



## Hamline-Midway Library may be torn down

*Neighbors question why they weren't involved, criticize 'top-down decision making,' and suggest alternative*

By JANE McCLURE

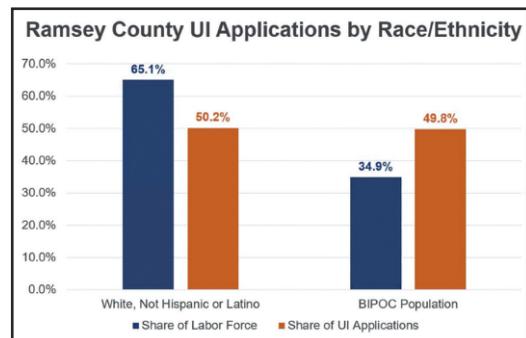
The fate of the Hamline-Midway Branch Library could be decided this year, during St. Paul's 2021 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process.

The city's CIB Committee will be asked to make a recommendation on the project by June 30. A recommendation then goes to Mayor Melvin Carter and the St. Paul City Council, for inclusion in St. Paul's 2022 budget.

One proposal calls for renovating the existing building for \$3.6 million, providing improved interior spaces and better accessibility for people with disabilities.

The second option would demolish the building and replace it with a new one-story structure that would cost about \$8 million. A new facility is touted as providing more dedicated spaces for specific users, including teens, children and public computer users. It would fill most of the existing lot but not expand beyond the current property.

HAMLIN-MIDWAY LIBRARY »» 2



*BIPOC, lowest paid workers hit hardest during pandemic; county looks at new economic competitiveness, inclusion plan*

## A PATH FORWARD

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

Ramsey County doesn't want to return to the status quo.

While 2020 was a hard year with unemployment spiking at 11% last May, it brought ongoing workforce disparities to the forefront, and the county responded by passing the Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Vision Plan in March 2021.

BIPOC, LOWEST PAID WORKERS »» 14



Nick Kor, of the Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice, said, "A fundamental belief of our alliance is that we have to name the racism against Asian Americans. We must be clear and we must speak up." (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

## Asian Minnesotan leaders NAME THE RACISM

*Bystander intervention class offered on strategies: distract, delegate, document, delay, and direct*

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

In the wake of a shooting spree in Georgia that left six Asian Americans dead last month, the Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice is encouraging the community to name the racism.

Nick Kor is a senior manager with Coalition of Asian American Leaders. He is one of the forces behind the Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice (AMAJ), which formed in response to the murder of George Floyd. The movement is made up of leaders and representatives from different Asian Minnesotan organizations who share a common purpose: ending racism and xenophobia rooted in White supremacy.

On the night of March 16, a 21-year-old Georgia man went on a shooting spree at three Atlanta-area spas that left eight people dead. Among the victims were four women born in Korea and two women born in China.

The Coalition of Asian American Leaders in St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood issued the following statement:

"We are horrified by the acts of violence against members of our Asian American communities across the country. We stand in solidarity with the survivors, victims, and their families during this challenging time. We all deserve to live without threat of violence, and to feel safe in our neighborhoods."

### Racial inequities worsen in pandemic

According to Kor, the recent assaults come on the heels of nearly 3,800 acts of documented Asian-American hate incidents nationwide since the pandemic began. As he points out, there many additional cases that were misclassified, ignored, or unreported.

NAME THE RACISM »» 3

*Professor brings people together to think about how their homes help them live better*

## Thriving places, thriving lives

By TESSA M. CHRISTENSEN

How does the design of your house or apartment help you live a healthy and connected life?

Minneapolis resident Tasoulla Hadjiyanni has been studying this through her work as Northrop Professor of Interior Design at the University of Minnesota.



As a child, Tasoulla Hadjiyanni fled from war-torn Cyprus.

"Homes are among the primary settings where we live, cook, eat, play, socialize, pray, work, study, and engage in activities that give meaning to our life and determine our ability to thrive," she observed.

Her latest book, "The Right to Home - Exploring How Space, Culture, and Identity Intersect with Disparities" features stories of Hmong, Somali, Mexicans, Ojibwe, and African Americans in Minnesota. It explores how elements of interiors support or suppress meaning-making.

Hadjiyanni focuses on the intersections of design, culture, and identity under conditions of displacement. Her own experience as a refugee from Cyprus as a child propelled her into this work.

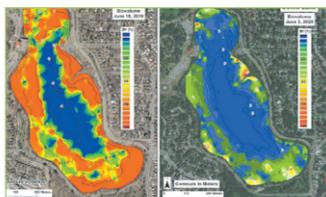
"Bottom line is that we all eat, play, sleep, socialize, pray, work, rest, etc.— how we do these may be different," pointed out Hadjiyanni. "As a result, there could be unexpected uses and unintended consequences of domestic environments."

THRIVING PLACES, LIVES »» 8



Ramsey County works on 'Transforming Systems Together'

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Como Lake water quality getting better

PAGE 15



Auto shops offer advice, grapple with COVID-19 impacts

PAGE 16

## Ramsey County implementing new ways to deliver programs under Danny Givens' leadership

# TRANSFORMING SYSTEMS TOGETHER

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

Activist and orator Danny Givens has been chosen as the first director of Transforming Systems Together (TST) – an initiative to improve, rethink, and reshape services and programs to be more equitable for everyone in Ramsey County.

Givens, who started his new position in January 2021, said, "We are creating a formal process through which county leaders and community members will share decision-making. What we envision is a shared table of power."

The TST approach is not focused on one particular area, but on changing the old ways decisions were made and power was leveraged within the county system. The goal is to shape policy and program direction from the earliest stages of design and development with diverse voices.

### Think of it as reverse-engineering

At a time when trust of authority is at historic lows in communities of color, Givens and many others believe it is time to lean into a new model of decision making. He said, "If we want to be invested in communities across Ramsey County, we

need to invite community members to participate in the process."

He sees TST as operating on the principle of reverse engineering. The old institutional design of decision making from the top down hasn't been well-received in many communities of color. People want to be involved in the design and implementation of programs that will directly affect their lives. The structure of TST will be different.

### Starting with conciliation

Givens said, "Reconciliation is a word that gets floated around when people talk about redressing racial inequity, but there has to be conciliation before there can be reconciliation. We see TST as an opportunity to offer conciliatory opening moments to diverse residents of Ramsey County – especially those whose voices typically have not been heard."

he TST approach is to create a framework for decision making. A group of nine community-selected representatives, and an equal number of Ramsey County and Second Judicial District employees, will work together in a collaborative model. The county has dedicated \$3,000,000 in funding to make significant systems change possible this year.

Givens will also lead a team guiding other systems transformation efforts in Ramsey County including the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, adult justice systems reform, and an integrated approach to mental health and justice.

### No stranger to transformation

For the last two years, Givens has been director of Healing Streets, a non-traditional gun violence prevention and intervention project in St. Paul. He is also an ordained minister, and the senior pastor of a church he planted in the Summit University neighborhood called "Above Every Name Ministries."

Givens did not follow a conventional route to the pulpit or to the positions of directorship he has held.

In 1996, he shot an armed, off-duty Ramsey County deputy named Art Blakey in the Rondo neighborhood where they both lived. Givens and some of his friends, just a few months out of high school, were trying to rob the local VFW Hall where Blakey happened to be that night. At the sentencing hearing, Blakey requested leniency from the judge and Givens got 12 years instead of 60.

His journey toward the min-



Activist and orator Danny Givens has been chosen as the first director of Transforming Systems Together (TST) – an initiative to improve, rethink, and reshape services and programs to be more equitable for everyone in Ramsey County. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

istry began in prison, spurred on by Art Blakey's gift of forgiveness. Over the many years that their friendship grew, they came to call each other father and son. Released from prison in 2008, Givens went on to earn his B.A. and M.A. in Christian ministry, and completed a three-year residency in interfaith ministry at Unity Unitarian Church in 2016.

Givens said, "Art passed in

### Roots in Rondo

The VFW Hall where Givens shot Art Blakey (at 820 Concordia Avenue) is now the site of the Rondo Commemorative Plaza. The VFW Hall was demolished in 2008, the year Givens walked free.

One of the ways Givens gives back to his community is by offering a Sacred Site Tour sponsored by the Minnesota Council of Churches. The name of the tour is "Black in Time;" the tour highlights local places of African American significance. The Rondo Commemorative Plaza is one of the tour stops, and is particularly significant for Givens as it was where the course of his life changed in an instant.

He said, "As a Rondo native, I'm humbled by the opportunity I have to work at the intersection of community, systems, and innovation in Ramsey County at this particular time. I am deeply invested in identifying and advancing ideas that will lead to transformational, county-wide systems change. To make this work, to get to equity and real conciliation – we all have some very heavy lifting to do."

## Hamline-Midway Library may be torn down

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Library administration, led by Library Director Catherine Penkert, presented the two proposals during an online meeting in March. Penkert made it clear that library officials want a new building, citing the deteriorated condition, space and disability access issues in the current library. Hamline-Midway's library has not had significant improvements in more than three decades.

That meeting has sparked considerable debate among neighbors and neighborhood groups. While some neigh-

borhood residents want a new library and like the plan to demolish the existing facility, and others want to see the historic library renovated and saved, there is also a call for a third option. That is to look at another use for the existing library and build a combined facility that would incorporate the library, the existing Hancock Recreation Center and possible library facilities for Hamline Elementary. That could involve using city and school district-owned property at the current Hancock site at 1610 Hubbard Ave. Hancock is connected

to the school. Then the existing library at 1558 W. Minnehaha Ave. could be repurposed, in the same way that the Hamline Park Playground building is used by Mosaic on a Stick.

Jonathan Oppenheimer is one of the neighbors calling for another look at the library proposal. He has criticized a lack of community engagement on the project, and top-down decision-making. He and others have also said that the new library would lack space for community needs.

"We are being presented



with an unfair choice, with the not-so-subtle message being that we better get something now or we may get nothing later. Just because there has been long-term disinvestment of the library to allow it to get to this point does not mean we should be grateful for the wrong kind of investment now. I sincerely hope that moving forward, whatever decision is made by SPPL and the CIB Board, that we as neighbors can partner with SPPL to dream up

something much more substantial and thoughtful than what's on offer right now," he said.

But under the current CIB process, bringing that kind of community-city partnership proposal forward would be difficult at best. St. Paul's capital budget process was set up years ago by the Minnesota Legislature. An 18-member citizen committee is appointed, with each of the city's legislative districts having a set number of seats. The committee reviews and ranks projects before making recommendations to the mayor and city council. For years the process was biennial, with all of the projects reviewed in one year.

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*MnDOT invites and encourages participation by all. If you need an ASL, a foreign language interpreter, or other reasonable accommodation, or need documents in an alternative format (such as braille or large print), please email your request to Janet Miller at [ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us](mailto:ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us) or call 651-366-4720. Presentation videos will also be available in accessible format on the website after the meetings.*

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# NAME THE RACISM

>> from 1

Kor, who grew up in Eagan and attended the University of St. Thomas, said, "I was called a 'gook' in elementary school before I knew what it meant, by kids I thought were my friends. Asian American children are generally taught to keep our heads down and not cause trouble. This attitude may be part of the tendency not to report hate incidents; there also is a low level of trust law enforcement and government agencies in Asian American communities. We are not immune to police violence."

"At AMAJ, we are asking that victims or observers report all incidents of hate to the Minnesota Department of Human Rights Discrimination Hotline at 1.833.454.0148."

## Name the racism

Kor continued, "A fundamental belief of AMAJ is that we have to name the racism. We must be clear and we must speak up. The Atlanta attacker specifically targeted Asian businesses and killed Asian women. The attacks were deeply connected to how Asian American women are sexualized in American society. They are portrayed as weak and submissive, as easy targets. There's a negative, harmful narrative there that will never go away if we don't call it out."

In response to the rise in Asian American violence and harassment, AMAJ and its partners are offering free, one hour, interactive Bystander Intervention Training sessions for community members. The Five Strategies for Intervention will be covered: distract, delegate, document, delay, and direct.

Preregistration is required. Visit [www.caalmn.org](http://www.caalmn.org) for more information. After registering, you will receive a confirmation

*"We need cross-racial solidarity, knowing that the fate of all our communities is tied together."*

- Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice

email with information about how to join the Zoom meeting. One is scheduled for Monday, April 19, at 3 p.m.

## President Biden speaks out

In his first week in office, President Biden issued a memorandum condemning racism against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. In part, he said, "The federal government must recognize that it has played a role in furthering xenophobic sentiments through the actions of political leaders, including referring to COVID-19 by the geographic location of its origin."

"Such statements have stoked fears and perpetuated stigmas against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders; they have contributed to increasing rates of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes against AAPI persons."

## Volunteer opportunities

As part of AMAJ outreach efforts, community patrols have been organized in parts of St. Paul and Minneapolis where there has been violence against AAPI persons. These patrols go out in groups, and are meant to be a peaceful presence on the streets.

AAPI individuals who consider themselves vulnerable may also request an escort. Email [MNasiansafetysquad@gmail.com](mailto:MNasiansafetysquad@gmail.com) to volunteer for a community patrol or to request an escort.

Kor does not feel unsafe himself, but said, "I understand

why Asian Americans are more comfortable going out in groups right now. Women, children, and the elderly have been disproportionately targeted for violence, verbal harassment, bullying in school, and discriminatory service in public places."

According to the AMAJ website, "Violence against Asians and Asian Americans is not new. Anti-Asian racism has occurred since Asians first came to the U.S. It started with the Page Act of 1875; the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882; incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II; surveillance of South Asians and Muslims following 9/11; and the continuing deportation of Southeast Asians happening to this day. The scapegoating of Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic is a continuation of systemic racism."

## Policy action

This session, the Combating Hate bill (House File 1691) will be heard. Kor said, "It's important that we urge our legislators to support making Minnesota safe for all." The comment period will be open for several more weeks.

The bill has the support of several community organizations including the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, Jewish Community Action, Council on American-Islamic Relations, OutFront Minnesota and more.

If the bill passes, community organizations would be given the authority to report hate crimes to the state. Hate crime victims may be more comfortable reporting to them than to the police. Supporters of the bill believe it would result in more accurate hate crime reporting data. Opponents take issue with the bill's added police training requirements and including gender non-binary people as a protected class.

For more information about the Coalition of Asian American Leaders and the Asian Minnesotan Alliance for Justice, email Nick Kor at [nick@caalmn.org](mailto:nick@caalmn.org).

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## The fight for Black Rights: leadership challenge of 21st century

Children are the hope for the future. History has shown us that youth have been at the forefront of social change movements. Whether it be the Freedom Riders of the past (who fought against racial segregation) or the Dream Defenders of our present (who fought against stand your ground laws). As parents, educators, and community members, we must stand ready to equip young people for this important leadership role. They will define the moral conscience of our nation. They have the power to move us closer to the essence of unity beyond the restraints of Black or White or rich or poor to the higher moral ground of justice and freedom for all.

One of the first steps in preparing our youth for this vital leadership role is educating them about history, laws, and poli-

cies. By gaining a deeper understanding of history, they will disrupt the cycle of racial injustice by not repeating the mistakes of our past. Now is the time to make equal justice under the law come alive. We can move closer to this goal by sharing books and images that explain what African-Americans have endured, while providing a historical context to current events.

I have written three books in the multi-book (The Fight for Black Rights) Alternator Books® series published by Lerner Books. They are particularly relevant and timely, especially when you think about what children are seeing now in the news, on YouTube videos, and on social media. The focus of the books I have contributed to the series is on the history of racial injustice and how to build a more just and equitable society.

Guest  
columnist

By DR. ARTIKA  
TYNER,  
[dr.artikatyner@gmail.com](mailto:dr.artikatyner@gmail.com)



The books all feature a wealth of knowledge and images from real-life events throughout history. For example, did you know: during the Reconstruction, more than half a million Black men became voters in the South. They elected officials whose policies helped improve their lives. Around two thousand Black men were elected during Reconstruction. In 1870, Hiram Rhodes Revels was the first Black person to become a U.S. Senator.

"Vigilante Danger: A Threat to Black Lives" is an exploration of the history of racially-motivated vigilantism that began long before the nation's official founding. Children learn about murders from Emmett Till to Ahmaud Arbery at the hands of vigilantes and how we must continue to protect Black lives from vigilante violence.

I explain in "Black Lives Matter: From Hashtag to the Streets" what the Black Lives Matter movement is. More than a slogan, it's a worldwide movement and children will learn about police brutality, why people are protesting, and the ongoing struggle for equality and racial justice.

"Black Voter Suppression: The Fight for the Right to Vote" discusses the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to end discriminatory practices that denied African-Ameri-

cans the right to vote. I also talk about ongoing efforts to suppress and silence Black voices at the ballot box.

Pioneering civil rights attorney Charles Hamilton Houston wisely stated, "The race problem in the United States is the type of unpleasant problem which we would rather do without but which refuses to be buried." This is the leadership challenge of the 21st Century. The Fight for Black Series can provide key learning tools for embarking on this journey in pursuit of racial justice.

Books are available at our Planting People Growing Justice™ Leadership Institute: [bit.ly/PPGJBOOKS](http://bit.ly/PPGJBOOKS)

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



## YES, WE HAVE A DIRECTORY!

In a world where we depend on our computers, phones, tablets and so much of our lives is run through screens and virtually, is there now more importance on the traditional ways of life? Trends have suggested people are more likely to respond and remember an invitation delivered in the mail as opposed to an email. Similarly, a conversation in person is more memorable than one on the phone or over email or text (or Zoom).

This thought reminds me of my comments back to people when they say, "The Midway Chamber still publishes a physical directory of businesses?"

This edition of the *Monitor* comes with a copy of our annual directory. Creating the publication is one of my favorite assignments of the year, as it is a time to reflect on the year and look forward to what is next. While this past year was not one most of us would want to repeat, it did feel good to memorialize it as a reminder of what we all went

Building a  
stronger  
Midway

By CHAD KULAS,  
Midway Chamber  
of Commerce Executive Director  
[chad@midwaychamber.com](mailto:chad@midwaychamber.com)



through.

Despite the struggles, we do see the light at the end of the tunnel for the pandemic and for many

of the businesses who dealt with property damage during the civil unrest. The directory has been a reminder for me that things are getting better and that we can hopefully take lessons learned this past year and use them to help our lives going forward.

The directory also is an opportunity for us to let our community know more about the work we do, including events relevant to our members and committee work which helps us strive for our mission to "build a stronger Midway."

But the most important part is a listing of our members. This gives you an opportunity to consider shopping local and become

more acquainted with our business community. I probably use it more than anyone (it is my job, after all!) but I know I'm not the only one who keeps a copy on their work desk. Before I started working at the Midway Chamber and was a Frogtown resident, I kept my copy in my kitchen and would use it like the Yellow Pages. I encourage you to use it and discover new businesses. As we have been reminded many times this past year, supporting local and small business has become even more important and a great way to show your support for your community.

Also, find the directory online at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com).

## It's urgent: sign HENS petition and vote 'yes' on rent stabilization

by JOE KRIVIT

Como Park Senior High graduate

In 2015, a powerful area real estate developer purchased an apartment complex in Richfield. The new owner rebranded the property "Concierge," raised rents, and instituted income and credit-score requirements for new tenants. For the – at the time – current tenants of the building, this meant eviction. Nearly 670 households were displaced as a result of this "up-marketing." 195 of the tenants filed a class-action lawsuit and eventually won a \$605,000 settlement in federal court. In reality, this amounted to about \$1,600 per tenant after legal fees were distributed, which is little more than the current monthly rent at the Concierge apartments for a one-bedroom apartment (which is now owned by a California-based holding company).

Under a proposed rent sta-

bilization ballot initiative by the group Housing Equity Now Saint Paul (or HENS as they are colloquially calling themselves) the egregious example of gentrification at the "Concierge" would not be possible.

HENS is seeking to garner enough petition signatures to place the initiative in front of Saint Paul voters in the 2021 municipal election that would cap rent increases at 3-5% year over year for all Saint Paul properties (the organization is still deciding what the exact percentage will be). To place it on the ballot, HENS will need the endorsement of 8% of the number of registered Saint Paul voters who voted in the previous mayoral election (about 5,000). If the petition is successful and the ballot initiative passes in November, it would be the most progressive protection against the displacement caused by "free market" housing in the state of Min-

nesota, and put the city on par with peers like New York City, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Washington DC.

Critics of the initiative, and you can bet there will be plenty who are backed by the city's powerful real-estate developers, will cite the "bad economics" of price controls that will limit supply and lead to urban blight. One need not look farther than our current housing crisis to see that it is not market-controls that are the problem, of which there are very little, but the free-market for housing itself. Their error comes from believing that the housing market operates as a single market, when in fact it operates as a handful of markets with different price brackets.

While the national and regional housing market has been booming for high-rent and high-margin luxury apartments that are suitable for middle-class renters and families, the supply of

housing that is 30% or less of income for a working-class renter or family has consequently shrunk.

The 2019 Minnesota State of the State's Housing Report the percent of renters in Ramsey County who are severely housing burdened (paying more than 50% of their income in rent) was 25%.

The same report shows that while rent has increased an average of 9% in the county from 2010-2017, renter's income has actually decreased by 10% at the same time. The consequences of this have never been more apparent than the shameful rise in the number of homeless encampments in the Twin Cities, whose residents are disproportionately people of color and the disabled.

Critics will further declare that such a rent stabilization policy will discourage future real-estate investments in Saint Paul. Another way to think about this is that it will clear out the city of price-gouging landlords who are placing their

bottom lines ahead of the livelihoods of their tenants and the health of our communities.

A 3-5% increase in rents still allows for a landlord to profit, but it asks for that profitability to be balanced with the affordability of the essential human right of housing. Furthermore, any gap in the supply of housing that is caused by this market control should only increase the call for the city and county to step in to provide more public housing, a conversation which will certainly be welcome among housing advocates.

Privileged Saint Paul residents are quick to demonstrate their aesthetic of progressivism; I saw no shortage of "Black Lives Matter" lawn signs in the wake of George Floyd's murder this summer. The time has never been more urgent than for us to put our money where our mouth is: sign the HENS petition and vote "yes" on rent stabilization in November.

# Monitor

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News for you!

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

Story ideas always welcome.

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

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The *Monitor* is for profit and for a purpose – and we don't sacrifice one for the other. We consider ourselves a zebra company, one that is both black and white, both/and. As a media company, we work to highlight issues, solve real, meaningful problems, and repair existing

social systems. We are working with our readers and advertisers to create a more just and responsible society that hears, helps and heals the customers and communities we serve.

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# Getting 'engaged' with our readers

Midway Como Frogtown Monitor staff attended the Minnesota Newspaper Association Convention (MNA) back in February from the comfort of our respective homes. As many events these days, it ended up being a virtual convention, with Wisconsin and Iowa also participating given the unique set of obstacles that COVID-19 presents for in-person events. I have fond memories of attending my first MNA Convention back I was a junior at Hamline University and editing the Hamline Oracle. Our college paper had entered the Better Newspaper Contest that the MNA sponsors each year and we were lucky to win in several categories. It was heady stuff for a young journalist and provided enough memories to last a lifetime.

This year's event was far different from the one I attended while in college, of course, but the convention did provide a lot of insights into how newspapers in Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin are coping with the challenges of publishing a newspaper during the pandemic. At one of the online sessions called "Publishing Through a Pandemic: Newspaper Leaders Share Solu-

tions," newspaper leaders talked extensively about how their newspapers had invested heavily in their websites over the past 10 years and had created digital pay walls where readers had to subscribe to gain access to the content.

The model is not a new one, of course, and comes right from the playbook of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Likewise, the *Star Tribune*, which was represented in the seminar by its publisher, Michael J. Klingensmith, modeled their own strategy on the *Times* and *Post*: Build up the newspaper's website with content and then eventually set up a pay wall so that readers have to pay to see the content. Over the course of that time period media outlets across the country have increased their digital revenue streams by doing just that. Some media outlets have been successful at it and some are still trying to cover the costs for their additional website investments.

Not all newspapers have embraced that model, however. The *Monitor*, for example, has done something far different. Unlike its big city rivals, the *Monitor's*



Stop the presses!

By DENIS WOULFE  
Sales Manager  
Denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com

print edition and its website are still free to all readers. Many outsiders marvel at our ability to do that, but newspapers like the *Monitor* make our living based solely on advertising revenue. We know that our advertisers want to reach a local audience like the Midway, Como, and Frogtown neighborhoods of St. Paul. And our advertisers know that residents and business owners in our community rely on the *Monitor* to keep them current on news in the community, events going on at their local church, and insights into their neighbors in St. Paul. Our advertisers also know that our readers will reciprocate by supporting those same advertisers when they need to buy goods and services.

With the departure of some newspapers from our market area and the shrinking footprint of other newspapers in an effort to save costs, the *Monitor* remains one of the few newspapers that continues to be home delivered, door-to-door in the Midway, Como, and Frogtown neighborhoods. And in addition, our newly re-released website gives you access to an archive of current and past issues of the *Monitor* as well as other news and features. All of that with no charge to you, dear reader.

But as part of that commitment to you, we would make this one important request: Please let our advertisers know that you are avid readers of the *Monitor*. Yes, in addition to reading the *Monitor*, sending in letters to the editor and liking our posts on social media, we hope you'll also seek engagement with our advertisers by letting them know that you are supporters of the *Monitor*, and when you have products or services that you need that you are highly likely to patronize those same *Monitor* advertisers. That engagement is so important, and it goes a long way in validating those advertisers investing their marketing dollars in the *Monitor*. And it also ensures that the *Monitor* will continue to keep coming to your doorstep on a

monthly basis free of charge.

Engagement is really what the *Monitor* is all about. Our primary mission is to facilitate our readers' ability to get engaged with their community. But for that mission to occur, we also facilitate our advertisers gaining important new customers, allowing them to engage with those customers via the *Monitor*, and finally giving advertisers the opportunity to thank their customers with their advertising messages in the *Monitor*.

As the supply of the vaccines for COVID-19 increases and more Americans are vaccinated, I would hope that next year we'll be able to return to an in-person Minnesota Newspaper Association. I would also imagine that in the months ahead we'll also see more and more of our local businesses reopen their doors and return to full capacity as restrictions lessen and our population approaches herd immunity. As you are out and about in the months ahead, I would encourage *Monitor* readers to be sure to let business owners know that you value their presence in Midway, Como, and Frogtown, and you also value their presence in the *Monitor*. As always, thanks for your support of the *Midway Como Frogtown Monitor* and happy reading!

## St. Paul educators taking lead on climate action

by THOMAS LUCY

In late 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change gave the world a stark warning. The warning was that the world MUST take unprecedented aggressive action to fight climate change to have even a chance at avoiding the most severe climate change impacts. In spite of that warning, most national governments have taken only moderate action and some have taken steps to increase greenhouse gas emissions.

This level of national government climate inaction is unacceptable if our goal is a healthy future for our children and grandchildren.

During this void of national leadership on climate action, one positive trend has developed. In the United States and throughout the world cities, towns and organizations have taken their own steps to act on climate. These lo-

calities and groups have acknowledged that we cannot wait for national leaders and have developed a groundswell for climate action from the ground up.

Now our national leaders and governments must catch up.

I am proud to say that local action is growing within our hometown of Saint Paul. One specific local effort to combat climate change is being organized by the Saint Paul Federation of Educators. In fact, in February SPFE held a virtual town hall to promote the effort to have Saint Paul Public Schools be a leader in developing and/or using community solar. During that town hall and since, we in SPFE and throughout the community have learned how SPPS solar installations can benefit our students and families in a myriad of ways (ie educational benefits, environmental benefits, financial benefits).

Now the time has come to turn that dream into a reality. Students within SPPS, SPFE members and Saint Paul residents are organizing to reach the goal of making SPPS a climate action champion through solar. To achieve this goal we must help the Saint Paul School Board and SPPS Administration by showing them how much support this effort has from Saint Paul residents, SPPS staff AND SPPS students.

This is where you all come in. I am hoping you can join this effort by signing our petition (at the link below) for Solar in SPPS. As our numbers grow, we will get closer and closer to our ultimate goal. A clean, healthy and equitable future for our children and grandchildren. Thank you!

<https://forms.gle/T3s8i5Scx-tr2bNsAA>

## A YEAR DRAGS BY

The *New York Times* covers it thoroughly, half the channels on tv are covering it, the community is buzzing loudly. Funny how 365 days can change the world so surprisingly, so drastically.

One piece at a time, the puzzle of the Derek Chauvin case continues to come together, for better or worse. So many unknown outcomes at our fingertips and yet we all feel a sense of helplessness, a sense of grief. A type of PTSD washes over Minneapolis as footage and details and words are released again of the murder of George Floyd. Watching testimonies and rewatching them bring tears to peoples' eyes, pain to their hearts.

Have we gone anywhere in the last year, taken any steps forward in the last 12 months?

What do you want? Justice.

When do we want it? Now.

We watch our community continue the conversation. That's a step forward.

We mourn another Black man being shot. That's a step backward.

We celebrate Black artists and speakers as they rise to the top. That's a step forward.



Stop Think Feel

By ABHA KARNICK

We cry when laws are passed to exclude community members. That's a step backward.

So where has this last year taken us? Up and down, it seems. We continue to weather the storms of racism, homophobia, sideways politics, and more. Not to mention a world full of a sickness that has taken far too many lives.

George Floyd was a person with a story and a life, just like you and me. Let's see if the next 365 days can better serve as a reminder of this to a broken world.

Abha Karnick is a south Minneapolis resident with East Indian roots who graduated from Hamline University in 2019. Her passion lies in storytelling and finding moments to capture.

## Letters

### Renovate, don't tear down

The fate of the Hamline-Midway neighborhood library building is uncertain. The Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) is seeking Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) funding to either fully renovate the current, historical building or to tear it down and build something new. Saint Paul's portfolio of libraries includes stunning remodels, such as the George Latimer Central Library and the St. Anthony Park branch library which will continue to serve the public well into the future.

The library opened in 1908 as a book station in the building now known as Lloyd's Pharmacy. Neighbors later purchased and donated the land that the current library sits on. The library itself was a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hale and opened in 1930, while the country was in the throes of the 1929 stock market crash and the Great Depression. The

library was identified as a potential historic resource in a 2018 Hamline-Midway survey and an earlier survey of historic buildings in 1983 found the library to have several significant architectural features. The library is the only remaining Henry Hale Memorial Library in Saint Paul. Demolition of the beloved neighborhood library would forever diminish Saint Paul's historic landscape and alter the historic character of the neighborhood.

The use of CIB funding predicated on demolition is contrary to preservation goals expressed in Saint Paul's Comprehensive Plan, which claims that "Saint Paul strives to be a leader in the use of best practices towards an equitable and sustainable approach to the conservation, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction of publicly-owned historic and cultural resources."

In a groundbreaking study by the National Trust for Historic Preservation Research, the

study concluded that "building reuse almost always offers environmental savings over demolition when comparing buildings of equivalent size and function." Two French architects who recently won the highly prized Pritzker architectural award have the mantra: 'Never demolish, never remove - always add, transform and reuse.' They try to bring out the best in old buildings in order to save energy, save material, and to preserve history.

Too many historic buildings have been needlessly lost to demolition. I encourage the city of Saint Paul and the CIB Committee to vote for the more affordable full renovation of the library as opposed to the costly demolition and rebuild option.

Bonnie Youngquist

### What's with Dickerson Park?

After years of driving past the caged black rocks in Dickerman Park on Fairview and Universi-

ty Aves., I simply must discover their purpose. Available online plans mention only park development greenery. Will pretty perennial plants be introduced to them? Become seating for use in warm weather? Outdoor grilling? Labyrinth? Hopefully they will be transformed soon into something attractive.

Calinda Mowery  
Minneapolis

### Did I miss something?

After reading Dr. Artika Tyner's column (March 2021 issue), not once was it mentioned that students are responsible for their own actions. Schools, staff or teachers don't make stu-

dents tardy or disrespectful and shouldn't be blamed. Tardiness and disrespect may be minor reasons for suspensions, but that behavior disrupts classes and other students who are at school to learn and improve their future. Respect and punctuality should be taught at home, as everyone learns by example.

What happened to the days of respecting people's well being and property? Also respecting elders, like teachers? Punctuality is also a good habit to learn for improving life and keeping a job.

Let us all remember the future of each individual is in their own hands.

Jean Opatrny  
Frogtown

# Lexington Station denied

*One side says it isn't consistent with 2040 core values and isn't affordable, the other side insists the denial will slow development in St. Paul*

By JANE McCLURE

Lexington Station and its 288 apartments won't be built near Lexington Parkway and University Avenue. On a 4-3 vote April 7, 2021, the St. Paul City Council rejected an appeal by developer Alatus and upheld the St. Paul Planning Commission denial of the project's site plan.

Minneapolis-based Alatus hoped to build on a long-vacant property at 411-417 Lexington Parkway, near Green Line light rail. The land is owned by the nonprofit social services agency Wilder Foundation. After the council meeting, Wilder President and CEO Armando Camacho said the nonprofit won't move ahead with the purchase agreement with Alatus. He added that the nonprofit looks forward to engaging with the community about the future of the site.

The project became a flash point in citywide debate. Affordable housing advocates contend the project doesn't meet the needs of the adjacent Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods and would cause gentrification and displacement. Housing advocates counter that housing at all price points is needed, and that there is no legal reason to reject the site plan.

Alatus had appealed an 8-7 January Planning Commission

vote denying the site plan. Chris Osmundson, Alatus' director of development, expressed disappointment after the vote.

"The council absolutely erred in their affirmation of the previous erroneous findings and failed to approve a totally unsubsidized, as-right mixed-income housing project with 60 percent and 50 percent area median income (AMI) rental rates committed to in the public record, on a 10-year vacant parcel of land with no other development proposals," Osmundson said. "There was a year of engagement with district councils which resulted in various letters of support from community stakeholders. It is tremendously disheartening and will certainly chill proposed development in the city of St. Paul going forward."

Plans called for 288 residential units, 3,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space and 254 structured parking spaces. The development would have been 331,300 square feet in size.

The first floor was commercial space and parking, with apartments on the upper floors. Apartment choices were alcoves, studio, one and two-bedroom units, with a few four-bedroom units.

Ward 1 Council Member Dai Thao said the appeal should be



denied, and that the Planning Commission didn't err when it rejected the site plan. He said the site plan and project aren't consistent with core city values reflected in the 2040 comprehensive plan that call for equity and opportunities for all residents, and reducing disparities. He also said the five-story project wouldn't provide a transition between it and the surrounding, predominantly single-family neighborhood.

Thao represents the development site in the Lexington-Hamline neighborhood.

Council members Mitra Jalali, Jane Prince and Nelsie Yang joined Thao in voting to deny the appeal.

Council President Amy Brendmoen and council members Rebecca Noecker and Chris Tolbert voted against denial. All three council members said more affordable housing is needed, and that the city is overdue to adopt inclusionary zoning which would ensure that developments include affordable housing.

Noecker said that while she agrees with concerns about racist city development policy, the legal issues of the site plan need to be separated from the arguments about displacement and gentrification. Noecker said the city also needs anti-displacement policies,

so that development anyway can go ahead without displacement. But she also said the city cannot deny a developer's application based on policies the city hasn't enacted yet, and that the rules shouldn't be changed in the middle of the game.

She and Tolbert said denying the site plan sends the wrong message to developers.

"My fear in this case is that we're sending a message to private developers that we don't want to send," said Tolbert.

Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Summit-University Planning Council and a host of housing and anti-poverty advocacy groups opposed the project and celebrated the vote. "Buildings over people is not what we should be doing," said Isabel Chanslor of the coalition Midway RiseUp. Midway RiseUp and other groups wants to see new plans for site development brought forward, with more community input.

Union Park District Council members, whose district the Wilder property is in, supported the site plan with calls for more affordable housing for very low-income residents.

Alatus had agreed to make half of the project's apartments affordable for a decade. That would have included 124 efficiency units at 60 percent AMI. Ten one-bedroom units and 20 two-bedroom units were to be offered at 50 percent AMI. The developer proposed that as a condition of site plan approval.

St. Paul AMI is about \$58,000 annually for a family of four.

## { Monitor in a Minute }

By JANE McCLURE

### Big Top can relocate store

Even though its building is a fire-damaged shell, Big Top Liquors has obtained city approval to renew its off-sale liquor license. The St. Paul City Council approved the renewal March 24. The liquor store at 1544 University Ave. was looted and set ablaze in May during civil unrest that followed the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Using the former Perkins restaurant meant getting a waiver from distance requirements as the Midway Center store is within 300 feet of Snelling Avenue Wine and Spirits, 500 N. Snelling Ave. Snelling Wine and Spirits was also extensively damaged in May 2020, but is being rebuilt. The council action allows Big Top to retain its off-sale license until Feb. 1, 2022 and allows the search for a different location to continue.

### Garden lease is approved

A former Frogtown funeral home site turned community garden will continue as a garden for seven more years. The St. Paul City Council, acting March 10 as the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) Board, approved a seven-year license agreement with Young Adult Koinonia, doing business as Safe City Project, for use of HRA-owned property located at 625 N. Dale St. The .57-acre site was acquired by the city in 2008.

working together to improve life where we live

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**Love Letters for the Midway:**  
A Public Art Lawn Sign Project created by resident and artist Hawona Sullivan Janzen

Do you have great photos or stories about life in the Hamline-Midway Community? Share them with us for "Love Letters for the Midway" featuring photos and poems about the beautiful parts of life in our neighborhood.

- Submit a photo and/or story about someone or something you love in the Midway"
- Sign up to host one of 100 lawn signs
- Offer up space in your Little Free Library to host poetry booklets and/or artworks created to share with the community this summer.

Visit HMC's website:  
[Hamlinemidway.org/Love-Letters-for-the-Midway](http://Hamlinemidway.org/Love-Letters-for-the-Midway)

## Meeting Schedule

### Development Committee

Monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 6:30 pm

### Environment Committee

Monthly on the 4th Monday at 6:30 pm

### Board Meeting

Monthly on the 4th Tuesday at 6:15 pm

### Transportation Committee

Monthly on the 1st Monday at 6:30 pm

All meetings are open and welcoming to the public. Visit the HMC website for details. You can also call or email for information!



Hamline Midway Coalition is excited to share our new online engagement tool! The purpose of online community engagement is to connect with the community and improve our neighborhood's decision-making process by taking in a broad range of perspectives from those who work, study, and live in the Hamline Midway neighborhood. This tool will allow more voices, participation, and insight from those at our community's table. Find it here:

[www.EngageMidway.org](http://www.EngageMidway.org)

# UNDERSTANDING THE LIFE CYCLE OF RECYCLED CARDBOARD

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

For people who care about conserving resources, recycling is a given. But what really happens to all the cardboard and paper dumped in curbside recycling bins?

Mike Gunderson is general manager of WestRock, the 100-year-old paper mill that recycles cardboard picked up across the Twin Cities by Eureka Recycling. The mill yard at University and Vandalia receives mountains of used cardboard and paper daily, while inside the mill operates 24 hours a day.

Gunderson said, "Our volume of incoming fiber goes up every year, but there has been a larger than usual uptick in 2020-21. Curbside recycling volume has gone up a lot. People are shopping more online, and they're ordering more take-out food, too."

"On the other hand, we have gotten substantially less paper from schools and brick-and-mortar retail since the pandemic started. Overall there has been a shift in the streams of where cardboard and paper come from."

WestRock receives cardboard and paper from more than 600 sources. The largest quantity comes from Eureka Recycling,



Cardboard placed in recycling bins is picked up by Eureka Recycling and sorted at their NE Minneapolis facility. It ends up here at WestRock in the Midway neighborhood, where it is remade into one of two types of recycled paper. (Photo by Margie O'Loughlin)

which contributes about 25% of the total incoming fiber. Gunderson estimates that approximately 400,000 tons of material are brought to WestRock and recycled every year. He said, "About 65% of all recycled fiber in the state of Minnesota ends up here."

### The long and the short of it

Next time you fill your cereal bowl, take a look inside the box. Every box is made from a mix of

fiber lengths. At WestRock, two types of finished recycled paper leave the mill on rolls as large as 11 feet wide: coated recycled cardboard that will be made into cereal, pasta, and pharmaceutical boxes, and corrugated medium (the fluted layer that goes between paper sheets to make cardboard).

Gunderson explained, "The fibers in cardboard can be recycled many times, but they get shorter every time they go through the process. We get millions of boxes entering our system every day. The cereal-type boxes (the ones that get printed on) are made up of half long and half short fibers. The corrugated medium is made up of all long fibers."

### Recycling 101

With curbside pick-up contributing so much cardboard these days, waste haulers are finding all kinds of things in recycling bins that can cause problems. Legitimate recyclables are often mixed up with items from peoples' homes and kitchens. Dirty diapers and kitchen scraps can contaminate cardboard, making it unfit for recycling. Holiday lights and batteries cause major problems.

Gunderson's #1 nemesis is plastic bags. He said, "Plastic bags, cereal wrappers, and plastic films have to be taken to a separate big-box store like Target or

CUB where they have drop-off bins. Plastic bags are not recyclable as part of the single stream system. Do not put them in your curbside recycling bin."

### From solid to liquid to solid again

Surprisingly, the packing tape and staples embedded in most cardboard boxes don't cause a problem in the recycling process. As the saying goes, they come out in the wash. Styrofoam packing material must be removed, however, and all cardboard boxes should be flattened.

Gunderson explained, "We move about 1,200 tons of waste material from the yard every day. Bales and loose waste are loaded into a circular tank containing water. Called a hydropulper, this machine has a powerful agitator at the bottom that breaks everything down into small pieces. The pulp mass looks like oatmeal."

"This is the first stage of 'de-trashing,' where anything that doesn't turn into pulp gets pulled out: shredded metal, broken glass, tape, staples, and other non-fiber materials. Multiple stages of screening remove remaining contaminants down to an 8,000 of an inch. In the last stage, the slurry is sent through an industrial magnet."

"At the end of the day, when the slurry has been washed, pressed, and dried, we have pro-

duced about 1,100 tons of recycled paper. We divert a lot of waste from the landfill."

### Recycling has changed over time

In 2014, the city of St. Paul did away with having residents sort their recyclables. The goal was to get more people to recycle, and it worked. Gunderson said, "On a net basis, more product is being recycled now. We've had to invest in improved sorting technology, as the quality of recyclables has gone down – but there is less volume going to the landfill."

Eureka Recycling Director of Community Engagement Katrina Lund underscored that. She said, "Even with the higher contamination rate, recycling has real benefits. In the case of cardboard, we are conserving trees by recycling. It takes about 25% less energy to recycle paper than it does to make virgin paper. Recycling produces jobs, and supports the local economy."

To see how Eureka and WestRock work in partnership, go to <https://eurekarecycling.org>. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to view "The Story of a Cereal Box." The video shows how a cereal box is made new again in about one month's time.

Lund said, "As a mission-based, zero-waste recycler, we believe that waste is preventable. Our goal is ultimately to prevent waste."

### Best-practice recycling

The following items are not recyclable: plastic bags, plastic containers #3, #4, #6, or #7, plastic containers larger than 3 gallons, black plastic, plastic storage bins, laundry basket or toys, shredded paper, food, liquid or other compostable material, Styrofoam, batteries, electronics, light bulbs, scrap metal, hazardous waste, sharps, or needles.

And last but not least, egg cartons (Styrofoam or paper) are not recyclable. Why not the paper ones? They are a product that has reached the end of its recycling life; the fibers have gotten too short to be used again.

More at <https://eurekarecycling.org/recycling-services/recycling-guidelines/>



Over 500 people marched along the Mississippi River on March 11 to protest Enbridge drilling their tar sands Line 3 pipeline under the headwaters of the Mississippi. It was part of the largest ever grassroots multi-faith day of action to lift up bold climate demands in over 40 countries. At right is Sharon Day of the Indigenous People's Task Force. (Photos by Margie O'Loughlin)



### Line 3 threatens Mississippi River

Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light held a rally on March 11 to protest the Enbridge Energy Line 3 Pipeline Replacement Program. A spokesperson for the group said, "Construction of the tar sands pipeline, which was approved without regard for climate justice or native treaty rights, is already 30 percent complete."

"The Biden administration has the chance to prevent further destruction to the delicate ecosystem of the Mississippi River, and to stop an unnecessary pipeline that threatens clean drinking water for hundreds of communities across the state."

The demonstration was part of a grassroots multi-faith day of action that is lifting up strident climate demands in more than 40 countries. As the featured U.S. event, and online broadcast of "Rise by the River" was shared with millions of people in the global faith and climate movement. The march started at the scenic overlook near 615 Mississippi Blvd. S., crossed the Ford Bridge, and continued on the Minneapolis side of the river.

Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light is no-profit organization located at 4407 East Lake St. They advocate on behalf of a healthy, just, and sustainable world – for all.

## LOOK AT A SUNNY DAY IN A WHOLE NEW WAY



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**CHANGING HOMES**

COVID-19 has changed what people want in their homes as they've needed to accommodate work and school at home, and figure out how to effectively quarantine.

"Flexibility and adaptability are now key," said Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, Northrop Professor of Interior Design at the University of Minnesota. People are balancing the need for aloneness versus togetherness through a variety of ways, including:

- Flexible spaces for children to play and study with easy supervision
- A bedroom/bathroom combination that can be separated for quarantine
- Kitchens that boast a separated disinfecting and organizing station
- Mold-resistant material finishes and adequate natural and mechanical ventilation in bathrooms

The storage of food and cleaning supplies is a valued characteristic, as are smaller units that are affordable. People are looking for multi-functional/adaptable rooms that can go from living spaces to working spaces for children and adults. They appreciate furniture with antimicrobial and easy-to-clean fabrics and materials, and touchless sensor-operated appliances to limit germ spread.

"Also crucial is mental health, and the design implications for supporting mental well-being vary from space layout to lighting, materials, sound and acoustics, as well as views to the outdoors," observed Hadjiyanni.

"There cannot be any more apartment buildings designed without access to the outdoors through functional balconies" that allow for light and air along with space for children and adults to decompress.

# THRIVING PLACES, THRIVING LIVES

>> from 1

**Connecting through stories**

Hadjiyanni is an interior design scholar and educator – and she's also a storyteller. "A story is the shortest distance between two people," they say. So I create platforms for people to talk about their stories, I collect stories, and I find ways to share stories with diverse audiences," she said. "These are often the stories of community members whose voices are not heard and whose stories are not known, such as refugees, immigrants, and minorities. I use interviews

and focus groups primarily, including gathering stories inside peoples' homes, as a way to see and better understand challenges people might be facing."

The physical realities of living space have big impacts on how people live. A kitchen layout may restrict cooking. The size of social areas limits gatherings with friends. A dining table can shape aspirations.

Hadjiyanni founded Culturally Enriched Communities to advocate for buildings that pave the way for social and racial justice. At the heart is a drive to create communities in which everyone

can thrive.

Her award-winning scholarship and teaching pedagogies have been widely published, and used to decolonize design education.

"Home is more than housing," she stressed. "It includes the ability of people to construct meaning inside their house – along with schools for their children to be educated, workplaces where they can earn an income and find purpose, parks to relax and exercise, and hospitals to heal their wounds. The spatial scales re-

THRIVING PLACES >> 9

**BEFORE AND AFTER**

"The "before" version is a two-bedroom affordable housing apartment (1,011 square feet) from one of Minneapolis' largest affordable housing providers, Aeon's Ripley Gardens. With two bedrooms, it can be inhabited by a maximum of four people, according to Minneapolis' occupancy limits.

The "after" scheme proposes a design solution that is more flexible and adaptable. Physical and social health are supported by the kitchen being moved to the right side of the unit for a more direct connection to the social area. A person cooking can easily supervise children doing homework or converse with family members and guests. That person can also have views to the outdoors, which makes cooking a more enjoyable task and eases stress. The kitchen can be closed or open and this option can be accomplished with a simple window on the wall that connects to the social area. If totally open, it can accommodate multiple cooks on the two counters. Flexibility continues with the dining area, which can easily be expanded for special celebrations and large gatherings.

A similar approach is applied to the bathroom, which is now compartmentalized and an additional sink is placed in the corridor for multiple users. The privacy concerns in the bedrooms are subdued by the placement of closets used as a buffer. An angled wall forges a sense of entry and can be used to display cherished possessions, helping craft meaning and identity. From within the bedroom, the angled wall can be the setting of a desk, signifying the importance of education and grounding aspirations for the future." - From *The Right to Home*, page 302



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Minnehaha Falls Landscaping creates outdoor environments that grow beauty, and support health and wellness. From this foundation grows our garden division, Giving Tree Gardens and our advocacy branch, Bee Safe Minneapolis.

MEET AUTHOR TASOULLA HADJIYANNI



"I was 10 years old when Turkey invaded the Cyprus and my family joined the thousands of refugees around the world, losing everything we had ever known. Losing my house and

home ruptured my way of being. I embarked on a new life as a 10-year old child of war, rootless, fearful, and apprehensive, with a gap in my heart that could not be closed.

"To counteract my sense of loss, I turned to my schoolwork — education, my parents told me, is something no one can ever take away from you. Before completing high school, I was awarded an AMIDEAST scholarship to study architecture in the U.S., a diplomatic effort on the part of the U.S. to assist refugees in Cyprus rebuild their lives. Little did I know that I would meet my husband a few months before graduating from Carnegie Mellon University and move to Minnesota.

"My experiences as a refugee and a member of the Greek diaspora propelled me to connect with others who experienced displacement and injustice as part of my healing process. I was struggling with not knowing how to mend my broken self and worst of all, being pregnant at the time, I did not know how to create a sense of home for my daughter and my family.

"In collecting the stories of refugees, immigrants and minorities both in Cyprus and Minnesota what struck me was recognizing that the effects of losing one's cultural connections and sense of continuity carried forward for generations. I, therefore, used my platform to advocate for designs and policies that recognize home as a right and contribute to creating communities in which everyone can thrive."

# Thriving places, thriving lives

>> from 8

vant to eliminating disparities range from the kitchen table (or lack thereof) to a room, a house, a neighborhood, a city, a nation, and the world."

### Landscapes of Hope

Her current work builds off the two crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, which occurred 12 blocks from her house.

The Landscapes of Hope project (www.cec-design.com/landscapesof-hope/) includes a digital map of over 200 buildings in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Searchable by building type and location, the map enables easy access to design-related interventions for everything from affordable housing to streets. "At the same time, searching by location enables advocates from different neighbor-

hoods of Minneapolis (North Minneapolis, Seward, Longfellow, Powderhorn, Lake Street, Hennepin Ave., Nicollet Ave., South Minneapolis, and Lyndale Ave.) and St Paul to see stories in their area, so they can form partnerships and synergies while giving visibility to the neighborhoods' resilience," said Hadjiyanni.

"I knew the neighborhoods and businesses impacted by the protests. I set out to share these stories in 'Landscapes of Hope,' because I know that the answers we are looking for in terms of how to move toward social justice are right here, in front of our eyes, if we know where to look."

She added, "Many of these businesses are Black-owned, immigrant-owned, refugee-owned, family-owned, and women-owned restaurants, shops, daycares,

and hair salons, along with organizations that pave the way for eliminating disparities and creating a just and equitable world."

Minority-owned firms in Minnesota generated more than \$8.7 billion in sales, pointed out Hadjiyanni, and Minnesota boasts close to 3,200 African immigrant businesses.

"Design can be used to strengthen everything from economic opportunities for Black and immigrant entrepreneurs through the development of thriving business corridors in BIPOC communities to health and well-being through parks that instill dignity and foster community," stated Hadjiyanni.

Learn more at www.cec-design.com.



### HYGGE AND ALONENESS

Instrumental to the Scandinavian "hygge" is the ability to be both together and alone. A window seat in a home and separated "retreat spaces" in the workplace, provide opportunities to recharge.



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## PART II: THE TWIN CITIES HOUSING MARKET

# Reimagining dream of home ownership for all

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

In last month's article about the Twin Cities housing market during COVID-19, real estate professionals characterized the market as "frenzied." A picture emerged of Minneapolis and St. Paul homes selling well above their asking price in a climate of multiple offers. While this is a benefit to sellers, it leaves many buyers, especially first-time home buyers and buyers without deep pockets, unable to compete.

Trent Bowman is the vice president and business development officer at MidWestOne Bank, where he continues his 25-year commitment to working with aspiring minority homeowners. He also serves as president of the Twin Cities Chapter of the National Association of Real Estate Brokers (NAREB).

NAREB is an equal opportunity and civil rights advocacy group founded in 1947 to ensure that African Americans (and other people of color) receive fair treatment in all real estate transactions. Founded in 1947, it is the oldest African American trade organization in the country.

### Democracy in housing

NAREB has chapters across the United States, unified in their vision of creating democracy in housing for all. When asked if that vision is any closer to becoming a reality after almost 75 years, Bowman said, "No. It has not yet been achieved – not in the Twin Cities or anywhere else in this country."

In Bowman's opinion, "A prospective minority home buyer needs to have a team behind them, because there are obstacles all along the way to home ownership." The team at NAREB Twin

Cities includes African American real estate brokers, mortgage lenders, real estate lawyers, appraisers, home inspectors, real estate instructors, insurance professionals, and more. Visit [www.narebtc.com](http://www.narebtc.com) to learn more about their housing advocacy work and resources for prospective minority homebuyers.

### Homeownership starts with education

Homeownership is the surest way to build family wealth and strengthen communities – but Black homeownership rates have dropped from 29% to 23% in the last decade. According to Bowman, "Foreclosure rates were higher in communities of color nationwide after the recession of 2008-09, and it has gotten a lot harder to get approved for loans."

There are several non-profit organizations in St. Paul poised and ready to work with minority clients considering homeownership; in addition to providing resources, they are sending the message that potential home buyers should stop telling themselves that home-ownership is beyond their reach.

The list of these organizations includes the Homeownership Opportunity Alliance, NeighborWorks Home Partners, Hallie Q. Brown, Twin Cities Urban League, Model Cities, and the Neighborhood Development Alliance, and many others. Each offers homeownership classes, which are a prerequisite for applying to any organization for down payment assistance.

According to Bowman, one of the most crucial steps in the process of buying a home is choosing the right loan officer. He said, "We help prospective

homebuyers understand the importance of building their credit, strengthening their savings plan, and coming in to the bank prepared for success. Too many times, minority loan applicants are denied for the wrong reasons and it ends up being very discouraging."

He continued, "A good loan officer will take the time to get to know a customer. This is not a transaction you do over the phone, but a sit-down conversation to discuss financial goals and realities. A dream home isn't just a home a customer can qualify for, but one that they can afford to stay in for a long time."

### Housing discrimination continues

Racial covenants were restrictive deeds that limited where people of color could live. The first racial covenant in Minneapolis was legalized in 1910, and the practice soon spread across the Twin Cities.

In the 1930s, "redlining" was created to keep people of color from buying homes in white neighborhoods.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) used redlining as a way to rate risk factors for government-backed mortgages. Color coding gave favorable scores to neighborhoods with racial covenants in place, and marked them with blue. Unfavorable scores were given to neighborhoods where African Americans and/or "undesirable" immigrants lived, and they were marked with red. It became nearly impossible for people of color to get FHA loans, because their redlined neighborhoods were rated as too risky for consideration.

Although the Fair Housing



Trent Bowman is the president of NAREB, a coalition of Black real estate professionals. He said, "Throughout history, people of color have been left out of the homeownership game. It's about leaving a legacy. It's about building wealth in our communities. We have to understand the history of housing discrimination, so we can work in the present to leave something for our kids in the future." (Photo courtesy of NAREB)

Act made redlining illegal across the country in 1968, housing discrimination is far from over. Bowman said, "The FHA loans that were once hard for people of color to get, are now often the way they enter the housing market. Some listing agents state in their purchase agreements that they will not work with buyers who have FHA financing. That's a problem. Sellers may prefer buyers with conventional financing or, better yet, cash. FHA buyers can't offer more than the appraised value of the home, which limits how competitive they can be in their offer."

"Some listing agents will also ask buyers to submit what we call a 'love letter,' if there are two offers on a property that are essentially equal. In a love letter, the buyers introduce themselves and say why the seller should accept their offer over the other. These letters can become quite

### Down payment assistance available

Homeownership disparities across racial lines in Minnesota are the worst in the country. (source: the Urban Institute)

Wells Fargo Bank and NeighborWorks Home Partners created the NeighborhoodLIFT® program in October 2020. The \$7 million collaboration aims to boost homeownership in Minneapolis and St. Paul for low-moderate income homebuyers, by offering \$15,000 in down payment assistance to 425 eligible customers over time.

Before applying, customers must complete eight hours of homebuyer education. Learn more about NeighborWorks Home Partners at <https://nwhomepartners.org>.

personal, detailing family make up, jobs, history in the neighborhood, and common interests. Sometimes a picture is included. If one buyer comes from the same background as the seller, and the other is a person from a completely different background or an immigrant who doesn't speak English as their first language, whose offer do you think the buyer will accept?"

To learn more about the history of racial restrictive covenants in Minnesota, and their lasting effect on the Twin Cities' housing market today watch "Jim Crow of the North on TPT: [www.tpt.org/minnesota-experience/video/jim-crow-of-the-north-stijws/](http://www.tpt.org/minnesota-experience/video/jim-crow-of-the-north-stijws/)

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**Get started at [nwhomepartners.org](http://nwhomepartners.org)**

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# Let's go far together instead of going fast alone

*If you want to go fast go alone, if you want to go far go together.*  
- An African Proverb

**Happy Spring Monitor readers,**  
This is such a refreshing time of the year with the return of the sweet sounds of birds, the renewal of the grass, trees, and flowers, the nurturing rains, and of course, the longer day-light hours and warmer weather. This spring is also blooming with COVID-19 vaccinations, optimistic-ness hope for justice for George Floyd and other victims of senseless acts of violence and murder, and a critical mass of willingness to look at the soul of our nation, as well as individuals stretching their comfort zones to deeply explore their conscious and unconscious bias of other cultures, genders, races, faiths, political views...

April, however, also feels kind of heavy with all the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual work that we have to struggle through on the city, state, and the national levels. I believe we will make good progress this spring and throughout the year. We will be tempted to go fast and get things over with, however as the African proverb reminds us, if we want to go far, it's wiser to go together. The problems and challenges will not get fixed like magic or just disappear because of vaccinations, having just and fair trials, or being more inclusive in our working daily world. We have 100 years of 100s of outdated and racist policies and practices that are deeply rooted and woven in toxic and greedy thinking. However, again, I believe we are and will make good progress of uprooting negative causes and cultivating "Doing the Right Thing."

For this issue, I have asked a few of my community soul-mates to share about their work and/or spring and summer plans as a way of going far together, in particular, for the greater Midway area.

## Early Learning Coalition

The Frogtown-Summit-University Early Learning Coalition is a group of residents and community partners working to connect families in our community with each other and with re-

sources. Last year, we met monthly in spaces where we could be alongside families and children – such as Tot Times at the West Minnehaha Rec Center or story-times at the Rondo Library – but this year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to get creative and find ways to support community members virtually. So, for the past several months we have been gathering online monthly to get to know our community partners better and to have conversations with children about difficult topics.

For example, in March, we invited a guest from the Ain Dah Young Center to educate us about their work, especially with American Indian young people who are experiencing homelessness. That got us started on a deeper conversation about the observations that children make and the questions they ask when they see people in their neighborhood who are experiencing homelessness. We will continue to have these online gatherings at least through May, but we are working – with hope! – to plan some safe, outdoors activities for children and families this summer. Our next virtual gathering will be on Wednesday, April 21, from 10:30 a.m. to noon. *Email Zack at zachary.pierson@spss.org for the Zoom info.*

## Urban Farm and Garden Alliance

On these beautiful spring mornings, we are so grateful for sun shining, ice melting, earth warming, buds and sprouts appearing! Our vision holds so much potential!! At Urban Farm and Garden Alliance (UFGA) we are planning for our 2021 Children's Gardening Program. On Wednesdays, June 16 - Aug. 11, 3:30-5 p.m. we will meet on Zoom, at least for the start of the season, with hopes of being in the Peace Sanctuary Garden in July or August. It will be a hybrid program, with participants receiving small garden beds for home and the programing on Zoom. There is such satisfaction in feeling that we bring the attention of city kids to the miracles of living soil, composting, the gift of water, and plants that shower us with food, oxygen, and beauty!

In her book 'BRAIDING

## Peace bubbles



By MELVIN GILES  
peacebubbles@q.com

SWEETGRASS: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants,' Robin Wall Kimmerer writes:

"People often ask me what one thing I would recommend to restore relationship between land and people. My answer is almost always, 'Plant a garden.' It's good for the health of the earth and it's good for the health of people. A garden is a nursery for nurturing connection, the soil for cultivation of practical reverence. And its power goes far beyond the garden gate – once you develop a relationship with a little patch of earth, it becomes a seed itself." We believe we are helping to plant seeds in the kids who participate, ages 5 years to 105 years, for a loving relationship with our mother, Earth.

*Megan Phinney, Children's Garden Coordinator, urbanfarmandgardenalliance@gmail.com.*

## Animal Humane Society

Animal Humane Society is very proud to announce that our new Veterinary Center is up and running! The Veterinary Center is location on the intersection of University Ave. and Lexington Parkway, at 1159 University Ave. West, St. Paul MN 55104. We are currently doing curbside service due to the coronavirus pandemic. At our center, we offer sliding scale services for wellness appointments, vaccines, sick pet care, dental cleaning and more. We are a full-service clinic with the exception of emergency pet care. We also offer monthly vaccine clinics where the price per pet to receive an exam, the rabies vaccine, and the distemper vaccine is either \$10 or \$26 depending on where you fall on our sliding fee scale. For more information or to register for an appointment, please call 651-788-4685 or email us at outreachinfo@animalhumanesociety.com. On-

line registration for the monthly vaccine clinics can also be completed here: <https://animalhumanesociety.wufoo.com/forms/m3c7bz50kt4yzn/>. *Melissa Hoo, Community Outreach Organizer, mhoo@animalhumanesociety.org*

## Peace Celebration

A special event will take place in the Rondo (Summit-University) and Frogtown communities on Friday, June 18 – the 25th annual Community Peace Celebration (CPC).

While we are just in the beginning stages of planning and do not yet have specific details, including whether we can meet in-person or in some hybrid in-person/virtual format, our "75-DAY COUNTDOWN TO THE 25th CPC" begins today, April 5.

We are committed to creating not just a moment in time with our Celebration on June 18, but rather an ongoing momentum toward a healthy community of genuine peace – a model for the rest of the world! We are posting each day on our social media channels with unique and exciting stories about the richness of St. Paul generally, and the Frogtown and Rondo (Summit-University) neighborhoods in particular. Be sure to follow these social media sources for daily personal profiles, inspiring details about the 25-year history of Community Peace Celebrations, and multiple resources unique to our neighborhoods.

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/maypeaceprevailonearth97/>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/peacecelebration/>

Twitter <https://twitter.com/PeacePrevail111>

We would love to have YOU participate by submitting your own reflections on how we can create a culture of peace, one founded on the well-being of all, on genuine connections with each other, and on true equity and inclusion in our St. Paul communities that we love. Our CPC Mission statement is "to cultivate healthy community and healthy values, advance a message of peace, and create a shared vision of cooperative relationships within community – locally and globally."

If you would like to share your thoughts, please submit to [peacecelebration.mn@gmail.com](mailto:peacecelebration.mn@gmail.com)

- photo of yourself (high-resolution)
- brief description of your neighborhood / community engagement
- brief 1-3 paragraph reflection on what the CPC Mission Statement means to you. What does this type of community look like? Why do we need it? What do we need to do to get there? What are YOU committed to doing, and what/who inspires you to keep doing the work?

And be sure to Save The Date of June 18 in your calendars! Stay tuned! *The Community Peace Celebration Planning Team*

## It's good when...

Yes, good things are and will happen this spring and summer. And, good things and more are happening right now; for example, it's good when:

- Men support the MeToo Movement
- Non-Black People support Black Lives Matter
- Blue officers cross the Blue-Line
- City, county, and state works together for benefit and health of all
- Appreciation of First Responders and essential workers
- April showers bring May flowers

Together we are going far in the direction of better outcomes and justice for all. We can and we will continue to do better; for instance:

- Please contact the Governor and our Lawmakers to #Stop Pipeline 3
- Learn the values and benefits of thinking and adapting green and alternative ways of working and living
- Finally passing the ERA-this is 2021, what's the hold up?
- Respecting, honoring, and giving back to our wonderful and courageous Veterans
- And, so much more...

Have a great month, stay optimistic and let's keep going far together.

*May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown, Hamline/Midway, Como & Surrounding Communities. May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities... May Peace Prevail On Earth MPPOE)!!!!*

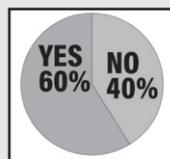
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## Frog Food by Z Akhmetova



## SUCCESSFUL WINTER SPORTS SEASONS

As students returned to in-person learning on April 14, the spring sports season was already entering its third week. During distance learning, Como winter sports teams kept competing with many protocols in place.

Having fun and completing their winter seasons without COVID shutdowns were significant achievements in their own right. Above and beyond, three Cougar teams had remarkable results that collectively included a conference championship and 10 individuals qualifying for state.

### Girls Basketball

For the seventh consecutive year, Como captured the St. Paul City Conference Championship. With another undefeated record in conference play, the Cougars' winning streak in the city reached 72 games.

Junior guard Ronnie Porter was selected All-State and the Player of the Year in the conference. Also earning All-Conference for the Cougars were juniors Kaylynn Asberry, Cloey Dmytruk,

and Jada James.

The team advanced to the Section 3AAA Championship Game where the season ended in a heartbreaking 68-66 overtime loss to St. Croix Lutheran.

The lone defeat resulted in a 12-1 overall record. Off the court, the Cougars boast a weighted team grade point average of 4.1.

### Wrestling

With less depth than previous seasons the Como wrestling team didn't win as many meets this year, finishing fifth out of seven in the conference standings.

However, several individuals were consistently winning matches in their weight classes and improving during the season, setting themselves up to compete with the top competition in the Section 4AA Tournament.

After multiple rounds of intense competition, five Cougar wrestlers qualified for the State Preliminaries: junior Aaron Adekpovi in the 285 lb. division,

Como Park Senior High School



By ERIC ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher

senior Sully Lucy at 220, senior Kaelyb Sears at 195, sophomore Ve Ah Ree Shar at 132, and senior Bleah Paw at 126.

### Boys Swimming

The Cougars took a significant step forward in the St. Paul City Conference this season, defeating the Highland Park/SPA team in both of their dual meets. That hadn't happened since the 1990s, and it propelled Como to a second-place conference finish.

With energy, passion, and a disciplined training schedule, the Cougars prepared for the Section 4A Meet with goals of posting



Como's State Swim Meet qualifiers at the U of M (left to right): Kai Sackreiter, Ethan Napierala, Gabe Napierala, Sig Isaacson, Soren Sackreiter, and Mark Remuto.

personal bests. The team earned third place out of 10 teams in the section, behind only St. Thomas Academy and St. Anthony Village.

Personal records were indeed posted. And with those times, five Como individuals qualified for the State Meet at the U of M Aquatic Center – where every Minnesota high school swimmer dreams of concluding their season.

State participants included senior Ethan Napierala for the 100 Butterfly, freshman Kai Sackreiter for the 100 Breaststroke, sophomore Sig Isaacson for the 500 Freestyle, and the 200 Freestyle Relay team of junior Soren Sackreiter, sophomore Gabe Napierala, along with their brothers Kai and Ethan. Senior Mark Remuto was the relay team's alternate.

## Vote by April 20 for district council reps

Tuesday April 20 is the last day to vote in the 2021 board elections for the Como Community Council. Once again this year, District 10 community members can vote from home using a secure online ballot. (Because of restrictions on public gatherings, we still can't schedule in-person voting.)

To request a ballot: Fill out the registration form at [www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html](http://www.district10comopark.org/ballot.html). If you intend to vote online, we need your request by Tuesday April 20 at 5 p.m. You must complete your ballot by 7 p.m. April 20. (If you previously requested a paper ballot, you need to return your ballot through the dropbox located in the parking lot of the Historic Streetcar Station, 1224 Lexington Parkway N.

Who is eligible to vote: Renters, homeowners, and other residents of District 10 who are at least 16 years old can vote. So can representatives from business, nonprofits, or other organizations with a physical presence in District 10. If you have questions, email: [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org).

### Who is running in elections

Twelve candidates are running for nine open seats on the Como Community Council board. They filed before the April 4 deadline to get on the ballot. The candidates:

- Chair: Jill Henricksen, Paula Lee Roberts
- Secretary: Jennifer Nelson
- At Large (3 seats): Sarah Reuter, Chad Smith, Jennifer Victor-Larsen, Alex Zikmund
- Sub-District 1 (roughly west of Hamline, south of Hoyt, and north of the tracks): Kevin Commerford, Morgan Weinert
- Sub-District 2 (roughly between Hamline and Victoria, south of Larpentour and north of the tracks): Maggie Zimmerman
- Sub-District 3 (roughly between Victoria and Dale, south of Larpentour and north of the tracks): Matthew Brown
- Sub-District 4 (South Como and Energy Park): Benjamin Kowalsky-Grahek

Voting lasts until Tuesday April 20 at 7 p.m. Those elected will serve two-year terms, until April 2023.

You can find candidate statements on the District 10 website: [www.district10comopark.org](http://www.district10comopark.org).

### Read Brave events examine immigration

As part of the Saint Paul Public Library's 2021 Read Brave program, the Como Community Council is partnering on two events tied to one of the featured books: the memoir "Children of the Land" by Marcelo Hernandez Castillo. How to take part:

- Read the book: The Como

District 10 Como Community Council

By MICHAEL KUCHTA,  
Executive Director  
[district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org)



Community Council has 15 copies of the book available to distribute for free (first-come, first-served). Email us and we'll set one aside while supplies last. E-book and audiobook versions are available through the Library's website: [www.sppl.org](http://www.sppl.org).

• Sunday Series: Local immigration attorney Gloria Contreras Edin will present and answer questions about constantly changing U.S. immigration policies and their impacts on families and communities. Sunday April 18, 2:30 p.m. Participation is free through Zoom, email [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org) to get registration information.

• Author Visit: The Saint Anthony Park Branch Library Association is co-sponsoring an online discussion with Hernandez Castillo on Thursday April 22 from 7-8 p.m. Participation is free through Zoom, but advance registration is required.

### Time to vote on a mascot, too

We invited your ideas for a

## Old media navigate a new era

As more people get their information (and misinformation) from social media sites, as daily, weekly and monthly local newspapers scale back or fold altogether, what's the future of local news?

The Como Community Council's Sunday Series features a panel discussion with Tesha Christensen from the *Monitor*, Scott Carlson from the *Park Bugle*, and Kelly Smith from the *Star Tribune*.

The online presentation is Sunday, May 2 from 1-2:30 p.m. It will include plenty of time for Q&A. To attend via phone or Zoom, email [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org). We'll send you access information.



neighborhood mascot – and you replied. Como residents submitted almost two dozen suggestions of what could serve as a recognizable symbol we can identify with, call our own, and use to promote and enliven District 10 events. The Como Community Council narrowed the list; now it's your turn to vote. Pick your favorite at: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/d10mascot](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/d10mascot)

### Free Food Fridays continue

The Como Community Council and Sanneh Foundation will continue distributing free food boxes on Friday afternoon through the end of April. The food is available to Ramsey County residents dealing with financial hardships because of Covid-19.

Food will be distributed

from 1:30-3:30 p.m. (or until supplies run out). The location is the north parking lot of Niem Phat Buddhist Temple, at Dale Street and Front Ave. The dates: April 16, 23 and 30.

### Call or link into D10 meetings

To obtain links, phone numbers, or other access information, send a request by email to: [district10@district10comopark.org](mailto:district10@district10comopark.org). Or, call 651-644-3889. Upcoming meetings:

- Board meeting (and annual meeting): Tuesday April 20
  - Anti-Racism Work Group: Wednesday April 28
  - Neighborhood Relations: Tuesday May 4
  - Land Use: Wednesday May 5
  - Environment: Wednesday May 12
- All meetings begin at 7 p.m.

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**550,000 residents in Ramsey County**

It's the 2nd most populous county in the state.

**40%** are Black, Asian, Latinx, Indigenous, and multiracial.

**23.4%** of residents over 5 live in homes where a language other than English is spoken.

**16%** are foreign born

**12.4%** pre-pandemic poverty rate—nearly three percentage points higher than the next highest metro county and more than three percentage points higher than the state's 9%

**70-92%** Ramsey County has the lowest rates of households with computers at 92% and households with broadband subscriptions (86.2%) in the metro. Rates fall below 70% in zip codes experiencing concentrated poverty.

**59.4%** own their homes - the lowest in the state.

**6.2%** are uninsured - compared to 5.8% in the state

**\$64,660** median household income - this is more than \$11,000 less than the next lowest metro county, more than \$30,000 lower than the highest metro county, and lower than the state overall.

# BIPOC, lowest paid workers hit hardest during pandemic >> from 1

"COVID-19 had brought all the disparities in our community to light and has now given us a chance as a community to be all-in on a comprehensive strategy to build a workforce that is inclusive of everyone. The effort not only benefits residents but will propel our economy for our businesses, as well," remarked Ramsey County Workforce Solutions Director and Ramsey County Workforce Innovation Board Executive Director Ling Becker.

"We recognize the many unique aspects that make Ramsey County unique. It is a place that is rich in cultural vitality and also economic opportunity."

According to a report presented to the Midway Area Chamber of Commerce on March 24, Black, Latinx, Asian and Indigenous-owned businesses are growing. However, this growth lags behind other counties.

There is a growing cluster of niche innovation industries regionally, and Ramsey County is positioned to grow within its county limits. The county is seeing a steady and slow industry growth of 8.3% in manufacturing, finance and insurance with much of the growth driven by smaller firms. There is a low business start compared to the region and nation, coupled with low lending. The county has a strength in women-owned firms. Health care is a much larger per-



Tim O'Neill, DEED

centage of economic activity in Ramsey County than in any other metro county and a much higher percentage than the state of Minnesota.

**30,700 out of work**

In May 2020, there were 30,700 people out of work in Ramsey County, reported DEED labor market analyst Tim O'Neill. The 11% had dropped to an unemployment rate of 5.1% as of January 2021.

But part of that is because the total labor force decreased with many opting not to return to work, including mothers and caregivers. Some elected to retire early. This mirrors state and national trends. The labor force decreased by 13,600 people or 4.6%.

The highest number of unemployed in Ramsey County are its teenagers at 15.4%.

**BIPOC, lower-paid workers affected the hardest**



Ling Becker, Ramsey County



Erin Olson, RealTime Talent

"Ramsey County lost over 43,000 jobs," said O'Neill, "disproportionately impacting industries with lower wages."

"Not all industries have been impacted equally," added RealTime Talent Director of Strategic Research Erin Olson. "A great amount of the unemployed population in Ramsey County are coming out of the lower paid occupations."

The biggest industries to see job losses were accommodation and food services, along with health care and social assistance; retail trade; arts, entertainment

BIPOC, LOWEST PAID >> 15

# Minnesota's First Economic Competitiveness & Inclusion Plan implemented in Ramsey County

On March 23, the Center for Economic Inclusion (the Center) joined its peer consultants Fourth Economy, NEOO Partners, MZ Strategies, and Urban3 to present the first-ever Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Plan (the Plan) in the state of Minnesota to the Ramsey County Board. The 18-month process of planning and design also included critical guidance from Ramsey County residents and business owners.

The Plan seeks to accelerate economic growth in Ramsey County by focusing on racial equity in each of its eight strategies and intentionally address systemic racism, wealth extraction, and economic harm to Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian people and immigrants, with strategies to close racial wealth gaps that are proven to also strengthen the economy for everyone.

The Plan, developed by the consultant team with the leadership of Ramsey County's Martha Faust, Kari Collins, Ling Becker, and Josh Olson, received unanimous support and endorsement from the Ramsey County Board. The next steps include articulating investments for the Plan in the next budget and performance measures process.

During the hearing, Ramsey County Board Chair Toni Carter (District 4) stated, "We stand to benefit from a plan that centers the thought that diversity is an asset. This plan not only iterates the need, the challenge and the opportunity, but also centers the actions, strategies and the accountability to be sure that we lift it up off the page."

"I am very excited," said District Commissioner Nicole Frethem. "We must acknowledge that this will likely make folks uncomfortable. But systemic problems require systemic solutions. I am thrilled with this plan's commitment to driving systemic solutions and equitable development policy."

District 6 Commissioner Jim McDonough added, "We are often weary from separating talk from action. Today, we can't celebrate without accepting responsibility for success. We must accept and celebrate this work and strong leadership and courage from our community and accept responsibility to make it a success as defined by the community."

"Ramsey County selected the Center and our team of consultants to design an inclusive and equitable strategy, lead community engagement, and advise on implementation for the County," said Tawanna A. Black, founder and CEO of the Center for Economic Inclusion, and non-resident Fellow of the Brookings' Metropolitan Policy Program. "This Plan represents

**8 STRATEGIES**

Each strategy includes actions, investments, partnerships, and desired results to drive shared accountability. View the complete plan on the county's web site.

**Strategy 1:**

Preserve and increase the supply of rental housing units for the lowest-income residents.

**Strategy 2:**

Expand affordable homeownership opportunities and improve housing stability for communities that have experienced historic wealth extraction.

**Strategy 3:**

Foster inclusive economic development within county transit, economic and cultural corridors.

**Strategy 4:**

Support communities in equitable site development.

**Strategy 5:**

Sustain and accelerate workforce recovery programs.

**Strategy 6:**

Develop pathways to entrepreneurship and Black, Latinx, Asian and Indigenous business ownership.

**Strategy 7:**

Attract and grow high-wage industry and innovation: technology, advanced manufacturing, and life sciences.

**Strategy 8:**

Strengthen business retention and expansion infrastructure to support communities.

Ramsey County's intention and commitment to dismantling racist policies and ensuring the racially equitable prosperity of every resident."

"We thank all of the Ramsey County residents, business owners, elected officials, and leaders who contributed their time and wisdom to the creation of this plan and who are committed to the journey ahead to bring the plan to life," said Black. "As we celebrate the completion of the plan alongside our partners and the Ramsey County leadership team, we look forward to building an equitable, inclusive, and thriving Ramsey County!"

The Center is committed to supporting Ramsey County through implementation of this plan and building the civic infrastructure throughout the region to ensure shared accountability for fulfilling the goals and objectives the community helped develop.

- Information from the Center for Economic Inclusion, [www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org](http://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org)

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# Proof: Como Lake water quality getting better

## Herbicide and alum applied last summer lowered phosphorus last year

By MICHAEL KUCHTA

The herbicide that Capitol Region Watershed District used in 2020 to battle invasive curly-leaf pondweed in Como Lake, and the alum it used to battle excessive phosphorus, both are showing amazing early results in improving water quality. The bottom line:

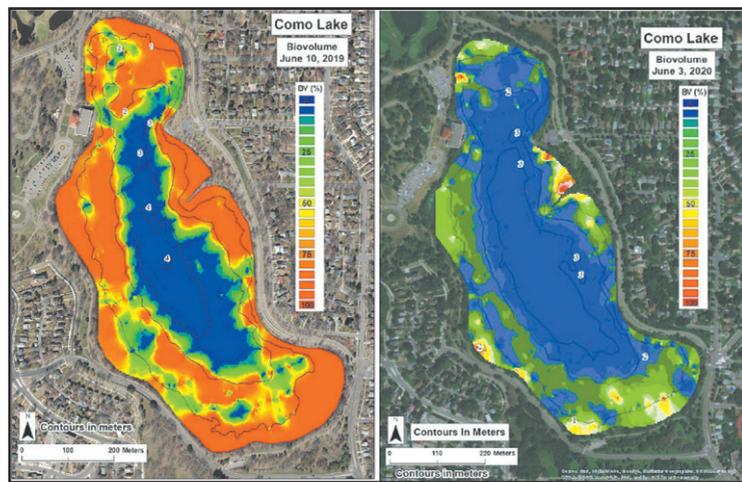
- The number of curly-leaf pondweed plants decreased 56 percent in 2020; the number of reproductive turions, or seeds, decreased 79 percent. "It was a plant that had taken over the lake, greatly reduced habitat quality within the lake, and out-competed the native plants," said Bob Fossum, a division manager at the watershed district.

- The injection of alum in 2020 helped reduce phosphorus concentrations by 62 percent, compared with the historical average from 1984-2019. For the first time on record, the average phosphorus concentration in Como Lake in 2020 – 65 micrograms per liter – nearly met the state standard. "It was tremendous improvement," Fossum says, "the lowest reading we've ever seen on Como Lake."

### One-two punch

Curly-leaf pondweed is the lake's main internal source of phosphorus, which collects in bottom sediment until being released. The biggest challenge with curly-leaf is that – unlike native plants – it grows in the winter, under the ice. It dies off in June or July, creating dense mats near the water's surface and releasing a surge of phosphorus into the lake.

That surge provides perfect fuel for algae and further chokes off oxygen when levels already



This biomass illustration, which compares 2019 (left) with 2020, shows the improvement in eliminating curly-leaf pondweed (which is red). (Courtesy of Capitol Region Watershed District)

are low because of peak sunshine, warming temperatures, and the lake's shallow depth. "It's a perfect recipe for a midsummer algae bloom," Fossum says.

While the herbicide attacks phosphorus levels by reducing the volume of curly-leaf pondweed, alum – liquid aluminum sulfate – further cuts phosphorus levels in the water by instead locking into lake sediment.

### Long-term commitment

The watershed district repeated the herbicide treatment again this year, applying Fluridone on March 31, shortly after ice out. Later this year, the district plans to do further shoreline maintenance to help native plants rebound and help move the lake toward a new equilibrium.

In addition, filtration projects completed on the Como Park golf course in 2020 (which will eliminate about 55 pounds

of phosphorus from flowing into the lake), plus additional storm-water runoff treatment in the watershed, should reduce phosphorus even further, Fossum says. These actions are part of the watershed district's 20-year adaptive management plan for the lake, which includes continuous monitoring of the lake; fish management to increase the number of predators such as walleye, bass and northern pike; and dozens of other tactics.

Como Lake "is doing much, much better," Fossum says. "Year one results were very good."

But, he cautions, "We're not about to declare victory yet." Some measures of water quality started going the wrong way in late summer and fall, Fossum notes.

"This is a long-term commitment," he says. "It's the cumulative impact of a number of different efforts, large and small, that are going to get Como Lake to a healthy, balanced ecosystem."

BIPOC, LOWEST PAID >> from 14 and recreation; and administration. These are jobs that affect the lowest paid workers the most. Plus, 27% of the workers in accommodation and food service who make less than \$15 an hour in the industry report as BIPOC.

Overall, BIPOC workers accounted for 35% of the labor force, but 50% of the applications for unemployment. Compared to that, White workers make up 65% of the workforce and 50% of the applications for unemployment. Those with less than a four-year degree were affected at higher rates.

Young people (16-24) and female talent are over-represented in occupations that are experiencing high unemployment during the pandemic.

"Younger workers are more likely than other age demographics to have their jobs impacted by COVID-19 based on concentration in 1) vulnerable industry sectors, 2) the occupations hardest hit, and 3) their lower levels of seniority and work experience," pointed out Olson. "Younger workers are also less concentrated in jobs that can be done remotely, and more concentrated in high-contact-intensity positions."

In September 2020, women left the workforce at four times the rate as men.

"Women hold about 93% of all childcare worker roles in Ramsey County as of 2020, and a dis-

proportionately high percentage of that workforce is Black, African American, or Hispanic," according to Olson. "Low wages and soaring job instability in this sector due to the pandemic threaten the business models of childcare providers of all kinds."

Plus, two-third of those employed in high contact positions with greater risk of COVID-19 exposure such as healthcare, service and education are women.

Transitioning to remote work was difficult for those in the Midway, Como and Frogtown areas in part because of the lower rates of households with computers and broadband subscriptions in these neighborhoods than elsewhere in the metro area. But also the sorts of jobs meant that while 51% of overall jobs in the county could be done remotely, in the *Monitor* coverage area only 14% could be remote.

### Jobs that need workers, those that don't

DEED is anticipating a talent shortage where the skills of those seeking work don't match the jobs available. Ramsey County is working on partnerships between government, community-based organizations and post-secondary institutions to drive re-skilling.

Those fields with a talent surplus and dangerously high unemployment include: cooks, waitresses, bartenders, hostesses, childcare workers, construction laborers, construction equipment

operators, painters, cement masons, brickmasons, roofers and insulation workers.

The fields that need more workers than are expected to be available in Ramsey County include: information, utilities, agriculture, finance, pharmaceuticals, and public administration.

Top occupations likely to see shortages in Midway, Frogtown, Como, Downtown, and Rondo neighborhoods are: registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, general and operations managers, management analysts, financial managers, and mental health counselors.

Emerging fields with higher new demand in the *Monitor* coverage area include: physicians, software developers, HR specialists, software testers, bookkeeping clerks, medical secretaries, and security guards.

"2020 has brought a tremendous amount of uncertainty to our community. However, we also see this as an opportunity and feel an urgent need to address the ongoing workforce disparities in our community. "Returning to the status quo is not acceptable," said Becker.

She is excited by the county board's endorsement of the nation's first Economic Competitiveness and Inclusion Vision Plan. "This framework will guide our efforts over the years ahead as we build an economy where all are valued and thrive," said Becker.



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By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Nelson's Automotive (2314 E. Hennepin Ave.) shut down in March 2020 just like everyone else did as they waited to see what the impact of COVID-19 would be. They opened back up a few weeks later when they were deemed an essential service.

But business has been slower in the past year as people drive their vehicles less, according to owner Nick Nelson. Nelson's staff fix a lot of commuter cars – and with the work from home orders, these vehicles aren't getting as many miles on them. "It slowed us down," said Nelson. "The industry is down 30% as a whole."

He's hopeful that things will change as people get vaccinated and the restrictions ease. The prediction is that more folks will opt to drive instead of fly this summer, which will translate into increased business for small auto repair shops, he pointed out.

### Shifting and changing

Nelson was able to keep almost all of his employees at his three locations thanks to a PPP loan. "I wouldn't have been able to do it without that," he observed. "The fact that we're still around and running – I am thankful every day." He doesn't plan to apply for the second round of loans, as he'd like to see it go to those who really need it.

To keep staff and customers safe, "we basically changed everything," said Nelson. Staff began wearing masks and gloves, and

they implemented new disinfecting protocols. Due to the high cost of disposable masks, they switched to reusable gaiters with the Nelson's logo.

It was hard to find spit shield screens, and even the glass and plexiglass material was tough to come by last spring. He hunted around for the materials and when he found it, Nelson made the screens himself. He plans to keep them in place even after the COVID-19 threat has diminished.

There was a period of time where he worried about getting parts and supplies, but even when it was slow, they still received what they needed from their suppliers.

He was glad to avoid damage during the civil unrest last summer. Nelson and a few buddies spent four nights at the Nicollet shop located behind the former K-Mart in Minneapolis to look after the repair shop.

Nelson suspects that many of his staff had COVID-19 two weeks before the shutdown. He was the first one to get sick shortly after a surgery in February, and it ran through the rest of his employees. "We were all deathly ill," recalled Nelson. "It was the worst flu I've ever had in my life." No one has been sick since, although a few employees have tested positive for COVID-19 and they've

taken the proper precautions.

Keeping his staff energized and excited is the number one thing Nelson says he does every day as a manager. But he knows how important employee morale is. Nelson worked as a mechanic for years before starting his own business in 2007, and recognizes how demoralizing a cold, dark shop can be. And so they shut down on major holidays and try to take 4-5 days off to give people the opportunity to recuperate. They plan to take their annual work camping trip up north in June. "I really try not to overwork the guys," said Nelson.

### Building relationships

One issue Twin Cities residents are dealing with right now is catalytic converter thefts. "We help people deal with insurance companies," said Nelson. The part is required by law, but with an average cost of \$1,000 the replacement can be a financial hardship for people. "We try to work with people and make it cheaper and more affordable," said Nelson. One way they do that is looking at aftermarket options. They also have financing available for more expensive repairs, as they recognize that there are folks on a fixed income and those with families who need help paying for repairs.

## START YOUR ENGINES!

### Auto shops offer advice, grapple with COVID-19 impacts

mates, and William Latuff manages shop production.

Some technicians at the shop have been there over 30 years. Jamison Randall, a Lake Phalen resident, is celebrating his 13th anniversary with Latuff this year. "COVID-19 had a sizeable impact on the auto body industry. Since the stay-at-home order went into effect March of 2020 vehicle traffic levels decreased by as much as 70%," he observed. "Statistically, auto insurance claims have decreased over the last year by about 30% thus reducing the potential number of customers that would require our services." Plus, some neighbors were concerned about leaving their homes and didn't seek repair services.

Latuff responded with continuing to focus on leading in technology and personalized customer service. "We were able to provide contactless service through our auto damage estimate tool, DocuSign forms, and free pick-up and delivery of the vehicles," said Randall. "We have many long-time customers and referral partners that have kept us going strong. Latuff Brothers has been able to operate and serve customers without having to lay off any of our staff."

"Latuff Brothers Auto Body would like to thank the community for all the support they've shown in the challenging years of light rail construction and into the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud to serve this neighborhood for the last 88 years."

Nelson's staff encourage customers to use their remote option for drop-offs and to pay via credit card. It's an option they always had, but more people are using it now. "I want people to know they can call us. There are no stupid questions," said Nelson. "We will talk you through the good-better-best options."

For the Nelson's Auto staff, it's all about building relationships. "I want people to feel like they can build a long-term relationship with us and bring us their cars for years to come," said Nelson.

### Long-time customer support

Latuff Brothers Auto Body has been fixing vehicles at the junction of the Midway, Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods since 1933. The shop was started by three brothers – Joe, Mike, and John – who focused on treating their customers the way they wanted to be treated and doing the right thing even if it isn't the easiest way to do something. These values helped them make it through the Great Depression and the drop in business during COVID-19.

The fourth generation of Latuff family members is involved today. Pete Latuff is the owner, his son Robert manages the front office and does esti-

## YOU'VE GOT A GUY AT NELSON'S

Nick Nelson opened his first auto repair shop in 2007 with one goal. He wanted to bring back that hometown feel. Today, he owns three shops in Minneapolis and is proud of his high customer retention. "It's all about building relationships," observed Nick. "Personal service is our number one thing."

After working for a big company, Nick quit to do repairs in his garage. His clients encouraged him to open a location, so he rented out part of the Purity Baking building at South 5th Ave. and 35th St. He was having fun fixing vans for traveling bands, but was ready to grow. Nick bought a shop at 24th and Hennepin, added one at 2809 Lyndale Ave., and opened the East Nokomis shop at 5415 34th Ave. in 2016. He was local, and hired local folks to work on their neighbor's vehicles. He and his staff focused on superior customer service and quality without compromise. "It felt like we were on to something," he said.

"I think transparency in the automotive industry is lacking and we try to break that open," remarked Nick. They operate as an "open book," inviting cus-

tomers into the shop to look under the hood and check out exactly what broke. Tim is the manager of the East Hennepin shop, and has been there since it opened. Tony is the lead technician and Jay is the general technician. "They're an amazing group of guys," said Nick.



Meet Tim, Tony and Jay

Tim, Tony and Jay recognize that most people enter an automotive shop on the defensive, worried they're going to get a raw deal. So they educate customers on the process and what it takes to fix a car properly.

There are no secrets – and no hidden fees, stressed Tony. "A vehicle is one of the most expensive things you own, and it's a big responsibility to be able to take care of it," observed Jay. They keep up with current auto technologies and trends, and don't stray from classical repair service fundamentals. At Nelson's, they fix a lot of commuter cars. "We get you to work. That's what we do," stated Tim.

"Our motto is you've got a guy," said Nick. "We want you to feel like you want to tell someone about us."

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