

UPTOWN ART FAIR RETURNS TO THE ISLES

By Courtney Cushing Kiernat



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Reborn as “Art on the Isles,” the 60th fair drew more than 200 artists and an estimated 200,000 visitors to the lakes.

Music from a Prince cover band wafted across Lake of the Isles and Bde Maka Ska, beckoning neighbors and visitors to the reborn Uptown Art Fair.

“Art on the Isles,” hosted by the Uptown Association, brought more than 200 artists, interactive art activities, live music and food trucks to the south side of Lake of the Isles and east along Lagoon Avenue.

Celebrating the 60th Uptown Art Fair, the association has committed to reinvesting half of

the event’s net proceeds in the Uptown area.

The return marks another step in rebuilding an event disrupted since 2020, when the pandemic and street construction forced its cancellation. In later years a smaller version moved to Bachman’s under a new name.

“Sunshine helped draw crowds who wandered the lakeside venue, browsed artists’ booths and enjoyed live music.”

This year’s fair featured fewer artists than the sprawling pre-pandemic events, with

Continued on page 18-19

Bad Math: Why Underfunding Parks Doesn’t Add Up

Page 3

What Can West Lake Street Learn From Midtown?

Page 6

Why Is Pimento on the Lake Struggling?

Page 8

The Lake of the Isles Haunted House: The Saga Continues

Page 9

Uptown Businesses Tell Us What They Need

Page 103

ADVENTURES IN KINDERGARTEN: A CAUTIONARY TALE

By Molly Mogren Katt



(Image: Molly Mogren Katt)

Choosing a kindergarten from fear sent one family four miles and nine hours a day away from home, until a five-block walk brought them back.

I once believed myself rational, pragmatic and well-adjusted. Then I became a parent.

Nothing caused me to spiral quite like selecting a kindergarten.

“Fear is an awful place from which to make decisions.”

I explored every option: Spanish immersion, Chinese immersion, an arts magnet, a STEAM magnet, open enrollment in a nearby district, an expensive but intriguing private school with an offsite farm and, of course, our community school, the public school where my kids were guaranteed placement.

The Grand Piano and the Good Vibe

On our community school tour, the International Baccalaureate coordinator greeted my husband and me in an airy room

filled with natural light, children’s art and plants.

“What’s that for?” I asked, gesturing toward a stately grand piano. “Oh, we have volunteers play every arrival and dismissal.” Excusez-moi, is this a Dayton’s? Charming!

We met a few teachers, many with a decade-plus at this particular school, and watched smiling students snake down the hall in neat-ish lines. I’d heard nothing but vague disdain for Minneapolis Public Schools, but the vibe here felt good. “Okay,” I thought, “this could work.”

Two Viruses: Fear and Self-Doubt

But over the next weeks, the anxious creepy crawlies trickled in. Why don’t I know anyone who sends their kids to this school? Shouldn’t some of our neighbors? Why are there zero alumni families from our nearby preschool?

I asked a mom friend, an intelligent, community-minded, politically involved neighbor I respected, “What am I missing?”

“Oh, you can’t send your kids there,” she said. “I think before the Comprehensive District Design it was okay, but that screwed everything up. Plus, the acoustics are atrocious!”

Continued on page 5

50TH

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TO THE

letters editor

Our goal is to offer readers diverse perspectives on newsworthy events or issues of broad public concern to the Hill & Lake community. Our copy limit is 300 words (750 words for a commentary or as space permits), and we reserve the right to edit for clarity and length. We do not publish submissions from anonymous sources; all contributor identities must be verified.

Update on Steve the Mud Man

Steve “the mud man” Vasseur died July 30, 2026. Mr. Vasseur was featured in the July edition.

He was a fixture at Cedar Lake East Beach each summer, but once fall came, he would disappear and not be seen again until spring. We never had a phone number or an email address for him.

Commuting for Mr. Vasseur meant taking the bus from his home in northeast Minneapolis to Franklin and Hennepin Avenues and walking from there. With his undiagnosed pancreatic cancer, that was becoming an increasing challenge. Given his struggle, I offered to drive him to the bus stop and eventually daily to his house.

As spring 2026 approached, I kept an eye out for him, but he never showed, and I grew increasingly concerned. Eventually, I started trekking to his house. A couple of months passed before anyone answered the door. It was then that his housemate informed me that he was in hospice.

Our initial visit to his hospice room was disheartening. He was unable to get out of bed. His television did not work, and his bed faced a wall where only an analog clock was mounted. He essentially spent his days watching the second hand on that clock.

Our first mission was to get him a radio. On those rides home from the beach, before he ever said a word, the first thing he would do when entering the car was tune the radio to KSJN. Kenwood neighbors were enlisted to create posters and mementos to bring a little bit of the beach directly to his hospice room.

I would like to thank all those who helped Mr. Vasseur realize how many people he affected. I would also like to thank the Hill & Lake Press for its wonderful article. He very much appreciated being recognized for his contributions.

Tim McManus
Kenwood

A Delightful Kids’ Issue

What a stunning delight was this summer’s Kids’ Issue! Not only solid reporting by edi-

torial intern Amelia Bush, and how smart to hire her for this job, and by Sonia Kharbanda a, plus Ari Baylor’s report on his exotic trip as flagbearer to the madhouse of the World Cup, not to mention his sharp advice on trading cards, but all the remarkable art and wit and wisdom of neighborhood kids ages 5 to 15.

I loved the “Bubble” poem and the accurate salamander advice.

Finally, I was shocked, shocked, to find myself quoted twice in the nostalgic “1987 Time Capsule,” though I have to admit my nearly 40-year-old advice to young journalists remains sound: pen, pad, sunglasses.

Jim Lenfestey
Lowry Hill



Catt Fear (Image: A friend)

Meow

I’m Kitty, the tattooed girl you may have seen recently at the Hennepin-Lyndale crossroads protesting the Walker Art Center. Your curiosity is more than understandable, so I’m writing this letter to scratch that itch and tell the public what happened to this transgender woman.

For 3 1/2 years I worked at the Walker, and the first year was amazing. My coworkers and I were happy; we felt like a real team made up of many kinds of artists. Work barely felt like work because of the positive energy all around. Patrons could feel it and observe it, offering compliments, taking photos and even making artwork of one gallery assistant.

Then that positive manager was pushed out, a new manager was brought in and the dark times began. Stools, books, sketchpads, breaks, phones and even some gallery assistants’ ability to express themselves through artistic clothing and private locker decorations were taken away.

A manager began to single me out with harassment and discrimination, refusing to let me wear shorts and pulling me aside at one morning meeting to send me home to change. The very next week I watched other gallery assistants wear shorts with no repercussions, and that continued for years.

We all tolerate negative behavior at our jobs, whether for love of the work or fear of losing what helps us survive. The final thorn

in this panther’s paw came during this year’s Pride weekend, when the same manager singled me out for a minor dress code violation, wearing a tasteful pink jacket for Pride, while allowing another gallery assistant to break the dress code all day in ripped, shredded baggy blue jeans.

I no longer felt safe under that manager’s supervision, so I reached out to human resources and my union. The stress of those years took a severe toll on my mental health and caused me to miss work; I did not feel safe at my job, and I did not want my depression to affect patrons’ experience in the galleries.

Rather than address what I had reported, the Walker used my mental health days to terminate me on the morning of Friday, July 17. The managers who delivered the news could barely look me in the eye. I lost a job of 3 1/2 years that I truly loved and was a rock star at.

I am protesting because the Walker is sweeping wrongful terminations under the rug, refusing to acknowledge its mistakes while protecting those who single out trans women and young women. In my time there, it always felt as if the higher-ups merely tolerated trans people. I’m here to show them how to actually respect and treat people with kindness, not just swing an ax.

In early August, while protesting, I was physically attacked. No one should have to fear for their life to express a viewpoint.

Catt Fear
Lowry Hill

The Walker Art Center was given the opportunity to reply:

Statement from the Walker Art Center

It is against our longstanding policy to comment on the specifics of individual staff separations. However, we strongly disagree with the characterization of this circumstance. The Walker is guided by comprehensive anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies as well as the protocols set forth in our Collective Bargaining Agreement. We do not discriminate in the application or enforcement of any of these policies. The Walker is dedicated to fostering a respectful, equitable, and inclusive workplace for all employees, and to cultivating a staff that reflects the diversity of our community.

Rachel Joyce
Associate Director,
Public Relations
Walker Art Center

BAD MATH: WHY UNDERFUNDING PARKS DOESN’T ADD UP

Opinion by Becka Thompson



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

The Park Board’s fiscal shortfall amounts to roughly one-tenth of 1% of the city’s proposed budget, a math teacher argues, and no line item delivers more for the money.

As the beginning of another academic year approaches, I’m reminded of the thousands of times I have been asked, “But when am I ever going to use math?”

Here, in the dogmatic 2027 City of Minneapolis budget, is a great example. Put

To put that into perspective, if you make \$60,000 per year, this would equate to \$83.50, or the cost of one nice meal, in the course of a calendar year. That doesn’t even cover the cost of a Vikings ticket.

Where the Money Actually Goes

Meanwhile, in 2010 the city’s Community Planning and Economic Development department took up approximately 7% of the overall budget. Now it takes up more than 15%. That increase alone is almost 100 times what the Park Board asked for.

The department owns vacant properties, managed by CPED, that have been on the rolls for a decade or more. More than 60% of those vacant city-owned parcels are in North Minneapolis.

Speaking of North Minneapolis, one of the projects at risk for inadequate funding is the brand-new, nearly complete North Commons Recreation Center and Fieldhouse.

The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board was given promises, despite gloomy financial projections in 2023, that when North Commons opened it would be fully funded. Who made those promises? The very person shorting the budget today.

The Cost of a Million Rubber Stamps

There is yet another way to present how insulting the underfunding of parks is, by considering the massive financial loss that comes from duplication of services inside the city.

In the realm of business, this looks like getting a health permit from the county and then waiting another two months to get one from the city. That time costs all of us, as does the actual duplication. Chalk up another \$40 million there.

In calculus, we integrate to discover the area under a curve. In this situation, that area is cost. When time is stretched out for a million rubber stamps, cost overruns are ensured.

This is why so many projects are never built. After one committee comes the next subcommittee and the next working group. All of these things take time, and time is the one thing the City of Minneapolis does not have in regard to its budget.

What Parks Deliver

By contrast, investments in parks are almost immediately felt. For all the untested pilots and diversion programs that essentially flush money down the toilet, nothing seems to have better outcomes than recreation programs for children.

Softball leagues and swimming lessons, after-school child care and lifeguards all make an immediate impact on children, teens and families. The Park Board also spends on moving and buckthorn removal, tree care and water quality measures.

We all feel the financial pinch of the city’s current mismanagement. One of the few things left that people universally enjoy is our parks: the Stone Arch Bridge Festival, movies in the Commons, walks around Lake of the Isles or bike rides along the river. With a city budget more than 650 times the amount the Park Board is asking for, it feels rather ridiculous to even be having this conversation, doesn’t it? But here we are.

The city wants managed decline, refusing to be strategic and get back to core

“In the end, the argument could land a thousand ways. And every single one would end up with the same outcome: it is shortsighted, possibly irresponsible and ultimately fiscally insulting to defund our parks.”

services. It wants an across-the-board cut on everything, which simply makes for bad math.

In the end, the argument could land a thousand ways. And every single one would end up with the same outcome: it is shortsighted, possibly irresponsible and ultimately fiscally insulting to defund our parks.

And even children can tell you that this is why we learn math.

Becka Thompson is a former Park Board commissioner who represented District 2 in North Minneapolis. She lives in Victory.



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ADVENTURES IN KINDERGARTEN: A CAUTIONARY TALE continued from page 1

And just like that, she infected me with two viruses plaguing every parent: fear and self-doubt. She suggested I check out her kid's charter school, or try open enrollment in a nearby district, or Minneapolis' one public Montessori school with an excellent reputation, warning me that we probably wouldn't get in.

Panicked, I took her advice, selecting the Montessori school as our reach school, the Harvard of Minneapolis Public Schools, but thought we'd probably end up at our acoustically off-putting community school. That piano seemed less charming now.

And then I got the email: "Welcome new Montessori families!"

"A suburban or country mile is no biggie, but a city mile is like dog years."

Four Miles, Nine Hours, One Small Backpack

I should've felt excited. My daughter would attend a great public school, maybe even the city's best. But at four miles away, it felt so far.

A suburban or country mile is no biggie, but a city mile is like dog years. String four of them together and you're in a whole different world.

We attended the back-to-school open house, meeting her teacher in a small, windowless classroom. "Administration had to get creative with rooms because there is just so much interest," she told me.

No natural light wasn't ideal. And isn't window washing supposed to be one of the pillars of a Montessori education? I filled out our contact information and in-case-of-emergency paperwork.

Just before Labor Day weekend, we learned our kindergarten-to-be would spend the first and last 55 minutes of her school day

on the bus, a full nine hours, door cent of students come from low-income families. Every year, there's a new classmate who has never attended school before, and about half of students are learning English.

I knew I'd hate that commute, so you'd think this is where I'd look at my husband and say, "Are we really doing this?" But no, we forged ahead, chalking it up to pre-kindergarten jitters.

It didn't take long for the proverbial wheels on the bus to fall off. Watching my child, dwarfed by her backpack, leave the neighborhood on a big yellow bus left me bawling my eyes out.

When she returned nine hours later, it was her in tears. She loved school but hated the bus. Too loud, too bumpy, too long. That night, my normally balanced daughter cried herself to sleep. She cried through breakfast and boarding the bus.

On the fourth morning, while I wrestled on her sneakers, we watched the bus fly past our picture window. I drove her to school every morning after that. I didn't get to work until 10 a.m., but it allowed us to start the day without a surge of cortisol. Most afternoons, she rode the bus, arriving home a deflated balloon.

By October, things hadn't improved. School was fine, nothing special to be honest, but the commute felt insurmountable.

I called her teacher for advice. "I hate to tell you this," she said, "but I just heard the bus ride is about to get even longer." I asked what she would do if this were her daughter. She didn't hesitate: transfer.

Five Blocks and a Wall of Windows

The day after MEA break, my daughter and I walked the five blocks to our community school. I helped hang up her backpack.

Her new classroom featured a wall of west-facing windows overlooking a park. A classmate immediately approached my kid, introduced herself and took her hand for a tour of the classroom. I knew everything would be okay. This is year five at our community school. My 8-year-old son attends as well.

GreatSchools ranks it 2 out of 10, meaning test scores are well under average. Eighty-five per-

I don't know how a teacher manages a classroom like this, though class sizes smaller than the district average help, but they do. I'm endlessly impressed at the work coming home in the backpack: stunning poems about the color orange, deep dives into the rock cycle, the history of ancient Greece.

My kids are happy. Our mornings feel easy. I've never, not once, noticed the acoustics. We're connected to the community in a way we'd never be if we bussed our kids out of it.

Fear is an awful place from which to make decisions. I'm ashamed to admit I trusted another parent's opinion more than my own gut. But then again, I'd never before sent my heart, beating outside of my body, into the world alone.

A few years later, a neighborhood mom asked me about our school. "I just don't know what to do," she said. "There are so many opinions and choices. I'm crumbling!"

I hugged her. "I know just how you feel," I said. "And I think you'll like our community school."

Molly Mogren Katt writes for the Hill & Lake Press and also publishes the "Hey Eleanor!" column on Substack. She lives in the Wedge.



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LESSONS FROM ANOTHER LAKE STREET: WHAT CAN WEST LAKE STREET LEARN FROM MIDTOWN?

By Jackie Colburn



(Image: Courtesy of Ingebretsen's website)

Three miles east of Uptown, Ingebretsen's Anna Bloomstrand watched her stretch of Lake Street move from crisis to cooperation. What worked was not construction. It was a room where people knew each other.

Many Minneapolisans are still wondering what the future holds for this iconic neighborhood.

The vibrancy and community that once inhabited Uptown are harder to find, and so is the feeling of aliveness many of us can remember. Foot traffic is missing because there simply isn't as much to wander to, and wandering doesn't always feel safe.

Redevelopment efforts are underway following several starts, stops and potential missteps. But is building new buildings enough? Or is more needed to cultivate the change we hope to see?

Three miles away, another stretch of Lake Street wrestled with many of these same questions.

I sat down at Barbette recently with Anna Bloomstrand of Ingebretsen's to talk about what it means to be a small business owner and resident who has been deeply involved in a community that has experienced periods of challenge, resilience and renewal over the years.

Ingebretsen's has been at 1601 E. Lake St. since 1921. It's 100 years even if you're not counting! It's where, just three miles east of Uptown, Ms. Bloomstrand has spent countless hours partnering with community organizations, other small businesses, the police and residents to address complex issues and support the health of her community.

She is a passionate advocate with a special place in her brain

and heart for all things Midtown, and we covered more ground than I imagined possible in a 90-minute discussion, pausing only for drive-by opera blaring from the opera guy who drives the lake every summer. Apparently passing Barbette is part of his regular route.

I couldn't help but feel ignited by her energy and perspective about why a connected community that comes together, including small businesses, residents and leaders, matters so much for the health of a corridor.

Ms. Bloomstrand took me back to 2017. Things in Midtown had been stable for a period of time, in large part due to the stability of the mostly immigrant business owners in the community.

The same business owners who were a backbone to the neighborhood were the first to notice when issues started to occur. Small business owners rarely operate from afar. They are working in storefronts, very connected to what's happening outside their door.

As trash started to pile up and open opioid use increased, the people of the Midtown business corridor moved quickly from simply coping, to trying to navigate change on their own, to looking for a way to work toward solutions.

In Ms. Bloomstrand's view, what followed was one of the richest and most productive periods of community engagement for Midtown. There was a greater sense of connectivity and care for one another and a willingness to work together to explore new solutions for the people who needed them. That effort helped spark meaningful change along the corridor.

Our conversation and the stories she shared had me wonder-

ing: What lessons from that East Lake Street chapter might be relevant for West Lake Street today? The recipe from that time included the following ingredients:

Coordination

A coordinating central hub, a space to gather and purposeful discussion made gathering both easier and more meaningful. People knew where to go, and when a topic was brought forward, there were experts in the room who could make the discussion more informative and productive.

"There was a coordinating cell. The Lake Street Council and business owners were helping to

"With each change in leadership, the stories have to be told again, the trust has to be built again."

host these monthly gatherings where there would be a particular subject. They would bring in people who were actually working on the subjects."

A lot of people showed up for meetings. Not only did the police show up more often and differently than they had in the past, there was representation across the board: nonprofit organizations, small business owners, residents, neighborhood organizations and people who worked for the city and county.

Leadership That Felt Different

At that time there was a police inspector who was really involved and understood the realities of the community she was serving. In particular, she prioritized making connections to immigrant business owners, and worked to understand the experiences and needs of those individuals.

One of her priorities was to make sure that her staff understood the community constituents as well, so there was more participation than in the past.

"She encouraged and expected officers to show up in these meetings because she wanted them to learn what everybody was saying, and actually be able to have relationships with people in the community. That was a really big deal because we were coming out of a period of time where, you know, cops would show up at a meeting with their arms crossed and an old school perspective that was not exactly open to other points of view."

Curiosity

Ms. Bloomstrand shared that the vibe leading up to this moment was full of stress and tension. It felt like there were lots of problems, including open drug use, aggressive behavior by johns and trash left on the streets, and no solutions.

Business owners and residents were burned out. Everyone was feeling the strain and not knowing where to go or what to do.

But somehow, in this new forum, the energy was different.

"The vibe was good, and everybody kind of liked each other. We all got to know each other, and there was a familiarity that was really helpful, because there was a lot to learn from each other. The thing that worked was that there was an environment that happened somewhat naturally, people who were curious, and also people who were interested in being honest with each other and folks really cared about a good outcome for everyone involved. There was a feeling of good faith in the room."

Transparency

One of the things that made the biggest difference was the open communication and transparency that occurred during the meetings.

Back to the inspector who set the tone.

"When folks would ask why isn't the Police Department doing xyz, she would give a straight answer that gave us insight to re-frame how we thought about the system's roles and limitations. She was being open and transparent and also setting expectations. For example, there was agreement that we can't police our way through a mental health crisis. Which at that time, was definite-

ly not being said by folks in traditional public safety roles, especially in mixed company."

This created a forum where others could be real, asking questions openly and creating space for deeper understanding of one another and the barriers at play.

There was real dialogue about where capacity was limited and a recognition that new ways of addressing challenges needed to be explored. The shift was that she was really clear about what their strengths and limitations were. It helped keep change moving and reduced the frustration people typically feel if their requests go unanswered.

"The difference at that time was that the community said, 'What's happening isn't working and we need to come up with another thing.'"

Admitting that things weren't working and being honest about limitations was a stepping stone for coming up with new solutions. One of the changes that came out of that time were more supportive options for people navigating mental health and addiction challenges, such as the city's Behavioral Crisis Response team, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion and Touch Outreach. Each puts people in place who know how to do intervention work and are trained and paid to do just that.

The Power of Relationships

The relationships that were created required storytelling and sharing between people who aren't often in the same room for that purpose. Over time, a trust was built, and because of that trust, there was an opening that made it possible for new ideas to emerge.

Unfortunately, with change came losses: leadership changes, upheaval due to the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd, and a few election cycles. Those important relationships changed, and many of them were set down altogether.

When the leadership in any department or organization changes seats or changes focus, the input that community offered is often lost.

"With each change in leader-

ship, the stories have to be told again, the trust has to be built again, and whether or not those things gain traction is no longer in the hands of the community. It's at the whim or capacity of the listener. And the retelling can be its own form of trauma, so we have to be careful about that and take the history seriously."

When we talked at Barbette, we agreed that it would be ideal if there were a sage or representative who lives on in any neighborhood as a steward, of what's being done, what's in progress, the relationships, the operational realities of the work.

Today, there is so much lost in transition, and with each transition, stories need to be retold and relationships need to be rebuilt. Making meaningful progress requires the accumulation of dialogue, experimentation, learning and progress over time.

"If I were going to change anything about the city there would be two evergreen staff members in every board office no matter who is the elected official so that there's some memory of what the people are working on, because every time there's a change, you lose all that and you have to develop a whole new relationship."

Knowing that change will persist, can we be more proactive to ensure that work in progress isn't lost with leadership changes and election cycles?

If a more vibrant Uptown is the vision, it might mean new buildings, new infrastructure and new surfaces.

But if we also want to experience more health and aliveness, it's more than just construction projects. It's the slower, harder work of relationships cultivated over time.

Jackie Colburn writes for the *Hill & Lake Press*. She lives in the Ferndale neighborhood of St. Louis Park.




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WHY IS PIMENTO ON THE LAKE STRUGGLING?

By Steve Kotvis



Pimento on Bde Maka Ska. (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

The Park Board rebuilt the lakeside pavilion for \$6.5 million, then renewed a 2017 concession decision without reopening it to bidders. The concept that opened was never competitively evaluated, and two years have cost the park system \$291,777.

The restaurant operating inside Minneapolis' \$6.5 million Bde Maka Ska pavilion never competed for the job, which may help explain Pimento's difficulties.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board selected Lola's on the Lake in 2017 for a building that burned down in 2019. When the replacement opened in October 2023, commissioners relied on that selection rather than reopening the concession to bidders. The new concept, Pimento on the Lake, had never been competitively evaluated.

Two years later, Park Board financial reports show losses totaling \$291,777 at the site.

In 2025, Sea Salt Eatery at Minnehaha Falls produced \$424,264 in operating income for the Park Board and Bread & Pickle at Lake Harriet produced \$143,650. Bde Maka Ska lost \$107,027.

“The restaurant operating inside Minneapolis’ \$6.5 million Bde Maka Ska pavilion never competed for the job.”

Lease Renewed, Concept Changed

Tin Fish operated successfully at the pavilion for 14 years, from 2004 through 2017. When its lease expired, the Park Board offered the operator a 15-year renewal. It declined.

A 2017 request for proposals drew 12 responses. The Park Board narrowed them to a Tin Fish franchise formed by former employees and Lola's Cafe on the Plaza LLC, doing business as Lola's on the Lake. It selected Lola's.

In its only complete season, Lola's generated \$72,865 in Park Board revenue, compared with \$171,616 during Tin Fish's final year. Lola's reopened in May 2019, but the pavilion burned down on May 16 and was demolished.

In November 2022, commissioners approved a new five-year lease with Lola's, relying on the 2017 selection rather than is-

suing another request for proposals. By the pavilion's October 2023 opening, Lola's had joined with Pimento Jamaican Kitchen to operate Pimento on the Lake.

The Park Board described the arrangement as a partnership but has not explained how contractual responsibilities are divided among Lola's, Pimento and Pimento on the Lake LLC, the entity named on the alcohol license.

What the Books Show

The Park Board records its restaurants separately from tax-supported operations. Its financial reports show what the board collected and spent at each location.

In 2024, Pimento's first full year, Bde Maka Ska recorded \$27,627 in operating revenue against \$212,377 in expenses, a loss of \$184,750. In 2025, revenue rose to \$123,219, but expenses reached \$230,246, producing another \$107,027 loss.

For roughly 15 years before the new pavilion, annual expenses at the site remained between about \$21,000 and \$40,000. They rose from \$38,233 in 2023 to \$212,377 in 2024.

The reports do not itemize that increase. Restrooms, grounds, utilities, snow removal and building depreciation may be included. Debt service is reported separately.

The figures also do not establish that Pimento itself lost money. They are the Park Board's numbers, not the restaurant's.

During Tin Fish's final three years, the same refectory produced \$478,103 in Park Board revenue against \$70,118 in expenses, or \$407,985 in operating income.

One figure remains unexplained. The audited report puts 2024 operating revenue at \$27,627, while staff later told a commissioner the board received \$80,113 from Pimento that year. The 2025 figures align; the 2024 figures do not.

Mixed Reviews, Falling Sales

Pimento averages about 3.4 stars across roughly 120 Google reviews. About 56% award four or five stars, while 37% award one or two.

Supporters praise the setting and dishes such as jerk chicken, curry goat and plantains. Critical reviewers describe long, disorganized waits and missing orders.

Restaurant sales declined from more than \$1 million in 2024 to about \$750,000 in 2025, roughly half the \$1.4 million Tin Fish reported in its final year.

In its 2024 annual concession operations summary and evaluation, Park Board staff called the decline concerning and noted fre-

quent complaints about cleanliness, trash and service. The 2024 report was published in April of that year; a 2025 annual report has not yet been published.

Pimento also lost the ability to serve alcohol after appearing on Minnesota's tax-delinquency list, which prevents distributors from supplying it.

Proven on Nicollet, Untested at the Lake

Pimento built a successful restaurant and respected brand on Nicollet Avenue. Pimento on the Lake placed that brand in a different setting with a new concept, seasonal demand and sudden crowds.

Park restaurants such as Sea Salt, Bread & Pickle and the former Tin Fish rely on fast counter service designed for that volume. Pimento's broader menu is harder to deliver at the same pace, and slow service dominates

“Pimento also inherited an October opening, a site dark for four years, a changing Uptown economy and inevitable comparisons with Tin Fish.”

its critical reviews.

A competitive process could have tested whether the concept fit the pavilion's demands. But the 2017 process evaluated Lola's, not the Pimento restaurant that opened in 2023.

Pimento also inherited an October opening, a site dark for four years, a changing Uptown economy and inevitable comparisons with Tin Fish. The unanswered question is whether anyone assessed what Pimento would need to succeed at the lake.

What the Park Board Says

A Park Board spokesperson provided this statement: “All concession agreements include specific performance standards covering financial obligations, operational requirements, facility maintenance, customer service, and regulatory compliance. We monitor operator performance through regular inspections, financial reviews, and documented complaint tracking. When operators fall short of these standards, we have contractual remedies available, up to and including termination.”

The statement describes a process but does not say what it found at Bde Maka Ska or what followed. A records request seeking annual concession evaluations from 2017 forward is pending.

Questions remain. What have inspections and complaint tracking found? How does the Park Board explain the differing 2024 revenue figures? What support has it offered the operator?

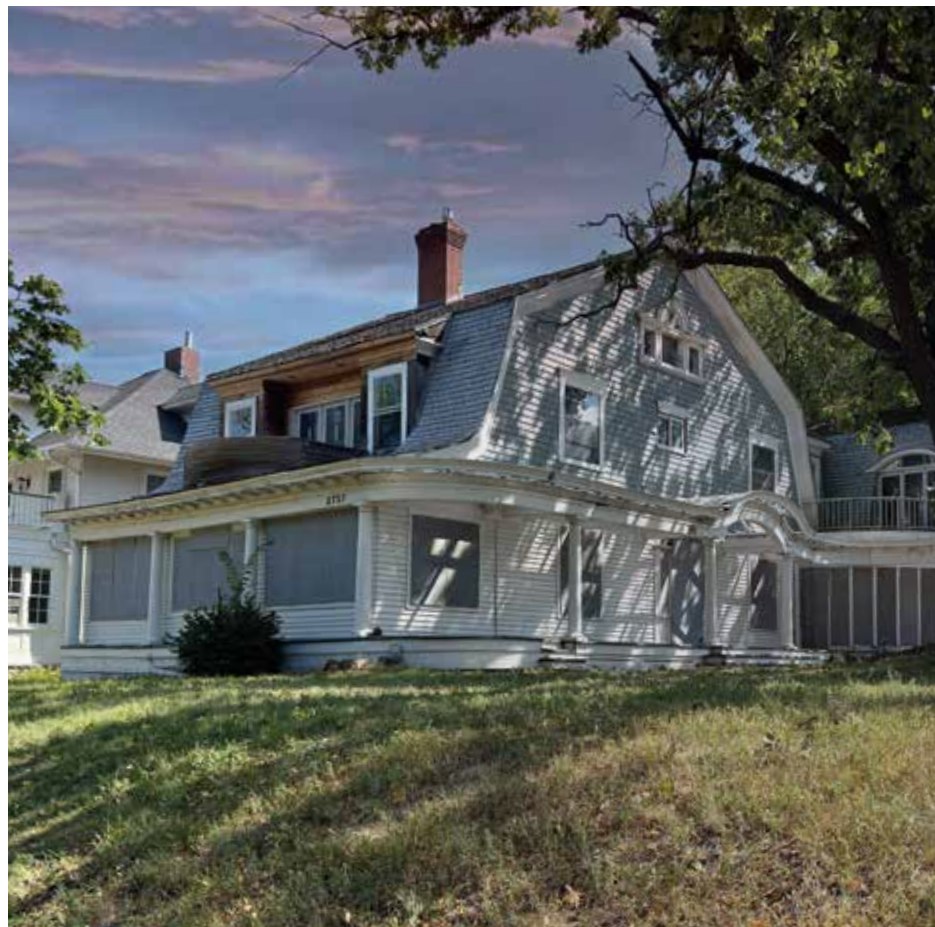
Sea Salt, Bread & Pickle and Tin Fish show that a park restaurant can return money to the public and delight its customers. Nobody is served by a \$6.5 million pavilion that does neither, not the Park Board, the operators, or the neighbors who pass it every day.

What the Park Board intends to do about a restaurant concept it never competitively evaluated remains the open question.

Steve Kotvis writes for the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Bryn Mawr.

LAKE OF THE ISLES HAUNTED HOUSE: THE SAGA CONTINUES

By Mike Erlandson



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

A grand home on the parkway has sat empty for more than a decade. The county seized it, then handed it back on a promise of renovation that still has not arrived.

“Apparently, the plan was to have a plan.”

taxes and fines, Hennepin County seized the property in 2023.

Neighbors thought perhaps this was the moment the story would finally have a happy ending. The house could be sold to someone who would restore it, bring it back to life and once again make it a home.

Instead, the county gave Mr. Persaud the opportunity to get the property back after he paid roughly \$63,000 in taxes and fines. He told officials and neighbors that he would renovate the house and move in. He had a plan.

Apparently, the plan was to have a plan. More than a year after his

promise to fix up the house, the promised renovation has not materialized. The house remains vacant. The ground level is now completely boarded up.

And the yard once again becomes a summer attraction for weeds. The weeds don't seem to recognize property lines. They

“A promise to renovate a property without actually renovating it begins to sound less like a plan and more like a ghost story.”

grow tall, spread toward the park across the street and creep toward neighboring properties.

A Mystery on the Parkway

So here we are. A beautiful old home on one of Minneapolis' most beautiful parkways sits empty and deteriorating while the surrounding neighborhood tries to move forward.

And there is something almost comical about the mystery. Why would someone spend tens of thousands of dollars on property taxes and fines to retain a house they apparently have no intention of living in or fixing?

Perhaps the gate to hell really is in the basement. Perhaps there is buried treasure underneath the foundation. Perhaps there are bodies. We don't know. Maybe Mr. Persaud does.

What we do know is that he has repeatedly said he intends to fix the house. And at some point, a promise to renovate a property without actually renovating it begins to sound less like a plan and more like a ghost story.

There is another irony here. Mr. Persaud is a landlord. One would assume that a person who owns rental property understands that being a property owner comes with responsibilities beyond writing a check for the property tax bill.

Where the City and County Stand

To be fair, the city of Minneapolis has taken enforcement steps, including placing the property in its prolonged-vacancy program.

The county made a decision that allowed the owner to retain this property despite years of vacancy and deterioration. The county is collecting its property taxes. But a vacant, deteriorating house does not produce the same value to the community as a restored, occupied home.

This isn't about demanding every property be perfect. It is about a house that has sat empty for more than 10 years while the surrounding community has had to live with the consequences.

Take a Walk

Neighborhoods surrounding Lake of the Isles remain among the city's great assets. People walk, run and stroll these streets and parkways.

They come from all corners of the larger community to enjoy the park, and sitting right there for all to see is the haunted house of East Isles.

As Halloween approaches, perhaps it deserves a little more attention. Come take a walk around the lake. Take in the scenery. But keep an eye out.

You might see a ghost or a monster or even someone working on 2737. That last one, frankly, might be the scariest sight of all.

Mike Erlandson writes for the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in East Isles.

LOCH NESS FOR SALE

By Courtney Cushing Kiernat



A kinetic sculpture has kept watch over Cedar Lake since 1983. Now the sliver of land it stands on is on the market.

For more than 40 years, a rather unusual creature has kept watch over Cedar Lake.

Across from Cedar Lake South Beach, on a small triangle of land officially known as 3201 Cedar Lake Ave., sits Loch Ness, the kinetic sculpture created by artist Bruce Stillman. Commissioned by Norman and Sanders “Sandy” Ackenberg in 1983, the

sculpture and the land beneath it are now for sale.

Loch Ness has been a neighborhood landmark almost from the moment Mr. Stillman began building it. Writing in the Nov. 3, 1984, edition of the Hill & Lake Press, Gretchen Vander Welde described the work taking shape: “Sculptor Bruce Stillman with paint, acetylene torch, and hack saw can be seen working on his creation through good and bad weather.”

Four decades later, Mr. Stillman's creation remains a familiar sight to walkers, bikers, beachgoers and drivers passing Cedar Lake.

The property is owned by the Alan C. Ackenberg Trustees. Hennepin County classifies the par-

cel as “vacant land-residential” and lists an estimated value of \$17,700.

The seller could not be reached before publication for information about the asking price, the sculpture's maintenance costs or what the sale could mean for Loch Ness.

For now, the landmark remains in its familiar spot. Its future may depend on who buys the tiny piece of Cedar Lake shoreline it has called home since 1983.

Courtney Cushing Kiernat is a regular contributor. She lives in Kenwood.

UPTOWN BUSINESSES TELL US WHAT THEY NEED

By Ellen van Iwaarden



Uptown, south of the intersection of Hennepin Avenue and W 28th Street. (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

In an informal Hill & Lake Press survey of 16 businesses, owners named parking, empty storefronts and public safety as their biggest concerns, and asked neighbors to show up and shop.

In June and August, the Hill & Lake Press, with help from East Isles Neighborhood Association board member Brian Lammers, conducted a very informal survey of Uptown businesses along Hennepin Avenue and Lake Street.

Our goal was to interview businesspeople to get a feel for how Uptown businesses are faring a few months out from the completion of the Hennepin Avenue construction and this winter's immigration enforcement disruption. Both of those long-lasting events decreased the number of people visiting Uptown.

Outside of the responses to our survey, which we report on below, we have a few general conclusions.

First, the businesspeople in Uptown are an amazingly friendly, thoughtful, creative and community-spirited group. It was a pleasure to talk with them. Second, they expressed a lot of optimism about Uptown and the positive changes they have seen happening.

Third, the increased police presence in Uptown has made a huge difference in how comfortable they and their customers feel about being in Uptown. Finally, almost every one of them stressed how important it is for residents to be out and about in Uptown and to buy local.

It is a welcoming crew. As Hilary Otey, owner and co-founder of Queermunity, said, "We would love to have more local residents visit us."

Who We Talked To

The three short questions we asked were forward-looking: As of today, what is your greatest challenge as a business in Uptown? What are the two most important things the city, county or local agencies could do today to help your business? And is there any-

thing else you'd like to tell the city, county or local residents?

Our sample of 16 businesses included restaurants, retailers, coffee shops, hair salons, cannabis dispensaries and tobacco shops. It included legacy institutions such as Bobby Bead and Uncommon Grounds and brand-new businesses such as CCJ Lazo Barber Shop and Cali Cannabis.

The people we talked to were owners, managers and employees, all with strong points of view.

Parking and Empty Storefronts

Here is what we found. The answer to the first question, the greatest challenge, was a tie between parking and needing more

businesses in Uptown.

As the manager of Hennepin Tobacco told us, "Our customers have a tough time parking. We are lucky to have a small alcove in the curb in front of the store where people can pull in and run in and out. Without that it would be even worse."

The empty storefronts in Uptown can be depressing to both businesses and customers. Sheri Hanshaw, owner of the salon Mon Cher Ami in the Seven Points mall, told us, "My greatest challenge is being in a desolate building."

Public safety comes first.

The top answer to the second question, how the city, county and local agencies could help, was to focus on public safety.

Not surprisingly, the shooting

at Reign has affected the businesses as more customers again express fear about coming to Uptown. The businesses greatly appreciate the successful work — one called it remarkable — of reducing public drug use and the number of people living on the streets.

Along with the appreciation for improved day-to-day public safety in Uptown, many of the business owners expressed compassion for the people suffering from addiction and lack of housing and wanted more societal resources spent on helping them.

A close second in importance on that question was the need for more support for businesses through lowering barriers to entry for small businesses, funding to get started or expand, improving the licensing process, communicating better about changes in ordinances and policies, and listening more to businesses..

Working to get more and more affordable parking was a close third in importance.

Show up and shop local.

It was in the answers to the third question, what else they would like to tell the city, county or local residents, that the clearest message came through.

Everyone, including the city, county, businesses, institutions

"Shop local and support your neighborhood!"

and local residents, needs to collaborate to bring more people and local businesses to Uptown.

Aaron Blaser, founder and chief executive of Curioso Coffee, said it succinctly, "Shop local and support your neighborhood!"

Ellen van Iwaarden writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in East Isles.


**SHOP
LOCAL**


**EAT
LOCAL**


**READ
LOCAL**


**ENJOY
LOCAL**


**WITHOUT
US
THERE
IS NO
LOCAL**

**PLEASE
SUPPORT
YOUR
LOCAL
RETAILERS
AND
EATERIES**

BUMPY RIDE AHEAD FOR SPEEDERS

By Quinton Courts



Top left: Cutouts on Humboldt Avenue S; Top right: New speed humps on Girard Ave S; Middle right: Map of current calming projects and Bottom right: Scoring criteria for traffic calming applications (Images: Quinton Courts)

Those mysterious road cutouts around the lakes are speed humps and traffic circles, the payoff of an eight-step city process that can take years.

Neighbors have recently been abuzz about mysterious road cutouts on some streets in Hill & Lake Press land.

We have seen quite a bit of construction in the past few years: Hennepin Avenue, road resurfacing in Lowry Hill, and work on natural gas mains and service lines by Center-Point Energy.

"The first step of the eight-step traffic calming process is the submission of an application by a community member or a neighborhood organization."

These new cutouts, however, were oddly shaped, and new signs were erected alongside them displaying the word "BUMP." One neighbor was adamant in his theory. "I think these are speed bumps!" he said.

Naturally, the folks at the Hill & Lake Press looked into it. Indeed, a few streets in East Isles, East Bde Maka Ska and Lowry Hill East were awarded new additions to their roads as part of the city's Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program.

As recently as March of this year, blocks whose applications were approved and selected are seeing either a speed hump at specific points on the street, a traffic circle in intersections, or both.

Eight Steps to a Speed Hump

The first step of the eight-step traffic calming process is the submission of an application by a community member or a neighborhood organization.

Seven more steps follow, including screening and scoring using a rubric, community meetings, and on-street data collection and technical evaluations by the Public Works department, before the recommended solution is installed.

One Block's Long Road

Jonathan Beck of East Isles submitted an application on behalf of his block just off the Midtown Greenway.

After moving into the neighborhood in 2013, he became frustrated with cars driving the wrong direction on his one-way street, a problem he attributed to poor signage at the entrance of his block, beginning at the Midtown Greenway.

Beck half-jokingly suggested the use of one-way road spikes like those at rental car facilities. Instead, in 2017, the city installed plastic bollards, which did help to mitigate the problem but did not hold up against the strength of snowplows in the winter.

In 2024, he formally submitted an application for traffic calming but did not meet the scoring criteria needed to be selected.

The city automatically resubmits an application that was not selected for one additional year, and in March of this year he was notified that his block would be awarded a traffic calming treatment.

"Applications for the next round are reviewed on the city's annual cycle, so a block that misses the cut one year is automatically considered the next."

As of this writing, his block has cutouts ready and signs posted, awaiting installation of the new speed humps. Beck is pleased at the prospect that the humps, and possibly better signage further south at The Mall, will alleviate future traffic concerns for his block.

How to Apply

Residents and neighborhoods interested in applying for future traffic calming treatments should pay special attention to the scoring criteria, which are weighted and divided into two categories: transportation and community.

The city's website includes a page on traffic calming, where residents can submit an application or request a temporary solution such as a speed display trailer for their block.

Applications for the next round are reviewed on the city's annual cycle, so a block that misses the cut one year is automatically considered the next.

For now, the signs are up and the message is plain enough. Slow down.

Quinton Courts writes for the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in East Isles.



Table E-2. Final Scoring for Project Selection/Prioritization

Category	Criteria	What is Measured	Maximum Number of Points
Transportation	Traffic Conditions	Traffic Volume	20
	Safety	Traffic Speed	28
		Crashes (5 years)	24
		Transportation Subtotal	72
Community	Equity	Non-White Majority	12
		Low Income Population	16
		Vehicle Availability	8
		Potential Users	8
	People Generators	Proximity to Schools, Parks, Libraries, LRT or BRT stations	8
		Community Subtotal	50
TOTAL			122



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FROM MONTALTO TO MINNEAPOLIS: FRANK TOTTON HEFFELFINGER FOUNTAIN IN LYNDALE PARK

By Steven F. Ostrow



Frank Totton Heffelfinger Fountain. (Image: Unknown)

Long called the Twin Cities' oldest fountain and a work of the Italian Renaissance, the Lyndale Park landmark is neither. Its real story begins in a Florentine foundry a century ago.

In the southeast corner of Minneapolis' Lyndale Park on the northeast side of Lake Harriet, adjacent to the second oldest rose garden in the United States, stands the Frank Totton Heffelfinger Fountain, a work beloved by many Minneapolitans and often featured in wedding

ed and dedicated in 1947.

Repeatedly identified as the oldest fountain in the Twin Cities and as a work of the Italian Renaissance, it is, in fact, neither.

Its true origins, in the early 20th century, tell a fascinating story about the vogue for fountains and for collecting Renaissance objects among America's monied class.

A collector goes shopping in Florence

Born in Minneapolis, Frank Totton Heffelfinger (1869-1959) made his fortune working at his father-in-law's firm, F. H. Peavey & Co., a grain elevator business.

A collector, philanthropist and world traveler, Mr. Heffelfinger went in search of a fountain on a trip to Italy in 1924, and discovered one on the grounds of a Renaissance villa about three miles northeast of Florence.

Called Villa Montalto by the Prussian nobleman Friedrich Maximilian von Pless Graf von Hochberg, who owned the estate from 1895 to 1904, the property featured a simple marble Renaissance fountain with a water-spouting dolphin.

But sometime between 1918 and 1924, Lady Mexborough, born Anne Belcher, who inherited the villa from her husband,

John Horace Saville, replaced it with a much grander fountain, the bronze and marble work that caught Mr. Heffelfinger's fancy and which he purchased for his Wayzata home when the villa was being sold in 1924.

Why It Doesn't Look Renaissance

While generically resembling Renaissance fountains, it lacks the unity and balance of works from the period. It is top-heavy, and its upper half, the section above the heads of the winged hybrid creatures, is not integral to the lower section.

The color and thickness of the bronze also differ between the upper and lower parts, and the shape and design of the central shaft that supports the marble basin and the standing faun above it are distinctly unlike those found on fountains of the

parts.

Both fountains, in other words, are pastiches, and although I have yet to discover who was responsible for designing the Heffelfinger Fountain or its French counterpart, both were likely produced by one of the artistic foundries in Florence, or perhaps Naples or Rome, which specialized in period-style works of art.

Not the Oldest, but the Most Unusual

The oft-repeated claims that the Heffelfinger Fountain is the Twin Cities' oldest fountain and a work of the Italian Renaissance can now be put to rest.

It is, in fact, younger than at least 13 other fountains that were erected in Minneapolis and St. Paul in the 1870s, '80s and '90s, among them the Peavey Fountain at the intersection of Kenwood Parkway and Lake of the Isles Parkway, erected in 1892, and the Schiffman Fountain in Como Park, erected in 1897.

All the same, it is arguably the most unusual and imposing piece of garden sculpture in the Twin Cities, and ever since it was first erected in Lyndale Park it has convinced most viewers that it was a product of the Italian Renaissance.

What remains unanswered, however, is whether Frank Heffelfinger thought he was buying a genuine Renaissance fountain or just a work that looked like one.

Steven F. Ostrow is professor emeritus of art history at the University of Minnesota. He lives in Loring Park.

"What remains unanswered is whether Frank Heffelfinger thought he was buying a genuine Renaissance fountain or just a work that looked like one."

Renaissance.

Additionally, the style and conception of the central standing faun, the fauns on the basin's edge and the tripartite pedestal smack of the early 20th century. Lastly, the iconography of the fountain is a mishmash, an odd combination of marine and rustic elements.

The Twin That Surfaced in Paris

What definitively proves that the fountain is not a unique work of the Renaissance, and is instead a product of the early 20th century, is the existence of another fountain dating to about 1915-20, which was sold in 2023 by a Parisian gallery specializing in architectural and garden pieces.

A comparison of the two reveals that their lower halves are exactly the same in their sculptural elements and size, while their upper halves differ in their design.

That we have two fountains with identical lower halves and distinct upper halves points to the fact that in the early 20th century one could custom order such a work, selecting the type and color of the marble basin and the design of the upper and lower

and graduation photographs.

The 11 1/2-foot-tall fountain was acquired by Heffelfinger in the 1920s from a villa near Florence, Italy, donated to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board in 1944, and finally erect-

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WOMAN'S CLUB BUILDING SOLD TO FIRST & FIRST

By Susan Lenfestey



The Woman's Club. (Image: St. Paul Business Journal)

The historic Loring Park landmark, home to a 650-seat theater and a rooftop terrace, goes to a developer known for restorations, and the club stays on as a tenant.

It was announced in early August that the developer First & First has purchased the Woman's Club of Minneapolis' historic building in Loring Park. This is

good news for the neighborhood, for historic preservation and for the future of the Woman's Club.

According to the press release, "First & First envisions the Woman's Club as a vibrant destination for culture, creativity, and community. The company plans to thoughtfully restore the property while expanding opportunities for cultural programming,

performances, lectures, exhibitions, weddings, and special events that celebrate the building's historic character."

"Those familiar with the building know that the facade does not tell the whole story."

Those familiar with the building know that the facade does not tell the whole story. The interior contains a 650-seat theater, a dining room, a ballroom, a lofty lounge with French doors opening onto Loring Park and, the best kept secret of all, a rooftop terrace with views over the park to the downtown skyline.

The sale was necessary due to the enormous cost of maintaining such a large building, built to serve different needs of a different era.

Club leaders were concerned that a developer might tear down the building, and were fortunate that Peter Remes, founder and chief executive of First & First, had the vision and the experience to restore this historic home of women's suffrage in Minneapolis. Other buildings restored by First

& First include Ice House Plaza, Aria and the James J. Hill library in St. Paul.

As an added bonus, the club does not have to find a new home. In a statement from the organization, "The Woman's Club will remain in the building as a tenant, continuing its outstanding work empowering women

"Club leaders were concerned that a developer might tear down the building."

through advocacy, education, leadership, philanthropy, and community engagement throughout the Twin Cities."

Susan Lenfestey writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Lowry Hill.

East Isles Fall Events

East Isles Safety Walking Club

Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7 1st Sat. 10 – 11:30 AM
Meet at Levin Park: W 26th St & Irving Ave S
Get outside, meet your neighbors, pick up litter and contribute to community safety and spirit!

East Isles Board Meetings

Sept. 8, Oct. 13, Nov. 10 2nd Tues. 7 – 9 PM
Grace-Trinity Community Church: 1430 W 28th St
East Isles residents 16+, business owners/lessees, and nonprofit, education and government reps welcome!

Lake of the Isles Cleanups

Sept. 12 Sat. 9:30 – 11:30 AM
Check-in: Euclid Pl & E Lake of the Isles Pkwy
Final 2026 Lake Cleanup! Check-in for supplies, and bring family and friends for any amount of time!

Uptown Farmers Market

Thursdays, ends Sept. 24 4 – 8 PM
Lagoon & Girard Ave Plaza (behind the cinema)
Harvest season is here! Drop by the weekly market for 30+ vendors, live music, and more.

Greenway Cleanup

Oct. 10 Sat. 1 – 3 PM
Check-in: Greenway, near Hennepin Ave
Join East Isles and Wedge neighbors for some food and a cleanup to celebrate the end of season.

Details subject to change—visit eastisles.org for the latest!

Lowry Hill Update

It's harvest season at Uptown Farmers Market! Still 4–8 PM Thursdays, but the location is north at Girard & Lagoon plaza, due to construction. Learn more at uptownmarket.org.

Rent relief remains a priority as federal presence continues—some residents still can't leave their homes. Whether you need resources or are looking for ways to help, visit lowryhillneighborhood.org/lice.

Did you know storm drain street trash pollutes lakes and rivers? Debris breaks down in the elements, then drains into our waters. But adopting a drain is free, and takes only a few occasional minutes to maintain: mn.adopt-a-drain.org



Lowry Hill Board Meetings

Sept. 1 • Oct. 6 1st Tues. 6:30 – 8 PM
Kenwood Community Center: 2101 W Franklin Ave
Join us for neighborhood updates! To join the agenda, please email lhna@lowryhillneighborhood.org.

Lowry Hill Service Saturdays

Sept. 19 • Oct. 17 3rd Sat. 10 – 11:30 AM
Start + end at Sebastian Joe's: 1007 W Franklin Ave
Join us for friendly walks around Lowry Hill! Get outside, meet neighbors, pick up litter, and build community.

Neighborhood Super Sale

Sept. 19 Sat. 9 AM – 3 PM • 6 local neighborhoods
Find new treasures and keep stuff out of landfills!
A wave of 100+ yard sales will sweep the area.
Sale registration now open on our website!

Uptown Farmers Market

Thursdays, ends Sept. 24 4 – 8 PM
Lagoon & Girard Ave Plaza (behind the cinema)
Harvest season is here! Drop by the weekly market for 30+ vendors, live music, and more.

Support Lowry Hill Neighborhood

lowryhillneighborhood.org/donate
Help build a stronger, more connected Lowry Hill!
Your donations allow us to host more events throughout the year, and provide refreshments at all of our events (which city funding does not cover).



lowryhillneighborhood.org
for full details, newsletter sign-up and more

UPTOWN ART FAIR RETURNS TO THE ISLES continued from front page

many of them from Minnesota and neighboring states.

Organizers estimated weekend attendance at 200,000. Sunshine helped draw crowds who wandered the lakeside venue, browsed artists' booths and enjoyed live music.

“The return of the Uptown Art Fair is about more than art.”

Nearby businesses benefited as well. Restaurants such as Lake & Irving saw an increase in patrons.

The return of the Uptown Art Fair is about more than art. Along with efforts such as the Uptown Farmers Market, it is helping bring people back to an area working to regain its footing.

Courtney Cushing Kiernat is a regular contributor. She lives in Kenwood.



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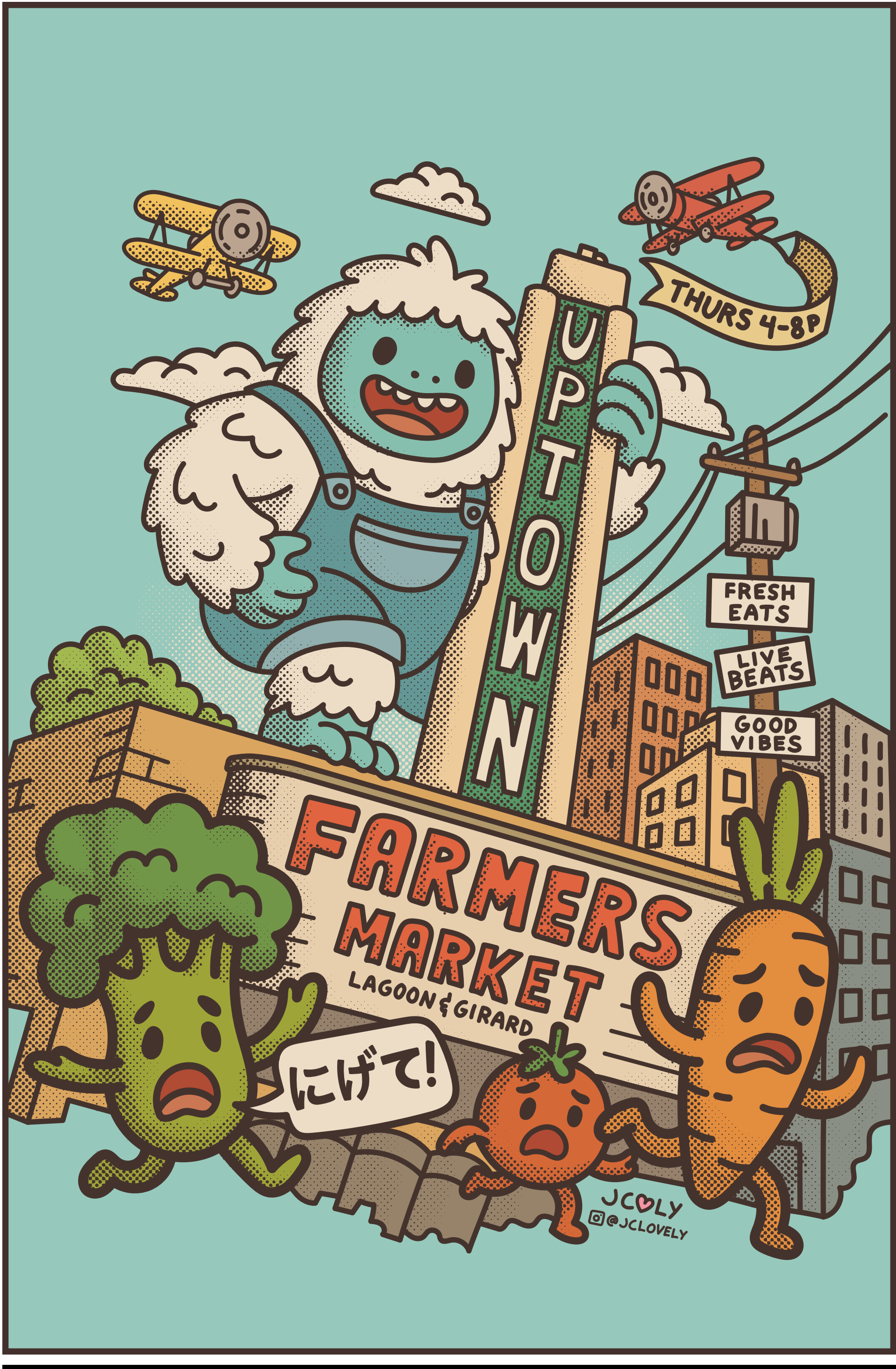
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MEETING MY CRITIC ON MACKINAC ISLAND

Opinion by Susan Lenfestey



(Image: Susan Lenfestey)

A chance conversation after a concert turns into an argument about parking, primaries and why two lifelong liberals no longer recognize each other.

Here on Mackinac Island, where I spend part of the summer, we have music in the park on Thursday nights. The other night I was sitting on a quilt in the goose-pooped grass with family and friends, enjoying a lively Minneapolis-based band.

At the end of the concert, I struck up a conversation with some people sitting nearby who seemed to have a connection to the band. Indeed, one of them was married to the drummer and, as it turned out, lives in Bryn Mawr.

“She looked at me as if she’d just unmasked the devil. And told me her name.”

Not many Minnesotans find their way to the fudge mecca of the Midwest, and so we engaged in the usual back and forth about what-are-the-chances and island life.

This being two nights after the primary election, the woman from Bryn Mawr asked me how I felt about the results. I answered that I had been

trying to write about it, adding, “Do you ever see the Hill & Lake Press?”

“I sure do,” she said, and not in a tone I wanted to hear.

“You, um, don’t like it?”

She searched for words to describe just how much she did not like it.

“The writers are so biased!” she finally sputtered.

“I’m Susan Lenfestey,” I said.

She looked at me as if she’d just unmasked the devil. And told me her name.

We have never met in the flesh, but we have butted heads hard on Nextdoor, especially during the Cashman-Shaffer City Council campaign in which I supported Shaffer, and Mayor Frey. In the eyes of some, including hers, that was a vile betrayal of any lefty credentials I might have once had.

Not only is she no fan of my views, she is also no fan of this little volunteer-based newspaper. I know she’s not alone, but it’s always a surprise to hear that when our intent is to build community, not divide it.

I’d like to tell you that we quickly put aside our differences because we had been having such a pleasant conversation prior to that reveal, but it was not to be.

The Exchange, Abbreviated

(This account is abbreviated; some nuance may be lost!)

Why did you write that parking spots on Lyndale will be lost? Not one spot will be lost!

Because 25% of on-street parking will be lost.

I’ve always admired your politics. Why have you changed?

My politics are the same. My party has changed.

You’d better stop worrying about whether Peggy can win and get to work.

Stating the obvious, I support Peggy 100%.

You need to sit down with the young members of the Democratic Socialists of America and hear their point of view.

I get their point of view: housing is beyond their reach, the wealth gap is obscene, the country is in the tiny hands of a despot and the planet is burning up. But they aren’t eager to hear the point of view of a boomer whom they blame for getting us here.

And so it went.

Darkness was setting in, my family had left and her friends were leaving, so we drifted off into the night, she to join her husband in town, me to pedal my bike up the steep hill to home.

“If there’s a takeaway from this, it’s that I liked her. It’s important to see the person behind the views.”

What I Took Away

It’s not often that you come face-to-face with someone with whom you’ve exchanged brickbats from the safe distance of social media, and rarer still to do it in a park on Mackinac Island, where rarely is heard a political word, debating the number of parking places to be lost on Lyndale Avenue on an island that bans cars.

If there’s a takeaway from this, it’s that I liked her. It’s important to see the person behind the views. We disagree on how to correct the disastrous state of our nation, and on who is best suited to do that, but we are both passionate politicians who state our views, um, freely.

I admit that I’m not eager to sit down with the young DSA members who in the past have shouted me down. But I know that we need to put our differences aside and pull together in the fall if we’re going to stop this president and his Republican enablers from continuing to destroy lives, democracy and our planet with the mindless greed of a comic book villain.

Susan Lenfestey writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Lowry Hill.



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ISLES STUDIO HOSTS EVENING OF ART & SHOPPING SEPTEMBER 24

By Josie Owens



“It feels less like a shop and more like being invited into a collector’s home.”



“We would like to be a gathering place for the community.”



(Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Neighbors are invited to meet the artists behind the Uptown shop’s taxidermy birds, French homeware and one-of-a-kind hand-made pieces.

“When I visit Isles Studio, I know I’ll find things I won’t see anywhere else in the Twin Cities. Even the space itself is unique, from the tropical plants in the courtyard to the beautiful handmade pieces inside. It feels less like a shop and more like being invited into a collector’s home. That’s a reflection of Jeff’s talent for finding intriguing and unexpected pieces.”

In that statement, Eileen Troxel, one of the many artists featured at Isles Studio, captures the essence of this artistic Uptown shop.

On Thursday, Sept. 24, from 5 to 7 p.m., the public is invited to explore the artistic menagerie over drinks and food and to meet many of the artists who bring their one-of-a-kind creations to the neighborhood.

Rekindling a lifelong dream to work in a natural history museum, Jeff Bengtson left corporate retail and opened Isles Studio in the fall of 2015 to sell handmade products made by artisans from Europe and the United States. One will not find similar products elsewhere in the Twin Cities.

Visitors immediately notice the bright plumage and inquisitive looks of taxidermy birds. Created by two naturalists in Amsterdam, these birds transport the shopper to exotic worlds.

Jill Michell, an Isles Studio artist, was inspired by those birds. “I was intrigued by Jeff’s collection, in particular, his impressive display of exotic taxidermy birds,” Michell said. “I offered to create a series of paintings for the studio. I’d say our mutual admiration for preserving birds in a way that blends aesthetics, science and interior decoration is

what motivated me to become involved with the Isles Studio.”

The COVID-19 pandemic, the unrest following the murder of George Floyd, crime and road construction all took a toll on Isles Studio. Bengtson wants to stay a part of Uptown, so he has added new ways to connect with the neighborhood.

“Our focus now is to continue selling the products we believe in but also expand our store events and include gallery openings and classes,” he said. “We would like to be a gathering place for the community.”

Linda Bachman, a painter and ceramicist, said, “It is one of the most unique destination shopping experiences in Minneapolis. Sometimes I just come to see what’s new or sometimes I come to pick out gifts for my husband to buy me. My house is filled with treasures from Isles Studio that I have bought over the years.” Bachman is currently creating a stork platter that will soon be for sale at the studio.

Many items are from afar: milky white French homeware by Astier de Villatte; ephemera, ceramics and furniture by New York decoupage John Derian; candles by Trudon, once the official supplier to the French court; and hand-embroidered home textiles and accessories by German designer Anke Drechsel.

Shoppers can also find and support local artists. Troxel, who is one of them, said, “I hope the neighborhood recognizes what a gem Isles Studio is. I especially appreciate Jeff’s commitment to introducing his customers and the community to new artists and their work.”

Josie Owens writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Lowry Hill.



ISLES STUDIO

1311 W. 25th St.
Regular hours are:
Noon to 5 p.m.
Friday and Saturday

More information is at
islesstudio.com.

NEIGHBORHOOD SUPER SALE RETURNS SEPT. 19

By Ellen van Iwaarden

The 15th annual sale spans six neighborhoods, adds an electronics recycling stop, and will survey sellers for the first time on how much was kept out of the landfill.

A popular lakes area event each fall is the Neighborhood Super Sale. Started by the East Isles Green Team in 2012, the sale is designed to help neighbors easily and efficiently reuse and recycle their great stuff.

This year’s 15th annual Neighborhood Super Sale will be held Saturday, Sept. 19, rain or shine. It’s not too late to participate. Registration closes Friday, Sept. 11.

After the sale, unsold items may be picked up at the curb and go to nonprofits, which have included the Disabled American Veterans and Arc’s Value Village Thrift Stores and Donation Centers.

This year, for the first time, sale organizers plan to poll sellers afterward to get an idea of just how much was sold or donated, keeping a good portion of it out of landfills or the incinerator.

Another first this year, organized by East Bde Maka Ska coordinator Vasiliki Papanikolopoulos, is a spot for the community to dispose of electronics. Free Geek will be popping up at the St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church parking lot from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. to accept computers and peripherals, phones, tablets, audiovisual and stereo equipment and more.

Over the years, the sale has expanded to include six area neighborhoods: East Isles, Lowry Hill, Kenwood, Cedar-Isles-Dean, East Bde Maka Ska and the Wedge.

Maps of all sale locations and a list of key items at each sale can be found on the East Isles website and the websites of the

other participating neighborhoods the week before the sale. Last year’s 140 sales set a record.

The sale is organized by a committee of volunteers from each neighborhood with the help of several neighborhood coordinators. Committee members Elyse Colpitts and Jacquelynn Brown of Lowry Hill served home-baked cookies at their sale. Ms. Brown’s favorite memory from the sale was “hosting a super sale with Elyse and meeting so many awesome people.”

Shelly Itman of East Isles, who organized the sale in the early years, is a relentless promoter. Every year Itman keeps track of the informal competition between Humboldt Avenue and Irving Avenue as to which street has the most sales.

She has also organized many of the side events on her block, such as live jazz and food giveaways, that make the sale so fun.

“It really is a community event!”

Committee member Kristin Dolphin of Cedar-Isles-Dean captured the spirit of the day with her reflection: “One of my favorite things about the Neighborhood Super Sale is how it brings people together. Friends and family come from near and far to shop our sale.”

Dolphin continued, “Last year, my in-laws even came to help staff the register and set up clothing racks. My mother-in-law brought some of her own goodies to add to



(Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

my sale, and I’ve even had someone from a nearby apartment bring over items to sell because she didn’t have a space of her own. My daughter once scored an American Girl bunk bed, and I found a super-fun striped vanity chair that I absolutely love. It’s those little moments, neighbors helping neighbors, friends and family showing up, and everyone chatting in the driveways, that make the Super Sale feel like so much more than a garage sale. It really is a community event!”

Ellen van Iwaarden writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in East Isles.



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AMAZING THAILAND

By Jason Suss



(Images: Jason Suss)

Almost 20 years in, the Uptown mainstay still has its original owners doing most of the cooking, a neighborhood that carried it through the hard years, and boat noodles you won't find on many American menus.

I hope you enjoyed the awesome summer kids' edition. Now I'm back with your next place to go. But before we get there, let's talk about a few new things in the hood.

New in the Neighborhood

The former Daisy's, previously Cowboy Slim's, on Hennepin and Lagoon is going to be Harold's Chicken Sports Bar. I'm not exactly sure what sports the chickens will be playing. I can only assume it's some sort of high-stakes head-on car racing, but I'll have to check it out and see when it opens.

Troubadour Wine Bar is hosting an open mic and spoken word event one Sunday a month called The First Draft. It was a packed house this past Sunday.

In fact, a bicyclist coming from the north was so distracted trying to look into the bar and see what was going on that he crashed into a bicyclist coming from the south. Fortunately, they were both OK. They really should make those bike lanes bigger.

Another new addition is Tom's Thai. It's in the space that was previously Matriarch for about two Scaramuccis, Pinoli before that, and most well known as Amore Victoria before that.

From my research, the plan is for it to be a Thai and Asian restaurant with a tiki bar. They are currently softly open, but with food only. I can only assume that they are waiting on their liquor licensing, which the city processes once every fifth month on the second Tuesday that falls on an odd two-digit prime number. Ask Brownstone Jazz Club for more info on that.

And speaking of Thai food, let's talk about one of the original Uptown gangsters of the cuisine: Amazing Thailand.

Almost 20 Years In

Amazing Thailand has been open for almost 20 years. In fact, they are already planning their 20th anniversary block party next year, so be sure to watch for that. That's a really long time in restaurant years.

I asked them why they think they have lasted so long. The answer: the neighbors. They have a loyal customer base that has continued to support them through all the

challenges the area has had.

That's no surprise, because the food is good and the owners are also very supportive of the community. They also do a lot of delivery, to-go business and catering.

They have been regularly donating food to those in need and been strong supporters of the relatively small Thai community in the Twin Cities.

What We Ordered

The space is nice too. It has a lot of traditional Thai decor, wood carvings on the wall, statues, artwork and the like. There's even a cute outdoor patio area.

My wife joined me on my visit, for a few reasons. First, she's Asian and loves Asian food. Second, it meant we would be able to order more things to try.

We started with the Tod Mun, an item from the "new Thai street food" section of the menu. They are shrimp cakes with pork, curry, green beans and kaffir lime leaves served with a sweet and sour sauce. They were hot, tasty and a great start to the meal.

My wife was excited to see boat noodles on the menu. It's a very common Thai dish

"I asked them why they think they have lasted so long. The answer: the neighbors."

but not found as often in the United States. It has a five-spice beef broth, noodles, pork meatballs, liver and rinds, served with chili sauce, bean sprouts, lime and basil.

I was told that traditional boat noodles also include either pork or beef blood in the broth, which may explain why it's not as common in the U.S., where that might not be well received. She said it was great and would absolutely order it again.

I opted for the more common Pad See Ew. It's stir-fried wide rice noodles, Chinese broccoli, egg and your choice of protein in a rich and savory sauce. I enjoyed that as well. We shared a Thai iced tea, a lightly spiced creamy version of iced tea. It's made from black tea, hence the sharing, so we'd be able to sleep that night.

I chatted with our server a bit and learned that the original owners are still

around and do most of the cooking. That has helped keep the food consistent and authentic over the years.

I also learned that "only one rock" was thrown through their window during the Uptown unrest, while many neighboring businesses sustained much more substantial damage. I'm not quite sure if that shows the respect for the immigrant-owned business, or the sadly lowered bar we have for things these days.

They are open until 8 p.m. most nights and 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, which still leaves you plenty of time to check out the new books at Magers & Quinn and grab a nightcap glass of wine at The Tasting Room.

Why Go?

Hot, fresh, authentic Thai cuisine. Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner. A happy hour from 3 to 6 p.m.

And they offer delivery and catering, so you can still have their delicious food even if you don't "go."

Jason Suss spent 15 years in tech before leaving the corporate world to pursue his passion for cocktails. For the past 12 years, he has worked on both sides of the bar at local restaurants. He now lives in Lowry Hill and owns @AProperPour.



AMAZING THAILAND at a glance

Location: 3024 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis, in Uptown. Traditional Thai decor, wood carvings, statues and artwork, plus a small outdoor patio.

Owners: A family from Nong Khai, Thailand, serving Uptown since 2007. The original owners are still around and do most of the cooking, which has kept the food consistent and authentic.

Don't miss: Boat noodles, a five-spice beef broth with noodles, pork meatballs, liver and rinds, served with chili sauce, bean sprouts, lime and basil. Common in Thailand, rarely found on American menus.

On the menu: Tod Mun shrimp cakes with pork, curry, green beans and kaffir lime leaves, from the "new Thai street food" section. Pad See Ew with wide rice noodles, Chinese broccoli, egg and your choice of protein.

Drinks: Happy hour 3 to 6 p.m. Share a Thai iced tea, a lightly spiced creamy black tea, unless you plan to be up late.

Good to know: Open seven days a week for lunch and dinner, until 8 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Delivery and catering available. A 20th anniversary block party is planned for next year.

Thursdays

Walker Art Center

Namaste

Spyhouse

UPTOWN TRANSIT CENTER

THE MALL

Walker Library

The Uptown Theater

LAKE STREET

31st STREET

THE GREENWAY

Little Pinball Bar

Ries Lounge

Lagoon Theater

LAGOON

The Brown Room

Armadillo

Magers & Quinn

Moona Moona

Tasting Room

Are For

Uptown

Make Thursday your evening for fresh eats, live beats and good vibes.

Whether you start or end at the Uptown Farmers Market, make a night of it. Go for a ride at CycleBar. Grab a bite and catch a movie at the Lagoon Theater. Or cross the street and rock the open mic at the Green Room. Join a (shhh!) Silent Book Club at Moona Moona and Magers & Quinn. Or pack a picnic basket and watch the sunset over the Sculpture Garden at the Walker. Grab a friend and plan your own Thursday in Uptown, then share it. #ThursdaysareforUptown. Learn more at uptownmarket.org.

WILL STENSURD

By David Piper



Will Stensrud (Image: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

The Kenwood volunteer who has spent a decade organizing yoga, music and habitat restoration at Hidden Beach on what stewardship has changed, and what light rail may bring next.

How long have you lived in Minneapolis, and how did you become involved with volunteering at Cedar Lake East Beach?

I moved to Minneapolis in 2001 after graduating from college in Iowa. From 2004 to 2016, I lived in North Minneapolis at the corner of Girard Avenue North and West Broadway Avenue.

Living in North Minneapolis inspired me to invest time and energy volunteering within my community and building trusted relationships with neighbors, civic leaders, non-profits and public agencies. It taught me that strong neighborhoods are built through trusted relationships and shared community responsibility.

In 2016, my family moved close to Cedar Lake East Beach. I quickly became involved with the Kenwood Neighborhood Organization and built strong working relationships with the Cedar Lake Park Association and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

What drew me to the beach was the opportunity to care for the most unique public beach in Minneapolis, surrounded by the only remaining natural shorelands in the Chain of Lakes.

How has Hidden Beach changed over the years?

Hidden Beach has given genera-

tions of people incredible memories. Its identity has always been rooted in youthful adventure, freedom and the feeling that you have discovered a special place tucked away inside the city.

In the early 2000s the beach was formally recognized by the Park Board and officially named Cedar Lake East Beach. Increased popularity led to new challenges that often negatively affected the surrounding community and natural habitats.

It became clear that the solution was not simply responding to problems after they occurred. There was a need for strong and intentional community engagement and volunteer stewardship.

Over the past 10 years, I have had the privilege of helping lead community initiatives at the beach, including free community yoga classes, live music performances, theater events, family beach parties and nature restoration projects. My ambition has been to help bring people together around the shared vision of positively activating and caring for these natural areas.

I believe that the historical legacy of Hidden Beach is still alive and well. What has changed is a collaboration of active community stewardship.

Today the beach feels cleaner, safer, friendlier and more welcoming to people of all ages and backgrounds. We are continuing to learn that when people are invited to build community together, they become strong advocates of the places they love.

What goals do you have for Cedar Lake East Beach?

One of the most exciting opportunities is the Cedar Lake School Forest, a program of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. I believe that this has the potential to become the defining identity of this area for generations to come.

My hope is that people begin thinking of Cedar Lake East Beach not only as one of Minneapolis' favorite beaches, but also as the gateway to one of the city's most celebrated and protected natural environments.

The School Forest provides opportunities for environmental education, ecological restoration, out-

door recreation and community stewardship all in one place.

The School Forest is available to all educational institutions but is already regularly used by Kenwood Elementary School and the City of Lakes Waldorf School. Volunteers have restored native habitat, removed invasive species, planted hundreds of native plants and recently helped create a wonderful nature play area through a Park Board-approved Eagle Scout project.

I would love to see even more schools, youth organizations, neighborhood groups and families discover this resource.

My long-term vision is for Cedar Lake East Beach and the School Forest to become a citywide model demonstrating how environmental restoration, outdoor education, recreation and community engagement can all help to protect and enhance our city's natural lands.

What problems are there at Cedar Lake East Beach?

Like any heavily used public park, Cedar Lake East Beach faces the ongoing challenge of balancing recreation, accessibility, environmental protection and public safety.

The issues we occasionally encounter aren't unique to this beach. They include litter, damage to natural areas, late-night fire pits and behavior that doesn't respect other visitors or the surrounding environment. Those challenges exist in parks throughout the city.

Rather than defining Cedar Lake East Beach by those issues, we have chosen to define it by the community that continues showing up to care for it.

Our experience has shown that the more people who actively show up to volunteer, participate in fami-

“The question isn’t whether more people will come. It is what they will experience when they arrive.”

ly events, practice yoga, restore habitat, attend performances and simply enjoy the park responsibly, the less space there is for harmful behavior

to take root.

With the opening of the Southwest Light Rail Transit line, we will certainly be paying close attention to how increased accessibility affects park use, particularly after park closing hours. That will require continued collaboration among neighborhood organizations, the Park Board, Metro Transit and public safety partners.

I believe the best long-term solution is maintaining a visible, active and welcoming community presence that encourages people to respect the park and one another.

Do you believe the West 21st Street Station will be positive or negative for the beach?

If community engagement continues to strengthen, I see tremendous positive opportunity.

The Southwest Light Rail line will make one of Minneapolis' most beautiful natural areas accessible to many more people. That is something to celebrate. Public parks are meant to be shared.

The question isn't whether more people will come. It is what they will experience when they arrive.

If we continue investing in community engagement, environmental stewardship, educational programming and positive public activities, I believe Cedar Lake East Beach will become an even stronger community asset than it is today.

“When people feel connected to a place, they become its greatest protectors.”

When people feel connected to a place, they become its greatest protectors. My hope is that Cedar Lake East Beach continues evolving into one of the most welcoming, sustainable and community-centered destinations in the Minneapolis park system.

It should be a place where people not only create memories but also help shape and secure its future.

David Piper is a retired judge and regular contributor. He lives in Kenwood.

CEDAR LAKE PARK SCHOOL FOREST STEWARDSHIP

Images by Courtney Cushing Kiernat



Volunteers of all ages brought shovels, gloves and plenty of energy to the Cedar Lake Park School Forest near East Cedar Lake Beach, continuing the hands-on work of caring for one of the city's special natural spaces. The Cedar Lake Park School Forest is a living classroom in the heart of Minneapolis, where students, neighbors and visitors can explore native ecosystems and experience the value of spending time in nature. The School Forest grows out of the legacy of the Cedar Lake Park Association, whose decades of advocacy and stewardship helped preserve the natural lands surrounding Cedar Lake.



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HOUSE ARREST

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond

A starburst of mold behind a basement bed turned one Cedar-Isles-Dean summer into an unplanned confinement, and, eventually, into a therapeutic staycation.

Dear Neighbor,

It's September. How was your summer?

Mine was uniquely unnerving, as I was under house arrest. Not for anything I'd done, but for the missteps and carelessness of others.

The perpetrators include shoddy construction workers, for failure to install drain tiles properly; a now-deceased architect, who certainly knew about permits and inspections but apparently didn't care; Mother Nature, who did her thing and rained; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, for decimating skilled work crews; and microscopic airborne spores, possessing a chemical process I can neither understand nor explain.

A Starburst Behind the Bed

It all began in February when I was cleaning the basement bedroom, which was part of an underground addition we did some 20 years ago for my husband, an emergency room physician, who needed a soundproof bunker to retreat to after overnight shifts.

I say "we" in the loosest sense. I lived here and was half-owner of the house. Other than that, the project was emphatically his.

Behind the bed was a starburst of black mold.

By March, much of the interior addition had been taken down to the studs, the original basement filled with bedroom furniture. I was in for the long haul. The mold was grander than anticipated, but nothing could be done until May, when things warmed up and the exterior mitigation began.

The rest of the house, nearly 100 years old, went merrily along, doing its house thing, unscathed.

My house arrest was bewildering and unsettling. Home was not home.

With guys here more miss than hit, endless questions, phone calls and serial checks being written, I couldn't go anywhere. Not, as planned, to Italy to see a friend. Not to New York to visit my daughter Lily.

Ten Seconds Behind Bars

It's not like I'd never been in a prison. I toured Alcatraz in 1993 and saw Al Capone's swanked-out cell, B-181. One of these is not like the others!

Two of my cousins were nurses at the women's prison in Shakopee, and I toured it several years back on Friends and Family Day. The combined gym and workout area was amazing. Life Time Fitness could take notes. At the time, Daisy was college shopping, and the cell we toured was nicer than any dorm I'd seen.

In the 1980s I worked for a short spell with a forensic psychiatrist, interpreting for Spanish-speaking inmates at Stillwater State Prison.

But I was always on the outside. Prison, in any form, means complete loss of control.

I remember: When I was a child, my parents were friends of Bob Dudley, a Northfield policeman, and his wife, Bernice. When Mr. Dudley was elected sheriff of Rice County and moved to Faribault, we visited them.

Their house was then connected to the county jail, and he took me, my siblings and some of his six kids on a tour. There were three cells, all empty, not unlike Sheriff Andy Taylor's Mayberry jail whose only regular was Otis, the town drunk.

Ever the wag, Sheriff Bob asked us if we wanted to experience jail. Sure! He led us into a cell and shut the door. Clang! Every claustrophobic nerve in my body was on fire and I screamed, "Let us out!"

Ten seconds behind locked bars before I even entered fifth grade was all it took to scare me straight.

Enter the J Crew

In May, there were gobs of guys I called the J

Crew: two Jeremiahs, Jaden, Jeremy, Jeff and, before immigration enforcement performed its black magic, Jesús and José.

The day a backhoe appeared on the front lawn was like a stun gun to my soul. There was nothing I could do but follow their lead, write checks, and ply the J Crew with lemonade and cookies to keep them here and making progress.

I grew very fond of Jeremiah the Younger, a 26-year-old with an unparalleled work ethic. I'd watch him working steadily and knowledgeably, admiring his rare attributes.

Then, suddenly, about a month in, I decided to go with the flow and accept everything. I'd learned that when one goes to battle with reality, one loses. Always. Jeremiah had reminded me of this truth.

I read several books and discovered that my old pal since middle school, Eileen, watched "Jeopardy" each afternoon with her husband. I joined them via text and it became our shared happy half hour. Once I strayed as far as Chaska for a baby shower.

Falling for the House Again

And then, one morning, I fell in love with the house all over again. The yard no longer looked like a landfill, and the sunlight in the upstairs hall seemed to shine beauty everywhere. I felt equal parts happy and ashamed.

Everything had shifted. Most of all, I felt grateful to be in a position where being stuck in my much-loved house was the biggest issue in my life.

This was the true reality check I needed, and it turned my internment into a therapeutic staycation.

— Dorothy

Dorothy Richmond writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Cedar-Isles-Dean.

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