivered by Adi Toe and Kyle Kosiak. The staff address was provided by math teacher Kia Yang, a Como graduate from the class of 2008. The choir and band gave their final performances of the year and thousands of photos featuring smiling high school seniors in their caps and gowns were taken.

**HAMLIN
ELEMENTARY**



BY KAREN MCCAULEY
& JESSICA KOPP

A BUSY SPRING AT HAMLIN



Hamline University's Pre-Health Club talks about the importance of oral hygiene with students at Hamline Elementary School. (Photo by Alex Troy)

Hamline Elementary and students, staff, and families are keeping busy! Here are a few highlights:

The volunteers at the Midway Project food distribution were so happy to welcome Ms. Amanda's PreK class in April. The kiddos made welcome signs, greeted neighbors, handed out milk and eggs, and generally made our neighbors' day.

Hamline Elementary is proud to welcome a wonderful Saint Paul Public Schools program, Parent Academy, which helps empower families. Families are learning about how to navigate and better understand the educational system and to make connections with their school and their community. The goal of the academy is to bring schools, families, and the community together as equal partners in the education of their children.

The Hamline Elementary Husky Pack, our family-teacher organization, hosted a Family Night in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Bell Museum of Natural History. Families traveled through 10 stations of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) activities together. We are still hearing about their experiences and wonderings in our classrooms and

hallways.

The Hamline to Hamline Collaboration's Academic Pairings program is hitting its stride with several new pairings in April. Hamline University physics students explored the science of balloon rockets at Hamline Elementary and Hamline University's Pre-Health Club visited the school to talk about the importance of oral hygiene which included a giant (fake) tooth! Students visited a music production classroom on the Hamline University campus

and created original songs which inspired loads of smiles and dreams of starting a band. A small group of students were invited to collaborate on an art project with a Hamline University senior and now the students' handmade felt creatures are on display in the campus art gallery. The students were invited to the gallery to help assemble the piece and have their names proudly displayed alongside the Hamline University artist.

As Hamline University's spring term

came to a close, with commencement on May 11, the Hamline to Hamline Collaboration and the Hamline Elementary community would like to congratulate all of this year's graduates, especially those who have been part of our programming and community during their time at Hamline University. Thank you for sharing your time and talents so generously with us; we appreciate you, we'll miss you, and we wish you all the best!

For almost 10 years Hamline Elementary has organized a joyful celebration of school and community and it happened again this year. The Mighty Midway Spring Festival was on Saturday, May 18, from 1-4 p.m. on the field behind Hamline Elementary School and Hancock Recreation Center. All were welcome to stop by and enjoy an afternoon of food, games, entertainment, and more!

CORRECTION

Thanks to the readers who contacted us about the old photo from 2019 that we incorrectly ran in the May edition of the Monitor of Galtier Students who placed third in the "Read to the Final Four" program. We apologize for any confusion we caused due to an email issue. Galtier Elementary closed its doors at the end of the 2021-2022 school year after 111 years in the Midway, which we reported on. The building at 1317 Charles Ave. currently houses the SPPS Early Childhood Hub West.

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DRIVE-THRUS >> from 1

city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for pedestrian-friendly environments along city streets.

Drive-thru services are typically found at fast-food restaurants, coffee shops, banks and pharmacies. A planning commission study found that St. Paul has about 77 businesses with drive-thrus, including 36 restaurants, two coffee shops, 31 banks, and eight pharmacies.

That's out of a total of 640 restaurants, 51 coffee shops, 40 banks and 17 pharmacies in the city.

But the city staff report notes that demand for drive-thru services may be growing, as some suburban grocery stores and big-box retailers are experimenting with drive-thrus. If that is successful, such a trend could spread. The COVID-19 pandemic also prompted a surge in demand for drive-thru nationwide.

Since March 2020, St. Paul city officials have approved site plans and/or conditional use permits for three new drive-thrus, for two banks and a coffee shop. Also approved were at least five drive thru reconstructions or redesigns, all for fast food restaurants.

Midway area residents know all too

well what challenges drive-thru services can create. The Taco Bell on North Snelling Avenue has drawn complaints for years about backed-up traffic from its drive-thru window. The owners lost a bid to rebuild the restaurant several years ago, and had to take the city to court to get approval for a new restaurant.

Then there was a certain coffee spot. During his presentation to the commission, Dermody drew chuckles when he brought up the infamous Starbucks drive-thru that was at Snelling and Marshall avenues.

The coffee shop, which won city approvals in 2015, was quickly nicknamed "Carbucks" because of the traffic jams it caused. City and Starbucks corporate officials worked for years to find a solution. But putting police officers outside to direct rush hour traffic prompted complaints from workers. The drive-thru was closed in 2021 and a patio added.

Motor vehicle off-site queuing that blocks sidewalks, bike lanes, or traffic lanes was cited as a reason to restrict drive-thru services. Exhaust from idling vehicles, noise and challenges with pedestrian access in reaching a business were also cited.

Some cities have banned new

drive-thru services outright. St. Paul officials have suggested one approach, with new drive-thru services banned in some parts of the city and still allowed in others.

Existing drive-thru services would be grandfathered in. A staff report also notes that: "Banks and pharmacies provide valued services to Saint Paul residents in addition to employment and tax base benefits. Also, notably, pharmacies play an important role in public health."

The proposed regulations focus more on specific areas and specific types of businesses

New drive-thru services would be banned in the downtown central business district. In areas zoned for traditional neighborhoods use, including several arterial streets, drive-thrus would be limited to banks and pharmacies. These land uses are seen as more necessary than fast-food restaurants and coffee shops, and having fewer negative impacts. Also, restaurants and coffee shops can more easily offer curbside pickup.

Design requirements are also proposed, with additional motor vehicle waiting or "stacking" spaces shops and design of businesses' pedestrian access in a way that shields pedestrians from crossing a drive-thru lane on foot or with a mobility

device.

The planning commission will also be asked to prohibit drive-thru lanes and their driveway access points in traditional neighborhoods district within 300 feet of transitway stations. Transitways include light rail, bus rapid transit, arterial bus rapid transit and modern streetcar, but not regular route bus lines.

While drive-thru traffic can pose hazards to people crossing them on foot or with mobility devices, using a drive-thru service is a way many people with disabilities get their medicine, do their banking and get their food. Restrictions typically raise red flags and calls for compromise.

The St. Paul Mayor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities and the Minnesota Council on Disability have not weighed in on the proposal.

Go to <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/planning-and-economic-development/planning/current-activities> and look for the zoning study. The city has posted a specific set of questions to be answered, and also gives information on how to submit written or in-person testimony. Comments for the planning commission have closed but community members will still be able to comment on the proposal when it goes to city council.

City council allows fewer windows for new United Villages restaurant

By JANE MCCLURE

A future restaurant pavilion at United Village can be built with fewer exterior openings that typically allow. The St. Paul City Council May 15 upheld an appeal by United Village developer Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC.

The council overturned an April Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) decision to deny part of a variances request for a restaurant building at the southwest corner of Simpson Street and Spruce Tree Drive. It is one of two buildings planned for the pavilion. The second building will be to the south.

Council member Anika Bowie, whose Ward 1 includes the United Village site, called for granting the appeal. She said the development provides the opportunity to bring more vibrancy to the Midway area.

Bowie said the developer made a case that the BZA erred in its decision. She also acknowledged the conflicts between the zoning code and what the developers envision for the site. City leaders might consider looking at the zoning code and its requirements, to see what should be adjusted for larger-scale developments, Bowie said.

The developer representative argued that the BZA erred in denying variances for

percentage of window space on the north building's north side and to omit a door there.

The pavilion will be south of a planned hotel along University Avenue. It is designed to face the great lawn public green space that is a central feature of the superblock. The developer's representatives argued that the restaurant interior layout, and the desire to have the entrances facing the great lawn, drove the design.

BZA staff recommended approval of the requests for window and door openings on both buildings' eastern facades. Denial was recommended by staff for the northern building request for its north side along Spruce Tree Avenue, and to request to omit a primary pedestrian entrance along Spruce Tree. The BZA concurred with the staff recommendations.

Staff indicated that the 30 percent requirement could be met for the northern façade given the interior restaurant design.

Union Park District Council recommended denial of the window openings variance, raising concerns that the building would be turning its back on the surrounding neighborhood.

The standard is for 30 percent of the wall to have window openings. One impetus for that change in the 1990s and early

200s was a spate of commercial buildings designed to have a small percentage of window openings. That led to designs like the one at the now-shuttered CVS at the northwest corner of Snelling and University avenues. Community members disliked the small percentage of windows and the fact that opaque spandrel glass was used there and in other buildings.

New buildings in St. Paul are required to have a set percentage of window and door openings along street frontages, and to place doors along primary streets. The intent is to have a pedestrian-friendly, walkable area.

The requirement for the United Village site is 30 percent. The developers requested 19.6 percent for the northern façade, for a variance of 10.4 percent.

What conflicts with that requirement is how United Village is laid out, with buildings facing the great lawn green space. The green space is north of the Allianz Field Major League Soccer stadium.

Mike Hahm, who represents Snelling Midway Redevelopment LLC, said the site and its design pose unique challenges. He pointed out that the pavilion is part of a larger master plan for United Village. Blocks east of the pavilion will be developed in the future.

Hahm spoke of the site's high-quality design and planned finishes. Building renderings have shown murals on the walls.

Hahm also noted that the building will have two other entrances and that a third entrance on the northern façade would take away dining room space.

The Midway Chamber of Commerce and St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce also weighed in in support of the variances.

The restaurant pavilion request is the third set of variances recently sought for United Village. That has caused frustration for some community members, who note the years of work on the Snelling-Midway master plan for the 34.5-acre block bounded by Pascal Steet and St. Anthony, Snelling and University avenues. That issue has also been raised by some members of the planning commission.

The variances are to current city zoning standards and to a master plan developed and approved seven years ago. The BZA in April approved other variances for the restaurant pavilion and for an interim parking lot.

Earlier this year, the planning commission approved a conditional use permit and most variances sought for the United Village hotel, which will be located on University between Asbury and Simpson streets. The developers appealed and the city council also upheld that appeal.

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ETHNIC DANCE THEATER CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Ethnic Dance Theatre (EDT) will present "Golden Memories: A Celebration of 50 Years," June 14 and 15, 2024 at Hamline University's Anne Simley Theatre. This performance will feature 20 dancers, the EDT Folk Orchestra, and Mila Vocal Ensemble. Founded in 1974, by Donald LaCourse and Jonathan Frey, Ethnic Dance Theatre has been dedicated to the artistic performance and preservation of world music, song, and dance in the Twin Cities and beyond. For the past 50 years, EDT has remained devoted to this goal and has brought over 50 unique cultures and traditions to life through their performances.

EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS LGBTQ+ TRAILBLAZERS

Espresso Talks and The Writers Block, founded by visionary freelance writer Anthony T. Eaton, is proud to announce the signing of a lease on a vacant retail space in Town Square, 445 Minnesota Street, downtown Saint Paul. This marks the beginning of an exciting six-month rotating exhibit series "Through the Window." The inaugural exhibit that opened June 1 will enlighten visitors as it highlights the rich history and significant contributions of LGBTQ+ trailblazers. Following the debut exhibit, "A Life in Art" will take center stage, showcasing the remarkable works of artist Jim Smola (1950-2022). Smola's legacy lives on through his diverse body of work spanning stained glass, pottery, handmade paper, and photography. As the rotating exhibit series unfolds, it's not just

about the art. It's about sparking conversations, fostering connections, and building a stronger community.

'BEAUTY AND THE BEAST' AT COMO PAVILION

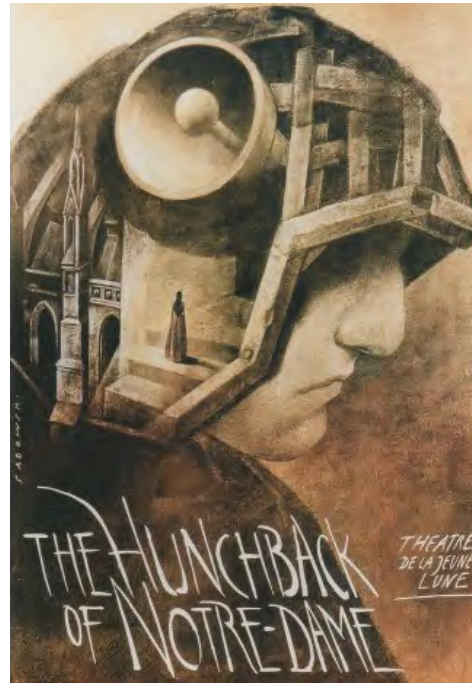
Rosetown Playhouse invites you to "Be Our Guest" at its unique staging of the tale as old as time: the stage version of Disney's "Beauty and the Beast." The multi-generational Rosetown cast will stage the award-winning musical that is suitable for all ages at St. Paul's historic Como Lakeside Pavilion on July 11-14 and 19-21. Show are 7 p.m. on July 11-13, and July 19-20 with 1 p.m. matinees on Sundays July 14 and 21. Ticket prices are: Adult, \$20; Student or Senior, \$17; and \$10 for those age 5 and under. More at rosetownplayhouse.org.

VTAC GRAND OPENING AUG. 25

Victoria Theater Arts Center is pleased to announce its grand opening inside of 825 University Ave W. on Aug. 25 from 1-8pm, at the Frogtown Arts Festival. Explore the new building and delight in the work of artists from across the community. From ice cream socials to art classes to theater productions, VTAC aims to be your home for the arts in Frogtown and Rondo. Watch the public events calendar and social media for more information.

OPEN YOUR HEART SUMMER CHALLENGE

Donate to participating food shelves during the 15th annual Open Your Heart Summer Challenge, and Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless and Hunger Solutions will match the food shelves' fundraising activities throughout the month of July.



POLISH POSTER ART EXHIBIT AT VANDALIA TOWER

Minnesota residents Brian and Teresa McMahon assembled a collection of Polish art in the 1980s while living in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, N.Y. They also got to know and work with others who had emigrated from Poland to escape the economic and political turmoil in their homeland. The McMahons acquired original work from a number of these artists and purchased over 400 Polish posters. Images of all 400 posters will soon be posted online at www.cliffordplacecollection.com. In addition, about 25 posters and a small sample of original paintings and watercolors will be on display in St. Paul at Vandalia Tower, a recently renovated industrial complex in St. Paul, at Vandalia Street and University Avenue. The exhibit will be held in Suite 234 throughout June on Thursdays through Sundays.

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