

UPTOWN’S WORST BLOCK GETS A DO-OVER

By Craig Wilson



Existing design challenges on Hennepin Avenue (Image: City of Minneapolis)

The city admits that the 2018 redesign of Hennepin Avenue between Lake Street and 31st Street didn’t work. A quick fix with paint comes this fall, a real rebuild in 2028. I went to the open house to hear about it. So did a few dozen other people.

The City of Minneapolis has stopped pretending. The 2018 reconstruction of Hennepin Avenue between Lake Street and 31st Street, which removed all parking and put two unprotected five-foot bike lanes in the street, has few fans left on any side, and Public Works now says so out loud.

“It’s really not safe for bikes and it’s not working for the businesses,” Public Works Director Tim Sexton told me at a Sept. 23 open house at Walker Library. “It doesn’t seem like it’s doing a great

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RENTERS ORGANIZE AS BUILDING VIOLATIONS PILE UP

By Paula Chesley



(Image: Brentwood Tenants Union)

Tenants in five large apartment buildings describe lost heat, no hot water and mice. The city says enforcement has limits, and building owners did not respond.

In January, Laura Mattson, a 40-year resident of 110 W. Grant St. in Loring Park, had to stay in a hotel for multiple days because there was no heat in her building.

“And because I’m disabled, I have to have a special setup for my

“I just hope the mice don’t drive me out.”

bath, which wasn’t available at the hotel,” she said. “I couldn’t bathe while I was there.” Now, she’s experiencing persistent mice in her unit.

Mattson is not alone. In March, Ward 7 Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer held a meeting in Loring Park about renters’ rights. Renters from several other large apartment buildings came and shared their stories, as well as solutions that have worked, albeit slowly.

The Hill & Lake Press interviewed current and former renters from 110 W. Grant St. and 1314

Marquette Ave. (Marquette Place), owned by Fine Associates; 215 Oak Grove St., owned by Samir Properties; 117-127 W. Grant St. (The Brentwood), owned by Quadrel Realty; and 1501 LaSalle Ave. (The Parkway), owned by Lion Rock.

These buildings have received multiple violations between 2024 and 2026. While some appear to be nonurgent, such as “remove rubbish or tree parts,” a significant number concern utility outages, safety and security concerns, hazardous conditions or categories such as “Life Safety,” which includes nonoperational smoke detectors. (See Table 1 for the number of violations for each building.)

How the City Rates Rentals

The Regulatory Services division of the City of Minneapolis groups rental buildings into three tiers according to a score based on 15 elements, including the age of the building, the number of violations issued by Regulatory Services and conduct on the premises (“qualifying incidents of disorderly conduct of tenants or their guests that adversely impacts neighbors”).

Tier 1 buildings have low scores and undergo rental inspections every eight years. Tier 2 buildings, with higher scores, must undergo inspections every five years. Tier 3 buildings must undergo rental inspections every year.

Beginning in January 2027, property owners of Tier 3 buildings will

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HILL & LAKE PRESS
P.O. Box 50052
Minneapolis, MN 55405
www.hillandlakepress.org

Staff

Craig Wilson, Editor
craig@hillandlakepress.org
Christopher Bohnet, Production
Courtney Cushing Kiernat, Photo Editor
courtney@hillandlakepress.org
Jill Field, Copy Editor
Kathy Low, Copy Editor
Jeanette Colby, Website Editor
Anji Nyquist, Business Manager

Barb Davis, Advertising
barb@hillandlakepress.org
Carla Pardue, Outreach
carla@hillandlakepress.org

Board of Directors

Jackie Brown Baylor, Secretary
Barb Davis
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Dominic Saucedo
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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.

Open Streets Returns to Hennepin Avenue Oct. 11

On Sunday, Oct. 11, Hennepin Avenue will be closed to traffic from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. between 26th and 36th streets so that people can enjoy local businesses, music, art, street food and each other while strolling or rolling on the car- and bus-free street.

Open Streets is a city program to build community, support local businesses and encourage people to get out of their cars to walk and roll more often. The Uptown Association is the sponsor of the Hennepin Avenue event.

No ticket is required and there is no starting point. Grab a friend or come solo and join the festivities anywhere along the way.

Susan Lenfestey
Lowry Hill



Remembering Robert Skafte, 1957-2023

Sept. 10 was a hard day. It meant reliving the trauma of Robert Skafte’s death and remembering the bright life our communities lost nearly three years ago.

I am deeply thankful for everyone who has stayed together and stood strong for Robert throughout the long legal process. Someone was present at every hearing involving the man charged with Robert’s murder, through mental health court, grand jury proceedings, competency hearings, psychological evaluations and, finally, the court’s decision on Sept. 10.

The process was long and often difficult to understand. The defendant had previously been found to be a danger to himself and others

and was ordered committed to the Minnesota Security Hospital in St. Peter. Because a bed was not available, he remained in the Hennepin County jail for more than a year.

A grand jury subsequently heard the prosecution’s case, and three independent psychological evaluations were conducted. Ultimately, the court found that the defendant had committed both premeditated and intentional murder but found him not guilty by reason of mental illness or cognitive impairment under Minnesota law.

For those of us in the courtroom, Sept. 10 brought a lot of tears, emotion, grief and memories of that awful day in December 2023.

We are grateful to the Hennepin County prosecution team and to Judge Burns for allowing victim impact statements to be heard even though there would be no criminal sentencing. Robert’s death affected far more than those closest to him. The communities of Loring Park and Stevens Square were deeply affected, as were Robert’s family, his dear friends and generations of neighborhood store owners who knew and loved him.

We appreciated Judge Burns’ care and the words he shared with those of us in the courtroom after the victim impact statements.

We mourn Robert each and every day: his smile, the twinkle in his eyes and, most of all, his kindness.

He was the best of us.

Jana L. Metge
Executive Director, Citizens for a Loring Park Community

A Clarification From Tin Fish

I commend you on your recent article and appreciate the due diligence that went into it. I would, however, like to offer an important clarification about why Tin Fish ultimately left the Bde Maka Ska pavilion.

We did decline a proposed 15-year lease, but that lease came with a significant condition: Tin Fish would have been expected to invest approximately \$3.5 million to rebuild the pavilion, a building we would never own.

When the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board issued a request for proposals in 2017, it similarly anticipated that the new tenant would bear the cost of rebuilding the pavilion. After the building burned, another request was issued requiring an approximately \$3.5 million investment from a prospective vendor. There were no applicants.

The eventual cost of rebuilding the pavilion exceeded \$6 million and was ultimately borne by the Park Board, including through funds that had been allocated for other infrastructure needs.

None of this explains the challenges Pimento has faced at the pavilion. But it is important context for understanding what precipitated Tin Fish’s decision to leave and the financial realities involved in operating at that location.

Athena N. Priest
Co-owner, Tin Fish

The Person Behind the Views

I appreciate receiving and reading the Hill & Lake Press. I was less glad to finish Susan Lenfestey’s column about her encounter on Mackinac Island.

Near the end of the exchange she recounts, Lenfestey is encouraged to sit down with young members of the Democratic Socialists of America. She replies that she gets their point of view: housing out of reach, an obscene wealth gap, a despot in charge, a burning planet. Then: “But they aren’t eager to hear the point of view of a boomer whom they blame for getting us here.”

As a Gen Z leftist, this sentiment is all too familiar to me. It amounts to: You’re right about the problems, but I still won’t sit at the table with you. She later adds that she’s not eager to meet with young DSA members who have shouted her down. I don’t doubt some have, and, like boomers, my generation is known for our activism. But this is a two-way street, and we are the ones who will have to live longest with the consequences she lists.

Lenfestey also writes that “it’s important to see the person behind the views.” I’d ask her to extend that line of thinking to those young people she’s not eager to sit down with. Every movement has loud, unpleasant members. Judging the whole by them is exactly what she’d object to if it were done to her.

What struck me most is that her column ends where I’m left: We do need to put our differences aside and pull together, not just this fall but every fall from here on out. We agree on the destination and see the same roadblocks. We can’t let our pride stand in the way of building a better world for ourselves and the generations to come.

Sam Snelson
East Bde Maka Ska

An Invitation to a First Art Show

I am writing to invite the neighborhood to a small and personal milestone: my first art show, running Oct. 1 to Dec. 31 at Isles Bun & Coffee on West 28th Street. I will be showing small landscape studies I did during several trips over the past year, as well as a few more finished works from my studio.

Some of you may remember me from my years living in the neighborhood. I helped spearhead the Kenwood Elementary School new fence and rain garden improvement project back in 2009, when our kids were students there. Though we no longer live in the neighborhood, I still feel the pull of community, the friends, neighbors and businesses that make for a special place. Our time living around Lake of the Isles left a lasting mark on my heart, and I am grateful to Catherine Veigle for offering to show my work at Isles Bun.

I am not a formally trained artist and have spent the past year experimenting with paints, surfaces, brushes and easels, all the while educating myself through a combination of online study, in-person workshops, museum and gallery visits

and art books. Throughout my travels, I found myself recording and interpreting the same things: a variety of shapes and lines and the interplay of light and shadow. Above all, I wanted to capture a feeling of being in that place at that time. The quality of the atmosphere and air, the colors of the water and sky, the shape of rolling hills or distant mountains, and the movement of a stream running by or waves crashing on a shore: those are the details that captivated me.

I hope you'll stop by, have a coffee and a treat, and take a look. I'd love to hear what you see in them.

Sanja de Garmo
Orono

A New Psychology Practice From Cedar Lake Neighbors

My husband and I live near Cedar Lake, and we recently opened Ready Psych Go, a psychology practice in Minnetonka serving children, teens and adults.

We created the practice with the hope of offering something that feels both highly professional and approachable for local families. We provide psychological and psycho-educational assessments for ADHD, autism, learning differences, giftedness, anxiety and other concerns, along with therapy.

One offering that feels especially meaningful to us is Walk & Talk therapy around Cedar Lake. Rather than meeting in a traditional office, clients can choose to have their session while walking outdoors. For some people, the combination of movement, fresh air and a less formal setting can make conversation feel more natural and comfortable.

More broadly, we want Ready Psych Go to be a true local resource for the community. That may mean answering a parent's questions, helping someone understand whether an assessment might make sense, speaking to a school or community group, or simply making the process of seeking psychological support feel less intimidating.

We know how difficult it can be to know where to turn when something does not feel quite right. Our goal is to help people better understand what is going on, feel supported through the process and leave with clear, practical next steps.

Above all, we are grateful to be part of this community and hope our neighbors know that we are here as a resource whenever questions or concerns arise.

Aliza Stein
Cedar-Isles-Dean

New to Cedar Lake Park

The Cedar Lake Park Association is proud to relaunch cedar-lakepark.org, an inviting new gateway to one of Minneapolis's most remarkable natural places.

More than a redesigned website, it presents Cedar Lake Park as one connected landscape surrounding the entire lake. For the first time, 11 distinct places have been formally named and described, giving visitors a shared vocabulary for discov-

ering its prairies, woodlands, shorelines, trails and beaches.

The website offers three ways to explore: by place; by activity (from walking and swimming to birding and skiing) and through "Things to Notice," a field guide to the natural features, history and small details that make each visit memorable. This orientation will become increasingly important as nearby light rail stations bring new visitors to the park.

The site also tells the extraordinary story behind the landscape. Community members (originally calling their group Save Cedar Lake Park) organized to protect former railroad land from private development and secure it as public parkland.

The association has always connected people with nature while bringing residents and public institutions together around a shared responsibility for precious places. Its pioneering approach placed public participation at the center of planning and helped shape what became the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Community Advisory Committee process.

Today, volunteers carry that legacy forward by restoring habitat, managing invasive plants, caring for trails and protecting the park's ecological health.

"Nurture Nature" remains the heart and soul of Cedar Lake Park: an enduring invitation to explore this special landscape, cherish what others worked to save and help care for what comes next.

Steve Kotvis
Bryn Mawr

Fire in the Prairie

If you see smoke or smell ash while traveling through the Cedar Lake Park Prairie, don't be alarmed. It's all good.

Prairies need periodic burning for several reasons. Fire restores nutrients to the soil, holds back harmful invasive species and stops the encroachment of trees. People have been using fire to suppress forests and open game land (and for defense) since coming to this continent.

In 1995, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, with the support of the Cedar Lake Park Association and others, transformed an old railroad yard on the northern edge of Cedar Lake into a budding prairie. Since then, volunteers have planted more than 30,000 native grasses and forbs, and the prairie has flourished as one of the foremost open spaces in the city.

Several years ago, the Park Board completed a plan to manage the health of the prairie. It divided the 48-acre area into three zones and instituted a three-year burning cycle, burning one zone each year and then beginning the rotation again.

Three years ago, the Park Board burned the first zone, from the easternmost end of the park to about what is known as the Mound.

Unfortunately, two years ago the second zone, from the Mound to the Brownie Bridge, could not be burned for technical reasons:

Prescribed burns must account for wind, moisture content and a flurry of permits. Early this year, the western end, from the Brownie Bridge to Highway 100, burned.

This fall, the Park Board plans to burn both the neglected second zone and the first zone. This will allow it to keep on schedule.

Thank you, Park Board, for tending to this treasure!

Neil Trembley
Cedar Lake Park Association



(Image: Vecteesy.com)

October

Because Old Man Winter comes in December, it is good to say October is woman. A well-balanced woman she is. Beautiful and radiant with ample color.

The kind of woman who walks into a room with a cape on and tosses it, commanding attention. The crisp air and the winds keep her busy; she is a very busy woman. She is a strong woman indeed.

She has lots of spirit guides. Familiars at her side, they enhance her strength and enable her to perform her duties.

She lets the weather and the day dictate her duties and does as she pleases. She decorates a lot, both inside and outside. She works busily about the cottage and land, and she is aided by fall energy. She is one with the season.

Fall energy is different, fall spirits are different, and fall fairies are different from those of the spring. They are much faster in helping us. They are swift and whimsical, and October appreciates their direction.

She holds many tools and prepares for things to come. She has a passion for art and uses bright colors to express herself. She reads fire and dances with it. She speaks to the reflections in the water.

The birds of prey accompany her as she walks through fields and dances in the cornhusks and catches a scarecrow's eye. She shape-shifts with the plants blowing in the wind and shape-shifts with the crows in the sky.

October fears very little, for she is a survivor. Every year she knows her cycle and knows her friend spring will come. She gets ready for hibernation with ease.

She enjoys loud sounds and likes to see things scurry about. She loves the tricksters of the fall, fooling her eyesight and making her laugh out loud. Her laugh can be heard from distant places, a contagious laugh it is.

She loves the night and the fun, scary, outdoor moments when the wind whips things around, where there are unfamiliar sounds that are caused by things crashing and breaking.

The wind is October's friend. The harvest moon is her divine connection to the universe and all its beauty. She waits for it to come and greets it as she rises across the bay, bowing down to worship, and the loons and fish on the lake by her home chime into the magnetic trance movement of true and utter praise.

The water is like glass; its silence hushes her. October loves this night; she is the night. She collects branches and breaks them with her knees and tosses them into a massive fire that stretches to the stars in the sky.

She has to sleep under the stars and the moon on this night. A fox and skunk slide by, both attracted to the moon and October's full-moon ritual.

The next morning comes and she wakes up and talks to the trees. The trees talk to October. She heads for the barn and the cats and dogs follow her. She mounts her horse and heads for the woods — to disappear in the forest and never be seen again until the next year

Just as the season ends, October goes away with it to rest and replenish her strength to shine on the next year.

Next year, a new October will emerge. We will all look forward to meeting her then. Always remember, October is just around the corner for all of us.

Megan Bacigalupo
Lowry Hill



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION MATTERS

By Jeanette Colby



Pictured, left to right: Christin Crabtree, Collin Beachy, Michael Baskins (images courtesy of the candidates); Not pictured, Stephanie Johnson.

Quick, name a School Board candidate. Chances are you can't! With a deficit of more than \$39 million and school closings on the table, the two at-large seats on your November ballot deserve a closer look.

“What are you thinking about the School Board race?” a politically active neighbor recently asked a group of similarly engaged friends.

The conversation that followed illustrated just how difficult it can be to be a responsible voter. Even people who pay close attention to

“Even people who pay close attention to local politics were unfamiliar with the School Board candidates, their platforms and how the elections work.”

local politics were unfamiliar with the Minneapolis Public Schools board candidates, their platforms and even how the elections work.

But schools are critical to the quality of life in a city, and the Minneapolis Board of Education, commonly called the School Board, has problems to solve: Nearly 50% of Minneapolis kids don't attend MPS schools, and the district is facing a budget deficit of more than \$39 million.

MPS offered three restructuring options on Sept. 15 that included closing some schools and redrawing district boundaries throughout the city. The School Board is inviting community feedback before voting on a plan in November.

The Minneapolis Federation of Educators, the teachers' union, fears that closing schools will simply lead to more disruption and more families choosing to leave the district.

While the vote is scheduled for after the School Board elections, the implementation and follow-through, if a plan is indeed decided upon, will be critical for students, families, teachers, school staff and communities. How the School Board leads through the implementation will trickle down to all stakeholders.

What the Board Does

The School Board is tasked with setting policies and goals and with hiring and evaluating the superintendent. The superintendent manages planning, operations, academics and much more. The board is responsible for

overseeing a budget of roughly \$1 billion, including about \$280 million in local property tax revenue.

The board is made up of nine elected directors: six representing geographic districts and three at-large directors representing the entire city. They earn a \$20,000 annual stipend. Two student representatives, who are appointed rather than elected, also serve on the board with a stipend of \$10,000.

Elected directors serve four-year, staggered terms (unlike members of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, whose terms all end at the same time).

What Is on the Ballot

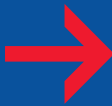
Most of the Hill & Lake Press coverage area falls within School Board Districts 4

“Enrollment is down, and the fiscal house is not in order.”

and 6. Neither district is on the ballot this year. Two of the three at-large seats are, however, and the candidates who advanced from the primary will appear on your November ballot.

November's election gives voters an opportunity to weigh in on the people who want to lead the district's policy and budget decisions, and to help chart a course for Minneapolis Public Schools. Here are the candidates you will see on your ballot.

Jeanette Colby writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Kenwood.



LEARN MORE

Christin Crabtree

Crabtree received the most votes in the August primary election. She is a longtime MPS parent and decided to run after her involvement in the opposition to Metro Surge. In a recent Minnesota Star Tribune commentary, she opposed the current School Board's restructuring options. She is endorsed by the DFL, the Democratic Socialists of America and the teachers' union, among others.

christincrabtree.com

Collin Beachy

Beachy currently serves as School Board chair and is running for reelection. He came in second in the primary. He is a special education teacher and ran to bring a teacher's perspective to the board.

He advocates what he calls an “ABCD Model”: accountability, belonging, consistency and destination district. He is endorsed by several of his School Board colleagues as well as the DFL and the teachers' union.

collinbeachy.com

Michael Baskins

Baskins, a parent and an automotive and aerospace engineer, expresses dismay at what he sees as a “School Board that fails in its oversight duties.” His website calls for “a strategic roadmap built on accountability, transparency and student-centered results.”

baskinsforschoolboard.com

Stephanie Johnson

Johnson has spent her career in education, from K-12 to community college. She believes that the district has to consider closing schools as part of an approach to fiscal discipline. She does not have a website.

Want to know more?
Visit our community newspaper colleagues at the Northeaster for interviews with each of the candidates:
mynortheaster.com/news/four-see-two-at-large-school-board-seats.

DEAR MPS: “TRUST ME, BRO” IS NOT GOOD GOVERNANCE

Opinion by Molly Mogren Katt



Image: Minneapolis Public Schools

The district’s plan closes 14 to 16 schools, only saves about \$700,000 and asks parents to take the rest on faith. A parent who has dated this guy before says: Show your work, bro.

Picture this: You’ve met someone special. Charming, funny, and OMG their values align with yours. They even live in your neighborhood! But a few months in, you realize this person is bad with money— always complaining about being broke while making tons of careless financial choices. Their past is full of burned bridges. And they start telling you about the handful of times they’ve blown up their life, chasing some half-baked, hair-brained scheme (I’m opening a non-alcoholic tap room! No, scratch that, one of those sip and paint craft studios but for dogs!). The only place with more red flags is the factory that manufactures red flags.

This is what it feels like to be a Minneapolis Public Schools parent. We’ve entered a long-term partnership with a problematic school system. May I present Exhibit A: On August 28, 2026, the Star Tribune reported the district never asked the state in \$4.1M in special ed reimbursements, also noting the \$5.3M in IRS fines for failing to properly file federal tax forms. And of course, 2020’s wildly unpopular Comprehensive District Design (CDD), aimed at fixing equity and budget issues by shaking up which kids went to which schools like a district-wide Boggle game. Guess what? MPS is as segregated as ever, and lost over 2,200 students in the immediate aftermath. The district continues to hemorrhage families and with them, funding.

MPS reported about 29,000 students attended district schools in 2025-26, significantly less than its 43,000 student capacity. Those stats aren’t great. But don’t worry! The district spent the last three years creating a plan that will address its nearly \$40 million budget deficit and sharp enrollment declines, which they shared with educators and families on September 15th.

MPS’s Transformation Plan offers three options aimed at creating a “guaranteed MPS experience” for all students. All three

plans include shutting down a significant number of schools— 14-16, depending on the option. On slide 112 of the district’s 118 page presentation, they finally get around to the numbers. At most, shuttering facilities will save the district \$705,000. When pressed at the September 15th meeting, Deputy Superintendent Ty Thompson stated closures are “not something that’s a huge cost savings.” Instead, the district assured parents that this plan will create a more equitable experience for all MPS students. How? Just trust us, bro.

Look, I am not a person who believes any school closure is

“The only place with more red flags is the factory that manufactures red flags.”

a travesty. Sometimes we must, for the greater good, make decisions that hurt our heart. But in the case of the transformation plan, the district has made no effective sales pitch. If closing schools isn’t about saving money, what are you optimizing for? Don’t throw around words like equity when you haven’t explained what that means, and how this new plan will make things so much better that we’re willing to dismantle the schools we purposely chose to live by. The same schools that acted as lifelines for families during Metro Surge. The places where a huge portion of community building happens in our city. You know, public schools aren’t businesses, right?

But, maybe we could borrow some transformation strategies from the business world. I recently spoke to my friend Jordan Husney, the CEO of a small software company, whose daughter attends Pratt Elementary in Prospect Park, one of the community schools slated to close. Husney previously worked in strategy and transformation for Undercurrent, a firm that helped Fortune 500 Companies with reorganizing to

match new goals. “I’m not against transformation,” Husney says. “I spent nearly a decade transforming large corporations. As a former consultant, I can tell you this current plan and process are shoddy work.”

One of Husney’s biggest complaints? That the district’s multi-year process was executed so opaquely. “Transformation isn’t about the conclusion,” he says. “Transformation is about effective communications and bringing everyone along on the ride, so as many people as possible will support the plan rather than fight against it.” Husney was a member of Pratt Elementary’s Site Council, a mandated board of caregivers and community members to help govern and advise the school. “Not once did MPS offer us information on the goals of their transformation or engage with caregivers or faculty. To my knowledge, the most we ever saw were results of a survey on building conditions...Jumping from there to closing up to 16 schools is too great a leap.”

For Husney, a solid transformation plan requires dialog. “Good leaders start with why change is necessary, share facts, goals, and provide plenty of time for listening long before any plans are proposed,” he says. “This gives everybody the sense they’ve been heard, and greatly improves the quality of the transformation by incorporating ground truth.” Successful transformations start with everyone understanding the stakes, coming up with a list of demands, followed by a compromise. In the best outcomes, Husney says, everyone leaves everyone a little disappointed, but heard.

Technically, the school board is soliciting feedback through mid-October. District leaders plan to report initial feedback Oct. 20, and develop a final recommendation before the planned school board vote on Nov. 10 (which just so happens to be one week after we vote for a new school board; another red flag!). Whatever option this current board chooses is set to go into

effect in the fall for the 2027-28 school year. Giving families a few weeks to formulate feedback on a plan that took three years to build and affects thousands of lives? It’s simply inadequate. To quote Mr. Cunningham, my sixth

grade teacher, I can’t give you a passing grade if you don’t show your work.

Even if we delay the vote, the damage is done. Closing schools is hard on families. But not closing them yet is also hard. So we wait another six months or a year to see if maybe we can reimagine a plan where more schools stay open? I can handle uncertainty in some areas of my life. My children’s academic future is not one of them.

I asked Husney if he could envision a scenario where his daughter’s school still closes, but he could live with the decision. “Of course,” he says. “But right now, I’m left with a void of information. And so it’s far too easy for me to project into that void, not even maliciousness, just incompetence.”

Maybe the transformation plan is great. Maybe it’ll stop the bleeding. Maybe we parents are a bunch of whiny babies who should sit down and shut up and trust MPS, bro. (We really do want to support you, MPS!) But bro: We’re trusting you with our most precious thing in the world, our children. The only “guaranteed MPS experience” I see is the anxiety of parents wondering how much longer they can continue a partnership with a system that can’t seem to get it together.

Many families and educators are asking the school board to delay the vote until the new school board takes office in January. Here’s how you can help:

Take the MPS Transformation Plan survey: <https://my.thoughtexchange.com/participate/226363058>

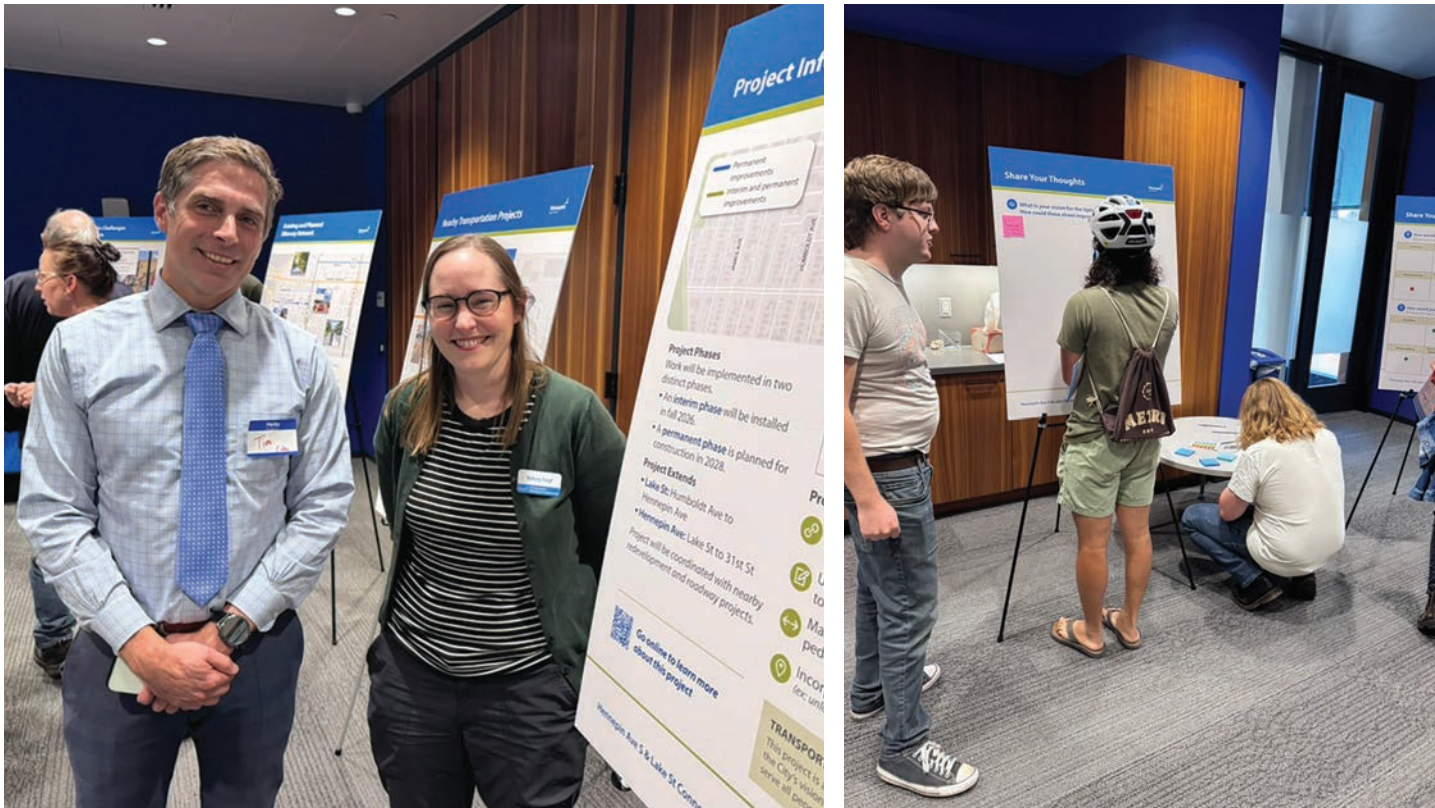
Email your school board members and Superintendent Lisa Sayles-Adams, telling them to delay the vote. Make it short and sweet— one or two sentences. Tell them your personal connection to the district, that you feel the vote is being rushed, threatening the stability of all children in the district.

Molly Mogren Katt writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in the Wedge.

“As a former consultant, I can tell you this current plan and process are shoddy work.”

effect in the fall for the 2027-28 school year. Giving families a few weeks to formulate feedback on a plan that took three years to build and affects thousands of lives? It’s simply inadequate. To quote Mr. Cunningham, my sixth

UPTOWN’S WORST BLOCK GETS A DO-OVER continued from front page



At left, Minneapolis Public Works Director Tim Sexton and project manager Kelsey Fogt greet participants at the Hennepin Avenue open house. Right, visitors to the Hennepin Avenue open house shared their vision for the corridor, writing wishes on sticky notes and voting with dot stickers. On the honor system, each participant could take up to two dots to vote on options ranging from bike lanes to parking. When this photo was taken, off-street bike lanes had drawn a cluster of dots, and parking spaces had none. (Images: Craig Wilson)

job of anything, and it’s actually creating a safety hazard.”

The fix comes in two parts: a quick restriping with paint this fall, within weeks, and a full rebuild of the block, plus Lake Street from Hennepin to Humboldt Avenue South, with construction anticipated in 2028.

“It doesn’t seem like it’s doing a great job of anything, and it’s actually creating a safety hazard.”

**— Tim Sexton,
Director,
Minneapolis Public Works**

“We tried something out there, and really huge kudos to the team for trying something really ambitious,” Sexton said. “I think it’s OK that we recognize now maybe it didn’t work as we thought it would.”

Nobody Defends It

Sexton is a biker himself, rides the block daily and went straight to the case for cyclists: The bike lane is blocked constantly. Project manager Kelsey Fogt said the same. “That’s the thing that we experience a lot,” she said.

I told them I bike, walk and drive through the same block, and that it is dangerous for drivers, too. Someone double-parks in the bike lane, flips on the blinkers and runs into a store. The rest of us swerve into oncoming traffic to get around them.

One attendee pointed out that the whole thing was designed before mobile deliveries and curbside pickups turned every curb

in the city into a loading zone. Even former Council President Lisa Bender, who championed the design, has reportedly acknowledged that it didn’t work.

When I asked where the push came from, staff, the council or the mayor, Sexton looked less comfortable. He said that the department had heard plenty from the community, and he credited the mayor with asking staff to think creatively about Uptown. “Many of us were here when Uptown was different, a bit more vibrant,” he said.

Paint Now, Curbs Later

The good news is that the city is not waiting. Fogt said the interim fix will be installed in September or October, “weeks, not months.” It will rework the lanes with paint and, in the city’s words, provide curbside space for loading, unloading and possibly metered parking, “helping reduce conflicts at the curb.” Exactly how the bike lane, the travel lanes and a parking or loading zone will be divided was not spelled out, and that is the detail worth watching.

What the interim fix will not do is move the curbs. Sexton said that gets expensive fast because of the utilities and areaways beneath the sidewalks. His three goals: Keep it cheap, keep it low-disruption, and collect data on what works.

The permanent project comes later, pending grants and other funding. The project will likely include more room for people walking and rolling, a two-way protected bikeway on Hennepin replacing the current lanes, a new protected bikeway on Lake and permanent curbside space for loading and metered parking. That last piece is what businesses have been asking for.

Who Showed Up

I found out about the open house less than a week before it happened, and only because City Council Member Elizabeth Shaf-

fer’s newsletter mentioned it. No one notified the Hill & Lake Press. Ward 7 staff told me they heard about it only recently and popped it into the newsletter.

That might explain the turnout. Somewhere between two and three dozen people, depending on who was counting, had come through by the time I left, 45 minutes in. Most participants looked young and, from the conversations I overheard, were there to advocate for bicycling and transit. A couple of older people stood out asking about parking and whether the block would be viable for businesses.

I didn’t see a single business owner. When I asked staff whether the businesses had been notified, they assured me they had door-

“The design will only reflect the voices that get into the record.”

**— Tim Sexton,
Director,
Minneapolis Public Works**

knocked on the corridor the week before.

Council Member Shaffer’s Ward 7 staff were there. The block itself sits in Ward 10, and staff said they expected Council Member Aisha Chughtai to arrive later in the evening. She had not by the time I left; I later heard that she was at a Board of Estimate and Taxation meeting.

Your Turn

The feedback exercise was low-tech: sticky notes and dots on boards, mark-

ing what mattered most to us. With a few dozen people in the room, the boards drew a handful of comments, which leaned heavily toward the bicycle and pedestrian experience. The parking-and-business concerns of those two people were in the minority.

That is not a complaint about the people who came. They showed up, and the city heard them. It is a note to everyone who didn’t. Sticky notes and dots are a crude instrument, but they are the record the city will carry into the design phase, and right now that record is thin.

The good news is that the process is just getting started. The interim striping comes this fall, and the city will get to see how it works before the permanent design is settled. Fogt said the team expects to return early next year with more detail on that plan, and she promised to connect anyone who reaches out with the right people.

“Regardless, it’s hopefully going to be a win for the businesses on those blocks,” said one longtime observer of City Hall who was in the room. “At least you can park a truck there and get your stuff off the back.”

If you have opinions on this block — and everyone who uses it does — check out the project page at minneapolismn.gov/government/projects/hennepin-lake-improvements, which has contact information and a sign-up for updates.

Shop owners, delivery people, pedestrians, people who ride the block and people who drive it: The design will reflect only the voices that get into the record.

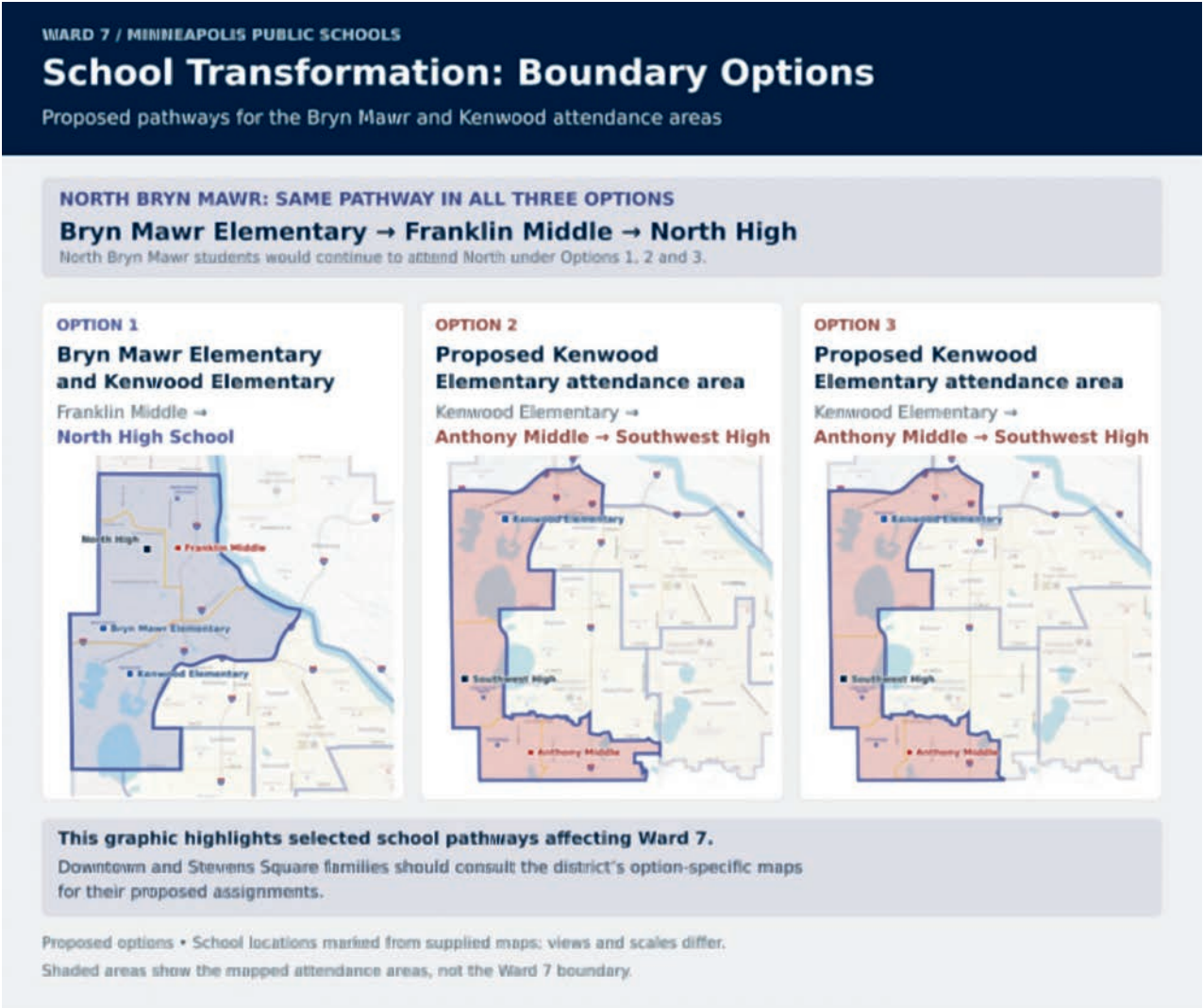
This time, don’t wait for a newsletter.

Craig Wilson is the editor of the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Lowry Hill.



SCHOOL CLOSURES ALONE WON'T WIN FAMILIES BACK

By Council Member Elizabeth Shaffer



(Image: City of Minneapolis)

Minneapolis Public Schools has room for 43,000 students and fewer than 30,000 enrolled. Ward 7’s council member says closing buildings is only half the fix.

The city isn’t the only unit of government in Minneapolis facing difficult budget choices. On Sept. 15, Minneapolis Public Schools presented its long-anticipated School Transformation Plan.

The district enrolls fewer than 30,000 stu-

“Whatever the good intentions behind the CDD, a plan that families don’t buy into can’t deliver on its promises.”

dents but has facilities to accommodate 43,000. More than half of its schools are less than 70% full. With much of the district’s funding tied to enrollment, maintaining so many underutilized buildings takes resources away from serving students and places financial strain on the district.

Lessons From the Last Redesign

Across Ward 7, I continue to hear frustration about the district’s last major reform effort: the Comprehensive District Design, or CDD. It redrew attendance boundaries over teacher and parent objections and helped create the very problems we are now trying to solve.

Families living north of 36th Street, south of I-394 and west of Hennepin Avenue were re-assigned from Southwest High School to North High School in an effort to better integrate schools long divided by race and geography.

Families voted with their feet. Many chose

other districts, charter schools or private schools, and many Ward 7 families lost neighborhood cohesion. Some left Minneapolis altogether. Whatever the good intentions behind the CDD, a plan that families don’t buy into can’t deliver on its promises.

The district’s enrollment data paints an ugly picture. In most of the school attendance areas serving Ward 7, two-thirds or more of school-age children are not enrolled in MPS. That pattern holds on both sides of I-394.

Schools are central to why families choose to move to, invest in and stay in Minneapolis. When our public schools lose families’ confidence, the consequences reach far beyond the classroom. Our city can’t afford more well-intentioned bad choices.

“A plan that closes schools while preserving the boundary decisions that helped drive families away would only repeat a serious mistake.”

What the Options Mean for Ward 7

That’s why I was encouraged to see that Options 2 and 3 would largely restore the pre-CDD attendance boundaries for Ward 7 families who were affected by those changes.

Students in the proposed Kenwood Elementary attendance area, including South Bryn Mawr and Stevens Square, would follow a pathway through Anthony Middle School to Southwest High School. Under Option 1, students assigned to Kenwood Elementary would instead attend Franklin Middle School and North High School.

Stevens Square families face a different outcome under Option 1: Students would switch from Kenwood Elementary to Whittier Ele-

mentary, then attend Anderson Middle School and South High School. Under Options 2 and 3, they would be on the Kenwood Elementary, Anthony Middle School and Southwest High School pathway.

For North Bryn Mawr families, all three options would lead from Bryn Mawr Elementary to Franklin Middle School and North High School.

Restoring the Southwest pathway is what I advocated for when I met with Superintendent Lisa Sayles-Adams and her staff in April. I am glad to see this direction reflected in two of the district’s three options.

Changes Under Every Option

Other proposed changes would apply under all three options. Emerson would remain a bilingual magnet school drawing students from across the district. FAIR High School downtown would merge into North High School. Wellstone, which currently operates at Minneapolis College and serves students ages 18 to 22 who are still developing their English proficiency, would move to South High School.

All three options also involve closing at least a dozen schools, including Anwatin Middle School in Bryn Mawr. That is a painful prospect for the families those schools serve, the staff who work there and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Anwatin families deserve clear answers about what comes next. Under the proposals, Anwatin students would attend either Franklin Middle School or Anthony Middle School, depending on where they live and which option the district adopts.

But doing nothing is not a viable path forward. Keeping buildings open while enrollment declines does not protect students from difficult choices. It leaves fewer resources to support their education.

The teachers’ union has already come out strongly against school closures, arguing that MPS can’t cut its way to growth. Its response did not address attendance boundaries. Those boundaries will be central to my assessment of any final plan. The district needs to control costs, but it also needs to give families a reason to choose MPS and stay.

A plan that closes schools while preserving the boundary decisions that helped drive families away would only repeat a serious mistake. I support a final plan that includes the revised boundaries and pathways in Options 2 and 3.

Elizabeth Shaffer represents Ward 7 on the Minneapolis City Council. This column originally appeared in her ward newsletter.

→ HOW TO WEIGH IN

I encourage you to follow this debate and make your voice heard:

- Complete the MPS online survey by Oct. 16. It is open to everyone in the community and available in multiple languages. Find it at mps.schools.org/about-mps/school-transformation.
- Attend the engagement session at 6 p.m. Oct. 7 at North High School.
- Attend the engagement session at 6 p.m. Oct. 8 at Southwest High School.
- The School Board is expected to vote Nov. 10. Families should weigh in now, while these choices are still being debated.

Supporting public education means being willing to confront what isn’t working, reverse misguided past decisions and make the changes needed for a sustainable future.

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RENTERS ORGANIZE AS BUILDING VIOLATIONS PILE UP continued from page 1

have to go before the City Council to ensure renewal of their licenses. A building’s tier and violation history are publicly available online at <https://tableau.minneapolismn.gov/views/OpenDataRegulatoryServices-Violations/PropertySearch>.

From Complaint to Citation

Enrique Velázquez, director of Regulatory Services for the City of Minneapolis, walked the Hill & Lake Press through the steps of a renter complaint.

The first step is to contact the property owner and inform them of the issue. If the issue is not addressed, renters should contact 311. Regulatory Services will come to the property and inspect the problem to measure its extent and how many units are affected.

“If we issue an order to condemn, all the residents of that building will be displaced.”

If the property is not up to code, a violation is given, as well as an order to correct. The city also reaches out to the property owner either in person or over the phone. Regulatory Services then revisits the property to ensure that the changes have been made. If not, a citation is given and a fine can be issued.

In the case of severe issues, such as no hot water, which happened to renter Calie Tovar at 1501 LaSalle Ave. this summer, a building can also be condemned, or the city can authorize repairs and charge them back to the property owner.

Velázquez said, “If we issue an order to condemn, all the residents of that building will be displaced. So it’s a decision we make very carefully.”

The boiler at Tovar’s building was replaced before condemnation, and the building currently has no outstanding violations.

Concern about displacement is also why the city has not turned off the water at 110 W. Grant St., despite the building having a past-due water bill of \$363,641.61 as of press deadline. The city is adding the overdue water bills to the property assessment later this year.

“When I heard about the overdue water bills, that’s when I decided to leave,” said Mike Griffin, a former resident of both 110 W. Grant St. and 1314 Marquette Ave. “I thought, ‘They’re going to condemn the building.’”

In 2025, Griffin moved to a newer apartment building downtown, not in Loring Park.

“The buildings in Loring Park are older,” Griffin said. “That’s what gives the neighborhood its charm. I love old buildings! But the property owners need to proactively invest into maintenance.”

What Renters Can Do

Despite a highly regulated rental industry, Minneapolis renters say



At left, Renters pick up trash trash at one of the Brentwood buildings. At right, a chart showing the number of violations at these apartment buildings from 2024 - 2026. (Image: Brentwood Tenants Union; Chart: Paula Chesley, Hill & Lake Press)

that Regulatory Services cannot capture all issues. What happens if a property owner chooses not to remedy a citation, or is unable to?

For emergencies such as broken utilities or flooding, renters can file an Emergency Tenant Remedy Action, an expedited court process, if essential services fail.

One additional measure at renters’ disposal is the formation of a tenants association. Both 110 W. Grant St. and 1314 Marquette Ave., as well as the Brentwood, have tenant associations.

Like professional unions, tenant associations can advocate for stronger protections and decrease concerns of retaliation. They also help renters deal with issues by sharing ideas and creating community.

Emery Brush, chair of the Brentwood Tenants Union, says that the association has taken its property owner to court and won. However, tenants still face many unaddressed issues (see Table 1).

Brush estimates he spends 15 to 20 unpaid hours a month doing tenant union work, such as letting other tenants know their rights, communicating with lawyers and designing flyers.

A challenge for tenant unions is that many renters prefer to move rather than stay and hope for better outcomes. Brush has lived at the Brentwood since 2023, making him one of its longest-tenured renters. He works at Helix Health and Housing Services.

“I’ve passed along things I’ve learned with our tenant union to my clients at Helix,” he says.

In spite of the challenges, the Brentwood Tenants Union creates community by hosting cookouts, cleaning up trash and helping keep each other safe.

“Our property owner is supposed to shovel the sidewalk, but that hasn’t been happening,” said Brush. “At some point, we started doing it, just to make sure people don’t slip and fall.”

Brush says the nearby Lotus Restaurant has noticed the tenant association’s neighborhood engagement and has given members free food.

Despite what seems like an increase in the number of tenant associations, Velázquez says the city is not seeing an uptick in the number of violations in rental units. However, according to the Sahan Journal, HOME Line, a legal aid organization for renters, says the number of tenants asking for its services is increasing.

A Council Member Looks for Solutions

For Council Member Shaffer, whose ward covers all the buildings in this story, the problem is multi-

faceted.

“This is one of my office’s main constituent issues,” she told the Hill & Lake Press. “The city can provide enforcement with Regulatory Services, and my office can provide resources to renters. As a city, we can’t work on the legal side of things, but we have been connecting renters with HOME Line and the Housing Justice Center, organizations which can focus on legal matters.”

Shaffer said she will host a meeting to connect the various stakeholders: renters, Regulatory Services, HOME Line, the Housing Justice Center and the state attorney general’s office.

“The AG’s office can place a building in receivership, for example,” Shaffer said, noting that the Heritage Park apartments in Ward 5 are currently in receivership. “We will also be seeking out legislative ideas, be they city or state, around how to support this process better.”

Rising Costs for Owners

Shaffer also noted potential issues for property owners.

“We’ve seen increased costs for all property owners across Minneapolis,” she said. “Whether that’s single-family homes or multi-unit dwellings, property taxes continue increasing significantly. Insurance rates continue to skyrocket, not to mention the inflationary costs of maintenance, how much it costs nowadays to get things fixed on your property.”

She added: “Oftentimes, property owners will pass along these increases to renters. So if there’s a problem in providing affordable housing in the city, we need to be really focused on helping create solutions.”

A study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis found that for multifamily rental housing in Minnesota and neighboring states, property insurance on average more than doubled from 2021 to 2024.

One respondent quoted in the study said, “We estimate that over 50% of our overall operating expense inflation since 2020 can be explained by property insurance premium increases.”

Furthermore, property taxes have increased substantially for multifamily apartment buildings as the Minneapolis and Hennepin County tax levies have risen faster than the rate of inflation every year since 2020, except for the Hennepin County levies in 2021 and 2022.

This, paired with a falling commercial tax base in Minneapolis, means both homeowners and multifamily residential buildings are picking up a larger percentage of the

Five Buildings, by the Numbers

Table 1: The apartment buildings whose renters spoke with the Hill & Lake Press, ranked by violations, 2024-26.

BUILDING	OWNER	2023 RENTAL FEE TIER	VIOLATIONS, 2024-26	OUTSTANDING VIOLATIONS	TENANT UNION
The Brentwood* 117-125 W. Grant St.	Quadrel Realty Group	2-3*	92*	● Several	Yes
110 W. Grant St.	Fine Associates	2	75	● Several	Yes
Marquette Place 1314 Marquette Ave.	Fine Associates	1	13	● One	Yes
215 Oak Grove St.	Samir Properties	1	10	● Three	No
The Parkway 1501 LaSalle Ave.	Lion Rock Properties	1	4	○ None	No

*The Brentwood has three addresses, and some of its buildings had different tiers than others. Violations for the three addresses were added together.

city tax levy.

Owners did not respond.

The Hill & Lake Press reached out to the owners and managers of the buildings for comment, to no avail.

In addition to contacting all owners by phone, email, or both, this reporter visited the 110 W. Grant St. building, where she was referred to the company’s corporate headquarters in the IDS Center. At the IDS, building security made a phone call and said they were confused, as there was no Fine Associates there.

For Lion Rock, in addition to making phone calls, this reporter first went to the company’s corporate headquarters in St. Louis Park. There she was referred to the on-site building managers.

She asked if the receptionist at the headquarters could call the building manager to ensure that someone was present. “We don’t have their phone number,” she was told.

This reporter then went to 1501 LaSalle Ave. and waited outside for 10 minutes until a maintenance worker told her the property management office was across the street at 1500 LaSalle Ave. When she got there, a sign said, “Out of Property - Be back shortly.”

As it was a Friday afternoon, she asked the maintenance worker if he thought the management team would be back that day.

“No,” he replied.

Where to Turn

Shaffer says that her office is hearing more about renter issues in Loring Park and less in the Hill & Lake area of Ward 7.

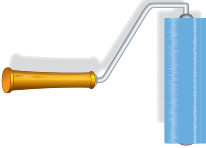
“But that doesn’t mean it’s not happening elsewhere,” she cautioned. “We want renters from all parts of the ward to know to reach out to 311. That provides a trail. And, we want to help them. So please call the Ward 7 office as well.”

All renters interviewed said they loved living in downtown Minneapolis, many in Loring Park specifically, because of its proximity to amenities, neighborhood charm and ample affordable housing.

“I love living in downtown Minneapolis,” Mattson said. “It has issues, but everywhere has issues. I feel safe, and I love the community.”

She paused for a moment. “I just hope the mice don’t drive me out.”

Paula Chesley writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in East Isles.



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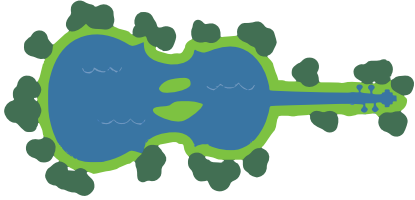
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PROPERTY TAX SHOCK COULD BE AHEAD FOR MINNEAPOLIS RESIDENTS

By Terry White

The city wants more, so does the county. The schools are next. Start saving.

Minneapolis residents may want to start saving for next year’s property taxes. On Tuesday, the Minneapolis Board of Estimate and Taxation voted 4-2 to approve a maximum city levy increase of 11.3% and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s full 5.86% request. Together, the maximum levy increase could top 11.7%.

Board of Estimate and Taxation Commissioner Eric Harris Bernstein said it would avoid “a catastrophic loss of funds” if the board deadlocked and reverted to last year’s levy. Mayor Jacob Frey and Commissioner Steve Brandt voted no, favoring a lower levy.

The City Council will now review the budget and may make cuts. A final number is expected in mid- to late December. The police budget could face pressure after the Minneapolis Police Department acknowledged mismanaging overtime, which Council Member Aisha Chughtai, chair of the council’s budget committee, called “despicable.”

The city is not the only taxing body asking for more. Hennepin County has proposed a \$2.993 billion budget with an 8.15% property tax increase, citing reduced state and federal funding. Minneapolis Public Schools, built for 43,000 students but serving 30,000, is expected to seek an increase too.

Those increases do not simply add together. Each one applies to its own share of the tax bill.

Not every property will see the same change. A complicated formula determines each property’s taxes, and owners in neighborhoods where values have risen could see larger increases. In 2026, 3,328 properties saw increases of more than 20%, and Ward 12 had the highest median increase, 13.39%.

These increases arrive as gas averages \$4.33 a gallon, fraud continues to surface and grocery prices strain family budgets.

Supporters say the increases are needed to maintain services. “We have to take seriously the cost of underinvesting in our shared resources,” Bernstein told KSTP. The Park Board says its analysis found that Frey’s pro-

posed 2.5% increase for parks would lead to 26 full-time layoffs and reduced service levels. Park Board Commissioner Kedar Deshpande said some recreation centers could close.

“We have to take seriously the cost of underinvesting in our shared resources.”

Hennepin County points to state and federal cost shifts. “These shifts do not reduce the federal or state taxes residents pay — they instead move more responsibility onto local governments and the property tax base,” County Commissioner Heather Edelson said.

Critics say the city needs to set priorities. Brandt said that for most city taxpayers, the increase from an 11.3% levy “would be in the 15 to 20% range. And so that’s horrendous.” He told KSTP, “I think it’s time really for Min-

“I think it’s time really for Minneapolis to separate the nice-to-haves from the must-haves and concentrate on the core services.”

neapolis to separate the nice-to-haves from the must-haves and concentrate on the core services.”

Terry White writes for the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Field.



EAST ISLES

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- Become an Uptown Community Safety Ambassador Supervisor**
The City of Minneapolis is looking to hire someone to supervise the daily operations of Community Safety Ambassadors, ensuring consistent patrol coverage, professionalism, and adherence to protocols. You can read more about the job and apply online at bit.ly/4xSGEQg.
- Calling all walkers**
East Isles Safety Walking Club tyocially meets the first Saturday of the month. It is an opportunity to get outside, meet neighbors, pick up litter and contribute to community spirit.
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THREE NEW JOBS FOR NATURE? TRY 0.75

By Steve Kotvis



Superintendent Al Bangoura and Commissioner District 5 Kay Carvajal Moran at one of five public meetings they conducted throughout the city. This one was at 40th Street Park. (Image: Steve Kotvis)

New staffing is welcome, but budget labels obscure how much of the Park Board’s investment actually reaches our natural areas.

As is the case with so many public budgets, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s has a significant gap between the needs (identified in this case by the Natural Areas and Cedar-Isles Master Plan) and the resources available to implement them.

Looking at just one area as an example, the Natural Resources team, there are several critical concerns.

Natural Resources staff, supplemented by park stewards, contribute to our ecosystems by restoring healthy natural areas throughout our park system. I serve as a steward at Cedar Lake Point Beach.

The proposed 2027 Park Board budget includes three new full-time positions for Natural Resources, which sounds like a dramatic expansion.

But because the budget converts 2.25 seasonal Natural Resources FTEs into three year-round environmental program specialists (supported by one supervisor and two

and Natural Areas Management Fund expenses, the whole department’s budget grows from approximately \$5.9 million in 2026 to \$6.7 million in 2027 and \$7.2 million in 2028.

This is a narrow lens. Other departments are growing even faster, driven mostly by the need to staff and support the North Commons and Upper Harbor Terminal projects. Natural Resources is only one part of that department, which represents less than one-tenth of the Park Board’s total FTEs. Environmental Management is also responsible for environmental education, youth employment, horticulture, water and stormwater management, community gardens and volunteers.

All are legitimate, but the proposed budget does not clarify allocations for any of these categories. Reporting them together makes it hard to see how much of the department’s growth actually reaches the natural areas.

Growth creates another obligation.

A proposed horticulture-focused position raises a related question. Park Board materials report that formal landscape acreage increased 36% from 2021 through 2026 and is projected to increase 170% by 2028. Perennial and shrub beds, meadows, no-mow turf, green roofs and other forms of “natural infrastructure” require specialized care.

That growth may justify another horticultural employee. But capital improvements create staffing and maintenance demands. A designed landscape can be environmentally beneficial without being ecological restoration; maintaining it should be distinguished from expanding Natural Resources.

Growth does not end with construction. Every new facility, amenity and managed landscape may create a lifetime of operating, maintenance, repair and replacement expenses. Those obligations should be funded when a project is approved. A project is not truly affordable simply because enough money has been found to build it.

What is happening in the natural areas?

The Park Board has approximately 1,200 acres identified as natural areas, but only about 400 acres are actively managed. Approximately 800 acres receive limited or passive care. The 2021 Natural Areas Plan found that 759 of 1,168 assessed upland and woodland acres received a “D” rating.

The proposed budget directs Natural Resources staff to identify attainable restoration goals for seven existing management briefs, evaluate another 95 managed acres and work toward the 2030 performance goal “with existing resources.”

What can be accomplished with existing resources when only one-third of the acreage is actively managed and most assessed acreage was already in poor condition? Where are the resources to care adequately for existing lands, much less expand the acreage being managed? The employees are being asked to address a problem larger than their capacity.

Programs, jobs, volunteers and plantings measure activity. Environmental improvement must be measured by the land: fewer invasives, greater native regeneration, healthier habitats and more acreage under effective management.

The Park Board could report Environ-

“Values are what we say. Priorities are what we fund and who we hire.”

mental Management by function. Natural area restoration, youth employment, education, horticulture, water resources and volunteer coordination should each show budgets, staffing changes and intended outcomes.

Converting seasonal Natural Resources positions into permanent jobs is constructive. The conversion creates a more stable team, but only a modest increase in its capacity to care for natural areas. Adding managed acreage without a strategy and commensurate resources will not produce success, and growth in Environmental Management does not necessarily mean growth in ecological capacity.

Values are what we say. Priorities are what we fund and who we hire.

The question is not simply whether the Park Board is growing. It is whether that growth strengthens its capacity to care for the nature already entrusted to it.

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



“Compared with the current 5.25 FTEs, the net increase is 0.75, not three.”

technicians), the result would be six permanent positions, three supported by the general fund and three by the state-supported Natural Areas Management Fund. Compared with the current 5.25 FTEs, the net increase is 0.75, not three.

Still, it represents progress. Year-round positions offer continuity: retaining knowledge, planning across seasons, sustaining volunteer relationships and ensuring follow-up. Natural area restoration is not seasonal. Buckthorn resprouts, native plantings need care and management plans require evaluation.

What is actually growing?

Natural Resources is housed within the Park Board’s Environmental Management Department, part of its Environmental Stewardship division. Combining its general fund

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH \$2.5 BILLION?

By Jeanette Colby



(Image: Metropolitan Council.org)

As Southwest Light Rail nears opening and the Blue Line Extension’s price climbs to \$3.6 billion, the debate is about more than trains. It is about how the region spends limited public dollars.

The Met Council is enthusiastically announcing the opening of the Green Line Extension, also known as Southwest Light Rail, June 12, 2027. At the same time, and with much less enthusiasm, Minneapolis and other cities are announcing double-digit property tax increases.

The job of elected officials is to prioritize limited public resources. Are Hennepin County and the Met Council doing a good job?

Southwest Line Nears Opening

The Southwest Light Rail line has been under construction for eight years at a cost of \$2.86 billion.

When the train finally begins operations next year, Metro Transit plans to discontinue the Route 25 bus through Lowry Hill, Kenwood and Cedar-Isles-Dean. No bus will connect with the light rail at the 21st Street station.

At one point, promoters called Southwest Light Rail “the equity train,” saying the 21st Street station was key for buses to connect urban residents with suburban jobs. But nationally, it is not uncommon for local bus networks to be phased out or re-oriented along light rail corridors.

Meanwhile, transit planners

are eager to move on to their next project: the Blue Line Extension through North Minneapolis to Brooklyn Park. The Hill & Lake Press was asked to attend a meeting at the Brooklyn Park library on Sept. 1 at which Hennepin County commissioners advocated for the extension.

The Case for the Train

Along with Brooklyn Park Mayor Hollies Winston and other supporters, county commissioners argued that they have waited long enough to bring high-quality transit to the increasingly diverse northern suburbs.

They articulated a belief that trains encourage development and would give transit-reliant residents better access to places they want to go. Light rail transit has many benefits, and understandably, they call it an equity issue.

Minneapolis City Council Member Pearl Warren had several disagreements with the plan. She noted that the “whole Northside needs a facelift,” but didn’t think the train would be the answer.

A Rising Price Tag

The meeting came about in response to a June 2026 Met Council study estimating that the Blue Line Extension will now cost \$3.6 billion to build. That is up from a 2024 estimate of \$3.2 billion and from \$997 million in 2014, when the project was first approved.

The study puts operating costs at about \$40 million annually and ridership at 10,000 to

13,000 daily. Hennepin County has increased its funding commitment from \$680 million to \$2.25 billion to build this project. County commissioners believe that the Met Council could and should cover an additional \$224 million needed to apply for a federal grant of \$752 million. The Met Council has followed all the mandated steps in the grant process, but the federal money is far from certain under the current climate in Washington.

The Bus Alternative

The Met Council study also shows that bus rapid transit, or BRT, along essentially the same route would cost a fraction of what light rail costs, perhaps as little as \$120 million in capital costs. Expected bus ridership would be lower, though, at about 4,300 to 5,500 daily riders, and buses do worse in heavy traffic and snow.

The Blue Line Extension’s history has been long and complicated. But the region’s experience with the expensive and problem-plagued Southwest Light Rail line makes the question of cost-effectiveness more relevant than ever: Would limited public resources be better spent on the lower-cost option?

Advocates for BRT point out that the difference between the cost of BRT and the Blue Line Extension could fund a highly developed network of electric buses in the northern suburbs. North Minneapolis already has access to Metro Micro Mobility, an on-demand, shared-ride public transit service that costs riders just \$1 to \$3.25.

And if the extension is built, existing Northside bus routes are likely to be truncated or eliminated to support light rail ridership, as with Route 25 through Hill &

In 2017, the county implemented a half-cent sales tax to fund transit and transportation improvements. This tax gener-

“It’s all very complex, but it’s your community and your tax dollars.”

ates about \$170 million annually and has mostly been used for light rail. Then in 2023, the state Legislature passed another three-quarters-cent sales tax that increased Metro Transit’s annual budget by almost \$400 million.

Competing Priorities

Light rail advocates believe that, given climate change and the role that private vehicles play in it, expanding public transit options should be a high priority.

But with the ridership decreases since the COVID-19 pandemic, down 14% on light rail in 2025 from 2024, others ask about priorities. They point to the financial challenges at the Hennepin County regional hospital, Hennepin County regional hospital (HCMC), the affordable housing shortage and addiction crises, among other things.

Quality public transit helps people get to jobs, schools and other places. When routes were being studied, many people advocated for a Southwest Light Rail route that would have better served transit-reliant neighborhoods than the route that was ultimately chosen.

But the debate about the Blue Line Extension ultimately extends beyond transit modes and methods to broader questions about how the region should prioritize and manage limited public funds, including sales tax revenue, amid competing needs.

It’s all very complex, but it’s your community and your tax dollars. What would you do with \$2.5 billion?

Jeanette Colby writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Kenwood.

“The job of elected officials is to prioritize limited public resources.”

Lake Press neighborhoods.

More Than Transportation

But people who champion light rail don’t approach it as simply transportation. They believe it can also be an economic development tool.

They say that a fixed transit route is a perk that property developers can offer potential tenants, making investment less risky since rail transit can’t be moved. The Met Council says that Southwest Light Rail has already done great things for development, though others argue that development was happening anyway along the economically prosperous route.



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612.817.7554



Leslie Bush
lcbush@cbrealty.com
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Stephane@CBRealty.com
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abcohen@cbburnet.com
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bjdavis@cbburnet.com
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Paige Gibson
paige@
paigegibsonhomes.com
651.788.0887



Christine Hazel
chazel@cbburnet.com
612.963.6229



Rod Helm
rhelm@cbburnet.com
612.720.9792



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TAHyde@cbburnet.com
612.859.8842

952.237.8201



Bob Kessler & José Kosar
rkessler@cbburnet.com
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Jonna Kosalko
jjkosalko@cbburnet.com
612.695.3136



Chad Larsen
Chad@berglarsengroup.com
612.968.6030



Ann Laurent
AMLautrent@CBBurnet.com
612.859.8842



Tom Lickteig
tlickteig@cbburnet.com
612.227.6227



Betsy Lucas
Betsy@CBRealty.com
612.327.5905



Jon Ness
jon.ness@cbrealty.com
651.442.3245



Rebecca Peterson
rrpeterson@cbburnet.com
612.325.0141



Sandra Rieger
sandra.rieger@cbrealty.com
612.964.1956



Judy Shields
jshields@cbburnet.com
952.221.1723



Shane Spencer
shane.spencer@cbrealty.com
614.256.8500



Susan Stryker
Srstryker
@cbrealty.com
612.839.6360



Isaac Teplinsky
isaac.teplinsky
@cbrealty.com
612.655.6456



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ana@cbrealty.com
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Klwall@cbburnet.com
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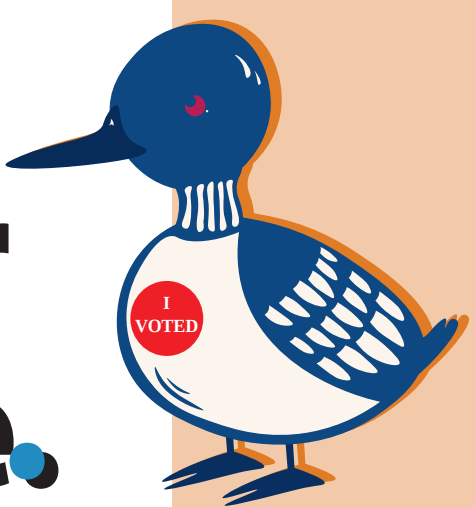


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MARK RITCHIE

By David Piper



Mark Ritchie (Image: Mark Ritchie)

Former Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie on running two recounts, why he is optimistic about democracy and the case for walking to Sebastian Joe’s.

Meet, although he needs no introduction, former activist, community leader and former Minnesota Secretary of State Mark Ritchie.

Born in Georgia, Ritchie became intrigued with Minnesota, particularly its food cooperatives, after graduating from Iowa State University in 1971. After moving around, including stints teaching swimming in Alaska and starting food cooperatives in San Francisco, he and his wife landed in South Minneapolis in 1980. They now live in a three-generation household, with another third-generation baby on the way.

Since arriving in Minnesota, he has been extensively involved in the community, including serving as president of both Global

Minnesota and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. He is best known for serving as Minnesota’s secretary of state from 2007 to 2015, a tenure that included two recounts: the very close 2008 U.S. Senate race between Norm Coleman and Al Franken (Franken won by 312 votes out of approximately 2.9 million cast, a margin of 0.01%) and the less close 2010 governor’s race between Mark Dayton and Tom Emmer (Dayton won by 8,770 votes out of approximately 2.1 million).

I interviewed Ritchie on Zoom on Aug. 24. The interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

You were elected secretary of state in 2006 and re-elected in 2010. What does the secretary of state do?

The most visible part is to be the back office for elections, and in that role, occasionally being responsible for things that are more public, like recounts. Elections are about a fourth of the

office’s responsibilities. In terms of the work, three-fourths of the office is the place of official registration and official documentation or filings when people create new companies or new nonprofits, or if they want to be a notary public, or they want to get an apostille, and other miscellaneous duties.

Is the secretary of state’s job now more important than ever?

It has always been important. It’s more complicated now because it is electronic and digital, and both things make the job of secretary of state more crucial, more complicated and more core to protecting our democracy.

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of our democracy?

I am always optimistic about it because I try to spend as much time as possible with younger people, and they’re just so smart, dedicated and courageous. And anyone who lived here during the attempted occupation had to be impressed by the willingness and courage of people to resist authoritarianism.

But equally important, and I might argue more important, was the way that people applied our values about cooperation, caring for each other. All are welcome

“Trusting in each other and taking care of each other is what distinguishes us.”

here. And so when anybody’s children are threatened with kidnapping, when anybody’s children are hungry and anybody’s children need medicine, or when any person needs to be safe and warm and protected, every block in every little hamlet, small town, big town, big city all throughout the entire state reached out and

took care of each other.

And so that’s the fundamental aspect of democracy. Yes, it’s a system, and you have rules, and how they do democracy in the Netherlands is different than how they do it in the United Kingdom. Minnesota is different than Nevada, for example. But in general, trusting in each other and taking care of each other is what distinguishes us. I am super optimistic about that. One aspect of living in a three-generation household is that you also have 3-year-olds who school you in this matter daily.

What can the electorate do to safeguard democracy?

Well, vote. But there are signs around that say, don’t just vote. And my interpretation of that is the importance of being engaged. We have all kinds of organizations, churches, environmental groups, social organizations, who work to keep the democracy invigorated. Supporting the media, and independent media, the necessity of the fourth estate, is important as well.

There are some specific things that are important about the democracy that Minnesotans hold dear, and I believe other people in other states hold dear. The ability to encourage and make possible the maximum participation by eligible citizens, as opposed to putting every kind of barrier you can dream up so that people cannot vote. These are basic things. Minnesota often is number 1 in terms of participation in the country, and that’s a really great thing.

What was the most rewarding part of being secretary of state and, conversely, what was the most challenging part?

The most rewarding part was learning about the entirety of my state, all 87 counties and all the different homes, the different types of companies, different types of religions and types of recreational activity.

I ran for secretary of state thinking I knew my state. I worked at the Minnesota Depart-



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ment of Agriculture. My passion in life has been around defending family farm agriculture. What I really knew was my neighborhood and the corn and soybean parts of the state. Learning about my state was a gift of getting

“I developed a bad habit of bragging on the state anywhere I was on the planet.”

elected and serving, in that I had reasons, and it was part of my job, to learn the whole state.

I developed a bad habit of bragging on the state anywhere I was on the planet. Every time I learned more about the state, I had more material for bragging up Minnesota. That was fun.

On the downside, I didn’t like being threatened with death when I was in public office. And it is very common, unfortunately, for election officials, but also election judges and people who work in polling places. Violence, shooting, stabbing, ramming with cars, beating up, choking: none of it is OK by me.

Eight years was the time frame for going from paper, in all aspects of business filings, to digital. And anyone who has had to be responsible for, or in some way manage, a very large digitalization process knows the hair pulling and the bad weekends and the many things that go wrong and keep going wrong.

Having that underway throughout my entire eight years was challenging. I had promised my wife, and our family agreement was two terms. On my last day, I was saying, well, we were about 98% digitalized. I would have loved to have been 100% done. But I was very satisfied that I had gone from zero to 98%.

Did you have any parting thoughts when your second term ended?

The good news is that the person who took my place was much younger and digitally savvy. And that makes him a much better

secretary of state than I was.

What do you and your family do for fun in South Minneapolis?

Walk the lakes, for sure! We can walk to any place downtown, which is fantastic. My wife was a developer of Open Book, and we are frequent participants in events there.

The whole downtown region, from the baseball and football fields to Open Book and the museums and all of that, is wonderfully walkable. You can walk around the lakes and go to the Bakken Museum, or Sebastian Joe’s.

It’s living day to day in a beautiful place, and it’s also like, oh, somebody has made a new flavor of ice cream that I just think is fantastic. I can keep liking new flavors of ice cream for the next decade, or two or three, and I can walk to and get it from my Sebastian Joe’s. Well, that is the high life, and that’s good enough for me.

What does the future look like for you, and what do you want for Minnesota?

I want our state to feel like one Minnesota and make every neighborhood feel like it’s coherent and that we are there for each other in good times and bad.

I walk some blocks in my neighborhood and see almost all the houses with Minnesota flags, and I think, yeah, they are proud of our state, and so am I. And so that’s an aspect of loving your neighborhood.

I miss the discipline of my secretary of state job that got me around the state automatically, so to speak. But I haven’t stopped pursuing and doing things that get me around the state.

For example, we’re opening a fantastic new veterans and military museum at Camp Ripley to replace the smaller one that’s there. The weekend of Sept. 11 will be the grand opening. In the process, I’ve gotten to know a lot more about that part of our state. And I’m always realizing that every nook and cranny of the state has amazing things, and that the importance of finding the things that bridge us together in hard

times can be accelerated by the experience of seeing other parts of the state, for whatever reason.

Not to be blind to the things that still need improvement or need to be renewed. But it’s just a place that inspires and keeps people going, and I just want to be around to see as much of the responsibility for the future handed over to the younger people, and to get to watch and be marveled by how the next generations will take us where they’ll take us.

There will be climate refugees from other parts of the nation and from other countries. There will also be refugees from authoritarian regimes, as in the past from Germany and Poland and all these places where people came because they were fleeing authoritarian governments.

David Piper writes for the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Kenwood.



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Please remember to get out to the polls and vote! Election Day is Tuesday, November 3rd, and the polls are open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Information on polling locations and candidates can be found at vote.minneapolismn.gov.



Our monthly board meetings are usually the first Tuesday of the month from 6:30-8 PM at the Kenwood Community Center, at 2101 West Franklin Avenue.
For full details, newsletter signup and more - lowryhillneighborhood.org

FULL CIRCLE

Opinion by Susan Lenfestey



(Images: Susan Lenfestey)

On her 80th birthday, a Lowry Hill resident since 1974 takes stock: The trees are dying again, the commuters are cutting through again and the suburbs are calling again. Progress!

I’m writing this on my 80th birthday. I’m aware of the tendency of geezers to gas on about the past, but this being my birthday, I get to go there. And this being the Hill & Lake Press, I need a neighborhood hook.

The Trees

When we moved to Lowry Hill in 1974, the elm trees were dying from Dutch elm dis-

“It’s not clear which will go first, me or the maples.”

ease. We watched the arching beauties get girded with a red belt, then waited for the heartbreaking sound of chain saws and crashing limbs.

The elms were replaced with a variety of saplings. On Lincoln Avenue, the Park Board’s choice was spindly Norway maples. Our shady yard, home to hostas and ferns, became a sunny savanna. But as the maples grew, the sun-lovers shrank, and once again we became a mossy glen. OK, that’s the goal.

But this spring I noticed that some limbs on the maples were not leafing out in their usual chartreuse and lime-colored lace. A call to the Park Board forester confirmed that the trees were being strangled by their own shallow roots and, as it turns out, were a poor choice for the narrow boulevard.

The dead limbs are scheduled to be trimmed, but the trees are doomed. It’s not clear which will go first, me or the maples.

The Suburbs

When we moved to Lowry Hill, city living was not popular, and houses were not pricey. The advent of the automobile in the 1920s had encouraged wealthy families, many of whom had built Lake of the Isles and Mount Curve mansions, to move to the western suburbs for huge lawns and life on the “big” lake.

Other families who could afford it soon followed, and by the 1950s and 1960s, suburban living was the sine qua non of middle-class existence.

In 1976, the Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association sent me, the eager new kid on the block, to a national conference called Back to the Cities, where we discussed how to lure young families to leave suburbia for the bright lights of the city. In our case, proximity to downtown and Uptown, as well as nearby parks and lakes, made that a no-brainer, and soon our shabby chic neighborhood became pricey chic.

But the pendulum may be swinging the other way. Although home sales in Hill & Lake Press land are said to be holding, I know of three families planning to leave our neighborhood for the suburbs, citing instability of Minneapolis schools, public safety and tax hikes.

To be fair, perspectives also swing. A recent first-time visitor from Maine, the 20-something-year-old friend of our granddaughter, said to us, “Boy oh boy is Minneapolis a dream!”

The Traffic

When we moved to Lowry Hill, commuters from the suburbs used our residential streets as a shortcut to downtown. The neighborhood organizations petitioned the city to put in stop signs and speed bumps so our streets would stay safe for pedestrians, bike riders and kids.

But with the recent makeover of Hennepin Avenue, said to make it safer for pedestrians, bike riders and kids on scooters, car drivers are now using side streets like Irving and Colfax to avoid the congested traffic on Hennepin. As a result, the city is now putting in new speed bumps the size of blimps, hoping to at least slow down the new surge of traffic.

Uptown

When we moved to Lowry Hill, Uptown was just becoming funky town, a hip destination for shoppers, beboppers and McPunks, and it thrived as such for a few decades.

But in 2018, the city removed all parking on Hennepin between Lake Street and 31st Street to make it more bike and pedestrian friendly. Instead, it played a key role in driving out businesses and creating a dead zone.

The city has just announced plans for another construction project at Hennepin and Lake, which includes creating short-term parking spots on Hennepin between Lake and 31st. Kudos for correcting the error, but Hennepin area businesses will have to endure more disruption in the short term.

Full Circle

We all like to leave the mortal coil believing we made the world, or at least the neighborhood, a better place, but I’m not sure I’m feeling it.

“We all like to leave the mortal coil believing we made the world, or at least the neighborhood, a better place, but I’m not sure I’m feeling it.”

Well, give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. And when my skein runs out, the grace to leave Lowry Hill with grace and good humor — and a passel of opinions for the saplings who replace me.

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



EXPLORE THE ARTISTIC PROCESS IN NEIGHBORHOOD EXHIBITS

By Josie Owens



(Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

Early Jim Denomie paintings at the Bockley Gallery and three years of shared life drawing at the Lowry Hill Gallery show how a body of work gets built.

Colorful oil paintings focused on historical issues affecting Native Americans. Monochromatic figure drawings in charcoal, pencil and pastel by six different artists. Both “Jim Denomie: Renegade” at the Bockley Gallery and “Parallel Practice: Life Drawing Collective” at the Lowry Hill Gallery explore the process involved in creating a body of art.

Denomie’s Foundations

Jim Denomie’s colorful style is very recognizable in such works as “Standing Rock 2016” (2018) at the Minneapolis Institute of Art and “Custer’s Retreat” (2009) at the Walker Art Center. These are large satirical paintings filled with humorous figures. The Renegade paintings are from the beginning of Denomie’s artistic career and are the foundation for those later artworks.

Although he always wanted to be an artist, Denomie did not begin to study and create art until he enrolled as an older student at the University of Minnesota, where he was especially influenced by fellow Ojibwe artist George Morrison. Morrison had started the American Indian studies department there, which awakened Denomie to disturbing events and history. In these smaller paintings,

“Jim was interested in people coming to the artwork with their own interpretations.”

one sees hints of the bigger issues explored in his later body of work.

Todd Bockley, the gallery’s owner, says, “Jim started to learn so much of the history of the country and started to know it in a much more involved way. These paintings are really important to see to understand Jim’s work.”

The artworks are surreal, colorful landscapes with small figures. The mesas represent reservations with their isolation and

limitations. The flying figures speak to “the privilege of being able to fly. They can access the resources, the land, the water, education. Those who cannot are denied those opportunities.” The opportunity of privilege brings mixed results. For example, in “The Posse” (1995), the casino speaks to an influx of money, but from a non-Native origin and with new problems.

Bockley says that Denomie did not speak a lot about these pieces. That is fine, though, because “Jim was interested in people coming to the artwork with their own interpretations.”

Six Painters, One Model

The Lowry Hill Gallery exhibit displays a bounty of drawings by six artists who are better known as painters. It highlights the foundation of the artist’s technique, specifically the importance of returning to pencil on paper.

Michael Banning, Dan Bruggeman, Jessie Fisher, Michael Kareken, Carl Oltvedt and Scott Seebart hatched a plan. Over three years, on alternate weeks, the six artists gathered and sketched the same model together. Muriel Lang, the gallery manager, explained that in this vacuum “they could take different approaches but enjoy a shared language.” They could also give one another feedback in the moment.

The drawings allow the viewer to see how the six artists approached the process differently. For example, when drawing a dancer in motion, one artist has more of an impressionistic feel while another focuses on a specific part of the body. Same model, different outcomes.

Once the body of work was complete, Kareken and gallery director Andrea Bubula devised how to exhibit the drawings. They are presented in two ways. Many are hung unframed, salon style, using magnets. Others are wrapped so people can flip through them and have hands-on experience. “This is something interactive, and so to have unframed pieces on the wall offers an immediate way to engage with the work,” Bubula said. “It is intended to be informal in that way.”

The artists are all teachers and wanted to extend the drawing experience to others. Two teaching sessions have already happened, but there is one more at Case Edgerton Studios in St. Paul on Oct. 10, followed by an open

house from 5 to 8 p.m. to which the public is invited to join in an exploration and discussion of the drawing process. And the Lowry Hill Gallery will have a concurrent exhibit of large landscapes by Gary Bowling, a Missouri artist known for his rich, colorful paintings of the vast prairies. He will give an artist talk Oct. 3 at 5 p.m.

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



ON VIEW NOW

Jim Denomie: RENEGADE
at the Bockley Gallery runs through October 31.

Bockley Gallery
2123 W 21st St
Minneapolis, MN 55405
bockleygallery.com

Parallel Practice: Life Drawing Collective and See: Gary Bowling
at the Lowry Hill Gallery run through October 17.

Lowry Hill Gallery
1009 W Franklin Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55405
lowryhillgallery.com

WANDER INTO OUR LOCALLY OWNED BOOKSTORES WITHOUT AN AGENDA

By Jackie Colburn



Pictured left to right - Birchbark Books, Wild Rumpus, Magers & Quinn and Big Hill Books. (Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat and Jackie Colburn)

The case for making time to browse in a local bookstore.

Most of us learned to search as an antidote to our questions. Type the right words, get the right answer. For more than 20 years, we have gotten proficient at using tools that reward searching, calling forth information and answers with a keystroke.

We are chronically hunting for the answer we suspect is already out there. That is a comfortable place to be. Our brains prefer consistency, and information that contradicts what we believe creates friction, so we gravitate toward evidence that reassures us we were right all along.

A narrow search yields predictable results.

But every time we narrow before we need to, we take in a little less. Less new information. Fewer perspectives that don't already

**“Wander.
Browse.
Become
someone
you’ve not
yet met.”**

match our own. Fewer ideas that don't yet have a home in our heads. We get comfortable working from a smaller pool of inputs, and we rarely notice what is missing.

Think about ordering a book online versus wandering a bookstore. Online, you leave with exactly what you came for. In the store, you leave with the book you came for and possibly something off a display you would never have thought to look for. That second book is the one you didn't know you needed. It's also the one you end up telling people about.

This happened to me recently when I stumbled onto “You Didn't Hear This From Me: (Mostly) True Notes on Gossip” by Kelsey McKinney at Magers & Quinn on Hennepin. The book completely changed my mind about gossip, and I have since recommended it to many.

In “Anatomy of a Breakthrough,” another book I recently finished, Adam Alter draws the distinction between searching and browsing. Searching is goal-directed: you have a question, and you go get the answer. Browsing is open-ended. You wander. You stumble upon.

Browsing is a posture.

Browsing is a way of moving through the world that allows you to discover. Most of us have gotten so focused on goal-directed searching that we have stopped leaving room to browse. And I get it: with “so little time” and “so much to do,” taking the time to browse can feel frivolous, like a luxury.

The thing is, the way we show up affects where we end up. When we search for something and call forth the answer we expect, we stay in a limited range of potential. Taking time to browse with curiosity primes you to find things you didn't know you needed to discover, and a bit of browsing just might lead you somewhere better than you could have imagined.

Browsing takes intention, and intentional time set aside. It means holding a question open longer than is comfortable and looking down paths you haven't been down before.

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



TRY AN INTENTIONAL BROWSE AT ONE OF OUR LOCALLY OWNED BOOKSTORES:

Big Hill Books • Bryn Mawr, 405 Penn Ave. S.

Great for: Classics mixed with local authors. Two sweet cats. A homey feel, which makes sense, because the space appears to be an old house. Owner Beth Thompson does more than curate books. She partners with her community to support the people who need them: this fall, that's the teachers at the local elementary school. Bryn Mawr's first-ever bookstore is right across the street from Cuppa Java, where you can caffeinate before (or after) you browse.

Birchbark Books & Native Arts • Kenwood, 2115 W. 21st St.

Great for: Slowing down. Sinking in. Your heart will unabashedly say “yes!” to the books here, but also to so much more: quillwork, traditional basketry, silverwork, unusual dreamcatchers and Indigenous paintings. A handmade wooden canoe by Charlie Gibson hangs from the ceiling, and there is a “hobbit hole” for children to squirrel away in while they read from the children's selection.

The shop sits among a cluster of other small businesses. Consider a bite at The Kenwood, a stop at ARTrageous Adventures for some creativity with the kids or a visit to Bockley Gallery. Birchbark is Native- and woman-owned by award-winning local author Louise Erdrich. Thank you, Louise.

Magers & Quinn • Uptown, 3038 Hennepin Ave.

Great for: First dates, second dates or your 25th anniversary. Perfect for a casual browse with friends after a cup of coffee at Moona Moonol or Mosaic Coffee. Major bonus? It is open until 10 p.m. every day. If you just need to get out of the house at night, go here. Wander. Browse. Become someone you've not yet met.

Magers & Quinn is known as one of the largest independent bookstores in the Midwest, with new books, old books, rare books and a wonderful staff to help you through the stacks if needed. Founded in 1994 by Denny Magers, it is going strong and is truly an anchor in Uptown.

Comma, a bookshop • Linden Hills, 4250 Upton Ave. S.

Great for: A selection, curated by owner Victoria Ford, that is sure to wow, and the feeling of being welcomed. I swear, every time I walk in, I feel as if the person working there has been waiting for me and is so happy to see me. We all need more of this in our lives. The space is bright and airy and includes a few must-consider giftable items on the table in the entryway, if you need something for a friend. Great for a quick pop-in on your way to dinner at Picnic, Rosalia, Le Burger 4304 or one of the many other options in Linden Hills.

Wild Rumpus • Linden Hills, 2720 W. 43rd St.

Great for: Hanging out with your kids and visiting the animals that live there, including cats, birds and the occasional rat. Pro tip for a family outing: grab an adult book at Comma, then walk over to Wild Rumpus and sit in a big cozy chair while your kids ask the staff about the animal habitats and the book selection. Fun fact: Wild Rumpus is employee-owned. In 2024, after 31 years in business, ownership passed to four longtime employees: Timothy Otte, Jessica Fuentes, Beth Wilson and Anna Hersh.

THE HILL & LAKE PRESS NEIGHBORHOOD

Images by Courtney Cushing Kiernat

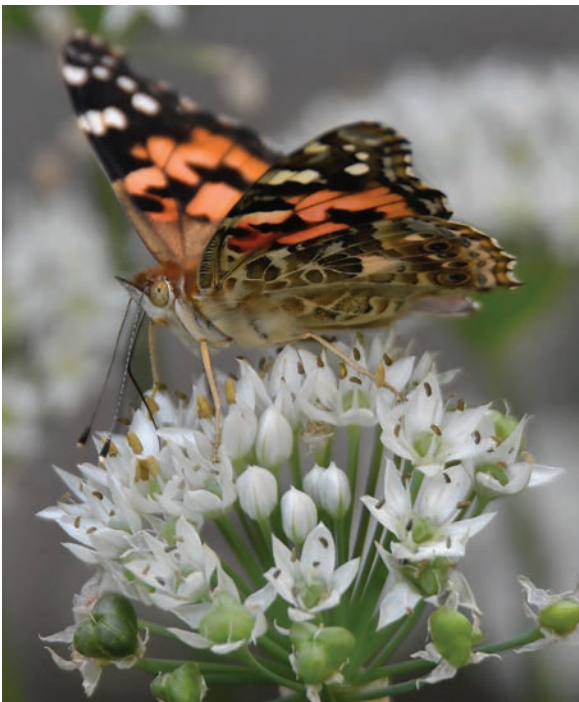


ASSOCIATIONS' 2026 SUPER SALE



NINE GARDEN TIPS

By Angie Erdrich



(Images: Angie Erdrich)

Nine tips from a Kenwood gardener on feeding pollinators, protecting the lakes and growing food, plus an offer of free native seeds!

My garden priorities are to provide insect habitat, to protect the lakes and to grow food. With that in mind, I appreciate this opportunity to share some garden successes and advice.

1. I love multipurpose plants. I grew Scarlet Runner and Chinese Purple Long beans from seed on a trellis and watched hummingbirds and monarchs sip nectar from the blossoms. One could grow them in containers on a patio and create a hummingbird feeder, privacy fence and stir-fry ingredient all in one.
2. I grow Cool Breeze cucumbers from seed and train them vertically. This year I produced enough to give away more than 100 pounds of cucumbers and 50-plus quarts of bread-and-butter pickles.
3. Does it make you sad to see Lake of the Isles topped with green scum? Want to prevent it? Install a rain garden. Algal blooms are caused by excess nutrients entering the lakes, espe-

- cially phosphate-rich garden soil, lawn fertilizer and organic material. Minneapolis's old-fashioned storm drains allow unfiltered rainwater to wash off streets directly into the lakes, carrying debris and pollution with it. Our entire boulevard is a rain garden, and we extended our downspouts about 20 feet away from our foundation into two more rain gardens. We get the joy of seeing butterflies and birds attracted to the deeply rooted native wildflowers.
4. The importance of growing food for caterpillars is well described in Doug Tallamy's book "Nature's Best Hope," which spawned a national movement, Homegrown National Park. Growing native trees and plants is the way to help caterpillars, which become pollinators and also provide food for birds. Here is a fun way to help: Pick a sunny spot or an empty pot this November and plant dill seeds for the black swallowtail caterpillars to eat next May.
 5. October is a great time to plant native seeds and transplant perennials. I am giving away a lot of seed heads that are easy to propagate this way: blanket flower, meadow blazing star (*Liatris li-*

- gulistylis*), goldenrod and spotted beebalm.
6. If you have a small strip of land in the alley that is weedy and ignored, consider planting native habitat. I am happy to supply seed heads of habitat-rich plants that could be filling those ignored alley spaces.
 7. A neighbor has found a native ground cover that might work for you: woodland strawberries. These cheerful plants are starting to take over her front yard from the bottom up, a welcome change from mowing her steep slope.
 8. North Star cherry trees grow well here, and they make the best cherry pie filling.

9. Winter sowing is a super easy and economical way to grow native perennials or even annuals. I start plants outdoors in February in clear plastic storage tubs. I repurpose plastic cups and yogurt containers, set them in the tubs, add seeds and water and forget about them until May.

I hope you have enjoyed these gardening tips. Please contact me with questions or for free native seeds at Angie_sandeep@yahoo.com.

Angie Erdrich writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Kenwood.

“Pick a sunny spot or an empty pot this November and plant dill seeds for the black swallowtail caterpillars to eat next May.”



AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM TAKES SHAPE IN THE SCHOOL FOREST

By Craig Wilson



Above and middle, Connor Jeffcoat. (Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

A 16-year-old Life Scout and Kenwood parents teamed up to give the school forest by Cedar Lake a place to play and learn in nature.

When Connor Jeffcoat was a little boy, the woods along the east shore of Cedar Lake were mostly just the way to the beach. “I didn’t know it very much when I was smaller since the Hidden Beach area was mostly just for the occasional beach day,” he said. Then his family moved closer, to Queen Avenue, a couple of blocks from the forest, and he started spending time there with his friends. “I grew to really appreciate the forest,” he said. “I liked it a lot.”

So when Connor, now 16, a junior at Edina High School and a Life Scout in Troop 33, started thinking about an Eagle Scout project, the forest was his first choice. He asked a friend for help. The friend happened to be the son of Will Stensrud, a Kenwood neighbor who has led years of volunteer work in the forest, and “Mr. Stensrud” showed Connor around.

The spot Connor chose is a hillside behind the rock spiral, where kids had been gathering to build forts. “There wasn’t really much going on,” he said. “It wasn’t really being used for much. It just seemed like an unused space, and I really wanted to make it more purposeful.”

His idea was a structure where kids could build forts and take them down easily. On the work day, he and 12 volunteers stacked two logs into a frame that kids can build against and climb on, then built a corral beside it to hold the loose sticks they built with. “We also decided to add a little seating area for any teachers who wanted to teach the kids something at the specific site or if anyone just wanted to be at the area in general and wanted to sit down,” he said.

That seating area is where this story connects to a much longer one. For more than a decade, a handful of Kenwood neighbors have been setting the stage to use the forest as a classroom.

The Original Seed

The school forest exists on paper because Angie Erdrich, a Kenwood Elementary School parent, decided it should. “When I moved here in 2009, I was introduced to the wild areas of Cedar Lake Park during an Earth Day cleanup,” she said. “Some parents and I started taking our classrooms on hikes and we started the oriole feeders. I found that teachers were not familiar with how close the forest was.”

“I learned the history of the park and realized that with this next generation of ad-



vocates, we could team up with the DNR to protect the area,” Erdrich said. She worked with Dr. Keith Prussing of the Cedar Lake Park Association, MaryLynn Pulscher of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Kenwood principal, the DNR, teachers and parents to form a committee and a partnership. In August 2019 the Park Board and the Minneapolis school board passed resolutions officially designating the area a DNR School Forest.

“Formation of the DNR school forest was five years in the making because of the resolutions and legal documents,” she said.

“The forest isn’t just to be tromped through everywhere. The forest is to learn and to tend to and to respect. But along with that, we need a place for kids to play.”

The Sapling

Stensrud has spent years doing volunteer work at Cedar Lake East Beach and in the school forest, much of it by hand: moving boulders with a come-along winch, pulling buckthorn, setting posts. More recently he has been working on a map of the forest.

Working with the Cedar Lake Park Association and James Schaefer, the natural areas manager for the Park Board, he mapped the forest into habitat zones: oak savanna along Upton Avenue, mesic forest on the higher ground, wet meadow and floodplain forest toward the shore. The idea, he said, is for teachers and students to understand the forest as something to learn from and tend, with lessons built around each zone.

“The forest isn’t just to be tromped through everywhere,” Stensrud said. “The forest is to learn and to tend to and to re-

spect. But along with that, we need a place for kids to play.”

The map also marks a nature play area, on the hillside behind the rock spiral where kids were already gathering to build. In Stensrud’s plan, a class learns about the habitat zones, and then, at the end of the lesson, goes to the play area. He had been promoting the idea with the Cedar Lake Park Association and Schaefer, and the intention of the spaces, he said, had started to be accepted.

Then Connor reached out. Stensrud showed him the map and the places he could help: the savanna restoration, buckthorn removal where the wet meadow is planned. Then he took him back to the hillside behind the rock spiral.

“Connor immediately was really like, ‘This is cool,’” Stensrud said. “This is a place that I would like to do something.”

Why nature play in an unnatural place?

There is a reason the play area landed here and not in the savanna, and it is a piece of neighborhood history. Nothing about this hillside is natural.

The ground behind the rock spiral was once the East Bay of Cedar Lake, marshy water stretching to the railroad tracks. Around the mid-1950s it was filled in. Stensrud’s theory, drawn from a newspaper article of the era, is that the fill came in because the Park Board had proposed a parkway around Cedar Lake like the ones at Harriet, Bde Maka Ska and Isles. The parkway was never built. The fill stayed, grew wild and became the rolling hills kids scramble over today, with the odd chunk of concrete showing through.

Stensrud said that the Park Board suggested this was the best spot for a nature play area for exactly that reason: it is fill, dirt and rock, not mesic forest or savanna, so concentrating play here protects the parts of the forest that have more of a native history.

Connor had reached the same conclusion. “I think it’s better to try and improve on a previously touched area than overall affecting a completely new area,” he said.

Taking Root

The project was approved by Sherry Brooks of the Park Board and by Connor’s scoutmaster. Thirteen people completed the work in a day: Connor’s friends, members of Troop 33, a couple of local Cub Scouts, Connor’s family and Stensrud’s. Chainsaws are not allowed in the forest, so the crew used

Continued on page 26

HOW NOT TO DEAL WITH A BAT

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond

A first bat in 30 years, an ancient can of Static Guard and a \$350 quote from Animal Control: a columnist pitches her own how-not-to show, in eight steps.

Dear Neighbor,

There’s a true-crime program called “How Not to Hire a Hitman,” which I’ve never seen, but I imagine it involves a lot of sloppy decision-making. In this vein, I feel qualified to pitch a show called “How Not to Deal With a Bat.”

Step 1: Identify the bat as a bat.

Since I entered my 60s, coinciding with a bout of shingles in my right eye, I’ve been seeing things. I’d go to stomp on a scampering bug only to discover there was nothing there. Dust rained from the ceiling, nonexistent people walked outside, water dripped from a faucet that didn’t leak.

I thought I was losing my mind and mentioned this to my steadfast ophthalmologist. She waved off my concerns as PVD (posterior vitreous detachment), aka “floaters,” microscopic clumps of collagen that form and cast shadows on the retina. She added that it was due more to my age than to shingles. I wasn’t losing my mind, just my youth.

When I saw a black fluttering creature one recent morning, I wrote it off as a floater and went on with my day. To confirm my diagnosis, I recalled the empiricist philosopher David Hume, who dismissed miracles on the grounds of likelihood: Did she really fly across the room, or was she lying? I guess miracles do occur.

Step 2: If it looks like a bat ...

Later that afternoon, reality returned (my kingdom for a floater!). A bat! My first bat in 30 years of living here.

Step 3: Be prepared.

When I was growing up on the farm, bats were frequent intruders. Since nobody played tennis, my mother bought a racket for the sole purpose of bat control. I can still see my dad wielding that racket with all the determination of John McEnroe, whacking madly until the bat was stunned into submission and heaved outside.

Not owning this important tool, I decided that chemicals would do the trick. I could have sworn I had a can of Raid, but I couldn’t find it, or any other aerosol besides an ancient can of Static Guard. It worked to the degree that Mr. Bat didn’t like it and slowed down. I sprayed him some more, and he alit atop a bookcase in my office, where I hoped he’d die a quick and painless death. You may call it cruel; I call it Stand Your Ground.

Step 4: Summon your inner gangsta.

That night, my daughter Daisy came by for dinner after work. We were FaceTiming with Lily in New York when the bat reappeared like Lazarus in pterodactyl form. The girls freaked out; I grabbed my can of Static Guard and went into battle. Lily screamed, “Mom’s a badass!” Compliments from Caesar.

Step 5: Don’t poke the bat.

Mr. Bat flew into the living room and nestled into an upper corner above the piano. I continued to spray him, more concerned about the wood’s finish than about the bat. I prodded him with a fireplace poker, and he flew furiously at me and then, inches from my face, gave out, dropping to the middle of the living room floor. I sequestered him under a mesh picnic dome and placed a heavy bowl on top to prevent any chance of escape.

Step 6: Cost-Benefit Analysis

Meanwhile, Daisy was on the phone with Animal Control, which was closed, and left a

message. The next day, Andy from Animal Control stopped by while I was out and left a sticky paper I didn’t understand. I called Andy and asked what to do with it. He told me to slap the sticky side on the bat to trap it. “Then what?” I asked. “Stomp on it,” was his reply. He said he could come back to do the deed. I asked how much it would cost: \$350 was the quoted price.

The \$350 wasn’t so much a stomping fee as the cost of rabies testing. I asked Andy about the chances of rabies, and he said, “approximately 0.0%,” adding that in the last year there had been zero cases of rabid bats in this area.

He continued, “Most bats are born in the spring, and by late summer they’re like Amish teenagers on Rumspringa,” the period when they’re allowed to explore the non-Amish world, sow their oats and decide whether to return or transition into the modern world and risk being shunned. Or, in this case, be held captive under a picnic mesh. I passed.

Step 7: Know when to call it.

You don’t have to be the county coroner to certify a bat’s expiry. Mr. Bat lay lifeless under the mesh for two weeks before I was confident enough to enshroud him in a paper towel and bury him in the trash, after which I washed my hands like a surgeon prepping for a heart transplant.

Step 8: Be proactive.

If you don’t already have one, ask Santa for a tennis racket.

— Dorothy

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

AN OUTDOOR CLASSROOM TAKES SHAPE IN THE SCHOOL FOREST continued from page 25

shovels, a hand saw and a winch, digging out spots for the logs and setting them by hand.

The fort frame is two logs stacked on each other, with some climbing opportunities, as Connor put it. The stick corral came out of a practical problem. “We saw that there were a ton of sticks from the previous structures and there wasn’t really much of a space to put them,” Connor said.

“Overall, it wasn’t too difficult,” Connor said of the day. “It was just a bunch of work.” His favorite moment was watching it come together, everyone working on the logs at once.

What’s next for Connor?

Connor is waiting on the project’s formal approval. After that come letters of recommendation and the application for Eagle rank. College is the plan after high school, and beyond that he is still figuring it out. One thing he is sure of: he wants to keep working in the forest.

Asked what he would tell another scout thinking about a project in a public park, he did not talk about logs or shovels. “It’s really important to learn about the area just as much as actually doing the project,” he said, “because having that kind of information will allow you to make the project feel more like it belongs in the area.”

Asked what he learned from the Park

Board and the neighbors he worked with, he replied in a calm baritone that makes him sound older on the phone than he is. He just wants the forest to be a place everyone can enjoy.

“That’s what these kinds of spaces are for,” he said. “They’re for enjoying yourself and being there in nature.”

Craig Wilson is the editor of the Hill & Lake Press. He lives in Lowry Hill.

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TINY TURTLES, BIG JOURNEY

Article and Images by Courtney Cushing Kiernat



Two quarter-sized snapping turtle hatchlings on a Lake of the Isles sidewalk send a dog walker to the Park Board and the Minnesota Zoo for answers.

As my four dogs and I came around the bend one morning, I spotted a roughly inch-long, roundish black object on the sidewalk across the street from Lake of the Isles. The dogs paid it no attention (it wasn't a squirrel or a rabbit), so we walked on by. But then I did a double take. It was a baby turtle! Not an unheard-of sight around Minneapolis lakes, but when I found another one in nearly the same spot that evening, I



got curious. According to the Minnesota Zoo and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, my two tiny turtle friends were common snapping turtles (*Chelydra serpentina*), one of at least five native turtle species found in Minneapolis parks. Snapping turtles are Minnesota's largest turtle species, with adults weighing up to about 45 pounds. They spend most of their lives in the water and survive our harsh winters buried in mud or decaying vegetation until spring. Snapping turtles breed in spring and fall. Females leave the water to find nesting sites, often traveling surprisingly long distances. They lay 25 to 50 eggs,

and the Minnesota Zoo estimates that 60% to 100% of those eggs may be eaten by other animals. For the hatchlings that survive, another perilous journey awaits: getting from the nest to the water. Snapping turtles may travel up to a mile to nest where they hatched, crossing roads, bike paths and other hazards along the way. In August, the next generation begins to appear. Baby turtles hatch from eggs laid earlier in the season and may continue emerging and heading toward water into October. Some late hatchers even spend the entire winter underground and emerge the following spring.

“I don’t think they use the crosswalk.”

There are turtle-crossing signs around the Minneapolis lakes, but as one neighbor observed, “I don’t think they use the crosswalk.” Fortunately, snapping turtles are long-lived, so only a small number of hatchlings need to survive each year for a population to

remain stable. Still, looking at a turtle barely bigger than a quarter and imagining it negotiating curbs, parkways, bikes, cars and dogs makes its journey seem rather heroic. My dogs and I ended up accompanying two tiny travelers across the sidewalk and safely

“Hard to imagine something so small making such a big journey.”

ly past the street before letting them continue toward the lake. The Park Board advises leaving healthy hatchlings alone whenever possible so they can find their own way, but if one needs help crossing a road, move it across in the same direction it was already traveling and minimize handling. Hard to imagine something so small making such a big journey.

Courtney Cushing Kiernat writes for the *Hill & Lake Press*. She lives in Kenwood.



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KENWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATION’S

Neighbors and visitors gathered at East Cedar Lake Beach for Fire and Ice Cream, the Kenwood Neighborhood Organization’s volunteer-run finale to its summer programs, with Sebastian Joe’s ice cream, hula hoops and fire dancers. More than 3,500 people attended KNO’s free events this summer, from bird walks and yoga to a Shakespeare play and the Pick-Up Truck Opera. (Fire Dancer Images: Eric Jorgensen; Images: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)



ANNUAL “FIRE & ICE CREAM”



GOODBYE, ROUTE 25L?

Revisiting 2011’s “Kenwood /CIDNA Bus Service in Jeopardy”

By Courtney Cushing Kiernat

With the 25L bus route down to just two runs a day and once again threatened with cancellation, a 2011 article traces the long decline of this neighborhood bus line.

Neighbors will likely soon say goodbye to the Route 25L bus, which runs from downtown Minneapolis through Lowry Hill, Kenwood and Cedar-Isles-Dean before ending at the Jewish Community Center in St. Louis Park.

Part of its route follows the path of the former Douglas Avenue streetcar.

Now running just twice a day, once in the morning and once in the early afternoon, the 25L has experienced a slow decline in service over many years.

In 2011, Hill & Lake Press writer Adam Platt took a deep dive into the history of the 25L and its predecessor, the Route 1 bus.

His article, reprinted here, offers a look back at a neighborhood transit line that may soon make its final run.

Courtney Cushing Kiernat writes for the Hill & Lake Press. She lives in Kenwood.



Kenwood/CIDNA Bus Service in Jeopardy

By Adam Platt

This article was originally published in the Hill & Lake Press on Sept. 16, 2011. At the time, the name CIDNA was used for both the Cedar-Isles-Dean neighborhood itself and the Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association. Since 2022, The Hill & Lake Press has distinguished between the neighborhood and the association. For historical accuracy, the original use of CIDNA has been left unchanged. The route also serves Lowry Hill and St. Louis Park.

Sept. 16, 2011 — A week after Labor Day, Metro Transit made substantial cuts to Kenwood/CIDNA bus service, eliminating nearly half the trips that serve the neighborhood.

The net result leaves Kenwood and CIDNA perilously close to being without bus service.

Metro Transit officials say the cutbacks are a response to modest cuts in state funding and an ongoing decline in Route 25 ridership. They peg metrowide service cuts at only 2%, but that’s little solace to riders of a line that as recently as two decades ago boasted Saturday service and hourly weekday service from sun-up to evening.

Long-held suppositions about the influence of the neighborhood’s bigwigs and heavy hitters have failed to stave off any previous service cuts, and cannot be relied on to save what service remains.

The current 25 line is the successor to a streetcar line that traversed Douglas Avenue and terminated at 21st and Penn. This “streetcar node” created the retail cluster at the intersection.

The Kenwood line was one of the earliest to convert to bus service; the last streetcars visited Kenwood in the 1930s. Sometime between then and Metro Transit’s inception, the line was extended to Lake and France on the west end and connected with a line on Stinson Boulevard and designated Route 1 Kenwood/Stinson.

Early this decade, during a Metro Transit service reorganization, the line was designated Route 25

and shifted from Hennepin Avenue to Nicollet Mall downtown.

Service cuts are nothing new here, as Metro Transit has been whittling away at the route every few years, maintaining service to Northeast Minneapolis (which still sees Saturday buses), but dismantling the south end.

Route 25 in Kenwood/CIDNA, prior to the September cuts, consisted of six morning trips and seven afternoon ones, spaced over rush hour and slightly beyond. The latest cuts eliminate early morning trips in and out of Kenwood and afternoon/evening trips at the beginning and end of rush hour.

Thus, 13 trips become eight, with four buses bunched in a tight 90-minute morning window and a two-hour window of afternoon service (though only two of those buses will then carry passengers back downtown).

Cyndi Harper, Metro Transit’s manager of route planning, says 25 line ridership is down 6% to 10% since 2008 and that the buses being eliminated carry just a few passengers.

Harper says ridership is greater in the morning than afternoon (evidence that riders may be using other bus service to get home) and even well-patronized buses are only carrying passenger counts “in the mid-teens.”

Harper acknowledges that service cuts beget even less ridership, as passengers seek out options that offer greater flexibility. She grants that the professional, white-collar line 25 rider, who does not work a factory schedule, may not find enough flexibility to continue to use the bus.

Although Harper would not speculate, the thrust of her comments implied that ridership on the remaining line 25 trips was marginal and that a transit funding crisis or continued passenger losses could put the neighborhoods’ remaining bus service in jeopardy.

As a regular rider of the 25 for 14 years now, I know several neighbors who abandoned the bus to bicycle to work. It’s good for them and good for the environment, but it shaves the 25 line’s razor-thin margins even further.

I use the line less frequently because the chronically tardy status

of the bus between 5 and 6 p.m. means I can’t pick up my kids on time.

Ironically, while Kenwood and CIDNA work subtly to impede a light rail stop in the Kenilworth Corridor that portends a huge increase in transit service to a portion of the neighborhood, we

“The neighborhood’s one ace in the hole may be its relative isolation.”
— Sept. 16, 2011

are in real jeopardy of losing the remaining sliver of transit service we currently have.

The neighborhood’s one ace in the hole may be its relative isolation. Metro Transit’s Harper said the agency likes to structure service so no city resident is more than a mile from a bus line, but the elimination of Route 25 service would do just that in the areas near Kenwood Parkway and Cedar Lake.

Still, Harper says that consideration can be trumped by other factors, including a neighborhood’s relative transit-dependence (ours could not be lower on that scale) and the need for scarce resources elsewhere.

Meaning Metro Transit will not leave passengers standing on Hennepin Avenue for want of a bus with available seats so it can send comparatively empty buses into Kenwood eight times a day.

Unfortunately, many of those passengers who can’t find room on a Hennepin Avenue bus are there because two decades of cuts to Kenwood/CIDNA service have rendered it too infrequent and inflexible to suit today’s complicated lifestyles and schedules. And the vicious cycle rolls on.

When this article was published, Adam Platt was executive editor of Mpls.St.Paul Magazine, a daily transit user and a longtime Kenwood resident.

NEW FLAVORS ALL FALL

LINDEN HILLS 4321 UPTON AVE SO. MINNEAPOLIS, MN LOWRY HILL 1007 W FRANKLIN AVE SO. MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Sebastian Joe's

LAKE & IRVING

By Jason Suss



(Images: Jason Suss)

Open since 2013, the Uptown restaurant juggles American fare, Hawaiian fusion, fresh sushi and a surprisingly impressive whiskey list – and pulls it off.

Let’s start with a few food and drink updates for the neighborhood.

New in the Neighborhood

Arizona Taco Co. has opened in the former Libertine/Arts & Rec space on the southwest corner of Lake and Girard (in the Seven Points mall). It’s their second location, with the original having opened in New Hope in 2019. It’s a big space with a large rooftop, so let’s hope that they can get the volume they need to succeed.

Harold’s Chicken Sports Bar has also officially opened. I haven’t had a chance to go see the chickens playing sports yet, but I’ll report back when I do.

OG ZaZa has opened in the former Mesa Pizza location on Lagoon. They feature “New Haven” style pizza, which is wood-fired, thin and crispy with the charred dough and cheese bubbles. I’ve had it at their other locations, and it’s quite tasty.

They are open very, very late: 3 a.m. on weekends. I think that’s pretty ambitious, so we’ll see how it shakes out.

Tom’s Thai is still dry.

Now that we’ve covered what’s new, let’s visit something tried and true.

So Much Going on Inside

Lake & Irving opened in 2013. Despite many of their neighbors changing over, they’ve remained strong. I think one of the main reasons is because there’s so much going on inside.

Is it a neighborhood restaurant? Yes. Does it have good cocktails and a rotating menu of local beer? Yes. Does it have a surprisingly impressive whiskey list? Yes. Does it offer several spaces for private dining? Yes.

Did the chef train with Morimoto? Yes. Do they serve standard American fare, Hawai-

ian fusion cuisine and well-executed fresh sushi? Also, yes.

That’s a lot to do well, but they pull it off. The main reason is owner and culinary director Chris Ikeda. He has a wealth of experience working with numerous internationally acclaimed chefs.

His apprenticeship under Alan Wong, often credited with being one of the founders of Hawaiian cuisine, helped him form his unique style. Hawaiian cuisine fuses many types of Asian, native tropical and American cuisine, which are all represented on the Lake & Irving menu.

Executive chef Eduardo Flores has a strong background in sushi along with Latin American cuisine. That’s why there is a sushi menu at what most people wouldn’t think of as a “sushi restaurant,” but with a bit of a Latin twist in items like the poke nachos and hamachi tostadas.

“Their buttermilk chicken sandwich is probably their most popular item, and rightfully so.”

The Menu

The menu is big, which can sometimes cause some items to fall flat, a common issue with trying to do too much. However, everything I’ve had there has been good.

Their buttermilk chicken sandwich is probably their most popular item, and rightfully so. It’s hot, crispy, cheesy and just right with some acid from the pickles.

But there are so many other interesting options. Loco Moco is a classic Hawaiian dish of rice, curry, egg, shrimp and chicken or short rib. Yonsei is a yakisoba noodle and veggie dish with beef, pork or salmon.

There are lots of veggie options like the KFC (Korean fried cauliflower), ginger scallion tofu or a quinoa salad. And of course, there’s a burger for that one friend we all have, but it uses Angie’s Acres Akaushi Wagyu beef, so it’s extra decadent.

Suffice it to say, everyone is going to be able to find something they like on the menu.

Before You Go

There’s a happy hour Monday through Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m. with some good deals on bar snacks (think sliders and musubi) and drinks. Lunch and brunch are served Friday through Sunday, featuring much of their menu and some more traditional breakfast items.

They didn’t forget about the kiddos either. There are a few smaller entrees for those under 12. There’s also a parking lot in back if you prefer to avoid the dangers of the bike lanes.

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.



LAKE & IRVING at a glance

Location: 1513 W. Lake St., Minneapolis, in Uptown. Open since 2013, with several spaces for private dining and a parking lot in back.

Who’s cooking: Owner and culinary director Chris Ikeda, who apprenticed under Alan Wong, often credited as a founder of Hawaiian cuisine. Executive chef Eduardo Flores brings a background in sushi and Latin American cuisine.

Don’t miss: The buttermilk chicken sandwich, probably the most popular item. Hot, crispy, cheesy and just right with some acid from the pickles.

On the menu: Loco Moco, a classic Hawaiian dish of rice, curry, egg, shrimp and chicken or short rib. Yonsei, a yakisoba noodle and veggie dish with beef, pork or salmon. Poke nachos and hamachi tostadas from the sushi side. Veggie options include KFC (Korean fried cauliflower), ginger scallion tofu and a quinoa salad. The burger uses Angie’s Acres Akaushi Wagyu beef.

Drinks: Happy hour Monday through Thursday, 4 to 6 p.m., with deals on drinks and bar snacks like sliders and musubi. Good cocktails, a rotating menu of local beer and a surprisingly impressive whiskey list.

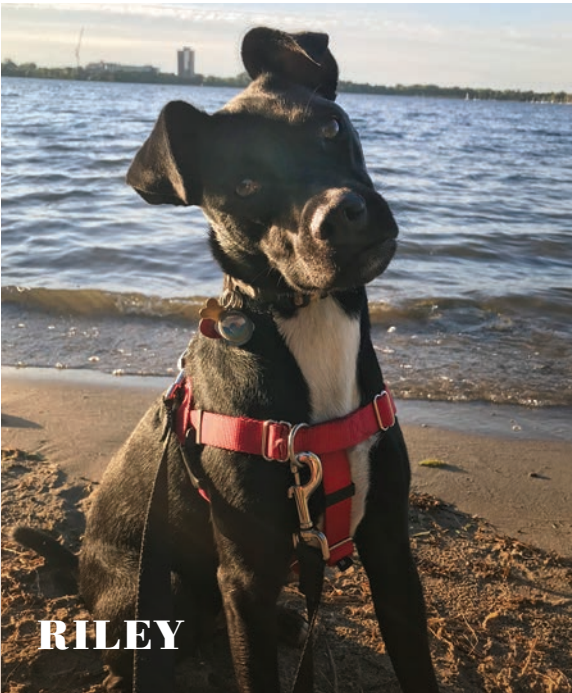
Lunch and brunch are served Friday through Sunday. A few smaller entrees are offered for those under 12.

PAWS FOR GOOD

Images by Courtney Cushing Kiernat and Submitted Photos



QUINCY



RILEY



MOOSE



SESI



ROYCE



BETTY



WOODCHIP CHARLIE,
MILLIE & FRANNY



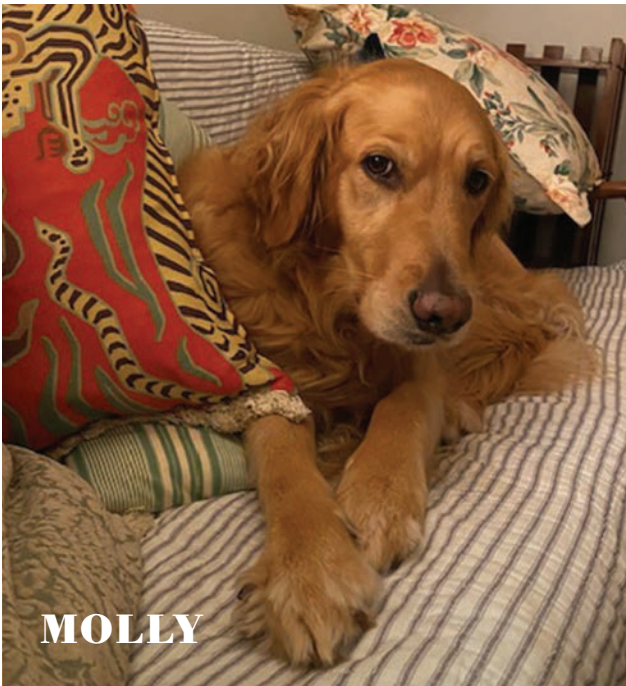
TORI



HELP US
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MOLLY



STELLA



POMSKY